

Brooklyn Revolutionary Collective Foundational Documents

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Marxism-Leninism-Maoism Today

I. Introduction

“Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.”

— V.I. Lenin, “What Is To Be Done?” (1902)

Marxism appeared about two centuries ago as capitalism was rapidly developing throughout Europe. Socialist, communistic, and anarchist thought were forming; and society was further divided into two antagonistic classes – the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Marxism, founded by the genius of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, appeared opposed to the prevailing utopian socialists and anarchists as the scientific ideology of the proletariat, capable of transforming the world and leading humanity towards communism. Since Marx, Marxism advanced two more times: Vladimir Lenin developed Marxism into Marxism-Leninism, and Mao Zedong developed Marxism-Leninism into Marxism-Leninism-Maoism – the highest stage of revolutionary proletarian theory we have today.

However, more than half a decade after the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR), where Marxism was brought to the stage of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, there still is no consistent agreement among those who call themselves Maoist today. These ideological differences are apparent in the international movement, and in the few Maoist projects active in the United States, almost all of whom share a low level of ideological and theoretical training. This lack can be ascribed to the absence of a proletarian center and the fall of the socialist camp in 1976, as well as the lack of a continued communist movement in the US. The lack of ideological training leads to on one hand, dogmatic distortions of Maoism – blindly applying concepts without regard for a fresh concrete analysis – and on the other hand, revisionist distortions of Maoism – uniting with anti-Marxist, idealist, postmodernist theories to make up for their lack of scientific knowledge.

In this period of great ideological deficiency, it is imperative that all revolutionary communists undergo rigorous study of the classics of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. This piece will outline the development of Maoism in China, its basic characteristics, and importance today. As always, we are open to struggle on any of our points.

II. Revisionism

Marxism has always advanced through fierce struggles with revisionism and prevailing incorrect ideas. Marx and Engels struggled against the idealists and utopians of their time – Proudhon, Duhring, Lassalle, and others – ultimately breaking with the anarchists and utopian socialists, founding scientific socialism, dialectical materialism, and Marxist political economy. The summation of Marx’s works can be found in *Anti-Dühring* by Engels.

Inheriting Marx’s teachings, Lenin too combated revisionists and opportunists of all colors – the economists, legal Marxists, Bernsteinites, Kautskyites – who tried their best to distort and liquidate Marxism. Lenin broke away from the opportunists of the Second Internationale as well as the Mensheviks, and successfully led the Bolshevik Revolution to establish the world’s first dictatorship of the proletariat. The all-round development of Marxism by Lenin was summed up by Stalin in *Foundations of Leninism*.

Following Stalin’s death and the victory of the capitalist-roaders in the Soviet Union, Mao fiercely struggled against the new revisionists, the Khrushchevites, who wore the cloak of the Communist Party to misguide and betray the proletariat in service to capital. The Khrushchevites pronounced that the Communist Party was now a “party for the entire people”, negating the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

The following international debate and defense of Stalin was a pivotal moment that split the international communist movement: the revisionist bloc aligned with Khrushchev and later, Soviet social-imperialism, and the anti-revisionist bloc aligned against both Washington and Moscow: parties such as the Chinese Communist Party, and the Party of Labour of Albania. The Albanian communists under Enver Hoxha would veer off into their own revisionism by dogmatically upholding Stalin, which included uniting with Stalin’s errors. The Chinese communists under the guidance of Chairman Mao would criticize those errors, uniting with Stalin’s correct revolutionary politics and bring forth a higher development of Marxism.

III. CCP Congresses and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

The 7th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought (MZT) as its guiding ideology, and at this time, the Congress claimed it was specific to China. However, a cursory glance will reveal that many major advancements in Marxism were already apparent in Mao Zedong Thought, and today are essential to Maoism. The theory of the mass line, ideological rectification, law of contradictions, are just some which were already universal theories developed as Mao Zedong Thought.

The rightist line prevailed at the 8th National Congress, which revoked the declaration that the CCP was guided by Mao Zedong Thought, removing all mentions of Mao's contributions to Marxist-Leninist theory. However, the 9th Congress¹ ratified once again that Marxism-Leninism MZT was the guiding ideology of the CCP, and emphasized how Mao Zedong Thought was an **all around development of Marxism-Leninism**. Though this was called Mao Zedong Thought, it was in essence, Maoism. It was during the course of the GPCR that Marxism-Leninism MZT advanced into Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, and it was during this Congress we find the *summation of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism*.

“Chairman Mao has integrated the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of revolution, has inherited, defended and developed Marxism-Leninism in the political, military, economic, cultural, philosophical and other spheres, **and has brought Marxism-Leninism to a higher and completely new stage.**”

— The 9th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (1969)

It is impossible to understand Maoism without understanding the GPCR, the conditions that led to it, and its vital role in proletarian revolution. Mao's greatest contribution to the international communist movement was his systemic summing up of the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat (DOTP), and the DOTP in the world since the October Revolution; that is, he summed up

¹ The political report of the 9th Congress was presented and read by the Lin Piao, who would later be revealed as an opportunist conspirator. However, the 10th Congress report clarifies that while Lin Piao was assigned to draft the political report for the 9th Congress, his draft was rejected by the Central Committee and the final report presented at the Congress was written under the guidance of Chairman Mao. Lin Piao's initial draft opposed the GPCR, contending that the main task was to develop production, instead of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

not only the positive but also the negative experience, and in particular the grave lessons of the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union.

The GPCR was declared following years of struggle between the rightists in the late 50s and 60s, who were able to take up party positions and pass Bukharinite economic policies. The San Zi Yi Bao policy would temporarily give agricultural forces an impetus to follow free market economics and receive less guidance from local cadres. This policy had three main directives: (1) restoration of private plots; (2) the use of the household as the basic economic unit; (3) the assumption by enterprises in communes for sole responsibility for profit and output.² Led by opportunists like Liu Shao Qi and Deng Xiaoping, this gave the right-line a stronger economic base to work from, setting the table for the GPCR.

The basic lessons of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, summed up in the 9th Congress, are as follows:³

It is necessary to apply the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist law of the unity of opposites to the study of socialist society. Contradictions exist everywhere, and it is necessary to identify the contradictions in socialist society, which there are two types: (1) contradictions between ourselves and the enemy; and (2) contradictions among the people.

After the basic completion of the socialist transformation of the ownership of the means of production, the class struggle is by no means over. “The class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the class struggle between the different political forces, and the class struggle in the ideological field between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie will continue to be long and tortuous and at time will even become very acute.”⁴

The class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat is in essence still a matter of political power, in other words, the bourgeoisie tries to overthrow the DOTP while the proletariat strives to further

² “The Struggle Between The Two Roads In China’s Countryside.” By the Editorial Departments of *Renmin Ribao*, *Hongqi* and *Jiefangjun Bao*. 1967.

³ “Advance Along the Road Opened Up By The October Socialist Revolution.” By the Editorial Departments of *Renmin Ribao*, *Hongqi* and *Jiefangjun Bao*. 1967.

⁴ *Ibid.*

consolidate it. In other words, the DOTP can only be a relation of one class oppressing another, the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, and there can be no other relation like so called equality or coexistence between the two classes.

The struggle between the two classes and two roads in society is inevitably reflected within the Party. For the continuation of the DOTP, it is of the greatest importance that the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is carried out. Communists must criticize and repudiate revisionism politically, ideologically, and theoretically, use proletarian ideology to overcome bourgeois egoism and all non-proletarian ideas within the superstructure that are not in correspondence with the socialist economic base, and thus uproot revisionism.

During his time, Lenin stressed that “only he is a Marxist who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat.”⁵ Those Marxists would become known as Marxist-Leninists. Today it can be said that only they are a Marxist-Leninist who extends the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat to the recognition of the need to continue the revolution and class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Those Marxist-Leninists are known as Marxist-Leninist-Maoists.

IV. Maoism

Though the most significant contribution of Chairman Mao was the GPCR, out of the experience of the GPCR and of the experience of the Chinese communists under Mao’s leadership can we find the Maoist method of communist organizing, mainly the mass line. The Maoist Communist Group lists the new style of party work, which entails:

“(1) close integration of theory with practice (2) the forging of close links with the masses and (3) the practice of self-criticism. These three moments are the theoretical requirements of the mass line, which names the Maoist theory of organization and knowledge in the sequence defined by the finality of communism. The Party concentrates the dispersed but correct ideas of the masses, in light of the class thought of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, into political directives

⁵ Lenin, V.I. “State and Revolution.” 1917.

and slogans that can lead the masses in transforming their concrete situations. The application of these directives and slogans is concretely assessed, resulting in new, dispersed ideas that renew the cycle. This cycle of organization and knowledge only ends when mass knowledge and mass organizations merge with class knowledge and class organizations—that is, with the end of class society and the state, with communism.”

— Maoist Communist Group Founding Statement (2014)

Advancements in Marxism means universal advancements in the three components of Marxism: philosophy, political economy, and scientific socialism. Chairman Mao undeniably made advancements in all three components which have been documented by many. To name a few: (1) in Marxist philosophy, Chairman Mao developed the theory of the laws of contradictions as the fundamental law of the universe; (2) in political economy, Chairman Mao criticized the revisionist theory of the “productive forces” emphasizing that the superstructure can transform the base and the productive forces can be developed with political power; (3) in scientific socialism, Chairman Mao developed the theory of social classes under socialism and the theory of continuing the revolution and class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

What is important is the fact that the sum of Chairman Mao’s contributions were proven and applied successfully, realized in practice through the Chinese Revolution achieving state power and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. It is out of this successful experience do we find the real components of Maoism. Fundamentally grasping the components of Maoism can lead us to the immediate and crucial task of correctly assessing the concrete situation of our revolutionary movement, and creatively applying Maoism to advance the revolution.

Lenin and Mao were able to successfully lead revolutions by having a firm understanding of Marxism and Marxism-Leninism (resp.), breaking away from preconceived and mechanical traditions, and creatively applying theory to create new breakthroughs to advance their revolutionary movements. Lenin and Mao both rejected dogmatic applications of cookie-cutter strategy and tactics, instead resorting to making their own analysis for their respective movements. Fresh, concrete analysis is lacking among the Maoist movement in the US, with many resorting to the same dogmatic errors that Lenin and Mao ruptured from.

The most prevalent of the dogmatists are those who uphold the “synthesis” of Maoism by Abimael Gonzalo of the Peruvian Communist Party (PCP). Gonzalo and the PCP led a people’s war which ultimately resulted in a significant defeat and retreat. The Peruvian experience did not surpass the Chinese experience with the GPCR, much less the Soviet experience in establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat. There are lessons to be taken from the Peruvian people’s war, however those lessons are not a universal advancement of Marxism, and do not carry the same weight as the experience of the Chinese revolution and the GPCR.

What is passed as Maoism by those who hold to Gonzalo’s “synthesis”⁶, are primarily components of Gonzalo Thought (its adherents refer to themselves as “principally Maoist”) only. Gonzalo’s concept of leadership (*jefatura*), militarized party, concentric construction, were not developed by Chairman Mao and are not part of Maoism. Those who try to misconstrue Gonzalo Thought as Maoism are no more than dogmato-revisionists falsely equating Gonzalo’s additions to be as significant as the contributions of Chairman Mao.

This by no means implies the Peruvian people’s war should not be studied, but it is important to recognize that Gonzalo’s contributions do not have the same universal significance as the contributions of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao. Having grasped a strong understanding of the classics of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, it will be important to study the Maoist struggles in places like Peru, the Philippines, India, Nepal, and Turkey – all of which can provide a wealth of information for us to apply in our movement, **given our own analysis of present conditions**. Without this concrete analysis all we are left with are blind and dogmatic applications.

⁶ We will note here the unique usage of synthesizing ideology by Gonzaloites. They provide the example of Stalin synthesizing Marxism-Leninism and equate this to Gonzalo synthesizing Maoism. However, synthesis implies bringing forth a higher understanding, which neither Stalin’s *Foundations of Leninism* nor Engels’ *Anti-Dühring* are. More accurately, they (and the 9th Congress) are **summations** of Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism and the actual process of bringing to a higher stage occurred through the course of revolution. We will touch on the difference in the usage of synthesis by Gonzaloites and synthesis in dialectical materialism in a future article.

V. Conclusion

From the Chinese revolutionary experience and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution we have Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. The works written by Chairman Mao, as well as the works written by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin must be thoroughly studied in order to master revolutionary theory, and correctly apply Maoism to advance the revolution. In the absence of thorough knowledge of the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, many communists veer off in the direction of dogmatism and revisionism. We openly invite other Maoist collectives in the process of constructing the Communist Party of the USA to study and struggle together on pressing ideological points, in order to build a capable theoretical force to analyze the concrete situation, and advance the revolutionary proletarian movement.

This document is only the first among many we plan to put out in the future, covering individual topics regarding Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, the revolutionary movement in the US, and the international communist movement.

Party Construction – Orientation and Principles

I. Introduction

As it currently stands in the United States, the lack of an organized vanguard party has had disastrous effects on the growth of the proletarian movement. The closest semblance to a vanguard in the US was the Communist Party U.S.A. (CPUSA) of the early 20th century. This party, however, has long traversed the path of revisionism, often calling for the support of liberal democratic candidates. Outside of the CPUSA, there have been many “pre-party” formations that have abandoned the cause of anti-revisionism, essentially conceding to bourgeois ideology. Many of these organizations were born out of the so called “New Left” movement of the 1960’s and 1970’s. Consequentially, this has left the working class in a precarious situation. As the crises of capitalism inevitably repeat and increase the poverty line, workers are often limited in their available responses by the ceilings of spontaneous rebellion. These rebellions and struggles carry important lessons and unrefined ideas but relying on them solely as a panacea for the ills of capitalism is a strategy that will endanger the lives of many more. Solutions sought out by the working people can only be found via socialism. Yet, in order to struggle and advance towards socialism, the correct orientation towards organizing the working class movement must be held in the beginning. Stalin had a clear analysis on the working class movement without socialism:

“What is scientific socialism without the working-class movement? — A compass which, if left unused, will only grow rusty and then will have to be thrown overboard.

What is the working-class movement without socialism?—A ship without a compass which will reach the other shore in any case, but would reach it much sooner and with less danger if it had a compass.

Combine the two and you will get a splendid vessel, which will speed straight towards the other shore and reach its haven unharmed.

Combine the working-class movement with socialism and you will get a Social-Democratic movement which will speed straight towards the ‘promised land.’”

— J.V. Stalin, “Briefly About The Disagreements In The Party” (1905)

He continues on, presenting the all important orientation in the early days of the movement, “And so, it is the duty of Social-Democracy (and not only of Social-Democratic intellectuals) to combine socialism with the working-class movement, to imbue the movement with socialist consciousness and thereby lend the spontaneous working-class movement a Social-Democratic character.”⁷

Combining the working class movement with socialism must be done *consciously*. This conscious task can only be carried out by a Bolshevik-style party organization as it is the element of the proletariat that systemically considers both objective and subjective forces of the opposing classes. It is clear that this party cannot appear via premature declaration, so the task of building must be worked on by organizations with the common goal of establishing the communist party guided by Maoism.

For communists, the first major task is resoundingly clear: the complete construction of a Maoist Party. Without it, only so much work can be done regarding the fusing of the working class movement with socialism. Carrying out this task requires that communists thoroughly learn and apply the principles of Maoism, while defending the science against revisionism. In our current day and age, an overwhelming majority of Maoist formations have glaring ideological deficiencies that often reflect negatively in mass work and the analyses of mass rebellions. While this error goes unchecked, more and more time goes to waste as revisionists mislead the masses towards the tactics of reform, adventurism, and subservience to the bourgeoisie.

On the particular level, there is no step by step formula for party construction that fits all countries, but we can look into the historical processes undertaken by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in general. Both parties led the working masses to socialism and both require thorough study to extract any universal lessons of building the movement and the party. These lessons can only aid the movement if they are creatively applied to our current conditions. This area of study cannot be underscored as there is no need to continuously repeat mistakes that other leftists have made in the US’s past in party construction.

⁷ Stalin, J.V. “Briefly About The Disagreements In The Party.” 1905.

II. Purpose and Historical Background

With an understanding of why the construction of the party is necessary, we will now lend passage to the history and types of workers parties themselves. Three divisions can be made here:

1. Parties of the old type — or the original opportunist “reform” organizations.

These social democratic parties were that of the Second International, many of which supported their reactionary country’s governments during wartime in “defense of the fatherland.” Outside of their opportunistic reformism these parties had a very clear inclination to disregard the principles of proletarian internationalism, often aiding the bourgeoisie in the process.

2. Parties of the new type — the Leninist vanguard formation under Bolshevik principles.

Bolshevik style parties were unique at this time due to the principles of democratic centralism, strong adherences to revolutionary line and political party rules. Maoist parties fall under this category, but as we have seen in the pre-revisionist China experience, there is greater emphasis on the two line struggle and self criticism by party officials. These parties of the new type are the only correct organization capable of leading the proletariat towards revolution.

3. Modern revisionist parties — such as the Chinese Communist Party and the late Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Both the CCP and the CPSU failed to succeed in staving off revisionism in their later years leading to the collapse of socialism in China and the Soviet Union. This should be noted as a temporary defeat for the working classes of their respective countries.

The communist parties of both China and Russia had their beginnings in Marxist study circles. Russia at this point had a relatively developed history with capitalism and organized workers struggles. Many of the earliest Russian communists such as Plekhanov wrote and connected with the urban workers movements as contradictions between the state and working classes sharpened. Russian revolutionaries eventually tried their hand at applying Marxism to the conditions of Russia through the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) and eventually the CPSU (b).⁸ On the other hand, Chinese capitalism was still in a stage of budding in the coastal cities. Some of the early study circles consisted of scattered

⁸ The RSDLP was the organization that merged older groups in Russia such as the Emancipation of Labor group, the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, and The Bund.

members of intelligentsia following the May 4th movement. These members such as Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao further armed themselves with Marxist study and the experience gained from the May 4th movement. By 1921 this laid the foundation for the 12 members that would eventually form the CCP in Shanghai. The following year the small but developing party broke through in gaining the support of a significant number of workers through the Anyuan miners' strike. Communist leadership by the likes of Mao and others greatly impacted the course of the workers struggle. Both the Russian and Chinese experiences essentially started with Marxist study circles that were adjacent and in most cases involved with local student and worker movements. This is extremely important to draw from as this basic starting step applies to our present conditions. The class conditions of Russia (along with China) and the US have varied significantly. However, a few circumstances seem congruent with the workers movement of the US.

Since the 2020 economic crisis, there has been an uptick in union drives and significant amount of working teachers have participated in regional strikes. The push for an expansion of democratic and in some cases, worker rights was clearly taken up by the people. However, this expansion of democratic rights should not be looked at as the ceiling for what the working class should strive to win. Without socialism, the bourgeoisie will continue to make piece-meal concessions and take them away once the masses hit a lull in activity. This highlights the necessity for communists to propagandize, agitate, and organize, to raise their socialist consciousness and direct them towards a revolutionary movement.

III. Basic Principles of Construction

It should be noted that we have the vast revolutionary history of China and the Soviet Union at our expense. The parties in both countries took different paths to come into being. Principles used by both parties are important to study and implement so that organizations do not muddy up time and effort reinventing the wheel.

Again, the experiences of the CPSU and CCP have proven indispensable in the realm of study and application:

“All the usual, regular, current work of all the organisations and groups of our Party, the work of propaganda, agitation and organisation, is directed towards strengthening and expanding the ties

with the masses. This work is always necessary; but in a revolutionary period less than in any other can it be considered sufficient. At such a time the working class feels an instinctive urge for open revolutionary action, and we must learn to set the aims of this action correctly, and then make these aims as widely known and understood as possible.”

— V.I. Lenin, “Two Tactics” (1905)

It goes without saying but the relationship that the party (or nucleic pre-party formations at the time of writing) has with the laboring masses is of exceptionally significant character. There can be no revolution without steeled ties to the proletariat in the US. “Mountain top” revolutionaries as Mao once called them, typically hang their coats on their theoretical knowledge, making directives to laborers that they have no relationship to. This error also has its opposite: “red charity” or the practice of serving the people or organizing the masses without any significant effort to draw from the principles of Maoism and the historical lessons of the International Communist Movement. The starting block for building revolution lies within the question of organization itself. In order for the proletariat to succeed in seizing power from the bourgeois class, the party of the proletariat itself must be organized. In order for the party of the proletariat to be organized, active Maoist organizations must begin (or continue) the work of propaganda and agitation while organizing and leading the masses in all active fronts of mass work.

Our orientation must be to “begin from the beginning” in such a way that we avoid the dilution of proletarian politics. This project must take an international character, meaning that principled unity with other Maoist formations with the same aspirations must be undertaken, nationally and internationally. These formations should; take great care in acquiring Maoist theoretical knowledge jointly whenever possible; applying this knowledge in practice; and defending the ideology against the bourgeois forces of revisionism. This task cannot be overlooked in such a nucleic phase of the movement, given the history of left organizing in the US in the past 40+ years. Many, if not all, of the failures in the most recent decades have stemmed from ideological poverty and philistinism. We will be suited best to gather and train our forces by method of measuring twice and cutting once rather than acting haphazardly and repeatedly committing avoidable errors made by others in the past.

“It must not be forgotten that the current pessimism about our ties with the masses very often serves as a screen for bourgeois ideas regarding the role of the proletariat in the revolution.

Undoubtedly, we still have a great deal to do to educate and organise the working class; but the whole question now is: where should the main political emphasis in this work of education and of organisation be placed? On the trade unions and legally existing societies, or on armed insurrection, on the work of creating a revolutionary army and a revolutionary government? Both serve to educate and organise the working class. Both are, of course, necessary. But the whole question now, in the present revolution, amounts to this: what is to be emphasised in the work of educating and organising the working class, the former or the latter?"

— V.I. Lenin, "Two Tactics" (1905)

At the present time of writing, the United States is not in a revolutionary situation, although the righteous fervor of the workers continues to grow and recede in spontaneous waves. While this continues to hold true, the aforementioned orientation of revolutionary work for Maoists remains the same. How then, must we visualize the functional growth of Maoist organizations aiming to rebuild a vanguard in the United States? During the Cultural Revolution, Mao and the party's left viewed the consolidation of the party (similar but not to be confused with construction) as a process that occurs similar to the physiological system in humans: eliminate waste matter and absorb fresh blood. This same orientation of expelling the incorrect and adopting the correct should still be taken now. Maoist organizations, even prior to the construction of the party, are not static or immutable. Because of this they face the responsibility of sharpening current revolutionaries where possible while expelling elements that vehemently defend bourgeois ideas.

On the relation of communists and the masses, the experiences advanced by the CCP and Mao put forth valuable systemic lessons regarding the questions of mass leadership:

"In all the practical work of our Party, all correct leadership is necessarily "from the masses, to the masses". This means: take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action. Then once again concentrate ideas from the masses and once again go to the masses so that the ideas are persevered in and carried through. And so on, over and over again in an

endless spiral, with the ideas becoming more correct, more vital and richer each time. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge.”

— Mao Zedong, “Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership” (1943)

Mass organizations, under the genuinely accepted leadership of communists, may serve as vessels to further steel sections of the masses in repudiating the trends of reaction. For communists, it is important to note that ideological struggles are also waged on the mass front, and that workers and students should accept ideas based off correctness and correctness alone. On their own, these mass organizations cannot accomplish this task but with the synthesis of these advanced workers ideas by communists they can unite and march on towards revolution. The Maoist Mass Line Method of Leadership serves as a tool to supply the correct synthesis of proletarian ideas.

As early as 1949, Mao cited that the party “must whole-heartedly rely on the working class, unite with the rest of the labouring masses, win over the intellectuals.”⁹ A process of this nature must be premeditated and systematically implemented during this period of construction. This, along with the use of: (1) the mass line, (2) the acknowledgment and application of requiring to begin the movement from the beginning, (3) the reinforcing of theoretical and historical study, and (4) the concentrated efforts of propaganda and agitation work, all serve as early principles for party construction.

With the use and creative application of both the CCP and CPSU’s experiences, the orientation or direction towards building the party should only solidify as the movement and its core continue to develop.

IV. Party Rules and Organizational Principles

What character would the party being worked towards and its cadres need to adopt? To get an understanding of what the party should essentially be and what core responsibilities cadres in a party should take, we look no further than the 1903 RSDLP Congress and the 1969 Constitution of the CCP.

⁹ Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the CCP. 1949.

In the Russian Party Congress of 1903, the majority (Bolsheviks) and minority (Mensheviks) attempted forming unity. The process of uniting as we mentioned before, must be carried out with principle but what is concretely meant by this? In the Russian experience, the Bolsheviks realized and drew attention to very distinct positions held by both sides on the question of membership.

The Mensheviks on one hand favored the ability for any striking worker to join the party regardless of work (or lack thereof) within party organizations. Kautsky, Plekhanov, Martov and co. subscribed to doctrines of ideological spinelessness whereas the Bolsheviks held that firm lines be taken.

The Bolsheviks on the other hand held the opposite position. For them, party workers were required to participate in one of its Party organizations and they were to be trained into more politically conscious individuals. While it may seem trivial, this fundamental break explains the ideological bankruptcy of the Menshevik faction. Workers themselves can be divided into three general categories: backwards, intermediate, and advanced. To open the door and let any and every worker join the party would be to repudiate the need and makeup of the advanced detachment.

Lenin in a conversation with Martov iterated the importance of this point:

“‘Our Party is the conscious exponent of an unconscious process.’ Exactly. And for this very reason it is wrong to want ‘every striker’ to have the right to call himself a Party member, for if ‘every strike’ were not only a spontaneous expression of a powerful *class instinct and of the class struggle, which is inevitably leading to the social revolution, but a conscious expression of that process . . .* then our Party . . . would at once put an end to the entire bourgeois society.”
— V.I. Lenin, “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back” (1904)

Further, in *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, he alludes to the period of disunity in the movement, the Mensheviks and Dyeloists often ran counter to the correct line and rarely held in principle. This organizational problem was a bigger essential question when forming what we came to know as the Bolshevik party. There could have been no revolution in Russia if this large division in thought were to continue existing in the party for such a long time without formally splitting. Two important points came from this initial exchange that highlighted disunity:

1. In this instance, Menshevik cadres insisted the publication of a program was too hasty regardless of the long and calculated process to draft it by that point. The Mensheviks complained about the pace of congress work, while Lenin had clarified that work was measured countless times already before being “cut.” To Lenin and the Bolsheviks, it seemed as if the Mensheviks would have likely complained that it was too slow if the process were drawn out.

2. The question of abstention in party matters, typically when lines have already been made clear, illustrated another repeated trend of opportunism which manifested itself in so-called “practical politics.”

“‘I could not but take into account all the consequences that might follow from our vote, and would therefore have voted for Paragraph 2 in its entirety.’ Comrade Makhov has admirably imbibed the spirit of ‘practical politics’: in principle he had already rejected federation, and therefore in practice he would have voted for including in the Rules a point that signified federation! And this ‘practical’ comrade explained his profound position of principle in the following words: ‘But [the famous Shchedrin “but”!] since my voting one way or the other would only have significance in principle [!!] and could not be of any practical importance, in view of the almost unanimous vote of all the other Congress delegates, I preferred to abstain in order to bring out in principle [God preserve us from such principles!] the difference between my position on this question and the position of the Bund delegates, who voted in favour. Conversely, I would have voted in favour if the Bund delegates had abstained, as they had at first insisted.’ Can you make head or tail of it? A man of principle abstains from loudly saying ‘Yes’ because practically it is useless when everybody else says ‘No’”.

— V.I. Lenin, “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back” (1904)

These Menshevik-types typically pay lip service to centralism. When discussing discipline, they often abuse or stretch democracy to its limits whenever it becomes palatable for their arguments. This common style of political opportunism stunts any effort to create principled party unity under the guide of democratic centralism, while ultimately derailing party building and unification efforts.

In any case, how would an eventually unified conscious exponent need to exercise discipline in order to advance the unconscious elements of the workers movement? A few great examples can be found in the constitution of the most advanced communist party to come into fruition. Below are both rules and committee principles that are appropriate to emulate in party building efforts. These rules and structures fully reflect the efforts made by CCP leadership to cement the party's discipline to Democratic Centralism, and they are also reflected by the original Bolshevik Party's organizational principles.

The second section of the constitution on membership rules for cadres:

“Party members have the following duties:

Article 1 Any Chinese worker, poor peasant, lower-middle peasant, revolutionary armyman or any other revolutionary element who has reached the age of eighteen and who accepts the Constitution of the Party, joins a Party organization and works actively in it, carries out the Party's decisions, observes Party discipline and pays membership dues may become a member of the Communist Party of China.

Article 2 Applicants for Party membership must go through the procedure for admission individually. An applicant must be recommended by two Party members, fill out an application form for Party membership and be examined by a Party branch, which must seek the opinions of the broad masses inside and outside the Party. Application is subject to acceptance by the general membership meeting of the Party branch and approval by the next higher Party committee.

Article 3 Members of the Communist Party of China must:

- (1) Study and apply Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought in a living way;
- (2) Work for the interests of the vast majority of people of China and the world;
- (3) Be able at uniting with the great majority, including those who have wrongly opposed them but are sincerely correcting their mistakes; however, special vigilance must be maintained against careerists, conspirators and double-dealers so as to prevent such bad elements from usurping the leadership of the Party and the state at any level and guarantee that the leadership of the Party and the state always remains in the hands of Marxist revolutionaries;

- (4) Consult with the masses when matters arise;
- (5) Be bold in making criticism and self-criticism.

Article 4 When Party members violate Party discipline, the Party organizations at the levels concerned shall, within their functions and powers and on the merits of each case, take appropriate disciplinary measures—warning, serious warning, removal from posts in the Party, placing on probation within the Party, or expulsion from the Party[...]”¹⁰

Section three, on the organizational principles of the party:

“**Article 5** The organizational principle of the Party is democratic centralism.

The leading bodies of the Party at all levels are elected through democratic consultation.

The whole Party must observe unified discipline: The individual is subordinate to the organization, the minority is subordinate to the majority, the lower level is subordinate to the higher level, and the entire Party is subordinate to the Central Committee.

[...]

Article 7 Party committees at all levels shall set up their working bodies or dispatch their representative organs in accordance with the principles of centralized leadership, close ties with the masses and simple and efficient structure.”^{11 12}

As seen in the passages above, any party project must concern itself with organizational structure via committees, democratic centralism, and party rules. If this is treaded upon lightly, a party organization will surely rot from within and follow the trend of anarchistic horizontalism. This trend has seemingly gained steam in the past decade as many isolated communist collectives have come and gone.

¹⁰ 1969 Constitution of the Chinese Communist Party. Refer to original text for exhaustive list.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² We omit the inclusion of Article 6 due to the lack of an armed organizational apparatus.

V. Conclusion

Organized communists should build with revolutionary optimism despite the conditions in our conjuncture. Our current task is one of creation, from the beginning. With the long lapse in continuity dating back to the heyday of the CPUSA, the US communist movement is long due for reconstruction starting at the base of fundamental ideology. For our formation and the current forces within it, we are primarily compelled to approach this task independently, while carrying out auxiliary struggles for organizational unity where possible in the US Maoist movement. The question of unity has been touched upon to a degree by other organizations in the past and it must continue to be engaged by organizations appraising the prospects of party construction. For the Brooklyn Revolutionary Collective, the correct route of action on this question regarding other formations must be carried out through principled exchange, criticism, and rigorous study. In addition, Maoist groups must take up the task of forming mass organizations and study circles with advanced and intermediate elements to further bridge the connection between unconscious masses and a party center.

Our current position leads us to the understanding that we should enact the principles of party construction by forming Maoist study circles to supplement the lack of proletarian class consciousness in the US. This, coupled with organized involvement and leadership in mass organizations will further provide us with hands in both ideological leadership and a proletarian base in both student and worker organizations. The formations that align with the orientation of our group shall be actively involved in the question of organizational unity, as we are not the only group looking to bring about socialism via Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. The form itself of this unity process cannot be predetermined without taking each objective case as one independent project with different features than that of the others. Some organizations may simply be synthesized into our formation whereas others may perhaps be struggled with via congress or unity proceedings.

We call upon the Maoist organizations of old and new to critically engage us and begin thinking of the long term resolution of our first major task in the US communist movement. At this stage in our work, our guiding slogan for future unity should not differ from Lenin and Liebknecht's call: "Studieren,

propagandieren, organisieren”— Learn, propagandise, organise— and the pivot of this activity can and must be only the organ of the Party.”¹³

It is our task to reassess shifts in trends and contradictions with each step in order for us to adapt our practices accordingly.

¹³ Lenin, V.I. “Our Immediate Task”. Published in *Rabochaya Gazeta*. 1899.