

Position Paper #1

The Trend's Break with "Left" Opportunism

The anti-revisionist, anti-"left" opportunist trend in the U.S. originated from a split in the New Communist Movement which crystallized over the question of support for the Angolan revolution in 1975-76. This split had been brewing for quite some time. Throughout the early 1970s, Marxist-Leninist elements within the New Communist Movement had been developing a growing critique of that movement's tendencies toward infantile leftism, dogmatism, and vacillation in the struggle against U.S. imperialism. Angola brought all these simmering contradictions to a head, and, on the basis of support for the MPLA and agreement that U.S. imperialism was the main enemy of the peoples of the world, the Marxist-Leninist forces broke with the New Communist Movement and brought this trend into being.

Beyond their unity on these propositions, however, and a generalized sentiment that the New Communist Movement had not been on a revolutionary course for some time, the trend's break with opportunism was initially quite shallow. Trend forces lacked a common perspective on the precise nature of the line and trend from which we had broken, and indeed were unclear about how fundamental this break actually was. In widespread recognition of this fact, virtually all trend forces targetted deepening the critique of ultra-leftism as a crucial theoretical and political task.

Since these early beginnings, the trend has actually made considerable progress in identifying, analyzing, and repudiating the deviation to our "left." A key step in that process has been the identification of that deviation as Maoism.

An explicit and thorough break with Maoism has been made necessary first of all by the realities of the class struggle itself. Since 1976, the world anti-imperialist front, made up of the socialist countries, national liberation movements, and workers movements in the advanced capitalist countries, has, despite twists and turns, continued to advance its struggle against U.S. imperialism. Meanwhile, Maoism has only deepened its abandonment of that world-wide anti-imperialist front and stepped up its collaboration with imperialism. Precisely because of this desertion to the bourgeoisie, Maoism has objectively removed itself from the ranks of the international communist movement.

Simultaneous with this unfolding development in the worldwide class struggle, our trend has increasingly taken up the conscious work of summarizing and analyzing the basic features of Maoism. This work has given rise to the thorough critique of the Maoist thesis that capitalism had been restored in the USSR, to the reaffirmation of the Marxist-Leninist view that the Soviet Union is a socialist country and an integral part of the worldwide united front against imperialism, and to the recognition that a major task of Marxist-Leninists is to combat anti-Sovietism. As well, it has given rise to an increasingly all-sided criticism of the semi-anarchist propositions which underlay the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China and the infantile leftism of Maoist formations throughout the world. Finally, this work has led to the reaffirmation of the concept of a single international communist movement, as well as the recognition that Maoism as a political trend has removed itself from the ranks of that movement.

This substantial progress has shed important light on the history and essential nature of the U.S. New Communist Movement out of which our trend was born. That movement represented a coming together of two threads: (1) a flunkeyist and dogmatist acceptance of the main propositions emanating from

the Communist Party of China (capitalist restoration in the USSR, support for the Three Worlds Theory and the Cultural Revolution) and (2) an ideological base in the anarcho-syndicalist strain which developed in the U.S. New Left of the 1960s. These threads came together and crystallized in the U.S. variant of Maoism, the New Communist Movement, whose chief ideological characteristic was infantile leftism.

Though this analysis and repudiation of Maoism has progressed steadily for some years, some forces in our trend continue to vacillate on the need for a thorough break with Maoism. Some still refuse to acknowledge the socialist character of the USSR and/or its integral role in the world anti-imperialist front, clinging to all manner of eclectic formulations to justify siding with imperialism on such key questions of the class struggle as Vietnam/Kampuchea, Afghanistan, and Poland. Others drag their feet in the thorough repudiation of the anarchist strain of Maoism and the New Left, upholding the Cultural Revolution in China as a fundamentally correct orientation for socialist construction and attempting to throw the doors of this trend open to such infantile left Maoist formations as the Communist Workers Party (CWP).

Such vacillation, however, has not halted the overall motion of this trend toward an ever more explicit and thorough critique of Maoism. Indeed, such motion must continue, for only on this basis can the trend accurately summarize the history of the anti-revisionist movement and of our own trend, solidify our demarcation with infantile leftism and class collaboration, and re-establish the international ties that are so crucial to the development of any single country's communist movement. In short, our trend can only stabilize as a Marxist-Leninist force to the degree that we deepen and complete our break with Maoism.

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For the theoretical and political background to the assertions in this position paper, comrades may obtain and study the following:

"The Trial of the Gang of Four and the Crisis of Maoism" in Line of March #6

"The International Communist Movement: A Reappraisal" in Line of March #9

"Theory of the Three Worlds: A Major Deviation from Marxism-Leninism" in Line of March #2

"Marxism and the Crisis of Imperialism" in Line of March #1