

Chinese Foreign Policy during the Maoist Era and its Lessons for Today

by the MLM Revolutionary Study Group in the U.S. (January 2007)



"U.S. Imperialism Get Out of Asia, Africa and Latin America!"

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Introduction

Our starting point is that the struggle for socialism and communism are part of a worldwide revolutionary process that develops in an uneven manner. Revolutions are fought and new socialist states are established country by country. These states must defend themselves; socialist countries have had to devote significant resources to defending themselves from political isolation, economic strangulation and military attack. And they must stay on the socialist road by reinvigorating the revolutionary process and unleashing the political initiative of the masses of working people in all areas of society.¹

However, socialist countries cannot be seen as ends in and of themselves. They are not secure as long as imperialism and capitalism exist anywhere in the world. Moreover, the transition to communism can only occur with the victory of socialist revolutions *worldwide*, and when the social, economic and cultural inequalities that exist in socialist society have been eliminated and the socialist states of all nations begin to wither away. Thus, socialist countries must both await and hasten the establishment of socialist states elsewhere in the world. From this vantage point, it is a strategic necessity for a socialist state to exert every effort – politically, morally and where possible militarily-- to support and accelerate the struggle for revolution and socialism worldwide.

This situation creates a continuing, and at times acute, contradiction between the necessity of defending socialist countries--including through state-to-state diplomacy with imperialist and reactionary states--and the goal of promoting and supporting the world revolution.

The foreign policy of the People's Republic of China during the Maoist era attempted to pursue both goals by building a broad *united front* of all forces that could be directed against the principal enemy or enemies of the people of the world.² The basic component of this united

¹ What defines socialism most clearly is the *road* on which it is traveling. Is it in fact on the road to communism? Is society expanding or restricting economic, social and political inequalities to the greatest degree possible? Is it promoting mass participation and debate, or political passivity, in factories, farms, schools and governmental institutions? Is it combating "me first" capitalist ideology with struggle for the collective interest? Is it challenging national oppression and male supremacy? Is it promoting internationalism and leading mass campaigns to support revolution in other countries? And of critical importance, what political line is the working class' political leadership in the communist party and state organs pursuing in all of these areas?

For an analysis of the struggle to stay on the socialist road in China, see our paper, "The Cultural Revolution in China and Its Legacy for the Future." For a copy, download at <http://www.mlmsrg.com>, or email mlm.rsg@gmail.com.

² This strategic perspective was based on the experience of the Chinese Communist Party, whose eventual victory depended on the identification of the principal enemy at each stage of the revolution and the formation of a broad united front against the principal target of the revolution (the Guomindang from 1927-1937 and 1945-1949 and the Japanese imperialists from 1937-1945). Within this united front, Mao consistently fought for the CCP and the army it led to maintain their political independence and initiative so the greatest possible revolutionary advances could be made at each point.

front (outside the socialist countries themselves) was the struggle of the working class and oppressed peoples of all countries. At various times the united front also included some of the imperialist powers, as well as bourgeois nationalist and reactionary governments in the “third world” that had conflicts to varying degrees with one or another of the imperialist powers. Thus, there were sharp class contradictions built into such a broad united front.

In this paper, we will examine how these contradictions were handled in the formulation and conduct of China’s foreign policy during the Maoist era, and we will attempt to draw lessons that can be applied by revolutionaries in the 21st century.

China's foreign policy between 1949 to 1976 can be divided into four periods:

(1) From 1949-1953, the U.S. imperialists attempted to contain and even roll back the Chinese revolution, and tried to suppress the advance of revolutionary movements in Asia. The response of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was to battle the U.S. military in Korea and support revolutionary struggles in Vietnam and elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

(2) During the "Bandung Period"—1954 to the early 1960s—U.S. efforts at containing China were complemented by the aggressive replacement of the European direct colonial empires with U.S.-dominated neo-colonial states. Chinese foreign policy, reflecting the influence of Zhou Enlai, sought to set up an alliance of socialist states and formerly colonial countries under an anti-imperialist banner. In practice, this policy placed primary emphasis on supporting bourgeois nationalist regimes such as Indonesia and India, and downplayed support for revolutionary struggles.

(3) Some of the most notable features of the 1960s period were the explosive growth of national liberation movements, concentrated in Vietnam, the rebirth of revolutionary struggle in the imperialist countries, and the initiation of the Cultural Revolution, an unprecedented revolution within a socialist society. These factors strengthened the revolutionary internationalist orientation that defined Chinese foreign policy during those years. At the same time, there was sharp struggle in the CCP over foreign policy, which was closely linked to the polemics against Soviet revisionism and the struggle against Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping and other leading “capitalist roaders” in the Chinese party.

(4) From 1969 into the 1970s, socialist China was faced with new conditions. A serious military threat developed on its northern border from the Soviet Union, and Defense Minister Lin Biao defected from the revolutionary camp. These adverse developments put the brakes on the Cultural Revolution and brought back Deng Xiaoping and other high-ranking officials who had been overthrown or demoted only a few years earlier. This also led to the emergence of the Three Worlds Theory, which advocated a *strategic* alliance with the Western imperialists for China, and assumed a dominant position in Chinese foreign policy from 1973 to Mao’s death in 1976.

During this period, the revolutionary thrust of Mao’s and his supporters’ foreign policy was blunted by their advocacy of a “three worlds perspective” that did not keep in sharp focus the reactionary nature of the West European imperialists and the neo-colonial states dominated by imperialism. Nevertheless, Mao and his allies in the CCP fought to continue political and military support for the emerging anti-revisionist and revolutionary forces in other countries.

All in all, Mao's revolutionary and internationalist orientation was the primary determinant of Chinese foreign policy from 1949 to 1976. However, there was a significant bourgeois nationalist opposition to this orientation within the CCP, and at times it held the upper hand. It is important to closely examine both aspects of Chinese foreign policy in order to draw lessons for the future.

A. The Chinese Revolution and its Internationalist Practice

The foreign policy of the first few years of the People's Republic developed from a complex mix of new conditions in the world after World War II:

--The development of national liberation movements in the vacuum created by the breakdown and collapse of the old European and Japanese colonial empires; in East Asia, communist-led revolutionary struggles arose in Vietnam, Korea and Indonesia.

--The new forms of imperialist domination (neo-colonialism) throughout Asia, Latin America and Africa led and created by the United States, which disguised itself in clever anti-imperialist and anti-colonial pretense and rhetoric; and

--The extension of the socialist bloc into Eastern Europe on the basis, not of revolutionary upsurge, but from the defeat of Germany by the victorious Soviet armies; the theoretical development of people's democracies as "states of the whole people" to justify the East European countries' entrance into the "socialist bloc"; and this bloc's failure to keep pace with and support the rising revolutionary movements in the colonial world;

After World War 2, the Soviet Union, concentrated as it was on the tasks of post-war reconstruction and bloc integration, had actively discouraged the revolutionary movements in China, Greece, Iran, and elsewhere from seizing power,³ risking confrontation with U.S imperialism, and "over-extending" the reach of the socialist bloc. Mao and the CCP did not heed Stalin's advice, and in 1949 won nationwide victory.

After establishing the People's Republic on October 1, 1949, the Chinese party and people were confronted with the daunting task of rebuilding a country devastated by 30 years of civil war and thousands of years of feudalism. They were consolidating nationwide political power, and land reform was just getting underway. Still, they shouldered the internationalist

³ Stalin did not think the CCP could defeat the U.S.-backed Guomindang and repeatedly told Mao that the CCP should form a coalition government with the GMD and end the civil war. In 1948, Stalin admitted that he was wrong: "After the war we invited Chinese comrades to come to Moscow and we discussed the situation in China. We told them bluntly that we considered the development of the uprising in China had no prospect, and that the Chinese comrades should seek a modus vivendi with Chiang Kai-shek, that they should join the Chiang Kai-shek government and dissolve their army. The Chinese comrades agreed here with the views of the Soviet comrades, but went back to China and acted otherwise. They mustered their forces, organized their armies, and now, as we see, they are beating the Chiang Kai-shek army. Now, in the case of China, we admit we were wrong. It proved that the Chinese comrades and not the Soviet comrades were right." Robert North, *Moscow and Chinese Communists*, 1953, p. 233, quoting *Tito* by Vladimir Dedijer, 1953. See also Dedijer, *The Battle that Stalin Lost: Memories of Yugoslavia: 1948-1953*, 1971, p. 68.

responsibility of supporting revolutionary struggles and liberation movements beyond their borders, beginning with major sacrifices during the Korean War. In this case, there was a direct and immediate convergence between the necessity of defending China and supporting the revolutionary struggle in a neighboring country.

Support for the Korean People

In late 1950, the U.S. military drove deep into northern Korea and towards the Chinese border, committing dozens of civilian massacres and leveling entire cities. A major campaign was launched all over China to "Resist America and Aid Korea." In the Northeast, factories drew up "anti-American aggression emulation targets," and popularized the slogan "Our factory is our battlefield and our machines are our weapons."⁴ In 1950, more than 30% of China's national budget was dedicated to support the war to resist U.S. aggression in Korea.⁵

The Chinese government insisted that their forces fighting in Korea were highly motivated volunteers in order to deflect U.S. charges of "Chinese communist aggression." Politics was in command of military recruitment. In the course of the government's political mobilization known as the "Volunteer Movement," significant numbers of worker, peasant and student volunteers, infused with the same consciousness that allowed them to triumph over the Guomindang, joined the Chinese People's Volunteers to fight in Korea.⁶

In October and November 1950, 300,000 Chinese soldiers crossed the Yalu River.⁷ The devastating attacks of the CPV on the U.S. Army in close cooperation with the Korean liberation fighters fought U.S. imperialism to a stalemate. Only a year after the victory of the revolution, China's willingness to go head to head with the most powerful military machine in history inspired and riveted the attention of revolutionaries and the oppressed in many countries.

⁴ John Gittings, *The Role of the Chinese Army*, 1967, p. 87.

⁵ Yang Kuisong, "Changes in Mao's Attitude Toward the Indochina War, 1949-1973," p. 25.

⁶ In Gittings' oft-cited work, he describes the workings of the Volunteer Movement:

The call for volunteers for the CPV [Chinese People's Volunteers], whether from the militia or from the civilian population, was organized at the local level by the Volunteer Movement Committee, set up by the Military District and party authorities. Volunteers were called for at agitation meetings, and emulation contests were organized both on an individual and on a village basis.... This is illustrated by one account of a recruitment meeting of a trade union branch in Peking: "The secretary of the branch spoke about the danger of American attacks towards the Manchuria border; the Americans were professing peaceful intentions while 'aiming a gun at our heart and preparing to pull the trigger.' Any Chinese volunteering was a true patriot... Suddenly someone shouted that he wanted to go to Korea... thereupon many other people rose to their feet... After two hours had passed the trade union secretary said that it appeared to him that everyone wished to volunteer. This was 'magnificent but not practical.' ... [He suggested that the party branch would allow everybody to] 'have a chance.' (84-85)

⁷ In Korea, the Soviet leadership let the Chinese army do the fighting against the technologically superior US armed forces. While the Soviet Union provided significant military aid to the Chinese forces, it required full payment for these arms. In early 1950, Stalin promised to provide air cover for the Chinese and North Korean ground forces, but this support only covered supply lines in the northern part of North Korea, and did not arrive until January 1951. By then, the decisive battles of the war had been fought. Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 2001, pp. 60-61; Barbara Barnouin and Yu Changgen, *Zhou Enlai: A Political Life*, 2006, p. 149.

Support for the Vietnamese People

Even while civil war raged in China after World War 2, the Vietminh and Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) units were coordinating military operations against French colonialism in Indochina. As early as 1946, a joint Vietnamese-Chinese unit (the Doc Lap, or Independence, Regiment) was created to engage in guerilla warfare against the French in the border area. As the CCP's forces advanced rapidly in northern China in 1948, the PLA became more active along the border with Vietnam and increasingly took part in operations with Vietminh units.

In December 1949, two months after the proclamation of the People's Republic of China, Ho Chi Minh traveled to Beijing to meet with CCP leaders concerning questions of political and military strategy. In 1950, the PLA equipped and trained 20,000 Vietminh soldiers in China's Yunnan province, and continued to ship weapons and munitions to the Vietminh while Chinese forces were fighting U.S. aggression in Korea.⁸ Chinese military advisers worked closely with Vietminh officers, and a campaign was launched in the Vietminh in 1950 to study the CCP's experience in the wars against Japan and the U.S.-backed Guomindang.⁹ After the armistice in Korea was signed, the PLA sent large quantities of weapons to North Vietnam, providing important support for the Vietminh's historic victory over the French army at Dienbienphu in 1954. The CCP also supported the efforts of communist forces in Laos, Malaya, Burma and Thailand to initiate armed struggle against reactionary governments allied with the U.S., French and British imperialists.

B. The Development of Neocolonialism and the Bandung Period

In the 1950s, as many of the countries that had emerged from colonialism sought to defend their independence, they developed conflicts of varying degrees with the remaining colonial European empires and with U.S. imperialism. China sought to unite with these countries with a program of developing mutual support and a common shield against imperialism.¹⁰ This diplomatic strategy culminated in the Bandung, Conference, and later in the formation of the Non-Aligned countries group.¹¹

⁸ Yang, pp. 3-5.

⁹ William Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, 2000, pp. 426-428.

¹⁰ The CCP leadership defined these states as an "intermediate zone" between the Western imperialists and the socialist camp, a concept that reappeared in the "three worlds perspective" of the early 1970s.

¹¹ "Non-Alignment" was the term originally coined by Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai. They agreed upon five pillars to be used for Sino-Indian relations. The five principles were: Respect for territorial integrity; Mutual non-aggression; Mutual non-interference in domestic affairs; Equality and mutual benefit; and Peaceful co-existence. Called *Panchsheel*, these principles would later serve as the basis of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The Bandung Conference was a meeting of Asian and African states, most of which were newly independent, organized by China, Egypt, Indonesia, Burma, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, and Pakistan. The conference's stated aims were to promote Afro-Asian economic and cultural cooperation and to oppose colonialism or neocolonialism by the U.S. or any other imperialist nation. The conference met from April 18-April 24, 1955, in Bandung, Indonesia.

It is not well known that pro-Western, anti-communist governments had a significant presence at the Bandung Conference. During the conference, leaders from Pakistan, the Philippines, and the Prince of Thailand assailed communism and China as “colonialism of a new type.” Zhou Enlai responded that China had its hands full with national reconstruction, and wanted to create a peaceful international environment. In the wake of Bandung, Zhou led a “goodwill mission” in late 1956 to Cambodia, India, Burma, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal and Ceylon. In his discussions with the leaders of these countries, he held out the “five principles of peaceful coexistence”--which included the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries--to reassure them that China would not support revolutionary movements in their countries.¹²

The Chinese advocacy of the “Bandung line” as a diplomatic initiative, principally shaped by Zhou, did help to break socialist China out of international isolation. However, the Bandung line came to define China’s foreign policy *as a whole* during this period. The leaders of the newly independent countries were seen as the most basic alliance of the united front against the Western imperialist powers.

As a strategic political line for Marxist-Leninists, the Bandung line took a heavy toll in diminishing and denying the independence and initiative of communists within the united front against imperialism. It replaced the internationalist line of support for people’s liberation struggles and for the strategy of protracted people’s war, with a line of support for bourgeois nationalist governments who were, it was claimed, the defining characteristic of the “post-colonial period.”

The Bandung line incorrectly understood the class character of these newly independent states and the neo-colonial relations developing within them. On the one hand, most of them were ruled by the national bourgeoisie with varying degrees of popular support from the petty bourgeoisie, workers and peasants. On the other hand, comprador bourgeois and feudal elements held strong points of economic and political power, backed up by the European and U.S. imperialists. Thus, these countries had not broken out of the Western economic orbit, and their political independence rested on shaky ground.

One of the defining characteristics of the Bandung line was its failure to comprehend and challenge the dramatic change which the United States, as it occupied the shoes of the old

Bandung marked a significant milestone for the development of the NAM as a political movement. During the Cold War, it grew into an international organization of over 100 states which considered themselves not *formally* aligned with or against any major power bloc. (Wikipedia Encyclopedia)

¹² Barnouin and Yu, pp. 158-159. According to another biography of Zhou, “Bandung was a great personal triumph for Zhou Enlai and an international breakthrough for China. Back in Beijing, however, he found himself criticized by some of his colleagues [for] accepting peace with imperialism.” Han Suyin, *Eldest Son: Zhou Enlai and the Making of Modern China*, p. 247.

European empires, had brought to both the appearance and the mechanisms of colonialism. Under the banner of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism, the U.S. was replacing direct-rule colonialism with the disguised yet more comprehensive controls of neo-colonialism.¹³ In the Bandung period, the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement were being actively, and for the most part successfully, cultivated and recruited into the U.S.' neo-colonial empire. Some resisted, such as Sukarno, Lumumba and Nkrumah, and were overthrown by CIA-orchestrated military coups.

The failure to recognize this neo-colonialist strategy and the developing role of the nationalist bourgeoisies within it, became the focus of one of the sharpest struggles over foreign policy in the People's Republic to that time. In March 1958, it led to a comprehensive self-criticism by Foreign Minister Zhou, which described his "conservative and rightist tendency" in handling the PRC's foreign relations. "He admitted that the Foreign Ministry's work under his direction had neglected the necessary struggle in dealing with nationalist countries, had maintained a kind of wishful thinking concerning imperialism (especially toward Japan and the United States) and had failed to conduct necessary criticism of the revisionist policies of other socialist countries."¹⁴ While he remained as Premier, Zhou was replaced as Foreign Minister by Chen Yi.

The Bandung line served to undercut China's support for liberation movements and revolutionary struggles. China had gained a prominent place at the meetings of independent countries by, among other things, promising to limit or deny support for revolutionary groups in those countries. For example, in 1962, the resolution of a border dispute and the announcement of Burmese "neutrality" led China to cut off support for the Burmese communist movement.¹⁵

In Indonesia, the impact was particularly dramatic—and disastrous. The Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI), the largest non-governing Communist Party in the world, had strong relations with both the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the CCP in the 1950s. Though its political program was more similar to that of the CPSU, the PKI sided with the Chinese party when polemics between them broke out in the early 1960s. Finding support in the

¹³ During World War II, President Franklin Roosevelt stated: "We Americans may have some disagreements among ourselves as to what we are fighting for, but one thing we are sure we are not fighting for is to hold the British Empire together." In drafting the act that was to guarantee the Philippines' independence by 1946, he said: "Our nation covets no territory; it desires to hold no people against their will over whom it has gained sovereignty through war or by any other means." The last statement was a direct attack on the concept of empire, including the British Empire.

From the closing days of World War II to its neo-colonial empire today (with \$5 Trillion in external capital investments), the United States is the largest imperialist empire in history, exercising hegemony over peoples and countries on an unparalleled scale. The mechanisms of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, NATO and ASEAN, all dominated by the U.S., have proven instrumental to this hegemony and power. These mechanisms have also been useful to other countries—whether traditional European and Japanese "junior partner" imperialists, or newly emerging imperialist powers such as the Soviet Union—who have both shared and contended for power with the dominant U.S. imperialists.

¹⁴ Chen Jian, p. 73.

¹⁵ Joseph Camilleri, *Chinese Foreign Policy: The Mao Era and its Aftermath*, 1992, p. 91.

Bandung line, the PKI subordinated itself to the national bourgeois program of President Sukarno and advocated an illusory peaceful transition to socialism. Of great importance, the PKI failed to develop rural base areas and to arm its mass base¹⁶

Many people's movements were blindsided by the events which led, in just ten years from the Bandung Conference, to the coup by General Suharto against the Sukarno government. Beginning in early October 1965, U.S.-backed generals mobilized military units and rightist Muslims against the politically and militarily disarmed PKI and its mass base. This resulted in the death over one million communists and supporters—one of the greatest crimes of the 20th century. The PKI was destroyed, and the revolutionary movement in Indonesia has still not recovered 40 years later.

While by the end of the 1950s the CCP was taking a more aggressive policy of supporting national liberation movements in some countries, sharp differences between revolutionary internationalist and bourgeois nationalist orientations remained.

In 1962, Wang Jiayang, director of the Party's International Liaison Department (which was responsible for relations with communist parties and organizations in other countries), argued in several reports that the strategic goal of China's foreign policy should be the maintenance of world peace, so that it would be able to focus on socialist construction at home. According to Wang, China should reconcile with the Soviet Union before the polemics escalated, adhere to the principle of peaceful coexistence with imperialism, and forestall a Korea-style war in Indochina. Wang was especially worried about the effect of the sharp increase in foreign aid since 1960 (one-third of which went to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam) on the Chinese economy. Wang was able to convince Zhou and Liu Shaoqi, who directed the Party's daily work, to support a peaceful settlement of the Laotian people's struggle at the ongoing Geneva Conference.¹⁷

Mao, on the other hand, lit into Wang. At a Central Committee meeting in September 1962, Mao explicitly connected the domestic class struggle, including the danger of capitalist restoration, to support for national liberation struggles. On Indochina, Mao insisted that China must support the armed struggles in South Vietnam and Laos without conditions because they were "excellent armed struggles":

¹⁶ "The PKI sought a peaceful road to power in Indonesia.... This was an aim from which the Aidit leadership never deviated...the party resolved to stick like a leech to Sukarno and, by a combination of ingratiating and carefully staged pressure, to insert itself into his power structure." Rex Mortimer, *Indonesian Communism Under Sukarno*, 1974, p. 393.

This point is further emphasized in a statement issued in Central Java by an underground section of the PKI after the coup: Referring to PKI Chairman D.N. Aidit's concept of the state: "According to this 'two-aspect theory' a miracle could happen in Indonesia. Namely, the state could cease to be an instrument of the ruling oppressor classes to subjugate other classes, but could be made the instrument shared by both the oppressor classes and the oppressed classes. And the fundamental change in state power, that is to say, the birth of a people's power, could be peacefully accomplished by developing the 'pro-people' aspect and gradually liquidating the 'anti-people aspect.'" Mortimer, p. 397. The PKI's revisionist strategy, going back to the post-WW 2 independence movement, will be the subject of an upcoming paper by the MLM Revolutionary Study Group.

¹⁷ Yang, pp. 21-22

The CCP Chairman characterized Wang's ideas as an attempt to be conciliatory toward imperialists, revisionists, and international reactionaries, and to reduce support to those countries and peoples fighting against the imperialists. Mao stressed that this policy of "three reconciliations and one reduction" came at a time when some leading CCP members (as it turned out, he had Liu and Deng in mind) had been frightened by the international reactionaries and were inclined to adopt a "pro-revisionist" policy line at home. He emphasized that his policy, by contrast, was to fight against the imperialists, revisionists, and reactionaries in all countries and, at the same time, to promote revolutionary developments at home and abroad.¹⁸

It is significant that Mao took this internationalist stand shortly after the Great Leap Forward, and at the time that he was preparing to launch the Socialist Education Movement, a direct precursor to the Cultural Revolution. At this and other decisive points, Mao's promotion of revolutionary social transformations in China was closely connected to his support for the world revolution.

C. Mao and the Chinese Communist Party Launch the Struggle against Soviet Revisionism

As the 1950s progressed, and especially with Nikita Khrushchev's rise to power, the Soviet Union withdrew its support for revolutionary struggles in Asia, Africa and Latin America. During the Algerian people's war of national liberation, the leaders of the CPSU withheld all forms of aid in the name of "non-interference in the internal affairs of other states"—that is, French colonialism. The French Communist Party even took the position that Algeria was part of France. For actions such as this, the Chinese described the CPSU and parties that took similar positions as "apologists of neo-colonialism."¹⁹ In contrast, China gave full support to the war of resistance of the Algerian people, and refused to establish diplomatic relations with France until well after the end of the war.

For the CPSU, national liberation struggles became bargaining chips and were expendable in order to negotiate arms control and détente with the U.S. According to CPSU General Secretary Khrushchev, "even a tiny spark could lead to a world conflagration." "Local wars in our time are very dangerous... We will work hard to put out the sparks that may set off the flames of war."²⁰

At this time, the Soviet Union under Khrushchev promoted the "three peacefuls": Peaceful coexistence with U.S. imperialism, peaceful competition between the capitalist and socialist

¹⁸ Chen Jian, p. 83

¹⁹ "Apologists of Neo-Colonialism," *The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement*, FLP, 1965, p. 199. <http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/ANC63.html>

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

camp, and a peaceful transition to socialism. According to Khrushchev, peaceful coexistence with the imperialist countries was the general line for the foreign policy of CPSU and other communist parties.

In 1963, the Chinese party publicly issued *A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement*, followed by nine other documents.²¹ These polemics were written by Mao Zedong or under his direction. This electrified the ranks of revolutionaries and genuine communists all over the world. In these documents, the CCP attacked Khrushchev's distortion of the principle of peaceful coexistence between countries with different social systems to justify the Soviet Union's collusion with U.S. imperialism and its withdrawal of support from revolutionary struggles worldwide. These polemics also identified Khrushchev and the other top leaders of the CPSU as *revisionists*--bourgeois forces in the party who had betrayed revolution.²²

Beginning with the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956, Khrushchev put forward "the transition to socialism by the parliamentary road," claiming that for the working class to win a majority in parliament is tantamount to "setting up a new proletarian state in parliamentary form." In response, the CCP argued that only revolutionary violence can overthrow the bourgeoisie, smash the old state apparatus and achieve socialism:

The proletariat would, of course, prefer to gain power by peaceful means. But abundant historical evidence indicates that the reactionary classes never give up power voluntarily and that they are always the first to use violence to repress the revolutionary mass movement and to provoke civil war, thus placing armed struggle on the agenda.²³

As part of promoting a peaceful transition to socialism as a "new development" of Marxism-Leninism, Khrushchev claimed that the development of nuclear weapons and their possession by the U.S. and other imperialist countries made the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism too dangerous, and therefore impossible. While it noted that the destructive potential of nuclear weapons is immense, the CCP argued that these weapons do not change the nature of capitalism, which never exits peacefully from the stage of history. The Chinese stated bluntly that imperialism is a paper tiger, ferocious in appearance but weak internally.

These polemics with the CPSU addressed other issues as well, such as the abrupt withdrawal of thousands of Soviet experts from China in 1960. The Chinese party understood

²¹ www.marx2mao.com/Other/Index.html#CPC

²² The term *revisionist* is applied to people who or organizations which see themselves as upholding Marxist principles and/or creatively adapting them, but in fact put forward an ideology and position that guts Marxism of its revolutionary essence. In capitalist society, a revisionist political line (1) makes reforms ends in themselves rather than connecting the people's resistance and struggle for reforms to a revolutionary rupture with existing property and political relations and (2) denies—often based on wishful thinking—the ferocity with which the ruling class(es) will try to retain state power. More generally revisionism denies that the state is an instrument of class rule. This leads to the view that a peaceful transition to socialism is possible and that durable international peace is possible in this, the era of imperialism.

²³ "The Proletarian Revolution and Khrushchev's Revisionism," March 31, 1964
<http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/PRKR64.html>

this as a high-handed attempt to disrupt China's economic and military development, and to make China toe the Soviet line.²⁴ It was also in these years that the Soviet Union started to consolidate imperialist relations within the socialist camp. Now the Soviet Union would serve as the "center of the socialist camp" while Eastern Europe and other countries would serve as the periphery, with "limited sovereignty."

According to many U.S. leftists at the time, the "Sino-Soviet split" was a disaster for the entire global alignment against Western imperialism, and it divided the "socialist camp."²⁵ In actuality, it was the Soviet Union and its vassal states in Eastern Europe that launched a process in the 1950s and 1960s of full-scale capitalist restoration and abandonment of revolutionary internationalism. It was the Soviet Union's betrayal of revolution that broke apart the socialist camp, not China's criticism of that betrayal.

The Rise of Brezhnev and Armed Revisionism

In 1964, Khrushchev was removed from office and replaced by Leonid Brezhnev, under whose leadership the Soviet Union sought to expand its "spheres of influence" and directly challenge US imperialism. This new approach required assistance to countries and national liberation struggles opposed to the U.S. Thus, in the mid-60s, the Soviet Union began to ship large amounts of weaponry to Cuba, North Vietnam and some of the African liberation movements.

In Vietnam, the increase in Soviet military aid was accompanied by pressure on the leaders of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to accept a negotiated settlement short of defeat of the U.S.-puppet regime and complete national reunification. Soviet policy was also reflected in the reformist stance of the Communist Party USA. The anti-war coalition led by the CPUSA opposed the call for immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces, opposed the anti-imperialist forces that called for support for the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front, and supported the presidential candidates of the imperialist Democratic Party during the 1960s.

Another reason for the change in Soviet policy is that the CPSU needed to shore up its position in the international communist movement. Due to the polemics launched publicly by the CCP in 1963, the Soviet leaders needed to reassert tighter political control over the network of communist parties around the world. The Soviets were aiming to win leadership over the "socialist bloc," and this included Cuba, which had won power in a militant, though "foco-ist" way. The Vietnamese were facing a more massive and aggressive onslaught from the U.S., and for that, a "peaceful transition" line would not do. Armed revisionism joined the peaceful road to socialism in the Soviet toolbox. An apparent militant stance became the order of the day.

Some were taken in by this change. What required explanation is how armed struggle can become, in revisionist hands, a form of pressure--a bargaining chip--to gain a share of

²⁴ According to Soviet chemist Mikhail Klochko, the Soviet specialists he knew in China were extremely upset at being recalled before the end of their contracts: "[We] had difficulty hiding [our] amazement when told by Soviet representatives in Peking that dissatisfaction with our living and working conditions was an important reason for our recall. In fact few of us had ever lived better in our lives than we did in China." Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 3rd ed., 1999, p. 236.

²⁵ See Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che*, 2002.

political power. This is qualitatively different from a strategy of mass-based people's war aimed at overthrowing imperialism and its domestic props, and building a new revolutionary state and society.

The illusory peaceful road line still held sway with disastrous consequences in Indonesia in 1965, and later, in Chile in 1973.²⁶ In South Africa and El Salvador, the practice of armed revisionism by the SACP and FMLN, respectively, parlayed the sacrifices of countless revolutionaries into careerist agreements to dissolve the people's movements and establish and administer new structures of neo-colonialism.

From the practice of disarmed revisionism to the implementation of armed revisionism, the CPSU and its allied parties showed a great deal of flexibility in building and supporting movements that were not aimed at driving out imperialism, overthrowing reactionary regimes and building socialism. All of these strategies were aimed at contending with U.S. imperialism and furthering the expansionist aims of Soviet social-imperialism.

Many have attacked or questioned the Chinese “thesis” that capitalism was restored in the Soviet Union and that it developed into an imperialist power. A substantial body of works has explored the mechanisms by which capitalism can be restored in a formerly socialist state, with a new bourgeoisie composed of high party leaders presiding over a highly centralized state-owned economy.²⁷

The expansionist policies of the Soviet Union arose directly out of the restoration of capitalism within the USSR in the 1950s and 60s. When the CP in Czechoslovakia attempted to break out of the Soviet orbit in 1968, Brezhnev sent in the Soviet army to crush the revolt.²⁸ This pointed to the development of a fully imperialist Soviet Union determined to enforce subservience of the countries in its bloc. The Chinese aptly named this Soviet social-imperialism—“socialism in words, imperialism in deeds.”

The real nature of Soviet foreign policy was further demonstrated with the dispatch of thousands of troops to Ethiopia during the 1970s to shore up a self-proclaimed “socialist” military junta,²⁹ the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and the imposition of martial law in Poland in 1981.

²⁶ See page 34 for discussion of the CIA-backed coup in Chile and the role of the pro-Soviet Chilean Communist Party.

²⁷ *Red Papers 7* by the Revolutionary Union, 1974; *The Soviet Union: Socialist or Social-Imperialist?* two volumes, RCP Publications, 1983; and Charles Bettelheim., *Class Struggles in the USSR*.

²⁸ Under considerable pressure, revisionist parties around the world rose to defend the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, including most notably Fidel Castro and the Cuban Communist Party.

²⁹ In Ethiopia, the Soviet Union supported a military junta, the Dergue, that the Soviets claimed was on the path to socialism. After it seized power from Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974, the Dergue was supported by thousands of Soviet and Cuban soldiers and advisers. From 1977-1990, this brutal regime received \$13 billion in military aid from the Soviet Union. The Dergue carried out repeated massacres of revolutionary students and workers, and suppressed the just struggles of the Eritrean, Oromo and other oppressed nations within Ethiopia.

D. Maoist Revolutionaries Break with Soviet Revisionism

The CPSU's reformism, its dread of U.S. imperialism and its own imperialist adventures impelled large numbers of young cadre in Communist Parties around the world to form new communist parties based on Marxism-Leninism and to rekindle the fires of revolutionary struggle.

In the 1960s, these young revolutionaries were inspired by the momentous strides in socialist construction in China, the Vietnamese people's struggle for national liberation, and anti-colonial struggles raging in Africa, including within the white settler state of South Africa. Only 90 miles from the U.S. mainland was the Cuban revolution, the first successful breach in U.S. imperialism's stranglehold on the peoples of the Caribbean and Latin America.

As the CCP opened the polemics against revisionism in the international communist movement in 1960-1964, revolutionaries who had been politically restrained by the pro-Soviet leadership of parties in many countries joined the battle against the dead hand of revisionism. This was not only an ideological battle; it was a political, life-and-death struggle. In China, it took the form of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, launched in 1966. Elsewhere, revolutionaries raised the mass struggle to new heights and built new anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninist and Marxist-Leninist-Maoist organizations and parties. In a number of countries they adopted the strategy of people's war.

The stage was set for this break with revisionism in 1965, as the Vietnamese revolutionaries engaged hundreds of thousands of U.S. combat forces. In addition, the revisionist peaceful transition to socialism line was more discredited than ever due to the destruction of the PKI in Indonesia in 1965.

India

In India, the reformist pro-Soviet Communist Party was a serious obstacle to the development of a revolutionary movement. However, its hold on the people's movements was broken with the historic uprising of Naxalbari in 1967, and as young activists such as Charu Mazumdar and Kanai Chatterjee led the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) in 1969.

Decades later, that breakthrough has led the two main streams of the revolutionary movement, represented by the CPI (ML) (People's War) and the MCCI, to merge and form the Communist Party of India (Maoist). The CPI (Maoist) has united the great majority of Indian Maoists in one organization, and its armed forces now operate in 15 states. With 70% of the population of India still living in rural areas, the CPI (Maoist)'s primary social base is among millions of Adivasis (indigenous peoples), poor and landless farmers, and Dalits (outcasts in India's caste system). (www.peoplesmarchgooglepages.com)

The Philippines

In the 1960s, Jose Maria Sison and others in the Philippines broke with the revisionist Communist Party, which had swung from left adventurism to a renunciation of armed struggle in the 1950s. They reconstituted the Communist Party of the Philippines in 1968. After a decisive break with Soviet revisionism, the CPP applied Mao's theory of people's war, and further developed it in the concrete conditions of the Philippines.

Today, the CPP's military arm, the New People's Army, operates in over 100 guerrilla fronts on all major 11 islands of the archipelago. The underground National Democratic Front has established revolutionary organizations and new institutions of political power in these areas, and the legal national democratic movement, based in the cities, has a mass base in the millions.

(www.philippinesrevolution.net)

Turkey

Similar developments took place in Turkey, where revisionist parties had long considered Kemalism³⁰ as progressive bourgeois nationalism. But the rise of the worldwide anti-imperialist movement in the mid to late 1960s, and the Cultural Revolution in China, deeply affected a new generation of Turkish and Kurdish revolutionaries. Mass student actions against the Sixth Fleet of the U.S. Navy soon spread to sections of workers and peasants, and an upsurge against the U.S.-backed Kemalist regime reached new heights in 1970, which broke with the pacifist trend of the revisionists. This soon led to the formation of new organizations--most significantly, the Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist (TKP/ML) in 1972. Formed at a time of martial law under the leadership of Ibrahim Kaypakkaya (who was captured and killed in 1973), the TKP/ML blazed a new path based on Marxism-Leninism and the teachings of Mao Zedong. It called out the Kemalist regime as fascist and comprador, and upheld the right of self-determination for the Kurdish nation.

Today, the TKP/ML is in the forefront of people's movements against imperialist domination and state terror. Guided by Maoist principles of people's war, its guerilla forces are active in the Black Sea region and in Kurdistan.³¹

Nepal

The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) developed out of splits with revisionist parties between 1970 and 1990, and consolidated itself under the leadership of Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai. In 10 years of people's war, the CPN (Maoist) liberated 80% of the countryside—empowering women and national minorities, building schools, medical clinics, and new organs of political power in the areas it controls.

However, the CPN (M) has recently adopted another path that doesn't require overthrowing the old reactionary state and defeating its army. In 2006, it negotiated a peace agreement with seven parliamentary parties that represent the interests of the landlord and

³⁰ A demagogic, quasi-populist regime based on the political ideology of Kemal Ataturk, the first president of the Turkish Republic.

³¹ A detailed history of the communist movement in Turkey is available at <http://www.peoplesmarch.com/archives/2001/apr2k1/History.htm>

bureaucratic capitalists in Nepal, setting up a Western-style parliamentary system based on elections to a Constituent Assembly in the summer of 2007. In order to reach this agreement, the CPN (M) dissolved its liberated areas, sequestered its troops and arms under UN supervision, and agreed to merge the People's Liberation Army with the former Royal Nepalese Army.³²

Latin America

In Latin America, the Chinese polemics assisted many revolutionaries in breaking away from the old, reformist politics that had long dominated communist parties in many countries. One important result was the emergence of a revolutionary people's war launched by the Peruvian Communist Party (better known in the media as the Shining Path) in 1980.³³ Significant Maoist forces emerged in Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay and elsewhere in Latin America.

The period since the early 1960s has also seen a marked decline in both the presence and credibility of pro-Soviet parties in many countries, such as India, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Greece, Brazil, Chile and South Africa. In some cases they have faced direct political challenges and exposure by revolutionary Maoist forces; in others, specious claims to revolutionary authority have been lost in their pursuit of electoralism, reformism and class collaboration.

The restoration of capitalism in China, led by Deng Xiaoping, had a disorienting and discouraging effect on the world revolutionary movement—similar to the effect of the earlier reversal in the Soviet Union. All over the world, revisionists and opportunists launched attacks on Mao and Maoism. While this was a difficult period for many parties, groups and movements, significant struggles were waged to sum up the reversal in China.³⁴

³² The June-July 2006 issue of *People's March* contains an interview with the spokesperson of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), which makes a detailed criticism of the CPN (M)'s political direction. (www.peoplesmarch.googlepages.com) A historical bibliography has been developed which may be useful in sorting out the various questions: *Assessing Recent Developments in Nepal: Bibliography on the State, a Peaceful Transition to Socialism, Democracy and Dictatorship, Negotiations and Their Relevance to the International Communist Movement in the 21st Century --* by the MLM Revolutionary Study Group in the U.S. (January 3, 2007) Write mlm.rsg@gmail.com to request a copy.

³³ For a summation of the advances made by the PCP in the 1980s and its defeat after the capture of its top leadership in 1992, see *A World To Win* magazine, # 32, 2006.

³⁴ An important work utilized by the revolutionary movement in India describes this period: "In the years immediately after the death of Mao, there was a considerable amount of confusion in the international communist movement, with the Deng revisionists, through Hua Guofeng, attempting to project themselves as upholders of Maoism. In particular they falsely peddled the revisionist Three World Theory as Mao's general line for the international proletariat. Many revolutionary sections accepted these positions and it was only after the very openly revisionist History Resolution of the CCP in 1981 and the Twelfth Congress in 1982 that most revolutionary forces throughout the world started coming out openly against Deng revisionism. However some sections continued to follow the Dengist revisionist line and abandoned Mao's revolutionary teachings.... Those that resolutely opposed Deng revisionism and upheld Maoism in practice could however make considerable advances. Today these forces form the core of the revolutionary international proletariat. They are leading armed struggles in Peru, Philippines, Turkey, India, Nepal." From *History of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism: A Study Guide*, New Vista Publications, New Delhi, April 2002.

Important sections of the international communist movement, including the Maoist parties mentioned above, were able to retain their anti-revisionist outlook and revolutionary bearings. In many places people's struggles developed a new level of revolutionary leadership and organization. The most thorough advances were imbued with a strong mass and class orientation, and with strategic and tactical clarity on the key tools of the united front, the party and the armed struggle in reaching for the revolutionary seizure of power.

The Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) has regrouped some of the Maoist forces internationally. However, among other problems, RIM's assertion of democratic centralist authority on a world scale has precluded wide-ranging political investigation and discussion. Based on a partial understanding of conditions in particular countries and internationally, RIM has created an obstacle to the process of uniting all genuine revolutionary forces on a higher level.

The U.S.

The picture is incomplete unless we relate the impact of Maoism in one of the heartlands of industrial and finance capital, the U.S. Traditional Marxism-Leninism had viewed these capitalist/imperialist countries as the "metropole," as the center of the worldwide class struggle and revolutionary process. The struggles in the colonial world--semi-feudal, overwhelmingly peasant economies--were viewed as the "periphery," secondary to, but important potential allies of, the revolutionary proletariat in the metropole.

Over the course of the 20th century, this traditional picture had grown seriously out of sync with reality. The gathering storms in the periphery had developed unprecedented and unexpected strength, while the class struggle in the metropole had lost its bearings and its revolutionary spirit. Not only had the periphery moved to the center of the world's revolutionary process, but whether the struggle in the metropole would be allied with those anti-colonial and socialist struggles was a big question.

The U.S.'s imperialist plunder had fostered privilege, corruption, and widespread populist and xenophobic illusions of its democracy, its global benevolence toward others, and its national superiority over all. Its culture was imbued with white supremacy both toward oppressed and subject peoples within the US and throughout the world.

The CPUSA, which had developed a mass membership and broad influence prior to World War 2, had come to focus overwhelmingly on trade union issues, the expansion of democratic reforms, and support for the Soviet Union. It did not promote a revolutionary perspective or strategy, and it did little to challenge white supremacy and the drive for U.S. global hegemony.

The challenge came, instead, from other sources--from the growing movement in the early 1960s against white power and privilege, and from the national liberation struggles challenging U.S. imperialism. It became a time when, as the song goes, "the truth is found to be lies." Black liberation and Vietnamese liberation opened the eyes of millions in the U.S. to a suppressed reality. That the Cultural Revolution occurred simultaneously was timely in raising the credibility of revolutionary Marxism out of the ruins of self-discredited revisionism. The revolutionary communist road increasingly grew among a new generation of revolutionaries to be appreciated for its viability and vitality.

The prospect of returning revolution to the metropole was both exhilarating and problematic. Many questions were pushed to the fore by the events of the 1960s, especially the year 1968. The Tet Offensive raised the prospect of the defeat of U.S. imperialism in Vietnam. For many, the uprising in Prague shattered the chains of Soviet rule in a most dramatic way. The uprising in Paris hammered the point that the capitalist crisis was indeed global.

The startling rise of the revolutionary Black Panther Party from the streets of Oakland, California, and the eruptions of well over a hundred cities when civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in April 1968, highlighted the centrality of the struggle against white supremacy and the significance of the advance from civil rights to Black liberation. Out of the ashes of Detroit's rebellion of 1967 came Revolutionary Union Movements at Chrysler and Ford plants, which coalesced into the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. Revolutionaries played a key role in organizing these autoworkers to shut down their factories to fight raw racial discrimination and brutal working conditions.

The declining credibility of, and the rising challenge to, democratic (and Democratic Party) illusions were emphasized in the massive protests against the Democratic and Republican conventions in the summer of 1968. Revolution was in the air and on the minds of millions. No one could ignore it.

1968 was also the year revolutionaries in the U.S. moved to provide communist leadership, direction and answers to those questions. A significant section of the student movement formed organizations and networks to explicitly take revolutionary politics to the working class--to take it home, at long last. Out of this process, many collectives were formed to exchange views and experiences. The most prominent network among these was the Revolutionary Union.

In general terms, these Marxist-Leninist collectives agreed on the need to unite the Black struggle against white power with the struggle of all working people against capitalism into a broad united front against imperialism--to base this new revolutionary movement upon unleashing the power of the people, and to turn every effort to raising the political consciousness and struggle of the masses in pursuit of this goal.

In April 1968, just days after the murder of Martin Luther King, Mao issued a statement that had a tremendous effect on the new communist movement in the U.S.:

The Afro-American struggle is not only a struggle waged by the exploited and oppressed Black people for freedom and emancipation, it is also a new clarion call to all the exploited and oppressed people of the United States.... It is a tremendous support and inspiration to the struggle of the people throughout the world against U.S. imperialism and to the struggle of the Vietnamese people against U.S. imperialism.... I call on the workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals of every country and all who are willing to fight against U.S. imperialism to take action and extend strong support to the struggle of the Black people in the United States!

Mao Zedong's Red Book was an introduction to revolutionary, anti-revisionist thought for many. In the early 1970s, leading members of the Black Panther Party and newly formed Maoist groups sent delegations to visit the People's Republic. The Panthers turned Mao's "Seize the Day, Seize the Hour" into "Seize the Time." "Serve the People," the title of an article widely read in China in the 1960s, became an idea around which 60s radicals reoriented their

lives.³⁵ Socialist China's statement that "women hold up half the sky" resonated with the growing understanding of the new communist groups about the importance of the struggle against male supremacy and patriarchy in U.S. society and within their own groups.

At the same time, significant other sections of the mass movements in U.S. were coalescing around views which shunned a mass orientation and reflected the petty-bourgeois character of these movements. The best known group was the Weatherpeople, which developed out of the radical Students for a Democratic Society. Similar to developments in Western Europe, these forces formed small, clandestine urban guerilla groups, often inspired by foco-ist theory.³⁶ In many capitalist countries, such groups exemplified, for many, the meaning of revolution. But in the U.S. this path was struggled against by the Revolutionary Union (RU) and others who promoted a revolution of the masses--and the crucial process of winning a significant section of the working class and the oppressed nationalities to that program.

Many of the organizations of that time were either battered and destroyed by state repression, or they developed into the parties of the New Communist Movement. The Revolutionary Communist Party was formed from the RU in 1975³⁷ and made a number of theoretical contributions in applying Maoism to the world situation and the problems of developing revolutionary work in non-revolutionary times. It also did important work analyzing the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union and the reversal led by Deng Xiaoping in China. At a crucial time in the development of mass political organizing, the RCP confronted an economist-revisionist faction that also supported the revisionist coup in China.

In the ensuing split, the RCP "threw out the baby with the bath water" and abandoned its mass base building in proletarian workplaces and communities. In the 1980s, the RCP leadership consolidated around an increasingly subjective idealist and voluntarist line based on slogans such as "Revolution in the 80s, Go for It!" Other Marxist-Leninist groups continued to do such organizing on a very limited scale and with an overwhelmingly economist and reformist perspective.

As a result, the work of building a base for anti-imperialist and class conscious politics among a significant section of the working class and oppressed nationalities in the U.S. remains to be done. A small but growing number of new-generation revolutionaries are looking at the task and considering the kind of organization that effort will require.

³⁵ See Robert Weil's 1996 speech, "The Historical Meaning of the Cultural Revolution and Its Impact on the U.S." www.chinastudygroup.org under "articles."

³⁶ The focoists asserted the initiation of armed struggle by small groups of guerillas in the countryside of Latin America and other "third world" countries (focos) would by their example bring forward the masses of the peasantry. This strategy arose in opposition to the line of protracted people's war, which is based on the development of a mass base before the initiation, and throughout the period, of revolutionary warfare. The best known application of focoist strategy was Che Guevara's ill-fated attempt to initiate armed struggle in the Bolivian countryside.

³⁷ The "race" to form a new party by the new communist groups was problematic. It took place at a time when the summation of experience, theoretical development and the sinking of deep roots in the working class and oppressed nationalities had just begun. The rush to form a new party also short-circuited the process of forging unity between oppressed nationality and white activists, a central question in a country in which white supremacy permeates every aspect of society.

E. Chinese Support for National Liberation Movements in Asia, Africa and the Middle East in the 1960s

Chinese foreign policy during the 1960s had a revolutionary internationalist thrust, as seen most clearly in China's staunch support for the Vietnamese war of liberation, African liberation movements, and the Palestinian liberation struggle. This was a direct result of the CCP's exposure of the Soviet Union's betrayal of revolutionary struggles worldwide, and the initiation of the Cultural Revolution.

In a series of talks in 1959 and 1960 with visitors from Iraq, Iran, Cuba, Brazil, Argentina and twelve African countries, Mao set the tone for China's revolutionary foreign policy in the 1960s: "What imperialism fears most is the awakening of the Asian, African and Latin American peoples, the awakening of the peoples of all countries. We should unite and drive U.S. imperialism from Asia, Africa and Latin America back to where it came from."³⁸

In its 1963 Proposal for the General Line of the International Communist Movement, the CCP set out a general approach to revolutionary work in the neo-colonial and colonial countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America:

On the basis of the worker-peasant alliance, the proletariat and its party must unite all the strata that can be united and organize a broad united front against imperialism and its lackeys. In order to consolidate and expand this united front, it is necessary that the proletarian party should maintain its ideological, political and organizational independence and insist on the leadership of the revolution. The proletarian party and the revolutionary people must learn to master all forms of struggle, including armed struggle. They must defeat counter-revolutionary armed force with revolutionary armed force whenever imperialism and its lackeys resort to armed suppression.³⁹

In the fall of 1965, an influential document, "Long Live the Victory of People's War" by Defense Minister Lin Biao, was issued. Lin's text outlined a strategy of developing the struggle to split up and destroy the increasingly over-extended American military by means of revolutionary struggle in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This was to be achieved through self-reliant struggle:

It is imperative to adhere to the policy of self-reliance, rely on the strength of the masses in one's own country, and prepare to carry on the fight independently even when all material aid from the outside is cut off. If one does not operate by one's own efforts, does not independently ponder and solve the problems of the revolution in one's own country...but leans on foreign aid—even

³⁸ www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_52.htm

³⁹ The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement, pp. 15-16. <http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/classics/mao/polemics/letter.html>

though this be aid from socialist countries which persist in revolution—no victory can be won, or be consolidated if it is won.⁴⁰

While Lin's statement focused exclusively on the U.S. as the target of revolutionary struggle, to the exclusion of the other Western imperialist powers, and downplayed the possibilities for revolutionary struggle in the imperialist countries, it had a powerful revolutionary thrust.⁴¹

In July 1967, at the height of the Cultural Revolution, some remarks by Mao on China's role in the world were "published" in the streets of Beijing in the form of dazibaos—big character posters. They were disseminated around the country as pamphlets and handbills two months later. In "China Must Become the Arsenal of the World Revolution," Mao stated:

A lot of places are anti-China at the moment, which makes it look as though we are isolated. In fact, they are anti-China because they are afraid of the influence of China, of the thought of Mao Tse-tung, and of the great Cultural Revolution. They oppose China to keep the people in their own countries down and to divert popular dissatisfaction with their rule. This opposition to China is jointly planned by U.S. imperialism and Soviet revisionism. This shows not that we are isolated, but that our influence throughout the world has greatly increased. The more they oppose China, the more they spur on popular revolution; the people of these countries realize that the Chinese road is the road to liberation. China should not only be the political center of the world revolution. It must also become the military and technical center of the world revolution.⁴²

Vietnam

During the Vietnamese war of liberation, China provided the largest amount of military and economic aid of any country and advocated a strategy of people's war. In 1959, Mao supported the decision of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) to restart guerilla warfare in South Vietnam, and the CCP offered to provide enough weapons to outfit 230 battalions of the People's Army of Vietnam. This included 270,000 guns, over 10,000 pieces of artillery, 5,000 radio transmitters and 1,000 trucks.⁴³ In the mid-1960s, the Chinese army sent 320,000 troops to the DRV to operate anti-aircraft artillery and perform logistical work that freed many regiments of the PAVN to engage U.S. forces in the South.⁴⁴ North Vietnamese planes flew out of Chinese airfields and engaged U.S. Navy jets.

After the U.S. started bombing North Vietnam in early August 1964, the Chinese government immediately issued a powerful statement, announcing that "America's aggression

⁴⁰ www.marxists.org/reference/archive/lin-biao/1965/09/peoples_war/index.htm

⁴¹ "Long Live the Victory of People's War" was also a rejection of the view that the struggle against U.S. imperialism required close political and military cooperation with the Soviet Union. This position, which would have entailed the creation of Soviet military bases on Chinese soil and an end to the polemics against Soviet revisionism, led to the downfall of Defense Minister Peng Te-huai in 1959 and PLA Chief of Staff Lo Jui-ching in 1965.

⁴² Jean Daubier, *A History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, 1971, p. 313. Daubier writes that the posters he saw suggested that Mao was addressing a foreign delegation when he made these remarks.

⁴³ Chen Jian, p. 207.

⁴⁴ While these troops were withdrawn by 1970 once the U.S. defeat in Vietnam was apparent, China continued to supply large amounts of military aid until 1975.

against the DRV was also aggression against China, and that China would never fail to come to the aid of the Vietnamese.” The Chinese assured the Vietnamese leadership that if U.S. troops attacked the DRV, China would dispatch its troops—“If the United States takes one step, China will respond with one step.”⁴⁵ From August 7 to 11, over 20 million people, according to Xinhua News Agency, took part in rallies and demonstrations all over China to show solidarity with the Vietnamese people. Pictures of Mao and Ho Chi Minh together were common. Through many such rallies and other activities, the call to “resist America and assist Vietnam” penetrated into every cell of Chinese society.⁴⁶

Africa

In Africa, China gave military aid and training to revolutionary movements throughout the continent. In camps in Tanzania and Algeria, the Chinese armed and trained guerillas from FRELIMO in Mozambique, the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau, ZANU in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania and the ANC in South Africa. In 1963, the Chinese sent military supplies from Tanzania and Congo-Brazzaville to guerillas in the eastern Congo led by a former education minister in Lumumba's cabinet. Also, in a secret military camp in Ghana, Chinese military instructors trained cadre for revolutionary movements in French neo-colonies such as Dahomey (Benin), Ivory Coast, Cameroon and Mali.⁴⁷

An essential part of Chinese military aid was political training of the officers and soldiers of the revolutionary armed forces. Chinese instructors stressed that outside military aid, while important, was secondary, and that self-reliant revolutionary struggle was of primary importance. Chinese statements in the 1960s about Africa stated that the strategy of protracted people's war, including surrounding the cities by the countryside, was broadly applicable in mainly peasant, rural African countries. The understanding of a revolutionary-led united front is found in a Chinese People's Liberation Army document from 1961:

We must tell [the Africans] about the Chinese revolutionary experience in order to reveal the true nature of both old and new colonialism....The important part of [their] activities lies in the national revolution and in making the united front spread everywhere on the continent. According to the analysis of Marxism, it is to be confirmed that the embryo of national revolution in these countries will become a genuine people's revolution, give rise to Marxists, form political parties of proletarians, and go towards the Socialist Revolution.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Chen Jian, p. 209. In April 1966, as the US increased its troop strength to over 500,000, Premier Zhou Enlai responded forcefully to the growing threat to China. In an interview with a Pakistani correspondent, Zhou stated that China would not provoke a war with the U.S., but was prepared to resist and fight to the end no matter how many troops the US might send to China and whether it used conventional or nuclear weapons. David and Nancy Dall Milton, *The Wind Will Not Subside: Years in Revolutionary China*, 1976, p. 121.

⁴⁶ Chen Jian, “China and the Vietnam Wars,” included in Peter Lowe, *The Vietnam War*, 1998, p. 167.

⁴⁷ Ian Hutchinson, *China's African Revolution*, 1975, pp. 111, 124, 247.

⁴⁸ J.D. Armstrong, *Revolutionary Diplomacy: Chinese Foreign Policy and the United Front Doctrine*, 1977, pp. 215-16.

At the same time, China placed great emphasis on developing relations with the African countries that had recently emerged from colonialism and sought to defend their new-found independence from the Western imperialist powers. This led to focused united front diplomacy with countries such as Ghana, Guinea, Mali and Tanzania. Trade agreements were signed, African and Chinese delegations exchanged visits, and unity was reached in opposing the remaining colonial powers in Africa. The largest single commitment of Chinese foreign aid to Africa during the 1960s was financing and building the Tan-Zam railway between landlocked Zambia and the coast of Tanzania.

In a visit to 10 African countries in December 1963-January 1964, Zhou Enlai expressed the rationale for this diplomatic approach. He stressed that political independence was only the first step in the struggle against imperialism; it could only be consolidated by the policy of economic self-reliance.⁴⁹

Zhou's position did not recognize the class character of these newly independent states and the neo-colonial relations still developing within them. On the one hand, they were ruled by the national bourgeoisie—Nkrumah, Toure, Keita and Nyerere-- with varying degrees of popular support from the petty bourgeoisie, workers and peasants. On the other hand, comprador bourgeois and tribal-feudal elements tied to the European and U.S. imperialists continued to have significant economic and political power. The political independence of these countries rested on shaky ground. In fact, most of these anti-colonialist leaders were overthrown by reactionary forces linked to imperialism by the end of the 1960s. Nkrumah, for example, was removed from power by a CIA-backed coup while he was visiting China in 1966.

Furthermore, none of these countries had broken out of their dependence on the imperialist economic system. Their trade was still predominantly with the former colonial powers, and they were dependent on Western investments in key areas of their economies. Thus, any talk of economic "self-reliance" without revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle was illusory. In Tanzania, Chinese diplomats even claimed that it was developing peacefully towards socialism.⁵⁰ By blurring the distinction between the class forces in the newly independent countries, Zhou's approach could only disorient revolutionaries who were battling against neocolonialism and domestic reactionaries in the African countries.

The Middle East

During the 1960s, the Chinese gave substantial support to liberation movements in the Middle East. Beginning in 1965, China provided light arms, mortars, explosives and medical supplies to the PLO, which was operating out of bases in Jordan and Lebanon. Contingents of PLO youth traveled to China for military training.⁵¹ Large quantities of Chinese weapons flowed into Lebanon's "Fatahland" during the 1970s, and leaders of the PLO and the Popular Front for

⁴⁹ Camilleri, p. 99.

⁵⁰ Armstrong, p. 231.

⁵¹ *The International Relations of the Palestine Liberation Organization*, ed. Norton and Greenberg, 1989, pp. 145-46.

the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) visited China.⁵² While the Soviet Union had diplomatic relations with Israel until the 1967 war, the PRC under Mao did not recognize Israel, and did not have diplomatic ties with the Zionist state.

The Chinese also supplied military aid to the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG) in the Dhofar province of Oman, and to Marxist-Leninist forces in southern Yemen. In North Africa, the Chinese gave military and economic assistance to the Eritrean liberation forces and to Algerian anti-imperialist forces before and after victory over French colonialism.⁵³

China's support for these revolutionary movements openly antagonized neo-colonial Arab states. While pledging eternal support for the "Palestinian cause," the rulers of these states were extremely nervous about the effect of a radicalized, armed Palestinian movement on their own restive populations. In the Gulf, Saudi Arabia and the emirates were alarmed by Chinese support for the PFLOAG. At one point, the Chinese denounced "Egyptian imperialism" when the Egyptian army intervened in Yemen's civil war on the side of royalist forces.

In the area of state-to-state relations, after the Bandung conference China set out to form a diplomatic united front against the Western imperialists and Israel with as many of the Arab states as possible. It gave special attention to Nasser of Egypt (the first Arab state to recognize the PRC) and to Kassem of Iraq, who came to power in a popular revolution in 1958. Chinese denunciations of the Egyptian-French intervention in the Suez Canal in 1956, the landing of U.S. marines in Lebanon in 1958, and the 1967 attack by Israel on the Palestinians and neighboring states solidified China's ties with many of the Arab countries. However, China's approach to even the most strongly nationalist of the Arab countries suffered from weaknesses in class analysis and understanding of the development of neo-colonialist relations within these states.

China also came face to face with a new form of neo-colonialism in which the Soviet Union attempted to step into the shoes of the Western imperialists. Socialist China was in no position to compete with the Soviet Union's offers of large amounts of military and economic aid to Egypt, Syria and other Arab countries. The same was true of most of the liberation movements in the region, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

In contrast to the Soviet Union, China's military aid was provided free of charge. In 1971, a leading Chinese party member told a delegation of members of the Revolutionary Union from the U.S.: "We give all military aid free, and we only give it to people resisting aggression and fighting imperialism. If they are resisting aggression and fighting imperialism, why charge them? If they are not resisting aggression and fighting imperialism, why give it to them?"

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 150, 152. Due to its rivalry with the Soviets and its desire to maintain commercial dealings with the Arab world, Deng's regime continued to send military aid to the PLO into the 1980s. China and Israel finally established official diplomatic relations in 1992. This has paved the way for the Chinese revisionists to provide sophisticated military technology to the Zionist state, which continues to the present.

⁵³ Lillian Harris, "The PRC and the Arab Middle East," in *China and Israel, 1948-1998*, ed. Goldstein, 1999, p. 50.

The Internationalism of the Cultural Revolution

The political salvoes of the Cultural Revolution—in the form of *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tsetung* and other Marxist-Leninist works—brought Marxism for the first time to hundreds of millions of the oppressed worldwide. In addition, mass expressions of revolutionary support for the struggles of the people of the world were a striking feature of the early years of the Cultural Revolution. David and Nancy Dall Milton, two American teachers living in China, attended an indoor rally of 16,000 at Beijing Workers Stadium in March 1966. Held in conjunction with a series of mass meetings and demonstrations in the U.S.’s Spring Mobilization against the war,

It was one of those rare and moving moments when the sentiments of international feeling, so often verbalized, became realized in the bodies and solemn faces of the ‘distant’ Chinese filling the bleachers and seated on the floor of an arena like those similarly filled in Berkeley or Cambridge.⁵⁴

In addition to massive demonstrations in support of the Vietnamese people and in opposition to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, millions took to the streets in support of mass uprisings in France and the U.S. in 1968. In Asia, the Chinese press expressed support for the Naxalbari peasant rebellion in West Bengal as a prelude to revolution throughout India.

In the summer of 1967, Kang Sheng, a leading member of the Central Cultural Revolution Group⁵⁵ charged that State Chairman Liu Shaoqi had continued to advocate policies that Mao had criticized in 1962—that of surrendering to the imperialists, the Soviet revisionists and foreign reactionaries, and eliminating the revolutionary struggle of the suppressed people of the world.⁵⁶ Liu was specifically charged with denying support to the Burmese communist movement and currying favor with the Ne Win government.⁵⁷

In the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, Foreign Minister Chen Yi and Premier Zhou Enlai argued that it should not be carried out inside the Foreign Ministry and that foreign policy generally should be dissociated from the Cultural Revolution. This position proved impossible to maintain as the Cultural Revolution picked up momentum. Chen Yi came under attack for revisionist tendencies in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy, as well as his involvement in the February Adverse Current that attempted to defend Liu and Deng in early 1967.⁵⁸ Chen Yi was also vociferously opposed to the distribution of *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tsetung* and other Marxist-Leninist works at Chinese embassies abroad.⁵⁹ He was stripped of power in 1967, and a rightist attempt to restore him to his former position failed in 1969.

⁵⁴ Miltons, p. 121.

⁵⁵ Lin Biao, Chen Boda, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyan, and Jiang Qing were other prominent members of the CCRG. CCP Chairman Mao Zedong, the CCRG, and Party and government officials grouped around Premier Zhou Enlai constituted the “Left Alliance” that took shape in the early years of the Cultural Revolution.

⁵⁶ Barnouin and Yu, *Chinese Foreign Policy During the Cultural Revolution*, 1998, pp. 58-61.

⁵⁷ “Along the Socialist or Capitalist Road?” *Peking Review*, 1967, No. 34.

⁵⁸ Camilleri, p. 109.

⁵⁹ Barnouin and Yu, *Zhou Enlai: A Political Life*, p. 254.

Amid reports that Chinese diplomats abroad were living a bourgeois style of life, all of China's ambassadors and most of their staff were called back to participate in the Cultural Revolution. By 1969, two-thirds of the staff of the Foreign Ministry was participating in the May 7 Cadre Schools, which were established in the countryside for party cadre to work on collective farms and engage in intensive theoretical study.

In the midst of this struggle against rightism in the Foreign Ministry, ultra-leftism became a serious problem. A faction led by Wang Li argued that the whole leadership of the Foreign Ministry was revisionist and should be overthrown, and supported the burning of the British embassy in Beijing in 1967. This faction was part of the "May 16th group," which set out to overthrow all leading state personnel, and it was denounced and disbanded by the CCRG.

In the CCP's International Liaison Department, Director Wang Jiaxiang came under attack for revisionism and was removed from his position.⁶⁰ In 1962, Wang had advocated a reduction in support to the Vietnamese liberation struggle, which had elicited a sharp criticism by Mao. Even during the late 1960s, there was a sharp struggle between revolution and revisionism in Chinese foreign policy.

F. Chinese Foreign Policy in the 1970s

China's foreign policy in the 1970s had important historical antecedents. On many occasions during the 20th century, the world revolutionary movement did not handle the contradiction between the defense of the socialist state and the promotion of revolution correctly. After World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, as revolutionary struggles in many countries were defeated and the worldwide struggle for socialism became confined to one country, the Soviet Union, the CPSU became overly cautious in its promotion of and support for bold revolutionary moves throughout the world. Beginning in the 1930s, overestimating bourgeois nationalist forces, and underestimating revolutionary communist forces—peasant and proletarian—became the norm, and defense of Soviet socialism trumped the advance of the world revolution for decades to come.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 2006, p. 97.

⁶¹ Soviet policy towards Greece during World War 2 provides a graphic example. As the war was nearing an end, Stalin made a deal with Churchill to integrate Romania into its sphere-of-influence in exchange for giving Britain a free hand in Greece. When the German army withdrew in the fall of 1944, the Greek Communist Party (KKE) and the KKE-led army of 50,000 were in a position to establish a new government in which they would play the leading role. At this crucial juncture, the Soviet Union advised the KKE to hold off on military action and instead join a "government of national unity" with the British-backed monarchist government-in-exile based in Cairo. As the KKE hesitated under Soviet pressure, the British transported the reactionary Greek army in Egypt back to Greece and reinforced their forces based in Greece under the command of General Ronald Scobie. By the time the KKE decided to launch an uprising in Athens in December 1944 (which was unsuccessful), the decisive moment to strike had passed. Peter Stavrakis, *Moscow and Greek Communism: 1944-1949*, 1989, pp. 11-35; Andre Gerolymatos, *Red Acropolis, Black Terror: The Greek Civil War and the Origins of Soviet-American Rivalry*, 2004, pp. 94-147.

The CCP had extensive experience with the Soviet Union's incorrect handling of these questions. From the 1920s to the 1940s, Stalin and the Comintern discounted the revolutionary potential in China and viewed Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang (GMD) as the best bet for securing what the Soviet Union considered a crucial goal—a stable and friendly government in China. Thus, Soviet and Communist International (Comintern) representatives in China pushed, and imposed where possible, a political line of preserving an alliance between the CCP and GMD at all costs.

Between 1927 and 1930, this line required the communists to restrain mass uprisings that threatened the GMD's social and political base, and it eventually led to the slaughter by the GMD and its allies of hundreds of thousands of communists and radicalized workers, peasants, and students, as well as the near destruction of the CCP.⁶² Similarly, in the mid-1940s Stalin did not believe that the CCP could defeat the U.S.-backed GMD, and tried to pressure the Chinese communists to enter into a coalition government with the GMD, including giving up control over its army and base areas.⁶³

Despite the CCP's first-hand disastrous experience with a line in which advancing the world revolution was subordinated to defense of the Soviet Union, in the mid-1970s the Chinese party adopted a line in which the defense of China displaced revolutionary internationalism. The key turning point was the rehabilitation of Deng Xiaoping in 1973 and the ascendancy of his version of the Three Worlds Theory, which was founded on a strategic alliance with the U.S. and other Western imperialist powers.

At the end of the 1960s, China's foreign policy drew strength from the revolutionary upsurge of the Cultural Revolution and China's support for national liberation movements throughout the 1960s. The 9th National Congress of the CCP, held in April 1969, proclaimed support for the revolutionary struggles of the people of all countries, the five principles for peaceful coexistence with countries with different social systems, and called for the formation of a broad united front of peoples and countries against U.S. imperialism and Soviet revisionism.⁶⁴

However, the CCP's approach to the U.S. and Soviet Union was already beginning to shift. In early 1969, the Soviet Union had massed a million troops along China's northern border, and launched several attacks to reclaim parts of the former Tsarist empire. In March 1969, on Zhenbao Island in the Ussuri River, two battles were fought between Soviet and Chinese forces, leaving hundreds of casualties. According to U.S. satellite photos, "the Chinese side of the river was so pockmarked by Soviet artillery that it looked like a moonscape."⁶⁵

According to Henry Kissinger, in August 1969 a State Department specialist in Soviet affairs was asked by a Soviet Embassy official what the U.S. reaction would be to a Soviet attack on China's nuclear facilities. Soviet diplomats were also raising the issue of a nuclear strike on China with European and Asian diplomats. Even more ominously, the Soviets had flown in

⁶² Meisner, pp. 316, 317.

⁶³ See "The Political, Military and Negotiating Strategies of the Chinese Communist Party (1937-1946) and Recent Developments in Nepal," March 2007, pp. 4-9, by the MLM Revolutionary Study Group.

⁶⁴ Report to the 9th Congress, pp. 94-99.

⁶⁵ MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, p. 309.

bomber units to bases in Mongolia and Siberia, where they carried out mock attacks on simulated nuclear facilities.⁶⁶

The PLA was placed on a war footing. The plans to relocate key military industries to a “third line” of defense in the interior of the country were accelerated, and networks of underground tunnels and shelters were built in major cities. In a top-secret study commissioned by Mao, four marshals of the PLA stated that even though the Soviets’ main forces were still concentrated in Europe, they were preparing for an attack on China. This study concluded that the key element holding the Soviets back was the attitude of the U.S., which did not want to see the Soviet Union’s global position strengthened by a successful attack on China.

This assessment buttressed the decision of the majority of the Chinese leadership to initiate an “opening to the West.” This strategy enabled China to avoid fighting on two fronts by exploiting the imperialist rivalry between the U.S. and Soviet Union. This policy had the best chance of heading off a Soviet attack. Another part of the CCP’s calculations was that the U.S. was headed to defeat in Vietnam and no longer posed as serious a military threat to China.

This shift in strategic thinking led to a major test of strength in 1970-1971 between Mao, Zhou and the so-called “gang of four” (the Four)⁶⁷ on the one hand, and Lin Biao and a number of high-ranking generals, on the other. Lin opposed the opening to the West and was building up a factional network in the army to strengthen his hand. Mao responded by launching a campaign to undercut Lin’s number two position in the party and to win over the regional military commanders. Facing political defeat, Lin attempted to stage a coup in September 1971 and died in a plane crash in Mongolia.

The “Lin Biao affair” had a devastating impact on the course of the Cultural Revolution and Chinese foreign policy. Lin and his allies in the army and party had been a key component of the “Left Alliance” during the mass upheavals of the Cultural Revolution, and their downfall created a power vacuum in both foreign policy and internal affairs.

Under the sponsorship of Zhou Enlai, large numbers of high-ranking party leaders and government officials who had been overthrown during the Cultural Revolution were rehabilitated after making pro-forma “self-criticisms.” This process culminated in the 1973 return of Deng Xiaoping, the “No. 2 capitalist roader,” to serve as Deputy Premier whose area of responsibility included foreign policy⁶⁸

The years 1969 to 1973 were a transitional period. Mao and Zhou, the two chief architects of Chinese foreign policy, were in basic agreement on the opening to the West. One element of this shift was that the People’s Republic pursued a strategy of normalization of relations with over 100 countries that resulted in its admission to the UN as the sole representative of China in

⁶⁶ "The Soviet-Chinese Conflict of 1969," Igor Sutyagin, <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/94-96/sutyagin/02-03.htm>

⁶⁷ The Four had risen to prominence during the Cultural Revolution. Zhang Chunqiao, Wang Hongwen and Yao Wenyuan were from Shanghai, and Jiang Qing was Mao’s wife. They were generally allied with Mao in defending the Cultural Revolution during the early 1970s, and were arrested and jailed for long terms after a rightist military coup in 1976.

⁶⁸ MacFarquhar and Schoenthals, p. 359. According to most researchers, Mao agreed to the rehabilitation of Deng in 1973. Mao may have thought that this was necessary to restore civilian control over the PLA in the wake of the Lin Biao affair. Mao may have later regretted this decision.

October 1971. At the same time, Mao continued to stress that revolution was the main trend in the world and that support for revolutionary struggles in other countries should not be cut back.

In order to keep the Soviet Union off balance, the U.S. ping-pong team visit and Henry Kissinger's trips in 1971 were followed by President Nixon's historic meeting with Mao in February 1972. This meeting did not result in any reduction in Chinese support for the Vietnamese liberation struggle. In Mao's view, fundamental revolutionary principles should not be compromised in the course of playing the "American card." In 1971-72, Mao and Zhou also told Kissinger and Nixon that full normalization of relations could not take place unless the U.S. withdrew from Vietnam and ended its military support for the Chinese province of Taiwan.

During this period, the basic orientation of the party leadership was summarized in an internal report on the international situation in December 1971: "The general strategy of our nation for the present is to push forward preparations against war and promote revolution." In a world divided into "three parts"—the U.S., Soviet Union and the Third World—China was "resolutely on the side of the Third World" in opposing the two main enemies. The report called for exploiting contradictions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and between the U.S. and the "second intermediate zone"—Western Europe, Japan, Canada and Oceania.⁶⁹

The report also called for continued military support for Vietnam and other revolutionary struggles in Southeast Asia, and for backing national liberation movements in Africa and Latin America, chiefly with political and moral support. In regards to the U.S., it stated, "As the people's revolution in the U.S. gradually gains momentum, we have to do more work," and noted that normalization of relations with the U.S. would make it easier to carry out this work.

The case of the Philippines is instructive. Even as China was normalizing political and trade relations with the Philippines, the CCP stepped up its support for the Communist Party of the Philippines, which was refounded in 1968. CPP members visited and received training in China, and in 1971, the Chinese provided 1,400 M-14 rifles and 8,000 rounds of ammunition in a ship sent from the Philippines by the CPP-led New People's Army.⁷⁰

The "Three Worlds Perspective"

Even during the 1970-1973 period, the CCP's view of the international situation had serious problems. Its position was that the two superpowers (the U.S. and the Soviet Union—"the first world") were the principal enemies on a world scale; the Western imperialists and Japan (the "second world") were part of an international united front against the superpowers; and the "peoples and countries of the third world" were the most reliable revolutionary force in opposing the superpowers.

⁶⁹ Barnouin and Yu, *Chinese Foreign Policy During the Cultural Revolution*, pp. 188-196.

⁷⁰ During the trip back from China, the ship had to be sunk when it was discovered by the Philippine Navy; only 200 rifles reached shore. Two other ships were sent to China but were not able to make it back to the Philippines. Recollections of Juanito Rivera, a founding member of the NPA, in *Bulatlat*, April 2-8, 2006. www.bulatlat.com According to another knowledgeable Filipino source, Zhou intervened more than once to limit the size and frequency of the CPP's delegations to China. This was an indication of continuing struggle in the CCP over whether the "opening to the West" required cutting back support for revolutionary struggles.

As a perspective for the world's revolutionary movement, this analysis was flawed. It detached the U.S. and Soviet Union from the imperialist system as a whole; it downplayed the reactionary nature of the other imperialist countries in Western Europe, Japan⁷¹, Canada and Oceania; and it advanced a classless conception of nationalism by lumping together the oppressed peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America with their rulers, who had limited contradictions, if at all, with one or another imperialist power.

Some of the problems with the “three worlds perspective” were reflected in a widely quoted statement attributed to Mao, “Countries want independence, nations want liberation, and the people want revolution.” Mao’s eclectic statement, which tended to place struggles of Third World countries for national independence on a par with revolutionary movements, shared some aspects of the Bandung line associated with Zhou in the 1950s and 1960s.

Thus, even during the 1970-1973 period, China’s overestimation of the contradictions that the reactionary rulers of a number of Third World countries had with imperialism led the Chinese to send representatives to the Shah of Iran’s celebration of 2500 years of monarchical rule, and to continue to send economic and military support to the government of Sri Lanka (Ceylon) when it was faced by a Trotskyite-led rebellion in 1971. Elsewhere in South Asia, China correctly opposed India’s invasion of East Pakistan in 1971, but it also denounced the formation of Bangladesh as a puppet state of India and the Soviet Union. These positions objectively lent support to the comprador regimes of Iran, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, and undermined the work of genuine revolutionary and Maoist forces in these countries.

The “Three Worlds”-- From Perspective to Comprehensive Strategy

It is difficult to ascertain Mao’s views on foreign policy after he suffered a stroke in 1972. He also suffered from Lou Gehrig’s disease,⁷² heart disease and anoxia (shortage of oxygen). Mao was nearly blind, making it impossible for him to read and write documents without assistance, and he did not issue any major statements on foreign policy until his death.

Still, there is strong evidence that his views diverged sharply with Deng and Zhou after 1973. Mao on the one hand, and Deng and Zhou, on the other, drew different conclusions on how to apply the “three worlds” to the international situation. While Mao advocated *tactical* unity in some areas with the U.S. in order to deal with the Soviet threat to China, after 1973 Deng and Zhou sought to implement a *strategic* alliance and political understanding with U.S. imperialism. This took the form of the fully developed “Three Worlds Theory.”

Important aspects of the Three Worlds Theory were presented in an address to the UN in 1974 by Deng Xiaoping. In this speech, Deng argued that “underdeveloped” Third World

⁷¹ While the Chinese view of the “second world” was not correct, socialist China was able to utilize the limited contradictions between Japanese and U.S. capital to good effect. In the early 1970s, as it developed economic ties with Japan, China did not trade with any Japanese companies that had investments in Taiwan or South Korea, that made or sold any materials for the U.S. war in Vietnam, and had any joint ventures with U.S. corporations.

⁷² This disease, technically called amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, caused the motor nerve cells to deteriorate in Mao’s throat, pharynx, tongue, diaphragm, right hand and right leg. MacFarquhar, p. 414.

countries should sell their natural resources to obtain advanced technology, which was strikingly similar to the “Four Modernizations” program that he was aggressively pursuing in China along with Zhou.

In addition, after 1973 Deng and the forces grouped around him asserted that the Soviet Union had become the main danger not only to China, but to *the countries and people of the world*. With the U.S. imperialists still the dominant power in most of the world, this was a serious error and had a deeply disorienting effect on many Maoist forces around the world.⁷³

By 1973, Mao had come into sharper conflict with Premier Zhou in both domestic and foreign affairs. Zhou had steered the national campaign to repudiate Lin Biao into a campaign against “ultra-leftism.” Mao saw this as a backhanded attack on the Cultural Revolution and moved to quash this direction.⁷⁴ At the same time, Mao and the Four started to criticize Deng’s “General Program of Work for the Whole Party and the Whole Nation” as a program for capitalist, not socialist, development.

In July 1973, Mao spoke to Politburo members Zhang Chunqiao and Wang Hongwen about the Foreign Ministry's view of the world situation:

In an internal paper, the Ministry had held the view that the current world situation was characterized by the collaboration between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in an attempt to dominate the world. Mao was convinced that this was an unrealistic assessment which also departed from his perception of the world as being characterized by “san da yi shen” (three bigs and one deepening), that was “big upheaval, big splitting, big reorganization and the deepening of the revolutionary struggle.” Mao called the Foreign Ministry's memoranda “shit papers,” and ordered Wang and Zhang to learn some foreign languages so they would be able to judge matters for themselves. “If it goes on like this,” Mao added, “the Ministry will surely become revisionist.”⁷⁵

Mao also refused to read the Premier's speeches on foreign affairs. Zhou responded to Mao's criticisms by declaring that he was responsible for the Ministry's errors and that these mistakes “have to do with my political thinking and my style of work.”⁷⁶ In November 1973, Mao took issue with Zhou's statement to Henry Kissinger on the issue of Taiwan—that it could be solved either by force or by peaceful means. Mao's view was that there was only one possibility, and that was to fight. Mao accused Zhou of being afraid of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and convened a session of the Politburo to criticize Zhou.⁷⁷

⁷³ This position was justified by historical parallels to World War 2, when the Soviet Union made an alliance with the Western imperialist countries against German imperialism. This line was not simply a necessary tactic to defend socialism in the USSR, but was a general analysis of imperialism and strategy imposed on the international communist movement by the Soviet leadership through the Comintern. Just as in the China in the 1970s, this line of identifying one bloc of imperialists as more dangerous than an opposing bloc encouraged class collaboration on the part of communists in the U.S., France, Italy, and Britain, as well as in their colonies such as India, Algeria and the Philippines.

⁷⁴ Barnouin and Yu, p. 35.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 36.

⁷⁶ Barnouin and Yu, *Zhou Enlai: A Political Life*, p. 295.

⁷⁷ Barnouin and Yu, *Chinese Foreign Policy During the Cultural Revolution*, pp. 37, 36.

As Zhou came under sharp criticism, a leftist group came to prominence in the Foreign Ministry, led by five young women. Mao made two of them, Nancy Tang and his niece Wang Hairong, his principal liaisons with the Foreign Ministry.⁷⁸ They succeeded in removing Chen Yi's successor, an ally of Zhou, as Foreign Minister.

There were other indications of sharp struggle in the CCP over foreign policy. At a Politburo meeting in October 1973, Jiang Qing and Deng locked horns over the policy of buying ships from the imperialist countries for China's merchant fleet. Jiang criticized this as an example of a "slavish comprador philosophy," and pointed to the *Fang Qing*, the first ocean-going cargo ship designed and built in China, as a symbol of Mao's policy of self-reliance and national independence.⁷⁹ There was also an important difference between Zhou's political report and Wang Hongwen's report on the revision of the party constitution at the 10th National Party Congress in 1973. When referring to the danger of war, Zhou warned of the danger of a surprise attack by the Soviet social-imperialists, whereas Wang warned against surprise attacks by both the U.S. and Soviet imperialists.⁸⁰

When Wang spoke to a visiting Cambodian delegation in 1974, shortly before Deng's speech to the UN, he called for continued support for revolutionary struggles and said that Mao had "recently" reminded them: "We are communists, and we must help the people; not to help the people would be to betray Marxism."⁸¹ That year, articles in *Peking Review* and the theoretical journal *Red Flag* called attention to the revisionist line of "the liquidation of struggle against the imperialists, reactionaries and modern revisionists, and the reduction of assistance and support to the revolutionary struggles of the people of various countries."⁸²

During this period, Mao's health declined rapidly. The mass campaigns that he had a hand in launching from 1973-1976 were focused on consolidating what had been won during the Cultural Revolution—and preparing the ground for future struggles to defeat revisionism and stay on the socialist road. Significantly, it was only after Mao died in 1976, and his supporters were suppressed, that the revisionist leaders of China were able to attribute the Three Worlds Theory to him.⁸³

Thus, there was a back and forth struggle over the conduct of foreign affairs in the CCP in the years before Mao's death, but it rarely came out into the open. For reasons that are not clear, Mao and his supporters did not launch a mass political campaign that explicitly opposed the direction that Deng and Zhou were taking foreign policy from 1973 to 1976.⁸⁴

As a result of the dominant position achieved by the revisionist forces after 1973, China began to withdraw support for revolutionary movements in the Third World. Parades of U.S.

⁷⁸ Barnouin and Yu, *Zhou Enlai: A Political Life*, p. 299.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 304-305.

⁸⁰ MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, p. 365.

⁸¹ "Speech at Peking Rally Welcoming Cambodian Guests," *Peking Review*, April 12, 1974, in *And Mao Makes Five*, ed. Raymond Lotta, 1980, p. 173.

⁸² See Hung Yu, "History Develops in Spirals," *Peking Review*, October 25, 1974, in Lotta, p. 163.

⁸³ See "Chairman Mao's Theory of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds is a Major Contribution to Marxism-Leninism," *People's Daily*, November 1, 1977.

⁸⁴ More in-depth investigation is needed into the terms of this struggle, and how the revolutionary and revisionist forces lined up during this period.

puppets were honored in Beijing for their contributions to "the struggle against Soviet hegemonism." In 1975, the Chinese government supported the U.S. and South African-backed UNITA in the Angolan civil war—in the name of defeating the Soviet Union's attempts to gain a strategic foothold in Africa through its support for the MPLA.

In the Middle East, China's prior support for revolutionary movements was reversed. Chinese aid to revolutionary forces in the Gulf States was dropped in favor of diplomatic ties with Oman. Another sign of this reversal of Chinese foreign policy was a speech by Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua in 1975 in which he said that China was reconciled to the existence of Israel as a "fait accompli."⁸⁵

After a U.S.-led military coup in Chile in September 1973, the Chinese Foreign Ministry recognized the Pinochet regime. While pro-Soviet forces in the U.S. are quick to jump on China, they don't tell a much more important part of the story.

As the U.S. moved to undermine Chile's "socialist" President, Salvador Allende, it received indispensable assistance from the pro-Soviet Chilean Communist Party. The CP, the largest left organization in Chile, told its working class base to turn in their weapons in order to assure the army of their peaceful intentions. The CP claimed that Chile's "constitutionalist generals" would uphold democracy, and it toed Moscow's line about working for a peaceful transition to socialism in Chile. These actions directly played into the hands of the fascists and U.S. imperialism, whose coup against the Allende government resulted in the massacre of tens of thousands of revolutionaries and political activists. Revisionism, whether shaped and carried out by Soviet or Chinese hands, revealed its betrayal of the people.

Thus, the counter-revolutionary developments in Chinese foreign policy in the mid-1970s were a direct outgrowth of the Three Worlds Theory and the revisionists in the CCP who spawned it. This threw many Maoist parties and organizations around the world into a tailspin, from which most never recovered.

G. The Response of the New Communist Movement in the U.S.

In the New Communist Movement (NCM) generally, Nixon's visit to China in 1971 was seen as a victory for the PRC and a defeat for the U.S. The "three worlds perspective" of the CCP was adopted uncritically by all of the NCM groups. At that time it was difficult to discern the terms of struggle at the top levels of the Chinese party between those who advocated a strategic alliance with U.S. imperialism to counter the Soviet threat, and those, like Mao, who supported détente with the U.S. as a tactic, and advocated continued support for revolutionary struggles against imperialism.

The key step backward for most of the NCM groups took place in the period between 1973 and 1976, when they embraced Deng's Three Worlds Theory, although this was a clear

⁸⁵ *The International Relations of the Palestine Liberation Organization*, ed. Norton and Greenberg, 1989, p. 152.

reversal of the revolutionary thrust of Chinese foreign policy since 1949. The Revolutionary Union (which became the RCP in 1975) deserves credit for its efforts to oppose this trend.⁸⁶ It politically exposed the support of the “Maoist” October League (OL) for U.S. imperialism and its puppet regimes, and did not rely on *Peking Review* for finding its compass on international events.⁸⁷

In contrast, the OL and other groups were especially uncritical in echoing Chinese foreign policy statements. The OL went so far as to support large-scale U.S. military aid to the Shah of Iran in the name of building a global united front against the Soviet Union. For several years, even the highly respected Chair of the U.S.-China People’s Friendship Association, William Hinton, who did so much to popularize the accomplishments of the Chinese revolution in the U.S., supported the incorrect position that the Soviet Union had become the main danger to the peoples of the world.

The question is then posed, who is responsible for the adoption of the CCP’s view of the “three worlds” perspective by all of the NCM groups, and for uncritical support for Deng’s Three Worlds Theory by the October League and many others. Here it is useful to consider Mao’s comments on Stalin’s disastrous approach to the Chinese revolution from the 1920s to the 1940s:

Long ago the Chinese Communists had first-hand experience of some of his [Stalin’s] mistakes. Of the erroneous...opportunist lines which emerged in the Chinese Communist Party at one time or another, some arose under the influence of certain mistakes of Stalin's, in so far as their international sources were concerned... But since some of the wrong ideas put forward by Stalin were accepted and applied by certain Chinese comrades, we Chinese should bear the responsibility. In its struggle against "Left" and Right opportunism, therefore, our Party criticized only its own erring comrades and never put the blame on Stalin.⁸⁸

Mao was saying that, yes, Stalin gave bad advice, but the responsibility for following it rests on those leaders within the CCP for accepting this advice. Similar reasoning applies to the NCM groups. In many ways they are more blameworthy than the leaders of CCP who followed Stalin’s advice. In the 1920s, the CCP was dealing with a Comintern that, drawing on the authority of the world’s first successful socialist revolution, viewed itself as the general staff of the world revolutionary movement with ample authority to make communists around the world toe the Comintern line.

⁸⁷ This struggle between revolutionary and revisionist trends in the U.S. Maoist movement is entirely different from the criticisms made by pro-Soviet revisionists such as Max Elbaum. (See footnote 25.) Those who attack the role of Maoism generally in the NCM have taken two tacks. They ignore the great revolutionary achievements of the Cultural Revolution and Chinese foreign policy during the 1960s. They then play what they consider to be their trump card--the adoption of the Three Worlds Theory by the CCP in the 1970s, and the incorrect response to it by the majority of NCM groups. In doing so, they ignore the intense struggle that took place over foreign policy in the CCP in the 1970s between revolutionary and revisionist forces, and fail to analyze why most of the NCM groups latched onto Deng’s Three Worlds Theory.

⁸⁸ “On the Question of Stalin,” *Polemic*, p. 123. This essay, which was part of the polemics between the CCP and the CPSU, was written by or under the direction of Mao.

Nearly fifty years later, the situation was very different. The Chinese made no attempt to form a Comintern that would similarly try to whip parties around the world into line. Why then did the NCM so largely adhere to the CCP line in the 1970s? Part of the answer is, of course, the immense prestige of the Chinese Communist Party in the New Communist Movement. Accompanying that prestige was the prospect of recognition by the CCP, and one which the OL was the least able to resist.⁸⁹ Similarly, the prestige of the USSR led to reflexive support among communists in the 1930s and 40s for Soviet foreign policy.

But there is more to the answer than just the NCM's political culture of uncritically accepting the authority of the Chinese Communist Party. Practicing revolutionary internationalism in an imperialist country is a hard and bumpy road on which to travel. At a minimum it involves doing revolutionary work against your own bourgeoisie even in non-revolutionary conditions, supporting liberation struggles in countries oppressed by imperialism, and defending socialist countries. Of these three, perhaps the easiest is to defend a socialist country, to assume that you should advocate whatever a socialist country says is in its best interest.

Following the path of least resistance in practicing what you think is revolutionary internationalism is especially easy when you are following the same low road in other aspects of your practice. In the NCM's work in the working class during the 1970s, here too it frequently took the path of least resistance in the form of economism and becoming trade union secretaries rather than tribunes of the people.

Unfortunately, most of the groups in the NCM did not reflect deeply enough on the Chinese experience in the 1920s, nor did they understand Mao's writings on the subject. In a 1946 statement about the international situation, Mao indicated that in the aftermath of World War 2, the Soviet Union might make various agreements and compromises with the imperialist countries. But he said:

Such compromise does not require 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.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Mouthing whatever line about the Soviet Union and the three worlds was emanating from Beijing at any particular moment, the Communist Party M-L (formerly the October League) endorsed Hua Guofeng's ascension to leadership and the arrest of the "gang of four" after Mao died in 1976. Shortly thereafter, *Peking Review* featured a picture of CPM-L Chairman Klonsky and Hua Guofeng toasting each other, and the CPML had, so to speak, the CCP's U.S. franchise. However, the very franchise that the CPML had so fawningly sought contributed to the organization's subsequent implosion, as it became increasingly clear that China was no longer on the socialist road.

Prior to the CPML's receipt of the franchise, an RCP delegation visited China. The RCP was, in effect, offered the franchise if it would endorse Hua and the suppression of the Four. Wisely, the RCP declined.⁹⁰ www.marx2mao.com/Mao/PIS46.html. "Some Points in Appraisal of the Present International Situation," April 1946, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Foreign Languages Press, 1969.

H. Some Lessons for Today

1. There is much from which new generations of political activists who have grown to political maturity in the past three decades can learn about the historic achievements of China's foreign policy during the Maoist era. China's political and military aid to revolutionary struggles in Vietnam, Korea, the Philippines, Palestine and many African countries; the millions throughout China who demonstrated in solidarity with the Black liberation struggle in the U.S. and France's May 1968 revolt; the boxes of Red Books that brought socialism and Mao Zedong Thought to revolutionaries and anti-imperialists in dozens of countries; how the Cultural Revolution, the unprecedented political movement that Mao led to keep China on the socialist road, promoted support for world revolution ---these are historic achievements that will provide inspiration and an essential foundation for the revolutionary conduct of foreign policy by socialist states in the future.

2. Though defense of socialism may require tactical maneuvering (as when a serious Soviet threat to China arose in 1969), strategically a socialist state must promote and support revolution throughout the world. One of the important lessons of the 20th century is that socialism in one or a few states, even the most populous country in the world, cannot survive indefinitely as islands in a sea of capitalism. Only the advance of the world revolution—with socialist countries serving as political, and where possible, military base areas—can forge a path to communism.

3. The experience of the 20th century in the Soviet Union and China demonstrates that the *internal* threat to socialism is as great as, and at times is greater than, the external threat from imperialism. The danger of capitalist restoration can only be confronted successfully by the masses of working people, with a communist party that remains revolutionary in the lead. They must embark on and stay on a socialist road that requires intense class struggle against newly arisen bourgeois elements, particularly in the party itself. This new bourgeoisie and their social base will not only pull a society off the socialist road; they will oppose support and aid to revolutionary movements in other countries as unnecessary and as a threat to their internal policies and to their hopes of reaching understandings with the imperialists and other reactionary countries.

Thus, while socialist states must defend themselves against imperialism, they must continue to undergo revolutionary transformations so they *stay* socialist and maintain an internationalist orientation. If they are able to do so, socialist states can maximize their support for the world revolution. Providing political support and nourishment for revolutionary movements can play a crucial role in these movements' growth and in developing a correct line and program for revolution in their own countries.

4. China's revolutionary line on foreign affairs in the 1960s strengthened the position of the forces led by Mao in fierce political battles with pro-Soviet revisionists in the CCP over the course of the Chinese revolution. Conversely, when a revolutionary foreign policy was not

followed, it breathed new life into the revisionist forces in China grouped around Deng Xiaoping, whose program for capitalist modernization led to a strategic alliance with U.S. imperialism and the liquidation of support for revolutionary struggles.

Revolutionary lines on domestic and foreign policy issues reinforced each other during the Maoist era, but they did not automatically converge. Caretaking the needs of state power, defending against outside aggression, continuing to revolutionize and transform all areas of socialist society and developing production on this basis, are a different process than nurturing and promoting revolutionary struggle throughout the world. How revolutionary leadership in both processes can be developed, and how to handle the contradictions between them, are questions that require deeper summation and analysis than we have been able to do here.

5. An important weakness of the “three worlds perspective” was that it did not make a correct analysis of the imperialist system as a whole. This theoretical framework sowed confusion about the nature of the “Second World”—the other Western imperialist powers – and exaggerated their conflicts with the U.S. This perspective was reshaped by Deng and other revisionists into the Three Worlds Theory, which asserted that the West European and Asian imperialist powers played a progressive role in the world by defending their national independence against the Soviet Union, the “most dangerous” imperialist superpower. This essentially called on revolutionary and Maoist forces, especially in Western Europe, to support, or stop opposing, their own bourgeoisies and various oppressor regimes which opposed the Soviet Union.

Why does this matter now? In today’s world, the U.S. is the dominant imperialist power, especially in military terms. However, it is not the only enemy of the world’s peoples on a global scale. The European Union, Russia, Japan, Canada, Australia and New Zealand all contend with and collude with the U.S. as imperialist powers in their own right. Underestimation of their far-flung imperialist interests and reactionary nature has in the past, and will again and again, throw revolutionary movements in these countries off course.

6. In addition, the “three worlds perspective”—as well as the Bandung line that preceded it -- created confusion about the nature of bourgeois nationalist regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Emphasis on economic development in these countries and their disputes with the U.S. obscured the neo-colonial relations that persisted.

The issues raised by the Three Worlds Theory remain crucial today. Similar sentiments are heard about the central importance of struggles for national sovereignty—referring to Venezuela, Bolivia, Iran, Zimbabwe and a number of other countries. They should be defended against attacks by the U.S. or by other imperialist partners, surrogates, or emerging blocs. However, it is important to understand that these countries—even if led by social-democrats like Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales—are still neo-colonies, caught in the web of imperialist economic relations. According to James Petras:

Venezuela, Bolivia and the entire spectrum of social movements, trade union confederations, parties and fractions of parties do not call for the abolition of capitalism, the repudiation of the debt, the complete expropriation of US or EEC banks or multinational corporations, or any

rupture in relations with the US. For example, in Venezuela, private national and foreign banks earned over 30% rate of return in 2005-2006, foreign-owned oil companies reaped record profits between 2004-2006 and less than 1% of the biggest landed estates were fully expropriated and titles turned over to landless peasants. Capital-labor relations still operate in a framework heavily weighted on behalf of business and labor contractors who rely on subcontractors who continue to dominate hiring and firing in more than one half of the large enterprises. The Venezuelan military and police continue to arrest suspected Colombian guerrillas and turn them over to the Colombian police. Venezuela and US-client President Uribe of Colombia have signed several high-level security and economic co-operation agreements.⁹¹

While these countries may implement progressive reforms--and even some features of a social welfare state with enough oil revenues-- this is not a substitute for the development of a mass-based revolutionary movement, which as history shows, is the only pathway to socialism.

Putting aside the relative strength and thoroughness of the various bourgeois nationalist opponents of U.S. imperialism today, there is a widely held view that nationalist governments and their leaders, not people's movements, are the *most* important challenge to imperialism. This is cause for some forces to deny support for people's movements within these countries, such as Iran, Zimbabwe and Brazil. With the U.S. imperialists threatening to launch a military attack on the Islamic Republic of Iran, it is essential to extend our solidarity to the Iranian people, not to the reactionary mullahs.

The fixation with great nationalist leaders is, for anti-imperialists, myopic and invites disaster. The way such leaders have been cut down by imperialism in the past is rarely discussed, though such examples are many and the parallels cogent—Arbenz in Guatemala, Mossadegh in Iran, Lumumba in the Congo, Sukarno in Indonesia, Nkrumah in Ghana, and Allende in Chile. And turning a blind eye to Maoist-led people's wars and liberation movements is to deny, or fail to recognize, the very forces that stand the best chance to open a new revolutionary dynamic in the 21st century.

7. At certain times, socialist states may have to make tactical maneuvers to avoid being crushed by one or more imperialist power or by neighboring reactionary countries. Mao and the Chinese leadership had to do so in the face of the very real threat of a Soviet attack and invasion. In 1918, when German forces were threatening St. Petersburg, Lenin and the Bolshevik leadership agreed, in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, to give up substantial territory in order to buy time to consolidate Soviet power. In the years ahead, socialist states will face similar contradictions.

⁹¹ See James Petras, "US-Latin American Relations: Measuring the Rise or Fall of US Power," November 1, 2006, <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article15464.htm>. In the second half of this article, Petras discusses Venezuela, Bolivia and Cuba.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a somewhat different question due to its particular history and claims to be a socialist state. The DPRK, too, is increasingly dependent on nearby capitalist countries, South Korea and China, for food and energy assistance, and by means of investment in maquiladora-like economic zones similar to those in China.

One of the most important lessons from China during the Maoist era (and the Soviet Union when it was socialist) is that revolutionary forces in other countries must not make the same compromises that socialist states may have to make when threats to their very survival arise. In the U.S, lack of clarity on this question undercut the ability of much of the New Communist Movement to take a firm stand against U.S. imperialism, the Western imperialist powers, and neo-colonial regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This was an important cause of their political and organizational demise.

8. Last but by no means least, the experience of socialist China and the Soviet Union demonstrates that support for the world revolution must become a *mass* question. It cannot be left to foreign affairs experts and official communiqués. This is a particularly important question for revolutionary forces in the communist party. Mass campaigns in support of revolutionary struggles in other countries and in opposition to imperialist war and plunder build up a critical social base for the foreign policy of a socialist state in which support for revolution is not subordinated to the needs of state-to-state diplomacy.

This spirit of internationalism must be turned into a powerful material force prior to the seizure of power and establishment of socialism. Only if internationalism is woven into the fabric of revolutionary struggle against imperialist and reactionary regimes on a continuing basis will the working class and oppressed people of all countries be able to fully contribute to the struggle for socialism all over the world and the achievement of communism.

Revolutionary forces in many countries, including Maoist parties and organizations, are discussing these and related questions, and are developing new, more thorough and daring analyses to shape the course of struggle today and for the years ahead. We hope this paper will be a contribution to this process.

If you have comments on this paper, please write to mlm.rsg@gmail.com