



## **CONDEMNED TO WIN!**

### **Position paper from Red Guards Austin, 2016**

#### **Part 1. On revolutionary communist principles**

##### **Introduction**

“The struggle of the proletariat and the revolutionary people to change the world comprises the fulfillment of the following tasks: to change the objective world and, at the same time, their own subjective world—to change their cognitive ability and change the relations between the subjective and the objective world.”—Mao

The theoretical basis that guides all of our work is Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM); our principal ideology is Maoism. Maoism is composed of the most advanced ideas that have ever emerged from the history of working-class struggles—the history of the wars between classes. Maoism is the living science that was developed through this long and difficult struggle on every continent—from the Paris Commune, to the heights of China’s Cultural Revolution, to the popular war waged in Peru, where Maoism was theorized as the third and highest stage of all Marxism. Maoism still serves its purpose as the guiding ideology of the most advanced sections of the world’s working class as they wage tireless war on the capitalist system. All the victories and defeats that have been learned from have been synthesized into a weapon—this is Maoism, the only anti-revisionist, revolutionary communist ideology

in the world today. Since MLM is a living science it must be understood as in-progress—nothing about it is static or trapped in time. We are only a small collective and it is far beyond our scope or the scope of this paper to present a detailed analysis of the situation both locally and globally that we must help apply MLM to. We can only seek to provide the basis for our own revolutionary perspective.

With the acceptance of our history as a communist movement comes the understanding that if we are to call ourselves communists, we must develop and practice true communist principles in our mass work, our political work, and in our daily lives. This includes conducting oneself as a true and genuine revolutionary—breaking with all narrow self-interests and individualist pursuits, living essentially for the people and for the world working-class revolution. This document hopes to shed some light on what is meant by living a communist life.

A communist life is not determined by theoretical sympathy or orientation; it is defined by serving the people. The best ideas when left in the heads of a few individuals are worth less than horse piss. Serving the people is primary. With any action, idea, or pursuit, we must ask ourselves, “What class does this serve?” The masses are the measure for our work in practice. Those who refuse to serve the people have already betrayed our revolutionary cause and stand as enemies in waiting. As servants of the people we must seek to be humble, willing to learn tough lessons from them, and always willing to take criticisms and make self-criticisms. These are indispensable tools of serving the people and rectifying our own errors. We must avoid small thinking here and go deep into our own beings, challenging every occurrence of ruling-class thinking. We hold that with these two things, serving the people and criticism/self-criticism, we will develop and grow, remaining accountable and genuine. That it is only through these two things that closely relate to one another that any organization will ever be able to advance the revolutionary situation in this country—that both things must be deep and thoroughgoing and only deepen over time and through reiterative practice. One should not simply call oneself a communist; one should earn that title daily. This is the struggle Red Guards seek to wage, and we sincerely invite others to join in this struggle—to struggle with us and unite together.

## **1 . The countrywide situation**

The ruling class in the US is the capitalist class, who exploit and oppress the US population—especially the black, brown, and indigenous populations of the US, as well as its broad working classes in general. Imperialism has provided the US capitalist class with a wealth of internal colonies, populated as a result of both settler-colonialism and US imperialism displacing the populations of the oppressed nations, in the form of refugees and immigrants. While the capitalist-imperialist ruling class abuse “their own” population in the US, they are principally outwardly aggressive,

seeking to subjugate the whole world to their domination one way or another. The world has been divided into two hostile camps: the haves and the have-nots. US corporations seek resources and cheap labor and will go to any violent length to get these things. They oppress and exploit us at home and extract super-profits via super-exploitation abroad. In the world today the number one enemy is the US capitalist-imperialist ruling class. This means that it is in our interests to kill the imperialist class for good before they get us all killed in more wars they cannot win as well as ecologically devastating production—leaving us nothing to inherit but a dead earth.

As the majority of the world's populations are forced to fight US imperialism at ever-increasing levels, the ruling class of the US must hide behind its own population, using the lot of us as human shields. The capitalist class finds it less and less possible to take care of its own working class. This has resulted in the US becoming host to the world's largest prison population and an ever-growing wage and wealth gap, creating a people who own nothing beyond their own debt. This inability to provide basic necessities for the majority of the population is the basis for popular interest in revolution in this country.

Because the US ruling class is the principal enemy of the world's working class and their allied classes, the Maoists who organize in the heart of the imperialist beast have a special responsibility to our comrades the world over. Anything we accomplish here can help the world working-class revolution and inversely their victories and defeats are our own. These revolutions do not exist in a bubble but are part of the same world revolutionary project. We must live up to our role and responsibility; this requires nothing less than becoming an internationalist communist revolutionary.

Even though the workers in the heart of imperialism are exploited and oppressed it would be delusional to expect them to join a people's war tomorrow. In many sections of society the workers continue to be ruled by consent rather than by coercion—especially in the white working class, who have been extended privilege on the basis of their whiteness, a necessary precaution taken by and to protect the ruling class. The working class is divided and must be united through struggle toward achieving their common long-term interests. It is the responsibility of revolutionaries to put in the work required to heighten the consciousness of the people. The working class already know that they are being messed over. There is little delusion when it comes to this. What must be proven to them in this struggle is that their fates are inextricable from the fates of their class siblings in the rest of the world. The working class and their class allies must be mobilized in their own interests by active and conscious revolutionary agents, and only through mass participation with communist leadership can the situation for the whole of the working class improve. We must build these mass movements and lead them in the effort to build their sharpest weapon, the party, which can only emerge from the masses and their struggles.

Within the US working class there are the oppressed nations, held prisoner within the US itself. As Comrade Stalin taught, a nation is “a historically evolved, stable community of people, based upon the common possession of four principal attributes, namely: a common language, a common territory, a common economic life, and a common psychological make-up manifesting itself in common specific features of national culture.”

In the US, these include internal colonies and captured peoples. In particular the US’s black population endure double and triple oppressions, facing mass incarceration, genocide at the hands of the police, unemployment, and dehumanization in the realm of American culture. The majority of the oppressed nations are workers themselves who inevitably find themselves on the forefront of revolutionary struggle. They must fight tooth and nail for their own liberation from this prisonhouse of nations. In order to win against such an enemy there has to be unity among the broader general working class as a whole. Within this working class there are also oppressed groups that do not constitute a nation, including ethnic groups, LGBTQ people, and women, all of whom face additional oppression stacked on top of their oppression as exploited workers. Revolutionary victory comes through the liberation of these oppressed groups, who share long-term interests with the majority of the US working class.

Leadership must be provided by a Maoist communist party. The capitalist state rules through repressive and violent means, such as the police, courts, and prisons; however its primary method of control comes in the form of its ideology. The ruling class distributes its ideology even among oppressed nations and oppressed groups in the form of education, advertisement, culture, and religion. This means that identity is not principal over class. Politics must be placed in command of all things, and only the revolutionary Maoist party can provide clear and correct political leadership. Right now there is no party that can rightly call itself a communist party, capable of establishing and wielding the great power of the people by building socialism and defending equality.

Only a socialist state in the form of working-class rule can address the needs of the people. Only a socialist state can guarantee that the people are fed, housed, educated, and clothed as well as guarantee that the masses have free time required to advance the revolution in the form of culture, creative expression, and development as human beings. Liberated people free of capitalist toil are alone capable of reaching their true potential.

Socialism itself is not the be-all, end-all goal of the communist revolutionary; it is only the transitional period in which the working class can break free of capitalist rule by suppressing the capitalist class as well as destroying the capitalists’ ideological, cultural, and economic influence, which inevitably outlives their role as a ruling class.

The establishment of socialism in the form of working-class rule does not conclude the class struggle—it intensifies it. History has proven that capitalism can restore itself from its deep roots even if we chop down the tree. The socialist period is defined by this class struggle, this march toward victory—the continuation and intensification of the class struggle under the revolutionary rule of the working class and their party. The party itself, by its existence, becomes the most likely place for the new capitalist class to emerge. The masses must be mobilized to defend the gains of the revolution and push it ever forward, defeating all those in the party who would seek to betray the revolution and the revolutionary people. Through the continuation of the revolution, capitalist restoration will be checked and defeated, in an ongoing, unceasing process of cultural revolution until we achieve communism, which is a classless and stateless society. This understanding is one of the most important aspects of Maoism and can never be under-emphasized.

## **2. The friends and enemies of the revolution**

The very first question posed by a revolutionary movement is, “Who are our friends? Who are our enemies?” How we answer this question means life or death for the revolutionary movement. The US is composed of many classes with various strata inside of each class. It is up to the revolutionaries to analyze each class and their class interests to determine their orientation toward revolution and ultimately where they will side in the long term. Each class is defined by their specific relationship to production. The economic situation is ever complex in an imperialist country such as the US, and correct understandings of how these classes relate to production as well as how they relate to each other are essential. The diverse range of sub-groups within the contending classes can nevertheless be understood as forming two basic antagonistic camps: the capitalist class and the working class. These two classes can never coexist in peace, as one is a tireless parasite on the other.

The capitalist ruling class owns everything: not only the means of producing what society needs to survive but also the means of distributing these goods and services, as well as the media and all major sources of information including social media. The rich own everything and we own nothing. The working class is forced to sell their time and labor in order to exist; we work only to live and live only to work, all the while creating value for the capitalist class. It is the value they take from our labor that creates the basic antagonistic contradiction between our classes. The capitalist class, in order to escape the brunt of these contradictions, has created elite sections of the working class who administer their interests—such people as highly paid laborers, managers, and intellectual laborers—who have been awarded certain benefits at the expense of the majority of workers. This higher section of workers face their own contradiction and the constant threat of being demoted back to the level of the rest of the workers. This section of the working class is always shrinking, and workers in this

section become ever more acute in their loyalty to one of the two antagonistic classes. There is no “middle class” in the true sense. Rather, there are workers who have struggled for or been awarded a place of relative security, and there are those who have sold out their class siblings in the interest of siding with the capitalist class.

The capitalist class like the working class is also divided. There are small businesses and huge corporations. There are those who rent out their meager property and those who own ever-increasing amounts of property. The vast majority of the wealth is owned by a small number of capitalist families, who, through their cartels and business connections, own many different branches of industry. This elite section of the capitalist class is sometimes inefficiently referred to as the 1%. It poses a great threat not only to the working class but even to other sections of the capitalist class. The role of the revolutionary communist is to exploit and widen these contradictions anywhere possible. Most of the population comes into direct conflict with the interest of the elite monopoly capitalists. Everyone from small or independent business owners, teachers, farmers, students, and mental laborers to the very poor among the working class—all stand to benefit from breaking the rule of the elite. Those who stand to benefit from the overthrow of the monopoly capitalists are our friends.

Any genuine analysis of class in the US must include understanding internal colonies within the US. This includes black people, Chicax people, Puerto Rican people, indigenous people, and the people of the Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa. The important role of these nations and peoples becomes clear in the fact that they experience both (a) the contradiction between the US working class and the US capitalist class and (b) the contradiction between the colonized people of the world and US imperialism. This struggle contains both the internal and external contradictions that the US working class and the workers of the world face. The right to self-determination of the oppressed nations up to the point of secession is essential to the establishment of the socialist state. Therefore we advocate the destruction of the US as we know it by breaking it into several smaller countries determined by the oppressed nations themselves. The right to self-determination of the oppressed nations means their right to secession.

### **3. “Racism” and patriarchy.**

Racism is the word used most often to describe what really should be called national chauvinism. National chauvinism divides the working class and in essence turns them against their own collective interests, objectively strengthening the ruling class. This is a form of ruling-class ideology that must be defeated outright in the interests of working-class power. White supremacist capitalism is the main culprit of all national chauvinism, and all white-supremacist thinking must be eradicated. The settler-colonial history of the US has resulted in the continuation of a settler mentality among

the white workers; they must be won over to the national liberation struggles on the basis of betraying their immediate, short-term interests in the colonial project and siding with the oppressed nations in the struggle for self-determination. This is in the long-term interest of the white working class as well, and cultivating this sentiment among the white working class is one of the tasks that must be taken up by white revolutionary communists. It is not enough to simply claim to be “anti-racist” while cashing in on the benefits of a racist society; genuine anti-racists must actively work to end white supremacy and break open the prisonhouse of nations.

Feminism should be understood as ideas that seek to disrupt and defeat the patriarchy that persists under capitalism. Patriarchy is intrinsically bound up in capitalist ideology and private property, and there can be no true feminism that is not rooted firmly in the working class. Women like men can be reactionary or revolutionary, capitalist or working-class, so feminism must also be partisan in this struggle, and only working-class feminism can be the weapon of oppressed women. Liberal capitalist feminism has achieved its goal of including capitalist-class women in the exploitation and oppression of working-class people, and it no longer serves any progressive function. At this point it can only serve ruling-class women against oppressed women.

Oppressed nations also contain within them sub-groups that face additional oppression: where black working-class men face a double oppression, black working-class women face a triple oppression. The liberation of working-class women generally is bound to the liberation of black women particularly. The liberation of one cannot occur without the liberation of the other. Oppressed nations and oppressed groups face stacked and overlapping oppression—which can be best defined as the combination of economic exploitation and lowered social status. Oppressed nations and oppressed groups face an intense combination of low-paying jobs and unequal pay for equal work. Women, which always includes trans women, also serve as a reserve labor pool, unemployed until cheap labor becomes needed in times of recession or war. Meanwhile, advertising in capitalist society perpetuates the submissive role of women as well as their commodification into a product, all while using women’s sexuality to sell more products.

The denigration and submission of women, a part of male supremacy, is a necessary part of the capitalist system and has a corrosive influence on the revolutionary movement itself. Male supremacy is a hindrance to the working class and materially serves the ruling class. Male supremacy and male chauvinism serve mainly the white men of the capitalist class and sometimes the elite strata of women in their keep.

Workers have no control over their own lives, but a deceptive feeling of actual power is sold to working-class men in the form of control over the conventional family and

sometimes other women in their lives. This illusion gives “meaning” to a meaningless existence, to a life they live in service to the capitalist class while having their labor stripped away from them. It is nothing but a poisoned carrot on a stick controlled by the class enemy. Women are treated like dogs, awarded to men the way a pet is given to an unruly child, reproducing class relationships in a microcosm. Working-class men have an inextricable interest in the liberation of women whether they understand this yet or not. Control over the women in their lives is not true power; true power is only possible when the people take power away from this system.

The struggle of working-class women is bound up in the struggle for socialist revolution. Since the revolutionary movement is tainted by male chauvinism, women have a struggle on two fronts. On one hand they must combat the patriarchy in society, and on the other hand they must combat the patriarchy in the revolutionary movement. Men cannot and have not accomplished this, and to attempt such without women in positions of leadership would only reproduce patriarchy further within the ranks of the revolution itself. The role of women in leadership is indispensable, and throughout the majority of revolutionary organizations in the US women are under-represented. This is the fault of male chauvinism going unchecked among our ranks, which at best deprives the struggle of more than half its most committed participants and at worst subjects them to assault and rape from those pigs and liars calling themselves comrades.

#### **4. What is the state?**

States have not always existed and hence will not always exist. Superstitions about the state persist in various revolutionary camps as well as popular culture. The idea of the state as always existing lends it an air of invincibility and a monolithic stature. Inversely, the superstition of the state as the root of all oppression lends it a boogeyman characteristic, allowing the neglect of the very real task at hand. Both types of superstition serve to make the masses submissive to the state. The state, like everything else, has a class character. Lenin understood the state as an armed and administrative wing of class rule by which one class suppresses another. States all over the world today exist to maintain capitalist-class rule. The existence of the state itself proves that the contradictions between the two main classes are in fact irresolvable and antagonistic to their core. In order for the state to exist, classes must exist, and classes do not just vanish once the existing state is smashed or replaced.

One of the functions the state uses to perpetuate itself is the illusion of mass participation. In a capitalist country this illusion most commonly happens in the form of elections. Elections are nothing but theater concealing capitalist-class rule: the ruling class uses elections to disguise the class character of the state and its role in service to the capitalist class. Elections never can and never will change which class is

in power. The only thing that changes is the appearance of the ruling class's representative and which capitalist-approved concessions are being made. The tone and style of capitalist representatives can vacillate and shift back and forth, but the rich will always rule the poor until capitalism is forcibly thrown out. It cannot be reformed or voted out.

The working class cannot just take over or infiltrate the existing state structures and institutions. Even their best representatives will only be met with military coups (provided they do actually stick to their word). The workers and their party must thoroughly smash the state and all of its institutions. The state must be completely destroyed and replaced by a new, fresh working-class state. If centralized power is not implemented immediately by workers via their party and the people's army, the deposed capitalist class will regain power without hesitation.

The existing rule of the capitalist class has created a toxic society, massive prison populations, unemployment, white supremacy, and backward nationalism. Capitalism breeds and reproduces an entire culture of dehumanization and self-deprecation—in a word, defeatism. It fosters a culture based on narrow self-interest, egotistical relationships—competition at all costs, where any cooperation is only determined by greater competition. This creates a disrespectful basis for all social relationships, between all people, relying on coercion instead of genuine respect and individual agency. In such conditions everyone is manipulated by profit motives and markets into isolated and alienated creatures. A by-product of this is depression and despair. The manipulation by profit results in human beings no longer being able to express their true selves, and all creativity is determined by what sells and what doesn't. In such conditions rebellion is the last pure act, the last real expression that we have at our disposal. Not determined by capitalism's interest, rebellion—fighting back, and celebrating that fight in the form of art and music—is in our own interest. It is not only correct to rebel, but it is a necessity to our survival.

The most concentrated form of working-class expression comes in the form of armed struggle. Such struggle exists to smash the existing state and the ruling class. The only way to get to the throat of the capitalist class is through the destruction of the state. There is no shortcut to this task and no way to circumvent it. The revolutionary organizations must remain steadfast in struggle alongside the masses of workers in all of our diversity. It is through struggle that all unity is earned. Not only must the working class struggle with itself but also with the revolutionary party. This process continues and unity increases among the friends of the revolution. The revolutionary must constantly struggle, not only with the backward ideas among the people but also against all self-interested, capitalist thinking. It is in this struggle that a genuine revolutionary culture will emerge and begin to replace the existing capitalist culture—especially in areas where we exert the most influence.

## **5. On communism**

We are not the past generations of US communists; our potential is greater because we are armed with an understanding of their efforts in both their successes and failures. Capitalism has advanced and dominates the world, and the need for revolution is more pressing now than ever. The equation is simple: if we do not kill capitalism, it will kill us and the planet. This new generation of rebels should summarize the experience of all those who struggled before us and learn from that history. However, we have something that the former generations of US communists lacked: a correct ideology, the guidance of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. It is principally Maoism, along with the understanding that it is universal, that gives us a sharp advantage over those who lacked this deep insight in the past and have steered off course.

In the communist society that we seek to help create, classes and the state will cease to exist. This does not mean that contradictions between people cease to exist but that they take on new forms and would be non-antagonistic, meaning we would have a peaceful society that could collectively work for real solutions, leaving systematic violent solutions a thing of the past. Throughout the socialist period of transition and the rule of the working class, the division of labor will be eroded and various still-persisting manifestations of capitalist social relationships will be combated, both preventing a return to the old ways and hastening the changes in society that will usher in the era of communism. However, to finally put down the gun we must first pick up the gun.

We do not understand communism as some desirable distant dream but instead as a necessity that many brave comrades have laid down their lives to achieve on a long and steady march. We continue that work. In the entire struggle it takes to get there we must always remember exactly what it is that we are fighting for and never forget for one moment how much the masses need such a society. Rosa Luxemburg once said there are only two paths, socialism or barbarism—and this is true. The socialist path leads to this communist society while the capitalist path is barbaric, and what's more this barbarism leads to ecological collapse, mass genocide, and potentially the end of the world. Only socialism can halt and reverse the devastation capitalism has wreaked on the environment. There can be no green capitalism because capitalism is profit-driven at all costs, while socialism is people-driven. For people to exist in harmony with the rest of life on earth, as they had for centuries before the invention of private property, we must establish a society based on common need and community. The current ecological situation merits a certain sense of urgency that has not been fully realized by past generations of communists.

## **6. Armed struggle and violence as the primary form of expression**

We are not reluctant to fight, but we must fight with full strength and capacity, which is achievable only through mass participation. Ability to fight is first determined by a willingness to fight. Without willingness, we accept the slavery, oppression, and exploitation guaranteed to us in this system. Without fighting, we have only earned being ruled over. There is no way out of capitalism except with the gun in hand. The capitalist class has its armed representatives in the form of the military and police as well as private armies who face even fewer restrictions. If the ruling capitalist class wields such armed forces, the working class must also arm. The class enemy forces this to be so.

The police emerged as slave-catchers and strikebreakers and have existed in this capacity ever since. They are the very first line of armed defense for the capitalist class. The police will become the first to do battle with the armed workers' movement, and only by armed victory over all the armed protectors of the capitalist state can the capitalist class be disarmed and tossed out. They started a war long ago, and the revolution aims to finish it.

Revolution and specifically organized armed revolution is a necessity. It is not just a question of saying what needs to be said but expressing it in the only effective way. We should be clear that any political strategy that does not seek to reach the level of armed struggle should be tossed aside. Nature, as well as human society, is violent. The process of change in all things is through rupture: the new breaking from the old, one thing dying as another is given life. Drastic social change is not exempt from this rule, and we communists should never mince words on this subject or lie to the masses of people.

Understanding the necessity of armed struggle, we must also understand that the revolution does not simply end after the seizing of state power. People power must be consciously maintained with the political rule of the working class over the capitalist class—the dictatorship of the proletariat, in other words. This working-class rule secures the transition to communism precisely by the suppression of antagonistic classes, who continue to exist and emerge even though they have been knocked down. Since the communist party is in the most advantageous role of leadership, the new capitalist class is most likely to re-emerge from within the party itself. In this position, they have the best opportunity to restore capitalism. This was a harsh lesson learned over the past failed attempts to develop a communist society. Their failures offer us greater understanding of both where the problems emerge and how to combat and defeat the problem of restoration. The only solution is that the masses be mobilized to knock down every capitalist that arises within our ranks at any point in our development. Through attacking bad elements within the party, the masses actually strengthen working-class rule and the dictatorship of the proletariat, through increasing its class character and purging it of its capitalist aberrations and corrupt

party officials, thus protecting and securing the rule of our class and pursuing the socialist path to communism.

The role of the party is to lead the masses of people to victory. The party cannot be dispensed with. This party must command the revolutionary people's army. The party can be thought of as the head: it must be healthy and connected to all of its limbs. The loss of any limb could result in death, and so the people's army, the people, and the united front must all be nurtured and protected. The party should be composed only of the most dedicated: those who are willing to give their whole life to the party and to the people. Braggarts and careerists with narrow self-interest will never put the party first, and if they are not checked they should quickly find themselves isolated.

## **7. Build the party**

History consistently proves that eruptions and rebellions will occur, sparked by the initiative of the masses themselves with no guidance from revolutionary leadership—but it also proves that these eruptions and rebellions by themselves are incapable of ousting the capitalist class and establishing working-class power. Human beings in all their diversity must be organized for victory. When we are swept up in movements that lack revolutionary leadership it is possible to ride a high tide for some time before the movement reaches its inevitable limits and those involved find themselves washed up ashore. Worse than the lack of leadership, however, is incorrect leadership—opportunists within the people's movement who seek only to capture moments of the people's outrage, dull them down, suffocate the energy, and commodify it into a marketable slogan in order to use it for their own capitalist motives, often to achieve electoral office or some other position of prestige in bourgeois society.

The current generation of rebels has witnessed several such movements come and go. Occupy Wall Street, for instance, wasted away the energy of a lot of young militants with its aimless and disorganized demands and hours of “consensus.” Or take the current example of the Black Lives Matter movement, which birthed official BLM organizations that use the rebellions as only a platform to advance their leaders so far into the capitalist political mire that they can become honored guests of war criminals like Hillary Clinton. These leaders in both cases do not care one bit for the masses of people, who are nothing but street theater extras in their spectacle to appeal to the oppressor class. These leaders have effectively served the ruling class by diverting the energy of the rebellions away from revolution and into the prison of reformism. Here smiles and handshakes are the course, having the same effect as a dagger in the hand of an assassin.

The initiative of the masses and their spontaneous rebellions are good things and must always be respected and advanced in a more revolutionary direction. These instances

of genuine rebellion and rebellious movements have a polarizing effect on US society, marking a sharp rise in both far-left and far-right politics. This, combined with an ever-increasing wage gap and a lowered living standard, increases the polarization between the haves (as well as those loyal to them) and the have-nots (as well as those loyal to them). These two forces are in constant contradiction, which will continue to erupt in mass working-class uprisings, movements, and protests. We are going to need a lot more than protesting to see any meaningful gains even in the short term.

The shortcomings, trappings, and limitations of these movements have also resulted in a drastic increase in young militants seeking genuine revolutionary ideas to help guide them out of the capitalist mire. We have witnessed a sharp rise in interest in Marxism, which has been gaining more traction over the last decade than was seen in the two decades before it. Protesting is one of two things: it is either a plea to the oppressor—which in all cases falls on deaf ears—or it is a display of organizational power, of people’s participation, which should be taken as a warning to those who fuck with the people. Protesting is nothing if it is not seen as a starting point for deeper revolutionary education and organizing. We can all get together and say we dislike something for the rest of our short lives, or we can get organized to physically stop the things we do not like—this is the difference between protest and resistance.

The revolutionary organization must always seek to transform protest into resistance. Only organized revolutionaries and ultimately the revolutionary party can break through the limitations of short-lived movements and forge them into a force for drastic and thorough revolutionary change—the creation of a new society. This new society will never peacefully develop of its own accord and requires conscious actors, agents, and partisans of the class struggle, who must emerge from the masses as leaders armed with experience and the science of revolution. With no such party in existence the principal task is building the party—a new revolutionary communist party. Movements on their own ebb and flow and mobilize many only to have participation and enthusiasm dwindle or fall off altogether. If these movements are to transcend their current limitations, revolutionary leadership must be provided, transforming these movements into revolutionary struggles. Such a party would by necessity have to be composed of committed, principled, and highly disciplined revolutionaries.

The new revolutionary communist party would emerge as a vanguard, and as soon as it becomes the vanguard party it will be immediately forced underground by the capitalist class and their armed protectors. There is little sense in creating many small arrogant organizations that refer to themselves as “communist parties” prematurely, with no real chance of becoming the vanguard party, a title earned only through the enthusiastic participation and support of the masses. It is an affront to the people to pretend that any such organization, revolutionary or not, can constitute such a force or

live up to the title of vanguard. We see this occurrence, commonplace among the US left, for what it is: treachery, and nothing but dangerous role-playing. If the party is doing its job and fulfilling its task in service to the people then it will immediately be banned and made illegal. Revolution is a criminal act in capitalist society. The fact that these self-proclaimed parties are legal is a disgrace to revolutionary traditions. We discourage following these false prophets into the mire of self-inflated cliques and encourage our supporters to take a modest and serious approach at developing a true communist party.

The party will only be successful when it enjoys the broad support of the masses—when it is in essence the people’s revolutionary party. In order to establish such a party the masses themselves must be revolutionary. This is not the case right now—far from it. The current stage of party-building involves preparing the masses as revolutionaries as well as spreading and increasing the revolutionary initiative among the masses themselves. This cannot be skipped and is only accomplished through mass work. The revolutionary party will emerge through the revolutionary masses to lead their fight against this system, and any shortcut will only result in careerist opportunism that sells out the people and prolongs the ability of self-interested elitists to pose as revolutionaries while neglecting the task at hand.

These so-called revolutionaries in the US communist movement today stand in disunity, for very good reason. They will, on occasion, blame the disunity they have earned for the shortcomings in this struggle. The conditions we face are such that even if all the self-proclaimed communists in this country were to achieve iron unity tomorrow they would still fail to constitute a revolutionary party, and they would still be a small and arrogant clique of poseurs who profess to hold all the answers. It is an error to focus on the incestuous left and their fragile egos. The correct strategy for us is to stop wasting time on the concept of “left unity.” And while we must continue to struggle for unity with all those we can unite with, making all alliances that weaken the enemy and strengthen the revolutionary cause, we would be fools to think that this is exclusively the “left.” We must orient ourselves toward the masses of people instead of toward the small revisionist cliques that already exist. It is through struggling to unite with the people that mass members become communist leaders and carry on our work. This is what we mean by struggling to unite and building the revolutionary masses. With mass support and mass participation, the preexisting left will be won over to our side or die against us, and there are only those two options.

We do not profess to hold all the answers and can only seek to apply our limited experience and understanding to begin trying modestly to answer a few pressing questions we face. In light of the lack of an actually-existing communist party based in the working class and their struggles and the fact that there is no existing effort that we see holding much promise to emerge as such a party, we face a peculiar set of

contradictions. The party we seek will not emerge organically or otherwise from just the day-to-day struggle of the masses, and we do not have much time to wait around. If the current amount of work being put toward this effort by the few genuine revolutionaries of this country is not increased drastically, and without much more mass participation, it could take decades or more to establish a party. We lack their tortoise patience. So how should we carry out this task of party-building?

### **8. The revolutionary collective: Build up the Red Guards!**

We have but a modest start and have only just begun to earn a sympathetic ear from comrades in this struggle; however, we do have some advice for our readers. We wholeheartedly encourage our supporters and all individuals with a revolutionary perspective across the country to establish small revolutionary collectives. These collectives, or Red Guards, should be composed of cadres who seek to attain high levels of principle and discipline. They should love the masses as if their own lives depended on it—because they do. These Red Guards organizations can launch or join revolutionary mass organizations and help to guide them, to orient them toward the immediate needs of the people in a given trench of combat. Cadres must accept collective discipline and no longer function as individuals. To do this they must carry out criticism/self-criticism, always being open to improving the quality and quantity of their work. These cadres should apply the most advanced revolutionary concepts to their common work. These concepts should be based on the science of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, the understanding of Maoism as the third and highest stage of Marxism—not just the contemporary name for Marxism but an all-around advancement.

Red Guards should seek to apply the same high level of principles to their personal lives as they do to their political and mass work; there should be no clear distinction between the personal and the political. Cadre should serve as an example of what it means to be a servant of the people and an upright example of a communist life. Collectives should remain autonomous of each other at the current stage; however, by maintaining and establishing supportive relationships between Red Guards collectives, we can all help each other to advance the struggle and better our work.

The most advanced revolutionary leaders will be those who have the most to fight for. This means that major leadership will emerge from oppressed nations and oppressed groups. All Red Guards collectives have to be multinational organizations, with a high level of women's and non-men's participation. White members should be considered on the basis of betraying their short-term national interest for their long-term interest as internationalists. Priority should be given to the rectification of past errors of the US communist movement by consciously developing women and non-men comrades

as leaders. Women hold up more than half the sky and should constitute at least half of the revolutionary movement, and this should be reflected in leadership.

The role of the white revolutionary is the integration into or return to white working-class communities and neighborhoods to work among the white masses, drawing the white workers away from white nationalism, patriotism, and their end result—fascism. These white comrades must wage tireless and arduous struggles; they must rely on intense agitation and propaganda efforts combined with political education in key trenches of ideological combat.

The formation of Red Guards collectives and the cooperation and communication between them will serve as the basis for future party-building efforts. Relying only on individual members scattered about mass organizations or college campuses is not a winning strategy. These individuals just operating loosely in movements lack the ability to develop as genuine communists on their own. Even when connected to a regional or countrywide pre-party organization or committee, they lack the voting power and influence enjoyed by collectives in the same committee. This has resulted in the rise of independent kingdoms or cliques that have derailed and set back the party-building efforts and allowed undue power to bad leadership. By allowing members of such a committee to function as lone members in a given locality, lacking the benefit of criticism/self-criticism practiced with local comrades, they lose all ability to line struggle with the larger groups elsewhere, cannot transform or correct their own errors, and more importantly cannot challenge or defeat the errors of the committee as a whole. This bad strategy produces both rightist and ultra-“leftist” errors and deviations. It should be defeated in form as the format for revisionism and understood as a manifestation of self-interested cliques. This was one of the major contradictions faced by the former Liaison Committee for a New Communist Party, which led up to their weak position and allowed genuine revolutionaries to topple them.

## **9. Organization principles**

All Red Guards collectives must serve the people. Without mass work there can be no right to refer to oneself as a communist, let alone a Red Guard. Mass work puts the cadres among the people and allows them to develop and be kept on track by the conscious application of the method summed up by “from the masses, to the masses.” Without being engaged in struggles among the people in service to the people, the organization becomes detached and stagnant—or worse, turns into its opposite.

This requires first linking up with the masses where the masses are at, both physically and ideologically. For revolutionaries to accomplish this first step, they must focus on both the immediate and long-term interests of the people, addressing to the needs of

the people created by the violent inefficiencies of capitalism. Anywhere the system has neglected the people there should be placed a revolutionary nurturing of the people.

The revolutionary organization is responsible for the creation of structures within the community that can establish a sort of dual power within the life of the community. This is most often done in the form of material support—providing the basic goods and service denied to the people by the system, free of charge. This also includes continued political education that cannot be neglected or postponed. Political education and material support are two parts of a whole; one without the other becomes empty and useless. When the two are merged they form what we call Serve the People (STP) programs, which will be discussed in another section in more detail.

Through fighting alongside the people for better conditions, in the interest of their ability to participate as active agents in changing the world, we must continually help advance the masses' theoretical understanding. This is accomplished by sharpening the contradictions between the people and their enemies. This also requires resolving the non-antagonistic contradictions that emerge between the people themselves or between the people and the revolutionary organization. This is the process of struggle that allows unity to be won. Through this increasing unity, the cadre organization should consciously advance the mass struggles to higher levels, and in the process they must discover and train revolutionaries from the masses into communist revolutionaries, replacing lost or corrupted cadres within the collective. With increased quality and quantity, the collective becomes stronger and more capable of advancing the masses.

All Red Guards collectives have to be guided by Maoism, which is never to be understood as an unchanging doctrine, dogma, or blueprint that must be followed to the letter in all cases. Maoism must be understood as a guideline to our work, as a living, developing, and growing science. This developing body of thought proven and tested in the class struggle can never at any point be misunderstood as completed or finalized. It is necessary to apply the universal truths contained in Maoism to the specific conditions collectives face in any given trench of combat. This is the role of a guiding ideology and its creative application.

Red Guards collectives should be composed of relatively small numbers of disciplined and advanced revolutionaries, at all times subordinating their personal interests to that of the collective. All members should be enthusiastic in their work and capable of carrying out difficult tasks and decisions without gripe. Smaller collectives with a minimum of three to six advanced members are desirable. It is better for the new collectives to be small and highly dedicated, because it is more dangerous to the

collective and to the movement to have large groups of undisciplined members who are lazy, unprincipled, or prone to compromising security.

Each revolutionary Red Guards collective should be committed to study and analysis. They should be engaged in continuous study of Maoism and the history of the class struggle, the study of both theory and practice. These studies should also focus on the history and experience of the working class of their city or specific trench of combat. The focus of this study should be in learning how to apply the universal concepts to the specific conditions the collective faces. The collective must be able to analyze conditions: the conditions of the masses, their level of consciousness and resistance, and the influence of other classes and the whole of the class struggle in various locations. Study should be taken on collectively and not left to the discretion or initiative of individual members. Study should be carried out according to the needs of the collective as a whole and the focus kept on making lessons accessible to average people from our class who have not received the best educations from the enemy system.

Each Red Guards collective should seek to put their theory into practice, with the understanding that our practice is guided by revolutionary theory and that it is our practice that informs our theory and allows it to be corrected and developed. The collective should formulate tactics for engaging in daily struggles. A strategy must be developed to place all of these daily struggles in an overall revolutionary context. Every activity should serve and be oriented toward the revolutionary interest and participation of the masses. It is only through the combining of our intellectual activity with physical action that we can make the masses into revolutionary masses. The collective should never function only as a book club or think tank; each member must be engaged with practical action.

Every Red Guards collective should remain in close communication with each other and struggle to support each other where possible. The collectives should exchange information on a regular basis and share experience in the form of summations. Every revolutionary collective must summarize their work to the benefit of the revolutionary movement as a whole. The summations should be honest and prepared in a plain and simple language accessible to the masses. Regular discussions should take place between collectives or their representative leaders. These discussions should be focused on line struggle and a desire for principled unity. All collectives must be genuinely seeking criticism of their work from comrades in other collectives and be willing to own, self-criticize on, and struggle to correct their errors and mistakes. Wherever it is possible collectives should seek joint political activity by region. All collectives must work together, seeking to implement democratic centralism. The collectives must assist each other in developing correct political lines and stick to this principle instead of splitting over issues that can be corrected.

It should be the task of every Red Guards collective to remain staunch anti-revisionists and always and everywhere challenge capitalist ideology that presents itself as Marxist. Collectives should be unafraid to challenge revisionism, especially when it emerges in Maoist ranks, understanding that Maoism is not exempt from turning into revisionism. It must be understood that avoiding revisionism requires not only having a correct line but also carrying out the correct line correctly.

Establishing democratic centralism is the goal, and it should define our intended structural relations between collectives. To do this correctly every comrade should befriend the masses and be able to integrate into mass movements and spaces frequented by workers. All cadres should be able to work in harmony with others outside of the collective. They should be consciously and from the start combating all manifestations of individualism, inflated egos, and cliquishness. By putting the collective first without neglecting our friends in the movement and among the masses, we can then implement democratic centralism within each collective as a step toward all collectives adhering to democratic centralism. We must start with the understanding that any comrade who has made mistakes should be persuaded in order to help them change, instead of coerced. Comrades should be given the chance to start fresh rather than be excluded unless they are incorrigible, in which case they cease to remain comrades.

Democracy should correlate with centralism as two opposites within a whole. Due emphases must be given to both aspects so that things do not become imbalanced and give rise to deviations. The individual must be subordinate to the organization, the minority subordinate to the majority, the whole organization subordinate to leadership. Orders should be obeyed and tasks carried out. Nothing should be taken from the masses. All that we use or rely on should be paid for fairly. Materials and funds raised should be turned in promptly. Cadres should be expected to be polite, to pay for everything they use, return everything borrowed, fix or pay for anything damaged that belongs to the people, refrain from pointless quarrels and nonrevolutionary violence, never take liberties with the affections of others, and not poorly treat even our opponents. Under this method of organization, comrades should enjoy extensive democracy and at the same time be subject to strict discipline. Without democracy we fall into acting as ruled subjects or bosses—becoming either know-nothings who need constant direction and to have their hands held on even the smallest task or know-it-alls who think they have the right to mistreat comrades—and without discipline we slip into a failed group of lazy, ineffective revolutionary poseurs and false prophets.

We invite you to struggle alongside us as we commit to growing among the people and building the party that will emerge to take power in this country. We invite all who seek to participate in revolution to engage with us on this project so that by

working with you we can better our own work. It is only through such struggles that we have a chance at anything other than death and slavery.

## **Part 2. Defend Maoism, uphold the banner of revolution**

### **Introduction**

Present-day capitalism-imperialism, like the working class and the monopoly class, is also divided. Since the world is carved up between capitalist powers and all capitalists must compete for resources and cheap labor, it follows that imperialism itself will have a dual character and that rival imperialists will do geopolitical battle for the spoils of the oppressed nations. There is US-European imperialism on one end, and on the contending end there is Chinese and Russian imperialism, with US imperialism being the primary threat to the world today as China and Russia bloc up to form a serious contender. It is inevitable that these imperialist powers come into conflict with each other while collaborating at other times, from propping up puppet leaders, as US imperialism does the world over, to backing up compradors like the Assad regime the way Russian imperialism has done. No matter the imperialist force, when imperialists wage wars and proxy wars it is the people of the oppressed nations who lose the most, making the principal contradiction in the world today that between the oppressed nations and imperialism.

The first victims abroad of US imperialism were black people who were kidnapped from Africa and forced to work as slaves in the interest of maintaining and building the settler-colonial project of the US. In order for imperialism to be defeated the black nation achieve liberation. The national liberation struggle of black people constitutes a threat of the greatest magnitude not only to US imperialism but also to the whole settler-colonial project. Additionally, since most black people are also working-class, they constitute an advanced component of the working-class struggle as a whole. Since the black nation embodies both sets of contradictions, black resistance is the fight against both internal and external imperialism, sharing common struggles with peoples of nations living under the jackboot of imperialism. Black power is anti-imperialism!

Without a vanguard party there will be no revolution. At this present historical moment there is no true communist party. Small collectives, “communes,” and workers alone are not able to organize the wholesale overthrow of the state and the advanced capitalist-imperialist system that it maintains. Human history has not seen the smashing of the state without such a party at the forefront; it is up to us all to take the project of party-building seriously.

Without a correct and tested guiding ideology there will be no party. Marxism lived on through Leninism and into Maoism—the guiding ideology of the world revolutionary movement today is MLM. MLM is both a continuation of and a rupture with Marxism-Leninism (ML) of the forgone era. It is the living science developed through class struggle that alone can defeat the advanced modern imperialist enemy. All revolutionary communists who seek to organize for power should study and adopt MLM instead of clinging to nostalgia for a past that has degenerated into dogma in the present. Our party must be a revolutionary Maoist communist party.

Revisionism is the enemy. It is capitalist ideology that masks itself as communist ideology. It is capitalist practice calling itself communist practice. It is a false red flag going to battle against the people's red flag. Revisionism comes in many variants but ultimately it is capitalists pretending that they are communists. These dogs have done more for dealing death blows than the external capitalists ever could have. It is internal threats that are more dangerous than external ones. Revisionism is an internal threat to our movement and must be combated non-stop. As long as classes exist they will contend for power, and as long as class struggle exists revisionists will exist and we must fight them. Within a communist party two lines will emerge. One will inevitably represent a bourgeois line and the other a proletarian line—one a revisionist line, the other a communist line.

The vile revisionists in power have degraded and destroyed every socialist project to date. As China became one of the best business partners of US imperialism after capitalist restoration starting in 1976, they have managed through sweatshop state capitalism to develop into a contending imperialist power. The revisionists and social-imperialists of the former Soviet Union destroyed the first socialist state in history by 1956 and over time dropped all pretense of “socialism” and dissolved altogether in 1991.

These changes have given the capitalist powers of the West a false sense of ease. The western capitalist proclaims the end of history, the final triumph over “communism.” It was not communists nor socialism that crumbled with the decrepit vile beast that was the former Soviet Union—it was revisionism that just took off its mask and swapped bureaucratic capitalist-class representatives in the “Communist” Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) for more honest scoundrels who no longer (in most cases) pretend to be socialists. This renders the capitalist cheers and jeers false and hollow and makes their end-of-history myth nothing but self-deception. Capitalism never beat communism. The capitalists who arose within the communist parties in both cases helped to restore capitalism. That is not due either to the great strength of capitalism nor is it due to some flaw in communism, which as a mode of production has never existed. The despicable fate of revisionism is not the fault of genuine revolutionary communists.

## 1. The revisionists

There are no socialist states existing in the world today. All states proclaiming themselves to be socialist are in reality capitalist states. From welfare states on life support like Cuba, to isolated militarist states like the DPRK (North Korea), to imperialist monsters like China; any claim to actually-existing socialism is just narrow-minded apologetics for capitalism that wears a mask and flies a red flag. Mao (when referring to arch-revisionist bastard Deng Xiaoping) said that Deng could not tell the difference between Marxism and imperialism. The same can be said for every supporter of the myth of “actually-existing socialism.”

Although the first revisionism to arise in history was all about abandoning the armed struggle and focusing on participating in electoral “democracy” as a means of making “revolution,” revisionism did not stop there; it morphed over time into the revisionism of today, which we call modern revisionism. There are revisionists in power in the above-mentioned state-capitalist countries and there are also revisionists in the waiting who hope to sell out the revolutionary movement as soon as they get the chance. The revisionists in the US communist movement come in a few main types. There are those who simply have not developed a firm proletarian theoretical base and genuinely have not developed enough to have a deeper understanding of these questions—comrades who can be reached and must be patiently corrected. The second type is the committed, diehard revisionists, who either exist as active enemies or lie in wait to do so. This type will not be convinced. They, like their master Deng, are dyed in the wool. They are the enemy, and we can make no mistake on this question. While both of these types pose a danger by the propagation of lies, one is reachable and the other is not. The diehard revisionists will most likely show themselves by working against revolutionary communist organizers and persistently propagating revisionism.

Furthermore, revisionism will manifest itself even in the best of revolutionary collectives. It is inevitable that self-interest, right- and “left”-opportunism, and liberalism in general will crop up in the organization. These must be continuously worked out of, and struggle must take place.

Mechanical materialists cannot comprehend the Marxist method of dialectical materialism, and to them one thing rigidly means another every time with no possible alternative. These people see anything that opposes US imperialism as progressive, good, or even socialist. While the opposition to US imperialism is good and correct and any oppressed nation should be defended against the threat of imperialism in general, a false “anti-imperialist” stance is taken in the form of mechanical materialist support for and denial of other imperialisms. You cannot be an anti-imperialist and at the same time be a running dog for Russian or Chinese imperialism. The mechanical materialist in their narrow pig thinking denounces or ignores communist struggles

while extending their support to anti-communist criminals like the leaders of Iran, who tortured, imprisoned, exiled, and murdered that nation's communists—communists who fought tirelessly against the shah. If they are intent on carrying out their line of thinking to its practical conclusion, these types of “comrades” are only a liability. Mechanical thinking results in an elitist regard for the masses as ignorant and results in a lack of any ability to organize a mass base among the people.

There is of course also no shortage of liberals who will call themselves “communists,” who are different from comrades who just make the occasional liberal error. These types of revisionists usually cowardly side outright with US imperialism. These liberals turn squeamish at the very thought of revolution and go on blissfully ignoring the armed struggles of the oppressed nations. Their solidarity is contingent on one's domestic, servile, and toothless docility. They insist we tail the masses, stifling their energy and condemning their mass initiative. They demand that revolutionaries “wait for the right conditions” and use this as an excuse to do nothing but run doomed candidates in bourgeois elections. These types are hopeless and have already been trashed by history.

For holding these positions we will no doubt receive allegations from the mechanical materialists that we are engaging in “Trotskyism,” while in reality the majority of US Trotskyite organizations pander to the same set of politics and have their own mechanical materialists defending Russian and Chinese imperialism, from the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) to the crypto-fascist Workers World Party (WWP). Lots of Trots agree with the dogmatic-revisionist Marxist-Leninists on both support for alternative-imperialism and “actually-existing socialism,” so we recommend they instead examine the positions that have found them in the largest Trotskyite camp.

The revisionist movement also accepts and contains former Maoists, who pretend to have thought their way past the class struggle. This results in everything from Third-Worldist delusions to Avakianist New Synthesis drivel. These types of revisionists think they represent an ideology that has outmoded MLM despite having never proved a basis for their theories by implementing them in practical armed struggle. Maoism constitutes a third and higher stage of Marxism because it has been proven true in the battlefields of world socialist revolution. Correct ideas do not come from the mind of sellouts tucked away on Ivy League campuses (where the theory calling itself Third-Worldism originates), nor do they come from the minds of “great geniuses.” These ideas will never be capable of leading a revolutionary movement here or elsewhere. They are stillborn ideas that can only mislead and divide.

The US MLM movement has not managed to unite in any real sense, and so unity is an ongoing process. We identify this process as a two-line struggle between left and

right, in which correct lines will emerge and unity will become possible. For this to happen all MLM organizations must overcome their rightist thinking and bad practices that prevent unity from occurring. Some “Maoists” still narrowly see Maoism as just the development of Marxism-Leninism, or worse yet just the contemporary name for ML. This is a rightist way of thinking that corrupts the best aspects of Maoist ideology into nothing but a name. We hold that it is the rupture with ML that constitutes the greatest accomplishments of Maoism and that it is principally Maoism that guides us on the revolutionary path. We hold that the lessons of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution must be upheld at every moment and at all levels of struggle, and that all who can rightly call themselves communists lead principled revolutionary lives and always seek to combat bourgeois interpersonal relationships; that there is no clear demarcating line between cadres’ personal lives, their mass work, and their political work; that one does not clock out from being a Maoist and must embody Maoist principles at all times. We hold that bad gender practice is not acceptable for Maoists and that rectifying this should be given the utmost priority, without delay, excuses, or liberalism. At some point even the best revolutionaries are susceptible to death from sugarcoated bullets, and we warn that this death can strike in our infancy. Worse yet is that these sugarcoated bullets are fired daily, so we advise that the only defense against them is deep and thoroughgoing self-criticism. A large part of the Maoist movement in the US has yet to adopt correct practice in the way of self-criticism. Unity is always conditional and it depends on willingness to accept criticism, make self-criticisms, and openly accept and welcome two-line struggle.

## **2. Our greatest teachers**

Karl Marx first developed the scientific approach to revolution. This is a great historical accomplishment that has provided us with a philosophy that is both true and completely partisan in service of our class interests. Marxist thought served as a radical rupture with all conventional thinking in the fields of political economy, philosophy, and class struggle. Marxism is also a science because it serves the march of history; the aims of our class are in accord with the evolution of human society, objective of human beings’ will.

Friedrich Engels supported Marx both with theoretical contributions and directly with material support. He enriched the scientific approach of Marxism and helped it develop. He taught Marxism tirelessly with true commitment and fought physically for its concepts in the progressive bourgeois revolutions of the period. Without Engels there would be no Marxism.

V. I. Lenin contributed so vastly to the whole body of Marxism that his teachings constituted a new and higher stage—the second stage. Lenin led the first struggle against revisionism and understood and theorized the development of capitalism to its

highest and final stage: imperialism. He proved that the world was divided among a handful of imperialist powers that subjugate and plunder the rest of the world. Lenin advanced the concept of capturing power by developing the vanguard party, which made proletarian revolution possible via the party of a new type. Most crucial of all Lenin's contributions (which are far too many to list) is that he put Marxist theory into practice and led the first victorious working-class revolution. Seizing and consolidating power brought the class struggle to a whole new level, furthering the communist revolution throughout the world through the formation of the Third International, or the communist international.

J. V. Stalin defended the proletarian revolution led by Lenin in a fight against revisionists from within as well as against imperialist invaders. Stalin correctly synthesized Marxism into Marxism-Leninism, which was the guiding ideology of its time on the forefront of world socialist revolution. Stalin led the construction of the first socialist state with no preexisting historical examples. He carried out the ending of the New Economic Program, which was state capitalism, and industrialized the country. Most important among Stalin's many contributions was his leadership in the defeat of German fascism and the triumph over Nazism. By uniting the world revolutionary movement under the guidance of ML, Stalin successfully led socialism through its darkest hour. Stalin made many mistakes along the way, which were criticized and corrected by Mao Zedong. There are those who call us "Stalinists," and we reject this term on the basis that Stalin did not develop the overall science of Marxism to a new and higher stage. However, Stalin provided many crucial theoretical insights, such as on the national and colonial questions and what constitutes a nation. In practice Stalin faithfully served his class and protected and defended Lenin both ideologically and physically during Lenin's lifetime. Stalin carried on Lenin's great work after his death. Without Stalin there would be no Leninism. While we too must be critical of Stalin's major errors in leadership we must never denounce his contributions. To do so would be to turn our backs on the revolutionary cause. We instead take the allegations of "Stalinism" as a compliment, for it is Stalin who serves as the bridge between Lenin and Mao.

Mao Zedong, like Lenin, developed the whole body of Marxist thought—this time to the third and highest stage. Mao's contribution to Marxist philosophy was understanding and theorizing the law of contradiction as the fundamental universal law—that all unity is conditional and temporary and that the struggle of opposites is universal and absolute. This developed the understanding of dialectical materialism to a new level. Masterfully applying dialectical materialism and delivering Marxist philosophy to the masses of people. Mao correctly taught that "political power grows from the barrel of a gun," which holds revolutionary violence as principal over any

illusions of peaceful transition to socialism, stating that armed struggle is the only road to revolution.

Mao comprehensively developed guerrilla warfare into the theory of protracted people's war (PPW). This is the military science of the proletariat. Mao taught and proved that it is people and not weapons that are primary; that with the support and will of the people, a poorly armed people's army can conquer superior military forces; that victory comes from unleashing and relying on the vast majority of people; that the people's army must maintain a high level of theoretical understanding and be politicized servants of the people, struggling and working alongside them. Mao taught that this is possible through conquering base areas that serve as a precursor to socialist society, and that these base areas develop a revolutionary culture to further the goal of class warfare. Mao taught that the party should command the gun and that the gun should never be allowed to command the party, placing the party as the vehicle capable of guiding and leading the revolutionary war. The central task of the revolution is the seizure of power by means of revolutionary violence.

Mao solved the questions Marxism had previously been unable to. He successfully led the revolution in a country dominated by imperialism by mobilizing the peasantry, under the leadership of the proletariat with the support of both the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie, establishing New Democracy and answering the question of how to develop socialism in semi-feudal nations.

Mao constantly maintained the centrality of the masses in human history, teaching that matter can be transformed into consciousness and consciousness into matter. It was this understanding that led to Mao's greatest contribution of all: how to combat capitalist restoration arising within the communist party itself. Mao launched and led the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR), which is the continuation of socialist revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The GPCR was, and is still to this day, the highest point in human history, where the workers themselves had the most power through targeting revisionists in the state and strengthening the class character of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Mao unleashed the masses of people to steer the socialist revolution in a march toward communism. The GPCR combated the old bourgeois ideology that still persisted in socialist society while also strengthening and developing the communist aspects of the economic base.

Mao understood socialism as the lowest stage of communism, where the old society gives way to the new. Socialism is a transitional period under the dictatorship of the proletariat, where the class struggle intensifies and becomes more acute. Through the suppression of the bourgeoisie and all bourgeois ideology, focusing on the relations of production over the productive forces, Mao taught that socialist progress can be charted and that it is a winding road with twists, turns, and setbacks but that we must

march ever forward. This advanced the realm of Marxist political economy by understanding and developing the political economy of socialism, identifying and targeting the areas where capitalist relationships emerge and give birth to the new capitalist class within the communist party itself. The contributions of Mao could fill volumes, standing far above any other.

Abimael Guzman, otherwise known as Chairman Gonzalo, was the leader of the Communist Party of Peru as well as the leader of the Peruvian PPW. It was Chairman Gonzalo who first synthesized Maoism into the third and higher stage. During the arduous struggle in Peru, Gonzalo proved the universality of Maoism in practice and developed MLM from the old understanding of ML–Mao Zedong Thought. This was a major contribution to the world revolutionary situation, of which the PCP was the guiding light. The Peruvian PPW was launched at a time when socialism was on the decline and there were no existing socialist states to offer patronage or support. The PPW was also launched in an “open democracy,” breaking fully with the revisionist lie that armed struggle cannot occur when the people have voting rights. It was in this tireless struggle against both revisionism and imperialism that Maoism grew into its full being in the mountains of Peru. This is our Maoism, and it would not be possible without the teachings and leadership of Chairman Gonzalo.

Of these six great teachers only three heads stand above all, offering us the theoretical basis of our revolutionary ideology: Marx, Lenin, and Mao. Human history is made by many, and it was through the correct understanding and study of the many that Marx, Lenin, and Mao were able to produce the weapon of ideology that is the invincible science of revolution—Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

### **3. Owning our mistakes and summing up our successes**

The class struggle continues and the communist movement offers it the most scientific guidance to this day. As with any scientific development there will be failed experiments. These failures, although inevitable, are not objective failures that mean that “communism has failed.” On the contrary communism has been a success in pushing the class struggle forward to its final conclusion. In order for the science of revolution not to degrade into a historical society or a stale dogma it must constantly criticize itself. Marxism teaches that we must be critics of all things in existence, that nothing is beyond criticism and hence nothing is “perfect.” It is precisely the reiterative process of criticism and rectification that allows our ideology to live and to grow. Its utility is only in service to our class in the war against our class enemy. We build then on the basis of our furthest success—our best failed attempts. It is foolish to throw out the good with the bad and to pretend we can dispense with the lessons earned with the blood of our comrades. It is worse to be opportunistic with communist history and distance ourselves from our mistakes to the point where we take credit

only for certain bits. If we are communists then we are communists who have made many great accomplishments and many debilitating setbacks that extend far through history beyond our small organizational reach. We must remain Marxists when accounting for the whole nuanced history of the revolutionary movement and the theories that it has produced, applying those theories to our practice and improving both in their relationship to one another. We must oppose both dogmatic anti-Marxist thinking and egotist individualism that pompously proclaims it has outdone Marxism without offering concrete historical proof. We must develop MLM through its application to our specific conditions in the belly of the US imperialist beast.

The running dogs of revisionism who have gone unchecked cannot live up to this principle. They are forced by their existence as servants of capitalism to pander to their master's narrative and find themselves discredited. One of our errors is the delusion that there can ever exist anything more than temporary, tactical unity with any of them, leading to a failure to sufficiently challenge these crude and destructive cliques.

As mentioned, mechanical materialists (among the left referred to as "tankies") as well as their Trotskyite counterparts are but two sides of the same coin in the pocket of one capitalist or another. They believe that they appeal to the people by appealing to imperialism. Right-Trots like the Marcyite variety and left-Trots like the Spart variety as well as dogmatic MLs only serve as wreckers or movement parasites that lack the far-sighted faith in the people that would allow them to offer any revolutionary course. They wear the name of "communist" vulgarly and at the expense of real mass work. In the long term they inevitably strike the revolution and remain the faithful dogs of imperialism that they are. Their ideology exists to provide ammunition for the capitalists who need "communist" sources to give their fantasy some credibility.

These false communists cannot sum up their successes and failures let alone the successes and failures of the communist movement. Instead they must cling to their own delusional fantasy that has left them rotting, trapped in a time when their ideology had some function in service of the people; that time has long since passed. All the world over, their time has come; they must step aside or side with the enemy. We must not waste our effort seeking their approval as comrades but must prove our ideology in practice, in which case the best will be won over while the committed running dogs will be put down.

#### **4. Capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union and China**

Partly due to Stalin's errors, the masses did not mobilize to target revisionists, allowing bastards like Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and their crews to slip by. Khrushchev

used some of the legitimate errors of Stalin as well as a lot of fabricated fantasy to implement “de-Stalinization,” which was a code word for legitimizing capitalist restoration and capitalist social relationships. This process allowed him to reign as chief capitalist in the communist party and push forward revisionist conceptions such as “peaceful transition” and worse yet “peaceful coexistence,” which all amounted to siding against the workers of both the USSR and the world. He proceeded to purge the party of its revolutionaries and to suppress the revolutionary masses who had struggled so hard for the gains of socialism. By 1956 the project of capitalist restoration was in full swing, and by the time Brezhnev took power he was able to transform revisionism into armed revisionism, by reforming certain aspects of “Stalinism” and combining them with the revisionist project started by Khrushchev, in effect turning the new state capitalism into Soviet social-imperialism (socialism in name, but imperialism in deed). Through this the USSR became the second leading imperialist power and the second greatest threat to the world’s people, following in the footsteps of US imperialism and only coming into conflict with it when there was little other option. The two imperialist powers carved up the world map, leaving the People’s Republic of China and Albania as the two last existing socialist states.

The restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union as well as their role as competing imperialists constituted an irresolvable contradiction between them and genuine revolutionaries in the Communist Party of China (sometimes called the CCP), led by Mao Zedong. This was the catalyst to one of the most important line struggles in socialist history, where the left (the revolutionaries led by Mao) did battle with the right (the revisionists led by Khrushchev) in what became known as the Great Debate and ultimately the Sino-Soviet split. It became apparent to the revolutionaries in the CCP that if not guarded against, the same fate would confront China that overcame the USSR, and capitalism could be restored in China relatively quickly.

This understanding helped to launch the GPCR, which was intense class struggle raging for ten years against the Chinese revisionists as well as the deposed capitalist class. Rightists who placed economic interests over social interests were ousted from power and denounced. Although we cannot cover all the twists and turns of the GPCR in this document, we must discuss it further and encourage our readers to continue researching it on their own. Eventually the second leading capitalist in the CCP, Deng Xiaoping, was able to consolidate his control over rightists and centrists in the party. This constituted a capitalist headquarters within the party, and it established control over the foreign policy and significant influence over the People’s Liberation Army. This capitalist HQ relied on intellectuals, managers, and corrupt officials and party cadres to extend its reach and influence in the country, constituting the social base for capitalist restoration. They went against Mao in deed but still professed allegiance in name. The rightists also fought among themselves, and in spite of holding the same

positions, they labeled would-be assassin Lin Biao as an “ultra-leftist” while Lin was in reality a rightist-militarist who like them sought to end the GPCR and focus on production at the expense of the workers. When Lin was defeated, the generals loyal to him had to be removed and Deng and crew took advantage of the situation by placing their men in key military positions.

The left continued to do battle with the right, which was increasing in strength. Shortly after the death of Mao, in spite of being denounced a second time Deng was able to command the loyalty of centrists in the party and facilitate a coup that resulted in the arrest of Mao’s four greatest supporters and leaders of the Shanghai commune, Ching, Chiang, Yao, and Wang, referred to by the capitalist HQ as the “Gang of Four.” This so-called gang was really the revolutionary leadership that represented Mao’s line and sought to continue the revolution to its conclusion. Mao’s wife, Chiang Ching, defiant and on trial for her very life, stated that “making revolution is no crime!” She insisted that she would rather have her head chopped off than give in to revisionism. The overthrow of the revolutionary leadership of the four resulted in the capitalist HQ consolidating power. They repressed and imprisoned hundreds of thousands of revolutionary masses and purged the rest of the revolutionaries in the party, fast-tracking capitalist restoration by ending the GPCR and reversing its hard-earned gains.

Among other things Deng ended the barefoot doctors, dissolved the peasant communes, brought back private property, proclaimed that “it is glorious to be rich,” sold products to the masses with the use of sexist advertising, developed even deeper ties with Washington, and erased all talk of revisionism—and while opposing the USSR as a rival, no longer spoke of capitalist restoration. Workers were now encouraged to stop studying revolution and stop learning politics and instead focus only on their “work”—producing products for the capitalists in the party. The state, still owning the means of production, made large cuts to the quality of life and the political life of the masses. The masses were shut out of power altogether and relationships went back to that of boss and worker, with the state above all. Deng became the most vile of revisionists, outstripping Khrushchev and Brezhnev both. Under the arch-revisionist tyranny of Deng, capitalism was restored and the world’s greatest revolution was reversed and defeated.

Capitalist restoration has provided us with invaluable lessons of how to spot revisionists and how to fight them. The GPCR is universal and correct—the revolution must continue under socialism, and the masses must be brought up in their theoretical and political consciousness. Armed with this knowledge, we must be ever vigilant and rely on the most advanced sections of the working class to spot and target revisionists in the party. Furthermore it is the responsibility of all communists to expose and defeat revisionists among their own ranks, no matter what level of

development—whether before, during, or after the armed struggle. Those on the capitalist road will remain on the capitalist road unless they are stopped. As Mao taught so well, everything that is reactionary is the same: if you do not hit it, it will not fall.

## **5. On the universality of PPW**

Mao Zedong's theory of protracted people's war is universal to all countries of the world. In understanding the concept of PPW, we must understand that Maoism is not a dogma—that all who hold to MLM must be able to correctly and creatively apply the universal to the specific. PPW in an imperialist country will therefore look very different from its application in China, which varies still from its application in Peru. Its three aspects are its protracted nature, the people, and the armed fighting.

PPW is *protracted*. It may take a lot longer in more feudal countries oppressed by imperialism than it might in the imperialist countries. Regardless, the struggle must be protracted—there is no escaping this, and comrades seeking a quick victory should check their idealism and understand that this enemy will use every measure to prevent such a quick victory. Insurrection in the Leninist sense will not be possible, and waiting for such an event will only decrease the fighting capacity of the people and stifle them by disallowing their mass participation in the overthrow of the capitalist state. Such ideas should be discarded for the present day, while being understood for their relevance to particular bygone historical moments. Furthermore, even if insurrection were possible it would not be desirable: it is through years of fighting in PPW that the masses become even more revolutionized, more experienced in directly participating in the highest expression of class struggle—their consciousness advances considerably through their active role and their ability to fully identify with the party.

Through protracted fighting the enemy weakens, while the people, the people's army, the party, and the united front all grow and establish greater unity. Through the establishment of base areas, revolutionary culture overturns the existing bourgeois culture and proletarian ideology begins to take the place of bourgeois ideology. In such base areas the revolutionary army is able to work alongside the liberated masses and avoid ever becoming parasitic. In such areas revolution reigns supreme and it is exported from the base area to the rest of the country. This concept is universal, and it does not rely exclusively on “surrounding the city from the countryside,” which is a common misconception. With no mass population located in the countryside, the base areas in the US would look drastically different, whether or not they were rurally located or located in urban areas. It is the existence of the base areas that earn a place in the heart of the people for our revolutionary forces, whom they will shelter and defend. Only this will give a guerrilla group the advantage over the imperialist enemy. Without mass participation, the revolution has already gone deadly wrong and

revisionism has already set in. The protracted aspect of PPW is not only universal; it is also crucial because it helps avoid pitfalls and strengthens the revolutionary culture.

In warfare the people are primary, while everything else is secondary. It is not weapons or training or financial support that will ever win a war: it is the people themselves and their morale, enthusiasm, and desire for victory that will be decisive. All of these depend largely on the relationships between the party and the masses. Any revolutionary strategy that confuses the role of the people or suggests that a small group of armed men can just take it upon themselves to make history fundamentally denies the role of the masses in history and betrays the revolutionary cause. The people's army has to be separate from the party but guided and led by the party. The two cannot be combined out of convenience. The people's army must be servants of the people and seek not only mass support but also mass participation. It must seek to represent the people and in doing so it must produce women and non-male commanders and officers. All of this should be guided by the communist party. Think of the people's army as armed social workers attending to every need of the people, beyond just attending to the war—and not social workers in the capitalist sense but in the proletarian and revolutionary sense.

The violent aspect of armed struggle is inevitable in any revolutionary theory. Violence is universal and unavoidable. The people will call for the blood of the class enemy and we shall deliver. Violent fighting is an essential aspect of social change, not just an unfortunate necessity. We reject liberal notions that are dishonest to the people in claiming that we only fight reluctantly. On the contrary, our class must seek power and we are not reluctant in this quest. We know that violence exists in all things, both in nature and society; that violence is part of all development and we do not begrudge the process like cowards but seek to prepare as fighters. Revolutionary violence however should never be equated to reactionary violence. Revolutionary violence is community self-defense on a massive scale—class self-defense—and we should not fear it. We should take great pride in becoming fighters for our class knowing that revolutionary violence will help us develop; that when the enemy attacks we will no longer internalize their violence, and we will instead channel it back at them in a wave of destruction. We understand that through fighting back, the people attain ever greater fighting spirit. Self-defense is self-care. If we are unable to defend ourselves, if we freeze in the moment, we shall—as a movement—suffer from cowardice. Such cowardice plagues the left and has left them underprepared while the right is ever increasing their preparedness. We must rid our ranks of those who see fighting back as a reluctant responsibility and encourage enthusiasm for preparing for the fight and eventually fighting to the finish.

## **6. PPW in the USA?**

The precise application of PPW in the US will be determined by the unique geographic conditions of the US as well as the class forces themselves and the concrete, objective conditions we face as a class. The majority of the population lives in urban areas; however there are broad expanses of wilderness and rural areas as well as a very diverse climate.

The level of activity of the national liberation struggles of the masses of the oppressed nations will be essential in determining a correct line in regard to the launching of PPW. The oppressed nations of Aztlán and New Africa exist (roughly) all along the southern border from coast to coast. This means that these areas, depending on the party and a correct line of orientation as well as on the oppressed nations themselves, will be responsible for guiding the direction of the PPW. These areas should be liberated and function as base areas, established first, with the goal of exporting the revolution to the rest of the US. This makes the area of Texas of particular importance because it is a southern state as well as the easternmost territory of occupied Aztlán. Texas is also under a reactionary state government with “right-to-work” laws. This produces raw class antagonisms and specific sets of contradictions. On one hand the reactionary laws restrict the rights of the workers, creating sharper contradictions, and on the other hand the repressive state laws create a more difficult environment in which to organize aboveground. Communists can be singled out by both the state and their popular fascist representatives.

Texas is also an open-carry state with some of the more relaxed gun laws in all of the US. This means that the forces of the people will be able to capture weapons from the enemy with more ease than in other parts of the country due in part to the sheer abundance of weapons in circulation. Texas also has a vast land area with diverse terrain, some of which the state would have great difficulty penetrating. The cities of the south and southwest house large oppressed-nations populations of urban poor as well as poverty-stricken rural areas, both of which will serve as a social base for the PPW. It is our position right now that any strategy of war would by necessity require the organization of the states that compose Aztlán and New Africa, the region known as the Sun Belt due to the heightened contradictions there.

Any application of PPW to the conditions of the US will absolutely require firm internationalism both between the colonies within the US and through the party gaining ideological support of revolutionary communists in Mexico as well as those in Canada. This internationalism must extend to the world communist movement, and we must always challenge ideas rooted in narrow nationalism or regionalism.

The forces of the people will grow from the most impoverished areas of the Sun Belt. We won't necessarily “surround the city from the countryside,” but a rural component will be necessary, with rolling urban attacks in a wave-like motion, geared toward

economic instability. The slums, ghettos, and border towns will be especially hospitable to the formation of base areas in the form of bio-political dual power as a long-term strategy put into motion as the first phase, long before the fighting and shooting of the PPW starts.

## **7. Internationalism**

Maoist-led people's wars still rage in several countries with advanced workers' struggles. Due to the primary contradiction between imperialism and oppressed nations, the oppressed nations have become the storm centers for world revolution—the places and regions where revolution is most likely to take place and most likely to win. The two most advanced armed struggles in the world today are taking place in India, led by the Communist Party of India (Maoist), and in the Philippines, led by the Communist Party of the Philippines. These people's wars must be supported, promoted, and studied by US Maoists. We should be doing all the organizing we can to educate our own working class on the struggles taking place in these countries and seek to build and support strong networks of solidarity.

While these PPWs led by genuine revolutionaries prove in part that Maoism is the best ideology for victory, they do not escape critical analysis.

In the Philippines, the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New Democratic Front, and the New People's Army have been leading a people's war since 1968. They have gained considerable ground and constitute the most advanced armed struggle in the world. They are gaining and deserve international support, but we must also analyze and be critically aware of their errors. The CPP vacillates ideologically and has in the past opportunistically presented themselves differently to different groups, at one point even seeking support from Soviet social-imperialists until that support proved useless only then to come out and criticize the action. At various points the CPP has denied the existence of Chinese imperialism only to come out against it when China began encroaching on the territory of the Philippines. This ideological inconsistency is likely rooted in their failure to understand Maoism as the third and highest stage of all Marxism, leaving residual ML-revisionism unchecked, seeing MLM as only the term to describe Mao Zedong Thought in the current era. This incomplete application of Maoism gives us great concern for the trajectory of their revolution, and while we are enthusiastic supporters, we fear that this could steer them off course—we believe that they are capable both of seizing state power and of seeking a phony “peace.” In either of those scenarios they could fail to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. We are hopeful that they will break with their errors and offer to give more direction to the world revolution and the world situation.

In India, the CPI (Maoist) stands as the most ideologically advanced communist force on the planet. They control vast sections of the countryside and masterfully apply PPW. One of their major shortcomings is neglecting the LGBTQ struggles that do take place in India and failing to do the necessary theoretical work on the question, work that could offer significant practical guidelines for other revolutionary efforts. There is also a rising concern of the level of politicization of the People's Liberation Guerilla Army, which has resulted in lumpenproletariat splinter militias that end up turning against the people while still wielding Maoist guns—a failure to keep the party in command of the gun.

These criticisms, however valid, do not indicate that these parties do not possess great revolutionary knowledge that benefits the world revolutionary movement as a whole. They are the shining examples of highly advanced Maoist-led struggles that we have everything to learn from. When Marxist-Leninist and Trotskyite organizations refuse to learn from comrades in the nations oppressed by imperialism they do so at their own peril out of what is most often white supremacist and Eurocentric thinking. The PPWs will grow, and we have good faith that the shortcomings and obstacles will be overcome.

#### **8. On criticism/self-criticism and thought reform**

These are perhaps the most misunderstood concepts among US Maoists today, and they are also among the most useful and important assets to our work. They must be understood more fully. Criticism is a gift, no matter the type. We must take all criticism enthusiastically. In fact, we must continuously seek it out. If the criticism is correct, it will improve our work, whether it was made in good faith or bad, and whether it was from comrades or adversaries matters little. We should first take the criticism and then see where it fits—see what is true within it and what we can utilize and learn from it. It is not the role of those being criticized to alone determine the truth in this, but there is instead a collective process to struggle out. Intentions are secondary to the results of one's actions; we cannot simply think that we “were misunderstood” or that we “meant well.” Intentions, while important, do not detract from consequences outright. Bourgeois moralism teaches that we are all special little examples to be taken individually; communists must break with this thinking, as it cannot serve us or the class we seek to represent. When we receive a criticism we must reflect on it for a long time if need be and then make a sincere effort to see where it can be applied.

Capitalist society makes us selfish and self-interested. This means that our whole upbringing and our ideology results in an inability to take criticism from others. We often feel wronged or singled out when it was our errors that hurt the work or wronged others. We cannot expect every comrade to have overcome this selfishness

or self-interest altogether, let alone all at the same level. Criticism is tough to accept sometimes, so we must have a great deal of patience when dealing with those who have difficulty accepting criticism. Inversely, capitalist society teaches us to use criticism to weaken opponents instead of strengthen comrades. We must understand the difference between attacks, repudiation (knee-jerk response that lacks analysis), and criticism. Our goal when taking and making criticisms should be to strengthen each other. We should at the same time fear no criticism and make the best criticism we can of all comrades without exception. Criticism should include suggestions. At the same time we should not expect these suggestions to offer immediate solutions in the form of rectification. Criticism must occur over and over again just as errors in thinking and practice will persist. We cannot expect a quick fix. Criticism and self-criticism are weapons for the revolutionary collective to correctly transform ourselves and our thinking, to integrate theory with practice and make our ideas reflect our concrete reality. It is an indispensable weapon, one we must master for both transformation of ourselves and our work and for the first line of defense against revisionism.

### **Part 3. Integrate with the masses—being one with the people in order to serve the people**

#### **1. Our efforts in mass work**

For the past year Red Guards Austin has been engaged in mass work via Serve the People – Austin (STP-A). STP started out as a program initiated and run by RGA. Since then STP has taken on a life of its own as we had intended. The reality of this helped us derive two principles: (1) STP should be run by and for the people; (2) STP should be a non-tendency revolutionary mass organization that is both launched and guided by a Red Guards collective and open to all sections of the people who fall under the category of “our friends.”

STP-A offers the community material aid (in the form of free clothing stores intermittently and free food programs weekly) and revolutionary theory. These service programs operate in working-class neighborhoods that are holdouts in the petty bourgeois–dominated, gentrified city of Austin. These neighborhoods have included or will include the Pleasant Valley neighborhood, the Montopolis neighborhood, and the Rundberg neighborhood. Due to police presence, the rising rents, and urban removal, the masses of these neighborhoods are experiencing a heightened level of daily struggles, resulting in higher levels of class consciousness than we have seen in other neighborhoods that are more diverse in terms of class. The community leaders and most organizers in these neighborhoods, however, tend to hold “middle-class” views, which reflect the views, positions, and interests/ideology of the petty bourgeoisie and labor aristocrats/upper strata of workers. These leaders currently have

dominance over community demands and as a result have limited the amount of working-class participation in activist struggles.

In spite of the liberalism that comes with the class interests of these elite home-owners and small business owners, they still fall under the category of “our friends” and must be struggled with in the interest of unity. They must not be handed over the power to lead STP or working-class struggles but won over in support of both. These “middle-class” leaders are primarily of oppressed nations themselves and from families who have lived in the area for generations. Their interests often align with our own, and unlike most workers they have time and money to devote to the community, which has in part helped earn them such social status. The downside is their tendency to push for collaboration with the city, demand reforms of the police, voting reforms, nonviolence, and so on. We must remain vigilant against these things but remember that these people are not our enemy and they stand to side with the revolution as it grows. When dealing with these types of friends we must not budge ideologically but remain friendly and have patience and show forgiveness. STP must seek out the relatively small number of advanced workers and unite with them first, then together with them help train and advance the consciousness of the intermediate workers. These two types will provide committed volunteers and members of STP, who will take positions of leadership within the organization.

What is an advanced worker? The advanced does not always imply the most active elements but specifically refers to the most class conscious of the workers: those who understand that capitalism cannot be reformed or voted out. The most advanced may well find themselves being the most active, but these two concepts often do not align. It is crucial that we break with the misconception that activists constitute the advanced.

The mass organization should not expect the level of commitment nor the discipline that is demanded by the cadre organization. People from the masses should not be expected to be functioning at the capacity of tried and tested communists, nor should they be held to the same principles. STP is a place where struggles can take place to create communists out of the masses. Since our programs have been reproduced by comrades in other cities, we hope to offer some guidance on this matter and help other STPs form under a correct line, avoiding both ultra-“left” and right-opportunist errors. Cadrefication of the mass organizations is a serious error that we have witnessed in the STP as well as student mass organizations.

In order to keep the organization functioning properly it should remain non-tendency, and sectarianism should be stamped out and not tolerated. We should follow the advice of Mao and truly unite with all those who can be united with, in order to best put the people first. These STPs however should remain under the guidance of

committed Maoists (in the form of a collective with no fewer than three people), who should constantly earn and win the leadership of the organization, proving their theory in practice, never degenerating into shouting matches or arguing hollow theory. If the Maoists who start STPs in any given area maintain the principles outlined here, then they will surely be invaluable leaders who will fully earn the respect and support of the diverse membership. This is the only way STP will thrive and grow.

Serving the people means first being among the people, experiencing their day-to-day struggles as well as offering guidance through participation in those struggles. Even if the program does not function as it should for a time, the only way to learn is through actually doing. STP work forces the communist to be among the masses, where they belong. One cannot and should not call oneself a communist if one is not engaged in mass work. We should all denounce the ivory tower “communists” of the past and show them for the false prophets that they are. The second point is to emerge as leaders. This emergence must be through the masses and their struggles, with their support. Changes, and taking positions of leadership, must never be arbitrarily asserted from above. Every role communists take must be earned in full and never assumed. Serving the people means combating individualism, boasting, and ego. It means combating all forms of vanity that come from being an “activist.” This is an ongoing effort that must never be neglected.

Serve the People must earn its namesake; this means that the people and their struggles must always be put first, before the interests of any individual or any small section of the people. Favoritism must be avoided and arrogance must be challenged among our ranks. We must be humble servants of the people in all aspects of our work.

## **2. Replacing cadre with the masses**

As time goes on and struggles wax and wane we will see comrades come and go. We will encounter demoralization, defeatism, and/or arrogance and selfish work. These things can manifest in the form of corruption, and all corruption must be rooted out and destroyed. Some communist cadres will give in to the sugarcoated bullets of the capitalist system. Some will take the capitalist road long before they hold any real power. At all stages of struggle we must do away with the lazy and the corrupt. This inevitably means that we will have to replace cadres in the revolutionary organization with the masses themselves as they become trained communists. Revolutionary collectives must be engaged in mass work so that the masses can replace their worst members and the organization can live on in good health. The masses are also essential to the growth of the revolutionary organization and all future party-building efforts.

There are not enough “communists” in this country let alone ones who are trained and experienced, with correct ideas. This means that if we want to build a revolutionary party we must do so through the masses. The lack of Maoists means that we must create Maoists out of the masses, and this cannot be circumvented. We have no interest in the small bunches of people and individuals who continually ignore the people while calling themselves communists; we see them as a stain on the movement and thieves of our ideology. Genuine revolutionary communists must make themselves replaceable in the event of death or incarceration. We must live such lives as to serve as shining examples of decency that the people will wish to follow so that they will step up to take our places when we fall.

### **3. On cadre organizations and mass organizations**

The revolutionary collective should be composed only of ideologically advanced and principled Maoists who have subjugated all their personal interests to the collective without exception. Weak-willed and lazy comrades should be trained out of these errors before becoming cadres. Discipline is an ongoing project; it is never a fixed thing. While a high level of discipline must be demanded of cadres, we must also treat them as comrades who are entitled to their mistakes and errors, which should be seen as opportunities to correct, improve, and rectify through two-line struggle, criticism, and self-criticism. Cadres in the revolutionary organizations must study diligently in a collective effort to better their level of theory and the application of that theory. They must be vetted and tested, given hard tasks and be accepting of continued hard living and sacrifice. They must be expected to not only be servants of the people but also be willing to protect the people and put themselves in harm’s way or even die if need be. Cadres mustn’t engage in anti-social activity. They must not pursue self-destructive paths or engage in dysfunctional social relationships. Cadres should not be drug users or heavy drinkers, as it sets a bad example among the people and disgraces the revolution we hope to build. Cadres should not steal or lie, unless in matters of expropriation or in terms of security against the enemy. Cadres should never engage in loose talk, shit talk, bad-mouthing, gossip, or oppressive and abusive language, in order to avoid alienating people. Everything that comes out of the mouth of cadres must seek to unite the masses of the people and never to divide them. Cadres should avoid bitterness and spite and all other manifestations of bourgeois ideology and reaction. No cadres are expected to be perfect revolutionaries. Perfect revolutionaries do not exist and never will exist; however, all cadres must constantly try to improve their thinking, habits, and practice in the interest of building the party and serving the people.

Communist cadres should be engaged in both mass work and cadre work and should understand how one relates to the other dialectically. The role of the cadres is to provide guidance to the people through the mass organizations and STPs. Being a

cadre should never put one above the people. We draw such a distinction because so much more is expected of one who considers oneself a communist revolutionary. While much more could be said on the topic and will be in the future, at this point we wish only to lay out a few basic points in order to shine some light on how STPs should function.

The mass organization and mass members, unlike cadres, are not expected to be disciplined, principled, ideologically advanced communists. The masses are diverse, with many different ideas and experiences that will always manifest in contradictions among the masses. STPs must take into account these contradictions and, while avoiding handling them liberally, must seek to solve them in good faith. This requires having patience with people, understanding that the world they and we grew up in is often messy and absurd. Capitalist society teaches people from birth to death to be individualistic and self-serving, to denounce, use, and abuse other people. We cannot expect mass members to engage in self-criticism the way communists do. We cannot expect them to be able to put everything they know aside and take criticism the way communists should. At the same time, we must never at any point underestimate the people or their ability to show better principles than the communists. We have found that the masses are far more revolutionary than most of the left—that they have better discipline and tend to be more reliable than the majority of student activists we encounter.

The language used by the people is part of their experience and culture, as well as a product of their environments. This means that STP should at all times avoid the trap of language policing that is common among petty-bourgeois academics, identity-reductionists, and postmodernists. While we do not allow our cadre to use oppressive language, we will not shame the people for speaking in their way. We should not tolerate activists shaming or perpetually correcting the masses for saying words they do not personally approve of. In such cases, language must be seen as secondary and never be seen as the principal aspect to struggle out. We have found that those who always say the right things in the right way often use their mastery of language to mask their bad and abusive practice. By the same token, many workers who use what activists and liberal arts majors call “problematic language” often are much more decent in practice than their counterparts on campus. We have no interest in policing what the people should say, and we seek to unite with them and through that process change them by advancing their level of class understanding.

Mass membership must be open and meetings must be public, with established principles and points of unity, which must be set to unite the broadest sections of the people in participation in STP. STP must not be run in the way a revolutionary cadre organization is. We have seen when others have started STP organizations that they have been idealistic on this topic and expect the masses to meet them where they are

at instead of trying to meet the masses. This is arrogant and basically says, “follow us, we have the answers.” Finding the masses “too problematic” is a vulgar hatred of the people that completely goes against Maoism, and these types must be criticized. People are very damaged in our class for a lot of real and valid reasons. To expect them to immediately function as communist cadres is an affront to what it means to serve the people.

Comrades who have no revolutionary collective but hope to establish one through the formation of STP orgs should be discouraged and warned of the perils of proceeding without revolutionary leadership. They should instead work from the bottom up to prepare their forces before embarking on the project. We strongly encourage the formation of small (minimum three-member) revolutionary collectives who can use democratic centralism prior to the formation of STPs instead of as a result. This is important in order to be realistic and keep the STP program on the revolutionary road. While we understand the eagerness to fight, that fight must be waged correctly, and sometimes this means patient, slow, and steady work.

#### **4. Trenches of combat, areas of struggle, and serving the people creatively**

Within any given city there are various sites or areas where class struggle takes place in a specific form, which differ from other locations around the city. Within those given areas of struggle we must establish trenches of combat, where the revolutionary organization wages specific forms of organizing resistance, either STPs or other work. These trenches can be taken up in areas like prisons, community colleges, ghettos, barrios, and other places with a particular set of sharp contradictions. Mass work should not be all over the place with no core strategy at the helm. We must first determine the area of struggle and commit to it, entrenching ourselves for ideological and, eventually, physical combat.

We should not move about from place to place or abandon the people; at the same time we must not superficially or superstitiously cling to any given site. Social investigation must take place before setting up STP programs. Teams must investigate the given conditions of a neighborhood or area of struggle by going there and speaking to the masses, finding out what ideas they have, what needs are not met, what they are worried about, and so on. This must not be done in the form of a cold and sterile survey but must be done personally and compassionately. The investigation team should also directly observe the class conditions, the classes at play, and the level of struggle they face. The investigation team should observe the living standards among the masses, their access to infrastructure, and general signs of poverty. The police presence must also be observed as well as the effect of gentrification on the neighborhood. Several neighborhoods should be investigated and compared, and sites of struggle within them should be determined based on a process of collective line

struggle and the development of a strategy. It is important to not just gather the ideas that communists want to hear to support whatever thing it is they already want to do. Rather, all ideas must be gathered, whether backward or advanced, and a general class analysis must be made in order to settle on a given area or particular struggle.

Once the area is settled on, it is the ideas gathered from the people that should be the determining factor in what type of programs are offered. Anything else but providing solutions based on the ideas of the masses themselves abandons the mass line. Just because you want to start an STP doesn't mean your ideas are correct, so erase any notions of what it is you want to do first and start with the people you intend to serve. This move will pay off big in terms of support, and there can be no cutting corners here either.

Our own experiences have revealed one particular error in practicing the mass line that we think it is important to describe and warn against. When carrying out the first step of the mass line, we are not simply taking *data* from the masses, learning their ages, occupations, number of children, and other demographic info. Nor are we simply learning their *condition*—that they were recently laid off, that they are being denied social services, that they have felony records. While these facts are not bad to record, they are not yet enough to begin the mass line. In order to begin practicing the mass line, what we must hear from the masses are their *ideas*: we want to know what they believe is the root problem beneath all the difficulties they are confronted by; we want their worldview; and even more important, we want to know what they believe can and should be done about the problems they are facing. Answers to this sort of question will give us the raw material to truly proceed in our work from the ideas of the masses.

It should be noted that this is far from sufficient in giving full information about the concrete experience of practicing the mass line in running an STP organization. Much more information about this concrete practice will be described in further summations specifically from STP-A.

The program in any given area must be creative and sustainable; we learned from our errors that infrequency doesn't allow you to really consistently and meaningfully participate in the life of the community, and we have learned a great deal from Serve the People – Los Angeles (STP-LA) on this matter. After the ideas are gathered from the masses they must undergo the rest of the mass line process. The result could be any number of programs aimed at the immediate concerns of the masses. These programs could involve a bus-to-prison program, a food program, a grocery program, a literacy program, a community self-defense program, a cop watch program, a car service program, and so on. We must not limit ourselves to the activity of other STPs

but actually address the ideas of the people in the form of real answers to problems and revolutionary guidance.

Programs must also consider the ability of the committed members to execute them correctly. It is better to do a small program modestly and well than it is to try and solve every issue all at once and end up appearing to the people to be all over the place and inefficient. Be realistic and aware of your own abilities, neither subjectivist nor overconfident—rely on the people.

Once the area of struggle and type of program are determined, preparations should commence to establish a trench of combat. All members should learn the history of the area and the history of the people's struggles there. Preferably a few members should be from there or have pre-existing relationships to people who are. If not, they should approach with caution and modesty at all times. Once a trench of combat is established, we should do everything in our power to hold onto it as long as it fits with our overall strategy and conditions are right. STP programs are usually protracted and play out over a very long period before any material results can be seen. It was through painstaking work that our comrades in LA have been able to amp up the fight against gentrification.

STPs must consider presentation when integrating into an area of struggle. We should do our best to make the community comfortable with how we appear to them. We should appear open and inviting. This often means submitting our own personal modes of expression to better integrate. This sometimes means looking like the workers of that given community, without mocking or costume. To do this cadre should seek full integration, socialize where the masses do, listen to the types of music the masses do, and always be accepting of the local customs and culture, seeking to handle inevitable contradictions that arise. Do not enter with preconceived notions of mass expression but learn from the people there. Most communists might have some difficulty with this but should be patient with themselves and truly willing to learn from the people. We should be careful to do business only with local, community-supported establishments and avoid doing business with gentrification establishments who do not fit culturally or economically in the site of struggle; these should instead be aggressively pressured for donations or opposed with the threat of community boycotts.

When actively serving the people, volunteers must be conscious of their role and execute the task to the best of their ability. Our programs offer us a platform for communication. They offer us the opportunity to hear the people out and collect the raw material for the mass line. Volunteers distributing goods should not argue with the masses of a given area but should apply the method of first learning from the people then offering them guidance. All ideas the people have should be remembered

and then reported to a designated person who will record them, and then discussed at meetings to later continually determine and guide the programs.

Conditions and ideas of the people are subject to subtle change and we must always adapt to given conditions and be informed by given ideas. What might work at first may hit road blocks that can be overcome, or instead the program may need to be changed. If a program continues to fail it should be replaced with other programs that work. We should be flexible and never dogmatic or mechanical in our work.

### **5. Limitations of liberal arts thinking**

We are not special snowflakes who have stumbled upon correct ideas. Correct lines are established only through struggle and the application of the mass line method of leadership: from the masses, to the masses. No matter how well one has been educated, one is still prone to error. In fact, education in the capitalist university reproduces bourgeois ideology, and therefore most university students will be corrupted with incorrect ideas stemming from their anti-masses education. These educated types will no doubt think they know best or have some great secrets denied to the people. This garbage thinking should be eradicated. No amount of university education can prepare one as a servant of the people; it is only through practice that our goals can be met.

The masses themselves, who have far more to fight for, make better communists than the university elite, who often have upper-class origins. Having a liberal arts degree doesn't mean anything in the communities that we must serve, and oftentimes makes comrades stick out and get offended easily. Comrades from such backgrounds must be worked out of their narrow thinking and commit class suicide. Otherwise they will be detrimental to the work that must take place among the masses, and their mistaken ideas and habits pose a serious threat regardless of their good intentions. Intentions are always secondary to the consequence of our actions.

We have found that identity-reductionist politics and other grave errors that stem from them have no place in our class and are not found among the masses themselves—identity-reductionist politics are a university and activist phenomenon often force-fed by activists to the workers. In short, they take politics out of command and ignore the class conditions that affect specific groups and give rise to these identities. They fail to serve those they were designed to serve and place identity as the principal actor. Regardless of how popular identity-reductionist politics are among neo-left elitists and activist circles, they do not offer any real analysis of conditions that is not already provided by Marxism. They cannot gain real traction among the masses and fall terribly short of any revolutionary goal; they are divisive and serve the class enemy in the long term. Identity-reductionist politics emerged as a contending force due in part

to the shortcomings of the Marxist left, who failed to utilize Marxism correctly; we mustn't repeat their errors. We must avoid the chauvinist and mechanical error called class reductionism as vigorously as we avoid identity-reductionist politics.

The interests of small sections of the class must not be placed above those of the working class as a whole. Identity-reductionist politics can only place the short-term interests of a small sub-section of workers above their long-term interest as a part of the whole class. If this kind of thinking is not defeated there will be no revolutionary masses and no revolution; we will accomplish only favoritism, which can support only revisionism and not the revolution.

Since identity-reductionist politics are so common among new and inexperienced communists, they must be trained out of it—and the people are very good at this. We must have a certain level of patience in explaining why this thinking is incorrect and dangerous and never be tempted to just write off those currently holding views we see as identity-reductionist politics. We should not be dismissive. We should first seek to determine the kernel of truth within a set of politics that is ultimately and overall incorrect and start there—helping our comrades understand how identity-reductionist politics play out in the long term because when they are used to formulate a line it will inevitably be incorrect. This is how we will disprove and defeat identity-reductionist politics: through patient correction, not intolerant dismissal. If comrades refuse to ever become proletarianized, then unfortunately they are not fit to become servants of the people and should just return to their privileged intellectual status until the revolution strips them of their privileges.

## **6. Sending the students to the “countryside”**

When working with students and other volunteers from alien class backgrounds they must be helped and sculpted under working-class leadership. They must be sent down to the countryside. In our conditions we do not literally mean the countryside, but we mean areas of struggle where these comrades can become culturally working-class: neighborhoods and jobs where their soft academic thinking will not allow them to survive, where they will be forced to begin thinking like workers. They should be given hard and physically demanding tasks when possible to break them of their habits of managing others. They should be forced to become one with the people in a process of liberating them from the toxic influence of their class spoils.

The most detrimental manifestation of liberalism is its sharp self-interested individualism. This manifests in many different ways that have been discussed in other works. We will mention a few things to look out for: (1) a laziness in work but a boastful tendency to claim easy victories; (2) the tendency to only stand with the collective in matters of accomplishment but distance themselves in matters of defeat

and failure; (3) a fear of danger or bold actions and/or a tendency to worry about what their class might think. This often manifests in a fear to be one with the people and a petty desire to stand out among the people or be seen as a “unique case.”

The three preceding points are good errors to look for when distributing tasks. Understanding the transformative nature of work, we can help these comrades rectify through a physical process. We should encourage them to move out of their safe areas and live among those they serve and to break with their former lifestyles and customs.

This is part of serving the masses of people; it avoids the misleadership offered by petty-bourgeois comrades, saving the people from potential abuses. It creates space for the educated to share the best of what they know with the people in the right way. Lenin was correct that revolutionary intellectuals must bring their knowledge to the people. In order to do this they must learn from the people and integrate into the proverbial countryside. This is of great help to both the masses and those suffering from the intellectualism that keeps them aloof and of no use to the people; intellectuals can become revolutionary intellectuals in service to the people.

At no point in time should STPs fall into the hands of such individuals as have not been corrected and changed. Although class background is not an insurmountable obstacle, we must take measures to not be overrun by so many liberals that they can no longer be checked, balanced, and corrected.

## **7. Bio-political dual power**

STPs do not and must not exist solely to provide material aid to ease the inequality of the capitalist system, though this is one function of the programs. Through such material aid, STP must seek to empower the community against the system. Through STP programs tailored specifically toward the interests of the masses it is possible to wean the people off of relying on the government and capitalist-controlled organizations such as NGOs, who can never at any point genuinely serve their interests. The contradictions between the masses and the ruling class (in this case also their administrators: social workers, reactionary churches, and NGOs) remain antagonistic. Charity is used as a buffer to prevent civil unrest and soften the class contradictions. What sets STP apart from these administrators of poverty is precisely our revolutionary politics, which at all times must be kept in command. It is this kind of militancy that can derive mass participation. It starts with having community control over a specific trench of combat and spreads from there to the point where the community relies more on itself via the revolutionary mass organizations than it does on the state or any of its representatives. This is the path for making the masses into revolutionary masses, which is the only correct path to building the revolutionary party.

We must examine whatever contradictions exist within a given area of struggle. There is the contradiction between the disdain for police and the people's need for protection. Poverty has and always does create crime. The line on the lumpenproletariat held and implemented by past revolutionary organizations in the US failed to listen to the masses of workers in many sites of struggle. This failure to learn from the people had disastrous effect. On one hand the masses already know the police are not their friends, while on the other hand they still feel the need to call on them in a crisis. This legitimizes the pigs in the community and the pigs benefit from this contradiction in terms of soft warfare on the community, mobilizing their secondary aspect—ideology. STP should be mindful of these contradictions and seek to sharpen the contradictions between the pigs and the people. In such sites the revolutionary mass organization could seek to form community conflict-mitigation units who could be called out for domestic issues in place of the police. Many left organizations are fine with encouraging the people to never call the police but fail miserably when it comes to solving the second contradiction by providing alternatives. It is possible and in fact preferable to solve through mass participation. Crime among the people will drop and the masses will join in the defense of their communities from both the pigs and their counterparts, the lumpenproletariat. This is laid out as an example of achieving community dual power in a given site.

Another contradiction that must be examined is the contradiction between city and “countryside,” which manifests differently in imperialist countries. Cities are composed of many different neighborhoods: there are the affluent areas of a city where people enjoy material comfort and wealth juxtaposed with both pockets of want and whole areas of poverty. We can call this contradiction the contradiction between the city and the hood. STP programs should always operate in areas where this contradiction is sharpest, never falling into habits of campus organizing that neglect the issue of being among the people. Poverty, contrary to popular thinking, does not always indicate the best site of struggle. The best site must be determined through careful class analysis and directly talking to the people. It will not do to just rely on statistics or the research done by NGOs, academics, or city planners. The bourgeois census may be referenced but it cannot be the final word. Some areas might have lower income in general statistically but still have a relatively stable population with a very low or even backward level of class consciousness. Simply put, the analysis provided by the ruling class will not and cannot replace the analysis made by Marxists on the ground, and corners cannot be cut on this matter.

## **8. On political education and STP programs**

In order to keep politics in command and avoid the danger of NGOization, all STPs without exception should also be carrying out the task of political education. Without the component of political education, all STP programs, no matter how good, are

nothing but red philanthropy: NGOs that are painted in communist imagery but fail to provide revolutionary politics to the people. Education by STP should be radically different than what is carried out by NGOs and formal schooling. It should be structured based on the needs of the people and their ways of learning, so there is no readymade solution to this contradiction and it is up to the local STP to solve on their own.

Political education must be carried out on two fronts: First, on the organizational level, all STP volunteers must be trained and educated on the mass line method of leadership; they should be provided with higher levels of Marxist theory. Second, on the mass level, it is important to not go in spouting what the people already know from experience but to teach only what strikes a chord with them. The people will only take political education if it appeals to them; otherwise they will feel bored and subjected to this boredom by the organization.

For political education to work correctly comrades must understand the dialectical relationship between agitation-propaganda and the mass line and never substitute one for the other. In other words the mass line is not just agitation-propaganda, nor is agitation-propaganda just the mass line; they overlap and are complementary. They also come into contradiction when pushing matters of political education. To properly handle this contradiction comrades should make learning the mass line and having faith in the masses their top priority.

## **9. Common misconceptions about STP**

While we are very glad to have played such a part in the formation of the STPs that have popped up over the past year, we feel that we have failed our comrades in providing the proper guidance, and due to our error we have seen several misconceptions manifest that could potentially create difficulties, if not destroy the effort. It is our aim here to address some of these misconceptions.

We have already talked about how STP should remain a revolutionary mass organization and not be subject to party-like discipline or seek too much ideological consolidation among its membership. It is sufficient to determine a few points of unity for the organization and to allow those points to develop into principles of conduct. This way members can be protected and the organization cannot become a useful tool to the enemy.

In our work we have encountered a great level of nostalgia among young radicals. While we too are inspired by the work of those who came before us, we must denounce nostalgia as a dangerous manifestation of bourgeois ideology. Nostalgia has a romanticizing effect on history and distorts Marxism by stripping it of its critical

eye. We see this most commonly when it comes to national liberation and communist organizations of the past, such as the Black Panther Party (BPP). The BPP was inspired by the teachings of Mao to launch STP programs of their own and of course we engage in similar work in their spirit. This does not mean that we seek to reproduce the work of the BPP or to copy them in any way. The BPP ultimately failed in their work, and it is that failure that we must critically examine. Comrades most often seek to study what it is the Panthers did then try and do the same thing. This is wrong for two big reasons: First, the Panthers opened the door for the NGO-industrial complex, and many of their cadres got careers in the process and the people didn't get shit. Second, the Panthers existed in a time before the NGO-industrial complex had turned into the beast that it is today, so the programs were cutting-edge. We find that comrades who hold nostalgia for the BPP often idealistically seek to mechanically apply that experience. This is an anti-Marxist position, though, and we should first understand the world we are living in today, which is actually quite different from the one the Panthers organized within. Learn what you can from the past experiences of revolutionaries but do not clone their efforts or be ahistorical in your application of study.

The most common misconception about STP is that we are a charity. In spite of our insistence that we are not many still do not understand what it means to practice solidarity instead of charity. This results in the profit motive, or of focusing only on the production of the programs—focusing on the goods we distribute or the administrative aspects of the program while neglecting the political implications of the work. This error is diplomatic and rightist, and will come about no matter what; if the error is not confronted, the whole organization will become devoid of what makes it relevant. Solidarity above all else means a willingness to struggle alongside the people; it means being entrenched and sharing the same fate. To have a firm commitment to the long-term needs and interests of the masses means we must not hesitate or fear bold actions. We must especially not fall into lackluster mechanical approaches to our work, just doing what we are supposed to on time without question. We must be partisans in class struggle, not just rank-and-file NGO employees. Work must be carried out with enthusiasm and an honest desire to learn everything we can from the people. We must not hide our politics but at the same time we are not there to soapbox, shame, or blast the people with “answers.”

Serve the People is a specific effort put forward by Maoist revolutionaries with the explicit intention of getting the most participation possible in the organization. We insist that guidelines and principles be developed and accepted by all STPs to prevent the weakening of the movement. This means that we should all communicate with each other and offer support everywhere possible—solidarity between us is a must. We encourage anyone seeking to start an STP to reach out to STP-A or STP-LA and

establish relationships with us, as these two organizations are the ones who have the most practice. If this is impossible or undesirable then start something else, choose a different name, or—if you have already started an “STP”—change your organization’s name. We cannot stand for our name to be run through the dirt by half-hearted reactionaries or revisionists. Nor will we accept being erased from the narrative or having STPs organized behind our backs. We care a great deal about the direction of this work and will fight to continue participating in determining the direction it goes. STPs require the guidance of a Maoist cadre organization, which should also be struggling to establish positive relationships with us.

## **10. Principles for serving the people**

Maoists must offer guidance, not restriction, to STP organizations. This principle of guidance instead of restriction extends to the revolutionary organization’s relationship to the community as well. This means our approach should always be firmly rooted in the masses and never thinking we know better. We must rely on and trust the people.

The police are never to be worked with in any capacity. The police are always the enemy and should never at any point be allowed to endorse, protect, or participate in STP work. STP and its membership should avoid talking to the police at all costs and should refuse to make organizational statements to them.

The media are not always our friends; we should avoid limelight and publicity that focuses on individuals in order to stay humbled by the masses. If we are to seek publicity let it be for our work and never as individuals. Let it be focused on the masses themselves. This means we should only give interviews to progressive or left-wing media outlets. The big media will offer us only sugarcoated bullets. They will distort our goals and views to sell papers while placing key individuals in the limelight, using individual fame to buy them up.

No boasting; we are in this for the people with their interests at heart, never for bragging rights or to feel better about ourselves. Self-interest is a disease all volunteers must be cured of. We should promote and propagate our work everywhere that is beneficial but remain modest in doing so. Lack of modesty in the form of bragging and boasting can turn STPs into their opposites.

STPs should be willing to dedicate time to investigation of social and economic conditions as well as the histories of their areas. They should not be too eager to get out and distribute food and services that they neglect this important legwork. Not every member should be out distributing food or goods; many may be needed to acquire, sort, and/or store items. We should be on the lookout for folks who only want to be on the ground distributing but fail to do the hard work out of view.

Politics should be kept in command and political education should never be neglected in STP work. This can sometimes mean that the programs must be smaller and more entrenched. We should be more concerned with the political development and advancement of the people than with the quality of our programs, but there must also be a balance between the two.

STP programs should be realistic and rooted in the actual ideas of the people, not in scriptures from above or formulated out of liberal notions of “love,” and so on. They should not seek to run programs that go beyond the realistic scope of those participating; a few good programs are worth more than many bad ones. The programs will grow and expand with new participation, which must be earned through patient efforts.

STPs should always promote ideological struggle within them and never seek to alienate or bar those with contradictory ideas, unless those ideas are outright reactionary. It is far better to include and struggle than it is to seek constant and immediate purity through exclusion. This method should be used to combat revisionist approaches and mentalities that see serving the people only as a platform to recruit into other organizations. This method of struggle is a tool for defense, consolidation, and advance.

STP membership should seek to reflect the site of struggle, culturally, aesthetically, and in content. STP should be diverse and multinational, not limiting itself to the needs or ideas of a sub-section of the class, thus avoiding both neglecting the interests of the class as a whole and favoritism.

— Red Guards Austin, 2016