

Notes on the Founding Declaration of the International Communist League (ICL)

On January 6th, we sent the following document to the [Communist International online newspaper](#), requesting that they publish it. Since they have not yet responded, we are publishing it on our own site.

Our position that the founding of the International Communist League (ICL) is premature; that the founding Declaration is not suitable as a basis of unity for the International Maoist Movement; that the ideological unity required for organizational unity has not yet been reached, and that an international organization at this stage will only include a section of the International Maoist movement (in the best case) and possibly hinder further efforts at unity (in the worst case).

Grounded in our desire for higher political unity, what follows is our assessment of the founding declaration of the ICL.

– Revolutionary Communists, Norway (RK).

Notes on the Founding Declaration of the

International Communist League (ICL)

The Maoist online newspaper «Communist International» recently published a document declaring the successful conclusion of the «Unified International Maoist Conference», and the founding of a new international organization, «International Communist League».

The founding statement of the ICL bases itself on a draft proposal that was published on January 2022 and debated in the months that followed.^{[i](#)}

The founding declaration of the ICL holds that the main problems facing the ICM are «revisionism and the dispersal of forces».^{[ii](#)} We believe this assessment to be correct, and we consider it our duty as Maoists and internationalists to seek to unite the International Communist Movement under Maoism. However, this unity must be grounded in a common understanding of a correct political line.

We uphold the acute necessity of unifying the International Communist Movement (ICM) under Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, and welcome any genuine steps in this direction. However, we believe that the level of unity necessary for the founding of an international organization has not yet been reached, nor do we believe the proposal for a General Line has been sufficiently debated on an international level. Therefore we consider the establishment of ICL to be premature, as the international Maoist movement has not reached the ideological unity necessary for organizational unity. We fear that the premature formation of an international Maoist organization will serve as an obstacle to the development of two-line struggle, thus preventing real unity. We hope this fear will be proven wrong, and that the two-line struggle will continue

so that a greater unity can be achieved.

At the same time, we are happy to see that some erroneous formulations in the draft proposal have been removed or modified in the final declaration. We see this as a sign that the two-line struggle in the communist movement is indeed progressing, and that by criticizing incorrect lines, it is possible to move in the direction of a higher political unity.

We raise our criticisms of the ICL's line not in the interest of creating intrigue, but in the interest of creating unity among Maoists according to the principle «unity, struggle, unity». Grounded in our desire for higher political unity, what follows is our assessment of the founding declaration of the ICL.

People's War

ICL asserts that «People's War» (PW) is the only way to revolution, universally applicable to all conditions, and they specify «base areas» as part of this strategy. We know base areas to be a fundamental aspect of Mao's definition of «Protracted People's War» (PPW). Therefore, it is logical to conclude that when ICL refers to «People's War», they define it as more or less synonymous with «Protracted People's War». The document states:

The fundamental of Maoism is Power [...] power based on an armed force led by the communist Party, conquered and defended through People's War.^{[iii](#)}

This demands us to lead People's War to face the imperialist wars of aggression against the oppressed nations in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and even in Europe itself.^{[iv](#)}

The Revolutionary War, the People's War, is the superior form

of struggle – through which the fundamental problems of revolution are solved; it is the military strategy that correspond to the political strategy (conquest of power) to transform society in favor of the Class and the people; it is the principal form of struggle and the People's Army is the principal form of organization[...]^v

In order to carry out People's War it is necessary to have four fundamental problems in mind: 1) ideology of the proletariat – Marxism-Leninism-Maoism – applied to the concrete practice and the particularities of revolution on each country, either oppressed countries or imperialist countries; 2) the necessity of the Communist Party to lead the People's War; 3) specification of the political strategy for its path; 4) base areas. The New Power or Front-New State – that is formed in the base areas – is the core of the People's War.^{vi}

Through the practice of Protracted People's War in China, India, Peru, the Philippines and Nepal, it has been proven that PPW is a suitable strategy for waging revolution under semi-colonial and semi-feudal conditions. This is made possible by objective conditions in these countries, generally including:

- A large peasant population serving as a rural base for the revolution
- A weak provincial infrastructure, which allows for building revolutionary military power outside the scope of the central state
- Semi-colonial and semi-feudal conditions, which allow for a broad alliance against imperialism and the comprador classes, under the leadership of the proletariat (through the Communist Party)

These conditions are not present in the «developed» capitalist countries. We have not yet seen any convincing argument explaining at all how base areas could be created and protected in an imperialist country. The Declaration makes no real attempt to analyze the internal differences between imperialist countries and oppressed countries; between developed capitalist countries and semi-feudal countries. Instead, it resorts to generalized statements.

The concrete analysis of a concrete situation is, as we know, the living soul of Marxism. It was by masterfully applying this principle that Mao rejected the Cominternist strategy of the October Road and initiated the People's War in China, which was better suited to the specific conditions. However, Mao never claimed PPW (or PW) to be a universal strategy for revolution, applicable to all conditions. On the contrary, he wrote:

The long-term survival inside a country of one or more small areas under Red political power completely encircled by a White regime is a phenomenon that has never occurred anywhere else in the world. There are special reasons for this unusual phenomenon. It can exist and develop only under certain conditions.

First, it cannot occur in any imperialist country or in any colony under direct imperialist rule, but can only occur in China which is economically backward, and which is semi-colonial and under indirect imperialist rule.^{[vii](#)}

What he did maintain, however, was the universal necessity of revolutionary violence for seizing power:

The seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds well universally, for China and for all other

countries. [viii](#)

This is correct, yet not a statement of the universal validity of People's War; unless we define People's War in a very broad sense, as any revolutionary civil war led by the Communist Party, essentially «combining two into one». In this case, the phrase «People's War» would lose its concrete strategic content.

In the article «Problems of war and strategy » (1938), Mao describes two different kinds of socialist revolution. One for capitalist countries, and another for China as a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country:

[W]hile the principle [of the seizure of power by armed force] remains the same, its application by the party of the proletariat finds expression in varying ways according to the varying conditions. Internally, capitalist countries practice bourgeois democracy (not feudalism) when they are not fascist or not at war; in their external relations, they are not oppressed by, but themselves oppress, other nations. Because of these characteristics, it is the task of the party of the proletariat in the capitalist countries to educate the workers and build up strength through a long period of legal struggle, and thus prepare for the final overthrow of capitalism. In these countries, the question is one of a long legal struggle, of utilizing parliament as a platform, of economic and political strikes, of organizing trade unions and educating the workers. There the form of organization is legal and the form of struggle bloodless (non-military). On the issue of war, the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries oppose the imperialist wars waged by their own countries; if such wars occur, the policy of these Parties is to bring about the defeat of the reactionary governments of their own countries. The one war they want to fight is the civil war for which they are preparing. But this insurrection and war should not be launched until the bourgeoisie becomes

really helpless, until the majority of the proletariat are determined to rise in arms and fight, and until the rural masses are giving willing help to the proletariat. And when the time comes to launch such an insurrection and war, the first step will be to seize the cities, and then advance into the countryside' and not the other way about. All this has been done by Communist Parties in capitalist countries, and it has been proved correct by the October Revolution in Russia.

China is different however. The characteristics of China are that she is not independent and democratic but semi-colonial and semi-feudal, that internally she has no democracy but is under feudal oppression and that in her external relations she has no national independence but is oppressed by imperialism. It follows that we have no parliament to make use of and no legal right to organize the workers to strike. Basically, the task of the Communist Party here is not to go through a long period of legal struggle before launching insurrection and war, and not to seize the big cities first and then occupy the countryside, but the reverse.^{[ix](#)}

What Mao is arguing for here, is a system of dual strategies: armed insurrection in the developed capitalist countries, and People's War in China. To state that PW is an universally applicable strategy without any concrete analysis is not Marxism. To make grand theoretical claims without rooting them in practical reality is idealism. We would also like to remind of the following from Mao in «On contradiction»:

The dogmatists do not observe this principle; they do not understand that conditions differ in different kinds of revolution and so do not understand that different methods should be used to resolve different contradictions; on the contrary, they invariably adopt what they imagine to be an unalterable formula and arbitrarily apply it everywhere,

which only causes setbacks to the revolution or makes a sorry mess of what was originally well done.^x

In the time when Mao wrote this, the dogmatists in the Communist Party of China would mechanically apply the Russian method to China. Today we see the reverse approach: dogmatically attempting to apply the strategy of the Chinese revolution to every country, including imperialist countries.

Interrelated construction, or concentric circles?

The ICL declaration states:

Chairman Mao Tse-tung developed the construction of the Party around the gun and put forward the interrelated construction of the three instruments: Communist Party, Army of a new type and revolutionary United Front, among which the center is the Communist Party.^{xi}

Here we note that the ICL has chosen the formulation «interrelated construction» rather than «concentric construction». The theory of concentric construction, based on the *General Political Line* of the Communist Party of Peru and later espoused by the Communist Party of Brazil, holds that the Communist Party is the central among the three instruments; that the People's Army is constructed around the militarized Communist Party; and that the United Front is built around the Army.^{xiixiii} Moreover, the Communist Party is unified under a single «Great Leadership» commanding the party.

The ICL's formulation of «interrelated construction» holds that the party is indeed at the center of the three weapons, but doesn't state clearly that the People's Army is at the

center of the United Front, nor does it demand that the Party be subordinated to a «Great Leadership». If this is a move away from the principle of «concentric construction», we see this as a positive and welcome development.

We disagree with the concentric principle that places the party as the commanding center of the United Front, and builds the United Front around the Army. Our opinion is that when communists establish front organizations, or engage with independently established front organizations, these should be formally independent from the party, with their own democratically elected leadership. Communists should practice ideological leadership in fronts by doing good work and winning the trust of front members, not through bureaucratic or commandist methods.

At the same time, the Declaration implicitly upholds the militarization of the Communist Parties, by claiming that *«Chairman Mao Tse-tung developed the construction of the Party around the gun»*. Contrary to this highly controversial statement, Mao stated: “Our principle is that the Party commands the gun, and the gun must never be allowed to command the Party.”^{[xiv](#)}

The ICL negates Mao’s principle. We suggest that they reconsider. While militarization of the party is necessary under specific conditions, specifically in conditions of civil war, it should never be elevated to the status of general principle. Methods of organization must be suited to the specific conditions; they cannot be identical in periods of legality and illegality; in peacetime and in civil war.

Voluntarist and commandist tendencies

The Declaration states that «[t]he task of the new international organization is to struggle to *impose Maoism* as

the sole command and guide of the World Proletariat Revolution».^{xv} We do not share the view that Maoism is something to be «imposed». Indeed, the proletariat will *impose* its political dictatorship over the bourgeoisie, and expand this dictatorship, just as the oppressed masses *impose* their will on the comprador and bureaucratic classes in the New Democratic revolution, but Maoism cannot be *imposed* in general; it cannot be *imposed* upon the proletariat and the rest of the basic masses. We must carefully win the masses over to Maoism, by leading their struggles and through persuasion until they accept MLM ideology as their own. It is worth noting that the Declaration doesn't mention the mass line method of «from the masses, to the masses», and it seems as if the Declaration is plagued by an imbalance in the direction of «to the masses».

Further, the document maintains the «omnipotence of revolutionary violence». We assume this phrase is lifted on the speech by Mao named «On Problems of Warfare and Strategy» (1938), from which we've already quoted and which, incidentally, goes against the previously mentioned conception of «construction around the gun». It is necessary here to quote at length (with emphasis added):

Every Communist must grasp the truth, «Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.»

Our principle is that the Party commands the gun, and the gun must never be allowed to command the Party. Yet, having guns, we can create Party organizations, as witness the powerful Party organizations which the Eighth Route Army has created in northern China. We can also create cadres, create schools, create culture, create mass movements. Everything in Yen-an has been created by having guns. All things grow out of the barrel of a gun. According to the Marxist theory of the state, the army is the chief component of state power. Whoever wants to seize and retain state power must have a

strong army.

Some people ridicule us as advocates of the «omnipotence of war». Yes, we are advocates of the omnipotence of revolutionary war; that is good, not bad, it is Marxist. The guns of the Russian Communist Party created socialism. We shall create a democratic republic. Experience in the class struggle in the era of imperialism teaches us that it is only by the power of the gun that the working class and the labouring masses can defeat the armed bourgeoisie and landlords; in this sense we may say that only with guns can the whole world be transformed. We are advocates of the abolition of war, we do not want war; but war can only be abolished through war, and in order to get rid of the gun it is necessary to take up the gun. ^{xvi}

Indeed, Mao speaks of «the omnipotence of revolutionary war», but we have to warn against taking his wording too literally. It should be treated as a case of rhetorical hyperbole (or possibly even a translation error), which is in any case more suited to an internal party speech than in a statement of principles for the International Communist Movement. As Maoists, we must maintain that violence is a necessary element of the revolutionary process, yet we must never look at violence, revolutionary or not, as an «all-powerful» tactic. There are no «all-powerful» tactics in the revolutionary process, rendering other tactics dispensable. We suggest that the word «omnipotence», which belongs to the theological field, be removed altogether.

One-sided evaluation of comrade Stalin

The Declaration goes far in reversing Mao's correct verdict on comrade Stalin as 70% correct and 30% incorrect, in favor of excessive praise. One of Mao's major criticisms of Stalin's

leadership was that he did not sufficiently trust and rely upon the masses, and that he solved things administratively. This is not given any discussion in the document; rather it states that «it is false that he solved things administratively.»^{xvii} A political declaration is not a theoretical essay, yet it is surprising that the document reverses this correct and essential verdict by Mao in an off-hand manner without providing any sort of reason or documentation.

Stalin had a tendency to deviate from Marxism-Leninism. A concrete expression of this is [his] negation of contradictions, and to date, [the Soviet Union] has not yet thoroughly eliminated the influence of this viewpoint of Stalin's. Stalin spoke [the language of] materialism and the dialectical method, but in reality he was subjectivist. He placed the individual above everything else, negated the group, and negated the masses.

Secondly, the mass line was seen as tailism by Stalin. [He] did not recognize the good points about the mass line, and he used administrative methods to resolve many problems. But we Communists are materialists; we acknowledge that it is the masses who create everything and are the masters of history.^{xviii}

If it is untrue that Stalin «solved things administratively», does the ICL also consider it untrue that Stalin failed to apply the mass line? Since this essential criticism by Mao is not mentioned, one could not be blamed for assuming so. In fact, in the entire Declaration, there is not a single mention of “the mass line».

From reading the Declaration's narrative of Stalin and the counterrevolutionary coup in 1956, one gets the impression that the line struggle in the CPSU was simply a struggle

between Stalin's «essentially correct» line on the one hand, and a handful of rightist traitors on the other. Consider this excerpt:

The declarations of these conferences correspond to the development of the two line struggle in the ICM at that moment, and they resulted in concessions aiming not to divide at that moment and to

***give time for the true followers of Stalin in the CPSU** to wage two line struggle within it. Considering that the weight of the CPSU was very big and its internal situation was very difficult, this expresses a correct handling of the left led by Chairman Mao at the head of the CPCh in applying the principle of combating with reason, advantage and not exceeding.^{[xix](#)}*

The left wing of the CPSU is thus essentially made synonymous with «the true followers of Stalin», and the tasks of the left wing of the ICM in the years following Stalin's death are reduced to upholding and defending the legacy of Stalin.

Moreover, the Declaration displays a lack of clarity of the question of transformation of relations of production:

In the midst of a complex and difficult situation – under the leadership of comrade Stalin – the dictatorship of the proletariat was consolidated and

***the construction of socialism triumphed.** The five five-year plans that were applied for twenty five years*

***led to the biggest transformation in the relations of production,** to the most powerful development of the productive forces in history and the greatest social achievements by the people's masses seen until then.^{[xx](#)}*

It is correct to uphold the victories of the Soviet people in developing the productive forces and raising the general standard of living under the leadership of comrade Stalin.

It is also correct that under Stalin, the construction of socialism «triumphed» insofar as it displayed the superiority of socially planned production – however it did not «triumph» in the sense of completely eliminating capitalist relations of production, and transforming communist relations of production from the lower phase to the higher phase.

Socialist construction consists in transforming capitalist relations of production into *communist* relations of production by gradually restricting bourgeois right, eliminating the commodity form and implementing the principle «from each according to their ability, to each according to their need». Mao and the left wing of the Communist Party of China developed socialist political economy to a higher level by critiquing the Soviet model of economic development. This was not merely a question of *defending* socialism, but *developing* it further. The Great Proletarian Cultural revolution was therefore not just a defensive struggle (against capitalist restoration) but a constructive and transformative struggle to transform relations of production.

We hold that Mao's contributions lay not primarily in defending the «essentially correct» line of comrade Stalin, but in *transcending the limitations* of this line and ultimately discovering new methods for continuing the class struggle in the period of socialism, through the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. A one-sided evaluation of Stalin obscures this issue and minimizes Mao's contributions to political economy, the mass line and the Cultural Revolution.

Great Leadership

The Document doesn't explicitly espouse the theory of Great Leadership as formulated by the Communist Party of Peru. However, there are multiple formulations like: «the Great Leadership of Chairman Mao» and «the Great Leadership of Chairman Gonzalo» – note the capital letters.^{[xxi](#)} While we recognize Chairman Gonzalo as the principal leader and strategist of the Peruvian Peoples's War, who is credited with initiating the synthesis of Maoism as a third and higher stage of Marxism, we disagree with the tendency to emphasize «Great Leaders» at the expense of collective leadership.

An emphasis on great leaders (or even «Great Leaders») creates submissive cadre who learn to follow the example of the leader; it creates a culture where critical thinking is replaced with blind devotion; it fosters, in Ajith's words, a «consciousness of infallibility of an individual, a leadership and indirectly of that party».^{[xxii](#)} Let us make clear that our criticisms of the personality cult have nothing in common with Khrushchev's negation of Stalin on the basis of «criticizing the cult of personality». Indeed, Stalin himself, whom we critically uphold, criticized the personality cult:

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

and later:

I am absolutely against the publication of «Stories of the

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

Mao wrote:

The cult of the individual is a rotten carry-over from the long history of mankind. The cult of the individual is rooted not only in the exploiting classes but also in the small producers. As is well known, patriarchy is a product of small-producer economy...^{[xxv](#)}

We agree with Mao and Stalin in the abovementioned quotations. Here it is worth noting that Stalin and Mao, despite these correct criticisms of the personality cult, limited themselves to criticizing its most extreme manifestations while not rejecting it on principle. With the benefit of hindsight, it should be clear to all that the personality cults around Stalin and Mao ultimately benefited the revisionist line more than the revolutionary line. We believe the correct Communist principle is to foster a group of leaders, who collectively share responsibilities and cooperate in making good decisions. Mao defended this principle of collective leadership. He wrote:

...a leading group should be formed in each unit in the course of the movement, made up of a small number of activists and with the heads of the given unit as its nucleus, and that this leading group should link itself closely with the masses taking part in the movement. However active the leading group

may be, its activity will amount to fruitless effort by a handful of people unless combined with the activity of the masses. [xxvi](#)

How many fundamental contradictions exist in a process?

The document states:

The whole process of the capitalist society has the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie as the fundamental contradiction. Yet, three fundamental contradictions are developed in the world when it transits from non-monopoly capitalism into monopoly capitalism – or imperialism [...] [xxvii](#)

First of all: It is not quite correct to state that: «The whole process of the capitalist society has the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie as the fundamental contradiction.» [xxviii](#) Rather, this contradiction is dependent on the fundamental contradiction in capitalist society. Mao explains the fundamental (or basic) contradiction like this (our emphasis):

When Marx applied this law to the study of the economic structure of capitalist society, he discovered that

***the basic contradiction of this society is the contradiction between the social character of production and the private character of ownership.** This contradiction manifests itself in the contradiction between the organized character of production in individual enterprises and the anarchic character of production in society as a whole. In terms of*

class relations, it manifests itself in the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.^{[xxix](#)}

Thus, the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is not the fundamental contradiction in itself, but a manifestation of the fundamental contradiction. In the «developed» capitalist countries, under most but not all circumstances, it is the principal contradiction. However, it is never *fundamental*.

The Declaration states that in the transition to the imperialist era, «*three fundamental contradictions are developed in the world*». This is an incorrect understanding. A contradiction is a unity of opposites, which can only exist as long as there is struggle between two opposite sides. In a complex process, there will be many contradictions, but there can only be one fundamental contradiction. The world situation at any given time is shaped by the interplay of several *major* contradictions, each of which may turn into the *primary* contradiction on a world scale for a given time, but these are all derived from the same fundamental contradiction, which remains the same for the entire bourgeois epoch. We quote again from Mao:

The fundamental contradiction in the process of development of a thing and the essence of the process determined by this fundamental contradiction will not disappear until the process is completed; but in a lengthy process the conditions usually differ at each stage. The reason is that, although the nature of the fundamental contradiction in the process of development of a thing and the essence of the process remain unchanged, the fundamental contradiction becomes more and more intensified as it passes from one stage to another in the lengthy process.

In addition, among 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; hence the process is marked by stages. If people do not pay attention to the stages in the process of development of a thing, they cannot deal with its contradictions properly.^{xxx}

We agree with Ajith's interpretation in this passage:

At any particular period, one or the other major contradiction will be principal. No doubt, all of these contradictions, including the principal contradiction, 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.^{xxxi}

To conclude, we hold that the correct Marxist understanding of the major contradictions «in the world when it transits from non-monopoly capitalism into monopoly capitalism – or imperialism» is that:

1. The contradiction between the social character of production and the private character of ownership is the fundamental contradiction
2. The principal contradiction in the present world situation is **between oppressed nations, on the one hand, and the imperialist powers on the other** (we seem to be in complete agreement with the ICL on this point)
3. There are many other major contradictions in the world today, the most important of which are:
 - contradictions between the various imperialist countries and blocs
 - the contradiction between capital and labor in the

- imperialist countries
- the contradiction between production and nature

The ICL document also states: that “there are three fundamental contradictions in the democratic revolution”.[xxxii](#)

Here again we disagree, for the same reasons as mentioned above. Mao himself, when speaking of the contradictions in China in the period of the Democratic revolution, wrote (our emphasis):

Take the process of China's bourgeois-democratic revolution, which began with the Revolution of 1911; it, too, has several distinct stages. [...]

Although no change has taken place in the nature of the fundamental contradiction in the process as a whole,

i.e., in the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, democratic-revolutionary nature of the process (the opposite of which is its semi-colonial and semi-feudal nature), nonetheless this process has passed through several stages of development in the course of more than twenty years [...] These stages are marked by particular features such as the intensification of certain contradictions

(e.g., the Agrarian Revolutionary War and the Japanese invasion of the four northeastern provinces), the partial or temporary resolution of other contradictions

(e.g., the destruction of the Northern warlords and our confiscation of the land of the landlords), and the emergence of yet other contradictions

(e.g., the conflicts among the new warlords, and the landlords' recapture of the land after the loss of our revolutionary base areas in the south).[xxxiii](#)

Democratic centralism at the international level

The ICL bases itself on the principle of democratic centralism:

The new international organization is a center of ideological, political, and organizational coordination, based on democratic centralism and the solution of problems through mutual and permanent consultation among the parties and organizations that conforms it, and it will extend this procedure to all those who – while participating with the same principles and purposes – are outside of it.^{[xxxiv](#)}

We are not sure what is meant by the last part of this sentence. Are we to understand that the ICL will extend the principle of democratic centralism to parties and organizations «outside of it»? What does this mean? In any organization governed by democratic centralism, members have rights (right to vote, right to criticize) as well as duties (the duty to carry out the majority line, duties of party discipline). Extending democratic centralism to outside of the organization would mean one of two things:

1. That non-members are subject to the same rights and duties as members. In this case, the line between members and non-members is blurred, the organization ceases to be an organization, and the centralism aspect of democratic centralism is negated.
2. That non-members are subject to the same duties, but not rights, as members. This negates the democratic aspect; centralism turns into bureaucratic centralism.

Since we do not know what the authors have intended, we will avoid drawing any hasty conclusions until the matter is

clarified.

In any case, we do not think democratic centralism is appropriate for an international communist organization, based on the historical experience. The Soviet Union's hegemonic position in the Third International led to severe setbacks and lines that hampered the development of the ICM. Tactical moves that served foreign policy of Soviet Union were elevated to the level of general line, and adopted by parties outside of the USSR, even when these were in conflict with the parties' national interests. As a consequence, national chapters of the Third International alienated themselves from the masses and (particularly in the «Third Period») followed a line which caused setbacks in the struggle against fascism.

The Declaration reads:

Although the Comintern and comrade Stalin made some mistakes on the course, the problems of grave deviations and betrayals were caused by revisionism in the leadership of those parties who got into those situations and it cannot be credited to comrade Stalin, the CP(b) of the USSR, or the Comintern. [xxxv](#)

This is a one-sided, i.e. non-dialectical explanation. It was precisely the hegemonic practice of the CPSU which alerted Mao and the Communist Party of China against the dangers of excessive centralism in the International Communist Movement. To impose democratic centralism on the communist organizations is to negate the principle of The Communist Manifesto that proletariat of each country must «first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie».

Conclusion

Although our notes have been mostly critical, we want to briefly point to some positive developments in the declaration of the ICL. Firstly, in spite of some militarist tendencies,

the Declaration speaks of «interrelated construction of the three instruments» rather than «concentric construction». Secondly, even though the Declaration speaks of concrete examples of «Great Leaders», it doesn't explicitly speak of the necessity of Great Leadership or Guiding Thought.

The founding of the ICL may or may not be a genuine step towards the unity of the international Maoist movement, depending on how the ICL relates to MLM parties and organizations that are outside of it; especially those non-member parties that are actively engaged in People's Wars (India, Philippines). If the ICL were able to unite every Maoist party that is currently engaged in a People's War, this would be very significant indeed. However, it remains to be seen. In spite of our criticisms, and although we consider the founding of an international Maoist organization to be premature at this stage, we welcome the increased collaboration between Maoist forces and hope to continue to engage in comradely criticism and debate.

Revolutionary Communists, Norway (RK)

January 6th, 2023

[i](https://ci-ic.org/blog/2022/01/04/for-a-unified-maoist-international-conference-proposal-regarding-the-balance-of-the-international-communist-movement-and-of-its-current-general-political-line/) Coordinating Committee for the Unified Maoist International Conference, January 4th 2022. «For a Unified Maoist International Conference! Proposal regarding the balance of the International Communist Movement and of its current General Political Line». Available at Communist International: <https://ci-ic.org/blog/2022/01/04/for-a-unified-maoist-international-conference-proposal-regarding-the-balance-of-the-international-communist-movement-and-of-its-current-general-political-line/>.

[ii](#) International Communist League. «Political Declaration and the Principles of the International Communist League», henceforth «*Declaration*». Available online at ci-ic.org.

[iii](#) *Declaration*, p. 4.

[iv](#) Ibid.

[v](#) *Declaration*, p. 5.

[vi](#) Ibid.

[vii](#) Mao Zedong, October 5th 1928. «Why Is It That Red Political Power Can Exist in China»? Available online at Marxist Internet Archive: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_3.htm.

[viii](#) Mao Zedong, November 6th, 1938. «Problems of War and Strategy». Available online at Marxist internet Archive: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_12.htm.

[ix](#) Ibid.

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