

# **AGAINST AVAKIANISM**

## **AJITH**



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## INTRODUCTION

In early 2012, a Special Meeting of the Parties and Organisations of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) was successfully concluded. The resolutions of the Special Meeting (SM) were released on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. (They can be accessed at [www.thenaxalbari.blogspot.com](http://www.thenaxalbari.blogspot.com)) Following this the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (henceforth RCP) circulated a letter titled, “Letter To Participating Parties And Organisations Of The Revolutionary Internationalist Movement.” It was dated 1-5-2012 and designated “Not for Publication.” Barely two months later it went online.<sup>1</sup> This haste is well exposed by the contents of the letter. It is a vicious attack on the SM and its resolutions. But before we get into that some history must be recounted.

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1. RCP letter of May 1, 2012. Henceforth “RCP Letter.”



## CHAPTER 1. THE SPECIAL MEETING AND THE RCP LETTER

The Special Meeting was the product of a persistent and determined struggle to resist and beat back conscious efforts to liquidate the RIM. This struggle was initiated in 2009 by individual parties in the midst of the intensification of the global crisis and people's struggles.<sup>2</sup> Their efforts led to the issuance of joint May Day statements from 2009 onwards, thus once again taking the collective views of the Maoists to the peoples of the world. The issue of reorganising and reviving the RIM as part of building towards an International of a new type was brought back on the agenda. Important seminars, joint meetings and activities were conducted as part of this process, deepening and widening it.<sup>3</sup> This also involved inputs from Maoist parties that were not part of the RIM.

In this course the necessity of a meeting which would carry out a preliminary summation of the RIM and formally initiate a proposal for an International Conference was recognised. An invitation for the meeting was issued in the name of four parties, the Communist (Maoist) Party of Afghan-

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2. The letter we wrote to all participating parties is given as Appendix 1. Reports of the seminar and May Day statements can be accessed at [maoistroad.blogspot.com](http://maoistroad.blogspot.com)

3. A paper we presented at the International Seminar held in 2010, *On the Present Situation of the RIM and the Challenge of Regrouping Maoist Parties at the International Level*, is given as Appendix 2.

istan [C(m)PA], Maoist Communist Party of Italy [mCPI], Proletarian Party of Purba Bangla [Bangladesh] [PBSP] and Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) NAXALBARI [CPI (M-L) NAXALBARI]. The invitation observed that "...the present collapse of the RIM is the result of the paralysis of the Committee of the RIM (CoRIM) arising from positions, serious ideological, political differences that emerged among some member parties of the CoRIM."<sup>4</sup> It went on to state, "Since the CoRIM has failed in the task it was entrusted with, we the undersigned parties are taking up the responsibility of organising a Special Meeting of the RIM... seeking the participation of all its member parties..." The tasks of this Meeting were proposed as "Identify and sum-up the ideological, political and organisational factors which have brought the RIM to the present crisis and collapse." and "Decide on the schedule and agenda of an international conference of all Maoist forces, charged with the task of seeking out principled, ideologically consistent, unity amongst themselves and regrouping at the international level." It was also clarified that "While these two should be the main agenda, other topics could be included depending on the decision of the delegates participating in the EM."

All the parties involved in drafting the invitation had their definite views on what the "positions, serious ideological, political differences that emerged

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4. "Invitation."

among some member parties of the CoRIM” were about. Yet this, as well as the naming of the parties whose positions and differences was considered responsible for the “collapse of the RIM,” were purposefully avoided. It was considered that it would be better to place all of these matters directly in the meeting. The majority of the signatories were clear that the RCP had put itself outside the RIM and the broader international Maoist movement through its new ideological positions. But, in view of the unevenness and differences among RIM parties on this matter, it was commonly accepted that the RCP as well as other parties adhering to its positions should be invited. Every effort was made to reach the invitation to all RIM participating parties and organisations through available channels. Parties directly approached were requested to pass on the invitation. Feedback showed that either the invitation or, at the minimum, information about the meeting had indeed reached everyone. The RCP position that it “does not intend to participate” was conveyed to the inviting parties indirectly.

While calling on all RIM parties to participate, it was clear to the inviters that a UCPN (M) led by the Prachanda-Bhattarai faction could not be allowed representation in the SM, given their blatant revisionism and sell out. The Maoist faction within the UCPN (M) struggling against the Prachanda-Bhattarai revisionist line was involved in the consultations during the drafting of the invitation.

At that time they were expecting that the revisionist centre in the UCPN (M) could be ousted through a rebellion and a split avoided. They conveyed that this would definitely be realised well before the proposed meeting. This was the basis for including the name of the UCPN (M) as a signatory in a draft of the invitation. It was clearly understood that if the separation from the Prachanda-Bhattarai revisionist centre was not actualised the Maoist faction would be participating only as observers. Later, when it became clear that these comrades' rebellion was getting deferred, it was decided (through consultations involving them as well) to remove UCPN (M) from the list of signatories. Thus, only the four parties mentioned above appeared as signatories on the finalised version of the invitation that was sent out to all RIM parties, except the UCPN (M).

In keeping with the proposed agenda two draft resolutions were prepared. Since contact with the PBSP was broken for a lengthy period these resolutions were prepared without their participation. But the finalised drafts could be reached to them. Just around the time when the Special Meeting was to be convened, the PBSP informed that it would not be participating due to logistical reasons. It was their opinion that "RCP's New Synthesis has not been debated. Without much debate and analysis this type of line-question should not be settled." Conveying news about a letter the RCP is writing to all RIM parties, they had in a separate commu-

nication suggested that the SM be postponed till that letter was received and studied.<sup>5</sup> This suggestion was rejected. The SM was carried out with a delegation of the Red Faction of the UCPN (M) joining as an observer.

So this was the first time we heard about the RCP's letter. Its timing was quite suspicious. For several years now the RCP has been publicly propagating that the ideas of its Chairman must be adopted by the international communist movement as its ideological basis.<sup>6</sup> This amounts to liquidating the ideological foundations of the RIM.<sup>7</sup> The very relevance of the international Marxist-Leninist-Maoist movement was being negated. The RCP had been continuously refusing to discharge the responsibil-

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5. The PBSP, CC later communicated its decision not to sign the Resolutions due to differences with its contents.

6. "The international communist movement needs to advance, and the basic political and theoretical scaffolding that has been developed with the new synthesis of communism by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the RCP, USA, *serves as the basis* for such an advance." – "RCP Letter," emphasis added.

7. In a sickening sleight of hand it now goes over to accuse the SM of "...declar(ing) the end of RIM.!" This has been echoed by the Revolutionary Communist Organisation, Mexico [RCOM]. (*The New Synthesis of Communism and the Residues of the Past*, henceforth "Residues.") Fully befitting a true disciple, its tract begins with Gospelic lines, "The Earth can rise on new foundations. Bob Avakian's new synthesis of communism... can put an end to the misery, oppression, and degradation..." It then goes on to accuse the SM of trying to "liquidate and split the RIM..." This is demonstrative of the new Revelation's potential to doctor truth. Ironically, it is being said by those who declare the end of a stage that includes the RIM and its ideological base of MLM!

ities assigned to it within the RIM. Hence it was quite obvious that the sudden inspiration to write to all RIM parties was a devious response to the SM, meant to derail or at the least delay it. That failed.

The RCP letter was finally sent out, deceitfully labelled “Not for Publication”; remember, this was coming from a party that had placed itself outside the ranks of the RIM in all senses! But any ploy, no matter how ludicrous, must be allowed its due share of time. That is the one thing the RCP can’t spare. It is in a blind rush to impose its ideas, “everywhere and everywhen.” So, hardly two months later, the “internal” letter went online, even at the risk of getting exposed in its misleading game of “adherence to norms.” That is how things stand with the RCP’s letter and its varying avatars.

## CHAPTER 2. THE ETHICS OF AVAKIANIST POLEMICS

It's a matter of principle that the Revealer types never share glory. The RCP is made of sterner stuff—it refuses to share space even while being attacked. Therefore, the Introductory Note to the letter (reborn as Appendix in the online version) must necessarily take issue with the “audacity” of the SM resolutions for declaring that the RCP has a “counter-revolutionary line... responsible for the current crisis and collapse of RIM.” It goes on and states, “These documents also list, in second place, criticism of what they call the “Prachanda-Bhattarai line” in the UCPN(M)...” The conclusion follows—the “clear target” of these documents is the RCP Chair and his ideas.<sup>8</sup>

Well, one really doesn't know whether Prachanda or Bhattarai would be willing to be second-placed in ignominy. But, speaking for the SM deliberations and its resolutions, we can conclusively state that all were equally held responsible. This is what the resolutions say:

When revisionism of Bob Avakian's post-MLM “new synthesis” variety became dominant in the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA and of the Prachanda-Bhattarai variety became dominant in the United Communist Party of Nepal

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8. “RCP Letter.”

(Maoist), not only did these parties deviate from the path of revolution and communism, but the destructive and disparaging effects of their counter-revolutionary *lines* negatively affected the parties and organisations within RIM, specifically the Committee of RIM (CoRIM), in an extensive and profound manner. These are the immediate ideological sources that have led to the current crisis and collapse of the RIM.<sup>9</sup>

The reader may please note the italicised words in both the quotes and the skill with which plural “lines” were easily turned singular. That was no mean synthesis for a party that is now on a high trip of “ethics and morals,” what with the “enlightenment” so copiously dished out by its Chair!

The RCP goes on to blame the SM resolutions of violating the principle of not to “...lightly brand forces in the communist movement as “revisionist” or “counter-revolutionary,” and especially to not do so without making an argument as to why their line is revisionist or counter-revolutionary.”<sup>10</sup> This is in line with the vociferous protests the RCP has been making over people not “engaging” with their

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9. “Proposal for an International Conference adopted by the Special Meeting,” henceforth “Proposal.”

10. “RCP Letter.” A recent critique made by the C(m)PA exposes the duplicity in this charge by pointing out how the Manifesto of the RCP publicly brands RIM parties who refused to fall in line as dogmatists. “A Response to the RCP-USA’s May 1st 2012 Letter.”

Chair's ideas. Their letter's elaboration of these ideas will be dealt with later. For now we will restrict ourselves to recording some facts on "engagement."

In many RIM forums, and even during the process leading to its formation, a number of erroneous positions and arguments of the RCP have been criticised for tendencies that undermine proletarian ideology, class struggle and revolution. An article contributed by our party on the debate over the socialist state system had pointed out that the principle of "a solid core with a lot of elasticity," (now posed as a major contribution of Avakianism) was nothing "...other than a good exposition of Maoist methods of leadership."<sup>11</sup> That is, it was neither new nor contained any synthesis. Our Note presented at the 2006 International Seminar dealt with some of these issues in a concentrated manner. This was done without naming anyone in keeping with norms. But the criticisms were explicit and direct. At this time, the RCP's claims about a new Revelation were yet to be made open. But the threat could be made out. Therefore, remaining within the limits of what was then being openly stated by the RCP we noted, "So far as the matter of approach (to socialist democracy) is concerned Mao's contri-

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11. It was first published in the December 2005 issue of *Struggle*, the internal magazine of the RIM, under the title "*The Current Debate on the Socialist State System.*" An edited version, leaving out references to parties, was later published in the 2<sup>nd</sup> issue of the *New Wave* titled ("On the Socialist State System," henceforth "Socialist"). It was responded to by the RCP—a rare occasion of its "engagement."

butions still remain the only advanced one. Characterising a restatement of those contributions as a new synthesis will only serve to *hinder* the task of going beyond the pinnacles achieved through the GPCR.”<sup>12</sup> Articles in “The New Wave” further elaborated on these criticisms. Critical observations on Avakianism made by one of the signatories of the SM resolutions, the C(m)PA, are also openly available.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the RCP’s letter polemicizes against it. Then why is it kicking up this din about people not “engaging” in struggle with it?

On the one hand, it reflects a bureaucratic attitude to criticism—trying to stifle them by simply refusing to acknowledge their existence. But there’s more to it than attitude. The RCP is trying to cover up the unprincipled and divisive methods it has used to foist its deviationist banners. In its recent letter mention is made about a letter sent in 2009 to all RIM parties.<sup>14</sup> We haven’t received this. But we will

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12. “A Note for the Seminar on “Imperialism and Proletarian Revolution in the 21st Century,” *Worker*, No: 11, emphasis added, henceforth “Note for Seminar.”

13. Op. cit. See the other criticisms: “Bob Avakian’s ‘New Synthesis’ A Critique, Part 1,” “The RCP USA and its New Synthesis Part 1,” “Nine Letters to our Comrades.” The PBCP, CC (Bangladesh) has written a critique, but it is yet to be translated into English.

14. “In 2009, we issued ‘Communism: The Beginning of a New Stage, A Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA,’ which summarizes our evaluation of the overall goal of the communist revolution and an assessment of the current crossroads facing the communist movement. The orientation is sharply summed up in ‘Chapter V: Communism at a Crossroads: Vanguard of the Future, or Residue of the

assume that the 2009 letter is a fact. In that case, this would be *the first time* the RCP directly communicated to the RIM parties its view that the ideas of its Chair must be made the basis of the international communist movement. Take note, this came several months *after* its new Manifesto, declaring this position and accusing those who reject it as dogmatists, was made public in September 2008 (even this is fudged up as 2009 in the RCP's letter!)<sup>15</sup> The reader may consider the deviousness involved in sending a so-called "internal" letter seeking "responses" to a publicly declared position. The RIM parties were being forced to avoid open struggle. Meanwhile the RCP had appropriated all freedom to propagate its liquidationist views.

The last communication all the RIM parties received from this party on this matter, *while the RIM was active*, had clearly said, in the words of Avakian himself that:

There is a body of work, there is a method and approach, that our Chair has developed, and is still developing, *which is part of the larger body of work and method and approach of MLM.*

...[I]t is going to be necessary for the

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Past? In 2009 we sent a letter to all the participating parties and organisations in RIM, asking for their evaluation and response to this Manifesto," "RCP Letter," op. cit.

15. "Communism: The Beginning of a New Stage, A Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA," henceforth "Manifesto."

whole international movement to, in a certain sense, be “going through” what our Chair has been and is bringing forward. By that I don’t mean accepting all of it wholesale without question, *nor enshrining it as some sort of ideology for the whole movement.*<sup>16</sup>

This was in 2005. Now three years later, without any intimation or formal proposal placed for their consideration, the RIM parties were being forced to respond to something that had already been declared unilaterally. Could there be anything more Avakianistically “internationalist” than this? The protest made by the RCP over others not responding to its fiats is precisely aimed at hiding its authoritarian posture of “father party” and its manoeuvring methods.

Let’s go back to the RCP’s accusation on the SM resolutions for branding its views as revisionism. Avakianism claims that Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM) is no longer a sufficient basis for the international Maoist movement. Avakianism declares that the very theoretical framework of MLM is itself outdated. It arrogates to itself the halo of a “new theoretical framework.” There is of course talk about building on all that has gone before, but with a clarification—the continuity involved in this is similar to Marxism’s taking up all that was posi-

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16. “Excerpts from a Talk by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the RCP, USA to A Group Of Comrades,” document circulated by the CoRIM in 2004, emphasis added.

tive in the advanced bourgeois thinking preceding it.<sup>17</sup> Obviously, this cannot be continuity within the single theoretical framework of MLM. It implicitly registers the new framework as something qualitatively different from that of MLM. At the most it is the borrowing of some MLM elements to buttress the different framework of Avakianism. At its worst, it is a play of words meant to fob off the naïve.

To repeat, with Avakianism, the RCP places itself outside not just the RIM but the whole international Maoist movement. It has liquidated its ideological moorings by declaring that MLM is outdated and must be replaced with Avakianism. Given this, the first responsibility of the internationalist Maoist movement is to draw a firm line of demarcation against this deviation. That is what the SM resolutions have done. The very wording of the SM resolution (italicised here) captures the essence of matter— “...Bob Avakian’s *post-MLM* ‘new synthesis’ variety...” Elaboration and sharpening must follow, but a resolution is not the place for it. However, even without elaboration, the RCP’s positioning of its views, as part of a framework different from Marxism, substantiates the criticism.

Having wished in a condition of being unblemished by criticism, the “Immaculates of Avakianism” then go on to wish away the ideological positions of

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17. The class implications of this analogy are worth pondering. Marxism’s synthesis of preceding bourgeois thought was done from a proletarian stand. What is the class content of Avakianism’s self-claimed surpassing of Marxism?

the SM signatories. This is what the charge is they:

...[A]re issuing calls to form a new international communist movement based on what they call “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism,” with no discussion of what they understand to be the content of MLM and, in particular, a shocking lack of delineation with the revisionist line that has been in command in the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) since 2005, which is not surprising since the UCPN(M) was a signatory to 2011 Call.

Further:

There is something ironic and wrong in claiming the banner of MLM, while avoiding Mao’s key point that “the correctness or incorrectness of ideological and political line decides everything” and refusing to approach all key questions seriously in that light.<sup>18</sup>

The Introduction had already charged that:

The leaders of this new “initiative...” are trying to substitute a different criteria for “unity,” in particular a demagogic and pragmatist appeal to taking Maoist-led people’s wars as “its reference points and strategic anchor,” as opposed to Mao’s

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18. “RCP Letter,” op. cit.

stress on “the correctness of the political and ideological line.”<sup>19</sup>

Let us start from this. Has the SM proposed that Maoist-led people’s wars should be taken as reference points and strategic anchor for convening an international conference or for building an international organisation? No. On the contrary it has explicitly put the matter of ideological and political line at the centre of this process. To re-quote the SM invitation, this is what it proposed as one of the tasks to be carried out:

Decide on the schedule and agenda of an international conference of all Maoist forces, charged with the task of seeking out *principled, ideologically consistent*, unity amongst themselves and regrouping at the international level.<sup>20</sup>

And this is how the Proposal adopted by the SM presented the matter:

In order to achieve this aim a *process of ideological, political debate* must be carried out. As part of preparation for the conference and serving its aims, we will it necessary to organise a seminar on “Summation of Experiences of RIM, ICML, and other International Initiatives.” *Through this whole process* the points of unity and differences can be identified

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19. Ibid, Appendix.

20. “Invitation,” emphasis added.

and a relatively advanced platform can be arrived at, to become the basis of a new international unity concretised in a new international organisation.<sup>21</sup>

So this is where the SM resolutions stand on the matter of the decisive role of ideological and political line in the process leading to a new Maoist international organisation.

The Proposal for an International Conference clearly states that “This conference should take up the task of building an international organisation based on Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.”<sup>22</sup> The RCP objects that this is done with “...no discussion of what they understand to be the content of MLM...”<sup>23</sup> The parties in the RIM certainly didn’t have identical views on MLM. But these differences were situated within a broad unified understanding on the “content of MLM.” For those who still remain firm on these positions a fresh discussion on the content of MLM is not the immediate necessity. What is immediately relevant and necessary is a sharpened reassertion of MLM. And the SM did this by differentiating MLM from the two liquidationist deviations threatening it and insisting that “To build this new international organisation we must break with revisionism in all its aspects and particularly with those that have led to the current

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21. “Proposal,” op. cit.

22. Ibid.

23. “RCP Letter,” op. cit.

crisis and collapse of the RIM, namely the post-MLM “new synthesis” of Bob Avakian in the Revolutionary Communist Party, US and the revisionist line established by Prachanda/Bhattarai in the UCPN(M).”

The RCP avoids any mention of this. Yet, in the remaining part of the sentence quoted above, it charges the SM of a “shocking lack of delineation with the revisionist line that has been in command in the UCPN(Maoist).” It comments that this “... is not surprising since the UCPN(M) was a signatory to 2011 Call.”<sup>24</sup> Presumably in anticipation of getting exposed in this game of selective quotation, it has added a footnote where the reader is informed that “It seems that some section of the UCPN(M) may have signed the joint 2012 document referred to above which denounces the “*Bhattarai-Prachanda*” line. However, we are still not aware of any thorough criticism of that line or decisive rupture with the practice of the UCPN(M).”<sup>25</sup> Apparently, in the Avakianist world one can “denounce” without “delineation!”

The SM resolutions are of 2012. What about the

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24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., emphasis added. Even then the Avakianists just can't free themselves from their habitual disease. So, a few pages down in the letter, they repeat the lie that the SM does not delineate itself from the UCPN(M)'s revisionism, by writing: “The signatories to the May 1, 2011 Call included the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) so we can understand what the ‘relatively advanced platform’ is likely to look like and what kinds of revisionism it will tolerate.”

previous year? The circumstance of the UCPN (M)'s name appearing as a signatory in the draft version of the 2011 SM invitation and its removal from the finalised version has already been explained. The other instance where the UCPN (M) was a signatory in 2011 is the Joint May Day statement of that year. The reason was the same. But what's more pertinent is whether this caused any dilution of the May Day statement's position on developments in Nepal. No, it was firm and clear:

In Nepal, 10 years of people's war have created the conditions for the advancement of Nepali revolution. This revolution is now at a complex crossroads and must be supported against the counter-revolution waged by internal and external enemies as well as against the reformists who try to undermine it from within.<sup>26</sup>

Who these internal and external enemies, waging counter-revolution, and who the reformists are, was not elaborated. A statement is not the place for that. This was done in the writings of parties. We will come to this later. Let us first complete the examination of the RCP's charge of pragmatism against the SM.

In further support of this accusation it has given what it claims is a quote from the paper presented by our party at the International Seminar of 2010. This is what it wrote:

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26. "May Day Statement, 2011."

As CPI (M-L) (Naxalbari) puts it in arguing for this type of [pragmatist] approach, “This [*unity*] must necessarily be broad enough, in the topics selected as well as participation, so that the present reality of the international Maoist movement is properly represented. Through this process the points of unity and differences can be identified and a relatively advanced platform can be arrived at, to become the basis of reorganisation.” In other words, rather than focus on the lines of demarcation that have emerged and are sharpening, we must first decide who should be included in this discussion and then look for the lowest common dominator of political line that can keep these forces “united.”<sup>27</sup>

We are thus being charged with making unity a precondition and diluting “line as criterion.” Is that true? Please note the bracketed insertion (italicised by us) made by the RCP. Did the “*this*” in our paper indicate “*unity*” as claimed by the Avakianists? Let’s look at it once again, this time in its proper context:

Since the adoption of the Declaration, the thinking and practice of Maoist parties, within and outside the RIM, has changed significantly. New parties have been founded. In this situation, the Dec-

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27. “RCP Letter,” emphasis added, op. cit.

laration, though still correct and relevant in many aspects, can no longer be the basis, even for a reorganisation of the RIM. It is therefore necessary to *initiate a process of debate* on various ideological, political and organisational issues. *This* must necessarily be broad enough, in the topics selected as well as participation, so that the present reality of the international Maoist movement is properly represented. Through this process the points of unity and differences can be identified and a relatively advanced platform can be arrived at, to become the basis of reorganisation.<sup>28</sup>

We wrote about making the *process of debate* necessarily broad in the topics selected and participation. The reasoning was given quite clearly, "...such reorganisation must go beyond an organisational regrouping of the participatory parties and organisations of the RIM. We cannot simply reactivate the RIM and continue as before, even with a new CoRIM."<sup>29</sup> This is what the Avakianists misrepresent with a doctored quote. The urge to do this is rooted in their grievance that "the lines of demarcation that have emerged and are sharpening" are not being focussed on. In plain English what they mean is that we are not willing to replace MLM

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28. Appendix 2, emphasis added, op. cit.

29. Ibid.

with Avakianism. Well, this can't be obliged with. But then it's not as if that has been totally ignored either. After all, one of the ideological criteria laid down by the SM is the rejection of Avakianism AKA "new synthesis" (the other being the rejection of Prachanda-Bhattarai revisionism). Now that should certainly qualify as a precise demarcation!

To substantiate its charge of pragmatism the RCP has written:

If we look at the draft "Proposal" that has just been brought to our attention as we finalised this letter we see this kind of vision fairly clearly spelled out: "a potential new wave of the world proletarian revolution develops and emerges, with the people's wars led by Maoist parties as its reference points and strategic anchor. The realisation of this potential ultimately depends on how successful the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist parties are in fulfilling their revolutionary tasks at the national and international level. The pooling of their understanding and experience and the development of their capacity to take a united revolutionary message to the rebellious masses all over the world, have decisive importance." The *essential task* of the ICM in this impoverished view of things is the "pooling of understanding and experience." What understanding

is to be “pooled?” How is experience to be summed up, for example the “experience” of a Maoist-led government in Nepal? The very conception of “pooling understanding” is a combining of “two-into-one” worthy of Prachanda and his “fusion” theory and is an open appeal for pragmatism. What happened to the primacy of political and ideological line so central to Mao?<sup>30</sup>

Once again we are faced with the tedious task of deconstructing Avakianist fabrications in order to get at the truth. They first twist “decisive importance” into “essential task.” And then they edit out “...development of their capacity to take a united revolutionary message to the rebellious masses all over the world.” This is how they desperately try to establish that the SM is arguing for a “two-in-one” combination. The word “pooling” is picked on as substantiation. We stand willing to be corrected, but, to our knowledge, “pooling of understanding and experiences” means development of collective wisdom. Development is not a putting together. That is doubly clear when placed in relation to “development of capacity [of MLM parties] to take a *united* revolutionary message to the masses.” And the very next paragraph proposes that

...[S]teps need to be taken to work for the building of an effective international

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30. “RCP Letter,” emphasis added.

MLM organisation that can aid the fulfilment of revolutionary tasks and take the *collective voice of the Maoists* to the proletariat and struggling peoples. Therefore, we should move towards holding a new conference of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist parties and organisations throughout the world. This conference should take up the task of building an international organisation *based on Marxism-Leninism-Maoism*.<sup>31</sup>

The RCP asks “What happened to the primacy of political and ideological line so central to Mao?” Well, it’s right there for all to see—provided those Avakianist blinders are removed.

Finally, on the question of the ongoing people’s wars as reference points and strategic anchor. From all that has been quoted till now it should be clear that this is not raised as criteria for the new Maoist international organisation. The Proposal observed:

The devastations of imperialist globalisation, wars of aggression and the devastating economic crisis of the imperialist system and its impact on proletarians and the broad masses have awakened worldwide a wave of struggles and revolts.

But they are not guided by a scientific outlook. In contrast to this stand the people’s wars led by Maoist parties. They too are part of the worldwide

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31. “Proposal,” emphasis added.

wave of revolts. But, unlike the others, they demonstrate in a concentrated manner, in deeds, the way out from the horrors of the imperialist system, the road to communism. They drive in with tremendous power the need for proletarian leadership, the Maoist vanguard, the guiding ideology of MLM. This is why the SM resolutions assert these people's wars led by Maoist parties as "reference points and strategic anchor." This is the role the people's wars objectively play in the present world situation. This is their role within the context of a potential new wave of the world proletarian revolution that develops and emerges.

The Avakianists have repeatedly distorted the SM positions to accuse it of replacing the centrality of ideological and political line with people's war as the criterion of unity. To cement this they have written about a tendency within the RIM that argued that the:

...RIM should incorporate new participants not on the basis of the overall political and ideological positions of these organisations but rather on whether these parties were seen as successfully carrying out armed revolutionary struggle under a banner of Maoism, without a real discussion of what the content of that meant.<sup>32</sup>

Greatly aided and spurred on by the people's wars, first of Peru and then of Nepal, the RIM par-

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32. "RCP Letter," op. cit.

ties had developed a common understanding of the content of people's wars. But that was by no means even. Yet this is the first time we hear of a view that ignored the "overall political and ideological positions" and demanded incorporation of new parties based on whether they were carrying out armed struggle under a banner of Maoism. We have never seen this in the positions of any RIM party. However, let that remain. There is something more significant here. The RCP's letter cunningly avoids spelling out its position on the ongoing people's wars. In fact, this precisely is one of the reasons why it repeatedly poses and attacks the SM's formulation of "reference point and strategic anchor" solely as a matter of pragmatic criterion. The Avakianists must pose themselves as favourable to these people's wars. Otherwise their counter-revolutionary essence would get badly exposed. But the very premises of Avakianism deny the ideological basis, MLM, guiding these revolutionary struggles. At the most they can be accepted as heroic ventures, but ultimately futile. In the Avakianist logic they belong to an antiquated stage (and worse, refuse to be anointed by the Revealer!). This is the real reason why the RCP is so upset with the SM formulation. In its present liquidationist thinking, these people's wars *cannot be* "reference points or strategic anchors," *precisely because MLM guides them.*

We have so far seen a number of examples (all from their letter) that amply reveal the approach

and methods adopted by Avakianism in polemics. Mao called on communists to “be open and above board.” Avakianism thrives on deviousness and underhand manoeuvres. It refuses to be principled in ideological struggle and resorts to all sorts of trickery, including doctoring quotes. The opponent’s views are distorted and vulgarised. The caricature is then attacked. This is the method of putting up straw men as targets. It is an example of the manufacture of reality by this party to suit its needs, even while it pretends to have broken off from instrumentalism. What is worse, it is not even honest to its own premises.

Take the case of the people’s wars. To be consistent in its position on ‘Avakianism as the ideological basis,’ the RCP should be arguing that these revolutionary wars are severely hampered by ideological limitations, just as it does in the case of various other people’s struggles. It doesn’t do that because of fear of getting exposed. Yet it continuously undermines them with its liquidationism that sows doubt about the ideological basis of these revolutionary movements. Ultimately it serves to isolate them from the revolutionary masses. In commonsensical terms this is plain “backstabbing.” Scientifically put, it is a sharp exposure of the right opportunism now dominant in the RCP.

We saw the same approach in the matter of the RIM. Once the RCP arrived at the position that the MLM ideological basis of the RIM was outdated

and needed to be replaced with Avakianism, it had the duty to present it at such before the RIM parties. It should have argued for the dissolution of the RIM and demanded a new conference to re-build it (or something else) on its proposed basis. Or, if it felt that this shouldn't be taken up immediately then that should be argued. This flows from its very position that "nothing viable can emerge" without Avakianism. It was not just something enjoined by virtue of being a member of the RIM or one of the parties delegated with specific responsibility.

We saw what happened. The real position of that party (Avakianism in place of MLM) was kept concealed and the very opposite was put out.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile the MPP and Nepal issues were sought to be employed as tools to subvert the RIM and enthrone Avakianism. When this ran into resistance, the RIM was slowly made defunct. (The liquidationist moves of Prachanda and Bhattarai complemented this.) It is only after this, after avoiding internal struggle within the ranks of the RIM, that the Avakianists dared to openly hold up their liquidationist banner. They are now faced with determined struggle, formally launched through the SM, to reorganise the

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33. Even in March 2008, the RCP was criticising the UCPN (M) for departing from "...basic Marxist-Leninist-Maoist (MLM) principles and the very basis on which our Movement was formed." ("Letter to the Parties and Organisations of the RIM, 19 March 2008.") Though this letter wrote about "new synthesis" it gave no indication of the upcoming proclamation of Avakianism as the ideological base. This was to be made just a few months later through its Manifesto.

RIM on the basis of MLM. This forces them to now declare openly, “It is neither possible nor desirable to simply turn back the clock and try to reconstruct RIM or some other international organisation *on the basis of previous criteria...*”<sup>34</sup>

While on the matter of approach, we must also take note of another caricature manufactured by the RCP. It writes, “Within RIM there was also a distorted and pragmatist understanding of the relation between practice and the truth, according to which advances in practice would *automatically* be translated into theoretical advances or the correctness or incorrectness of theoretical propositions could be determined by examining their successes (real or supposed) in practice.”<sup>35</sup> The implication is that this tendency resisted the need to develop theory. Well, this view on “*automatic advance*” is news to us. Even stranger, this was never mentioned or struggled against in RIM forums and reports. But the letter’s precise formulation of Avakianism’s attack on the dialectic of theory and practice (the verification and further development of theory through practice and the deepening of practice through new theoretical insights) is quite expected. Mao Zedong clearly explained why “Only social practice can be the criterion of truth.”<sup>36</sup> He also qualified this by explaining, “In social struggle, the forces represent-

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34. “RCP Letter,” emphasis added.

35. Ibid.

36. Mao Zedong, “On Practice,” *Selected Works, Volume 1* (MSW 1)

ing the advanced class sometimes suffer defeat not because their ideas are incorrect but because, in the balance of forces engaged in struggle, they are not as powerful for the time being as the forces of reaction; they are therefore temporarily defeated, but they are bound to triumph sooner or later.”<sup>37</sup> That is, theory or line may not always succeed and get verified in immediate practice. But that does not eliminate the role of social practice as the “criterion of truth.” While, as Mao said, the forces representing the advanced class are bound to triumph, that is premised on their ideas being correct, of their conforming to reality. It is an affirmation of the dialectic of theory and practice. The RCP has been vulgarising Mao’s position in order to attack anyone who insists that the “correctness or incorrectness of theoretical propositions could be determined by... practice.” Obviously enough, Avakianism needed this to escape the burden of proof through practice. But that wasn’t the only reason. It was a necessary tool in its attempt to “creep in” Avakianism within the RIM by whittling away at its ideological foundation. Covering up its real intentions it began by raising the matter of “developing theory,” something broadly accepted within the RIM. This was then extended to counter pose theoretical tasks to those of practice. Along with this the capacity of MLM to be the ideological guide, even for imme-

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37. Mao Zedong, “Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?” MSW 9.

diate practice, was questioned.<sup>38</sup> Thus the grounds were being prepared to usher in Avakianism.

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38. This later found reflection in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Plenum Report of the CoRIM, which was a reversal of the orientation adopted by the 2000 Extended Meeting of RIM. Criticising this we wrote in 2005, “While we agree with the call of the report to take up the task of ideological and political struggle and the points it has raised (new advances sharpening ‘old questions,’ continually sharpen our grasp of underlying reality etc.), we disagree with the way this is being posed. The task of raising the level of our ideological, political clarity and unity is certainly a pressing one. But, the statement made by the report that ‘Our understanding is not deep enough, our Marxist-Leninist-Maoist tools are not sharp enough and our unity is not strong enough’ to enable us to meet the challenges raised by the current situation is an exaggeration. It can lead to the wrong orientation that we cannot advance in practice until these ideological, political issues are resolved.” (Struggle, No: 5, early 2005) This struggle gained support from most of the parties present in the 6th Regional Conference of RIM Parties and Organisations of South Asia, convened in end 2006. The Press Communiqué issued by that Conference explicitly reflected this by noting “...one important topic of discussion in the Regional Conference was that of deepening the grasp of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM) and developing it by correctly handling the dialectics of theory and practice to make the Maoists more capable of addressing the tasks of making revolution in the present world.” Our Note for the International Seminar of 2006 attacked the tendency that was “counter posing theoretical tasks to the task of initiating or developing People’s Wars.” A recent example of the vulgarisation of the theory-practice dialectic is seen in this Communist Party of Iran (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) [CPI(MLM)] view (as quoted by C(m)PA), “Unlike the general understanding that theory should follow the steps taken by practice, theory must take steps before practice and become its guide.” (“The Communist Party of Iran (MLM) has fallen into the lost road of ‘post MLM’”) Notice the counter posing of “theory guiding practice” with “theory following practice.” The Marxist theory of knowledge teaches that theory both follows practice (i.e. draws on and is verified by it) and guides it.

We will be coming back to the approach and methods of Avakianism. For now let us move on to its claims to be the ideological guide of a new stage in the struggle for communism.



## CHAPTER 3. THE ARBITRARY STAGES OF AVAKIANISM

Avakianism claims that a stage of communist revolution has ended. This is also referred to as the first wave. It presents itself as the theoretical framework for a new stage, a second wave.<sup>39</sup> There is agreement among the Avakianists on this. But they seem to differ on what exactly they mean by “stage.” The RCP and Revolutionary Communist Organisation, Mexico [RCOM] argue that the stages they speak about have nothing to do with the stages in the development of communist ideology or the era. But the Communist Party of Iran (MLM) [CPI (MLM)] has a different view. It says that the crisis in the communist movement that has necessitated a new theoretical framework “...is the definite sign of *an era’s ending and beginning of another era.*”<sup>40</sup> We must wait for more details before commenting on this. For the present let us note that this has major implications.<sup>41</sup>

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39. “The revolutionary communist movement began in 1848, when Marx and Engels brought forth the basic theory and vision in the Communist Manifesto. The first stage of this movement included three epic revolutions: the Paris Commune; the Soviet Revolution; and the Chinese Revolution, which included the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution as its high point.” (*Constitution of the RCP, USA*)

40. CPI (MLM) document “Call for All Iranian Communists: Two roads for Communism,” as quoted by C(m)PA, op. cit.

41. If this casual treatment of a decisive issue like the change in era is a sample of how the CPI (MLM)’s theory “steps ahead,” we shudder to think about when it will finally deign

What is the argument for this demarcation of stages? It is the defeat of socialism.

With the reversal of socialism in China after 1976, coming a couple of decades after that had happened in the Soviet Union in the 1950s, the first wave of socialist revolutions was ended and, today the world is left without any socialist states.<sup>42</sup>

No doubt, the setback suffered in China with the capitalist coup of 1976 and the betrayal of the Albanian Labour Party brought about a qualitatively new situation in the international communist movement (ICM). It was, in a certain sense, thrown back to the pre-October revolution period. But in a limited sense only. The ICM was now enriched with the lessons of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the ideological advance to MLM. The objective condition noted by Mao remained:

Imperialism has prepared the conditions for its own doom. These conditions are the awakening of the great masses of the people in the colonies and semi-colonies and in the imperialist countries themselves. Imperialism has pushed the great masses of the people throughout the world into the historical epoch of

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to guide practice!

42. "Communism as a Science," *Appendix to the Constitution of RCP, USA*, op. cit.

the great struggle to abolish imperialism. Imperialism has prepared the material as well as the moral conditions for the struggle of the great masses of the people.<sup>43</sup>

Yet the setback was undeniable. It demanded summation of the experiences of building socialism and restudying/examining/critiquing the whole theoretical and practical heritage of the world communist movement. This much was understood by the Maoists, more so among the constituents of the RIM. In varying degrees, within their capacities and circumstances of work, most of these parties (and some outside the RIM) have been addressing this task. They continue to do so. Their efforts and the insights this has given were clearly seen in their interventions in various forums and writings. This task of summation was (and is) being approached from various angles. It is unfinished. The lessons distilled out remain to be synthesised. There was a high degree of agreement within the RIM on the importance of this work. But, even though the RCP had been proposing since 1990 that the setback of socialism in China signifies the end of a stage, this was not accepted; except in a figurative manner. The reasoning was simple it was too vague to satisfy the scientific demands of Marxism.

If the setback of socialism as witnessed in the capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union and China

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43. Mao Zedong, "Cast Away Illusions, Prepare For Struggle," MSW 4.

is the criterion of stage division, why should the whole period from the Communist Manifesto (or the First International as Avakian had first put it in 1990) till the setback in China be considered a single stage? By this criterion it would be more logical to speak of the period from the October revolution to the setback in China as a single stage. Unlike the period preceding it, extending all the way back to the Communist Manifesto, this period saw the existence of relatively stable socialist societies and their destruction. But then, why not divide the whole history of the communist movement into three stages? The first stage could be from the Communist Manifesto till the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871. The second from the formation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International till its collapse in 1914. (This period did have its particularities for the ICM, including the establishment of Marxism within the proletarian movement and the growth of mass parties.) Finally, the third one would be from the establishment of the first socialist state in the era of imperialism till the setback in 1976 that brought about a condition where there is no socialist state. Perhaps this could also be divided into two: the first finishing with the 1956 restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union that ended the existence of a socialist camp. If world decisive events of victory/defeat, advance/setback in world revolution are taken as the criteria for stage division, each of those outlined above would qualify. Each of them, both in advance and defeat, were

truly epochal in their resonance on world developments.

The C(m)PA has exposed the arbitrariness of the RCP's stage division quite well.<sup>44</sup> Therefore we will proceed to examine the defence put up by the Avakianists. The RCOM demands:

Is it true or not true that the temporary defeat of socialism mentioned above *represented a profound, qualitative change* in the process of the communist revolution *that separates one stage in this process from another?* The CPA(M) avoids this question instead of answering it.<sup>45</sup>

This is indeed amusing. Who is doing the avoiding here? Weren't the Avakianists supposed to be explaining *why* this marks off a single stage? No one disagrees about the qualitative change that was caused by the capitalist coup in China. But how does that necessarily imply that all that went before it constitutes a *single* stage? The only explanation given by the RCOM is this:

...[W]hat in reality has happened is a period of more than three decades in which there are no socialist countries or communist international. Talking about past victories doesn't answer the question of whether or not this big setback rep-

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44. "The Communist Party of Iran (MLM) has Fallen into the Lost Road of 'Post MLM,'" op. cit.

45. "Residues," emphasis added, op. cit.

resents the end of a stage.<sup>46</sup>

So now it's the big setback concretised by the "more than three decades" without a socialist country that marks off a stage. But, as the C(m)PA notes, a longer period, 46 years to be exact, had passed between the defeat of the Paris Commune and the victory of the Russian revolution. And this was a period without a single proletarian revolution. In contrast, the period after the setback in China has been vibrant with people's wars and revolutionary struggles. Despite ups and downs, revolutionary struggles led by Maoist parties have been a constant feature of this period. They continue to be so.

The stage division made by the Avakianists could be dismissed as shallow theorisation, if not for its lethal implications. They arbitrarily chop up the process of communist revolution into stages so that MLM can be pictured as a theoretical framework solely limited to one of them, the so-called first stage. This is done to argue that a new stage needs a new theoretical framework. *Avakianism's stage division is a device by which it appears to acknowledge MLM, only to shut it off as antiquated.* While doing this it also liquidates the powerful contributions of communist revolutionary struggles, including the people's wars, in the post-1976 world.<sup>47</sup>

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46. Ibid.

47. While on the topic of stages it will be worthwhile to examine a different, but closely related, argument made by the French philosopher Alain Badiou in his work *The Meaning of Sarkowsky* (translated David Fernbach, Verso, London,

The overthrow of the Paris Commune and the restoration of capitalism in the socialist countries were all defeats suffered by the proletariat. Yet each was unique in its significance and implication for the future course of world revolution. In particular the setbacks in the Soviet Union and China were of far greater qualitative import than the others. The former held out the promise of finally succeeding in building a stable socialist society. The latter, mainly through the Cultural Revolution, seemed to provide the answers to the problems thrown up by the experience of socialist construction and capitalist resto-

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2008, pages 106-107). He repeats the often heard view that the institutionalised leading role of the party in the hitherto existed models of the socialist state was the main reason for the setback of the communist project. This is taken as the basis to divide the communist movement into two stages: one until the end of the Commune, and the other till the setback in China. The criterion of differentiation is the state system. The failure of the Commune to withstand the enemy's attack (due to lack of centralisation) was sought to be addressed through the party's institutionalised role in the second stage. This separates the stages. As a possible resolution Badiou insists on dismantling the institutionalised role of the party, even doing away with the vanguard party. Though he claims this to be different from Toni Negri's "multitude" theses, it squarely fails to address the material reality of acute class struggle that made the vanguard party and its institutionalised role necessary. Thus, despite his professed desire to "revive the communist hypothesis," Badiou's utopian solutions reflect a bourgeois democratic viewpoint. Ultimately, these and similar arguments of "stage-division" are grounded in the view that we need something other than MLM to advance in the "communist project." (Not a development of MLM but *something else*.) Yet, Badiou's differentiation, based on the state systems tried out till now, directly touches on the challenges faced by the ICM. Its criterion of "stage-division" has its logic; unlike the arbitrary one of Avakianism.

ration in the Soviet Union. Therefore both these setbacks had added significance. Most importantly, lessons of the class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat in China, including the building of socialism and its defeat, have an altogether different qualitative significance. The great complexity of this class struggle, its various dimensions and implications, was revealed and grasped in its main features for the first time in the history of the ICM through the teachings of Mao Zedong. The heights of this theory and practice is concentrated in Maoism, the cutting edge of MLM. It arms the communists to re-examine, re-evaluate the whole of the communist endeavour till now, its theory and practice. It is not the final word. But this is the basis, the reference point, the opening, for this ongoing, unfinished task. The problem with Avakianism is not just that it tries to deny this basis in order to usurp that position. In important aspects of ideology it pulls the ICM back from the advanced insights and important corrections achieved through Maoism. We will now examine some of them in detail. Let us start with the very question of ideology itself, of MLM.

## CHAPTER 4. MIS-RENDERING MAO

Within RIM forums, we have all along criticised the RCP on errors in its ideological orientation, focussed on its position of “Leninism as the bridge,” first put forward in an article written by Avakian.<sup>48</sup> This is what he wrote,

...[I]n today’s situation Leninism is the *key link in upholding and applying* Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought. To put it somewhat provocatively, Marxism without Leninism is Eurocentric social-chauvinism and social democracy. Maoism without Leninism is nationalism (and also, in certain contexts, social-chauvinism) and bourgeois democracy.

...Leninism... is precisely the bridge between Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought, what today is the *key link giving Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought*

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48. This criticism was made open in our *Note to the 2006 International Seminar*, “While the last decade saw struggle over the question of adopting Maoism, it has since become weak following the adoption of MLM by most of the genuine Maoist parties. But the fact is that there is still a lot of unevenness in what is understood as Maoism as well as the significance of adopting it. This is not limited to the debate whether adoption of Maoism is just a matter of change in terminology or the Stalin question. It is also reflected in a hesitation to fully embrace Maoism, in the re-appearance of ideological wavering reflected in concepts like ‘Leninism as the bridge’ which emerged in the context of the setback in China and the confusion sought to be created by the Hoxaistes.” Op. cit.

*its overall integral character and synthesis as the science of revolution and the revolutionary ideology of the proletariat.*<sup>49</sup>

Since MLM is an integral whole, one could think up various combinations—Marxism without Leninism or Maoism without Marxism etc.—and attack them of manifesting one or the other deviation. One can just as well argue, correctly, that without being supplemented, informed, by the insights of one or the other each would be incomplete. But there is the even more important matter of the qualitative development of this ideology and the heights it has attained. Because once such a leap has taken place then that becomes the vantage point.<sup>50</sup> This leap comes from rupture and synthesis. They give Marxist ideology its basic continuity, its overall integral character. For instance, the comprehensiveness and depth in outlook presently possible through MLM is precisely given by the leap and synthesis achieved through Maoism. This would not be possible today with Marxism or Marxism-Leninism. Charu Mazumdar put this in a focussed manner when he wrote:

...[T]oday, when we have got the bril-

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49. *Conquer The World? The International Proletariat Must and Will*, emphasis added, henceforth “Conquer...”

50. The RIM’s document *Long Live Marxism-Leninism-Maoism* notes, “From the higher plane of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism the revolutionary communists could grasp the teachings of the previous great leaders even more profoundly and indeed even Mao Zedong’s earlier contributions took on deeper significance.”

liant Thought of Chairman Mao Zedong, the highest stage of the development of Marxism-Leninism, to guide us, *it is imperative for us to judge everything anew in the light of Mao Zedong Thought and build a completely new road along which to press ahead.*<sup>51</sup>

Avakianism's demand to take Leninism as the key link in upholding and applying MLM, his understanding that Leninism is what makes the synthesis of MLM possible today, denied Maoism its position as the cutting edge. Thus it laid the basis for undermining MLM itself. This could already be seen in the arguments made in that article.

Two issues were presented by Avakian to substantiate his assertion of Leninism as key link. One of them relates to nationalism, which we will deal with later. The other is the party. To prove his assertion Avakian writes about:

...[S]o-called and pretended "Maoists" who think that because of the experience of the Cultural Revolution in China the basic principle of the Leninist party, of democratic centralism and so on, has been superseded and surpassed...<sup>52</sup>

But how on earth can distortions manufactured

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51. "Party's Call to Students and Youth," from *The Historic Turning Point*, Volume 2, page 36, emphasis added. In our Party's formulation of ideology we specifically add "particularly Maoism" precisely to highlight this.

52. "Conquer," op. cit.

by ‘so-called Maoists’ be summoned to indicate some lack in Maoism that justifies Leninism being the key link? In fact there is no explanation, just assertion. And, in this seeming infatuation with Leninism, the actual advance made by Mao in the Leninist party concept, which makes it right today to speak about a Maoist party concept, is abandoned.<sup>53</sup> This is how Avakianism dilutes the ideological advance achieved through MLM.

Some may protest that Avakian’s writings on the party contain more quotes from Mao than Lenin. Or it may be pointed out that the RCP Constitution even repeats some of Mao’s words on the party. We haven’t counted, but there’s no quarrel. We do see a lot of Mao quotes in the writings of the RCP and its Chair. But is this Mao from a Maoist understanding? Or is it from a self-assumed Leninist one? One can’t dodge this question by appealing to MLM being an integral whole. Yes, it is an integral whole. There is continuity from Marx, to Lenin, to Mao (and that includes the contributions of Engels and Stalin). But the understanding of this ideology was not the same in each stage. The party concept of Marx’s, Lenin’s and Mao’s times were not the same. In fact, to speak of a Leninist party without imbibing the advance achieved by Mao, including his correction of some of the aberrations that had crept in, would be going backward. This is why we must today speak of the Maoist party. Today the key

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53. An initial exploration of this less discussed aspect of Maoism can be seen in the article *The Maoist Party*.

link is Maoism, not Leninism, not just on the party but on all aspects of communist theory and practice. This can be recognised by those who firmly grasp Maoism. Those who insist that Leninism be made the basis of synthesis and the key link will not be able to grasp this, no matter what their subjective desire is.

Earlier we wrote about the RCP ‘seeming infatuation with Leninism.’ Well, this is so because in some aspects of party concept it is completely taken up with the aberrations that came in later through Stalin, rather than the views of Lenin. The leadership cult unremittingly being built up over the years by the RCP is a case in point. The necessary emergence of authoritative leaders of the party is altogether different from leadership cults. We well know that Lenin was completely opposed to such cult building. This began with Stalin and was taken to ludicrous proportions. While Mao corrected some of this, he didn’t totally break off from this negative tradition passed on by the Comintern.

Personality cults can never be justified in Marxism. But instead of totally rejecting them, Mao limited himself to criticising their extreme manifestations. Though this is sought to be justified by appealing to the complex situation of the class struggle in China, it is unacceptable in principle itself. The issue is not the extent of praise, or even whether somebody deserves to

be praised. Such cults foster a consciousness of infallibility of an individual, a leadership and indirectly of that party; something rejected by the Maoist party concept but seen in the Chinese party's adjective, 'always correct.' Contemporary examples, of Maoist parties justifying their leadership cults by citing Mao, draw attention to the need to achieve clarity in this matter.<sup>54</sup>

It would do well to remind ourselves of Marx's words,

...[S]uch was my aversion to the personality cult that at the time of the International, when plagued by numerous moves—originating from various countries—to accord me public honour, I never allowed one of these to enter the domain of publicity, nor did I ever reply to them, save with an occasional snub. When Engels and I first joined the secret communist society, we did so only on condition that anything conducive to a superstitious belief in authority be eliminated from the Rules.<sup>55</sup>

Within the RIM, this disease was abundantly visible in the case of the Communist Party of Peru

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54. Ibid.

55. Karl Marx, *Letter to Wilhelm Blos*, November 10, 1877.

(PCP) and the RCP. It was taken to the extreme with PCP members swearing subordination to their Chair. The RCP used to criticise this. It now demands of its members “allegiance to leadership!” Either way the error is compounded towards reification of leadership. This inevitably generates the systematic effort to build the cult, to manufacture an account that will serve to promote it.

In the recent period this has been a more or less permanent feature of the Avakianists’ writings. The RCP letter tells us:

The work of Bob Avakian was *decisive and central* in this process [leading to the formation of the RIM], in particular in formulating a penetrating criticism of the revisionist coup-makers in China (along with their ‘centrist’ obfuscators), systematizing, popularizing and defending Mao Zedong’s contributions to the science of revolutionary communism.

There is more of this further on. Was that the truth? The coup in China and betrayal of the Albanian party triggered off widespread ideological struggle against Deng-Hua revisionism and the dogmato-revisionism of Enver Hoxha. It was spearheaded by the few parties, organisations and individuals who stood firm on MLM. The RCP led by its Chair was one among them. The line struggle in the RCP, its re-publication of important texts of the line struggle in the CPC and the writings of Avakian

during this period were significant contributions to the international struggle. As one of the initiators of the First Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organisations and the major efforts it made to mobilise support for this, the RCP played a notable role.

But to qualify the role of Bob Avakian as “*decisive and central*” would be a gross lie and great disservice to the world Maoist movement. First of all, it robs this historical struggle of its richness, generated by contributions of Maoist forces from all over the world. Most of them worked in extreme conditions and with little resources. Yet despite those limits they contributed much. A lot of it is unknown, purely because it hasn’t been translated. But, as we noted earlier, that richness and depth were quite evident in their interventions.

Secondly, and even more importantly, in the period leading up to the First Conference the ideological role of Avakian and the RCP had serious negative implications. Left unchecked it would have derailed the whole process. Along with the RCP, Chile leadership it was refusing to acknowledge Mao Zedong Thought as a *qualitative new stage* of proletarian ideology in the proposed draft resolution of the Conference. It accepted the “*contributions*” of Mao Zedong, but not as a *new stage*. A close look at Avakian’s *Mao Zedong’s Immortal Contributions* will reveal that this had deep roots. This book gives a fairly exhaustive account of Mao’s

contributions in various fields. They are at times accepted to have ‘advanced’ Marxism-Leninism. But while it carefully records how Lenin developed Marxism to a “new and higher stage,” it never acknowledges Mao Zedong Thought (as it was then termed) as a qualitatively new and higher stage.<sup>56</sup>

The “question of Mao Zedong Thought as a new stage” became a key issue of struggle in the First Conference. The Maoist position prevailed and the Joint Communiqué issued by the Conference clearly recorded:

We are still living in the era of Leninism, of imperialism and proletarian revolution; at the same time we affirm that Mao Zedong Thought is a new stage in the development of Marxism-Leninism.<sup>57</sup>

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56. Bob Avakian, *Mao Zedong’s Immortal Contributions*, RCP Publications, Chicago, 1979. The Avakianists are now actively propagating this work as THE definitive summation of Mao’s contributions. As we noted, it is fairly exhaustive in its account. But, apart from the severe ideological flaw we have pointed out, it is also marred by some conspicuous silences. To give some examples, Avakian fails to deal with Mao’s conceptualisation of bureaucrat capitalism, so crucial in understanding the political economy of oppressed nations. Nor does he deal with Mao’s positions on the nature and dynamics of the revolutionary situation in these type of countries. Just for the record, the contributions of comrade Gonzalo, Chair of the PCP, were “decisive and central” in reasserting these Maoist positions and placing them firmly within the theoretical and practical discourses of the RIM.

57. The struggles [of which we are aware] waged by the erstwhile Ceylon Communist Party led by comrade N. Shanmugathasan and the CRC, CPI(M-L) were of great impor-

Evidently, in this crucial matter of ideology, it was *not* Avakian's views (and of the RCP, Chile leadership) but their *defeat* that was "decisive and central" in the advance to the Second Conference of 1984 and the formation of the RIM as a Maoist movement.

This example is quite instructive for two reasons. It shows us how cult building inevitably promotes the opposite of dialectics. Once you decide that you must have a canonised leader then a history of absolute correctness becomes a must. Political untruths must be manufactured and propagated. The RCP has recently decided that "a culture of appreciation, promotion, and popularisation around the leadership, the body of work and the method and approach of Bob Avakian" is one of the principal tasks of the party. Cult building has since been taken to vulgar proportions, so profusely seen in their publications.

This whole episode gives us a better footing to locate and understand a long-standing lack in the RCP's ideological outlook. It was recognising and

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tance in this victory. In this struggle, the CRC, CPI(M-L) [led by K. Venu who later deserted the Maoist movement] made an important contribution by exposing and criticising the mechanical materialism that underpinned views which refused to accept Mao's ideological contributions as a new stage under the plea that the era had not changed. Comparing Mao's analyses of the contradictions and complexities of socialist transition with those of Stalin, it pointed out how ideological development was necessitated by these conditions and how Mao fulfilled this need, thus raising proletarian ideology to a new stage.

trying to learn and apply Mao Zedong's contributions in diverse fields. But it could never make the leap to grasping this as the vantage point, a new height. It was, as noted earlier, a case of a lot of correct things, but fundamentally based on a wrong ideological orientation concretised in Avakian's formulation of 'Leninism as the bridge, the key link.' This was both an element ultimately undermining its Maoist character as well as one encapsulating some amount of ideological backwardness at its very core. Over the years, this negative aspect has grown and overwhelmed it.

An opportunity was available to break out when the RCP adopted MLM. But the new grasp of Maoism was never employed to interrogate its previous understanding. The erroneous position of "Leninism as bridge" was never corrected. It just went out of circulation. At the time of the Extended Meeting of the RIM, which adopted MLM, it was explained that this position was merely a 'tactical' slogan, relevant for that particular juncture when it was put out. But in the early half of 2000 it made a re-entry. Following the auto-coup of Avakianism it was hailed by the author as "incisive."<sup>58</sup> The RCP letter states "Bob Avakian's work *Conquer the World, the Proletariat Must and Will* represented a particular

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58. Bob Avakian, *Ruminations and Wranglings*, April 2009. The liquidationist core of that formulation was well exposed by Avakian himself when he wrote, "...Along with this, we should clearly understand... that today Maoism without Bob Avakian's new synthesis will turn into its opposite."

nodal point in this process.” That it certainly was it formally laid down the basis for the slide to liquidationism we see today.<sup>59</sup>

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59. “RCP Letter.” Considering the fact that the grosser manifestations of Avakianist tendencies were held in check and partially reversed for nearly two decades after the formation of the RIM, the negative impact of certain developments like the setbacks in Peru and Nepal should also be factored in while assessing this.

## CHAPTER 5. A PERVERSION OF INTERNATIONALISM

One argument advanced by Avakian for replacing Maoism with Leninism as “key link” is his charge of nationalism against Mao. This has been a permanent theme of his writings. He sees manifestations of this in the way Mao viewed the prospects of world revolution, his analysis of the world situation, his policy on united front and his philosophical positions. (On occasions Lenin was also criticised of nationalism.) Most of these were first raised in the “Conquer the World” article. Some of them were openly criticised and rejected during the debate leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference of Marxist-Leninist parties and organisations, convened in 1984. This was a topic of sharp struggle in the Conference. The *Declaration of the RIM* adopted by that Conference recorded this in its correction of some of the grosser errors of Avakianism in this matter. But the Avakianists have persisted on their damaging path. The more the RCP diverged from MLM the more this tendency has been rigidified as a deviation. In recent years it has acquired the monstrous form of imperialist economism and, even worse, expansionism. The root of this lies in Avakian’s perverted version of proletarian internationalism.

In Avakian’s view:

...[I]n fact, in the era of imperialism in

particular, the international arena, and changes and developments on that level, are more decisive and determining of what happens in particular countries than the “internal conditions” in the particular countries, taken by themselves.<sup>60</sup>

This was first advanced and elaborated in his article “On the Philosophical Basis of Proletarian Internationalism” (1981). Let us try to follow his logic. Avakian starts off by admitting the correctness of Mao’s observation that:

...[E]xternal causes are the condition of change and internal causes are the basis of change, and that external causes become operative through internal causes.”<sup>61</sup>

He even admits that this was a blow to metaphysical thinking which saw external factors as decisive. But then he changes tack and declares:

But to a certain extent, there was the tendency to conceive and apply this principle itself metaphysically, which was linked to a certain amount of nationalism in the Chinese party, including among the genuine Marxist-Leninists, even Mao.<sup>62</sup>

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60. “On Internationalism,” *Revolutionary Worker* #1263, December 26, 2004.

61. Mao Zedong, “On Contradiction,” MSW 1

62. “On the Philosophical Basis of Proletarian Internationalism,” *Revolutionary Worker*, January 2, 2005 (First published in 1981)

Avakian's charge is that Mao's view of considering factors internal to China as the basis of its revolutionary change represented a nationalist view. He contrasts this to what he claims to be the correct internationalist view. The argument is as follows – since what is universal in one context becomes particular in another, and vice versa, what is internal in one context becomes external in another. When viewed from the angle of a country the world situation is external to it.

But it is also true that, in another context, China, the U.S. and the rest of the countries in the world form parts of the world (of human society) as a whole, with its internal contradiction and change, determined in an overall way by the fundamental contradiction of the bourgeois epoch, between socialized production/private appropriation. This means that in an overall sense the development of the class (and national) struggle, the development of revolutionary situations, etc., in particular countries are *more determined by developments in the world as a whole than by developments in the particular countries—determined not only as a condition of change (external cause) but as a basis of change (internal cause).*<sup>63</sup>

The contradictions of the world situation “*as a*

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63. Ibid, emphasis added.

*whole*” are certainly internal to it. And yes, the world is certainly made up of “*parts of the world*” (different countries). But “*the world as a whole*” is distinctly different from “*parts of the world.*” We can analyse and speak of the contradictions seen in the world *as a whole* only at a level distinctly different from that of the countries—even though they make up the world, are influenced by the world situation and in turn influence it. The world situation is neither the sum total of the situations of different countries, nor is the situation in any country a fragment of the world situation. Avakian juggles with the word “context” when he states that “what is internal in one context becomes external in another.” In the specific instance examined here, the change of “context” (from the situation in a country to the world situation as a whole) signifies a totally new, qualitatively different, dimension. Therefore, appealing to the relative nature of internal and external does not in any way substantiate the conclusion Avakian arrives at. His arguments in fact only go to expose the logical contortions he indulges in (a matter of criticism at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference).

Let us now examine the matter of the fundamental contradiction of the bourgeois epoch. This contradiction, between socialised production and private appropriation, sets the basis, the broad parameters, of the world situation. This has become even more explicit and influential in the imperialist era, particularly under globalisation. It will last

throughout this epoch, till it is resolved through the world socialist revolution. But, though the fundamental contradiction of a process will not disappear until the process is completed:

...[I]n a lengthy process the conditions usually differ at each stage. ...[A]mong the numerous major and minor contradictions which are determined or influenced by the fundamental contradiction, some become intensified, some are temporarily or partially resolved or mitigated, and some new ones emerge...

Further:

There are many contradictions in the process of development of a complex thing, and one of them is necessarily the principal contradiction whose existence and development determine or influence the existence and development of the other contradictions.<sup>64</sup>

This immediately indicates that Avakian's bland statement on internal contradiction and changes in the world as a whole "determined in an overall way by the fundamental contradiction of the bourgeois epoch" is a rather shallow treatment of the issue. At any particular period, one or the other major contradiction will be principal. No doubt, all of these contradictions, including the principal contradiction,

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64. Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction," *op. cit.*

are overall determined and influenced by the fundamental contradiction. But at any specific period the principal contradiction, not the fundamental contradiction as such, will determine or influence the existence and development of the other contradictions. This guides us to probe the *specific ways* by which the principal contradiction at the world level influence the situation within specific countries. In the present world the contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed nations and peoples is principal. But though India, or an occupied country like Afghanistan or Iraq, are all oppressed countries, the influence exerted by the principal contradiction on the situation in each country is distinctly different. This is obviously determined by the socio-political-cultural-economic particularities of these countries. If these internal specificities are not grasped, the Maoist forces will never succeed in their tasks. And they will never grasp them if they fail to understand that they emerge from the particularities internal to their country and are more determined by them. Avakianism's distorted version of internationalism denies this. It is a recipe for getting isolated from the people. Even worse, it provides an excuse for marking time on the plea of waiting for the revolutionary situation to get "determined by world events."<sup>65</sup> We will conclude

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65. In a later piece (Revolutionary Worker #1263, December 26, 2004, op. cit.) Avakian tried to respond to such criticism by arguing that his view doesn't mean that "nobody can make revolution anywhere, in any particular country, because the

this matter with Mao's words:

In the era of capitalism, and especially in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution, the interaction and mutual impact of different countries in the political, economic and cultural spheres are extremely great. The October Socialist Revolution ushered in a new epoch in world history as well as in Russian history. It exerted influence on internal changes in the other countries in the world and, similarly and in a particularly profound way, on internal changes in China. *These changes, however, were effected through the inner laws of development of these countries, China included.*<sup>66</sup>

The internationalist character of the proletariat is born of the objective fact that it can nowhere have a particular emancipation from its wage-slavery, neither as a class on its own nor within the confines of a nation. Its emancipation can only be universal. It must liberate the whole of humanity

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international arena is ultimately and fundamentally decisive." That's true, he hasn't said that. But his logic inescapably leads to it. A continuous revolutionary situation with its ebbs and flows is a notable feature of oppressed countries. This objective situation places armed struggle on the agenda. But if a party considers that the revolutionary situation is "more determined" by the world situation it will inevitably fail to grasp this dynamic and task pointed to by Mao.

66. Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction," emphasis added, *op. cit.*

to liberate itself. This does not deny the real historical process of emergence of this class from within distinct national contexts. Nor does it eliminate the distinctly different tasks confronting it in the imperialist countries and the oppressed ones. The proletariat in all countries are commonly exploited by capital through the extraction of surplus in the form of surplus value. The essential relation is that between capital and wage-labour. But this is actualised through distinctly different relations in the imperialist countries and oppressed nations. In the former it is overwhelmingly represented in its direct form. In the latter, more often than not, it is mediated through bureaucrat capitalism.<sup>67</sup> This form of capitalism is fostered by imperialism in the oppressed countries. It serves both imperialism and feudalism. Thus the specificity of the exploitative relation encountered by the proletariat in these countries immediately brings up before it a set of tasks, different from those faced by this class in the imperialist countries.<sup>68</sup> It must struggle against imperialism, bureaucrat capitalism and feudalism.

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67. The exception is in the small and medium industries owned by national capital.

68. Given the times that they lived in, such complexities were inevitably outside the range of the analysis made by Marx and Engels on the proletariat as a single class. Furthermore, the manner in which the bourgeoisie actually created "its own image" in the oppressed countries turned out to be a heavily disarticulated one, instead of the more or less replication of capitalism that they had expected. This precluded the fairly rapid vanishing of "national differences and antagonism between peoples" optimistically expected by them.

This emerges from the particularity of its class existence. Unless it takes up the national and democratic tasks, it cannot confront the exploitative and oppressive conditions governing its very existence, let alone play the role of vanguard and unite and lead the peasantry and other revolutionary classes in the new democratic revolution.

The Avakianists have no time for such complexities. They imagine up an “ideal” internationalist proletariat and then make that the basis of their analysis. This inevitably leads them to an absolutist, purist concept of proletarian internationalism. Thus, self-anointed as the true guardians of the Faith, they launch into righteous battle against a host of attributed “nationalistic” tendencies. If it were a matter of quixotic windmills we could have dismissed this as a curious pastime. But, in the real world and for the real tasks of revolution, it has disastrous implications. Therefore it must be trashed.



## CHAPTER 6. THE NATIONAL TASK IN OPPRESSED NATIONS

We have already spoken to Avakian's mechanical transposition of the internal and external contradictions in a country. He further criticises Mao's observations on the shift of principal contradiction. This is what Mao wrote:

When imperialism launches a war of aggression against such a country, all its various classes, except for some traitors, can temporarily unite in a national war against imperialism. At such a time, the contradiction between imperialism and the country concerned becomes the principal contradiction, while *all the contradictions among the various classes within the country* (including what was the principal contradiction, between the feudal system and the great masses of the people) are temporarily relegated to a secondary and subordinate position...

But in another situation, the contradictions change position. When imperialism carries on its oppression not by war, but by milder means—political, economic and cultural—the ruling classes in semi-colonial countries capitulate to imperialism, and the two form an alliance for the joint oppression of the masses of the people.

At such a time, the masses often resort to civil war against the alliance of imperialism and the feudal classes, while imperialism often employs indirect methods rather than direct action in helping the reactionaries in the semi-colonial countries to oppress the people, and thus the *internal contradictions* become particularly sharp.<sup>69</sup>

Evidently, Mao considers the contradiction with imperialism as one with an external force. This is what Avakian takes offence with, since for him 1) it is internal to the world as a whole and 2) through its penetration, it becomes an intrinsic part of the socio-economic structure of colonial, semi-colonial countries. We have already seen the absurdity of his first argument. His second one rests on a sounder basis, provided the country-wise specificities of bureaucrat capitalism, the main form of imperialist penetration, and semi-feudalism are accounted for. But even though imperialism becomes intrinsic through them, Avakian's criticism fails. Even more, it proves to be a prescription for suicidal sectarianism. The crux lies in grasping Mao's observation "When imperialism launches a war of aggression against such a country, all its various classes, except for some traitors, can temporarily unite in a national war against imperialism." This possibility

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69. Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction," emphasis added, op. cit.

is obviously given by imperialism being *an external, a foreign enemy, despite imperialist relations becoming intrinsic to the economy*. Any thinking that denies the externality of imperialism will inevitably undermine the ability of the communist party to unite with the just national sentiment of the people and mobilise the vast majority in the country in a war of national liberation.

It may be objected that Avakian and the RCP have written quite a lot about imperialist oppression and have never denied the national component of the new democratic revolution. Well it's like their writings on Mao. Despite a lot of nice words, in the Avakianist scheme, the national task, even in an oppressed country, is in essence treated as an unwelcome burden suffered by its "ideal" proletariat. It is admitted, and then undermined. Its perversion of internationalism forces it to deny the necessity for the party of the proletariat to raise the national banner in these countries.<sup>70</sup> Mao's stand, "in wars of national liberation patriotism is applied internationalism." is rejected as nationalism.<sup>71</sup>

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70. "In countries under the oppression of imperialism and feudalism the political party of the proletariat should raise the national banner and must have a programme of national unity by which to unite with all the forces that can be united, excluding the running dogs of imperialism," Mao Zedong, "Some Experiences in Our Party's History," MSW 5.

71. Mao Zedong, "The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War" MSW 2. The Avakianists argue, "...this formulation confounds two different questions: the stage of the revolution in China which needed to carry out new democratic revolution, and the ideology and orientation of the

Mao had put forward the approach, “Make the past serve the present, and make the foreign things serve China.”<sup>72</sup> The first guards against comprador modernist disparagement of past knowledge and traditions. It also breaks away from uncritical worship of the past where feudal values are carried over under the guise of national culture. The second warns against the comprador aping of foreign things or their xenophobic rejection. Avakian attacks this dialectical approach. He picks on the words “serve China” and brandishes it as yet another example of Mao’s nationalist tendencies.<sup>73</sup> This is a particularly shocking example of how Avakian’s distorted version of internationalism leads him to dismiss revolutionary tasks, thrown up by the specificities of

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communists which could not be ‘patriotism.’” (RCP Letter) They in fact confound truth by talking of “new democratic revolution” in order to conceal their undermining of the national task. Moreover, the ideological question Mao poses of being patriotic on an internationalist ideological basis is avoided. Mao’s position directly draws on Lenin’s argument that, “In a *genuinely* national war the words ‘defence of the fatherland’ are *not* a deception and we *are not opposed* to it.” (*A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism*, emphasis in original) Obviously, “defence of the fatherland” is a *patriotic* slogan. But the Avakianists carefully avoid extending their criticism to Lenin (on this occasion).

72. Mao Zedong, “Letter to the Students of the Central Conservatory of Music,” February 1964. A clear explanation of this orientation can be seen in “Chairman Mao’s Talk to Music Workers,” MSW 7.

73. Bob Avakian *Madison, Jefferson and Stalin... and Communism as a Science, Observations on Art, Culture, Science and Philosophy*, Insight Press, Chicago, September 2005, page 65, henceforth “Observations...”

colonial, semi-colonial conditions, including that of critically absorbing the national heritage.<sup>74</sup> It is a gross manifestation of the imperialist economism that has for long been a trademark of the RCP's approach.<sup>75</sup>

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74. In an earlier period, yet to decisively swing over to "Leninism as the key link," Avakian had a better appreciation of these issues. Thus in an article published in 1980, "On the Question of So-Called "National Nihilism," he is quoted as saying, "I do not believe that in a fundamental sense there is for a communist such a thing as national pride. Mao Zedong posed the question, "Can a communist, who is an internationalist, at the same time be a patriot?" Mao correctly and explicitly said that in the colonial countries that "he not only can be but must be." I think that is a question of practical political stand. That is correct... In colonial countries it is correct for people to stress the struggle against the feelings of national inferiority and to build up a national pride of the people in the sense that they are not inferior as a nation. But that always has to be done—and here it gets to the basic point—not on the basis of nationalism but internationalism..." Though his "Conquer..." contradicts this position, it still refers to this article without any critical remark. There is even more of this eclectic offering. At one point even the "Conquer" article keeps aside its criticisms on "nationalist" deviations and endorses the policy of "defence of the fatherland" in an oppressed nation.

75. "Imperialist economism" was a tendency criticised by Lenin. Its proponents formally accepted the distinction between imperialism and the colonies. But they then went on to eliminate its implications from their politics by denying the right to self-determination including secession of the oppressed nations, arguing that it was economically unfeasible under imperialism. See *A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism*, op. cit. The RCP dilates on internationalism (of a rather spurious variety) in order to disregard political, cultural issues posed by national oppression. The distinction between imperialism and oppressed nations is rendered formal by branding the taking up of national tasks in the latter type of countries as nationalist deviations. Thereby the poli-

To give some other examples of its imperialist economism, in the early 1980s it was dismissing almost all resistance struggles in the oppressed nations as mere extensions of inter-imperialist contention. In the recent period it repeats the same by bracketing the resistance in Iraq and Afghanistan with the US led imperialist aggression. The exercise of formal logic is rather blunt: ideologies of both the adversaries are reactionary, one imperialist and the other fundamentalist; therefore it's a case of confrontation between reactionaries. That's all there is to it, though the US camp must be termed the "greater threat to humanity and the principal culprit." What does this analysis, seemingly taking a position on the side of the oppressed, actually accomplish?

An examination of the contradictions propelling the resistance is eliminated. The task of uniting with the just sentiments of resistance to national oppression, even while struggling against the reactionary Islamic fundamentalist, revivalist ideologies and the tactical issues this raises, is excluded. The Maoists are thus pushed into sectarianism and the national resistance is weakened. Above all, the objective role these resistances have played and still play, in delivering a heavy blow to US imperialism's plans, encouraging anti-imperialist sentiments and allowing new imperialist contentions to sharpen, is

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tics of new democratic revolution is gutted.

simply ignored.<sup>76</sup>

Though Avakianism was claiming to be upholding Leninism as the key link, its notions of internationalism were in fact pitting Lenin against Lenin. This is sharply seen in its claim of having salvaged the Leninist concept of internationalism from its distortions at the hands of Stalin and Mao. In the words of the RCP letter,

Avakian addresses the difference between Lenin's understanding of internationalism and that of the Irish revolutionary James Connolly. Connolly argued that internationalism was the support or aid that one revolution extends to another, unlike Lenin's more scientific understanding, in his own words, that the revolution in each country should be seen as "my share in the preparation, the propa-

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76. The tendency is not limited to the Avakianist camp. For example, those grouped in the Kasama Project also oppose situating of the armed resistance in Iraq and Afghanistan within the imperialism/oppressed nation contradiction. As we had pointed out in our contribution to the International Seminar of 2006, such tendencies insist on judging these struggles solely by the class or ideology in leadership, excluding the objective role played by them in a concrete situation. A resistance led by a reactionary class in an oppressed country draws on the powerful anti-imperialism of the people and can play a positive role in the world context. This places it objectively within the imperialism/oppressed nation contradiction (the present principal contradiction), even though the class leading will eventually surrender to one or the other imperialist power. A more detailed examination of this issue can be seen in "Islamic Resistance, the Principal Contradiction and the War on Terror," henceforth "Islamic..."

ganda and the acceleration of the world revolution.”<sup>77</sup>

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77. “RCP Letter.” Lenin’s quote is from *Proletarian Internationalism and the Renegade Kautsky*. The honest Avakianist’s itch to doctor quotes is once more demonstrated in its rendering of Lenin’s quotation. In footnote 26 of their letter they give more of Lenin’s quote, as follows, “The Socialist, the revolutionary proletarian, the internationalist, argues differently. He says: “I must argue, not from the point of view of ‘my’ country (for that is the argument of a wretched, stupid, petty-bourgeois nationalist who does not realise that he is only a plaything in the hands of the imperialist bourgeoisie), but from the point of view of my share in the preparation, in the propaganda, and in the acceleration of the world proletarian revolution.” That is what internationalism means, and that is the duty of the internationalist, of the revolutionary worker, of the genuine Socialist.” The Avakianists have simply left out quite a lot (without even an ellipse) between the first and second sentences of this quote. It actually reads like this, “The socialist, the revolutionary proletarian, the internationalist, argues differently. He says: “The character of the war (whether it is reactionary or revolutionary) does not depend on who the attacker was, or in whose country the ‘enemy’ is stationed; it depends on what class is waging the war, and on what politics this war is a continuation of. If the war is a reactionary, imperialist war, that is, if it is being waged by two world groups of the imperialist, rapacious, predatory, reactionary bourgeoisie, then every bourgeoisie (even of the smallest country) becomes a participant in the plunder, and my duty as a representative of the revolutionary proletariat is to prepare for the world proletarian revolution as the only escape from the horrors of a world slaughter. I must argue, not from the point of view of ‘my’ country (for that is the argument of a wretched, stupid, petty—bourgeois nationalist who does not realise that he is only a plaything in the hands of the imperialist bourgeoisie), but from the point of view of my share in the preparation, in the propaganda, and in the acceleration of the world proletarian revolution.” When quoted in full it immediately becomes obvious that the “point of view” Lenin attacked was not about some different view on world proletarian revolution or internationalism as implied by the Avakianists. He was exposing bourgeois

But on another occasion Lenin wrote,

There is one, and only one, kind of real internationalism, and that is—working wholeheartedly for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in one’s own country, and supporting (by propaganda, sympathy and material aid) this struggle, this, and only this, line in every country without exception.<sup>78</sup>

What are we to make of that? Should we conclude, following the Avakianist logic, that the second quote is an example of “Lenin departing from Leninism?” Or is it the case that the RCP is legitimately arguing for conceiving “development of revolutionary struggle in one’s own country” as doing “my share in the world revolution?” But, if that were true, it would be negating its own attack on Mao. Avakian presented Mao’s position on internationalism as follows:

...[W]e have to advance the Chinese nation to socialism and on to communism and we have to at the same time support and do all we can to advance the world revolution so that the people of the whole world and of all nations advance

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chauvinism and differentiating proletarian internationalism from it.

78. Lenin, “*The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution*,” *Collected Works, Volume 24 (LCW 24)*.

to communism, too.” I think that was a genuine view in Mao but it is not fully the correct view.<sup>79</sup>

What Mao really said was this:

Leninism teaches that the world revolution can only succeed if the proletariat of the capitalist countries supports the struggle for liberation of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples and if the proletariat of the colonies and semi-colonies supports the proletariat of the capitalist countries... for this is the only way to overthrow imperialism, to liberate our nation and people and to liberate the other nations and peoples of the world. This is our internationalism, the internationalism with which we oppose both narrow nationalism and narrow patriotism.<sup>80</sup>

Later, correcting Stalin’s mistaken view on the final victory of communism, he made it clear that either all will go to communism together or none will.

We can directly see how Mao’s positions accord to Lenin’s views as seen in both of his quotations. But the logic of Avakianism leads it to see them as contradictory. This flows from the way it grasps and

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79. “Conquer...” op. cit.

80. Mao Zedong, “In Memory of Norman Bethune,” December 1939, MSW 2.

conceptualises the world socialist revolution. Formally it accepts the two components of the world socialist revolution—the socialist revolutions in the imperialist countries and the new democratic revolution in the oppressed countries. But in its idealist, upside down, view, these two components are *in fact* taken as emerging *from* the world socialist revolution. This metaphysical construct thus replaces the real historical process by which the latter has taken form through the emergence and union of the two components. Its reductionist concept of the dynamics by which the fundamental contradiction of the bourgeois epoch works itself out, through revolutions (that resolve distinctly different contradictions) in the two types of countries, inevitably leads to this.

What underlies Avakianism's metaphysical concepts on the world revolution? This must be examined in relation to its formative process, particularly the way it read and responded to the setback in China and its repercussions in the RCP. For the present we note the powerful pull of petty bourgeois impetuosity that had seized it at times. For example, Avakian's attack on Mao's vision of internationalism is prefaced by a discussion on his so-called "linear, country-by-country advance, first to socialism and then to communism." He criticises "...a certain tendency recurring in Mao to make a principle out of the policy of making use of contradictions among the enemies, defeating the enemies

one by one.” Recklessly plunging on he asks, if all the enemies of the international proletariat can be defeated at one go why not take on all of them and do it? The logical corollary follows, “...in the context of a world war it might be correct to in fact strike out in different directions, viewing the world as a whole; that is, to oppose the imperialists in general and to attempt to overthrow them wherever possible in both camps, of course taking into the account the particular situation in different countries.”<sup>81</sup> There is more of the same kind, comical in its fantasising, as equally as it is alarmingly suicidal in its prescriptions.

A willingness to strike out in all directions may appear as a determined, consistent, revolutionary approach in someone’s daydreams. The real world remains as a rude correction. Avakian wishes away

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81. “Conquer...” op. cit. Once again we are taxed with the unpleasant job of “setting the record straight.” Citing Mao’s observation on the “intermediate zone” in conversation with Anna Louise Strong, Avakian states that he was lumping together the countries (except the Soviet Union) immediately subjected to the aggression of US imperialism with the other imperialist countries. This is then made the base for indulging in some Hohxaism and accusing “This involves a frankly classless concept of aggression and, ironically, an error in the direction of blotting out the distinction between imperialist and colonial countries.” What Mao really said was this, “The United States and the Soviet Union are separated by a vast zone which includes many capitalist, colonial and semi-colonial countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. Before the US reactionaries have subjugated these countries, an attack on the Soviet Union is out of the question.” (“Talk with the American Correspondent Anna Louise Strong,” MSW 4, emphasis added.)

all concrete specificities. For instance, would the opportunities and challenges faced by the international communist movement at the time of a world war be the same in a condition where there is no socialist country and one in which either one or more exist? In 1981, when Avakian was writing this, no socialist state existed. Except for those who went over to the camp of Chinese revisionism, all Maoist parties regarded both the imperialist blocs (led by the US and the erstwhile Soviet Union respectively) as enemies. It was well understood that Mao's instruction on dividing the enemy where possible and uniting the many to defeat the few would not be *immediately* relevant in that situation at the international level. The Maoists followed the orientation of "revolution preventing war, or war leading to revolution," in other words making revolution or preparing for it. Here, the immediate relevance of Mao's policy where a revolutionary struggle was going on, as well as in working out strategy and tactics as part of preparation, was firmly grasped—by those who were grounded in reality. The long term relevance of Mao's policy instructions was also appreciated since, for a long time to come, even after new socialist states are born, they would be encircled by imperialism. Avakian's fantasies born of impetuosity sought to dismiss all such real issues.

This went to the extent of fantasising about collapsing the two stages, new democratic and socialist stages, of revolution in the oppressed nations into a

single one. The fantasy had its logic: "...[O]verall it [he means the number of stages] is more determined by what's happening in the world as a whole than it is by what's happening in one country."<sup>82</sup> Earlier we had noted how, in the RCP's scheme, the national task in the revolution of an oppressed country, is admitted and then undermined. It is seen and treated as an "unwelcome burden." We now see that this is equally true of the democratic task. The argument Avakian advanced was illuminative. He asked, if the German revolution had preceded the Russian one, couldn't they have handled the peasant question in a different manner?<sup>83</sup> Let us accept this speculation. But how can the example of Russia, quite backward but basically an imperialist power, be compared to the oppressed countries? In Russia the democratic task was to be carried out by the proletariat in the passing.<sup>84</sup> In the oppressed countries it is a vital task of revolution, along with the national task, the foundation for the advance to socialism and communism. This is why the revolution has two stages, new democratic and socialist. What will happen if this is denied and they are collapsed into a single stage? The new democratic revolution which addresses the twin tasks of national liberation and anti-feudal democratic revolution will be eliminated on the plea of a quicker passage

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82. "Conquer..." op. cit.

83. Ibid.

84. This is well explained in Lenin's "Two Tactics of Social-Democracy."

to socialism. Though later on in his article Avakian tried to hide tracks by reiterating his adherence to “two stage revolution,’ the essence of his arguments amounted to smuggling in Trotskyism.

Another example of the extremes to which Avakian’s perversion of internationalism took him is his approach on the dialectics of advancing the world revolution and protecting the socialist state. Overall, his starting point is the correct criticism on the CPSU (B) led by Stalin for subordinating the interests of world revolution to the interests of the Soviet Union. This is a position generally accepted by Maoists. From this the Maoists take lessons, recognising the contradiction between these two interests and stressing the need for a socialist country to act as a base of world revolution, to subordinate its interests to the world proletarian revolution. Avakian’s flights of fantasy took him elsewhere. He stated,

...[T]here is a limit... to how far you can go in transforming the base and superstructure within the socialist country without making further advances in winning and transforming more of the world... there’s also the fact that this is the era of a single world process and that has a material foundation, it’s not just an idea. *What may be rational in terms of the production, even, and utilisation of labour power and resources within a single country, carried beyond a certain point, while*

*it may seem rational for that country, is irrational if you actually look upon a world scale. And that reacts upon that country and becomes an incorrect policy, not the best utilisation of things even within that country, and begins to work not only against the development of the productive forces but, dialectically related to that, against the further transformation in the production relations (or the economic base) and the superstructure.*<sup>85</sup>

The implied suggestion is that the socialist country must directly spread and carry out revolution in other countries as a condition for its continued advance.<sup>86</sup> Assuming this succeeds, and it then addresses its production tasks from the “rationality of the world scale,” what would be the consequences?

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85. “Conquer...” Part 2, emphasis added, op. cit.

86. Avakian argues that Lenin was willing to “export revolution” but this was abandoned by those who came later. He cites the Red Army’s drive on Warsaw as proof. The negative fallout of that move, the failure of the attempt made by the Comintern to initiate and directly guide revolution in Germany, the hindrances caused by Comintern advisors in China, the failure of the new states formed in East Europe to develop as socialist societies, in large part due to mainly relying on the Soviet army for their foundation and existence—Avakian has no time for these real lessons of history. But they taught the communist movement that revolution cannot be exported, though they can and must be aided in all possible ways. Some instances of such international support were the participation of the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War (errors in policy notwithstanding) and the direct role of revolutionary China in the Korean War.

The moment we think in these terms, the dangerous implications of the Avakianist concept of a “single world process and its material base” forcefully come out. Will the “rationality” of production tasks be the same for the victorious proletariat in both the types of countries? Can these differences be dismissed by citing the overall interests of the international proletariat at the “world scale?” How should the proletariat judge the “rationality” of resource utilisation and development while building socialism? Should it be done mainly from an economic angle, judging things on the “economies of scale?” Should it follow classical bourgeois political economic prescriptions of each country doing what it can do best and trading with others for its remaining needs? Or should it be done from a political viewpoint that addresses the need to overcome the severe dependence and disarticulation, left over from imperialist domination? To contribute to the world revolution, serve as its base, the victorious proletariat in any country *cannot and must not* make what’s best at the “world scale” its criteria. Because, no matter what the political rhetoric, its content will inevitably be narrow economic rationality. This is particularly decisive for any country liberating itself from the clutches of imperialism. It is also important for a fledgling socialist state in an erstwhile imperialist country, since it too will be tasked with ending the parasitical ties of the economy. For a long time, the proletariat must address the produc-

tion tasks *primarily* at the “national scale.” It must strive for self-reliance for the country as a whole and its regions as a matter of principle. In the narrow (bourgeois) economic sense this would be irrational; a waste of resources. In its view, even a rational utilisation of resources within a country could be unnecessary and irrational from the viewpoint of the world economy (Avakian’s “world scale”). From the long term view of world proletarian revolution, in order to overcome and end the lop-sidedness in the world so that all can become equals and thus create favourable grounds to advance to communism, it would be eminently rational.

Even in a condition where socialist states have emerged in most of the imperialist countries, the socialist camp would still be heavily marked with carryovers of the unequal relations of imperialism. Avakian has paragraphs on imperialist lop-sidedness in the world. But his orientation makes it empty talk. It simply brushes aside issues posed by unequal relations and disarticulation. For all his criticism of Stalin’s metaphysics, imperialist economism pushes him to repeat the errors committed in the Soviet Union. Under the socialist state, the division of economic tasks between the advanced European and backward Asian republics was guided by a similar argument on rational use of resources. In effect, it carried over the distortions and dependencies of the Czarist empire. Rupturing from this, Mao noted in his *Critique of Soviet Economics*:

## 6. The National Task in Oppressed Nations

I wonder why the text fails to advocate each country's doing the utmost for itself rather than not producing goods which other countries could supply? The correct method is each doing the utmost for itself as a means toward self-reliance for new growth, working independently to the greatest possible extent, making a principle out of not relying on others, and not doing something only when it really and truly cannot be done. Above all, agriculture must be done well as far as possible. Reliance on other countries or provinces for food is most dangerous.<sup>87</sup>

Avakian's logic, supposedly meant to enable the proletariat to advance, takes a leap backward, away from the heights achieved by Maoism.

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87. Mao Zedong, *Critique of Soviet Economics*, MSW 8.



## CHAPTER 7. THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN IMPERIALIST COUNTRIES

We have, till now, unravelled Avakianism's disastrous effects on the tasks of revolution in oppressed countries. What about its guidance for imperialist countries? By digging into the roots of nationalist deviations within the international communist movement and exposing some of its concrete manifestations in imperialist countries it had produced some positive results. In particular, it had pinpointed the pandering to nationalism seen in Comintern and in the CPSU (B) policies in the period leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War period and during the war. The losses caused by subordinating the interests of world revolution to those of the Soviet Union were also analysed. Furthermore, the 1963 General Line put forward by the Communist Party of China under Mao's leadership was also criticised for its advocacy of national interests in the secondary imperialist powers. Overall, these were correct criticism. But, since these criticisms were guided by its wrong understanding of internationalism, they were intertwined with a lot of one-sidedness. While the positive aspects of its criticisms were accepted, its one-sidedness became a target of struggle right from the very beginning.

Fighting against the social chauvinist's position of "defence of the fatherland" during the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, Lenin had correctly pointed out that the national question was basically exhausted in

imperialist countries. Drawing on this he advanced the policy of “revolutionary defeatism”<sup>88</sup> and called for a line of transforming the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war. Picking on these positions and interpreting it one-sidedly, Avakian went on to deny any role for the national aspect in imperialist countries. While the main thrust of his criticisms was against errors committed by Stalin and the Comintern, Lenin was also made a target. Avakian posed the question of whether or not it is correct to view the working class as being the inheritors of the traditions of the nation. He answered in the negative and made this a cornerstone for his arguments. In the process, he criticised Lenin’s article “The National Pride of the Great Russians,” and delivered yet another example of his faulty method.

Avakian accepted that Lenin had stuck to revolutionary defeatism in this article. His complaint was that Lenin was trying to justify it by saying it’s correct because the Russian proletariat has national pride. This is criticised as an attempt to “combine two into one.”<sup>89</sup> Lenin had related national pride of the Russian proletariat to the rich tradition of struggle and resistance within the Russian empire. This was counterposed to slavishness to the Czarist Empire.<sup>90</sup> He overturned the chauvinist frame-

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88. This meant working for the defeat of one’s own ruling class in the war by utilising all means and thus preparing to convert the war into a revolutionary civil war.

89. “Conquer...” op. cit.

90. “We take pride in the resistance to these outrages put

work in which the “fatherland” question was being posed and placed it firmly within the wider issue of the oppressed nations, particularly of those within the Russian empire. He reiterated this by quoting Marx, “No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations.” Lenin thus pointed out the logical connection between democratic, national traditions of resistance with contemporary defeatism. He concluded, “we say: it is impossible, in the twentieth century and in Europe (even in the far east of Europe), to ‘defend the fatherland’ otherwise than by using every revolutionary means to combat the monarchy, the landowners and the capitalists of one’s own fatherland, i.e., the worst enemies of our country. We say that the Great Russians cannot ‘defend the fatherland’ otherwise than by desiring the defeat of Tsarism in any war, this as the lesser

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up from our midst, from the Great Russians”; “It would be unseemly for us, representatives of a dominant nation in the far east of Europe and a goodly part of Asia, to forget the immense significance of the national question—especially in a country which has been rightly called the ‘prison of the peoples,’ and particularly at a time when, in the far east of Europe and in Asia, capitalism is awakening to life and self-consciousness a number of ‘new’ nations...”; “We are full of a sense of national pride, and for that very reason we particularly hate our slavish past (when the landed nobility led the peasants into war to stifle the freedom of Hungary, Poland, Persia and China), and our slavish present, when these self-same landed proprietors, aided by the capitalists, are goading us into a war in order to throttle Poland and the Ukraine, crush the democratic movement in Persia and China, and strengthen the gang of Romanovs, Bobrinskys and Purishkeviches, who are a disgrace to our Great-Russian national dignity,” Lenin, “The National Pride of the Great Russians,” LCW 21, pages 102-106.

evil to nine-tenths of the inhabitants of Great Russia.”

Evidently what we see here is not some ‘two into one’ combination but an artful presentation of the Bolshevik position, penetrating the extreme jingoism that existed in the initial period of the war.<sup>91</sup> This is quite explicit not only from the particular style of argument Lenin adopted but also from his choice of words like “Great Russian proletariat,” “Great Russian Social Democrats” etc. and his qualification of Marx and Engels as the “greatest representatives of consistent nineteenth century democracy.” Avakian totally missed or ignored the specificity of the situation in which that propaganda tract was written. All he noted was the pressure of chauvinism existing at that time, implying that Lenin was conceding space to it in his writing. This is inevitable given Avakian’s position that the proletariat, being an international class, cannot represent or be the continuator of any national tradition.

Avakian eclectically mixed up two separate aspects. One of them is the internationalism of the proletariat, a matter of its ideology. The other is the complex concreteness of its emergence and existence in different countries. The proletariat of any country emerges and takes form through a historical process, a process specific to that country.

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91. It reminds us of the method used by the *Mother* in Maxim Gorky’s novel of the same name, to agitate against the war while standing in a queue of people waiting to make their contributions to the Czar’s war effort.

This historic process could be initiated by world developments. Even then it would be specifically national in form and characteristics. This is not merely a material process. It incorporates the culture and traditions of the country, more particularly those of the labouring people. It will also include the democratic traditions of the modern period. This is why, historically, the proletariat represents progressive, democratic traditions of a nation. This is an objective, inevitable, part of its existence. Accepting this does not, as such, negate the internationalist character of the proletariat. That depends on the ideological approach. The Comintern was not committing a mistake by noting national traditions. Its nationalist deviation lay in posing the defence of national traditions as a task of the proletariat in an imperialist country, particularly in the context of a war. We saw how Lenin dealt with national traditions in an entirely opposite manner leading to a revolutionary defeatist position. Avakian lumped up everything together and made a mess.

Not only that, he cut up Lenin's views into bits and pieces and did an arbitrary copy/paste job. Thus, while commenting on the approach to the Versailles Treaty<sup>92</sup>, Avakian first mentioned Lenin's views on the matter as seen in his work *Left-wing Communism*. Arguing against the "Left" communists in Germany who were insisting on immediately repudiating the

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92. The treaty imposed on Germany by Britain, USA and other imperialist powers following its defeat in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. Its terms were extremely harsh.

Treaty, Lenin wrote, “To give *absolute, categorical and immediate* precedence to liberation from the Treaty of Versailles and to give it precedence over the question of liberating other countries oppressed by imperialism, from the yoke of imperialism, is philistine nationalism... not revolutionary internationalism.”<sup>93</sup> The italicised words clearly indicate that the difference was not over whether that Treaty should be opposed or repudiated, but *when*. Furthermore, a reading of the whole text shows that Lenin was basing his arguments on the expectation of a revolution in Germany.<sup>94</sup> Avakian simply left all that out. He then proceeded to accuse Lenin of having departed from his initial internationalist stand by “...pushing the communists in Germany a little bit to raise the national banner in Germany against the Versailles Treaty and against the victors’ feast at the expense of Germany.”<sup>95</sup> First of all this is a gross distortion—Lenin was calling for agitation against the harsh conditions of the Versailles Treaty, which was placing a heavy burden on the German masses. Avakian brands this as “raising the national banner.”

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93. Lenin, *Left-wing Communism—an Infantile Disorder*, Chapter 8, emphasis added.

94. “In the present situation, however, the German Communists should obviously not deprive themselves of freedom of action by giving a positive and categorical promise to repudiate the Treaty of Versailles in the event of communism’s victory... The possibility of its successful repudiation will depend, not only on the German, but also on the international successes of the Soviet movement.” *ibid.*

95. “Conquer...” *op. cit.*

Secondly, Lenin was proposing this in changed conditions, where the immediate prospect for revolution had receded in Germany. When both of these factors are considered, all that remains of Avakian's criticism is a wretched demonstration of the total disregard he has for concrete analysis of concrete conditions. Not surprisingly, he was critical of Lenin's broad characterisation of the post-war situation that placed Germany among those reduced to a colonial condition through the conditions imposed by the victor states. Instead of grasping this objective situation and the opportunity it afforded (as Lenin did) Avakian misrepresents Lenin position to mean "...Well, my imperialists got whipped so now it's okay for me to defend the fatherland..."<sup>96</sup> Once again we see how Avakian's perversion of internationalism immediately pushes anything national into the domain of bourgeois chauvinism.

What Lenin was getting at was the possibility of utilising the contradiction, generated by the subjugation of Germany, in favour of the proletariat. Exposing the Versailles Treaty as unjust, which it was, would not in itself mean allying with German imperialist interests or waving the national flag. It could be done without any weakening of the proletarian stand and outlook. The harsh impact it was having on the common masses was itself a strong ground for this. Such opposition would unite with the just sentiments of the masses, without getting

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96. Ibid.

caught up in its spontaneous national framework. It could thus strengthen the Communist party's capacity to resist bourgeois, petty bourgeois chauvinism. This is why Lenin, who had earlier opposed an immediate call to repudiate the Versailles Treaty, later proposed that the German communists should take up agitation against that treaty.

In all of these examples, we see how Lenin masterfully addressed and tried to utilise national aspects while working out proletarian tactics. This was done without in the slightest departing from his position that the national question was, basically, a thing of the past in imperialist countries. By adding the qualification "basically," its relevance in particular situations was being noted. Avakianism paid token admittance to this by citing the example of Ireland, which was at that time a colony of Britain. But is that all there is to it? Let us go through Lenin's criticism of the Junius pamphlet. While welcoming its attack on social chauvinism Lenin criticised it for "...trying to drag a national programme into the present non-national war."<sup>97</sup> But

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97. *The Junius Pamphlet*, LCW 22, pages 305-319. Junius argued that "...the imperialist war programme..." should have been opposed by the Social Democrats "...with the old, truly national programme of the patriots and democrats of 1848... a truly national banner of liberation..." Responding to this Lenin pointed out how Junius "...proposes to "oppose" the imperialist war with a national programme," and thus fails to arrive at the correct position of opposing it with revolutionary civil war. As usual the RCP distorted the essence of the debate. It stated, "Junius wanted to oppose Germany's part in the war on the basis of the true interests

that was not all. He was also critical of its exclusion of the possibility of national wars. He wrote:

The fact that the postulate that “there can be no more national wars” is obviously fallacious in theory is not the only reason why we have dealt with this fallacy at length. It would be a very deplorable thing, of course, if the “Lefts” began to be careless in their treatment of Marxian theory, considering that the Third International can be established only on the basis of Marxism, unvulgarised Marxism.<sup>98</sup>

The national wars Lenin had in mind were mainly those of the colonies and the oppressed nations within imperialist boundaries, like those in the Russian Empire. He held the view that the transformation of the imperialist war (1<sup>st</sup> World War) into a national war was “highly improbable.” But he also recognised that it could not be ruled out *even in the advanced capitalist countries*. Lenin wrote:

...[I]f the European proletariat were to remain impotent for another twenty years; if the present war were to end in victories similar to those achieved by

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and ‘best traditions’ of Germany. It was precisely an attempt to make internationalism more acceptable by trying to reconcile it with nationalism.” (On the Question of So-Called “National Nihilism,” op. cit.)

98. Ibid.

Napoleon, in the subjugation of a number of virile national states; if imperialism outside of Europe (primarily American and Japanese) were to remain in power for another twenty years without a transition to socialism, say, as a result of a Japanese-American war, then a great national war in Europe would be possible. This means that Europe would be thrown back for several decades. This is improbable. But it is not impossible, for to picture world history as advancing smoothly and steadily without sometimes taking gigantic strides backward is undialectical, unscientific and theoretically wrong.<sup>99</sup>

Such dialectical insight is excised by Avakianism through its so-called excavation of Leninism. It would be more appropriate to term it as the “hollowing of Leninism.”

When Lenin wrote about a national war in Europe he was obviously conceiving of one fought on bourgeois terms. But the possibilities he examined, such as “subjugation of a number of virile national states,” had far-reaching implications. They became explicit during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War when a number of European imperialist countries were overrun and occupied by Hitler’s armies. As Lenin had predicted, this vastly strengthened bourgeois nationalism in the subjugated countries. It

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99. Ibid.

became a rallying banner of armed resistance. How should the Communist parties have responded to this situation? True to his doctrinarianism Avakian declared:

The argument that Lenin made in relation to World War 1 precisely applies to World War 2. He said ... if Paris or St. Petersburg were to be occupied by the “enemy” troops... that [would not] change the nature of the war... he meant a serious invasion and actual occupation, and he pointed out in any case that invasions are inevitable in almost every war.<sup>100</sup>

The nature of the war between the occupying and occupied imperialist bourgeoisie would not change in the short term.<sup>101</sup> But what about the revolutionary war to be organized and led by the proletariat? Obviously it would no longer be a *civil* war, since it would be immediately directed against a foreign occupier, against *its* state. The idiocy of Avakianism can easily declare, why bother whether it's foreign or not; all that counts is that it is an imperialist bourgeoisie. But for a proletarian vanguard that really strives to win it does matter because it presents a wholly different set of opportunities and challenges.

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100. Bob Avakian, *Advancing the World Revolutionary Movement: Questions of Strategic Orientation*, henceforth “Advancing...” This was a further elaboration of the views presented in his “Conquer...”

101. But it could in the long run, in the absence of a proletarian revolution.

In the Second World War, an important opportunity that emerged through German occupation of these countries was that national and anti-fascist democratic sentiments could be drawn on in favour of a revolutionary war led by the proletariat. The challenge would be of drawing on this powerful reserve while maintaining ideological and organisational independence. The challenge would be in sticking to the proletariat's strategic tasks even when tactical alliances are made with other forces, including the bourgeoisie resistance. The challenge would also be in advancing appropriate tactics, including, if necessary, transitional stages, without abandoning the socialist revolution. The Comintern's mistaken positions, complemented by revisionism of the concerned parties, forsook this. Hence the resistance built up by the Communist parties in most of the occupied European countries restricted their program to driving out the occupiers and restoring bourgeois republics. (The exceptions were Yugoslavia and Albania.)

Avakian's mutilated application of Lenin was an excuse to avoid the real issues posed by the conditions in occupied imperialist countries during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Through struggle during the 1984 international conference this was rejected. The Declaration adopted by it recorded, within the limits possible then, "In the European countries occupied by German fascist troops it was not incorrect for the Communist Parties to take tactical advantage of

national sentiments from the standpoint of mobilising the masses, but errors were made due to raising such tactical measures to the level of strategy.”<sup>102</sup>

Finally, we come to a possible outcome of the Avakianists’ metaphysical treatment of internationalism and the national question—its potential to turn into its chauvinist opposite. This is already indicated in its proposal for a “New Socialist State in North America.” The proposed draft Constitution for this state says that its final form will be decided on the basis of various factors including “...the size of the territory that had been liberated from the imperialists (and *other reactionaries*) and consolidated as the territory of the new socialist state...”<sup>103</sup> The new socialist state is predicated on the destruction of the existing US imperialist state. Beyond that, the formulation “in *North America*,” along with mention of territory liberated from *other reactionaries*, indicates that the new state could also extend beyond the present territory of the USA. What are the implications?

North America contains two other countries, the oppressed country Mexico and imperialist Canada. Countries are not simply territories. Moreover, a liberated Mexico will face the arduous task of eliminating centuries old ties of oppression and becoming

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102. “The USSR and the Comintern,” *Declaration of the RIM*.

103. “Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America—A Draft Proposal,” p. ii, emphasis added, henceforth “Constitution...”

ing self-reliant. Even if its main former oppressor, the USA, also became socialist, being on its own will be more conducive for this task. It would also be far better for the internationalist struggle for communism, which can only be achieved together; all acting as equals. Therefore this proposal for a “New Socialist State in North America” coming from a party in the dominant imperialist country of that continent is a dangerous recipe for expansionism, even if it’s posed as “seizing the maximum territory for the proletariat.”

## CHAPTER 8. INFANTILE CRITICISM OF UNITED FRONT TACTICS

The United Front policy adopted by the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Comintern, held in 1936 in the wake of Hitler's ascendance in Germany and the rising threat of world war made several mistakes. But, in its criticism of these mistakes, the RCP jumped to the exact opposite. It denied the significance and importance of differentiating between fascism and bourgeois democracy. It denied the necessity of striving to form a tactical united front against fascism.<sup>104</sup> Thus, the general tendency to absolutise things and end up as the other side of the coin was seen in this matter too. The 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference of 1984 rejected this. It held that it was correct to distinguish between fascism and bourgeois democracy. Along with that it identified the Comintern's mistake of absolutising the difference between these two forms of bourgeois dictatorship and making a strategic stage of the struggle against fascism.

Since then the RCP has corrected its mistake of refusing to distinguish between fascism and bourgeois democracy. But the basic error in its positions on united front tactics, which also underlay that mistake, remains to be corrected. It continues as a fundamental position of Avakianism and, presumably, is regarded as another ingredient of the "new synthesis." We must therefore get into this.

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104. "Advancing..." op. cit.

Why would a communist party or socialist state enter into a united front with a section of its enemies? It does so in order to utilise contradictions among its enemies and thus create a more favourable situation to advance revolution. Avakian ruled out this possibility. He wrote, "...to get into that whole sort of posture of trying to manoeuvre the imperialists to fight this way and not that way, and on this terrain and not that, to attack this and not that, already gets you into very dangerous territory, and a very dangerous dialectic."<sup>105</sup> Well yes, it's true that entering into a united front with reactionaries strengthens the danger of tailism. But that is the dialectic of the real world far removed from Avakianism's construct of pure relations and even more pure politics. United front tactics brings up opportunities for revolutionary advance, not just dangers. Faced with formidable enemies, a communist party or socialist state must make use of all opportunities to intensify contradictions among them. It must strive to make them "...fight this way and not that way, and on this terrain and not that, to attack this and not that..." Avakian not only denied this but created confusion by bringing in irrelevant issues such as the essence of the actions of reactionaries. Thus, commenting on the united front between the Soviet Union and the Allied imperialist bloc during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, he wrote:

To justify the kind of all-encompassing

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105. Ibid.

alliance that was built with the “democratic” imperialist states in World War 2, you would have to show that even without changing their nature it was possible to change the essence of the actions of these imperialists for a certain period.

There weren't the means at hand to change the basic character of even the actions of these imperialists—that is, to change them into actions which would be principally progressive, viewed in terms of objective content and objective effect.<sup>106</sup>

Avakian poses the false issue of trying to change the “essence” of the actions of an imperialist state through a united front and gets the obvious answer in the negative. The real issue to be judged is whether it was necessary and correct for the Soviet Union to utilise the sharp contradictions that had emerged among imperialist powers and form a united front with one bloc in order to surmount the grave threat to its existence. Avakian wriggled away from answering this by pulling in the issue of an “all-encompassing alliance.” Let's leave aside the question of whether this qualification of “all-encompassing” is correct. Even if it were true and demanded criti-

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106. *Ibid.* It is known that the US and British governments had supplied military equipment to the Soviet Union and communist armed forces in China and some European countries during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Going by Avakian's logic these should count as actions that were “principally reactionary” in their “objective content and effect!”

cism, was a limited tactical unity possible and necessary? The answer is obviously in the affirmative. And that would also imply a proper assessment of the particularities of that world situation, including new factors such as the existence of a socialist state and the distinction between fascism and bourgeois democracy.

What is notable here is that the very logic of Avakian's arguments severely hindered such an assessment. It made any distinction between the enemies irrelevant. Thus the need to go into the particularities of fascism, the specific set of contradictions it generated (including the one with bourgeois democracy), and the opportunities and challenges it posed was summarily rejected. In the name of correcting the errors committed by the Comintern, Avakianism reduced Leninism to a set of lifeless doctrines.

Following his standard procedure Avakian hadn't forgotten to hedge his position. After ruling out any role for a united front in that situation, he wrote:

...[I]n World War 2 the imperialists... also, it's true, adopted certain specific tactics as to how they wanted to go about that. *A socialist country and a strong international movement may be able to affect some of that in a secondary way, tactically, and that may be important in certain aspects, but to think that in any basic way or as a principal aspect of things you*

can affect the way in which the relations among the imperialists find expression is a very serious error and leads you in the direction of becoming a tail upon the bourgeoisie...

It [meaning the proletariat] can, where it holds state power, by certain tactical measures and manoeuvres increase certain divisions, make use of and perhaps deepen certain divisions that do exist among the imperialists...<sup>107</sup>

But doesn't this admit the usefulness of such tactics? Doesn't it accept that a socialist state can and should enter "dangerous territory" and try to "... manoeuvre the imperialists to fight this way and not that way...?" Doesn't it contradict Avakian's main argument against such tactics?

Arguing against identifying some among the imperialist forces as main enemies, Avakian stated that this would inevitably lead to the position of "saying that the other imperialists are not *really* enemies."<sup>108</sup> The absurdity of this position is all too apparent when we recollect that identifying one as the main target comes up only in a context where we try to differentiate *between enemies*. Hence, such differentiation does not automatically render the others, who are not considered the *main* enemy, as friends. They 'really' remain as enemies though the

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107. Ibid, emphasis added.

108. Ibid, emphasis added.

communist party should apply different methods in handling the contradictions among these two categories of enemies. As the experience of China showed us, it has to be vigilant even against the reactionary forces it has allied with.

Avakian claims that his criticism is focussed against seeking out the main enemy at the international level. He even states that the CPC was correct in singling out Japan and allying with the Kuomintang. But, if his logic against singling out a main enemy is correct, if such differentiation inevitably means that the others are not *really* enemies, then there is no reason to restrict it to the world level. It should be equally applicable within a specific country. Hence, in the final analysis, though Avakian acknowledges the correctness of the CPC entering into an alliance with Chiang Kai-shek, his logic actually rules out united front activity with a section of reactionary forces. This is an acute example of infantilism born of Avakianism's doctrinaire approach.<sup>109</sup>

Finally, is it true that there is no justification at all for identifying the main enemies at the inter-

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109. The RCP was guided by this approach in its opposition to the tactics adopted in Nepal of forming an alliance with reactionary parties against the Gyanendra monarchy. The conversion of these tactics into a strategic orientation by the Prachanda-Bhattarai revisionists, or the presence of this danger within the initial Chungwang decisions that launched these tactics, do not in any way justify the RCP precisely because doctrinarianism can never be an answer to revisionism. For more exposure on the RCP criticisms on Nepal, see "Naxalbari #3."

national level? No. In a situation where a socialist state exists, this is absolutely relevant and necessary within the domain of diplomacy. This brings us to another serious error promoted by Avakianism. In its critique of the “United Front against Fascism” promoted by the CPSU and Comintern during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and the “Three Worlds Theory” (TWT) of the Chinese revisionists, it fails to differentiate the strategic orientation of the international proletariat from the diplomacy of a social state. It has, in the main, correctly criticised the CPSU led by Stalin for imposing the interests of the Soviet Union above those of the ICM. The Soviet Union’s diplomatic manoeuvres and policies were presented as the international strategy of the proletariat. But instead of rectifying this, the RCP commits the opposite mistake. It eliminates any role for diplomatic manoeuvres and policies of a socialist state and all that this implies.

This is amply exposed in its arguments against the TWT. Formally, the RCP has denied the Chinese revisionist’s claim that this theory was a creation of Mao. But, in essence, it has argued the opposite. Thus Avakian charged Mao of not only seeking an international united front with the USA and its allies against the Soviet bloc, but of considering this as the “...focus for the international movement and the form through which it should carry out the struggle.”<sup>110</sup> In essence this attributes

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110. “Advancing...” op. cit.

the TWT to Mao Zedong. The preposterous allegation that the TWT was put forward by Mao Zedong was refuted as “revisionist slander” by the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference. Why did the RCP become a conduit for such slander even while it was on the whole struggling to uphold the banner of Mao Zedong? Its immediate roots lie in Avakianism’s erroneous arguments against differentiating among enemies and refusal to recognise and address the role of a socialist state’s diplomatic moves.

In the specific issue being examined here, this was manifested in its stubborn opposition to the separation made by Maoists between Mao’s differentiation of the world into three and the TWT. In the early 1970s, Mao noted the three-way differentiation of the world: the First World composed of two superpowers (US and Soviet imperialists), a Second one composed of other intermediary imperialist countries and the Third World of oppressed countries.<sup>111</sup> This provided the international proletariat with a broad picture of the existing balance of power in the world. Recognition of this reality was never used by the Maoists in China to impose a strategic orientation of uniting with one or the other reactionary power at the international level. Rather they stuck to the view that “...the people of the Third World are the main force combating imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism, the motive force of revolution propelling history for-

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111. Socialist China and Albania were included in the Third World in view of their underdeveloped state.

ward.”<sup>112</sup>

The differentiation of the world into three served as an orientation for China's foreign policy in that period. It helped it to utilise contradictions between the two superpowers and break the diplomatic blockade. This was correct and necessary. But several mistakes were made in its implementation. The *Declaration of the RIM* has described how the revisionists in China "...controlled to a large degree its diplomacy and the relations between the Chinese Communist Party and other Marxist-Leninist parties, turned their backs on the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat and the oppressed peoples or tried to subordinate these struggles to the state interests of China."<sup>113</sup> These revisionists tried to utilise Mao's division of the world into three and impose the foreign policy of China as the strategic orientation of the international proletariat. This was finally given a full-fledged form through the "Three Worlds Theory" put out by them after seizing power and restoring capitalism in China. This theory declared the Soviet social imperialists as the main enemy. It called on the Maoists to unite with the US imperialist bloc and all reactionaries allied with it in the name of fighting the main enemy.

Those parties which capitulated to Chinese

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112. "Rise of Third World and Decline of Hegemonism," *Peking Review*, January 10, 1975.

113. "Mao Zedong, the Cultural Revolution and the Marxist-Leninist Movement," *Declaration of the RIM*, 1984, op. cit.

revisionism, and some who took a centrist stand, upheld this theory. In the case of the latter, their failure to differentiate between the division of the world into three and the revisionist's distorted use of this to concoct their theory, contributed to their mistaken stand. The attack of the Albanian party led by Enver Hoxha against the TWT committed the same mistake from the opposite end. It too failed to differentiate between the two. Avakianism absorbed this dogmato-revisionism through its failure to distinguish between the diplomatic policies and tactics of a socialist state and the international strategy of the ICM. Its argument that it is wrong to separate out a main enemy at the international level flows from this.

One or the other imperialist power or reactionary force may be the main enemy for the revolutionary movement in a specific country. But all are equally enemies for the international proletariat. This is admitted by Avakianism, and that's correct. But is that true for a socialist state? No, it isn't. So long as it exists in a world dominated by imperialism, a socialist state must necessarily identify the contradictions among imperialist powers, and make diplomatic moves to utilise them in its favour. At certain junctures, one or the other imperialist power may emerge as the main threat, the main enemy. In that situation its diplomatic policy must try to isolate the main enemy (enemies). This may necessitate the formation of an alliance or united front

with other imperialist powers. In the likelihood that socialist states will be a minority for a long time to come, contra the infantilism of Avakian,<sup>114</sup> we can realistically expect this to be the rule rather than the exception. The mistake is not in identifying the main enemy or forming tactical alliances with other powers. The mistake is in subordinating the strategic orientation of the international proletariat unifying the proletarian socialist revolution and new democratic revolution into a world revolution that will destroy all imperialism and reaction to the foreign policy of a socialist state.

This state belongs to a contingent of the international proletariat. But, as a state in a particular country, it has its own interests which could be at variance with that of the international proletariat

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114. Once this reality is denied one can dish up any number of infantile formulas such as this one proposed by Avakian: "In fact, from a strategic standpoint, and even in more immediate terms, the movement internationally would be further advanced had such a correct line been formulated and fought for—a position that said in essence, 'look, *we're not going to have a united front with one group of imperialists against another* (even a united front where we keep in mind that they are still imperialists and where we fight against capitulation); instead, we're going to seek *another way* of dealing with the situation and even if, because of our own situation, we enter into certain *limited agreements and arrangements* with some imperialists and reactionary states, we are not going to make that a strategy for the international proletariat.'" ("Advancing..." emphasis added, op. cit.) We leave it to the reader's imagination to make out the fine line separating a tactical united front from a "limited agreement," as well as what the "other way" could be.

at particular junctures.<sup>115</sup> This contradiction cannot be ignored. The interests of a socialist state are part of those of the international proletariat. But they cannot be equated. The former cannot replace the latter. The opposite is equally true. The specific interests and compulsions faced by a socialist state cannot be denied in the name of upholding the interests of the ICM. It must be given due weight and role, subordinate to the strategic orientation of the proletariat. The struggle waged by a socialist state in the realm of diplomacy is an important part of the world revolution. We must never forget that the socialist state will be the main instrument through which the international proletariat can intervene at the world level until the world revolution reaches a high level.

The *Declaration of the RIM* notes:

In circumstances of imperialist encirclement of (a) socialist state(s) defending these revolutionary conquests is a very important task for the international proletariat. It will also be necessary for socialist states to carry out a diplomatic struggle and at times to enter into different types of agreements with one or another imperialist power. But the defense of socialist

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115. This once again underlines that this class is composed of different contingents, existing in different conditions, with differing national distinctions. Its overall interest is manifested, worked out through these particularities, not away from or above them as conceived of by Avakianism.

states must always be subordinate to the overall progress of the world revolution and must never be seen as the equivalent (and certainly not the substitute) for the international struggle of the proletariat. In certain situations the defense of a socialist country can be principal, but this is so precisely because its defense is decisive for the advance of the world revolution.<sup>116</sup>

The record of the ICM in this matter is rather poor. (The latest example being Nepal.) Avakian's accusations against Mao of trying to force Maoist parties to toe Chinese foreign policy interests are baseless. But even then the fact remains that there were serious lacunae in the way this was handled.

Mao didn't repeat the errors of Stalin and the Comintern. But that was not enough. In view of past experiences, it could readily be foreseen that the new turn in China's foreign policy would inevitably bring up the danger of rightism and tailism. Sufficient attention was not paid to ideologically arm the ICM to face these dangers. This is an important lesson we must keep in mind. Above all, Maoist parties must arm themselves with the lesson given by Mao: it is possible for the imperialist countries and the socialist countries to reach certain compromises but such compromises *do not require*

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116. "The USSR and the Comintern," *Declaration of the RIM*, op. cit.

*the people in the countries of the capitalist world to follow suit and make compromises at home. The people in those countries will continue to wage different struggles in accordance with their different conditions.*<sup>117</sup> This gives the correct orientation.

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117. Mao Zedong, "Some points in appraisal of the present international situation," April 1946, MSW 4.

## CHAPTER 9. GUTTING MARXIST POLITICAL-ECONOMY

Since the Comintern period, the General Crisis theory (GC) has dominated the ICM's views on the dynamics of imperialism and its crises. There is no comprehensive explanation of this theory in the classics, similar to Marx's analysis of capitalist crisis during its competitive period. Stalin's brief explanation given in his report to the 16th Congress of the CPSU(B), starts out with correctly drawing attention to overproduction. But he treats it from an "underconsumptionist" approach. Most importantly, the General Crisis theory's understanding of an irrevocable, steady decline in imperialist economic growth has been upset by its spurts of growth. Lenin's characterisation of the moribund nature of imperialism did not rule out its dynamism and potential for growth. Despite these basic flaws there are certain aspects of the GC theory that need to be synthesised. The most notable among them is its view on the change from cyclic crises seen during the competitive period (this was noted by Lenin also) to a situation where crisis is more prolonged. The GC theory tried to incorporate the impact of the October revolution in the analysis of imperialist crisis. This was another positive feature. But the matter was mechanically reduced to one of shrinkage of the capitalist market due the emergence of socialism in a large part of the world.

While the essentially underconsumptionist, lin-

ear approach of the GC is to be rejected, its recognition of the role of revolution in giving rise to crisis was a correct step forward. It must be synthesised to develop a correct grasp of the dynamics of imperialism and crisis in the present world. For example, the transition to neo-colonialism in the post-Second World War period was mainly prompted and guided by political compulsions faced by imperialism. Imperialism was threatened by the rise of the socialist camp, the spreading communist movement and the powerful thrust of national liberation movements. Neo-colonialism was favoured over direct colonial rule and exploitation since it helped deflect and blunt the growth of a revolutionary thrust in anti-colonial movements, while allowing continuation of imperialist exploitation and control.<sup>118</sup> Thus the weight of the political factor, of class antagonisms, became more significant in the post 2<sup>nd</sup> World War period.

In the 1980s the RCP put forward a critique of the GC. This was mainly focussed on the theory's projection of a linear decline of imperialism, and its failure to grasp the dynamism of the imperialist system. In opposition to this, a theory which sees inter-imperialist world wars as nodal points, playing

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118. US imperialism's dominating position, and its moves to utilise the anti-colonial tide as a means of weakening other imperialist powers and advancing its own interests had no doubt shaped neo-colonial imperialist relations and institutions. But, in the absence of the political factors mentioned here, the changeover from colonialism would not have been systemic.

a role similar to the crises during the competitive period of capitalism in the restructuring of capitalism, was advanced.<sup>119</sup> The RCP's theory appeared to address the dynamics of the imperialist system. But its basic premises were wrong. They became an issue of struggle during the process leading to the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference and in its deliberations. They were criticised by us in the 2000 Extended Meeting and again in the Note we presented before the International Seminar of 2006. Since the RCP complains about others not "engaging" with its views and positions it is necessary to point out that it has never responded to these criticisms.

The contradiction between socialised production and private appropriation is the fundamental contradiction of capitalism. In his *Anti-Dühring* Engels wrote about how "The capitalistic mode of production moves in... two forms of the antagonism immanent to it from its very origin."<sup>120</sup> One of them was the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.<sup>121</sup> The other was the contradiction between organisation of production in the individual workshop, and the anarchy of production in society generally. He also noted:

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119. Raymond Lotta with Frank Shannon, *America in Decline*, Banner Press, Chicago, 1984.

120. Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring, Part III: Socialism, Theoretical*.

121. In the imperialist stage this includes the contradictions between oppressed nations and imperialism, between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and between socialism and imperialism (when socialist states exist).

It is the compelling force of anarchy in the production of society at large that more and more completely turns the great majority of men into proletarians; and it is the masses of the proletariat again who will finally put an end to anarchy in production. It is the compelling force of anarchy in social production that turns the limitless perfectibility of machinery under modern industry into a compulsory law by which every individual industrial capitalist must perfect his machinery more and more, under penalty of ruin.

Preceding this, he had already made it clear that:

...[T]he production of commodities, like every other form of production, has its peculiar, *inherent laws* inseparable from it; and these laws work, *despite anarchy*, in and through anarchy. They *reveal* themselves in the only persistent form of social interrelations, i.e., *in exchange*, and here they affect the individual producers *as compulsory laws of competition*.<sup>122</sup>

Evidently, these “laws” lie in the very nature of commodity production and are distinct from anarchy or competition. This is why he stressed that they work “despite anarchy” and went on to say that the compulsory laws of competition are a mode of

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122. Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dübring*, emphasis added, op. cit.

manifestation, of how these “inherent laws” reveal themselves in exchange. As we shall see, this entirely accords with Marx’s analysis of the inner tendency of capital and competition.

But Avakian selectively quoted Engels to promote something totally different. He declared that the anarchy/organisation contradiction is overall the principal form of motion of capitalism’s fundamental contradiction. This was then extended to argue that the inter-imperialist contradiction is overall more determining, as compared to the other major contradictions of the imperialist system. Not only that, the very “parameters and possibilities” of class struggle were assumed to be ultimately determined by “movement compelled by anarchy,” by the inter-imperialist contradiction.<sup>123</sup> Imperialist wars were posed as the nodal points in the restructuring capital, playing a role similar to crisis in competitive capitalism. Disregarding the concrete reality of neo-colonialism in the post 2<sup>nd</sup> World War situation, the RCP mechanically parroted Lenin’s thesis of “redivision of the world through war” and arrived at the position that a world war was imminent.

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123. “...[I]t is movement compelled by anarchy that sets the overall terms for these other contradictions [i.e. class antagonisms-NB] and ultimately determines the parameters and possibilities of class struggle... [M]ovement compelled by anarchy...—the qualitative impact of the contradictions of world accumulation and the consequent role of wars of redivision—is more determining of the overall process by which these other contradictions unfold, at least so long as the bourgeois mode of production is dominant in the world,” *America in Decline*, page 125, emphasis added.

The elimination of class struggle from its central role was sought to be justified with arguments that posed competition as the inner tendency of capitalism. This was based on a distortion of Marx. Marx clearly says that the inner, “necessary” tendency of capital is to drive beyond the proportion. It generates a limitless striving “...for surplus labour, surplus productivity, surplus consumption etc.—to drive beyond proportion.” He went on to add that “*In competition* this inner tendency of capital appears as compulsion exercised over it by *alien capital*, which drives it forward beyond the correct proportion with a constant *march, march!*”<sup>124</sup> In the first volume of *Capital* he wrote:

It is not our intention to consider, here, the ways in which the laws immanent in capitalist production manifest themselves in the movements of individual masses of capital where they assert themselves as coercive laws of competition, and are brought home to the mind and consciousness of the individualist capitalist as the directive motives of his operations. But this much is clear: *a scientific analysis of competition is not possible, before we have a conception of the inner nature of capital*, just as the apparent motions of the heavenly bodies are not intelligible

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124. Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse*, Pelican, London, page 413, italics in original, underlining added.

to any but him, who is acquainted with their real motions, motions which are not directly perceptible by the senses.<sup>125</sup>

Evidently, the inner nature or tendency of capital is not competition but its ceaseless striving for more surplus, emerging from its exploitative character. This emerges from the very character of capital as an exploitative social relation and process.<sup>126</sup> For all capitalists their own ceaseless drive for more surplus is legitimate while those of the others are not. Hence all capitalists experience the tendency inherent in their capital as an external force, as the compulsion of competition from other capitals.<sup>127</sup>

But Avakian argued that if there were not the pressure of competition capitalists would not face the same compulsion to more deeply exploit the proletariat. The exploitative character intrinsic to

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125. Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, Chapter 1, page 300, emphasis added.

126. “It must never be forgotten that the production of this surplus-value—and the reconversion of a portion of it into capital, or the accumulation, forms an integrate part of this production of surplus-value—is the immediate purpose and *compelling motive* of capitalist production,” Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 3*, Chapter 15, Section 1, page 244, emphasis added, Visalandhra Vignyana Samthi, Hyderabad, 2009.

127. “Conceptually, *competition* is nothing other than the inner *nature of capital*, its essential character, appearing in and realized as the reciprocal interaction of many capitals with one another, the inner tendency as external necessity. (Capital exists and can only exist as many capitals, and its self-determination therefore appears as their reciprocal interaction with one another.) Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse*, page 414, italics in original, underlining added.

capital as a social relation and a process is thereby made external and secondary. Departing from Marxist analysis, competition is reduced to a matter of capital always existing as “many capitals.” On the contrary, Marxism shows how competition itself stems from capitalism’s specific mode of exploitation through extraction of surplus value. The capitalists can acquire this only by realising the value of their commodities through exchange in the market.<sup>128</sup> There they are forced to confront each other as competitors. The inherent drive of their own exploitative nature is now experienced by them as a compulsion to make their capital more productive than those of the others. This leads them to greater organisation of the productive process within their factory. Thus competition is even more intensified and overall anarchy increased. In other words, the anarchy of capitalism is ultimately rooted in its exploitation.

Moreover, not just competition, class struggle too is a major compulsion faced by the capitalists. Exploitation inevitably calls up resistance from the exploited. This induces the capitalists to increase mechanisation, the organisation of the labour process, as a means to defeat the class struggle of the proletariat and deepen exploitation.<sup>129</sup> The class inter-

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128. This is also why capital can only exist as “many capitals.”

129. “So soon as the growing revolt of the working class compelled Parliament to shorten compulsorily the hours of labour... from that moment capital threw itself with all its

est of the bourgeoisie and the antagonism it calls up is ultimately the principal driving force behind the more intensive and extensive exploitation of the proletariat. Both class struggle and anarchy/organisation have their roots there. They continuously interact with each other and impact on each other with one after the other getting foregrounded. This constitutes the process by which these forms of motion of the fundamental contradiction work themselves out, a ceaseless dynamic richly captured in Engels' words. The Avakianist thesis of anarchy/organisation as the principal form of motion delivers a truncated conception of this dynamic. Flowing from a flawed view that makes competition the inner nature of capital, it inevitably leads to undermining the determining role of class struggle, of revolution. In fact, in its view, the chances of class struggle becoming the main driving force in the working out of the fundamental contradiction are rather low until "...three-quarters of the world were socialist."<sup>130</sup> Thus, for all the talk about the greater role of politics, of the dynamic role of the masses in the imperialist system, its theory actually goes back from the factoring in of revolution in the analysis of imperialist crisis initiated by the Comintern and later developed by Mao Zedong.

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might into the production of relative surplus value, by hastening on the further improvement of machinery." Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, Chapter 15, page 386, op. cit.

130. "The Two Forms of Motion of the Fundamental Contradiction."

Moreover, Avakian's thesis reveals a serious flaw in outlook. According to this theory the principal role of the driving force of anarchy sets the primary stage and foundation for making revolution. Avakian claims that this was a crucial breakthrough to really get a deeper materialist understanding of what it is we're doing in setting out to make revolution.<sup>131</sup> What is the truth? When anarchy/organisation is posed as the main driving force determining the parameters and possibilities of class struggle, the necessity confronted by revolutionary class struggle is reduced to the economic realm. The political and other realms, class aspects (including the specific contours of class relations, alliances, the advantages and disadvantages these give rise to) all of this is excluded from the material necessity faced by the proletariat in its struggle. The necessity imposed on the ruling classes by revolutionary class struggle is similarly treated. Such is the crude reductionism of Avakianism.

World events, like the diffusion of contention from the mid-1980s and the collapse of the erstwhile social imperialist bloc, emphatically exposed the folly of the RCP's theory. It was hard put to account for this debacle. Finally it came out with, *Notes on Political Economy*.<sup>132</sup> Though this was presented as a review, it was more in the nature of a cover up. Refusing to make a self-critical examina-

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131. *Birds Cannot Give Birth to Crocodiles, Part 1, A Crucial Breakthrough... Revolution*, 218, November 28, 2010.

132. *Notes on Political Economy*, henceforth "Notes."

tion of its basic premises, the RCP obstinately stuck to them. The only “error” it admitted was in its application of the theory it had concocted.

It accepted its error in ruling out options other than a world war as a way out for imperialism.<sup>133</sup> This one-sidedness was already contained in its theorising making inter-imperialist contradictions as overall principal. But this was not accepted. Instead, the failure to take into account two factors, the difficulty of achieving victory in a recognizable and viable form in a nuclear war and the possibility of carrying out “proxy wars” through client states, were cited. This was another lie. Worse than ignoring such new particularities, the RCP had vehemently dismissed the erstwhile CRC, CPI (M-L)’s citing them as Kautskist deviations. The theoretical framework within which the CRC situated such factors was no doubt wrong. But, even if the basis on which arguments that were earlier rejected are now adopted is different, some explanation, some acknowledgement, is surely called for. There is nothing of that sort in the review, an eminent example of how not to make self-criticism.

With the crisis-like role of world war abandoned, the RCP’s theory limped. World events have continued to batter it. Anarchy/organisation, and consequently inter-imperialist contradiction, is still considered by it as the overall principal driving

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133. The RCP’s scheme did admit revolution as the alternate resolution but this was a token gesture. All emphasis was on a 3<sup>rd</sup> World War.

force. But collusion among imperialist powers has been principal for nearly two decades. Their contention, though growing, remains secondary. The course of world developments, including imperialist crises, offers many more instances where the discord between its views and reality stand out.

The new situation brought about by the collapse of the social imperialist bloc allowed greater freedom to imperialist capital. This was projected by the RCP as a partial resolution of the ‘conjecture’ posed by its theory. Close examination would show that the construct of ‘partial resolution’ was both a means to salvage something from the remnants of its theory and simultaneously appear to reflect contemporary reality. The implication was of a resolution that allowed “...a stimulus to investment, growth, and further reorganisation in the world economy.”<sup>134</sup> Though, being partial, it was “...not creating the conditions for sustained and stable global growth.”<sup>135</sup> The conclusion was that, “...we do not think it is correct to characterise the *overall situation* faced by the imperialists today as one of ‘crisis’...” though stable growth hasn’t been achieved.<sup>136</sup>

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134. “More on the New Spiral and the World Economy,” “Notes,” op.cit.

135. *Some Summing-Up Points*, ibid.

136. *More on the New Spiral and the World Economy*, ibid, emphasis added. Further on it was explained, “The world system is not, as a whole, in crisis—nor is there a single world crisis gripping that system. But this is an ‘intensely mixed’ state of affairs. There is some expansion and there

This whole analysis was way off the mark. For a brief period in the early 1990s, the imperialist agenda, orchestrated by the USA, could be pushed through. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) was founded. Its strictures universalised the structural adjustment programs of the IMF-WB. Consequently, imperialist penetration in the oppressed countries was vastly increased. But soon enough resistance to globalisation began to grow and became worldwide. The currency crisis in South East Asian countries, Mexico and Russia forced a pullback in free currency convertibility and other measures sought to be imposed by imperialism. A section of imperialist ideologues were obliged to start arguing for “globalisation with a human face.” Many WTO treaties and policies meant to further open up Third World countries have been put on hold. Even while outsourcing and the globalisation of production expanded, this period was also one of a rapid shift to financialisation, precisely because profit rates were still down. That is, there was no

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are areas of high growth; there are new patterns of capital investment; there is greater economic integration; and there has been recovery in the US. But there is crisis in significant parts of the world. There is deepening immiseration and suffering throughout much of the world. Overall, class and national contradictions are intensifying in the world.” *Some Summing-Up Points*, *ibid.* The facile nature of this view can readily be judged by observing the relatively high growth that was seen in some Third World powers like China and India, right in the midst of the global financial crisis, “a single world crisis!” Additionally, the omission of any mention of growing resistance to globalisation, a notable feature from the mid-1990s, is glaring.

resolution, even partial, of the imperialist crisis that set in from the mid-1970s. The expansion, briefly seen after the post-social imperialist collapse, was an example of a partial recovery. Let us recollect that such temporary recoveries were seen even during the prolonged crisis and stagflation of 1970-89. Obviously, they cannot be taken as indices of crisis resolution. Quite the contrary, bubbles of growth followed by their disastrous bursts have been a consistent feature of recent years, all the way till the present global financial crisis. The imperialist system as a whole has been wrecked by a prolonged structural crisis, now in its fifth year with no sign of resolution. And this is a world that is supposed to be free of structural crisis according to the RCP!

The review of 2000 was the last we heard from the Avakianists on applying their theory to contemporary reality. But, as we shall soon see, that theory continues to misguide them in their assessment of the world situation.

## CHAPTER 10. THE WORLD SITUATION

In 2000, the RIM finally adopted an overall correct Maoist position in its analysis of the world situation. The Statement adopted by the Expanded Meeting of 2000 specified, “Between the two trends of revolution and world war, revolution is the main trend in the world today. The principal contradiction is between imperialism and the oppressed peoples and nations.” It noted the “emerging new wave of world revolution.”<sup>137</sup> The RCP had accepted these positions. Even when it later expressed disagreements about some of the content in the Statement, these positions on the world situation were not challenged. But its flawed theory on the dynamics of imperialism would not permit it to be consistent.

Barely a year had passed before the inherent thrust of its theory regained predominance. The trigger was the 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre and George Bush’s declaration of a “war on terror.” Since then, its vision of inter-imperialist contradiction as “overall determining” has once again started to direct its evaluation of world events. In particular, US imperialism’s “war on terror” and the specific strategy adopted by the Bush regime were analysed from this angle.<sup>138</sup> The obvious fact

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137. *For A Century of People’s Wars, For Socialism and Communism.*

138. “But the point is that what they are doing is not primarily or essentially in response to September 11 but is part of a whole program they have—what we call their wild ambitions for recasting the whole world and taking down the Iraqi

that the WTC attack was being utilised to launch a worldwide attack in order to roll back the growing mass resistance to globalisation, to throw back the “emerging new wave of world revolution,” was reduced to a secondary aspect. Exposure of the real content of the “war on terror” as a “war against the people” was handled meagrely. The emphasis was on analysing US manoeuvres vis-à-vis other imperialist powers, as seen in its policies on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Iraq war. But it never bothered to inform the RIM of its abandoning the 2000 EM’s positions or the reasoning behind its retraction.<sup>139</sup>

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regime as one part of that... Trying to force even other imperialists and powerful states like Russia or other imperialists in Europe or Japan to fall in line with the new restructured way in which the sole superpower in the world, the US, is going to be running roughshod over everything else, even more—this is all at the essence of what they’re doing... It has to do with their own needs and interests and designs as an imperialist power, which is seeking to follow up on its political victory in the Cold War to further recast the world under its domination,” “Bob Avakian Speaks Out, Interviewed by Carl Dix, Part 1,” *Revolutionary Worker* #1155, June 16, 2002.

139. The first formal indication of retraction from the 2000 EM positions was seen in the RCP’s response to my article, written five years later. The Avakianists negated the RIM’s position by arguing, “It is not true that ‘revolution is the main trend in the world today’ *in the sense that it was put forward by Mao at the height of the worldwide upsurge of the 1960s.*” (“Response to the article The Current Debate on the Socialist State System” emphasis added. It was first published in *Struggle* No: 8.) But this was clear enough, right in 2000 itself, when the EM adopted this position. As explained by a representative of the CoRIM, “We believe that the international situation is generally favourable for the advance of the revolutionary struggle. While we are not yet experiencing the same kind of high tide of revolutionary struggle on a

However, the RCP letter of May 2012 now charges that:

...[S]ome forces in RIM have continued to insist on repeating empty exhortations about “revolution is the main trend” and “Africa, Asia and Latin America remain the storm centres of the world revolution” when even the most cursory study of the *actual conditions of revolutionary struggle in the world today shows that in even the most viciously exploited and oppressed countries the revolution is not only not surging ahead* but is confronting the same fundamental questions facing the whole international communist movement...<sup>140</sup>

Let us look at the logic underlying this accusation. Their reasoning is simply this—revolution is not *surging ahead*. But what about the wave of struggle and rebellions seen all over the world, including the people’s wars? What about the momentous emergence of the “Arab Spring” or the Occupation movement? How do we assess the fact that most of these struggles are taking place in the oppressed countries? The RCP letter avoids these questions by pulling in the issue of whether revolutions are

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world scale that we have witnessed in the past and will surely see again, we can speak with confidence of an emerging new wave of the world proletarian revolution.” “Interview with the RIM Committee Accelerating the Pace of World Proletarian Revolution.”

140. “RCP letter,” emphasis added, op. cit.

“surging ahead” or not. There is a history to this. In the early 1980s it was denying the presence of a continuous revolutionary situation in the oppressed countries. The logic was the same—if that were the situation why were revolutions not surging ahead? Though it finally withdrew its opposition the theoretical roots were never dug out.

We live in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution. War and revolution are the two prominent features of the motion of the era.<sup>141</sup> They are not mutually exclusive. They inter-penetrate. Both trends usually exist together. An analysis of the imperialist era shows that revolution has been the main trend overall. What does it mean to say that revolution or war is the main trend? An evaluation of war as the main trend does not mean war has already broken out. Similarly, revolution as the main trend does not mean revolutions are going on all over the world. It shows the potential of the world situation. The sense of such an evaluation is that, overall, the trend of revolution sets the direction, the terms of the working out of the contradictions of the imperialist system. In times of global crisis of the system, like the present, this role is even more strengthened. The dynamics of the imperialist system forms the basis for this. The logic of the RCP eliminates this fundamental basis and replaces

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141. War includes not only inter-imperialist wars, but also imperialist wars of aggression and proxy wars where imperialist powers wage war through one or the other neo-colonial regime.

it with the immediate ups or downs of revolutions.

The RCP letter next accuses the 2011 and 2012 joint May 1<sup>st</sup> statements of “instrumentalism.” It is said, “The instrumentalist method behind this kind of “analysis” is that of highlighting and exaggerating positive aspects in the situation and omitting or minimizing negative aspects, thus creating a so-called “reality” in agreement with the desires and objectives of the authors, which in turn it is hoped will motivate people to act in accordance with these desires and objectives.” The reader is then invited to “...compare the idea that the Arab rebellions have “paved the way” for the new democratic revolution with Avakian’s statement on Egypt, which praises the very positive aspects of this uprising and extends his “heartfelt support and encouragement to the millions who have risen up,” while also pointing to the need for a communist vanguard guided by the most advanced theory, without which the perspective can only be the substitution of one regime by another while remaining inside “the overall framework of global imperialist domination and exploitation.”<sup>142</sup>

One couldn’t have asked for a better exposure of how the Avakianists create a so-called “reality” in agreement with their “desires and objectives.” In this case it was done by quoting selectively. (But it would be gratuitous to term this wretched chicanery “instrumentalism!”) The May Day statements attacked by them, as well as the resolutions adopted

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142. Ibid.

by the Special Meeting of 2012, have certainly highlighted manifestations of the main trend of revolution. But they have not done this one-sidedly, ignoring contrary tendencies within them. They have not yielded to spontaneity.

The statement of 2010 noted:

These struggles must be coordinated, generalised and raised in the framework of a revolutionary perspective of overthrowing the reactionary governments and bourgeois states for the proletarian seizure of the power. This will not occur spontaneously. We must build in all countries the revolutionary tools, the new party of the working class, the new type communist party, the Maoist Communist Party, based on the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theory and the summing up of the historic experience of the communist movement.<sup>143</sup>

The 2011 statement stated:

The struggling and uprising proletarians and popular masses demand the building of revolutionary parties at the height of the current clash of classes; and that process of organisation is developing. We need communist parties based on Marxism-Leninism-Maoism...<sup>144</sup>

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143. "May Day Statement, 2010."

144. "May Day Statement, 2011."

The 2012 statement noted that:

These proletarian struggles and rebellions are not revolutionary in and of themselves but they are a first step in the realisation by the masses of the necessity of revolution.<sup>145</sup>

It reiterated the need for communist leadership. Finally, the Special Meeting resolution stated:

In this new wave of struggle and resistance we must support and strengthen the struggle for the liberation of peoples and for new democracy, towards socialism and communism, and oppose the pro-Western and Islamist currents which ride the tiger of people's struggles in order to impose new chains and new subordination to the reactionary classes and their masters of all time, imperialism, mainly of the U.S. and Europe.<sup>146</sup>

Evidently, the contention is not over contradictory tendencies in these rebellions. That much is admitted by both sides. The difference lies in how they are seen within the overall world situation. For the Avakianists these outbursts are simply another example of "wasted opportunity." To be hailed no doubt, but that's all there is to it. Since they deny the trend of revolution they cannot situate these

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145. "May Day Statement, 2012."

146. "Resolution of Special Meeting of MLM parties of RIM."

rebellions as manifestations of the revolutionary potential existing in the world. They therefore cannot understand the significance of new political openings created by the ferment caused by these upheavals, the infusion of new energy into Maoist parties/circles in this region. They cannot realise how they “pave the way” for revolution, just like all other momentous upheavals of the masses have, throughout history.

We have already exposed the serious errors committed by the Avakianists in their evaluation of the resistance going on in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their letter opposes the SM resolution’s characterisation of the situation in these countries as ‘a front in the battle between imperialism and the peoples.’ The reason given is that this approach “...ignores the problem that a large part of the forces on the battlefield are reactionary Islamic forces (including Al Qaeda and the Taliban) who do not represent the interests of the people’s struggle against imperialism.”<sup>147</sup> Bound by its theoretical blinkers, it continues to parrot the theme of “two reactionary poles reinforcing each other, even while opposing each other.” But the hard reality is that one has been badly bruised by the other. The political fallout of this objective development is all too evident in the shift from Bush to Obama and the recasting of US strategy. This much is evident. Therefore Avakian admits, “...what a mess, what a real debacle, the

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147. “RCP Letter,” op. cit.

Iraq war has turned out to be for the U.S. ruling class.”<sup>148</sup> But his mistaken views on the dynamics of imperialism pull him away from properly assessing these developments that have raised theoretical as well as practical questions before the Maoist movement.<sup>149</sup> Instead of grappling with them he buries them in a lot of Avakianese ‘the this and that, and then the this, without forgetting the that, though it’s really all about this.’

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148. “Making Revolution And Emancipating Humanity,” Part 2, *Revolution* #105, October 21, 2007, henceforth “Making...”

149. “It is indeed a unique feature of the present situation that the US is being forced to search for a different strategy mainly because of the armed resistance in West Asia led by Islamic groups that are either revivalist or fundamentalist in their outlook and not even consistent in their anti-imperialism. This brings up two things. First, the intensity of the oppressed people/imperialism contradiction and the real weaknesses of imperialism that make it possible for even such forces to tie down a sole superpower. Second, the subjective weakness of the Maoist movement and a reminder of the need to overcome it as soon as possible. A part of this subjective weakness is its analysis of Islamic fundamentalism, which still remains at a preliminary stage. While the propagation of militant materialism has its role, rationalist critiques of religion cannot replace a Maoist approach on Islamic fundamentalism,” “Note for the Seminar,” op. cit.



## CHAPTER 11. SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY

A key plank of Avakian's claims is his writings on the dictatorship of the proletariat. They are peddled as a "...whole different approach, founded on the breakthroughs in communist world outlook and epistemology..."<sup>150</sup> A "solid core, with a lot of elasticity" is the central concept being put forward.<sup>151</sup> This is presented as a key justification for the claim to a "new synthesis." Let us start by examining the facts.

Learning from the experiences of the Soviet Union and rupturing from wrong thinking, Mao developed the theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. He pointed out how "bourgeois right" provides the soil for the emergence of new capitalist elements.

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150. *What Is Bob Avakian's New Synthesis?*, Part 4, *Revolution* #129, May 18, 2008.

151. This has been explained as follows: "The solid core will set the terms and the framework. But within that, it's going to unleash and allow the maximum possible elasticity at any given time while still maintaining power—and maintaining it as a power that is going to communism, advancing toward the achievement of the 'four alls,' and together with the whole world struggle. Now there's going to be constraints on the solid core at any time in doing that, including what kinds of threats you're facing from imperialism. Sometimes you'll be able to open up pretty wide, and sometimes you may have to pull in the reins; but strategically, overall, you're mainly going to be trying to encourage and work *with* the elasticity, trying to learn from it and trying to figure out how you lead things so that it all becomes a motive force that is actually contributing—even if not so directly or immediately, in the short run—but *overall* contributing to where you want to go," italicised in original, *ibid*.

Putting politics in command and taking class struggle as the key link the communists had to mobilise the masses in struggle to revolutionise production relations and the superstructure and thus restrict and gradually eliminate bourgeois right. This was the general approach put forward for the advance towards communism. In close relation to this Mao also dealt with the problems of socialist democracy.

A number of articles in the 5<sup>th</sup> volume of Mao's Selected Works demonstrate his approach on the problems of the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist democracy.<sup>152</sup> One of the most important mistakes made in the Soviet Union was an approach that tried to keep everything under administrative control and gave no room for dissent. In contrast to this Mao was advancing a radically new approach. He insisted on protecting the dictatorship of the proletariat and the leading, institutionalised, role of the party. But he also insisted on "great democracy."

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152. The following works are essential reading for their guidance on this question: *On the Draft Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, *Letter Concerning the Study of The Dream of the Red Chamber*, *In Refutation of "Uniformity of Public Opinion,"* *On the Co-Operative Transformation of Agriculture*, *On the Ten Major Relationships*, *Strengthen Party Unity and Carry Forward Party Traditions*, *Speech at the Second Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China*, *Talks at a Conference of Secretaries of Provincial, Municipal and Autonomous Region Party Committees*, *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*, *Speech at the Chinese Communist Party's National Conference on Propaganda Work*, *'Things Are Beginning to Change, Beat Back the Attacks of the Bourgeois Rightists*, *The Situation in the Summer of 1957*, *Be Activists in Promoting the Revolution*, *Have Firm Faith in the Majority of the People*.

Mao wrote:

Two alternative methods of leading our country, or in other words two alternative policies, can be adopted—to “open wide” or to “restrict.” To “open wide” means to let all people express their opinions freely, so that they dare to speak, dare to criticise and dare to debate; it means not being afraid of wrong views or anything poisonous; it means to encourage argument and criticism among people holding different views, allowing freedom both for criticism and for counter-criticism; it means not coercing people with wrong views into submission but convincing them by reasoning. To “restrict” means to forbid people to air differing opinions and express wrong ideas, and to “finish them off with a single blow” if they do so. That is the way to aggravate rather than to resolve contradictions. To “open wide,” or to “restrict?” We must choose one or the other of these two policies. We choose the former, because it is the policy which will help to consolidate our country and develop our culture.<sup>153</sup>

“Great democracy,” the right to dissent, was not

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153. Mao Zedong, “Speech at the Chinese Communist Party’s National Conference on Propaganda Work,” MSW 5, page 432.

restricted to the people alone. Those from the bourgeoisie too were allowed this, so long as they didn't indulge in counter-revolutionary acts. During the Rectification Campaign of 1957, their articles attacking the Communist party's leading role and socialism were published without censorship. Where correct, their criticisms were accepted. Even when they were exposed of instigating anti-socialist activities and branded as bourgeois Rightists they were not arrested or deprived of their rights, except in exceptional cases.<sup>154</sup> The "Left" was encouraged to "...freely air views and hold debates not only with the middle but also openly with the Rightists and, in the villages, with the landlords and rich peasants."<sup>155</sup>

"Great democracy" was conceived as an important means of mass supervision over the state and the party. As Mao explained, "Great democracy can be directed against bureaucrats too... Now there are people who seem to think that, as state power has been won, they can sleep soundly without any

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154. Given Mao's writings on the importance of following the rule of law even in the matter of suppressing counter-revolutionaries, it takes some conceit to claim, as Avakian does, that he is raising something controversial in the ICM by arguing "the importance of not subjecting individuals, even individuals of the former ruling class (and other counterrevolutionaries being dictated over), to arbitrary suppression and curtailment of their individual rights, expressions, etc." (*The Basis, The Goals, And the Methods of the Communist Revolution*, henceforth "Basis...")

155. Mao Zedong, "Be Activists in Promoting the Revolution," MSW 5, page 484.

worry and play the tyrant at will. The masses will oppose such persons, throw stones at them and strike at them with their hoes, which will, I think, serve them right and will please me immensely. Moreover, sometimes to fight is the only way to solve a problem. The Communist Party needs to learn a lesson. Whenever students and workers take to the streets, you comrades should regard it as a good thing. The workers should be allowed to go on strike and the masses to hold demonstrations. Processions and demonstrations are provided for in our Constitution. In the future when the Constitution is revised, I suggest that the freedom to strike be added, so that the workers shall be allowed to go on strike. This will help resolve the contradictions between the state and the factory director on the one hand and the masses of workers on the other. After all they are nothing but contradictions.”<sup>156</sup>

Taking lessons from the Rectification Campaign, Mao observed, “In the course of this year the masses have created *a form of making revolution, a form of waging mass struggle*, namely, speaking out freely, airing views fully, holding great debates and writing big-character posters. *Our revolution has now found a form well suited to its content.*”<sup>157</sup> This emphasised

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156. Mao Zedong, “Speech at the Second Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China,” Section 4, MSW 5, page 344. Mao simultaneously debunks the reified view of the Communist party with his cryptic statement “The Communist Party needs to learn a lesson.”

157. Mao Zedong, “Be Activists in Promoting the Revolu-

that “opening wide” was a strategic orientation of the proletarian state, not a temporary expedient to flush out Rightists. It took a leap during the Cultural Revolution.

In view of this Maoist approach, what is new in Bob Avakian other than a partial exposition of Maoist methods? The RCP’s letter states, “Bob Avakian has recognised and emphasised the need for a greater role for dissent, a greater fostering of intellectual ferment, and more scope for initiative and creativity in the arts in socialist society.”<sup>158</sup> The claim is that Avakian is talking about room for dissent and ferment on a *far greater scale*, with *different elements and dynamics to it*. Well, he and his believers have certainly been *talking* about all sorts and forms of dissent in socialist societies. But in substance there is nothing there that’s qualitatively advanced compared to Mao’s teachings and its practice in China, particularly during the Cultural Revolution.<sup>159</sup>

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tion,” op. cit.

158. “RCP Letter,” op. cit.

159. The following are some quotes from Mao that readily prove this: “Letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend is the policy for promoting progress in the arts and sciences and a flourishing socialist culture in our land. Different forms and styles in art should develop freely and different schools in science should contend freely. We think that it is harmful to the growth of art and science if administrative measures are used to impose one particular style of art or school of thought and to ban another. Questions of right and wrong in the arts and science should be settled through free discussion in artistic and scientific circles and through practical work in these fields,” “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,” MSW 5.

The Avakianists unwittingly make this abundantly explicit when they get on to elaborations. It is admitted that the *solid core will set the terms and the framework*. Wasn't that the essential thrust of the "six criteria"<sup>160</sup> put forward by Mao to distinguish

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"In a socialist society, the conditions for the growth of the new are radically different from and far superior to those in the old society. Nevertheless, it often happens that new, rising forces are held back and sound ideas stifled. Besides even in the absence of their deliberate suppression, the growth of new things may be hindered simply through lack of discernment. It is therefore necessary to be careful about questions of right and wrong in the arts and sciences, to encourage free discussion and avoid hasty conclusions. We believe that such an attitude will help ensure a relatively smooth development of the arts and sciences," Ibid, pages 408-09; "People may ask, since Marxism is accepted as the guiding ideology by the majority of the people in our country, can it be criticized? Certainly it can. Marxism is scientific truth and fears no criticism. If it did, and if it could be overthrown by criticism, it would be worthless," Ibid, page 410. "It is inevitable that the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie will give expression to their own ideologies. It is inevitable that they will stubbornly assert themselves on political and ideological questions by every possible means. You cannot expect them to do otherwise. We should not use the method of suppression and prevent them from expressing themselves, but should allow them to do so and at the same time argue with them and direct appropriate criticism at them." Ibid, page 411. "Some actually disagree with Marxism, although they do not openly say so. There will be people like this for a long time to come, and we should allow them to disagree. Take some of the idealists for example. They may support the socialist political and economic system but disagree with the Marxist world outlook. The same holds true for the patriotic people in religious circles. They are theists and we are atheists. We cannot force them to accept the Marxist world outlook," "Speech at the Chinese Communist Party's National Conference on Propaganda Work," MSW 5 page 424.

160. The "six criteria" were: Words and deeds should help to

what is right and wrong while “fostering free discussion among the people?” On the matter of “elasticity” the Avakianists admit that, “Sometimes you’ll be able to open up pretty wide, and sometimes you may have to pull in the reins.”<sup>161</sup> But where does that differ from what was being done in Maoist China? The argument could be that an approach of *mainly trying to encourage and work with the elasticity* (as opposed to mainly controlling it), even if the reins have to be tightened at times, is the new factor. Very well, wasn’t that the whole thrust of Mao’s advocacy of “opening wide” as opposed to “restricting?” We know that this was a strategic perspective, even though the opening up of debate and struggle had to be curbed at times.<sup>162</sup>

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unite, and not divide, the people of all our nationalities; They should be beneficial, and not harmful, to socialist transformation and socialist construction; They should help to consolidate, and not undermine or weaken, the people’s democratic dictatorship; They should help to consolidate, and not undermine or weaken, democratic centralism; They should help to strengthen, and not shake off or weaken, the leadership of the Communist Party; They should be beneficial, and not harmful, to international socialist unity and the unity of the peace-loving people of the world. “Of these six criteria, the most important are the two about the socialist path and the leadership of the Party.” Mao Zedong, “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,” MSW 5, page 412.

161. *What Is Bob Avakian’s New Synthesis?*, Part 4, op. cit.

162. Citing some historical examples from socialist societies shedding light on the material constraints in “opening up” I had pointed out, “This indicates a real contradiction a communist party in power will have to face, the contradiction between its orientation and its *concrete application in different*

While there is no new contribution, Avakian often slips into slander and idealism in his desperate effort to look different. In discussion on how to handle reactionary views and trends in a socialist society he declares, “If all you do is mobilise the masses to crush this, it’s the same as state repression in other forms.” This is being said in a context of

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*circumstances.* It emerges from the contradiction between the unique task the proletarian state has of creating conditions for its own extinction and what it has in common with all states as an instrument of coercion. *Both these aspects must be addressed.* (“Socialist...” emphasis added, op. cit.) In its response the RCP accused us of arguing that “...real world contradictions make it impossible to envision a different way to handle the problems of the proletarian dictatorship.” (“Response...” op. cit.) K.J.A’s “Polemical Reflections on Bernard D’Mello...” (henceforth “Polemical...”) vulgarises the matter even more by raising the absurd charge that I had claimed the “hundred flowers policy” impossible to implement in the actual conditions of socialism. As we will soon see, the real issue is not whether it’s possible to “envision a different way” but whether that can be done in any meaningful way by those who avoid addressing such material constraints. Furthermore, the RCP reduces the matter to the general question of “...contradiction between a party’s “orientation” (overall ideological and political line) and the concrete application of this line...” The particularity of the issue being addressed is thus avoided. The purpose is to serve up this vulgarisation: “What Ajith is proposing is something different—we may have a communist ‘orientation’ but the ‘concrete application’ cannot avoid using methods that run *in opposition* to this ‘orientation.’ Instead of dialectics we have dualism.” (“Response...” emphasis added, op. cit.) The reply to this is given by the example of Socialist China. The orientation was that of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. “Opening wide” and allowing the bourgeois rightists to publicise their views was to serve this. When this threatened to undermine socialism it had to be curtailed. It was not “in opposition” to the overall orientation but a different application in a different situation.

claiming to have a “...different vision... different than even the best of the GPCR....” Thus the actual direction and practice of the GPCR, where the masses were mobilised to *struggle* against capitalist roaders and thus transform their world outlook is slandered as a mere matter of “crushing” them. The GPCR is reduced to nothing more than a variety of state repression. And how does he propose to surpass this? His argument that you shouldn’t rely on state repression as the way to deal with opposition in every form is nothing more than a paraphrasing of Mao. The difference in his position is this—coming up with new ways through which the masses oppose reactionary thinking or practice is not always the way to do this. So it is neither state repression nor mobilising the masses. According to Avakianism the way is to let the reactionaries have a free run, even keeping away from their event to ensure that they are really free... and then send in the political police to spy on them!<sup>163</sup> Could there be anything

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163. “If all you do is mobilise the masses to crush this, it’s the same as state repression in other forms. You can’t let misogyny run rampant and not challenge it and not suppress it in certain ways—but on the other hand, even just coming up with ways that masses oppose this is not always the way to do this... Let them go on in a certain way? Or shut them down? We have to know what they’re doing.... you need a political police—you need to know about plots, real plots that will go on, to overthrow socialism—but you shouldn’t rely on state repression as the way to deal with opposition in every form, and sometimes you don’t even want your own people to go into these things, because then it’s not really a free university because you’ve got your people in there and it can be chilling, so we have to think about it.” “Everything That Is Actually

more disgustingly manipulative than this hoax of a solution? Mao was emphatic on “opening up” and allowing reactionaries to express their views. He was even more insistent on facing up to this with open ideological struggle, involving the masses in their millions. Avakian’s idealist elasticity where free space for the reactionaries is something that can be willed in by avoiding struggle, inevitably turns into its opposite. So who is seeking simple solutions in state repression, that too in worn out methods resembling that infamous Hyde Park democracy of Britain?

Desperate to sanctify Avakianism as something “new” the RCP has marshalled a number of criticisms about the “errors that were associated with the GPCR and how Mao and the revolutionaries in China were looking at the problems of carrying forward the socialist revolution in China.” It wrote:

In China, it seems to be the case that the revolutionaries wrongly attacked some mathematicians for working on theoretical problems (such as the Goldbach conjecture) because they had no known practical application, thus demonstrating a too narrowly constricted understanding of the relationship between theory and practice and the need for the work of intellectuals to serve the masses

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True Is Good For The Proletariat, All Truths Can Help Us Get To Communism,” *Revolutionary Worker* #1262, December 19, 2004, henceforth “Epistemology.”

of people. It is correct and necessary to struggle to link scientific and technical personnel with the masses and for their work to meet the needs of the masses and society—broadly understood—but this dialectic is complex, and it must not be treated in a linear or mechanical “one-to-one” fashion.<sup>164</sup>

No reference has been given to check this up. But let’s recollect Mao’s directive:

...[E]ven in the absence of their deliberate suppression, the growth of new things may be hindered simply through lack of discernment. It is therefore necessary to be careful about questions of right and wrong in the arts and sciences, to encourage free discussion and avoid hasty conclusions.

Evidently, even if things happened as stated by the RCP, it didn’t have roots in some error in Mao’s approach. It was an aberration. Beyond that, we must also recognise that the dialectic of “opening up/curbing” applies to the fields of arts and science. There will be times when the application of resources and abilities will have to be prioritised in a socialist society, particularly in a backward one. This could mean disallowing some things. However, that should be exceptional. It shouldn’t be the general norm. And this, precisely, was the approach

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164. “Response...” op. cit.

of Mao. Though the RCP speaks a lot about tumult and debate etc. in a socialist society, all said and done, it has a rather linear, simplistic, view of how things actually will unfold through the twists and turns of class struggle.

Most of the criticisms raised by the RCP fall in a similar category. Aberrations from Mao's approach are attributed to him. But that is not all. Some are also revealing instances of an idealistic treatment of the issue at hand. For example, it wrote:

...[I]t is possible to see in *Breaking with Old Ideas*... some of the one-sided understanding of what it means for the proletariat to guide intellectual work, such as criticising the teaching of anatomy of horses because none were present in the region where the technical school, the subject of the film, was located.<sup>165</sup>

Let us recollect the thrust of that movie—it was the struggle to rupture from an educational system and methods divorced from the needs of socialist society. In the specific instance mentioned here, students were taught about horses, for the sole reason that it was prescribed by the syllabus. But they were not taught about buffaloes, which was common there. Instead of serving the needs of the people, the syllabus was wielded to trample on them. This was the contrast being made in the movie.

Evidently, the issue was not whether those stu-

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165. Ibid.

dents should learn about horses at all. Criticism was directed against the blind aping of foreign syllabi and the refusal to root education in local reality. They were manifestations of the capitalist road in education. That much is obvious. But the obvious is now beyond the comprehension of the Avakianists. In their ideal socialist society, teaching should be for the sake of teaching; the needs of society must wait.

Before the Cultural Revolution the approach put forward by Mao remained as guidance. But after that it was enshrined in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. New and rich forms of expressing dissent, mass supervision and participation in running the state and party such as the "big-character posters" and recruitment of new party members through mass meetings emerged and were institutionalised. The right to dissent included the right to strike. Despite these advances, it is certainly true that the stifling traditions of the earlier period were still substantial. This was a carryover from the past, grounded in an outmoded conception of socialist society. It didn't have any basis in the new vision and practice advanced by Mao through his writings and the Cultural Revolution. This cannot be cited, as done by the Avakianists, as a lack in Maoism. It was lack in the application of Maoism. Probing into the objective factors that underlay this would lead us to address the continued transformation of the socialist state system with the party at its core.

The problem with the RCP's false claim of hav-

ing advanced something new is not just a matter of petty pretensions. It does grave harm by diverting attention from the real constraints of socialist democracy. These also relate to the structures of the socialist state, including the institutionalised role of the communist party. But before we get into that let's examine the theoretical foundations of Avakian's "solid core, greater elasticity" formulation in more detail. It would allow us to have a better appreciation of Avakianist "elasticity."

One of the sources that went into this concept is the lesson he has taken from John Stuart Mill. In his words:

Recently, I told some people that one of the key things I have been grappling with is how to synthesize what's in the polemic against K. Venu with a principle that is emphasised by John Stuart Mill. A pivotal and essential point in the polemic against K. Venu is that, having overthrown capitalism and abolished the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat must establish and maintain its political rule in society, the dictatorship of the proletariat, while continuing the revolution to transform society toward the goal of communism and the abolition of class distinctions and oppressive social relations, and with that the abolition of the state, of any kind of dictatorship; and

that, in order to make this possible, the proletariat must have the leadership of its vanguard communist party throughout this transition to communism. In continuing to grapple with these fundamental questions, I have become convinced that this principle articulated by Mill—that people should hear arguments presented not only as they are characterized by those who oppose them, but as they are put forward by ardent advocates of those positions—is something that needs to be incorporated and given expression in the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is one element—not the entirety, but one element—of what I have been reaching for and wrangling with in terms of what we have formulated as a new synthesis.<sup>166</sup>

Avakian's willingness to continue being engaged with these issues and learn from others is no doubt commendable. Yet, when we go through the polemic he refers to, there's something that intrigues. Why did he turn to Mill? After all, the same issue, as posed by Rosa Luxemburg, had a prominent place in that polemic. One section of the erstwhile CRC, CPI(M-L)'s document was devoted to the criticisms

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166. Bob Avakian, *A Materialist Understanding of the State and Its Relation to the Underlying Economic Base, Part 2*, henceforth "Materialist..."

made by Rosa Luxemburg against the Bolsheviks.<sup>167</sup>  
It quoted Rosa:

Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party, however numerous they may be, is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for one who thinks differently. Not because of any fanatical concept of “justice” but because *all that is instructive, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on this essential characteristic*, and its effectiveness vanishes when freedom becomes a special privilege.<sup>168</sup>

These views, as well as all of her other positions, were rejected by Avakian in his critique of the CRC document. He argued that her views were very similar to the formulations of bourgeois ideologues like John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville.<sup>169</sup>

Yes, that’s right, the essence of her argument was identical to what Mill spoke about: “people should hear arguments... as they are put forward by ardent advocates of those positions.” Evidently, if he now accepts this, he is actually correcting an error of one-sidedness he had committed in that polemic. That mistake was no doubt committed within an

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167. *On Proletarian Democracy*.

168. *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, New York, 1970, pages 389-390, emphasis added.

169. *Democracy: More Than Ever We Can and Must Do Better Than That*.

overall correct rebuttal of the CRC's liquidationist approach. But, all the same, it was a mistake. And Avakian's so-called synthesis of the Mill principle turns out to be nothing more than an unprincipled method of self-correction. It is an extreme example of opportunist "elasticity!" Even more, it fails to examine Rosa's views in the light of the advances made through Maoism. If that were done, it would readily be accepted that "Rather than Mill, it would be more profitable to go back to Rosa Luxemburg's criticism against the Bolsheviks for suppressing dissent. She certainly had a point in drawing attention to the stifling of political life under conditions where opposition is suppressed." It would also be understood that in the given conditions then existing in Russia, "sticking to this as a matter of principle would have led to the destruction of the new born proletarian state."<sup>170</sup> Thus, instead of getting infatuated over some abstract merging of principles as Avakian is, the issue would be posed in the concreteness of a given situation in a socialist society.

It is to this concreteness that we now turn to get a fuller picture of Avakianism's specific proposals. They can be summarised as follows: there needs to be a Constitution and the Communist party should abide by it; even while it's being led by the Party, the army should not be able to be mobilised to go against the Constitution; a certain element of contested elections must be instituted within the frame-

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170. "Socialist..." op. cit.

work of whatever the Constitution of the socialist society is at the time. (These proposals have been incorporated in the Draft Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America put out by the RCP.)

Avakian writes:

...[T]he army, and also in a fundamental sense the courts, especially courts that have a more societal-wide impact, and the essential administrative bodies, should be particularly responsible to the vanguard party in socialist society. But here's where the contradiction comes in. I also believe they should be responsible to the Constitution. And here you can see a potentially roaring tension. But if the party can lead the armed forces to go outside of and above and beyond the Constitution, then the Constitution is meaningless. And then, in effect, you do have an arbitrary rule whereby it's merely the party and whatever the party is deciding at a given time—those are the rules, and that's how they'll be enforced.

...[Y]ou can't simply run society in such a way that whoever gets control of the party at a given time sets and enforces the rules according to whatever they think the rules should be at a given time.

...[I]f you allow the party to simply and arbitrarily decide what the rules are, what the law is, how the judiciary should operate, whether or not constitutional provisions should be extended or whether rights should be taken away, without any due process of law; if you allow that, you are increasing the potential and strengthening the basis for the rise of a bourgeois clique to power and for the restoration of capitalism.<sup>171</sup>

Just what does this really boil down to? The leadership of the party is sanctioned by the Constitution. And the Constitution states, quite emphatically, that “in matters concerning the role and functioning of the armed forces, militia and other organs of public defense and security, the Party shall have the final say.”<sup>172</sup> In that case, the army’s following the directives of the party would be perfectly constitutional. Nothing arbitrary there! Now, as experiences of socialist countries readily remind us, whether those directives “go outside of and above and beyond the Constitution” will always be a matter of struggle and interpretation between the socialist and capitalist roads. Similarly, every Constitution (bourgeois or proletarian) also provides for the suspension of some of its provisions in a situation of emergency. And history once again tells us

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171. “Materialist...” emphasis added, op. cit.

172. “Constitution...” page 25, op. cit.

that instances of “arbitrary” denial of constitutional rights were usually justified by appealing to such provisions. Thus, after wading through several paragraphs of Avakian’s imagined “controversies” what we are finally left as a solution is some tautology. Delivered in the true Avakianist style it tries to give an impression of bringing in something new while things actually remain as they were.

In both the Soviet Union and China capitalism was restored through coups. They were justified as emergency measures carried out to “save socialism.” They were organised by exercising the constitutionally legitimate “leading role” of the party. Instead of addressing this core issue squarely Avakianism shies away from it. As a result, its claims over the newness of specific proposals presented by it are just as vacuous as those on its ‘new synthesis’ in theory.

We saw the duplicity of Avakian’s “elasticity.” What about his “solid core?” There is nothing wrong in conceiving the leading core as something more than the party. But the lessons of hitherto existed socialist societies show us that the solid core mainly advances through continuing the class struggle. This process inevitably brings out the contradictions within it. More and more masses must be drawn into the running of the state through this process of “one divides into two,” the struggle against the capitalist roaders. Invariably a section of the core will become hostile and separate out. Avakian handles this dialectic in an extremely mechan-

ical manner as a matter of quantitative addition or subtraction (sometimes integrate more people, sometimes restrict).

The institutionalised role of the Communist party wasn't a part of the Marxist theory on proletarian state. This is clear from reading Lenin's *State and Revolution*. In 1918, speaking about the superiority of Soviet power he had said: "...[I]f the working people are dissatisfied with their party they can elect other delegates, hand power to another party and change the government without any revolution at all..."<sup>173</sup> But, the fierce experiences of the revolutionary civil war in Russia later led him to acknowledge, "After two-and-a-half years of the Soviet power we came out in the Communist International and told the world that the dictatorship of the proletariat would not work except through the Communist Party."<sup>174</sup> His explanation was centred on the concrete situation existing in Russia: "...[O]ur proletariat has been largely declassed; the terrible crises and the closing down of the factories have compelled people to flee from starvation. The workers have simply abandoned their factories; they have had to settle down in the country and have ceased to be workers."<sup>175</sup> Does this mean that the institutionalised leading role of the communist party in

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173. Lenin, "Extraordinary All-Russia Railwaymen's Congress," Part 2, LCW 26, Moscow, page 498.

174. Lenin, "Part II: Tenth Congress of the R.C.P. (B.)," LCW 32, page 199.

175. Ibid.

the socialist state system is a matter solely related to specific conditions? No. It emerges from the particular nature of this state form, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is the state of the socialist transition period. It should have a structure corresponding to the transition towards communism, where the state itself withers away. This differentiates it from the exploitative classes' states. Yet, since it is a state, it also shares some common features with them. The most important of these is that of being the instrument of a specific class, charged with the task of implementing this class's political and socio-economic interests by suppressing opposing classes. The state must necessarily have some institution that guarantees the continuous exercise and safeguarding of the interests of the class in power. The political function of the state itself makes this a necessity. The monarchy during feudalism and the permanent army and bureaucracy of capitalism are some examples of this. While governments can change in a capitalist democracy, these permanent institutes, kept out of the ambit of elections, safeguard the basic interests of the capitalist class. But the proletarian state cannot adopt such institutions, which "stand above" society as an alienated force, to ensure the continuity of its class interests. It has the task of ensuring that this alienated force is returned to the people. Yet it still must have some institution that guarantees (or strives to

guarantee) the continuity of proletarian class interests. The overall role of the communist party as the commanding centre in the socialist state system, the institutionalised leading role of the party in the dictatorship of the proletariat, was the resolution. It was necessitated by circumstances and later theorised.<sup>176</sup> There is no point in blinding oneself to this hard fact or evading this lesson of history. The socialist constitution cannot replace the institutionalised leading role of the party; it is not an institution. Capitalist roaders are never going to stay within the bounds of a socialist constitution once they get into power.

The challenge before the Maoists is to deal with the problems caused by the institutionalised leading role of party, while fully realising the class reality that makes such an institutionalisation necessary. Under the leadership of a correct line, that role helps to advance socialism. It helps to unleash the initiative of the masses and allows their greater role in running the state. But “The commanding position of the communist party is indeed a decisive control over political power, in the sense that other parties are excluded from *control over decisive instruments of the state*. This is true even when power is

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176. Proposals for a system of multi-party elections such as those made by the UCPN (Maoist) simply avoided this material factor. Though some correction was made in the paper it submitted for the International Seminar of 2006, the fundamental flaw in its analysis remained uncorrected. See “Imperialism and Proletarian Revolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

exercised by drawing more and more of the masses into running the state and conditions for its final withering away are being promoted.”<sup>177</sup> Hence, simultaneously, as a secondary aspect, the structure given by institutionalisation is a material ground conducive to the growth of bureaucratisation causing alienation of the masses from the party. It thus aids the capitalist roaders.<sup>178</sup> Under a wrong line, a

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177. “Socialist...” emphasis added, *op. cit.* The Avakianists responded to this by first hacking off the words “control over decisive instruments of the state.” They then went on to declare, “There is no reason to argue, as Ajith does, that under socialism all ‘other parties are excluded’ if some parties are willing to work together in a state apparatus whose nature is in a fundamental sense determined by the leadership of the party of the proletariat.” (“Response...” *op. cit.*) They just can’t resist the temptation to hack, it’s almost like a compulsive disorder.

178. The RCP has argued that “Ajit ...tends to locate the problem incorrectly, mainly in the sphere of ‘bureaucracy,’ which leads him to underestimate the real depth of the problem and to look in the wrong place for solutions. The concept of ‘bureaucracy’ has limited value because it tends to obscure the class nature of the struggle under socialism, focused to a large degree on whether to expand or reduce ‘bourgeois right.’” (“Response...”) “Bureaucratisation” has been posed by Rightists as the source of capitalist restoration in order to minimise or deny the role of bourgeois right in forming the soil that engenders new capitalist elements in socialism. However, the RCP goes to the opposite one-sidedness when it minimises the danger of bureaucratisation. Through their shared enjoyment of privilege, bourgeois right and bureaucratisation interact and reinforce each other. Incidentally, “to set the record straight,” what I wrote was, “Apart from the new and old bourgeois elements that will make their way into the ruling communist party, the rotten baggage and bureaucratism inevitably engendered by any institutionalised role will also push away from the goal of advancing to communism.” (“Socialist...” *op. cit.*)

revisionist line, the party's leading role is subverted. In that situation, institutionalisation quickly lends itself to the degeneration of the party into a fascistic instrument of capitalist restoration. The Maoists must grasp and grapple with this contradictory character of the institutionalised leading role of the Communist party in socialism.

The constitutionally guaranteed position of the party is a privilege. Like all other privileges it creates room for tendencies of abusing it and perpetuating it. Arbitrary exercise of power aggravates this. But the key aspect to be kept in mind is that while the institutionalised leading role of the party provides space for such aberration, it provides an even more solid and wider ground for limiting and eliminating it. The central issue is the party and its position in the state structure. Checks and balances must address this.

Both Lenin and Mao were aware of this and tried to develop structures and methods to tackle it. We must make further advance in this direction for two reasons. One of them is to limit the inevitable rigidity and bureaucratisation caused by the institutionalised role of the party. For this, the development of a political culture, forms and institutions that will enable a greater role for mass supervision of the party and its activities will be decisive. To the extent possible at each period, the party itself must "open up" and organise greater involvement of the masses in its functioning. The method of making

mass approval mandatory for new party membership applicants was a contribution of the Cultural Revolution. Similar practices need to be further developed as part of continuing the revolution in socialism. The second task is to prepare the most favourable conditions for the communists and the revolutionary masses to struggle for the restoration of socialism in the event of capitalist roaders seizing power. We will come back to this later.

Dongping Han's observations made in his work *The Unknown Cultural Revolution*<sup>179</sup> are useful to appreciate the contradictory aspects of the issues involved in promoting mass supervision of the party. He highlights the impact of the Cultural Revolution in undermining and overturning the culture of subservience to people in authority. This is well comprehended in Mao's explanation of the aim of the Cultural Revolution – changing the world view.<sup>180</sup> The culture of kowtowing to power will be particularly strong in a backward country, given the carryover of feudal culture. Yet, advanced countries too won't be free from it. This indicates an important area where the Maoists must focus on.

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179. See Chapter 4 of *The Unknown Cultural Revolution*, Dongping Han, Cornerstone Publication, Kharagpur, India, 2007. Originally published by Garland, New York.

180. "To struggle against power holders who take the capitalist road is the main task, but it is by no means the goal. The goal is to solve the problem of world outlook: it is the question of eradicating the roots of revisionism." Mao Zedong, "Speech To The Albanian Military Delegation," MSW 9.

They must consciously instil and foster an attitude of challenging such subservience among the masses.

Han has pointed out how Mao's quotations became a de facto Constitution, enabling the masses to judge and supervise the activities of leaders and cadres. This is the emancipatory power of proletarian ideology. We must build on this experience by making the party itself, not just individuals in it, open to criticism and supervision. Maoism broke away from the hitherto existed approach of considering the party as something sacrosanct. It acknowledges the necessity of making it an object of criticism. As Mao once put it, sometimes "The Communist Party needs to learn a lesson."<sup>181</sup> He was contradicting an outlook that absolutised the party's leading role and made the masses and ranks into disciples, passive instruments. To advance from the lessons of the Cultural Revolution, the Maoists must consciously fight against tendencies that reify the party, its leadership and role in revolution. Mao made an important distinction, "The state is an instrument of class struggle. A class is not to be equated with the state which is formed by a number of people (a small number) from the class in the dominant position."<sup>182</sup>

This is not to deny the vanguard role of the party or to belittle the political importance of the regard the masses will develop towards a genuine Maoist

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181. Speech at 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of 8<sup>th</sup> CC, pages 344-5, MSW 5, op. cit.

182. Ibid, page 378.

party. It is to insist that any absolutisation of the Marxist understanding of proletarian leadership would certainly lead to reification. Current practices (abundant in Avakianism but not restricted to it) of glorifying the party and the cult of leadership are examples of such absolutisation. It will reinforce, rather than weaken, a political culture of subservience to power. In a socialist society the danger is amplified because the “bourgeoisie is right within the party.”<sup>183</sup>

Armed with this approach we can properly place another of Han’s observations. He argues that the May 16 Circular “empowered” the masses.<sup>184</sup> The authority of the local party was held in check, enabling the emergence of new mass collectives and the deepening of struggle. This is contrasted with the earlier situation where everything was strictly controlled by the local party and criticism was suppressed. The negative tendency inherent to an institutionalised leading position and the “opening up” made possible by its overturning are all too apparent here. Even then, it is equally true that such “opening up” was possible because of the overall institu-

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183. We refer readers to the article “The Maoist Party” for a more complete presentation on the matter of the party, *op. cit.*

184. “The Cultural Revolution... differed from all the previous political campaigns because for the first time in the CCP’s history it circumvented the local party bosses and stressed the principle of *letting the masses empower themselves and educate themselves.*” *The Unknown Cultural Revolution*, italicised in original, page 49.

tionalised leadership of the Communist party and the control this gave it over the main instruments of the state. It could be done because the political power existing in China was, on the whole, already of the people. In other words what happened was not the “empowerment” of people who didn’t have political power. It was a revolution led by the Maoists to make the people capable of wielding power through overthrowing those capitalist roaders who had usurped parts of that power.

Earlier we wrote about the need to prepare the most favourable conditions for the communists and the revolutionary masses to struggle for the restoration of socialism in the event of capitalist roaders seizing power. In this regard, the views put forward by the PCP and the UCPN (M) on arming the masses were a correct and sound step forward, even if it won’t be the only solution. In the present world situation, and for a long time ahead, the proletarian state won’t be able to do without a standing army. But experiences up till now have shown us the importance of creating the best conditions to resist or wage a fresh armed revolution against a capitalist takeover. Similarly, developing better methods to retain the Red colour of the People’s Army, such as keeping it among the masses, is another important lesson. It is not without reason that such steps were bitterly opposed by the capitalist roaders in China. The contrast between the Soviet Red Army, particularly after the 1930s, and the model Mao was try-

ing to develop by drawing on the Yen-an experience is also known. This warns us against depreciating the importance of such policies by overemphasising the necessity of perfecting the professionalism of a standing army.<sup>185</sup> The PCP had correctly stated that the transition to communism will involve a lengthy process of “restoration/counter-restoration.” The bourgeoisie will try to seize back power. If they succeed, the proletariat will be faced with the task of counter-restoring its power. Thus the whole period of transition to communism will proceed through Cultural Revolutions as well as people’s wars. The Maoists must take lessons from the past in order to wage both of them successfully.

Finally, in the matter of political culture, we must touch on something fundamental to it, the issue of human rights under socialism. All socialist constitutions had statutes on the fundamental rights of citizens. But the record of their implementation

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185. One persistent question raised by the RCP to depreciate the importance of the People’s Militia in the struggle of “restoration/counter-restoration” is that of who leads it. Their May 1, 2012 letter repeats this, “...even if there are armed militias (as Mao’s followers in China sought to develop) who leads them? How can it be assured that these forces will be used to support a genuine proletarian line?” (“Response...” Section 8, op.cit.) The implication is that this form would be useless without a correct central leadership and line to guide it. Leadership and line are no doubt decisive. But why can’t this be provided by those in the lower ranks, in the localities? Besides, even spontaneous armed uprisings against the bourgeois seizure of power will also be of great significance. The RCP’s argument counterposing the question of leadership to the task of militia formation practically amounts to belittling the political significance of arming the people.

was not all that good. It was somewhat better in China. Mao could learn from the Soviet experience and develop a qualitatively advanced approach to issues of socialist democracy. But there is a need to go further. At the level of outlook, it calls for some deep re-examination of current understanding on the question of the individual in relation to class and society. Marx pointed out how the individual is subsumed by class. No one exists outside one or the other class. "Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand."<sup>186</sup> But that was not all. He also drew attention to the division of the individual into the "personal" and "class" individual. That offers a deep insight into the problem of individuality in class society. It shows that the advent of a classless society is also the freeing of the "personal" individual from the subsumption of class. This is further emphasised by his observation:

With the community of revolutionary proletarians... who take their conditions of existence and those of all members of society under their control, it is just the reverse; it is as individuals that the individuals participate in it.<sup>187</sup>

This was contrasted to how the capitalist system

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186. Karl Marx, "The Chapter on Capital, Notebook II," *The Grundrisse*, page 239.

187. Karl Marx, *German Ideology, Part I, D.*, "Proletarians and Communism, Individuals, Class, and Community."

(bourgeois democracy) reduces individuals to average individuals. The continued importance Marx attached to this matter can be further seen in the following words from *Grundrisse* written 10 years later:

Relations of personal dependence are the first social forms in which human productive capacity develops only to a slight extent and at isolated points. Personal independence founded on objective dependence is the second great form, in which a system of general social metabolism, of universal relations, of all-round needs and universal capacities is formed for the first time. Free individuality, based on the universal development of individuals and on their subordination of their communal, social productivity as their social wealth, is the third stage.<sup>188</sup>

These insights of Marx allow us to appreciate the historical advance as well as rude limits of bourgeois democracy as regards the individual. Coupled with his observations on bourgeois right, they give a solid theoretical basis to properly place the issue of human rights in conditions of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>189</sup>

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188. Karl Marx, the "Chapter on Money, Part II, Notebook 1," *The Grundrisse*.

189. This has been dealt with in detail in "Socialist..." op. cit.

Class is primary and class struggle is the key link. Even in the matter of going beyond an existence as “average individuals” enjoying equality, class struggle is principal. But it wouldn’t do to employ this primacy to ignore questions affecting the individual as such or bury them within the ambit of class. The communist society we are aiming at cannot be realised without enabling the participation of “individuals as individuals.” An important part of the political culture mentioned earlier should be the inculcation of this perspective and the conscious creation of space for its application.<sup>190</sup> A thorough grounding of “opening wide” in Mao’s theory of continuing the revolution needs this perspective as one of its foundational principle.

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190. Though not given in a worked out form, Mao’s writings offer many insights and observations of great assistance in addressing this task.

## CHAPTER 12. TRUTH, CLASS INTERESTS AND THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

The tendency to envision or explain reality in a fashion suited to one's views or immediate political, organisational needs has been present in the ICM for long.<sup>191</sup> It became particularly pronounced during the Comintern period and was compounded by Stalin's metaphysical errors. Mao broke away from this. He insisted on "Seeking truth from facts" and declared "No investigation, no right to speak." Through his philosophical works and practice, he reiterated the Marxist position on the independent existence of objective reality. All ideas are ultimately derived from it. And that is where they must be tested for their veracity.

In the course of critiquing Avakianism we have repeatedly seen how its adherents "bend" words so that opposing views become amenable to their polemics. This is an acute manifestation of the tendency to explain reality in a fashion suited to one's views. However, without the slightest of scruples, Avakian asserts that he is digging out instrumentalism and that this is his unique contribution. Moreover, Mao too is accused of the sin of sanctifying instrumentalism. The proof is supposed to be seen in the May 16 circular issued during the Cultural Revolution. According to Avakian it asserted that

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191. Its baneful influence continues to prey on the movement. The term "instrumentalism" is used by some to indicate this subjectivism.

“...there is such a thing as proletarian truth and bourgeois truth...”<sup>192</sup> Let’s take a look at that circular.

This is what it said:

Just when we began the counter-offensive against the wild attacks of the bourgeoisie, the authors of the outline raised the slogan: “everyone is equal before the truth.” This is a bourgeois slogan. Completely negating the *class nature of truth*, they use this slogan to protect the bourgeoisie and oppose the proletariat, oppose Marxism-Leninism, and oppose Mao Zedong’s Thought. In the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, between the truth of Marxism and the fallacies of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes, either the East wind prevails over the West wind or the West wind prevails over the East wind, and there is absolutely no such thing as equality.<sup>193</sup>

The accusation of the Avakianists is centred on the words “*class nature of truth*.” Objective reality is equally the same for the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Therefore, attributing a class nature to it opens the path to instrumentalism. That is his

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192. “Epistemology,” op. cit.

193. “May 16 Circular of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,” emphasis added.

argument. But is that all there is to it? The May 16 circular was opposing the capitalist roaders' argument that "everyone is equal before the truth." What exactly was being indicated by "truth" in that context? Reading down, one sees that this was not about objective reality. It was about ideologies, thinking. When the bourgeoisie in the party said that "everyone is equal before the truth" they were not debating the existence of objective reality irrespective of class. They were demanding that the proletarian state must allow equal space to bourgeois views. This is why the circular insisted that there cannot be equality in the struggle between "the *truth of Marxism* and the fallacies of the bourgeoisie."<sup>194</sup>

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194. A similar error is seen in the RCP's reply to the "9 Letters to Comrades" put out by Mike Ely and others of the Kasama Project. They wrote, "Quoting Mike Ely, 'An article from Peking Review's revolutionary days' writes, 'Truth has a class character. There have never been truths *commonly regarded as 'indisputable'* by all classes in the field of social science.' Why is that wrong?' ...Yes, Mike Ely, the above statements are, in fact, wrong... the existence of fierce class struggle over what is accepted as truth does not imply that truth itself has a class character... Truth itself is objective, and should be assessed by whether it corresponds to objective reality, as can be known and understood in the most scientific and materialist way." Where the Peking Review article points to the *dispute* between classes over what is true *in the field of social sciences*, the RCP evades it and speaks of the objective character of truth. Is the objective world the same for the proletariat and the bourgeoisie? Yes it is, there is only one material reality. But each of these classes realise, grasp, this reality in different ways. The RCP's example, Mao's statement on the existence of classes and the need for continuing class struggle in socialist society, is illustrative. They ask,

This is plain enough. So why did Avakian resort to misinterpretation in order to charge Mao of instrumentalism? There is of course the Avakianist urge to pull words out of context. But that is not all. Avakian's belaboured criticism of "class truth" reflects a deep flaw in his conception of material reality and the process of comprehending it. Earlier we saw how he reduced material necessity faced by revolution solely to the economy. Even that was grasped in a partial manner. What we will now see is how Avakianism labours to eliminate class from the process of understanding social reality and conflates the natural and social realms.

Not just the "fallacies of the bourgeoisie," the "truth of Marxism" too is not objective reality as such. Through an ongoing process of "seeking truth from facts" Marxism can grasp this reality in a qualitatively deeper and more comprehensive manner as compared to the bourgeoisie and other classes. The truth of Marxism" can stand the closest to objective reality *because* of its class partisanship. Its quality of being thoroughly scientific, of starting from objective reality and making that reality the test of its understanding, is indissolubly bound up with its partisanship. This is so because the class it

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"How is this 'proletarian truth' untrue for the bourgeoisie?" Well it certainly is. To start with, the "new bourgeoisie" simply refuses to acknowledge itself as such. In its consciousness it is as proletarian, over even more so, than its opponent. They do not suppress the fact because it doesn't *benefit* their fundamental interests." Those interests, their class character, *prevent* them from realising it.

represents, the proletariat, is the only one that has a basic interest in comprehending reality to the fullest extent possible. That derives from its being the only class that must take the revolution all the way to the emancipation of all humanity to achieve its own liberation.

Mao explained:

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 emphasises the dependence of theory on practice, emphasises that theory is based on practice and in turn serves practice. The truth of any knowledge or theory is determined not by subjective feelings, but by objective results in social practice.<sup>195</sup>

Note how Mao insists that dialectical materialism has a class nature. As we know, Marxism's scientific approach and method flows from this philosophy. But the Avakianists do not accept this intrinsic relation between the class partisanship of Marxism and its scientific approach. In their view:

Marxism is a scientific understanding of nature and society that reflects reality as best and as thoroughly as mankind can do at this stage of history. *And* Marxism

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195. Mao Zedong, "On Practice," MSW 1.

reveals the possibility and the necessity of proletarian revolution—it is partisan.<sup>196</sup>

According to this argument, mankind has a science known as Marxism. It's a science that, among other things, reveals the need for the revolution of a specific class. And that is why it becomes partisan. In other words, the class basis of the scientific approach of Marxism is denied. Its scientific approach is separated from its class character.<sup>197</sup> This is clarified in their statement, "Marxism is partisan and it is true; but one cannot say Marxism is true because it is partisan."<sup>198</sup> As we noted earlier, the "truth of Marxism" is not objective reality as such. It isn't endowed with knowledge of this reality just by being partisan to the proletariat. But the capacity of Marxism to grasp truth, and to do that far deeper than any other, is inseparable from its partisan character. In that sense, it is true *because* it is partisan.<sup>199</sup>

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196. "Response..." emphasis added, op. cit.

197. In another instance they say, "Because the proletariat *as a class* has no need to cover up the fundamental character of human society, dialectical and historical materialism corresponds to its *fundamental interests*..." (*What Is Bob Avakian's New Synthesis?*, Part 2, italicised in original, underlining added, op. cit.) Here, what is inherent to dialectical materialism, its proletarian class nature, is made into a matter of correspondence.

198. Ibid.

199. For the record, Avakian had a better position before he ventured to break away from Maoism. In 1997 he wrote, "MLM... recognises and deals with the particularity of many different contradictions, but it does so from the standpoint and with the methodology of the class-conscious proletariat,

Further down in the same piece of writing the RCP accepts that “Marx and Engels wanted to change the world; *without that orientation* they would never have discovered the truths that they did discover.”<sup>200</sup> Here, the vague term “orientation” replaces the proletarian class interest with which Marx and Engels had identified. Without in the least diminishing the astounding intellectual labour of Marx and Engels, it must be emphasised that they were prompted by this partisanship and not some super heroic propensity for being scientific. They arrived at this through a process of realising the inability of existing theories to correctly grasp reality and learning from the class struggles going on.<sup>201</sup> If not for that partisanship there would be

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because the stand, viewpoint, and method representing the proletariat is both partisan and true. It reflects the interests of a particular class and it reflects objective reality.” “MLM is Partisan—and True,” *Revolutionary Worker* #908, May 25, 1997, emphasis added.

200. “Response...” emphasis added, op. cit.

201. “...Marx and Engels, *responding to the needs of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat*, personally participated in the practice of the revolutionary struggles of the time, summed up the experience of the workers’ movement, began a long and difficult programme of theoretical research, and, critically absorbing what was rational in the cultural and scientific achievements of humanity, created Marxism.” (*Basic Understanding of the Communist Party of China*, Norman Bethune Institute, Toronto, 1976, page 28, emphasis added.) This all-round account of the emergence of Marxism stands in sharp contrast to the shrivelled up presentation of the RCP, gutted of class struggle: “Marx and Engels developed their worldview not mainly out of any specific practice they were engaged in and still less out of the activities in ‘a particular country.’ As Lenin emphasised in his well-known

nothing propelling them to the discovery of the scientific principles and method of Marxism. Conversely, if not for the development of this scientific grasp, their partisanship would have remained utopian.

The Avakianists highlight Marx and Engels's application of scientific principles and the scientific method in separation from the class partisanship that guided them. They then confuse the issue by dragging in the matter of "constructing truth" as opposed to "discovering" it.<sup>202</sup> We must certainly discover truth, not construct it. However, the point of debate here is the role of class interests, partisanship, in enabling one in this task. Marxism emphatically declares and upholds this relation. The Avakianists deny it. Where does this lead them to?

This can be understood by examining some of their arguments:

Comrade Ajith argues one of the cornerstones of the CRC's deviation was its departure from proletarian class stand. The philosophy and method it applied

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article "The Three Component Parts of Marxism," Marxism was forged from elements of French socialism, British political economy and German philosophy," "Response..." op. cit.

202. "Had Marx and Engels sought to construct rather than discover truth, however well-intentioned and 'partisan' they may have been, they would have succeeded no further than the various utopian socialists and other reformers who decried the injustice of class exploitation but were unable to understand wherein lay the roots of class exploitation or by what process such society could be transcended," Ibid.

for analysing categories such as individual or democracy, its idealism, metaphysics and ahistorical treatment of the issue, was a “*consequence.*” (emphasis added) Here Ajith is clearly separating “class stand” from philosophy and method. However, for Marxists “philosophy and method” are central to the proletarian ideology, not something that merely “results” from class stand. What does “proletarian class stand” mean separated from the philosophy and method that together with class stand make up proletarian ideology? Really it can only mean simple class feelings—for example, identification with the masses, hatred of the exploiting classes, and so forth.<sup>203</sup>

Class stand, viewpoint and method no doubt make up the proletarian world outlook. But that does not mean that they don't have their own specificities. Nor does it negate each one of them impacting in its own way upon the others. In the history of the CRC's deviation this was quite evident. A document written by those who had ruptured from the CRC noted:

Though the CRC, CPI(ML) played an important role in defending Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, the tendency of the leadership to deny the uni-

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203. Ibid.

versality of this ideology was present from the very beginning.<sup>204</sup>

But the way it got manifested was not directly centred on philosophy or method. It emerged as a tendency that argued for seeking answers to new questions in views advanced from non-proletarian stands on the plea that they have not been dealt with by the leaders of the proletariat. The document criticised this and said:

New things and knowledge are constantly emerging in this world. The proletariat must grapple with them and continuously develop its ideology and practice. *But it cannot ignore the fact that all of these new things have a class character.* So the vanguard party should analyse them from its own class standpoint and outlook. It should carry out synthesis on the basis of the fundamentals of its ideology. Otherwise it will become eclectic and liberal in its ideological approach, opening the door to revisionism.<sup>205</sup>

It could be argued that ignoring the class character of new phenomena is already a deviation in philosophy and method. Yes, it certainly is. But that does not mean that the particular features seen in the emergence and subsequent course of develop-

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204. "A Critique Of The CRC, CPI (M-L) Line," April 1997, henceforth "Critique..."

205. Ibid., emphasis added.

ment of a deviation cannot be separately identified. In the specific instance of the CRC, the weakening of class stand soon led to weakening and overturning the mainly correct views it had on philosophy and method during its initial period. This was the experience being cited in the writing criticised by the RCP. It does not in the least bit suggest that primacy must be given to “proletarian class stand” as opposed to “proletarian philosophy and method.” It was drawing lessons from a specific example of deviation from proletarian ideology to stress the importance of class stand. There was a reason for doing that. The arguments on developing ideology being raised by the RCP were already pointing to the disastrous direction it was taking. Having experienced the deviation of the CRC, indications of their attempt to separate the scientific outlook and method of Marxism from its class nature were all too apparent to us. Their response confirmed this. They accuse us of separating class stand from philosophy and method precisely in order to counterpose them and side-line the former.

More deeply, by minimising the role of “simple class feelings” the RCP displays a dismissive attitude towards the foundational significance of class position, the material position of the class. All the three components of the proletarian world outlook stand, viewpoint and method flow from this material reality; they are ultimately determined by it. While class hatred or feelings cannot substitute for class

stand, there cannot be a class stand that excludes them. All the members of a Maoist party, regardless of their class origins, have to struggle to acquire a proletarian world outlook. But there is a qualitative difference in this matter between those who come from the working class and others. In the case of the latter, particularly those coming from the ruling classes or middle classes, declassification is decisive. The lessons of the erstwhile socialist countries amply prove that this is not just a matter of learning Marxist theory. The class line of a Maoist party, building it primarily among the basic classes, consciously tries to draw on the strengths given by the class position. That is correct and necessary. It plays an important role in retaining the proletarian character of the vanguard. The RCP's approach of one-sidedly highlighting the decisive role of theory in ideology downplays this.

Zhang Chunqiao's correct identification of theory being the *most* dynamic factor in ideology is driven by the RCP's logic to a one-sided position that makes it the *sole* dynamic factor.<sup>206</sup> It observed, "...a theory which departs from MLM will inevitably corrupt any genuine proletarian feelings."<sup>207</sup> The converse, a weakening of class stand leading to theoretical deviations and corruption of ideology,

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206. This is a persistent position of Avakianism. Avakian wrote, "Theory is *the* dynamic factor in ideology." ("The Need for Communists to Be... Communists," Bob Avakian, emphasis added, henceforth "Need...")

207. "Response..." op. cit.

is practically denied. This is then taken to the next level. The danger I had drawn attention to, "... reducing Marxism to a methodology cut off from its proletarian stand and partisanship." is attacked as an example of insisting on the "...*opposition* between "stand and partisanship" and methodology."<sup>208</sup> Thus they deny even the possibility of such an approach despite its being widely seen among intellectuals.<sup>209</sup> No, there is no opposition between *Marxist* methodology, its viewpoint and stand. But there is a powerful tendency which portrays and tries to use the philosophy of dialectical materialism and its methodology as tools that can be employed by anyone, regardless of their class stand. This was seen in the CRC's positions.<sup>210</sup> We see its repetition in a new form in Avakianism's views on the scientific nature of Marxism. It is further exposed in its positions on the "fundamentals of Marxism."

The RCP argued:

...Ajith is raising the questions of "fundamentals of Marxism" as a special category that somehow can escape from the realm

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208. Ibid., emphasis added.

209. Karl Popper, for instance, declared, "Marxism is fundamentally a method," quoted in *Karl Popper and the Social Sciences*, William A Gorton, State University of New York, 2006, page 83.

210. "The CRC, CPI (ML) drew attention to the importance of grasping philosophy. But its liberalism soon led to treating dialectical materialism merely as a methodology which can equally serve any class. The proletarian bias of this philosophy was in effect denied," "Critique..." 3.1, April 1997, op. cit.

of critical examination. In so doing, Ajith presents Marxism, its “fundamental principles,” not as a scientific method and approach, not as both a product as well as a tool of social investigation, but essentially outside this process.<sup>211</sup>

Notice how the “fundamental principles” of Marxism are reduced to “method and approach.”

What was the context in which this issue was raised? I wrote:

Leaps in the history of the development of proletarian ideology are marked both by rupture and continuity. One sees a dialectical interaction between the two. Continuity through rupture, and rupture made possible by continuity. In terms of what was discussed above, this can be described as *standing firm on the basic principles (or fundamentals) of Marxism by developing them through creative application to correspond to contemporary social reality and tasks*. Both revisionism and dogmatism deny the dialectics of rupture and continuity. But *what is it that enables one to grasp this dialectics? The universal truth of Marxism, its class stand, method and, above all, its revolutionary mission. If*

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211. “Response...” op. cit. Though it is also characterised as “a product” this is already circumscribed by “method and approach.”

*this is called into question, then we lose our mooring.*<sup>212</sup>

Evidently, the fundamentals of Marxism are not being posed as something above critical examination. The necessity to develop them by rupturing from views that do not correspond to contemporary social reality is acknowledged. But if this is not done by standing firm on the universal truth of Marxism it will deviate. *Therefore, the development of Marxism is not simply a matter of putting up its fundamental principles for re-examination in a general sense. It demands the application of the universal truth of Marxism in concrete situations which also include the realm of theoretical practice.* Mao wrote:

Marxism must necessarily advance; it must develop along with practice and cannot stand still... However, *the basic principles of Marxism must never be violated*, otherwise mistakes will be made.

It is revisionism to negate the basic principles of Marxism and to negate its universal truth.<sup>213</sup>

This is indeed an exacting task. How do we decide what constitutes the “basic principles,” the “universal truth” of Marxism? How do we differentiate them from others that are not so essential?

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212. “Socialist...” emphasis added, op. cit.

213. Mao Zedong, “Speech at National Conference on Propaganda Work,” SW Vol. 5, page 434, emphasis added, op. cit.

I attempted a definition by suggesting that such principles should be distinguished from the models thrown up by their application. This approach is of use in some contexts. Let's take an important issue currently under debate, the dictatorship of the proletariat. Its vital necessity during the period of transition from capitalism to communism is an inviolable basic principle of Marxism. Now, the specific way this was implemented in the Soviet Union was at one point considered as THE application and sanctified as a fundamental. Yet, its errors were later criticised and Mao developed a qualitatively different application. The "fundamentals/models" distinction can be of assistance to understand this. But, even then, it is of limited value. The examples listed out by the RCP of principles that were considered fundamental at one point and later abandoned as mistaken or outmoded certainly shows this.<sup>214</sup> Yet, it remains a fact that a satisfactory resolution of what constitutes the essential fundamental

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214. Avakian has suggested a different approach, "Of course, it is possible that a scientific theory is true—correctly reflects reality—in its main and essential aspects, but is shown to be incorrect in certain secondary aspects—and, in accordance with that, some of its particular predictions prove not to be true. And when that is the case, the application of the scientific method leads to a further development of the theory—through the discarding, or modifying, of certain aspects and the addition of new elements into the theory." ("Making..." Part 1, :Marxism as a Science..." *Revolution* #105, October 21, 2007, op. cit.) This is founded on the assumption that the Popperist concept of "falsifiability" is fully applicable to Marxism. This is a problematic proposition. We will be examining it later on.

principles of Marxism still remains unfulfilled. Its stand, viewpoint and method no doubt lie at the core. But that is not all. Ideological positions too are part of it.

Ideology, MLM, is understood as the body of work and method of the great leaders of the international proletariat. Over the course of its development through advances and setbacks in application, as well as due to basic changes in the world, the ICM has deepened its grasp and raised the level of its understanding. Some parts of what were considered as essential parts of its ideology have been discarded or transformed. The Maoist grasp is not the same as a Leninist or Marxist one. But its advanced grasp is not merely a matter of rupture. The insights and foundations of Marxism-Leninism are essential to it. Thus, the question of the basic principles of Marxism directly relate to the universality, the universal truth, of ideology. The RCP view of treating the fundamentals as “method and approach” in the name of being scientific tends to deny this.

Hence they take offence for saying that:

Though new advances in Marxism arise from concrete application and verification through practice in a particular country they contain universality precisely because they are guided by the fundamentals.<sup>215</sup>

The accusation is that:

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215. “Socialist...” op. cit.

He does not argue they are universal because they are universally true, but rather because they correspond to, or were based upon, the “fundamentals” of Marxism. Gone is the objective criteria of truth, that it corresponds to material reality, and in flies another opposite criteria where the truth of some idea or theory (its “universality”) is determined by its consistency with the premises on which it was based.<sup>216</sup>

When “concrete application and verification through practice” is specifically mentioned, it should be obvious that the objective criterion of truth is not in any way denied. So then what was being argued for? The line of a Maoist party in a country is developed by creatively applying the universality of MLM in the concrete conditions obtaining there. That universality already corresponds, in an overall sense, to the material reality existing there. This is so because the experiences of particular applications from which it was derived (to a great extent) have given lessons already validated by objective reality. It does not replace the particularities of concrete conditions. But it can shed light on them and be of guidance to grasp them.<sup>217</sup> A

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216. “Response...” op. cit.

217. To give an example, the Communist International pointed out that imperialism transforms and makes feudalism its social base in an oppressed country. That lesson was derived from the social analyses of numerous colonial and

creative application of MLM already contains universality precisely because of this guidance. Its verification through practice in a particular material reality, the concrete conditions of a country, in turn enriches the universality of Marxism.

The Avakianists have as usual pulled words out of their context. And in that process they revealed how their reduction of Marxist fundamentals to a matter of method eliminates its universal truth. Let us repeat their words, “He does not argue they are universal because they are universally true, but rather because they correspond to, or were based upon, the “fundamentals” of Marxism.” This raises the question of the content of Marxist fundamentals, of ideology. Do they, as such, contain universality? Is that universality true? The logical conclusion of the RCP’s arguments leads to a negative, on both counts. But they are wrong. The basic principles of MLM contain universal truth. In fact, that is why MLM can be applied in diverse conditions and fields. However this universality is not something static, some readymade answer explaining reality.

How is this to be understood? As Lenin pointed out, every law “freezes” reality. It is incomplete, relative. Therefore, the application of MLM laws or principles to chart out the course of revolution in any country also calls for enriching, developing, the conceptual understanding of those laws. Otherwise

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semi-colonial countries. As such it contains a universal truth that helps communists in preparing their programs and guiding their practice.

it would be cutting the feet to suit the “shoe” of laws. This is the point about creative application. In fact, creative application of MLM precisely calls for such conceptual leaps in grasping the universal laws established by MLM. Thus, through its application in unravelling and handling the specific laws of a particular revolution, the universal laws of MLM themselves become more complete, more capable of grasping the complex, contradictory, motion of the whole human society.<sup>218</sup>

We will now proceed to examine another consequence of the RCP’s approach. This is its mechanical equation of the realms of natural sciences and social sciences. My argument<sup>219</sup> on the qualitative

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218. “The Fight to Establish Maoism,” Ajith, *Naxalbari* No: 2.

219. “Marxism is also a science. So the comparison is being made with natural sciences, where new discoveries have led to re-examination of fundamental concepts. This comparison overlooks the *qualitative distinction between the natural and social sciences*. The distinct character of the latter is their class partisanship. While social facts are part of objective reality, the process of identifying them and seeking out truth, as well as the extent to which truth can be synthesised, are intimately bound up with class stand. Whether something claimed as new is really new is itself a matter of class struggle, in theory as well as in practice. *All of this rules out a simple extension of the methods of natural sciences into the re-examining of Marxist positions.*” (“Socialist...” emphasis added, op. cit.) Lenin stated, “...in modern society the latter [political economy] is as much a partisan science as is epistemology.” (Lenin, *Materialism and Emperio-criticism*, Chapter 6.4, LCW 14, words in square brackets added.) Further on, Mao drew attention to the role of ideology in aiding or preventing the acquisition of knowledge even in the natural sciences. He noted, “As for the natural sciences, there are two aspects. The

distinction between the natural sciences and social sciences and the error of simply extending the methods of the former into the latter has been contested by the Avakianists.<sup>220</sup>

Marxism takes practice as the criterion of truth. It insists that social theory must be verified by objective reality. This constitutes the foundation of its claim to be scientific. It shares this scientific method in common with the natural sciences. But if this is taken to the extreme of equating both and ignoring their qualitative difference, it would amount to a form of mechanical thinking. Marx was well aware of this danger. He insisted on the distinction between the precision possible in the analysis of material economic conditions as compared to that of ideological forms.<sup>221</sup> Later on, tendencies which

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natural sciences as such have no class nature, but the question of who studies and makes use of them does.”(Mao Zedong, “Beat Back the Attacks of the Bourgeois Rightists,” MSW 5, pages 460-1.

220. As usual, it begins with a distortion. For instance, my views on the methodological implications of the qualitative difference between the two realms is twisted around to charge me with “refusing” the necessity of re-examining fundamental principles in the social sciences. (“Response...” op. cit.) In an even more vulgar display of Avakianist craft, K.J.F writes, “Ajith argues that *because of Marxism’s ‘proletarian stand and partisanship,*” it cannot (and should not attempt to) conform to the scientific method used in the natural sciences.” (“Polemical...” emphasis added, op. cit.)

221. “With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, *which can*

overlooked the importance of this insight emerged and became entrenched. Stalin's argument that the "science of history of society... can become *as precise a science as, let us say, biology...*" was an example.<sup>222</sup> It is one thing to say that Marxism has made the study of history scientific. But it's quite another to claim that Marxist historiography can attain *as much precision* as a natural science. Apart from the paucity of factual material, historical study of any society can never do without the study and interpretation of its ideological forms.

The views of the RCP display a repeat of Stalin's error. It is rendered even grosser through Avakian's endorsement of Karl Popper's criteria of 'being scientific.' For Popper, a theory is scientific only if can be challenged by testing for its falsifiability. Avakian accepts this. Popper's had asserted that Marxism is unscientific because it isn't falsifiable. Avakian replies by insisting that it is indeed falsifiable "in a fundamental and essential sense." He then enumerates examples where Marxism has withstood the

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*be determined with the precision of natural science*, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic—in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out." "Preface of a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," emphasis added. It must be noted that what Marx is dealing with here is the comparative differences in precision. The diverse fields of material reality studied by the natural sciences themselves exhibit various levels of possible precision. But this does not negate the qualitative difference in this matter between the natural and social sciences.

222. Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, emphasis added.

test of falsifiability.<sup>223</sup> At a first reading this would appear as a valid refutation of Popper. But closer examination will show something else. Recollect Mao's observation that despite having correct ideas representatives of the advanced class may still suffer defeat because of their comparative weakness. By its very logic, the criterion of falsifiability can never comprehend this paradox. For it, failure is simply failure and conclusive proof of being unscientific.<sup>224</sup> Avakian's defence of Marxism is thus fatally flawed. Based as it is on an uncritical acceptance of Popper's criterion, it ultimately goes to undermine the claim of Marxism to truth. The roots of this lie in his failure to properly grasp the qualitative distinction between the natural sciences and social sciences.<sup>225</sup>

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223. "There are definitely things in Marxism that are falsifiable. For example, dialectical materialism. If the world were made up of something other than matter in motion—if that could be shown—then clearly Marxism in its fundamentals, in its essence and at its core, would be falsified, proven wrong. Or, if it could be shown that, yes, all reality consists of matter, but that some forms of matter do not change, do not have internal contradiction and motion and development—that too would be a fundamental refutation of dialectical materialism. But none of that has been shown." "Making..." Part 1, *Marxism as a Science*, op. cit.

224. Despite his insistence on the test of falsifiability (i.e. verification based on objective reality) Popper finally ended up posing "criticism of theory" as the ultimate test. But that is another matter.

225. Avakian's arguments are the mirror opposite of those advanced by Venu. In his criticism of Popper, Venu argued "...the law of dialectical materialism which states that the unity and struggle of opposites is operating in all the processes in the universe cannot be proved at the level of empirical science. Whether this law of dialectical materialism operates in

Avakian is quite caught up with this confusion. He writes:

Communism, it could be said, is not simply a science, *in the sense that it does involve other elements*, including morality, which are, strictly speaking, *outside of the province of science*. *But all this cannot be divorced from science*; and it all ultimately and fundamentally rests on, as well as needing to be continually regrounded in, what is actually true, as determined by a scientific approach and method, and no other.<sup>226</sup>

Astonishingly enough, this is said while claiming to present a correct understanding on the relation between science and philosophy. Apart from “morality,” the “other elements” mentioned by

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any particular branch of science can be examined and found out by that particular branch. But, no branch of science can say that it is a law applicable to the whole universe... Thus, the law of the unity and struggle of opposites, the cornerstone of Marxist world outlook, is never *proved completely* at the level of science.” (*Philosophical Problems of Revolution*, K. Venu, Vijayan Book Stall, Kottayam, 1982, pages 107-08, emphasis added) As seen here, his rebuttal was based on recognition of the qualitative difference between the realms of philosophy and science. This is true. But it failed in its task because the issue is not one of being “*proved completely*.” Failure to pass the test of objectivity even in a single field of the natural sciences would be sufficient to overturn the claims of dialectical materialism.

226. *Ruminations and Wranglings – A Correct Understanding Of The Relation Between Science And Philosophy*, underlining in original, italics added, op. cit.

Avakian as constituting communist philosophy are “outlook and method.” Among them “method” obviously cannot be “strictly kept” outside the province of science. The distinctly philosophical is thereby reduced to “morality and outlook.” Thus what is advanced as the defence of scientific methods in philosophy ends up as the pauperisation of philosophy.

Philosophy is no doubt indissolubly bound up with material reality and the sciences that unravel it. But empirical sciences are only one of the sources of philosophy. It emerges from all the realms of human existence, including art and culture, and draws sustenance from them. Its roots lie not only in the human-nature interaction but also in those of oneself with one’s own material and spiritual existence. The greatness of Marxist philosophy lies in its unbound capacity to comprehend and address this totality in all its dazzling particularities.

We must adopt scientific methods in philosophy—“the science of thought and its laws—formal logic and dialectics.” But philosophy cannot be treated as a natural science. Avakian advocates this wrong view. Criticising the concept of “scientific ideology” he states:

It has been pointed out that this argument amounts to an attempt to create ideology and philosophy which *stand outside or above science*—ideology and philosophy which are, in the words of this

criticism, “*a higher level of abstraction*”  
than science.<sup>227</sup>

Avakian attributes all sorts of deviations to the term “scientific ideology.” What he fails to examine is the commonly understood meaning of this term—an ideology that is scientific because it accords to reality. Ideology was taken to mean the body of principles and method of Marxism from the 2<sup>nd</sup> international period onwards. Earlier, for example in *German Ideology*, it was mostly understood as “false consciousness,” an inverted grasp of reality. Current developments, including claims about Thoughts, Paths and Syntheses, pose the necessity to re-examine the present understanding on ideology as such and probe how far it can be scientific and how much of it would be “false consciousness. But let’s leave that aside for now and get on with Avakian’s argument.

What is scientific abstraction? Theoretical abstractions made in science are derived from particular laws discovered in specific fields of scientific enquiry. Therefore, it is meaningless to speak about an abstraction of “science as such” and debate its position. Compared to scientific abstractions in specific fields, the abstractions of ideology and philosophy certainly do represent a higher level. This is so because the universal categories they put forward are themselves derived from a diverse set of univer-

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227. Ibid., *Communism as a Science—Not a “Scientific Ideology,”* emphasis added, op. cit.

salities contained in laws governing specific fields of social life and natural phenomena. An ideology or philosophy will be wrong in its abstractions if they are not grounded in natural and social reality. But that doesn't change the fact that they represent a higher level of abstraction.<sup>228</sup> Avakian confuses the scientific method for natural sciences and drains out the distinctiveness of philosophy and ideology. This is a manifestation of scienticism, a variant of positivism. The one-to-one equation of natural sciences and social sciences seen in the RCP flows from just such mistaken thinking and in turn bolsters it. Avakian prides to imagine himself and his supporters as a team of scientists setting out to transform the world. Fortunately for us, the "green pastures" of natural and social reality readily provide the means, and Maoism the tools, to resist and overturn this scienticist project.

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228. In his biographical sketch of Marx, Lenin wrote "Dialectical materialism 'does not need any philosophy standing above the other sciences.'" (Lenin, *Selected Works, Volume I*, emphasis added.) This has been a consistent position of Marxism right from the very beginning. It needs to be clarified that what is meant by 'standing above' in this quote is the claim of pre-Marxian philosophies to be the all-embracing source of knowledge for all domains, natural and social.



## CHAPTER 13. A RATIONALIST CRITIQUE OF RELIGION

With scienticism as a prominent trait it shouldn't be surprising to see Avakianism indulge in crass rationalism while dealing with religion. He writes:

You pull one little thread and it all unravels—that's religion, religious absolutism. This is the point I keep hammering at Christian Fascists: If one thing in the Bible is wrong, then their whole case is sunk...

Be cautioned! If you thought this was the height of wishful thinking, the gem is yet to come:

I have some strategic thinking about how the way you can get to the mass base of these Christian Fascists is by hammering at the foundations of it... hammering in the ideological sphere.<sup>229</sup>

Well, there is already a long-standing, acknowledged claimant for that. "Hammering religion in the ideological sphere" has been the "strategic thinking" of rationalism and its proponents for quite some centuries now. They have been literally tearing at religion all over, not just pulling at one or the other thread. Not merely one, a huge lot of things in the Bible and all those other religious texts have been proven wrong. But religion and religious absolutism still remain to be "unravelling" (whatever that may mean).

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229. "Observations..." page 77, op. cit.

If at all, they have been “ravelling up” a lot of things in recent times!

The Marxist understanding on religion is well explained in these words of Marx:

Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point d’honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realisation of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion. Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.<sup>230</sup>

These words beautifully and scientifically grasp the material *and* spiritual underpinnings of religion. It thus cautions against assuming that religious faith can be controverted merely with rational argument. The scientific understanding on the role played by

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230. Karl Marx, “Introduction,” *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*.

religion has since been deepened through studies in diverse fields. Its historical role in the creation and development of morality and social ties and its imprint in the human brain are now better known. All of this has surely confirmed the Marxist understanding on religion. But they also demand that Marxists move beyond a simplistic description of religion as something born of ignorance and secured by the interests of the ruling classes.

It would seem that Avakian is at least engaged with the material grounding of religion. Yet the few instances where he tries at a materialist explanation are as mechanical as is his ideological approach on religion. One of these is his equation between proletarianisation and the “decrease of religion.” The reverse, de-proletarianisation under conditions of globalisation, is held to be a prime cause leading to “gravitation toward religion, and in particular religious fundamentalism.”<sup>231</sup> This simply flies against

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231. In Avakian’s words, “Mike Davis, who has his limitations but also has some important insights, wrote an article where he spoke about how in the nineteenth and early twentieth century when people were driven off the land in the countries where capitalism was rising, they were more or less—not evenly and smoothly but more or less—integrated into the proletariat. And the proletarianisation of these people led to a decrease in religion. But the phenomenon in the world today is in significant measure the opposite: people being driven from the countryside to the cities, or flushed out of the proletariat, if you will, and being herded into these massive shantytowns, existing in this ‘disarticulated’ kind of situation—this has given rise to the reverse phenomenon of the growth, the significant dramatic growth, of gravitation toward religion, and in particular religious fundamentalism,” (“Basis... Changing Material Conditions and the Growth of

facts. One could give any number of instances where overwhelming sections of a growing proletariat remained religious even though they were unionised and involved in class struggle. But, more than that, this Avakianist thesis blocks us off from grasping the reasons for the decline of the secular among the proletariat, a phenomenon that appeared well before the advent of globalisation. The secular, the progressive, was not pushed out by religious trends in tandem with de-proletarianisation. Rather, religious revivalism and fundamentalism grew up in the space vacated by their weakening.

If this is understood properly we will be drawn to a meaningful analysis of the particularities of religious phenomena such as fundamentalism and revivalism. Whereas, if the vulgar materialist thesis of “de-proletarianisation leading to growth of religious fundamentalism” is accepted, we will be lead away from this important task. Specificities of ideological tasks in this field will be denied. The blanket solution will be that of “hammering away.” Militant materialist exposure of religious thought is certainly needed. But it can never stand in for a Marxist critique of existing religious phenomena.

In his discussion on the material grounds of religious fundamentalism, Avakian points to the destabilising impact of globalisation in the Third World. This, coupled with most people in urban areas ending up in the informal economy, is seen as a major

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Religious Fundamentalism”) op. cit.

reason for “...many people... turning to religious fundamentalism to try to give them an anchor, in the midst of all this dislocation and upheaval.”<sup>232</sup> Let’s take a closer look at this. The conditions he describes can explain why religious faith is getting strengthened among the oppressed, in a context of weakening of the Left. But why do they turn to fundamentalism? Why not to some other religious trend? In Avakian’s scheme all this would be irrelevant. Earlier we had seen how he casually places religion and religious absolutism in the same bracket.

The fall out of this rationalism is seen in his dismissal of Islamic resistance movements in Iraq and Afghanistan as a “reactionary pole” representing “historically outmoded strata among colonized and oppressed humanity.” The imperialist economism contained in this position has already been dealt with in an earlier section. Here we will examine some theoretical aspects. Islamic fundamentalism certainly is a historically outmoded ideology. But does it represent historically outmoded social strata? Not necessarily. Islamic fundamentalism itself is not a single entity. Some of its streams are quite petty bourgeois, rural and urban, even “modern” in education. The petty bourgeoisie of an oppressed country is an important national force. It can play a reactionary role. But it is by no means historically outmoded. Such petty bourgeois class com-

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232. “Why Is Religious Fundamentalism Growing in Today’s World—And What Is the Real Alternative?,” henceforth “Religious Fundamentalism...”

position of the core is one important reason why some fundamentalist movements are able to connect with the broad masses and don the mantle of legitimate resistance. If the Maoists are to challenge these forces and assume leadership of the struggle it won't do to merely expose the reactionary content of their program. They must address and unravel the enigma of a modern class, generally progressive, fiercely advocating an outmoded and reactionary ideology and achieving representation of national resistance through it. Instead of merely *describing* how these forces are "...returning to, and enforcing with a vengeance, traditional relations, customs, ideas and values..."<sup>233</sup> they must seek out the particularities of this phenomenon which give it its fascist character.<sup>234</sup>

Secondly, all the Islamic religious movements that have emerged or strengthened in the Third World in recent times are neither fundamentalist nor revivalist. A lot of ideological churning is going on among Muslims, and that is true of the religious sphere too. Though liberation theology trends are still practically non-existent, that is not the case with reformist ones. Some among them are quite infatuated with Western democracy and modernisation. This a reflection of the illusions created

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233. Ibid.

234. A preliminary attempt in this direction can be seen in "Islamic..." op. cit. Incidentally, this article, published in 2007, directly took on Avakian's thesis on "the two outmodeds." The Avakianists have yet to "engage" with it.

among a section of the middle and lower classes by globalisation. They see in it a means to economic elevation. This is another aspect of globalisation's dynamics. The pro-West political stance of some trends of Islamic reformism facilitates the appropriation of anti-imperialism by fundamentalism. It in turn bolsters its claims on being the true rendering of Islam and helps it block the democratisation of Islamic belief. Maoist ideological intervention will have to address all of these aspects if it is to make headway. Obviously, such complexities are simply beyond Avakian's thought.

Finally, Avakian's arguments totally fail to identify and locate the major role played by national sentiments and culture in the growth of Third World fundamentalism. He writes,

An additional factor in all this is that, in the Third World, these massive and rapid changes and dislocations are occurring in the context of domination and exploitation by foreign imperialists—and this is associated with “local” ruling classes which are economically and politically dependent on and subordinate to imperialism, and are broadly seen as the corrupt agents of an alien power, who also promote the “decadent culture of the West.” This, in the short run, can strengthen the hand of fundamentalist religious forces and leaders who frame opposition to the

“corruption” and “Western decadence” of the local ruling classes, and the imperialists to which they are beholden, in terms of returning to, and enforcing with a vengeance, traditional relations, customs, ideas and values which themselves are rooted in the past and embody extreme forms of exploitation and oppression.<sup>235</sup>

By this logic, what is seen is nothing more than of a bunch of reactionaries making use of popular anger against an alien power and its servitors. There is no effort to grapple with why “traditional relations, customs, ideas and values... rooted in the past” can be so readily promoted and made acceptable in this modern age by the fundamentalists. Its articulation, spread and assimilation as a *national* discourse is nowhere acknowledged. But that is precisely why the fundamentalists are able to disseminate them without much resistance. For sure, they embody extreme forms of exploitation and domination. However, this doesn't controvert their quality of being part of that culture. Here, the sources of Avakian's error extend beyond his rationalism to his economist views on the national question. Be that as it is, we must go deeper into the implications of what was said above.

Understanding the “national” claim of fundamentalism helps us locate the failure of Maoists to uphold the national banner in oppressed countries coupled with a superficial identification of compr-

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235. “Religious Fundamentalism...” op. cit.

dor modernisation with secularisation of society as one of the reasons for its strengthening. The latter is no less important than the former. Its ambit of influence goes beyond the boundaries of the Third World and encompasses significant sections of progressive people in imperialist countries. It even extends to the Maoist camp.<sup>236</sup>

Furthermore, awareness of the ‘national’ claim of fundamentalism helps us grasp that:

...[U]nless the spiritual space occupied by fundamentalism is retaken with the enlightening vision of an all-round liberation, a vibrant national, secular culture and a new society free of exploitation, unless the physical space now occupied by fundamentalist resistance is regained under the revolutionary banners of a peoples’ war, the Maoists are not going to succeed.<sup>237</sup>

We must add, unless they thoroughly repudiate Avakianism they will not even reach anywhere near these tasks.

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236. Uncritical adulation of works of art with a “modern” ethos originating from the Westernised urban middle-class or elite circles in the Third World as expressions of progressive thought is an example of this tendency.

237. “Islamic...” op. cit.



## CHAPTER 14. SOME “POSTIST” TRAITS OF AVAKIANISM

The claims on Avakian’s contribution to philosophy include a supposed “...fuller break with idealist, even quasi-religious, forms of thought that had found their way into the foundation of Marxism and had not been ruptured with.”<sup>238</sup> This is elaborated as follows:

Avakian has excavated, criticised, and broken with certain secondary but still significant religious-type tendencies that have previously existed within the communist movement and communist theory—tendencies to see the achievement of communism as an “historical inevitability” and the related view of communism as almost like a heaven, some kind of “kingdom of great harmony,” without contradictions and struggles among people. Mao broke with these kinds of views and methods; but the point is that *there was still, even in Mao, an aspect of “inevitablism” and related tendencies*, and Avakian has carried further the rupture with these ways of thinking, which are suggestive of an element of religiosity within Marxism... *Avakian has now made some ruptures with some of Mao’s understanding*

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238. *What Is Bob Avakian’s New Synthesis?*, Part 2, op. cit.

*too.*<sup>239</sup>

There is no account whatsoever of where “inevitablism” is seen in Mao’s writings. Nor is there any explanation of where and how Avakian “ruptures” from Mao. What we see instead is some serious departure from Marxism and pandering to postist trends.

Avakian writes:

Engels, and Marx as well, talked about moving from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom, with the achievement of communism, as though—I’m exaggerating, or overstating, but there was a certain tendency toward thinking that—when you get to communism you will be *in a realm of freedom in relation to necessity in a whole different way*. And this, Mao came to see, is not really correct—does not correctly grasp the essence of things. No matter how far ahead you go into communist society, you will still be dealing with necessity which presents itself as something “external” to you, which you have to act on and struggle to transform—and, in doing so, bring forward new necessity.<sup>240</sup>

Let us first note that Mao has said nothing of this sort. What he pointed out was that there still would

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239. Ibid., “Overcoming Limitations.”

240. “Making...” Part 1, op. cit.

be contradictions and struggle in communism, which is a different matter. Avakian’s imputation is that Marx and Engels tended towards ignoring or underplaying the role of necessity in communism. This is sought to be clinched with platitudes on how necessity will continue to exist in communism.

The concept “realm of necessity” has a specific meaning in Marxism. It is not necessity *in general*, but the realm of physical needs of human existence. When Marx wrote about moving from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom he was explicit that this would not mean the ending of the realm of necessity. The point was that humanity would no longer be ruled by it, but would be able to submit it to its control. Thereby its physical needs of existence would be achieved with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, its human nature. This in turn would allow it to develop its human faculties to the greatest possible extent in the given circumstances.<sup>241</sup>

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241. “Just as the savage must wrestle with Nature to satisfy his wants, to maintain and reproduce life, so must civilised man, and he must do so in all social formations and under all possible modes of production. With his development this realm of physical necessity expands as a result of his wants; but, at the same time, the forces of production which satisfy these wants also increase. Freedom in this field can only consist in socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, their human nature. But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that devel-

Evidently, there is nothing here even remotely suggestive of *getting free of necessity*. Rather, Marx's rules this out, "...the true realm of freedom... however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis." But Marxism does stress that the relation between the realm of freedom and necessity will be "in a whole different way" in communism, will be qualitatively different, when compared to all social systems which preceded it.<sup>242</sup> Thus, what is trumpeted by Avakianism as a philosophical rupture turns out to be a sordid case of departure, not just from Marxism but from intellectual integrity itself. We see yet another example of how Avakianism's claim to the new is built on critiquing the creations of its own vulgarisation.

The struggle against deterministic, teleological interpretations of Marxism, including mechanical views on the base-superstructure relation, is long-standing. It goes back all the way till the times of its founders themselves. During the Comintern period, influenced to a high degree by Stalin's mechani-

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opment of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, *which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis,*" *Capital, Volume III*, emphasis added.

242. Avakian contradicts himself in another piece of writing where he accepts, "It is true that, in communist society, in a communist world, the character of necessity and the interrelation between necessity and how people deal with necessity *will be radically different* than it is now," in "Materialism vs. Idealism, Part 2 – Necessity and Freedom," emphasis added, henceforth "Materialism..." Apparently, consistency is least placed in his concerns.

cal views, determinism became quite prominent. Mao ruptured from this. He advanced a dialectical grasp on the relation between base and superstructure and the role of human consciousness. Despite this, determinist tendencies persist within the Maoist movement. Evidently, there is the need to further deepen the dialectical understanding on these aspects. A number of Marxist theoreticians have written on this, some opening up new grounds. Recent historical and anthropological studies also offer rich material to aid us in this task. But where does Avakian’s self-acclaimed breakthrough against “inevitablism” stand in this matter?

The first thing that stands out is the almost total absence of reasoned engagement with existing theory. One may think that this is a basic requirement for someone setting out to achieve a higher synthesis. Yet, neither the classics of Marxism nor the numerous theoretical works on the subject are systematically surveyed by Avakian. Let that be. What does Avakian say?

...[F]rom the vantage point of the proletariat and what’s required for its emancipation in the fullest sense, you can see in terms of the sweep of history and in terms of where society is going and needs to go. Not inevitably going, but where, in what direction, there are very strong tendencies—and those tendencies have not inevitably developed, but they have

developed. There's a certain tendency that points in a certain direction. There is also... the possibility humanity could become extinct through the same contradictions that make possible a whole different and better world of communism. So there's nothing inevitable, but there are certain tendencies, there are certain things to build on in terms of going for communism.<sup>243</sup>

He argues that we can only speak of coherence in historical development, not inevitability.<sup>244</sup>

The possibility of humanity becoming extinct through the same contradictions that make communism possible is real. Capital's endless drive for self-expansion that lies at the root of these contradictions could very well lead to an environmental catastrophe making human life impossible. So too could something like a huge comet crashing on earth. Thus there is no hidebound certainty that

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243. "Calculation, Classes and Categorical Imperatives," from "Marxism and the Call of the Future."

244. "There have been, and there are, no predetermined pathways in the historical development of human beings and of human society (in its interaction with the rest of nature). But once again, through this process, this continual interaction, of necessity and freedom—and, yes, causality and contingency (or necessity and accident) and their dialectical inter-relation—there has developed a certain 'coherence' to history. And it has brought us to the threshold where it is possible—not inevitable but possible—to make the leap to communism." ("Materialism... Necessity and Accident," *op. cit.*)

humanity will achieve communism. But do these possibilities eliminate inevitability altogether from historical development?<sup>245</sup> No they don't. The resolution of social contradictions contains inevitability. For example, a socialist (or new democratic) revolution is inevitable for the *resolution* of the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. And, if humanity continues to exist, the basic contradictions of imperialism will inevitably continue to sharpen and give rise to rebellions, communist parties and revolutions led by them.

Let's go back to Avakian's argument, "Not inevitably going, but where, in what direction, there are

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245. Avakianism's gossellers are even more unrestrained in their dismissal of inevitability. If they had their way they would eliminate it even from philosophy: "...a non-scientific concept of 'the inevitable triumph of communism' ...long held sway in the communist movement. Even today there are comrades that are still burdened with this metaphysical notion. Is it inconceivable that the earth will be destroyed by some kind of natural catastrophe (collision with a comet, for example?) And if that unlikely event were to happen within the next several hundred years, might it not prevent the triumph of communism? Here we should point out that even if the odds of such a calamity happening are minuscule, any real, scientific possibility of the same is enough to rule out the *philosophically unsound conception of 'inevitability'* even if such a remote possibility may have little or no practical implications for revolutionary tasks of carrying out revolution on earth." "Response..." emphasis added, op. cit.) If such a collision were to destroy the earth it would surely be an "inevitable" outcome of the trajectories of two bodies in the universe crossing each other. But the Avakianists cannot even notice that the very example they cite substantiates "inevitability" (regardless of whether or not humanity arrives at communism) and refutes their ruling it out *as a philosophical conception*. Such is the strength of faith!

very strong *tendencies*—and those tendencies have not *inevitably developed, but they have developed*. There’s a certain tendency that points in a certain direction.” Notice the italicised words. If the strong tendencies he admits have not “inevitably” developed but still “have developed,” they must then be considered as contingent, chance occurrences. So what remains of historical materialism? His elimination of the premises of historical materialism is in fact already set up by speaking of a “*tendency*,” instead of the “*laws*” of social formations and their historical transformation. Thus, surrendering to post-modernist fads, he ends up denying a central contribution of Marxism in the study of history.<sup>246</sup>

The materialist conception of history comprehends determinations of necessity, inevitability, at several levels of human existence and development. When Marx speaks of coherence in historical development he indicates the logical, orderly and consistent interconnection of various aspects of social life. Needless to say these interconnections invariably contain necessity. There is an element of inevitability in them.<sup>247</sup> This is what gives rise to

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246. It may be argued that he is justified in using this term since these laws are tendential. But that is true of all laws, even more so in the case of social laws.

247. “...[A]t each stage there is found a material result: a sum of productive forces, an historically created relation of individuals to nature and to one another, which is handed down to each generation from its predecessor; a mass of productive forces, capital funds and conditions, which, on the one hand, is indeed modified by the new generation, but also on the other *prescribes* for it its conditions of life and

direction in historical motion, the potential for historical advance. Whether it will be realised, whether other factors will upset this working out of contradictions, is a different matter. Marx’s usage of the term “coherence” is consistent with his grasp of the role of “inevitability” in history. Avakian’s interpretation eliminates the materialist basis of Marxian historiography.

This becomes more explicit when he deals with questions of historical advance. In a conversation Avakian stated:

...[T]here is also a... carrying a little Hegel... a little bit of a “closed system” and a little bit of the lower to a higher kind of thing that was carried along by Marx and Engels... And a little bit “Here’s history unfolding one thing after another” and a little bit like everything has to fit neatly into the system and...

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gives it a definite development, a special character. It shows that circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances.” (Karl Marx, “Summary of the Materialist Conception of History, Chapter 1,” *German Ideology*, emphasis added.) “If you assume a given state of development of man’s productive faculties, you will have a *corresponding form* of commerce and consumption. If you assume given stages of development in production, commerce or consumption, you will have a *corresponding form* of social constitution, a *corresponding organisation*, whether of the family, of the estates or of the classes—in a word, a *corresponding civil society*. If you assume this or that civil society, you will have this or that political system, which is but the official expression of civil society.” (“Marx to Pavel Vasilyevich Annenkov,” letter of December 28, 1846, emphasis added.)

“everything is accounted for.”<sup>248</sup>

His interlocutor argued that Marx saw the emergence of class society from primitive communal societies in some sense as an advance *because* it leads to the day when there will be a “humankind” in a global sense, which can only be seen retrospectively. He put this as “part of the teleology,” supposedly inherent to the Marxist conception of history.<sup>249</sup> Avakian acquiesced with this because he explicitly rules out any conception of historical advance. In this matter he is carried away by fashionable post-colonial trends. Elsewhere he had insisted:

This is not a matter of saying that one way of life was “superior” and the other “inferior”—there is nothing inherently superior or inferior about gathering and hunting, on the one hand, or, on the other hand, engaging in settled agriculture and the accompanying development of technology.<sup>250</sup>

An inevitable corollary to this is his attempt to smuggle in ethical considerations in historical study, opening up space for idealism. This can be seen in his arguments against the “justification” of genocide and other inhuman crimes that accompanied the

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248. Bob Avakian and Bill Martin, *Marxism and the Call of the Future*, page 151-2.

249. Ibid, page 175. Also available in *Calculation, Classes and Categorical Imperatives*, op. cit.

250. Bob Avakian, “Lessons from the History of Mexico Part 2.”

European invasion of the Americas.<sup>251</sup> The attempt is to reply to arguments which justify them either as necessary for historical advance or excuse them on the grounds that the victim Native Americans too have committed such crimes against other people. The topic comes up again in his conversation with Bill Martin who criticises Marx of the former tendency.

Some of the writings of Marx and Engels did exhibit the influence of Eurocentric Enlightenmentism. This cannot be completely attributed to the paucity of information they had about these societies. It can be seen, for instance, in their writings on India. We can also see a tendency to dismiss some national movements as obstructions to historical advance.<sup>252</sup> But while rupturing from such tendencies we must guard against the opposite proposed by Avakian of deeming historical events as “unjustified.” Instead we must draw on the materialist basis of the Marxist conception of history. From this viewpoint it is clear that the question of whether historical events are justified or not is irrelevant. In this, Marx was quite correct in opposing those who tried to drag in issues of morality into the study of history.

Trying to “judge” history from the higher plane

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251. Ibid.

252. An example of this can be seen in Engels’ writings on the Slav situation. A critical appreciation of Marx’s writings on India can be seen in “Rereading Marx,” *New Wave*, No: 3, op. cit.

of proletarian morality would be as wrong as the attempts made to justify it from the interests of this or that class. For tribal communities the massacre of other tribal people was fully justifiable because they were not recognised as people. It would be meaningless to condemn this from the awareness of the proletariat. That the bourgeoisie has carried out the most horrendous crimes against humanity, and continues to do so, is incontestable. But the very concept of “crimes against humanity,” the concept of “humanity” as such including all humans irrespective of race or class or gender, is itself a product of the capitalist age. The role played by the bourgeoisie in paving the way to proletarian ethics is undeniable. Avakian has indeed *noticed* some of these aspects. He fails to see their interconnections and ground his responses on a Marxist footing.

This matter of “justification” serves as a handle to better grasp Avakianism’s departure from historical materialism. We have seen how he opposes the concept of historical advance and categorisation of different societies as “lower, higher,” or “inferior, superior.” This concept is indeed a part of Marxist historiography. This is not a “carryover” from Hegel. It is a consciously included aspect. But a few qualifications are called for.

First, these categorisations are not meant as value judgements. Second, this motion is not qualified as an advance *because* it leads to the day when there will be “humankind” in a global sense. The first of

these qualifications can be drawn from the following quote from Engels:

Since civilisation is founded on the exploitation of one class by another class, its whole development proceeds in a constant contradiction. Every step forward *in production* is at the same time a step backwards *in the position* of the oppressed class, that is, of the great majority. Whatever benefits some necessarily injures the others; every fresh emancipation of one class is necessarily a new oppression for another class.<sup>253</sup>

It is evident that every step forward in production leads society to a higher level in human capacities, consciousness and creation. This is the material fact recorded in the categorisation of societies into higher or lower. A civilisation based on settled agriculture is certainly superior, inherently, to one subsisting on hunting and gathering precisely because of the vast difference in surplus generation and the greater possibilities it offers in the development of culture and science. At the same time, acknowledging the fact that such advance has till now been accompanied by a step backwards in the position of the oppressed classes secures us from absolutising it. It reminds us that we need to be critical about

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253. Barbarism and Civilization, Chapter IX, Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State, emphasis added.

the “absolute” quality usually vested in it. It has to be tempered with the recognition that what is surpassed and made inferior may well contain some superior aspects. The relativeness of “superiority,” to the future as well as to the past, given by class, gender, racial and various other biases accompanying it, must never be ignored. What is needed is a materialist analysis of all aspects of social development and not some moral judgement.

Coming to the question of understanding historical advance in a teleological sense, the founders of Marxism negated this right from their early writings.

History is nothing but the succession of the separate generations, each of which exploits the materials, the capital funds, the productive forces handed down to it by all preceding generations, and thus, on the one hand, continues the traditional activity in completely changed circumstances and, on the other, modifies the old circumstances with a completely changed activity. This can be *speculatively distorted* so that later history is made the goal of earlier history, e.g. the goal ascribed to the discovery of America is to further the eruption of the French Revolution. Thereby history receives its own special aims and becomes “a person rating

with other persons...”<sup>254</sup>

Finally, the Marxist conception of historical advance doesn't imply in any way that human societies must invariably progress along the schematic trajectory of tribal-slave-feudal-capitalist social formations. It has advanced through diverse paths. For instance, though the societies in the South Asian sub-continent had various forms of slave exploitation, they never had a stage of slavery akin to that of Egypt or Rome. (In this context, the concept “shudra-holding mode of production” advanced by the martyred Maoist activist intellectual Saket Rajan of the CPI (Maoist) demands deeper study.<sup>255</sup>) There is also the example of the region that later took shape as Keralam. Here, tribal societies directly became caste-feudal kingdoms, where adiyalatham (slave-like trading and exploitation of Dalit castes and some Adivasi tribes) existed in a symbiotic relation with tenant exploitation.

We have noted that Marx and Engels were not totally free of Enlightenmentist influences. How does Avakian fare in this matter? Today, compared to even Mao's time, we are enriched with a new awareness of the contradictory essence of Enlightenment and its scientific consciousness. Post-modernist trends have made significant contributions in this matter. Though their relativism led them to

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254. Conclusions from the Materialist Conception of History, Chapter 1, German Ideology, emphasis added.

255. Saki, Vimukthi Prakashana, “Making History: Karnataka's People and Their Past,” Bengaluru, 2004.

an ahistorical rejection of the Enlightenment and modernisation, the critical insights they offer must be synthesised by Marxism. The contributions made by theoreticians of the Frankfurt school are also to be acknowledged. The necessity to distinguish the emancipatory aspect of the Enlightenment from its overarching bourgeois, colonial nature and thrust is one important lesson that we must derive. Furthermore, scientific consciousness itself must be critiqued in order to separate its rational content from the influence of Enlightenment values seen in it. These are particularly manifested in the claim made about modern science as the final word, the disparaging of pre-modern thought and practices on that basis and a utilitarian approach on the human-nature relation. In the oppressed countries, the belittling of traditional knowledge continues to be a dominant aspect of the comprador modernisation, developmental paradigm. Mao's approach on the critical appropriation of Western, modern ideas and technologies, the rich lessons of the attempts made in Revolutionary China to synthesis traditional knowledge with modern sciences and its mass practice during the Cultural Revolution offer a sound starting point for a Maoist synthesis. It has the penetrating observations made by Marx and Engels on the human-nature interaction as guidance.

Avakian does not indicate any thinking on these lines. All he says is:

...[T]here is a definite strain in bourgeois

liberal thinking to *conceive* of the Enlightenment (and what are considered its results) as a “positive” instrument of colonialism and of an imperialist domination that seeks to remake the whole world in the image of bourgeois democracy... we oppose the use of the Enlightenment, and the scientific and technological advances associated with it, as a way of effecting and justifying colonialism and imperialist domination, in the name of “the white man’s burden” or the alleged “civilizing mission” of the “more enlightened and advanced” imperialist system, and so on.<sup>256</sup>

Far from grappling with new thinking that directs attention to problems *inherent* to Enlightenment and modern scientific consciousness, all he speaks about is how they are *conceived* of and made *use* of by imperialism. This suggests that the problem is with their misconception and misuse. Such thinking is a step back from the theoretical advances made in this matter.<sup>257</sup>

If this is how things stand with new knowledge, Avakianism is hyperactive in passing of old knowl-

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256. “Marxism and the Enlightenment,” emphasis added.

257. Though Avakian speaks of the need to learn from others, including postmodernists like Derrida, there is not the slightest indication of his really having done anything of that sort.

edge as its discoveries. Thus it is said:

Avakian has developed a far deeper understanding of the potential role and power of consciousness. Put it this way: to the extent that you *do* scientifically and deeply grasp the complex and multi-level contradictory character of society, with all its different constraints and its many possible pathways... to that extent, your freedom to act on and to affect that situation is immeasurably magnified. While both Lenin and especially Mao made very important contributions toward a more correct and dialectical understanding of how this relation between the base and superstructure “works,” neither quite grasped the scope and fluidity of this relative independence deeply enough, or in a layered enough way.<sup>258</sup>

Let’s examine the second sentence of this quote. Does it in the least go beyond the Maoist view that freedom consists in the recognition and transformation of necessity? Does it in anyway add to the Marxist theses that ideas once grasped by the masses become a powerful force? The recognition of the importance of ideas, of consciousness, has always been a distinct strength of Marxism. It has been a

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258. *What Is Bob Avakian’s New Synthesis?, Part 2 – The Role, and Potential Power, of Consciousness*, italics in original, op. cit.

hallmark distinguishing it from mechanical materialism. The power of this ideological awareness was fully brought to bear by Mao’s break from mechanical materialism in his work *On Contradiction*. He observed:

...[W]hile we recognise that in the general development of history the material determines the mental and social being determines social consciousness, we also—and indeed must—recognise the reaction of mental on material things, of social consciousness on social being and of the superstructure on the economic base. This does not go against materialism; on the contrary, it avoids mechanical materialism and firmly upholds dialectical materialism.<sup>259</sup>

This was instrumental in unleashing the revolutionary power of the masses under Mao’s leadership during the course of the Chinese revolution and socialist building, particularly during the Cultural Revolution. His critique of the “theory of productive forces” was a further development of the Marxist understanding on the role of consciousness.

As for grasping the relative independence of the realm of ideas, this was well appreciated by the founders of Marxism themselves. The following quote from Engels is an example:

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259. Mao Zedong, *On Contradiction*, Section 4, MSW 1.

Every ideology... once it has arisen, develops in connection with the given concept-material, and develops this material further; otherwise, it would not be an ideology, that is, *occupation with thoughts as with independent entities, developing independently and subject only to their own laws.*<sup>260</sup>

Incidentally, this is also educative about of how “theory can run ahead of practice” and its dialectics.

We are yet to see any critique by Avakian exposing the limitations of Lenin’s or Mao’s views on the dynamics of the base and the superstructure or of consciousness and matter. Furthermore, there is also the matter of addressing new knowledge. In recent years advances in neurosciences have deepened our awareness of the way the brain functions. There is a better scientific appreciation of how consciousness can influence, and even bring about, physical states. This knowledge confirms the Marxist view on the dialectics of the mental and the material. Yet it is often understood and explained from the viewpoint of idealism or metaphysics.<sup>261</sup> What is indicated is the need, once again, for a Maoist synthesis. But nothing of that sort is acknowledged by Avakian,

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260. Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the end of Classical Philosophy, Part 4*, emphasis added.

261. V.S. Ramachandran’s work on phantom limbs is a good example, both of the advances made in this field and erroneous interpretations that in fact go against the factual basis of new findings. See William Morrow, *Phantoms in the Brain*, N.Y. (co-authored with S. Blakeslee).

let alone attempted. It seems to be a law of Avakianism that the effort stands in inverse relation to its claims!



## CHAPTER 15. STRUGGLE WITHIN THE RIM

Having taken the reader through a tedious but unavoidable repudiation of Avakianism's pretensions about being a new synthesis we now return to RIM matters. The RCP has claimed that it waged "principled" struggle within the RIM on the Nepal and Peru issues. It has accused us of failing to see the similarities between Bhattarai's positions and Venu's liquidationism and of being enthusiastic supporters of the dismantling of revolution in Nepal. On Peru, it is asserted that a document issued by the RCP on the line issues was largely ignored and that some within the RIM have refused to condemn the deep vitriol against Avakian and the CoRIM made by PCP supporters abroad.

As usual, we must begin by recounting some facts. Right from the time of Bhattarai's criticism against "monolithic state" we were alerted to wrong tendencies in the CPN (Maoist) on the dictatorship of the proletariat. The introduction of this term clearly indicated some rethinking on this vital principle. This was raised in bilateral meetings. Later the CPN (Maoist) came out with documented positions arguing for multi-party elections and so on. This was one of the questions responded to in my article "The Current Debate on the Socialist State System."<sup>262</sup>

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262. Along with rebutting views denying the "monolithic character of the state" the article pointed out, "...some of the ideas currently advanced by the CPN(M) have some serious problems. For instance, the proposal on allowing other

Later, when the CPN (Maoist) took the turn to ceasefire, alliance with ruling class political parties and interim government our party took up an exhaustive study of the issue. On the whole the new tactics of the CPN (Maoist) was accepted as justified. At the same time serious dangers contained in it were also noted. All of this was communicated to the CPN (Maoist) by way of a letter to its Central Committee.<sup>263</sup> Simultaneously, two important public responses were also made. One of them was a commentary on political developments in Nepal published in the *New Wave*. While acclaiming the victory of the people's forces against the monarchy it drew attention to the dangers and possible outcomes:

The balance of forces, international situation and past experiences of utilising rightists within the revolutionary camp to subvert it, can well allow imperialism and

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political parties to compete with the communist party for government power does not square with the bitter lessons of history. Capitalist roaders, inevitably linked to imperialism, will never respect the socialist constitution once they get to power. Similarly, rotating sections of the party allows for checking bureaucratisation. But what about the line of those exercising power or those due for their turn? Should those with a bad line also get their turn, as a matter of principle? And who gets to control the army? With regard to the socialist state system the crux of the matter is the institutionalised leading role of the communist party." ("Socialist..." op. cit.) In keeping with norms mention of the CPN (Maoist) was deleted while publishing this article in *New Wave*.

263. All the relevant documents can be seen in *Naxalbari*, No: 3, op. cit.

reactionaries to seek the fulfilment of their aims within the present arrangement. But if the CPN(M) succeeds in maintaining its initiative and independence even while being a part of the interim government and persists in its political mobilisation guided by the aims it set for itself at the initiation of the war, any reversal of the present agreement, whether armed or peaceful, can quickly become the rallying point for a new upsurge.<sup>264</sup>

The other intervention was the translation and publication of an article that drew lessons from the 1946 aborted armed uprising in Kerala.<sup>265</sup> Its relevance consisted in refuting views that conceived semi-colonial feudal monarchies as solely representative of feudalism ignoring the transformation that took place under imperialist domination. Similar mistaken views were quite evident in the analysis being made by the CPN (Maoist) on the Nepali monarchy. It had great implication for properly situating the anti-monarchy struggle within the larger frame of new democratic revolution. We continued to engage with the CPN (Maoist) on its tactics through bilaterals, letters and public comments. In short, the charge made by the RCP that our party was an “enthusiastic supporter of the dismantling

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264. “On Developments in Nepal,” *New Wave*, No: 2, December 2006, op. cit.

265. “The True Lessons of Punnapra Vayalar,” *ibid.*

of revolution in Nepal” is an outrageous lie. The fact that it does this without even acknowledging or critiquing our publicly documented views on the developments in Nepal is indicative of the distance it has travelled from principled ideological struggle.

Did we make any mistake? Yes, we did and that was openly acknowledged in our repudiation of the UCPN (M).<sup>266</sup> But while doing so we retained our criticism on the doctrinaire approach exhibited by the RCP on Nepal developments. In a side comment to our repudiation we noted the position seen in the March 19, 2008 letter of the RCP accepting that “in the specific conditions prevailing after the collapse of the absolute monarchy in April 2006 it would have been difficult and perhaps undesirable to continue uninterruptedly the armed struggle or refuse to enter into negotiations with the SPA.” We raised the question:

But what are the implications of these “specific conditions” and its emergence?

It is clear enough that the mass uprising

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266. While rejecting doctrinaire evaluations of the CPN (M)’s tactics some correct aspects seen in the criticisms were acknowledged by us and we observed: “It was pointed out that the CPN (Maoist) was disarming its ranks and the masses, *ideologically and politically*, by accepting such conditions (cantoning the PLA and dissolving local power centres), as they surrender revolutionary army and revolutionary power, at least verbally. This is correct. In failing to examine the issue from this angle, from the angle of the ideological significance of the concessions made by the CPN(Maoist), we too made a pragmatist error,” “On the Line and Tactics of the UCPN (Maoist),” *Naxalbari No: 3*, emphasis added, op.cit.

of April 2006 was made possible through the prior agreement with the SPA based on the decisions of the Chungwang CC meeting. This indicated an objective situation. A situation that contained compulsions pushing the ruling class parties and external enemies towards agreement. These tactics themselves became possible because of this objective situation. *If this objectiveness of the possibility for negotiations (also implying a possible temporary settlement) is accepted, then the line and tactics that allowed the party to utilise it cannot be summarily dismissed. On the other hand, if it is denied or treated superficially then the admittance of “specific conditions” and negotiations will only be a meaningless gesture.*<sup>267</sup>

Now about Peru. This involves two main issues. The first of them is the question of the originator of the negotiation proposals that came up soon after the capture of Gonzalo, Chair of the PCP. The RCP

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267. “On Negotiations,” *ibid.*, emphasis added. In recent writings comrades of the CPN-Maoist who ruptured from Prachanda-Bhattarai revisionism have stated that the conditions existing at the time of the Chunwang CC did not demand a tactical compromise and that, contrary to the explanation then given by Prachanda, the military situation was favourable. They have also accused Prachanda and Bhattarai of being involved in secret negotiations with the Indian state *prior* to the Chunwang meeting. A substantiation of these views by the CPN-Maoist will certainly throw new light on the whole issue.

has for long nursed the view that this was none other than Gonzalo himself. This was based on inferences drawn from the PCP's erroneous position of qualifying the top leadership of the party as a "jefatura," a Great Leader standing above the collectivity of the party. In Avakian's words:

...[I]f someone is actually putting forward and carrying out a line that they believe that their role is so decisive in the way they formulated it, that person could draw the conclusion that, without them there to lead, nothing can go forward. We never took the position, "oh this is definitely true—Gonzalo is calling for a peace accord—look at that sellout." But we did take the position that we'd better not just dismiss this possibility.<sup>268</sup>

This certainly was something worth raising and struggling over. Yet that was not how the RCP handled it. It never put its apprehensions before the RIM or the PCP. In the Excerpt quoted above Avakian justifies this silence as something done in the interests and the needs of the international movement. But there was more to it. In our criticism of this method we argued:

The ideological and political reasoning underlying its view that comrade Gon-

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268. "Excerpts From A Talk By Bob Avakian, Chairman Of The RCP, USA, To A Group Of Comrades," circulated by the CoRIM in 2004.

zalo, most probably, is behind the Right Opportunist Line (ROL) is now on record through the “Excerpts.” Why was it silent about this for so many years? This cannot be explained as a desire to avoid nit picking. It is even less explained by references to following norms of proletarian internationalism. So far as we know, these views have never been put to the PCP even. The differences remained unaired. The Movement as such was unaware and denied the opportunity to grapple with these views. Yet, certain inferences were drawn and publicly reflected through the “Hard Look” article published in the journal. The RCP USA could have put forward its reasoning (as seen in the “Excerpts”) and raised struggle in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Expanded Meeting (EM). But that also was avoided even though the comment on the PCP line made in that article was a point of criticism and some parties, including the PCP, had directly called upon it to place its views before the house. In our opinion this is precisely a case of “pragmatism and realpolitik.” And it has contributed in a great degree to the unhealthy handling of the two-line struggle.<sup>269</sup>

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269. “A Comment on the RCP, USA’s Letter Published in Struggle!, August 2005,” *Struggle No: 8*, June 2006.

In view of the manner in which the RCP has tried to foist Avakianism on the international Maoist movement, we must now add—this was a manifestation of manipulative methods, the exact opposite of “being open and above board” advocated by Mao.

In January 2005 the RCP wrote a letter raising the Peru issue and indignantly demanding:

...How can we have a movement that is taking responsibility in the fullest sense for leading the masses to change the world on the basis of MLM ideology which allows its leadership to be reviled as class enemies and doesn't insist that it be stopped? What are the standards in our movement?<sup>270</sup>

Its May 1, 2012 letter repeats this charge. We had already responded to this in our letter cited above:

This issue [public attacks made by the MPP] has been with us for quite some time. It is long overdue for settlement. But this delay was not caused by parties turning a blind eye to such public attacks out of some unprincipled concern to unite with the PCP. As far as we know, these attacks have been criticised in all the forums of the Movement. ...

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270. “The Movement and the Bend in the Road,” RCP, *Struggle No: 6*, August 2005.

[C]riticism of the PCP about its attack on comrade Bob Avakian was dropped from an amendment (jointly presented by the CPN(M), MKP-PBSP and ourselves) to the Report [of the 3<sup>rd</sup> EM] at the insistence of the RCP, USA itself.<sup>271</sup>

Thus, once again we see an example of unprincipled, manipulative methods employed by the RCP. It opposes a proposal to incorporate criticism on the MPP's violation of norms. And then, just a few years later, when it decides to make it a major issue, other parties are accused of inaction and attempts are made to bulldoze them to fall in line. Is it entirely coincidental that these developments attempts to overturn the correct positions and verdicts of the 3<sup>rd</sup> EM, the circulation of Avakian's critical views on the PCP, the accusation that RIM parties are silent on MPP's public attacks coupled with demands for immediate action and its first letter to the CPN (Maoist)—were bunched up more or less around the time of the Avakianists' auto-coup in the RCP? A closer look suggests a pattern. Whatever that may be, the fact of the matter is that the RCP never tried to raise struggle within the RIM in a principled manner.

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271. "A Comment on the RCP, USA's Letter..." Words in square brackets are added for clarity. In retrospect, it was wrong on our part to have complied with the RCP, because it was not a matter of that party and its Chair alone but of correct norms and principled struggle necessary for the ICM.

Finally, on the matter of whether Gonzalo's alleged involvement in the negotiations proposal was a hoax or not. By the time of its January 2005 letter, the RCP was explicit in charging Gonzalo with this deviation.<sup>272</sup> But it was still mainly based on ideological grounds related to the PCP's jefatura concept mentioned earlier. This concern cannot be dismissed out of hand and must be probed further. But we did not accept this as sufficient to conclude Gonzalo's involvement. That remains our position till date. The position advanced in the Millennium resolution of 2000, "...one cannot accept indirect and unverifiable communications attributed to Chairman Gonzalo as representative of his thinking...the fight must continue for an end to his isolation." remains valid. Along with that we have all along upheld the correct view put forward in the RIM's Call of March 1995, "Rally to the Defence of Our Red Flag Flying in Peru" that the "decisive thing is the line, not the author."

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272. "Here was the situation of the leader of a Party that was playing an important role in our movement, apparently arguing for a line (as developed in documents like "Asumir—Take up and fight for the New Decision and Definition") that went against the line of that Party and against MLM principles." ("The Movement and...")

## CHAPTER 16. MORE DEVIOUS, MORE DANGEROUS

The RCP has taken offence over the C(m)PA's characterisation of Avakianism as a "way deeper deviation than that of the UCPN (M)" and demands "Who has aborted a revolution?"<sup>273</sup> Well, only those who made a revolution can abort it. Therefore, the Avakianists can hardly be blamed of that crime. But what they do is indeed worse. They seek to abort the whole communist movement itself. They try to eliminate MLM as the ideological basis of the ICM and replace it with Avakianism. Their liquidationist, and ultimately rightist, attack is often packaged in "left" form.<sup>274</sup> It is deviously presented as an attempt to address real problems faced by the ICM in the context of the setbacks it has suffered. Thus it is less easy to see through its deceptions and that makes it all the more dangerous.

Opposing the PCP formulations on Guiding Thought Avakian had said:

...[A] "Thought" is a more transcendental thing, a more permanent thing, than whatever the line of a party is at a given time. A "Thought" is a category which, as I said, is pregnant with and on its way to

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273. "RCP Letter," Section 8, op. cit.

274. Thus there is a lot of high talk of a visionary communism but the primacy of armed struggle to destroy the existing state is conspicuously absent in the RCP, USA's program.

delivering an “ism.” So then we will get a lot of different isms, and that’s not good and not correct.<sup>275</sup>

Apparently he has tried to resolve this predicament of multiplicity with a “synthesis” that attempts the forced delivery of a new “ism.”

The Avakianists blame everyone who resists this as opposing the development of proletarian ideology itself. Therefore, in order to complete the repudiation of Avakianism, we must examine the process, dynamics, of ideological development. This also becomes unavoidable in the wider context of views that hold the development of Thought or Path as essential for the success for every revolution. Recently a concerted attempt is being made to propagate this view within the international Maoist movement.<sup>276</sup> It was first advanced by the PCP and later on reiterated by the CPN (Maoist).<sup>277</sup>

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275. “Excerpts From A Talk By Bob Avakian...”

276. See “The International Project: Guiding Thought of Revolution: The Heart of Maoism,” jointly promoted by the OWA (MLM, principally Maoist), CPMLM—Bangladesh and CPMLM—France and supported by the MLM Center of Belgium. An Open letter to the ICM from these parties states, “At our epoch, Maoism, as Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, synthesis of the ideology of working class, can only exist as a guiding thought in each country, forging the avant-garde in correspondence with the inner contradiction of the country, unleashing People’s War.”

277. “Each revolution must specify its guiding thought, without which there can be no application of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, nor any revolutionary development.” (“Basic Document of PCP,” *International Line*, Section 4.) “Moreover, and this is the basis upon which all leadership

Every creative application of MLM, leading to the successful development of a revolution (that is an application tested through practice), will surely give rise to a deeper grasp and insight of MLM. It will even contribute new concepts or ideas, which will enrich MLM. But it is not necessary (inevitable) that these contributions will represent a new “Thought.” It is even less necessary that they will represent a leap to a new stage, i.e., an all-round development of MLM.

Can universality of ideological contributions emerge only if they attain the level of “Thought?” Can’t such universality also exist in the line of a party, if it has emerged through a creative application of MLM in the concrete conditions of a coun-

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is formed, revolutions give rise to a thought that guides them, which is the result of the application of the universal truth of the ideology of the international proletariat to the concrete conditions of each revolution; a guiding thought indispensable to reach victory and to conquer political power and, moreover, to continue the revolution and to maintain the course always towards the only, great goal: Communism; a guiding thought that, arriving at a qualitative leap of decisive importance for the revolutionary process which it leads, identifies itself with the name of the one who shaped it theoretically and practically.” (“Fundamental Documents,” Section 2, adopted by 1<sup>st</sup> Congress of PCP) “...[O]ne thing what is sure is that the application of science in the specificities of a particular country gives rise to a concrete thought that guides the movement in that country (which we can assume as quantitative development in MLM) Without the development of such a concrete thought neither can there be a true application of science in any country nor can the revolution there have a continuous forward march.” (Prachanda, “The Nepalese People’s War and the Question of Ideological Synthesis,” *Worker No: 6*, page 9.)

try? “Line” is specific to a country and party. It is a particularity. But if it has been formulated through creative application of MLM, then this particularity contains the universality of MLM. It reflects this universality. In the course of its formulation, application, testing through revolutionary practice and development it will lead to new concepts or contributions, which enrich MLM.

Even if the development of a revolution only gives rise to a new grasp of MLM, this still would be a qualitative development. It would still hold out lessons for every contingent of the ICM. Some revolutions may achieve even more and generate new concepts or contributions. But, the point to stress, is that all of this is possible even while there is only a “Line” and not yet a “Thought.” Or, in other words, a new “Thought” is not a necessary condition for new contributions that enrich our ideology.

In this context it is also necessary to examine the view on quantitative development of ideology earlier put forward by the CPN (Maoist). The possible meaning, that is one which makes sense, could be this—deeper understanding, more insight, more grasp, more capacity to apply ideology, etc. That is, a development in which no new MLM concepts, laws as such emerge, but only better grasp and capacity to apply existing ones. But this in itself is complex. Any deeper understanding, grasp, etc. of MLM, cannot take place without creatively applying it. And creative application will inevitably

generate new *conceptual* knowledge of the laws of that society and revolution. Won't such conceptual leaps enrich MLM? Even though they are specific to that revolution and society (that is particular) they will definitely enrich the whole body of MLM itself. Quantitative development in the context of ideological development can only be understood as the accumulation of "perceptual knowledge" in the course of the revolution.

With this understanding we are better placed to understand the essential error in the position on Thought or Path. This extends to the "New Synthesis" theses of the RCP too, though it comes in an altogether different category. Despite the PCP and CPN (Maoist) treating Gonzalo Thought and Prachanda Path as principal they were still being described as relevant to the respective countries and staying within MLM.<sup>278</sup> Avakianism demands global acceptance and insists on appropriating the role of ideological basis of the ICM. But common to all of them is the attempt to pose their partial successes, the resolutions they have identified as final, without thorough verification of practice. This epistemological error underlies such deviations.<sup>279</sup>

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278. Whatever the "description" this actually is self-contradictory. For example the thesis that *every* revolution must have a Guiding Thought was a new position put forward by the PCP. Evidently it is part of Gonzalo Thought. But the applicability of this Thought is itself acknowledged to be *limited solely* to Peru.

279. The PCP was using the formulation "Guiding Thought of the party" even before the people's war was initiated. Gon-

It is not that new ideas and practices won't emerge or shouldn't be raised. But to elevate them to the level of ideology needs verification over a longer period. The example of the CPC's declaration on Mao Zedong Thought is a good teacher in this matter. Many major components of what is now accepted as Maoism—philosophical contributions, new democracy, people's war, development of the party concept, 2 line struggle, ideological rectification, mass line etc.—had already been developed and tested through arduous revolutionary practice before Mao Zedong Thought was formally stated. Second, these contributions of Mao developed in the course of struggle against right and “left” opportunism, Trotskyism, and dogmatism. Compared to them both the Peru and Nepal experiences were evidently limited. This is not to deny the advanced grasp seen in those revolutions or to negate their important contributions. But this does not justify a Thought or Path or the ideas underlying them.

The epistemological gap is even starker in the case of the RCP. Let us for the moment accept their plea that such verification cannot be limited to that of a single country. Let us take the whole

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zalo played a great role in fighting against revisionism, reorganising the party and charting out the specific line and plans of people's war. But how can a party claim that a “Thought” has emerged even before its line is put to the test of practice and verified? This contradicts the Marxist theory of knowledge and promotes some sort of idealism. The Avakianists' insistence that the development of ideology does not need the verification of practice is another example.

international arena instead. What does that show? Avakianism's concepts and the analysis made on that basis have failed at each turn. The Avakianists have accused the C(m)PA of maintaining the erroneous viewpoint that the application of Marxism in a specific country will *automatically* lead to the corresponding advance in theoretical understanding. This is baseless. But their accusation brings up the larger question of the relation between the application of Marxism in practice and the development of ideology. Is it incidental or fundamental? The Avakianists tend to the former. Practice is incidental in their scheme. Ideology certainly has its own dynamics. It can theorise in advance. But this is vulgarised by the Avakianists when they speak of "theory moving ahead of practice" in order to justify their approach of treating practice as incidental in the development of ideology. Avakianism is quite fond of bringing in the example of the founders of Marxism. It claims that Marx and Engels achieved the synthesis of Marxism from existing theory and not from direct practice. As we noted earlier that is not true. Marx and Engels were quite involved in the class struggles going on in those days, at times even directly. As Mao pointed out:

The basis is social science, class struggle. There is a struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie... It is only starting from this viewpoint that Marxism appeared. The foundation is class strug-

gle. The study of philosophy can only come afterwards.<sup>280</sup>

That is, developments in all the three components have taken place through the continuing role of Marxism in guiding class struggle.

Every leap in ideology involves synthesis. But Avakianism is neither new nor in any way a synthesis. It is that same old revisionism and liquidationism. We must reject its claims and stand firm on Maoism. Yes, today the key to grasping proletarian ideology is grasping Maoism firmly. To say this does not in any way separate it from the integral whole of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. Rather, it is imperative to put stress on Maoism in order to sharpen the struggle against revisionism and all other alien thinking. We must uphold, defend and apply Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, particularly Maoism.

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280. Mao Zedong, "Talk on Questions of Philosophy," MSW 9.





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