



## On the creation of the International Communist League and the debate it has sparked in the Maoist movement

OCML Voie Proletarienne (France), 10 October 2023

The OCML Voie Proletarienne, a Maoist organisation based in France founded in 1979, has noted the creation of the International Communist League (ICL)<sup>1</sup> in December 2022 by some fifteen Maoist parties from around the world, including the Maoist Communist Party of France (PCmF), and the debate that this has sparked in the worldwide Marxist-Leninist-Maoist (MLM) movement. Our organisation has paid close attention to the reactions published in the journal *Two Lines Struggle*<sup>2</sup>, including the detailed position dated 19 May 2023 by the Communist Party of India (Maoist)<sup>3</sup>, which has not joined the ICL, which concludes by calling on the Maoist organisations around the world to express their views on this subject.

At our very modest level, we therefore wish to make our own contribution, especially as we are faced both politically and practically in France by the PCmF.

### On the premature nature of the creation of the ICL

We share the view expressed by several of the reactions published in *Two Lines Struggle* regarding the premature nature of the formal creation of the ICL. Many issues remain

<sup>1</sup> <https://ci-ic.org/blog/2022/12/26/historical-news-of-the-successful-holding-of-the-unified-maoist-international-conference-the-international-communist-league-was-founded/>

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://www.bannedthought.net/International/TwoLinesStruggle/L2L-N02-Eng-Corrected.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bannedthought.net/India/CPI-Maoist-Docs/Statements-2023/2023-06-11-CC-CPI-MaoistStandOnICL-Full-Yellow-OCR-Eng.pdf> (Available in French: <http://www.bannedthought.net/India/CPI-Maoist-Docs/Statements-2023/2023-06-11-CC-CPI-MaoistStandOnICL-Full-French.pdf>).

unclear or inadequately discussed and are a source of disagreement or are insufficiently debated for a solid international communist movement to be formed. We already voiced the same criticism at the time of the 1980 declaration that subsequently led to the creation of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM), stressing that this would only serve to mask major contradictions which would inevitably resurface. As we stressed at the time (just as the Communist Party of India (Maoist) does today), a unilateral declaration with very categorical ideological positions should not overshadow the need for theoretical analyses taking into account the differing situations on the ground.

Indian comrades rightly point out that the dissolution of the Third International has yet to be properly assessed and we share the opinion of Italian comrades in the PCm that the lack of an appraisal of the RIM is also very detrimental.

Now is the time for bilateral relations and conferences where we can debate and deepen our mutual understanding in order to move forwards together and jointly draw up a Maoist program of struggle rather than hankering after a worldwide Maoist party under democratic centralism as proposed by the ICL.

## **On the global economic, political and social contradictions**

This issue has been a bone of contention giving rise to profound differences within the international communist movement since the 1960s following the publication of the *25-Point Letter* by the Communist Party of China in 1963, which led, for example, to the Three Worlds Theory presented by Deng Xiaoping at the United Nations in 1974. This needs to be explored in a rigorous, non-dogmatic, critical and self-critical way in the light of the way imperialism has evolved and the ever-increasing inroads made by capitalism across the globe. As the Communist Party of India (Maoist) rightly points out, major changes have taken place around the world over the last century and it would be mistakenly idealistic not to address them seriously.

For our own part, as a modest Maoist organisation from a major imperialist country, we have not conducted enough work to be absolutely clear-cut and we can only hope that the debate will continue. As such, our comments below represent our current state of our thinking rather than a definitive closed position.

It is clear that the restoration of capitalist rule in the USSR and China has temporarily put the contradiction between socialist countries and imperialism on hold. At present, this contradiction only potentially exists through the existence of the International Communist Movement and the Maoist parties in their struggle for world communist revolution.

We can understand that the main global contradiction is between imperialism and the dominated nations and peoples. This is the contradiction we see at work on every continent, from Africa and Latin America to Asia and even in Europe with the Russian imperialist invasion of Ukraine.

Of course, the bourgeoisie/proletariat contradiction is the main contradiction in the imperialist countries, particularly our own. This much is clear, while at the same time stressing that, contrary to the repeated claims made by the Maoist Communist Party of France, there is no burgeoning revolutionary situation in Europe. This contradiction must also be understood in light of the way imperialism shapes the proletariat in such countries, including our own, with the existence of the labour aristocracy or the “labour lieutenants of the capitalist class” as Lenin put it and the social, political and ideological domination of the salaried petty-bourgeoisie.

But we also stress the importance of debating the bourgeoisie/proletariat contradiction specifically in the countries dominated by imperialism, faced with either comprador or bureaucratic bourgeoisies which have grown enormously through the spread of globalised capitalism. However, this debate must take place within the specific context of each specific situation rather than mistakenly blurring it with the situation in imperialist countries. What is clear is that the question arises whether discussing Brazil, Turkey, India or even Iran. It is worth remembering that the Communist Party of Peru had begun work on this issue.

Finally, the contradiction between the different imperialisms, capitalist countries and monopolies is of course alive and well and serves to weaken them mutually, whilst at the same time acting as one of the driving forces behind global developments through competition and the permanent redivision of the world.

We also note that recent debates on the subject have highlighted the contradiction between capitalism-imperialism and nature involving ecological issues such as the scarcity of resources, increasing pollution and climate change, all rooted in capitalism. It would be important for the ICM to integrate this contradiction into its analysis of the global situation.

As the Communist Party of India (Maoist) rightly points out, we must be rigorous when addressing the philosophical debate.

There is a fundamental and ultimately decisive contradiction between the socialised nature of production and its private appropriation.

Dialectical materialism, enriched by Mao Zedong, teaches us that any concrete situation entails one and only one main contradiction alongside secondary contradictions; that in every contradiction there is a main aspect and a secondary aspect. The task of communists, through investigation and theoretical, political and ideological work, is to identify all of the contradictions and how they relate to each other. Because Maoist dialectics also teaches us that while we must not mistakenly identify the principal contradiction or the principal aspect of a contradiction, we must also bear in mind that secondary aspects also feed into the main aspect creating a loop from the secondary contradictions into the main contradiction. This is what dialectics is all about.

For example, in imperialist France, while the main contradiction is the bourgeoisie/proletariat contradiction, there is also a series of secondary contradictions,

such as men/women or French/immigrants within the proletariat, intertwined with the way the main contradiction needs to be addressed.

Here again, the ICL's positions are a long way from the necessary reflections of this kind regarding its analysis of the global situation.

## **On Imperialism**

We share the view expressed by the Communist Party of India (Maoist), the Norwegian comrades from Revolutionary Communists (RK), the Italian comrades of the PCm and no doubt many others that imperialism has inevitably changed since Lenin. Of course it operates in blocs and alliances based on global contradictions with today's clashes between the US, European, Russian and Chinese imperialists, the latter being highly aggressive in the economic sphere. Of course there is no such thing as super-imperialism (Kautsky's theories, or Deng Xiaoping's Three Worlds Theory) and today there is a shifting multipolar world, where we can see the inklings of a Third World War, with the emergence of as yet not fully formed new blocs.

Here again, definitive assertions cannot take the place of a concrete Maoist analysis of the actual situation, which would be the task of a living and active International Communist Movement (ICM).

## **On putting politics in command, the style of work and Party priorities**

Reading the highly doctrinarian positions espoused by the ICL gives us cause to wonder about its grasp on Maoism.

Maoism teaches us beyond a shadow of a doubt that revolution means an economic and social revolution supported by a political and ideological revolution, with proletarian politics in command. This is a fundamental tenet of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

It calls for research, a mass line and theoretical work to avoid spontaneism, economism and, quite simply, "talking nonsense", as Mao put it in 1930 in *Oppose Book Worship*. This is the simple Marxist and dialectical understanding of the process of knowledge as enriched throughout the existence of the ICM.

## **On Protracted People's War**

For years, we have never ceased to be amazed by the dogmatic assertion of the universality of Protracted People's War. This is what we wrote in our 1993 *Political Platform* (Booklet N°2, §442)<sup>4</sup>, a position that has remained unaltered for the last thirty years:

### **442. The various forms of revolutionary violence are defined by the different social situations**

In dominated countries, where non-capitalistic social relations are still ruling, revolutionary violence can develop during a long period, while relying in particular on

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<sup>4</sup> See *Political Platform*: <https://ocml-vp.org/article282.html> (Original in French: <https://ocml-vp.org/article29.html>).

peasants. The form it most usually takes is the **Prolonged People's War**, like the war that the PCP is leading in Peru. On the basis of a developing revolutionary situation, among social groups where capitalism is still little structured, and where there are zones which can escape the direct control of the State, the prolonged people's war can make the progressive destruction of the former order possible, as well as the construction of the foundations of a new power.

In countries where capitalistic social relations are dominant, and especially in imperialist countries, the form of the revolutionary armed struggle has been **insurrection**. It's to insurrection that workers resorted at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, in Russia and in Europe. In different conditions, communists today must prepare for revolutionary violence and armed struggle.

**But in most of these countries, there is no revolutionary situation yet.**

Capitalist relations and the strength of the bourgeois State make the existence of any liberated zone – where the bourgeois power could be paralyzed for a while, and where precarious forms of another power would appear – impossible except during a revolutionary situation.

Some revolutionaries have attempted to experiment in Europe with **new military strategies**. We have always fought against their assimilation to terrorists. The choice of their political targets distinguished them without any ambiguity from the blind attacks carried out by reactionary groups at the bourgeoisie's service. They always aimed at the State, or at notorious bourgeois. Our disagreement with these groups, and especially with those who refer to Marxism-Leninism, does not lie in the necessity of armed struggle or on their military acts. It lies **in the question of the construction of the party, on the politics which commands their guns, on the opportuneness of such actions today**, taking into account today's condition of the revolutionary movement.

**Military tactics** in an imperialist country are an unsolved question for us – we must admit it. We will have to fill this important gap. Every experience, be it European or not, will then have to be brought under fire by criticism, in order to draw a maximum of lessons out of them, should they be negative or positive lessons.

This is in line with the Communist Party of India (Maoist)'s criticism of the ICL's positions, with the nuance that while insurrection will undoubtedly be the seed of revolution in the imperialist countries, the military tactics required to reach this point remain yet to be decided.

Finally, we reject any idea of the militarisation of politics (it is worth remembering that it was Trotsky who was its first proponent, opposed by Lenin as early as 1920) and that it is always politics that must be in command and that commands the gun.

## **On understanding the MLM and assessing great leaders**

We fully share the Communist Party of India (Maoist)'s position which sees the MLM as an ongoing development of Marxism through experience based on historical materialism and dialectical materialism.

As we stated in our *Platform* (§460)<sup>5</sup> way back in 1993: “Voie Proletarienne refers to **Marxism, Leninism and Maoism**: the three great stages of the development of a **dialectical materialist conception** of the world. They define the goals to be reached to transform it and the paths to take in order to reach them.”

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<sup>5</sup> Idem.

We therefore wholly reject the notion of ‘mainly Maoism’ or ‘of a higher phase’, as if the process of knowledge were the negation of the preceding phases at each qualitative leap.

There is also a need to take stock concerning the great leaders. While the contributions made by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao are, to our mind, indisputable, a thorough assessment has yet to be made of Stalin and Gonzalo.

- As far as Stalin is concerned, we believe that we cannot be satisfied with the formula expressed by Mao at the end of the 1950s (70% positive - 30% negative), especially given that the subsequent analyses of the Chinese communists themselves during and after the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution enabled them to deepen their theory of the construction of socialism in a crucial way. This, in turn, has allowed us to deepen our own critique of the CPSU's flawed conceptions. In this regard, we share the points underlined by the Norwegian comrades of RK and the point of view expressed by the Italian comrades of PC(m) who contest the exclusively positive assessment of Stalin. While the OCML Voie Proletarienne does not have a clear-cut position on the ‘person’ of Stalin, it was as early as the 1930s (and not at the time of the Khrushchev coup) that capitalist restoration was imposed in the USSR. We acknowledge that this may offend some comrades and that it is worthy of discussion<sup>6</sup>.
- As far as Gonzalo is concerned, we recognise his role in developing the tactics and strategy of the revolution in Peru and in launching and ensuring the success of the People’s War for over a decade. It is worth remembering that we were amongst the few in Europe to show unwavering support for the PCP from 1984 in the face of torrents of abuse and slander in the bourgeois press. We translated the PCP’s texts into French, we popularised the People’s War and we supported the PCP and Gonzalo with only minor criticisms of their predominantly just orientation<sup>7</sup> up until the arrest of Gonzalo and part of the Central Committee, with Gonzalo's famous *Speech from the Cage* on 24 September 1992, when he was paraded before the press in a prison uniform in a 3 metre-square cage, a speech that will remain an example of communist resistance in the face of imprisonment. Unfortunately, the story doesn't end there. A year later, we learnt of the existence of the ‘peace letters’ sent by Gonzalo to President Fujimori in the name of a supposed radical change in the situation in Peru, despite the last PCP document released in 1991 which heralded a “strategic balance” in the people's war! We're not talking about fakenews or simple CIA conspiracies, there are plenty of facts and writings out there for anyone who wants to read them. These letters exist and have been publicly validated by Gonzalo himself. Unfortunately, the decade that followed only confirmed this position.

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, *The Theory of The Productive Forces underpinning Modern-day Revisionism*: <http://www.ocml-vp.org/article2379.html> (Original in French: <http://www.ocml-vp.org/article136.html>).

<sup>7</sup> See *The OCML Voie Proletarienne supports the Communist Party of Peru*: <http://ocml-vp.org/article1829.html> (Original in French: <http://ocml-vp.org/article1827.html>).

This is not the place to expand upon what we have described as the “betrayal of the PCP leadership and Gonzalo's capitulation”, referring instead to our document published in 2017 on the subject available in several languages<sup>8</sup>. We are ready to discuss it in depth, but here again concrete facts and material reality must prevail over subjectivist rhetoric.

It is understandable, therefore, that for the time being we share the view that the assessment of great leaders should not be rushed...

## **On historical and dialectical materialism, against subjectivism and idealism**

By way of conclusion, the entire debate surrounding the positions adopted by the ICL illustrates the confrontation between the idealism and subjectivism that underpin them and historical and dialectical materialism. If these comrades fail to undertake serious self-criticism and do not return to the field of materialism, of a living MLM, not only will they fail themselves, but they will also do considerable damage to Maoism and its concrete development in the class struggle.

Finally, we wish to remain modest. As a small organisation in an imperialist country in crisis, we have suffered greatly from bourgeois reaction and the pressure of organised reformism, the “labour lieutenants of the capitalist class” of which Lenin spoke, as well as the overwhelming numerical and above all ideological presence of the salaried petty-bourgeoisie.

Over the past 45 years, we have overcome many crises and are proud of our heritage. But we know that we must remain very modest and we are counting on counterarguments from Maoists around the world to correct us through criticism and self-criticism, which we know and practise constantly.

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<sup>8</sup> See *On People's War in Peru, the betrayal by the leadership of the PCP and the capitulation of Gonzalo*: <http://ocml-vp.org/article1828.html> (Original in French: <https://ocml-vp.org/article1826.html>. Also available in Spanish: <http://ocml-vp.org/article1830.html>).

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