



UPRISING

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Building 'Dual Power' in the City

reflections on revolutionary strategy for
urban capitalist centres

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- **Toronto Austerity Budgets: Beyond Personalities - P.20**
- **Building Dual Power in the City - P.3**
- **Discussing Methods and Tactics: Mass Work, Spontaneity and Leadership - P.8**
- **What should the work of communists be amongst the people? - p. 10**
- **Why Maoism in Canada? - p.22**



EAT THE RICH!

Nom, nom, nom!!!

The party is just getting started...

We are not a Party - yet.

Revolutionary Initiative is a pre-party formation in Canada. We have presence in multiple cities and are expanding. We are present in numerous areas of work, advancing revolutionary, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist positions in those spaces. But we still have a lot of work to do before we can take the step of organizing ourselves into a revolutionary vanguard Party – that is, an organization that can stand behind its name and live up to its tasks, and organization with deep roots amongst the oppressed, the exploited and the revolutionary in this country.

An important part of the work ahead is the *ideological* work - building ideological unity among our ranks while synthesizing our reality into a revolutionary program. Another essential part

of this work is engaging people outside of our organization in discussion and debate on issues, as well as strategy and tactics. Here is where *Uprising* comes in.

Uprising is the new name of our journal. It will be produced twice a year. With it, we hope to take part in and advance discussions around mass movement building, party-building, and of course, revolution. Selected articles will be used as central documents for conferences and public educationals held by Revolutionary Initiative.

In this issue, we are placing great emphasis on discussing the undertaking of mass work in general, and in particular, how our work ties into the project of building a revolutionary 'dual power'. In this issue, we begin interrogating this concept and discuss proposals from a number

of sectors and angles. We are extending an invitation to all revolutionary forces in this country engage in this discussion by visiting our website, participating in the debate, and perhaps even attending a conference we are scheduled to convene in the Fall of 2012 in Toronto on the question of 'dual power'.

Given extent to which the state is willing and able to go to monitor and repress mass activists and especially revolutionary movements (i.e. G20), we will not be opening this conference broadly to the public. But we aren't going to stop our work either.

If you like what you read, want to contribute to this debate or want to participate in the conference, write us at revintcan@gmail.com. But be sure to write us anonymously! Download 'Tor Bundle' on a USB, set up an anonymous email, and write us from an internet cafe. There's work to be done! Let's get this Party started.

In Resistance,
Uprising Editors
Central Committee, RI

Breaking the Illusions of Liberal Democracy and Building 'Dual Power' in the Urban Setting

by Comrade Victor Hampton

Revolutionary Initiative, as a revolutionary communist pre-Party organization has a responsibility to employ revolutionary methods in building the mass movement and the people's resistance to capitalism and imperialism. The party also has the responsibility to contribute to the ideological and strategic debates among the mass movements as well as among the advanced elements on the Left.

Below is a brief reflection on the organizing in metropolitan, urban centres and the struggles manifesting in these spaces as the crisis in capitalism intensifies. Moreover, the struggle of people in their neighbourhoods against the policies of local governments and its agents raises the question of building 'dual power' structures as strategy for shattering the pretenses of bourgeois democracy and creating a further fracture between the people and the bourgeois state.

The Canadian state and capitalist hegemony

Perhaps more than any other branch of the state, the City (municipal government) has historically played a key role in creating and reinforcing capitalist hegemony. As they are constituted and responsible to the Provinces, the relationship of the people to the state is often experienced through the City, its government and its agents. The majority of direct services, excluding health care

and education, are provided or administered through the City government. As with many urban centres in imperialist countries, state intervention in Canada at the City level have been used to facilitate the efficient and continued



The bourgeoisie: what exactly did we ever have in common with them?

accumulation of capital as well as a means to mitigate the contradictions of capitalist society. Through planning and resource allocation, undertaking essential functions to facilitate economic activity (eg. transportation systems and regulating land ownership), enforcing bourgeois law (police), and administering redistributive programs as well as 'consultative' spaces in governance, the capitalist City serves numerous simultaneous functions within the bourgeois state. These includes operating some of the aforementioned services to ensure labour reproduction, as well as organizing and facilitating capital accumulation through public works, and even cultural development. While these are functions that a socialist state would also undertake, it cannot be overlooked that the capitalist City undertakes these primarily in the service of capital.

The breadth of its operations and their purported neutrality reinforce the idea of the state – and in the case of Canada, the bourgeois state – as an indispensable component of modern society. As such, the idea of the bourgeoisie NOT being in power seems abnormal and unthinkable. Any honest appraisal has to recognize some degree

of effectiveness in achieving bourgeois hegemony at the City level, but at the same time we should recognize the gaps and the opportunities. There are some who project the notion of the municipal branch of the state (in its current form with still a considerable plethora of state run programs and redistributive mechanisms) as evidence of the redeemability of the state within capitalism, an example of the transformative potential of reform within the boundaries of bourgeois legality. From arts programs, to government run community centres, to public zoos, and other programs run by the bourgeois state present a facade of benevolence (or at least its potential) on the part of the ruling class and their state. The implications are that co-habitation between urban working classes and the capitalists within the City is possible and even desirable, all the while attempting to bind the most immediate interests of the working people to it by reinforcing its perceived necessity (and desirability). As evidenced by the caption on a large picture in Toronto's Metro Hall, land use planning and government intervention in social housing ensured that 'poverty was spread out' over the City as opposed to allowing 'the market' to concentrate poverty as is the case in many other North American cities. Urban centres in Canada were projected as models for engineering prosperity, social cohesion and high standards of living – archetypes of the promise of capitalist urbanism. In the absence of an active and visible organized struggle as well as non-co-opted mass movements, this notion remains strong among the people as trade unions, social democratic parties and most social organizations are wedded to Keynesian economics within this imperialist state.

There is a wealth of literature summarizing the decline of the welfare state and the corresponding rise of neoliberalism (or better, neoliberalization which identifies this as an incoherent policy regime aimed at the regulatory and distributive elements of the capitalist state) which make it unnecessary to repeat this information

extensively. However, in terms of summarizing this experience within Canada over the last 30 or so years there has been two correlating phenomenon; 1) a marked shift in the economy away from manufacturing and towards a 'service' based economy and 2) the slow but accelerating reduction in regulations on capital and protections for workers and

Canadian state bureaucracy (including provincial and municipal divisions and other subsidiaries) have consistently increase in number of employees. Since 2007, the number of employees involved in 'Public Administration' has increased by 106 000 employees to 937 000, not including those involved in health and education sectors. The



society as well as the distributive social and economic policies that had been set in place throughout the post-WWII period. With the global re-alignment of the international division of labour that has accompanied this period, urban centres have seen a significant decline in the manufacturing, heavy industry and transport sectors that had provided the basis for the industrial detente engineered by the labour bureaucracy and the national bourgeoisie in order to pacify the militancy that characterized the workers movement until the 1940 s.

In the analysis and debate around the economic changes and the delegation of certain regulatory functions to international institutions, the situation and basis of the state has been often misinterpreted. In the post WWII period, the capitalist state in Canada grew dramatically in terms of its functions and bureaucracy. By the mid 1970 s, the amount of public sector employees had grown by 10 times, far outpacing the increase in the workforce as a whole. Contrary to the political line of liberal bourgeois/ social democratic parties and organizations, the ruling class has no intentions of doing away with the state. Even since the economic decline of the 1970 s, the

federal government remains the largest employer in the country, and within each jurisdiction the corresponding government body remains among the top employers (including Toronto which employs over 48 000) people.

These facts should be clear in our mind – capitalists are not attacking 'the state', but rather are re-organizing its functions and re-allocating resources. This fact is as true at the federal level as it is in the municipal level. The state has been and continues to be the tool of the ruling class to facilitate continued accumulation of wealth as well as to control, manipulate and when needed, subjugate the working classes – this is the essence of the capitalist state and all its appendages. Likewise, although it is of course necessary for mass movements to compel concessions and reforms from the bourgeoisie that may come through the state (although the viability of this becomes more questionable by the day), the capitalist state cannot and should not be seen as a potential instrument of liberation. There is no 'capitalism with a human face'; there is no benevolent form of the bourgeois state. Our fight should not be to preserve the capitalist state in any of its previous

functions. On the contrary, we must work to weaken the state and its grasp over the minds and lives of the people.

For communists the question remains – what do we propose in concrete terms? How do we purport to channel this surging mass energy towards a revolutionary end? Certainly we must continue to build the institutions among the masses that can continue their preparation for revolutionary class struggle. But more concretely, what do we envision as a coordinated project among the people to seize this moment?

Of course, there are legitimate concerns that ruling class attacks on aspects of the social contract will in the immediate term detrimentally impact the working class as a whole. Certainly, revolutionaries should not support the austerity measures that chip away at the welfare state, its programs and regulations. At the same time, we should be wary of ushering the masses, whose anger is growing daily and manifesting itself through the spontaneous movements and demonstrations outlined previously, towards initiatives and calls which look to restore and reinforce the bourgeois state in its welfarist form. Instead, we should present an alternative vision and start preparing people to build it.

The Crisis of Capitalism, municipal austerity and the City

Those bound to the social/liberal democratic project, which currently includes the vast majority of the leadership of organized labour, call for a re-establishment of the Keynesian order, for reinvestment in state run projects, and even for public subsidies to capital in the form of 'stimulus'. In recent years, bourgeois urbanists have elaborated a newly-packaged form of 'trickle down' theory, suggesting that large cities must invest to attract a 'creative class' of businesses and people (read: tech-capitalists, academics and bourgeois artists) in order to generate wealth that ostensibly could be taxed to create revenues to maintain these programs. They focus their arguments (and in doing so mislead the masses) on the desirability

of 'the good old days', without pausing to contemplate its feasibility at this period within capitalism, let alone the counter-revolutionary premise of 'labour peace'. They strive hard to avoid discussion about the roots of these problems, particularly if these point to capitalist structures. Their answer to these problems, so they tell the masses, is simple – elect a better party. In Canada, this has always translated into a 'vote strategic' or 'vote NDP' mantra while in Quebec the same could be said about the BQ/PQ. At the municipal level, this is reduced further to the 'flavor of the month' coalition or urban reformer. Because of their commitment to a purely electoral solution, they have either deliberately or unwittingly suffocated the public imagination and obstructed consideration of real alternatives. The inability for these 'labour leaders' – the labour aristocracy – to recognize the historical limitations of Left-Keynesianism is a matter of their class perspective. The handsomely-salaried bureaucrats of labour are invested in this strategy of 'labour peace' and class compromise. This in turn insulates the imperialist system from elements wishing to 'rock the boat'.

With the roll-back of the social investments and redistributive mechanisms of the bourgeois state however, the illusion of reform as a permanent possibility within capitalism (the sort of North American/ European exceptionalism that became a pillar of the social democratic project and that was the underlying tone of revisionists and Euro-communists) has been fading. It is imperative that we foster this growing distrust and create cleavages between the capital and bourgeois state on the one hand and the people on the other. We must recognize that in order to weaken the strength of capital, we must weaken the strength of the state that protects its interests and assists in coordinating its continued accumulation.

Despite the social/liberal democrats efforts to maintain confidence in the state, the gravity of the problems and the clarity of the contradictions are causing the people to search for solutions beyond those under official consideration. Their unwillingness to recognize class antagonisms and propose solu-



Peking Commune Swag

tions based on this fact is increasingly alienating the social democratic and liberal forces from the broader masses. This has also meant that considerable numbers are being won over to forces of the organized far right, particularly in the US where radical libertarianism is surging and in Europe and Canada where anti-immigrant conservatism has gathered a strong foothold.

Without a clear alternative program and path, many segments of the radical left have been calling or organizing for the re-institution of the policies and programs of the hay-day of Keynesianism in Canada. These forces are looking to employ a strategy of organizing the masses towards achieving reforms. However, whether these campaigns are divorced from a broader analysis or strategy, they nonetheless lead back to a dependence on the bourgeois state as the organizer and maintainer, demanding the state to fund and provide.

Of course in a socialist society, there would also be a need for certain types of social programs and services that are organized and funded with the support of a socialist state. In such a society, involvement and agitation for the state to work with the people to create and

fund initiatives to meet needs would be an essential part of an ongoing revolutionary process. However, the essence of a socialist state is not the same as that of a bourgeois state. Likewise, peoples democracy is not the same as bourgeois democracy.

As the bourgeoisie reveals its callous indifference to the lives of the people and the planet we inhabit, they offer us an opportunity to point out this reality to our class. While there is importance to any area or sector where masses are struggling, communists should centre around campaigns and issues that allow revolutionaries to carry this message and fan the ire of the people against the bourgeoisie and their agents. At the same time, we need to make the people realize – in practical terms – their collective potential and power. The decline in the welfare state will create gaps that the people can fill themselves, providing services to their own all the while increasing the organization of the people independent of the capitalist state. As this process develops, we must also look to have people reject the other illusions of the bourgeois state, including its democratic pretensions.

Building 'Dual Power' in the City

We must recognize that we cannot build a revolutionary movement that confines itself to the parameters of the bourgeois state. Nor is a peaceful, free and just society possible within a capitalist system. Moreover, it should be evident that the capitalists also have little desire and even less capabilities to stabilize this economic crisis let alone return what they once conceded. Revolutionaries should instead be concerned with weakening the hold of the capitalist state over the working class in Canada while accumulating forces to lay a foundation for the revolutionary struggle that is developing before us. Certainly, we must look at previous experiences to draw upon those lessons. We must begin to discuss how we build dual power.

Recall the experience of the Russian Revolution (and in that sense, the Paris Commune as well) to illustrate the actual revolutionary transformation this implies:

What is this dual power? Alongside the Provisional Government, the government of bourgeoisie, another government has arisen, so far weak and incipient, but undoubtedly a government that actually exists and is growing—the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

What is the class composition of this other government? It consists of the proletariat and the peasants (in soldiers' uniforms). What is the political nature of this government? It is a revolutionary dictatorship, i.e., a power directly based on revolutionary seizure, on the direct initiative of the people from below, and not on a law enacted by a centralised state power. It is an entirely different kind of power from the one that generally exists in the parliamentary bourgeois-democratic republics of the usual type still prevailing in the advanced countries of Europe and America. This circumstance often overlooked, often not given enough thought, yet it is the crux of the matter. This power is of the same type as the Paris Commune of 1871. The fundamental characteristics of this type are: (1) the source of power is not a law previously discussed and enacted by parliament, but the direct initiative of the people from below, in their local areas—direct "seizure", to use a current ex-

pression; (2) the replacement of the police and the army, which are institutions divorced from the people and set against the people, by the direct arming of the whole people; order in the state under such a power is maintained by the armed workers and peasants themselves, by the armed people themselves; (3) officialdom, the bureaucracy, are either similarly replaced by the direct rule of the people themselves or at least placed under special control; they not only become elected officials, but are also subject to recall at the people's first demand; they are reduced to the position of simple agents; from a privileged group holding "jobs" remunerated on a high, bourgeois scale, they become workers of a special "arm of the service", whose remuneration does not exceed the ordinary pay of a competent worker.

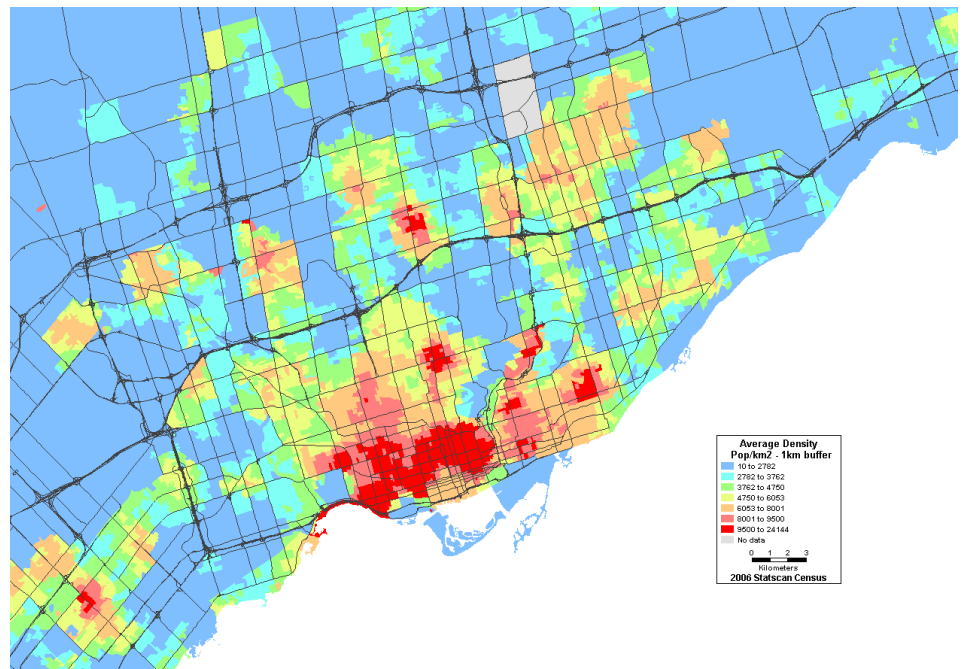
-Lenin, "What is Dual Power", 1917.

Why a dual power strategy? Because it is necessary to break the hold of bourgeois hegemony, the connection, contact and control it has over the masses. Reforms that give more resources to and reinforce the power of the bourgeois state will do little more than feed the temporary support of the social democrats and consume the energies of the masses, but the contradictions and crimes of capitalism will remain. Building dual power by way of building peoples institutions challenges the necessity and thereby legitimacy of

the state, at the same time and preparing the people – both ideologically and practically – to replace it. At an advanced stage, people's power structures also command resources formerly under control of the bourgeois state. Of course, we must always reassert that only revolution can decisively destroy and replace the capitalist order. History has shown that there can be no slow reforming of the capitalist order towards a socialist one. Rather this is a strategy to deepen the contradictions and mass struggle, to push the legal limits of weakening the bourgeoisie while accumulating forces and developing the preparedness of the masses for revolutionary struggle and the mass-administration of a socialist society. Eventually, the bourgeoisie will resort to more drastic and violent methods to reassert their dominance. We must also prepare for this, and will have the advantage of a more experienced mass movement.

What does building dual power look like in the setting of imperialist centers? In Canada, there are 31 Cities with more than 100 000 people. No less than 80% of the population (25 million) lives in these urban centres. While various forms of building dual power are possible, an assessment of the conditions (including the location, size and power of the state as it is) indicate that this necessitates primarily urban forms. Moreover, within the possibilities of creating 'dual power'

Where my people at? Mostly packed into urban centres.



structures, we must recognize that the structure itself must have some basis or commonality in the same way as organizations do and that these must create a parallel, peoples structure to that of the bourgeoisie. Thus, given the current declining relevance and credibility of the municipal branches of the Canadian state in large urban centres, the creation of 'dual power' at the municipal level stands out.

Lenin asserts that dual power structures must have three basic characteristics: they must be undertaken by the people, they must replace the armed apparatus of the state, and they must replace and subject 'officialdom' to popular will. In short, this is the usurping of the power and functions of the bourgeois state (at least at some scale) and placing it instead under direct control of the people. Certainly this requires a high level of organization among the masses and a considerable rooting of proletarian hegemony among the masses which requires communists to creatively apply MLM towards achieving the conditions necessary to form these structures.

In so far as challenging 'officialdom', the credibility of bourgeois democracy is increasingly dubious, with widely recognized corruption and decreasing voter turnout. Reform movements such as those centered on changing the voting system (proportional representation for example) and 'municipal reform' movements naturally feed the same bankrupt electoral system, and thus genuine ambitions to see things change have amounted to little.

Among the emerging mass movement, there is an increased orientations towards 'Neighbourhood' organizing but as of yet these have had little clarity as to how building a movement at this level may look or what they should be focused towards. Providing some directions and orientation, the building of neighbourhood groups can be pushed to establish themselves at very local (block) scale with an organizational articulation and coordination with others in order to also operate at a larger scale. While many will not start at this level of operation, correct application of a step by step building of mass

organization and accumulation of forces towards creation of more localized units should yield positive results in engaging with a large swath of people, picking up contacts and obtaining information about local conditions. With the correct intervention of communists and revolutionaries in them pushing a political-ideological orientation that challenges the legitimacy and authority from the bourgeois state and politicians, these organizations can demand that resources and decision making be transferred directly to the people.

While there are a number of ways that this could occur practically, the primary purpose of building local neighbourhood councils should be to build alternate, organic institutions where revolutionaries can organize. This will be integral part of a process of building consciousness – of what Gramsci called the process of building proletarian hegemony in a war of position against the bourgeoisie. These will be sites of struggle where their existence challenges the necessity of the bourgeois-democratic institutions whether they be local (probably most immediately) or on other levels. The exact form that this takes, the manner in which this demand is articulated and the coordination of these units will be a matter of debate and discussion among the masses where we must be present building anti-imperialist, revolutionary consciousness while pressing maximum cleavages between communities and the bourgeois state.

This application of the gradual building of dual power provides us with sites for building contacts as well as local levels of resistance and organization. Successful interventions by our mass organizations and proletarian revolutionaries, who will challenge bourgeois democracy and build the analytical and ideological capacities of the people, will be able to use these spaces to engage and win over people to a revolutionary alternative.

In this work there will be undoubtedly a pull towards electoralism by the opportunists as well economism. But there is no 'safe' terrain, no type of work among the masses where there isn't this

same risk and possibility. But if we hope to involve a large swath of the broad masses, some will enter into immediate struggle with the expectation of winning immediate concessions, defending against new rounds of attack, or effecting reform. We mustn't repel the masses who operate under such preliminary assumptions; nor must we nurture the social democratic, reformist expectations that liberals and social democrats continuously foster through their own opportunistic interventions. Rather, while struggling amongst the masses, we strive to rupture the current social relations of capitalist imperialist society by demanding concessions and beating back attacks that, rather than renew the legitimacy of the state, advances our accumulation of forces, build peoples organization and replaces bourgeois hegemony with proletarian hegemony.

The strategy of building dual power should become a matter of consideration and debate amongst revolutionaries in Canada, including those that tend towards anarchism. There are many sincere and committed comrades out there, and the social conditions for organizing becoming more advantageous to our forces every day. However, while unity around resisting is coming along, we also need to create maximum unity around a strategy for building. Failure to do so will create space for our enemies of all stripes. Building unity amongst advanced forces should be a priority for all of us.



There are over 35 000 community councils in Venezuela and are directly undertaking over \$2 billion worth of projects.

Spontaneity, Movementism and Leadership Methods

by Comrade Victor Hampton

General reflections on emerging movements

Since the financial collapse of 2008, monopoly finance capital has used the structural crises of government deficits and debts – exacerbated to a great extent by the massive corporate and financial bailouts from 2008 onwards, but rooted in monopoly capitalism’s long-running dependence on state support – to launch an unprecedented transfer of wealth from the masses to the monopoly bourgeoisie, through bailouts and privatizations, to the rising cost of living and all-around attack on wages.

The roll back of redistributive measures and legislative concessions to the masses has awoken a sense of indignation among the people. There is ample evidence of this across the globe, from the recent uprisings in Greece, Spain and Italy, to the mass mobilizations of students in Chile, Colombia, Puerto Rico and Quebec around the cost of education, to the upsurge in the United States demonstrated through the Occupy movements and the Wisconsin General strike. With continued imposition of these ‘austerity’ packages, there is an undeniable and escalating disenchantment and hostility to the lot of bankers, captains of industry and the politicians facilitating this theft. Even polling firms serving the bourgeois press acknowledge that increasing numbers of people are coming to the realization that the problem lies in the political and economic structures that these actors are working through. There is a rising tide of anti-capitalist thought and expression among the masses and this is an extremely positive and important development.

As the crisis continues to unfold, new opportunities for building struggles will present themselves. These will occur on various fronts, with each struggle having

its own particularities and expressing its own demands. There is no single terrain of struggle and we must build to be present in as many of these struggles as possible, without losing our footing in long term base-building projects in the oppressed and exploited masses. All of these are spaces and opportunities to carry the mass line and win workers and others masses over to the idea that radical social transformation must occur in order for these problems to be



decisively resolved.

Of course, communists are and should be present in these aforementioned ‘movements’ and spaces, recruiting from the most advanced elements of these movements but we must also strive to contribute positively to the development and strengthening of these movements in their analysis and action. We must learn from these movements, constantly analyze the mood, desires and inspiration of the people who are fighting and from this, bring a broader analysis of what the problems are and what needs to be done. However, we need to be involved in these struggles in order to understand their sentiments and thinking and to be able to make political interventions. So what should communist involvement in these mass struggles look like? The long experience

of the International Communist Movement provides many lessons for correct methods of organizing the masses and for engaging spontaneous movements which serve as an orientation for us. Some of these lessons remind us to ensure the following:

1. Engage with, don’t worship, spontaneity

Some of these spaces and movements can be relatively spontaneous, amorphous and sometimes limited in their scope (ie. issue based). This does not mean that they will necessarily stay this way, as many spontaneous movements and uprisings give birth to more radical, better organized movements. The Quebec student strike is an important recent example: in a mass movement built to combat a 75% tuition fee increase, the largest and most radical student union, CLASSE, has taken a principled line against Quebec’s colonial ‘Plan Nord’ and has been able to navigate beyond the trappings of economism to develop the strike into a broader social movement and strike. This movement is a good example how a mass struggle can leap from a struggle around very limited demands into a more far-sighted and militant movement.

Spontaneously arising mass movements can often appear to lack structure and/or direction, but this does not necessarily mean that there is no leadership involved. In fact, this condition often makes such movements susceptible to direction and even misguidance from an organized presence operating within them. Such was the case with the involvement of the Liberal Party and the NDP in the mobilizations around the proroguing of the Canadian Parliament and the co-option of that movement as a result.

In the same vein, there will undoubtedly

be (at least for a time) a political eclecticism that characterizes these movements and we enter in these spaces as one of many lines being presented, from anarchism to primitivism, from right-wing libertarianism to quasi or crypto-social democrats. These tendencies have their limitations, and there may even be reactionary currents within them. Revolutionary forces must be conscious of the class character of these spaces while cautioning against those who will opportunistically co-opt the energy of these nascent or spontaneous spaces for electoral ends or other purposes that are not in the interest of developing these movements and advancing their legitimate demands.

These spaces should be assessed appropriately when contemplating work with or within them and part of our mass line should always emphasize the need to have these struggles crystallize into independent people's organizations that can ensure the longevity and continuity of a struggle.

2. Communists must engage on a principled ideological and political basis

The participation of our cadre and party members in any of these movements should never be of the fleeting, opportunistic variety where we move through spaces simply to take advantage of the convoking of people these bring. Quite to the contrary, we should be sincere in our support for any movement that is genuine in its desire to challenge the crimes of capital and our political and ideological interventions should call out and educate the masses against the sorts of opportunists that routinely arise in these spaces. But more importantly, we should emphasize class analysis, democratic engagement with and highest possible political unity amongst the masses at a given conjuncture.

Some sections of the radical left point to these contradictions listed above and the imperfections of these spontaneous spaces as reasons for abdication. We should be reminded however that revolutionaries should be contesting as many spaces where the masses are present and where there is opportunity to win these masses towards revolutionary ideas,

political struggle, and organizational forms. Winning these masses over to a revolutionary mass line and organizing them will help clarify the contradictions and scattered thoughts that they may have so that the real enemy becomes clear and the path towards liberation well defined. However, almost all spaces where masses are present are rife with contradictions and as such, the ideas of those masses in these spaces can be negatively influenced as a result. This is not a reason to retract from entering these spaces although reactionary ideas and leadership must be fought.

Our participation and the leadership style that we offer in these spaces can never be opportunistic – we must always talk direct and clearly with the masses with the guiding principles of our mass work and how to carry out work and ideological development among the people. We must deal with people's immediate grievances and issues but always project beyond them so that we do not fall into the trap of economism and parochialism.

3. Work to build up the organizational capacity of the masses

Building a movement naturally entails building organizational capacity amongst the masses. People's involvement in these organizational forms presents the opportunity for engaging ideologically with and among them. There should be little question that currently in most parts of the country, the people are not prepared yet to go to open war with the state. Yet every one of these struggles, and the intransigence and violence from government is an opportunity for the people to bear witness to the true character of state. Conversely, these movements also offer opportunities for revolutionaries to bring our analysis and developing program to the people as they engage in their struggle, where each activity and demonstration can contribute to their preparation for the next phase of struggle. While these preparations occur daily as the pitch of struggle heightens, the mass movements need a far greater development and accumulation of forces as well as greater coordination and coherence in order to make a qualitative progression

in the tactics being applied against the state and its agents.

Of course, this will largely depend on the ability of the advanced segments of the working class to coordinate and carry out a strategy to develop the mass movement towards revolutionary struggle with the state. This strategy will have to be a multilayered strategy with legal and clandestine organizing, contesting spaces where the masses can be won away from bourgeois leadership to proletarian leadership, engaging in both legal and illegal work. The tactics employed in each area must be coordinated and are not mutually exclusive.

4. Strategically firm, tactically flexible

We enter into these movements with limitations, prior commitments of work and a strategic orientation for the mass movement – we should always balance the need for intervention in these emerging movements and developments with our previous commitments to the masses and building firm mass organization amongst the people. It will be through these organizations that mass activists are developed and that we will rally revolutionaries to the building of a Party. This necessarily implies that we are limited in our human and material resources and do not have the luxury to be omnipresent. The opportunists are highly skilled at swooping in to dominate any and all spontaneous mass movements and redirecting them to their narrow social democratic ends, and liquidating whatever is threatening to them. A revolutionary approach aims to nurture and guide spontaneity in order to create higher forms of organization and mobilization wherever possible.

Revolutionaries need to guard against the tendency to jump from issue to issue, diverting resources away from our constant work to other issues or movement which may dissipate or whose work may not fall within our plans. That being said, a truly revolutionary organization must have a sharp and critical eye so that organizational plans are not so rigid and static as to make them inflexible to emerging issues that should command our attention and participation.

Mass Work and Proletarian Revolutionaries

by Comrade Amil K.



Introduction

The question of what are the tasks of proletarian revolutionaries amongst the masses remains a major point of difference¹ between and an obstacle to the unification of the two revolutionary communist organizations in Canada, the Revolutionary Communist Party and our own organization, Revolutionary Initiative. This article is intended to explain the answer to this question not only to advance the unity-struggle-transformation process between Canada's two revolutionary communist organizations, but also as a general discussion that all revolutionaries should be having.

How RI understands mass work of proletarian revolutionaries can be broken down into three questions:

First, what is the correct form of revolutionary leadership by proletarian revolutionaries among the masses? Based on the revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, we uphold the mass line method of leadership; but we do not take it for granted that upholding the mass line theory leads to its implementation in practice. A related question to the mass line in particular and mass work in general is who we understand the advanced masses to be – a question that, as is argued below, follows from our understanding of the contradictions of Canadian society. We cannot define our mass work unless we know what sections of the masses we prioritize in our work.

Based on the answer we give to these questions, we then proceed to answer a second major question: How should proletarian revolutionaries relate to the masses in the current phase of revolutionary struggle, which is a phase of regroupement of proletarian revolutionaries in Canada? Or in other words, what should be the relationship between the Party and the masses broadly?

Third, based on our answers to Questions 1 and 2, we must answer the question of what should the character and role of the mass movement in the proletarian revolution be? We argue that the mass movement must be the basis for the construction of proletarian hegemony.

The answers we give to each of these questions is based on five fruitful years of practical party-building by Revolutionary Initiative. Since 2010, we have been operating under a Five Year Plan to satisfy what we deem to be the necessary preconditions for establishing a genuine proletarian revolutionary vanguard. In these years we have had ample opportunity to test out many of

our preliminary hypotheses on party-building we set out in our foundational documents, hypotheses that were developed to publicly articulate our unresolved differences with the RCP-Canada at the time of their first Canadian Revolutionary Congress in late 2006.

In the interest of advancing the unity-struggle-transformation process amongst revolutionaries in this country – between the RCP and RI and more broadly amongst all proletarian revolutionaries – we are initiating this discussion in an open fashion. After a number of years of more or less active “unity-struggle” between RI and RCP-Canada we have made little headway towards unification on a principled basis – which is not for lack of effort on the part of RI.

(1) The Correct Form of Leadership is the Mass Line

Our organization upholds the principle of the mass line – first articulated by Mao Zedong, but since refined and honed by many Maoist forces – as being the highest and clearest articulation of the correct form of proletarian revolutionary leadership amongst the masses.

Although scattered throughout speeches and writings spanning many years in the revolutionary struggle, the collection of quotations from Mao Zedong on the mass line forms one of the richest articulations of a revolutionary epistemology and pedagogy in the International Communist Movement – that is, epistemology and pedagogy at the service of the proletarian revolution.

Epistemology is that branch of philosophy that deals with questions of where knowledge comes from and how knowledge is produced. In Mao's *On Practice*, the answer given to this question is that in the contradiction (unity of opposites) between knowledge and practice, know-

ing and doing, the truth of an idea stems from social practice. The correctness of a concept is rooted in a systemization of our perceptions or the phenomenon we observe around us. Taken with Mao's On Contradiction, these two pieces amount

communist ideas – ideas that have been substantially enriched by knowing and living the experiences of the people in all the specificity and particularity that is required to advance class struggle in any given place and time.

a dialectical and historical materialist analysis of the society in question – and then return back to the people those ideas in a concentrated form.



to Mao Zedong's contribution to and enrichment of dialectical materialism.

Another dimension of the mass line is its pedagogical content, which speaks to the relationship between teaching and learning. Some academics of education theory would call this a 'critical pedagogy', based on the watered-down, liberal interpretation of the radical Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Critical pedagogy is a method of teaching and learning where the teacher not only teaches the student, but learns from the student as well. The student is not an empty vessel waiting to be filled with knowledge. The teacher, regardless of his/her expertise on a topic, cannot teach the student effectively without engaging with the student's own experiences and knowledge, which also teaches the teacher.

If the communist is the teacher, then what s/he strives to teach is materialist dialectics and history and the strategic orientation for revolutionary struggle. But the mass line recognizes that one cannot teach revolutionary politics adequately without first being familiar with the conditions and experiences of the masses, and that knowing can only come by way of humbly learning from and being taught by the masses. Communist ideas are not neat little pre-packaged ideas that we just have to go out and disseminate amongst the people. The most important communist ideas, those that RI seeks to develop, are the mass-lined

Both the epistemological and pedagogical aspects of Mao Zedong's mass line speak to the complimentary but opposing aspects of leadership that make up a unified whole: how we gather the ideas and how we disseminate them, how we teach and learn, and how we lead but also take leadership from the people. It is this form of leadership, a proletarian revolutionary leadership, that constantly strives to expand the horizon of proletarian revolutionary leadership in preparation for revolution and the mass administration of socialist society and through the process of continuous revolution until we have reached a classless communist society.

The most succinct formulation of the mass line given by Mao are in phrases like:

Take the ideas of the masses and concentrate them, then go to the masses, persevere in the ideas and carry them through, so as to form correct ideas of leadership – such is the basic method of leadership.

Or even briefer, "From the masses, to the masses."

What Mao meant by concentrating the ideas of the masses was that after gathering the scattered but most progressive, advanced, and revolutionary ideas from the people, it was necessary to filter and refine those ideas through

But what are these "advanced ideas"? Is it knowledge of classical literature or an understanding of the physical sciences? Do the most intelligent people have the most "advanced ideas"? Of course not. A substantial bulk of the advanced masses to be found in the context of the Chinese revolution were illiterate peasants. The "advanced ideas" Mao referred to were those ideas that could be harnessed and developed for the revolutionary struggle, ideas that corresponded to a revolutionary alignment of the correct social forces against the principal class enemies in the society, "advanced" in the sense of being truly historically progressive for the bulk of humanity (not to be confused with those "progressives" in the imperialist countries who advocate for a capitalism that benefits their lot at the expense of the continuing misery, violence, and super-exploitation for the rest of humanity).

For example, an old West Indian granny in a poor neighbourhood who sees the police as a greater enemy than the youth hanging around in the stairwells of her building, and who fails to be incited by Islamophobia against the new Afghani refugee family that just moved in next door because she sees in them the same struggling, dispossessed proletarian migrant she once was (or still is!) has some "advanced ideas" that can, at the very least, be mobilized for mass struggle. A white auto-worker in a small industrial town in southern Ontario who sees himself as more on side with the native folks asserting their land rights than the government and the bosses also has some "advanced ideas".

Since "advanced ideas" are scattered amongst the people, and since most people hold some combination of backward ideas and advanced ideas, we can and must classify the people in accordance with how advanced their consciousness is. There's no other way to test consciousness than through social practice and mass struggle. In an imperialist, colonial, and bourgeois society like Canada, we find varying



degrees of allegiance to or hatred for the ruling classes and their ideas. A million factors influence where one can fall on such a spectrum, such as: class position, class background, class trajectory, or the degree to which one is influenced by bourgeois ideological apparatuses on a day-to-day basis versus one's level of exposure to proletarian revolutionary ideological influences.

The hegemony of the imperialist bourgeoisie over the masses is incomplete, limited, and must constantly be renewed to be effective. It is incapable of totally subordinating the oppressed and exploited masses, given that the relations of production in an imperialist world system will always generate the system's gravediggers. That its hegemony is incomplete is to recognize that there are always people that can be won over to revolutionary struggle – even in non-revolutionary situations – and it is to suggest that there are advanced layers that must be united so that they can provide leadership to those under a greater degree of hegemony by the imperialist bourgeoisie. Understanding this, Mao classified the people into three parts:

The masses in any given place are generally composed of three parts, the relatively active, the intermediate and the relatively backward. The leaders must therefore be skilled in uniting the small number of active elements around the leadership and must rely on them to raise the level of the intermediate elements and to win over the backward elements.

“Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership” (June 1, 1943), Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Vol. III, p. 118.

Unite the “active” or advanced to organize the “middle” to win over the “backward” elements of the masses –this is the mass line expressed in political terms.

But who are these advanced elements in our own society?

The advanced masses in Canada are those in an antagonistic contradiction with Canadian imperialism and have a subjective understanding of that contradiction

In general terms, we define the advanced masses as those who are in contradiction with Canadian imperialism, are to some degree conscious of that contradiction, and are willing to struggle against that contradiction. They may not understand their enemy as ‘Canadian imperialism’, but that is the conceptual leap that we strive to generate an understanding of when we systematize people’s experiences of oppression and exploitation. But there is, however, a material basis for being part of the advanced masses: those who stand in antagonistic contradiction with Canada’s political economy – i.e. with no possibility of reconciling that contradiction. While there are and will continue to be revolutionaries who come not from the most oppressed and exploited masses, our project is principally to unite those in an antagonistic contradic-

tion with Canadian imperialism, whose material interests cannot be reconciled with Canada’s economic system.

By definition then, a more specific and detailed answer to the question of who the advanced masses are can only be given on the basis of a comprehensive class analysis and historical materialist overview of Canadian society – which RI is, admittedly, still in the process of developing. We do not yet have a developed program for revolution in this country, nor do we pretend to. So the following considerations can only reflect the transitional and incomplete analysis RI has advanced thus far on Canadian society based on the few years of experience we have in party building. With that disclaimer, let’s provide a very brief overview of the contradictions in Canadian society as we understand them, so as to qualify who we identify as “advanced”.

Canada’s dominant position in the international division of labour – evidenced by Canadian corporations and banks operating and dominating all across the world, super-exploiting workers in all continents and plundering their lands – is only one aspect of Canadian imperialism. That these corporations are able to compete and dominate globally is part of what makes Canada an imperialist power in the imperialist world system.

As a country with internal colonies and colonized people – the native lands and the indigenous peoples and nations within Canada’s colonial borders – there is a colonial division within Canadian society as well. As the world’s second largest country (based on lands Canada claims but has not yet conquered²) and as a settler society, Canada has always been heavily reliant upon migrant workers to replenish the lower ranks of its proletariat (as well as skilled workers and some professionals). For decades after the second inter-imperialist war (WWII), many industrial workers along with many public sector workers were bourgeoisified and won over to a pro-imperialist class peace against the interests of the more superexploited (im) migrant workers, black and urban native workers, women workers, reserve-based indigenous peoples, and the peoples of

the colonies and neocolonies oppressed and exploited by Canadian imperialism all across the world. In the last few years, especially since the onset of the 2008 crisis of the imperialist world system, this upper stratum is experiencing a precipitous decline in its income and social security. The leadership of opportunist labour aristocrats over this strata has left it seriously lacking in the ideological, political, or organizational means to fight back against the capitalist offensive. It's ideology is class peace, it's politics is social democracy, and it's organizational basis is a bureaucratized labour movement that has been unable to resist the austerity offensive. This pro-imperialist class peace – a forsaking of proletarian revolutionary solidarity – is now coming back to bite them in the ass. Nevertheless, it is among this strata of the working class that the illusions of social democracy and liberalism remain the strongest.

On the basis of the said points, the “advanced masses” are those who can be rallied and consolidated to play a leading role in the proletarian revolution, those whose class background, position, trajectory and most importantly class consciousness, provide the most solid subjective and objective basis for building a proletarian revolutionary movement. Needless to say, having “advanced ideas” is not the same as having a proletarian revolutionary consciousness, since the latter is a systematization and broadening out of the former via a scientific socialist (i.e. dialectical and historical materialist) understanding of the world. But it's the advanced elements we must seek out and struggle amongst so as to develop and consolidate proletarian revolutionaries.

We believe that the advanced masses reveal themselves in a number of ways in Canadian society, listed here in no significant order. Although each of these categories cut across classes, it should go without saying that we must prioritize the recruitment of those who derive from the most oppressed and exploited masses.

(i) Anti-capitalist revolutionaries:

We begin with that very small proportion of the masses who have arrived by whatever means at the conclusion that capitalism must be overthrown and/or who identify with revolutionary ideas such as anarchism, socialism, and communism. These are the advanced masses which most “left” groups concentrate on in their recruitment drives, especially by focusing on social movement spaces and university campuses.

We must embrace and advance the most steadfast revolutionaries amongst these elements of society, while struggling against many of the erroneous ideas that prevail amongst the same people, such as the electoralism, reformism, pacifism, first world chauvinism, bureaucratism, identity politics, social movementism, anti-organizational anarchism, anti-communism, etc.

But this section of society remains small and isolated as a result of the ideological hegemony exercised by the bourgeoisie over what the masses believe socialism and communism to be, a belief that matches not the historical record but rather the bourgeoisie's fantastically distorted and nightmarish recollections of what they were. “Communism” is a word that has been much maligned and distorted by our class enemies. The historical achievements of the communist parties in many parts of the world as vanguards of workers' liberation, women's liberation, and anti-colonial liberation have been buried under a mountain of lies and distortions.

The true causes of the defeat of socialism – reformism and revisionism within the communist movement – are obscured, keeping revolutionaries today from being able to correctly synthesize the positive and negative lessons of previous generations of struggle. The greatest revolutionary leaders are attacked as the greatest monsters in history. What a way to keep the masses from examining what these figures actually had to say and what they actually contributed! Instead of making a correct (proletarian revolutionary) assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of previous revolutionary leaders and experiences, so many of us have swallowed the bourgeoisie's assessment of these experiences and leaders. From the perspective of the imperialist bourgeoisie, of course the ideas of Mao Zedong and the experience of the Chinese revolution are monstrously totalitarian! Revolution is not a democratic thing in relation to the exploiting classes. Meanwhile, the most reformist and revisionist “communist” leaders are celebrated by bourgeois historians as great reformers and democrats, from Khrushchev to Gorbachev and Yeltsin, from Deng Zhao-Ping to Vaclav Havel and all the other traitors to the proletarian revolution in between.

So if the people are hearing what the bourgeoisie has trained them to hear when we talk about “communism” then why the hell would anyone want to join a communist Party? But in struggling alongside the masses, especially the most exploited and oppressed, around



their various concerns and issues, we can dispel the bourgeois slanders against the proletarian revolution and assist the people in rediscovering its lessons through direct experience and indirectly through study.

Because of what people think “communism” is, the size of the forces across Canada who spontaneously identify with communism or socialism will not be substantial enough to serve as the main recruitment ground or a launching point for a proletarian revolutionary vanguard in this country. Hence, there will be many ideological obstacles to be overcome with the militant anti-capitalists we meet. These challenges are not raised to discount these sections of the masses, which we would ignore at our own peril. The most revolutionary and steadfast among these forces – especially from proletarian backgrounds and the oppressed nations, can and must be developed to play a prominent role in the revolutionary struggle.

However, there are other ways to understand the advanced masses based on the contradictions that make up Canadian society. The advanced masses consist not only of those who have developed a subjective viewpoint that the system as a whole is rotten, parasitic and has to go – which may or may not correspond to their own lived experiences – but also those who live suffer the most exploitative and oppressive aspects of the system on a daily basis and most often have a very rich understanding of their own oppression and exploitation.

The following categories of the advanced masses are framed in terms of subjective outlook, but the most important elements amongst these advanced elements have an objective basis for their ideas.

(ii) Defenders of the rights and welfare of the people

Another important section of the advanced masses are the mass leaders and community organizers who put in their tireless efforts in defense of the political rights, economic well-being and social welfare of the people. Foremost among

these are the tireless unpaid community organizers and volunteers who serve the people expecting to gain nothing in return. Some paid workers can be included among this section of the advanced masses – such as some social service workers, unionists, teachers, etc – if they have clearly demonstrated that they are willing to place the interests of the people ahead of their own careers and self-aggrandizement and clearly go far beyond their paid duties to serve the people.

Foremost in significance among these organizers and servants of the people, however, are those who actually come from the affected strata of society, and are driven not by paternalistic conceptions of charity or liberal humanitarianism but of struggle and solidarity. Among such people we must still struggle against tendencies like economism – the tendency to focus only on meeting people’s short-term needs at the expense and to the exclusion of developing revolutionary ideology, politics, and organization – and reformism, the idea that capitalism can be reformed to fully meet the needs of the people. We must also struggle against any national chauvinist, religious, and social chauvinist sentiments that place the needs, welfare, and interests of some of the masses in Canada against those of others, be they non-status peoples, migrant workers, workers abroad, indigenous people, other ethnic groups, etc.

Such mass leaders and servants of the people we must win over to a revolutionary approach to serving the people, an approach that emphasizes and prioritizes the construction of proletarian hegemony in the course of their work.

(iii) Anti-colonialists

Another section of the advanced masses in Canada are those who are opposed to the colonial character of the Canadian state and society. The vast majority of the indigenous peoples and nations who are struggling to defend their lands against Canadian imperialism and colonialism, who are being herded into Canadian prisons at genocidal propor-

tions, who have been and are still being dispossessed and impoverished by Canadian colonialism, and who can identify their main enemy as the Canadian state and its colonial policies, are part of the advanced masses.

To be sure, there are some natives whose rewards outweigh any exploitation, dispossession or oppression they have experienced at the hands of Canadian colonialism. There are the big enemies of indigenous liberation, like the bureaucrat capitalists of the Indian Affairs bureaucracy who are handsomely compensated by the Canadian state and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada for playing their part in the colonial bureaucracy, like former Assembly of First Nations Chief Phil Fontaine (who now advises the Royal Bank of Canada). The native comprador and bureaucrat capitalists rely on the likes of national liquidationists like former Kamloops Chief Manny Jules, who is the lead ideological proponent of the ‘Fee-Simple’ scheme that would amend the Indian Act to break up reserve system by commodifying and municipalizing its land base, thereby completely extinguishing the national rights of natives to their land and turning it over to the unbridled domination of monopoly capital.

There are also some non-Aboriginal people who are opposed to Canadian colonialism by virtue of knowing, having seen, or having studied the history and present state of Canadian colonialism. But many of these forces are driven more by white settler guilt than revolutionary solidarity and are hostile to the proletarian revolution. So they must be won over to support the full national liberation of indigenous people alongside a proletarian revolutionary and anti-imperialist project.

There are also some big native capitalists that benefit from Canada’s imperialist position in the international relations of production, such as the few billionaires of the Grand River Enterprises based out of Six Nations, who operate Canada’s third largest cigarette manufacturer with multinational operations.

However, by and large, the vast ma-

majority of indigenous people are nothing like these compradors and bureaucrat capitalists. The vast majority are being severely impoverished or dispossessed by Canadian colonialism along with all the genocidal colonial violence that is required to destroy a nation.

The very struggle of indigenous peoples to survive as peoples and nations comes into direct conflict with the interests of the Canadian imperialist bourgeoisie to plunder the lands and resources of native lands and exterminate the native peoples as such. Canada's big mining companies and banks by definition have no interest but to rape indigenous lands of their resources and in the process eliminate them as nations, as they have done for centuries. But the anti-colonial movement is limited in how far it can proceed without revolutionary unity with the rest of the proletariat. Any form of indigenous self-determination that keeps Canadian imperialism in tact will be nothing but neo-colonialism.

The task of the proletarian revolution must be to effect a convergence between the anti-colonial movement in Canada with the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist movements. It is not the place of the non-indigenous part of the movement to dictate what form the national liberation movement of indigenous people will take. It's the task of the proletarian revolutionary movement to assert the need to build a revolutionary united front with the Indian national liberation movement, struggling to unite the movements of the most oppressed and exploited settlers and immigrants with it. Since the indigenous liberation struggle is already an objectively present form, the greater challenge here is not the winning over the anti-colonial movement (which already exists) to the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist movement, but the development of the struggles of the poor, the workers, and the immigrants into a revolutionary unity with indigenous peoples against Canadian imperialism. It is also a greater challenge because indigenous people as such – or the Indian nation, if you will – must continue to be decimated and dispersed for Canadian imperialism to survive. Canadian imperialism is founded upon and continues to be

driven by resource extraction of its internal colonies and also of semi-colonial across the world. It's easier to buy off and corrupt sections of the proletariat in the imperialist centers and cities than it is to compromise with the land claims of indigenous people. Nonetheless, there can be no overthrow of Canada's imperialist bourgeoisie if we do not starve it of the pillage it takes from the internal colonies and unconditionally support genuine national liberation for indigenous peoples.

(iv) Anti-imperialist and pro-national liberation for the oppressed countries

Another substantial portion of the advanced masses in Canada are those who support or who can be won over to supporting national liberation struggles in their countries of origin, namely immigrants and their children. Anti-imperialist forces can be developed out of that substantial part of the population that is relatively new to Canada, the immigrant families who continue to have a stake in and/or identify with the lands and nations from which they come. Leaving aside for a moment their interests as proletarians or petty-bourgeois elements in Canada, many immigrants still look to the mounting disasters in their home countries with sorrow and indignation. While this outlook can also be a conservatizing influence ("Thank God I'm in Canada!"), we must struggle with the immigrant masses to recognize the role of imperialism in exploiting their countries, fueling the reactionary civil wars, and defending the most reactionary and repressive forces.

Many still have family members who they worry about, if not directly support through remittances. A great number of these people can be won over to supporting the national liberation struggles and revolutionary movements back at home, and must be struggled with to view Canadian imperialism as the principal enemy to their interests and the interests of their compatriots and family members back home. We must foster an understanding of Canadian imperialism that not only emphasizes its external projection into the oppressed countries, but the foundation of the imperialist social formation within Canada. Win-

ning over petty-bourgeois immigrants in Canada to supporting the national liberation movements back home may be more difficult, since they may themselves hail from landlord, comprador, or bureaucrat capitalist classes back at home. But even some of these elements – if they experience a frustration of their class aspirations along with racism in Canada – can also be won over to anti-imperialist struggle.

Winning over the newly-migrated to confronting the Canadian state in Canada will be difficult in proportion to the class mobility they have undergone within Canada and the class mobility they believe is still within reach.

We must struggle against the ruse of multicultural nationalism that is targeted at new migrants, the sort of nationalism that over the last forty years has ideologically reinforced the feeling among immigrants that they should feel "grateful" to be in a country as great (and white!) as Canada. Multicultural nationalism obscures the fact that, despite the colonial powers that established Canada, at no stage was Canada ever a homogeneously white country beyond its ruling class. The lower strata of the proletariat have always been racialized with immigrants and displaced urban indigenous people. The feeling of lack of entitlement that many racialized immigrants and even racialized citizens feel in light of the white supremacist account of Canadian history (which is not a white history) is a strategy of the ruling classes for containing and neutralizing class struggle.

In struggling to break the influence of this sort of nationalism over new migrants, which is especially rampant amongst the more petty-bourgeois immigrants, we must identify and expose the crimes and injustices of the Canadian state and capital. We must expose the allure of assimilation for the pipe dream that it is by revealing the long history of the super-exploitation of immigrants that Canada is founded upon. We must oppose any cropping up of reactionary immigration policies that propose for newer immigrants and migrant workers lesser rights than those who preceded them. We must win over these "soft" anti-imperialists who still support the

struggles of their compatriots back home to become full anti-imperialists within Canada – to confront Canadian imperialism in its headquarters.

It is worth reiterating that, although the above-named four categories of the “advanced masses” can be found cutting across the social classes, it is those from the most proletarian backgrounds – the most oppressed, exploited, and dispossessed – that we must build our Party amongst, since their lot cannot be improved under Canadian imperialism. The significance of the most oppressed and exploited mass leaders and activists, immigrants, and indigenous peoples for revolution are often downplayed, misunderstood, or ignored by many activist groups, “Marxist” organizations, and other opportunist and petty-bourgeois forces. Or worse, they are co-opted or used as tokens. The task of the proletarian revolutionary organization is to develop and elevate these elements to provide revolutionary leadership along class lines (and for indigenous peoples, revolutionary nationalist lines) to the masses they work and struggle with.

(2) What is the relationship between the Party and the masses?

Our understanding of the mass line and who we believe to constitute the advanced masses sets the basis for answering the question of how proletarian revolutionaries should be relating to the advanced masses. The mass line principle of leadership demonstrates that proletarian revolutionaries lead the masses principally not through organizational command but ideological influence and political example through the mass movement.

This is not to say that the proletarian revolutionary party should be kept from the masses, as a secret or network completely invisible to the people. It shouldn't be promoted for its ideological, political, and organizational leadership. Perhaps this is the impression that some have of Revolutionary Initiative because of its lack of open and public propaganda up to this point in our development. While many of our members have not disclosed our organizational ties to RI over a period when our organi-

zation was smaller and more susceptible to enemy infiltration, surveillance, and disruption, this is not to say that we have kept our ideological, political, and organizational lines from the masses. Whether or not a more open exposure of RI amongst the masses would have been conducive to the long-term development of the proletarian revolutionary movement, our position remains the same that proletarian revolutionaries should relate to the masses through the mass line and as active participants in mass movement.

Does this mean that we shouldn't relate to the masses as communists? Of course we should. And we should also be spreading “communist ideas” wherever we work. But the mass-lined communist ideas discussed above, not trite slogans or stale dogma. The burden of proof really falls upon us (as revolutionary communists) to demonstrate in practice and through struggle that only revolutionary communism paves the road to the resolution of the exploitation, oppression, precariousness, and insecurity that most of us face. To do this effectively, we must elaborate and enrich our general conceptions about Canadian history, society, and revolution through the particularity of the struggles we engage in, and upon that basis derive the strategy and tactics to actually advance class struggle. It is from the particularity of any given sector of the oppressed and exploited masses that we must make the case for socialism, revolution, and the rebuilding of a revolutionary communist party. None of this patient and protracted work can be leap-frogged by simply wearing Mao on the lapel or waving a party rag at the masses.

Such a burden of proof is not to be found in general platitudes or programmatic points – as necessary as these are to unite a revolutionary movement – but from the particularities of any given section of the proletariat. And it is immersed in the mass movement that proletarian revolutionaries will develop the sufficiently concrete analyses of concrete situations to advance the struggle.

Lest we be perceived as completely

delusional – or worse, lumped in with the totalitarian mass killers that the bourgeoisie has the people thinking that we support – then we need to reinvent the communist struggle on the terrain of the current contradictions in Canadian society and in the current imperialist world system.

To do this, we believe that we need mass-based organizations in which proletarian revolutionaries can struggle alongside the broad masses – many of whom will not be immediately won over



to a revolutionary party – to develop class analyses and correct strategy and tactics for class struggle. It's our position that such mass organizations need to be truly democratic and truly independent, not mere Party fronts, be they open or secret. It's baffling how difficult it is for some communists to wrap their head around the concept of a mass organization that is democratic and independent yet still under the leadership of proletarian revolutionaries; or an organization that is not communist, does not have a communist basis of unity, but in which revolutionary and even communist ideas can be engaged. This view is essentially identical to the view of anti-communists who label any organization in which ideas of class struggle can be democrati-

cally engaged as a communist or red organization. Yes, red in influence and orientation, perhaps. But nonetheless fully mass-democratic and independent in character. We revolutionary communists have no fear of debating our ideas openly in mass-democratic organizations. It's for this reason that anti-communism organizational principles cannot tolerate mass-democratic organizational forms. This is why the purging of reds from the union movement from the 1940s onwards went hand-in-hand with the bureaucratization of the labour movement.



Because of the near absence of mass organizations independent of the ruling class in our society, a large part of our work must consist of building them. To build mass organizations independent from bourgeois hegemony is only one side of the proverbial coin of building proletarian hegemony. To be clear, a class struggle basis of unity is not a communist basis of unity. But it is a class struggle basis of unity, which we struggle to win over to the general political line of socialist revolution. Such spaces of mass struggle are spaces in which such debates can play out. Party fronts – some of which may be necessary – cannot fulfill this function because of the pretense of already being under the

organizational leadership of a Party. We must struggle to win over the masses to the leadership of the Party, but this struggle cannot precede the actual class struggle, which is where revolutionary communists will win over the trust and confidence of the masses.

Communists should lead through ideology, not mere organizational mechanisms. The Communist Party exercises organizational leadership (via democratic centralism) only over its own members, not the masses.

If we are correct in our analysis of where the advanced masses are to be found in Canadian society, as well as in our estimation that the proportion of forces who can be immediately organized on a communist basis is quite small, then it follows that we must build mass organizations that line up with the contradictions of Canadian society. For all those who can be united immediately on a communist basis, let's unite with them and integrate them with the tasks that our party-building organization has set for itself. But let's not distance ourselves from the masses by working exclusively with these already-revolutionary elements, many of whom do not even hail from the oppressed and exploited sections of Canadian society, but rather petty-bourgeois or more class privileged backgrounds and who are radicalized through university campus politics.

We believe the general method of accumulation of revolutionary forces at the current phase of revolutionary struggle – regroupement – must come through mass movement building in and around the advanced masses identified above. We do not believe that the revolutionary Party can be rebuilt through the mere grouping together of the already-revolutionaries who are disconnected from the concrete struggles of the masses.

Proletarian revolutionaries should be immersing themselves amongst the people, struggling alongside them, helping clarify problems, and formulating correct class analyses, strategies and tactics for building people power and

revolutionary struggle. In places where the people are facing desperate situations and their needs are being wholly ignored or unmet by bourgeois society, we should build serve the people programs to satisfy the needs of the people – be they material, cultural, or social – not in a social-service fashion, but as an infrastructural basis for advancing people's power.

In places where the needs of the masses are being satisfied in the short-term but threatened in the long-run by the current offensive of imperialism – from “austerity” measures to the ongoing colonization of native lands – then we should focus less people's immediate material needs and more on building political structures to resist and advance the struggle.

(3) Build the mass movement for proletarian hegemony

As important as the construction of the mass movement is for the development of the proletarian revolutionary vanguard, it should not be seen as a mere spring board for mass leaders and activists into the Party. Another reason for respecting the independence of the mass movement and its mass organizations is because it will be the basis for the proletarian hegemony that is needed to not only make revolution, but for the mass democratic administration of a socialist society. A vast array of people's organizations must be constructed to build up the backbone of the proletarian revolution – a proletarian counter-hegemony that we will require to win the class war against the imperialist bourgeoisie. This is what ‘base-building’ and ‘red power’ consists of in the imperialist countries: the step by step, organization by organization, campaign by campaign, alliance by alliance, battle by battle upward-spiral accumulation of our forces, until we have built a mighty revolutionary Party, People's Army, and United Front that has the strength to reverse the relation of forces between the proletariat and the imperialist bourgeoisie, make revolution, and consolidate socialism.

Up to this point, we have justified why we believe the work of proletarian

revolutionaries should consist of building class-struggle mass organizations and developing the mass line amongst the advanced sections of the masses to advance the ideological, political, and organizational principles that will build class struggle. So when or how do party organization members actually relate to the most advanced and revolutionary elements as communists? When does the conversation get beyond the narrower confines of the mass work, or the more limited basis of unity of the mass organization or alliance in question? When can or should the question of the communist party and revolutionary struggle be raised?

There's no clear-cut answer to this question, as it depends on a number of factors: What level of trust exists between you and the person in question? How prepared are they to engage in these specific questions? Are there more basic questions that have yet to be answered for the person in question before the question of revolution and communism can even be broached?

As a general principal, we believe that we should be practicing a maximum exposure amongst the masses, with a minimal exposure to the intelligence agents of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Limiting the ability of the latter to know our members and our operations means that we must be cautious about exposing the membership of Revolutionary Initiative beyond the revolutionary mass activists amongst whom we have developed trust.

But short of exposing our membership in RI, there's nothing that stops proletarian revolutionaries from providing ideological leadership in the organizations that they participate in. Unlike many opportunist bureaucratic and authoritarian methods of "leadership" – such as those deployed by most Trotskyite organizations – we do not aspire to simply maneuver our comrades into the reigns of power in bourgeois institutions and other bourgeoisified institutions like today's class collaborationist business unions. We seek to build mass struggles, mass organizations, and revolutionary alliances to break the hold of bourgeois institutions and build a proletarian

counter-power. On this point, we find ourselves in unity with class struggle anarchists, though we oppose the parochialism of syndicalism and "autonomism".³ Aside from building red mass organizations, we must also struggle to democratize undemocratic, bureaucratized, and yellow mass organizations, such as the social democratic unions controlled by the labour aristocracy.

What it means to be a proletarian revolutionary in the mass movement is to advance the ideological, political, and organizational lines that advance class struggle and proletarian hegemony i.e. the hegemony of the proletariat over the masses that supplants and challenges the hegemony of the imperialist bourgeoisie to the point of rupture. Within any given section of the mass movement, we must develop an anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist basis and pro-socialist orientation that converges upon revolutionary struggle.

What gives coherence and strategic unity to what would otherwise be disparate movements that may find themselves in contradiction with one another is the proletarian revolutionary vanguard. So that instead of an immigrants struggle that makes demands on the Canadian state that further dispossess natives of their land, or a workers struggle that demands pro-imperialist "good jobs", or an indigenous self-determination struggle that props up, legitimizes and leaves in tact (or simply transforms the character of) Canadian imperialism, we mobilize the struggles of all sections of the proletariat into a united front against imperialism.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this article, we cited the question of mass work to be a main point of division between Revolutionary Initiative and RCP-Canada. We would characterize RCP-Canada's method of party building to be a method that relates the Party openly and directly to the masses. From what we can see, the RCP does its agitation and propaganda work openly through its Party fronts, its bookstore, its presence in rallies and courageous street-fighting and its direct distribution through Drapeau Rouge/

Red Flag and the Partisan. We appreciate the role played by the RCP Canada in propagating many revolutionary points of analysis of Canadian society, in propagating the ideas of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, and promoting proletarian internationalism. These methods have value and are necessary for the accumulation of revolutionary forces. But for all the reasons identified above, we do not find these methods to be sufficient for the accumulation of forces amongst the advanced masses. The RCP's methods may bear more fruit for an organization whose centre of gravity is in Montreal and its surrounding regions, a part of the country where the militant milieu is far stronger than elsewhere. But even in Montreal, we'd question the ability to develop the Party beyond a certain section of the city's militant milieu – such as, for instance, Montréal's large immigrant working-class population.

The example of the historic student strike in Québec of 2012 – the longest running and largest student strike and protest movement in Canadian history – for example demonstrates the importance and significance for genuine, independent mass organization in building mass struggles. The militant student union CLASSE rebuilt the student movement in Québec on a more democratic and militant basis from the mid-2000s onwards to break with the treachery of social democrats and their bureaucratized unions. To be sure, CLASSE and the student strike were built and directed by revolutionaries and militants: anarchists, communists, left social democrats and left nationalists and other revolutionary-minded youth. But the strike would have never accumulated such a strong and sustained movement without the building of mass-democratic spaces wrested open in the colleges and universities that have rallied students to the defence of their immediate concerns, albeit on a lower basis of unity than revolution. But, as the twists and turns of mass struggle go, we have seen that what should have been an historically insignificant struggle based on a modest demand to block raised tuition fees has – through the intransigence of the provincial government, through its repressive measures, through police repression – leap-frogged into one of the world's leading protest movements.

The mass organizations, the mass movement, and mass work proletarian revolutionaries engage in contribute not only to getting a revolutionary Party off the ground, but more fundamentally to the building of the broader revolutionary movement, dual power, and proletarian hegemony. The construction of dual power and proletarian hegemony is not a project that neatly follows Party construction, nor it is identical with it. It is a project that proceeds alongside it. While we will leave the question of dual power for other discussion documents, we would flag the point that the question of mass work must be figured into our overall revolutionary strategy. The RCP-Canada has been advocating for the development of a protracted people's war in Canada. It is unclear to us however, based on their previous articulations, how one conceptualizes a protracted people's war without the development of dual power and a mass movement; or even how a peoples war is possible without the mass-based proletarian counterpower to serve as the rear-guard for the revolutionary forces.

A protracted revolutionary struggle – including the forms of armed struggle that will be necessary to succeed – must be supported by the broad masses of people and it must pull them into the struggle in ever-expanding proportions. To do this outside of the purview of the Canadian state and its military-intelligence-policing apparatus, the revolutionary Party must be deeply embedded in the masses and their struggles.

In building the revolutionary movement in China, Mao warned comrades in the Communist Party not to isolate themselves from the people:

[T]o be vigilant and to see that no comrade at any post is divorced from the masses... [to] teach every comrade to love the people and listen attentively to the voice of the masses; to identify himself with the masses wherever he goes and, instead of standing above them, to immerse himself among them; and, according to their present level, to awaken them or raise their political consciousness and help them gradually to organize themselves voluntarily and to set going all essential struggles permit-

ted by the internal and external circumstances of the given time and place.

“On Coalition Government” (April 24, 1945), Selected Works, Vol. III, pp. 315-16.

These are the methods of a genuine vanguard, the true leadership of the people.

If this process is undertaken in an erroneous fashion, marked by poor methods of social investigation or without sufficient integration with the masses, it will be lacking in its democratic character. Lacking in democracy, when the Party attempts to deploy its ideas to the masses, they may not resonate. If done properly, however, if the Party's ideas are steeped in the struggles of the masses and correctly reflect their most advanced ideas, the masses will see the Party's ideas as their own and will support it and join it.

An organization can coalesce and call itself a Party whenever it likes. But it will be the masses that will determine if this or that organization actually becomes ‘the Party’ of the revolutionary proletariat, its true vanguard in revolutionary struggle. To become this genuine proletarian revolutionary vanguard, even while we build a revolutionary Party that is distinct from the masses, the proletarian revolutionaries without that Party must be fully immersed within the oppressed and exploited masses, building people's power and proletarian hegemony within it, and articulating the ideological, political, and organizational lines that converge with all sections of the proletariat upon proletarian revolution.

This, in short, is what we believe should be the mass work of proletarian revolutionaries.

Footnote 1: We also have yet to arrive at a unified conception of revolutionary strategy. RCP-Canada upholds a form of protracted people's war elaborated to the context of imperialist countries that our own organization has questioned, particularly the place of

insurrection in this overall strategy. A substantial elaboration of their strategy has been long anticipated and we hope it is forthcoming. Therefore, we cannot say that we differ over strategy, but rather have not unified around a common conception.

Footnote 2: We're all familiar with the political boundaries that Canada claims and are recognized by international law. But internally, much of the land bounded by this border is not conquered or under the effective dominion of the Canadian state. These are the treaty lands or entirely unceded lands upon which indigenous people continue to fight and assert their right to self-determination against ongoing dispossession, plunder, and colonization. This is what is meant by “claimed but not conquered”.

Footnote 3: “Autonomism” is a correct standpoint in relation to bourgeois power, what anarchists call “The State”; it is not correct, however, in relation to proletarian revolutionary power. Organs of popular power should not aspire to be “autonomous” from other organs of popular power, but rather interdependent, allied, and advancing together to defeat the enemy and build the new society. The problem is that anarchists generally don't distinguish between the bourgeois state and the socialist state under proletarian hegemony; or if they do they see proletarian power as just another species of authoritarianism to be struggled against. The class basis of this anti-authoritarianism is the petty-bourgeoisie which sees its class ascendancy frustrated by the big imperialist bourgeoisie on the one hand and by socialism and communism on the other.

Toronto Budget Battle is Bigger than Ford



A Statement from Revolutionary Initiative – 17 January 2012

A battle is squaring off in Toronto between Rob Ford's City Hall and the growing proportion of people who see Rob Ford for the enemy of the people that he is.

In recklessly pursuing his anti-union, anti-poor, anti-working class agenda, Toronto Mayor Rob Ford has done at least two things which he most likely did not intend to do: (1) discard his populist, 'man-of-the-people' election image to reveal the callous, reactionary basis to his politics; and (2) expose to many of Toronto's residents the bankruptcy of the political and economic structures at the City level.

Certainly, Ford's attempts to slash social services and jobs must be resisted in every way possible. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to view this as an isolated incident or simply one of 'bad governance'. This battle is part of something much larger and goes to the core of how Toronto is currently run.

Making sense of the numbers

For months, both media and politicians have been throwing around the figure of a \$700 million deficit to signal an imminent cut to City expenditures. This huge, intimidating statistic stands in stark contrast to the \$300 million surplus presented last year and the \$180 surplus generated this year. To most people, this doesn't make any sense at all. How is there such a large discrepancy between what is budgeted and what is spent? These numbers reveal the shadiness of this budget process as a whole, where the people are not given accurate, honest information, but rather are fed bloated statistics and convoluted, contradictory financial explanations to justify the political objectives of whoever is in government. In this case, these have figures have been the rationalization for reductions in expenditures to social programming and unionized public sector jobs.

Downplayed by virtually all sides has been the refusal by any of the politicians

to question the City's single largest budget line – the Toronto Police Service (TPS). While most City departments were forced to present budgets that included a 10% reduction, the almost \$1 Billion operating budget (approximately 15% of the City's overall budget) of the TPS came in with an increase and was approved! For the TPS to be given more money following the mass arrests of the G20, the murders of Junior Manon, Charlie McGillivray and others, and the ongoing police corruption scandals involving the Drug Squad reveals the hypocrisy of this entire process.

The previous 20 years of downloading the responsibility for certain spending (such as Toronto Community Housing) is erased from memory. The City government allows the Liberals and Conservatives at the federal and provincial levels to wash their hands clean of the problems at municipal levels. The misspent priorities of the previous Miller administration (who significantly increased the Toronto Police budget and implemented an expedited budgeting process) go unacknowledged.

In Toronto, there is clearly an increasing amount of people who are seeing through this fog of confusion and realizing that there are other issues at play.

Beyond Ford

Make no mistake about it: The Budget being put forward by Toronto Mayor Rob Ford and his allied City Councillors is just part of a broader, international offensive by capitalism against concessions previously fought for and won by the working class. From the concessions forced on Postal Workers and Air Canada workers, to the wage concessions being rammed down the throat of the Caterpillar work-

ers in London, Ontario, to the cuts being imposed on Greek, Italian and Spanish workers, all over the World we are seeing the imposition of wage and services cuts being forced on to the working class. The new 'austerity' offensive is only the latest and intensified phase of a decades long offensive that was waged under the banner of 'neoliberalism'. In the oppressed, 'Third World' countries, this offensive by international monopoly capitalism took the form of socially devastating 'structural adjustment pro-

grams', which included the same sorts of attacks we in Toronto and Canada are facing today, only at a far more violent and intense level.

The root of this problem is not Rob Ford, but rather a local manifestation of this broader, structural crisis of capitalism and imperialism. There is no doubt that he is a repugnant individual and an enemy of the working class; however the problem does not go away by simply electing someone different. George Smitherman also promised to explore jobs cuts and privatizations. If we look at the Provincial level, the McGuinty Liberals are also signalling that there will be

showed us very clear how insignificant these are. We must build organizations for real people power, organizations that can not only defend us against the current round of attacks, but to advance our struggles for real revolutionary change in the long run.

It may seem out of reach to us, but we must look to building long-range alternatives to depending on the goodwill and sympathetic ear of elected 'representatives', individuals who are held to account not by the people who elect them, but by the corporate media and other institutions representing the power of capitalism that have the power



ers in London, Ontario, to the cuts being imposed on Greek, Italian and Spanish workers, all over the World we are seeing the imposition of wage and services cuts being forced on to the working class. The new 'austerity' offensive is only the latest and intensified phase of a decades long offensive that was waged under the banner of 'neoliberalism'. In the oppressed, 'Third World' countries, this offensive by international monopoly capitalism took the form of socially devastating 'structural adjustment pro-

austerity measures imposed on provincial workers and services. Capitalism on a global scale is in a period of crisis that is being used as justification for a roll back on concessions and transfers of wealth from workers to the super wealthy and the biggest corporations.

As working people, we must think and go beyond elections and the tokenistic spaces for participation that have been 'set aside' for us. Mayor Ford

to discipline them when they don't fall in line with the interests of big money.

We must organize the people locally and within our communities and workplaces, and build organizations with our neighbours and fellow workers where people can come together, analyze local realities and create collective solutions and build people's power.

A Single Spark Can Light a Candle: Maoism in Canada Today

by Comrade Joseph Mackenzie

Perhaps it is true that history moves in spirals, because it seems our present looks down on the era preceding the Paris Commune. The great revolutionary arch of the late 19th and 20th centuries has ended in objective and subjective conditions somewhat similar to its beginning. Nowhere does a revolutionary Communist movement hold state power. We have no International. The working classes and oppressed around the world are restive, but the number of genuine revolutionary Parties is dwarfed by the number of opportunists. The bourgeoisie are firmly entrenched in state power, yet nervous, haunted by specters, and adopting new forms of repression. On the other hand, we are at a higher level. We have the benefit of the experience of revolutionary movements that smashed bourgeois and semi-colonial semi-feudal state powers, built socialism, and fought the restoration of capitalism and the profound revolutionary theories that emerged from those experiences. The absolute and relative size of the proletariat is much larger and their consciousness higher: almost nowhere is open colonialism or dictatorships (even so-called nationalist ones) acceptable to the people. It is a time of rebellions and Peoples' Wars. Both nightmares and optimism are justified.

Let's state it plainly: if we are going to make a revolution in Canada then we need a qualitative leap in our revolutionary theory and practice. We need to build a conscious revolutionary vanguard capable of functioning as the militant representative of all oppressed peoples, establish a project of universal liberation that sinks deep roots into our society, and develop the strategy and tactics necessary to shatter the existing social order.

For that it happen, we need the insights found in Maoism. It's not that Mao was a prophet or an individual of such super human intellect that he created a perfect theory for all places and all times that we just need to take up and apply to our local conditions. It would make our jobs much easier if that were the case ("here's the Red Book, memorize it!") but that would be a

departure from the reality of history and materialist dialectics. Rather, it's that Maoism represents a radical development of Marxism, a vital contribution to a living science of revolution, that we need to engage with if we are to understand where we are in relation to our monumental tasks and how to move forward.

This article will not be a general overview of the historical development of Marxism or introduction to Maoism, as there is already the overall useful (if rather linear and non-contradictory) introductions from India: "Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, Basic Course" and "Marxism - Leninism - Maoism Study Notes" or some of the material in RI's How To Study, How To Think study guide. Rather, this article will focus on the certain aspects Maoism that are distinct (but not separate) from Marxism-Leninism and that are particularly important to grasp at the current stage of the Canadian revolution.

"But we don't have peasants in Canada!"

In order to understand the contribution Maoism can make to a Canadian revolution it is important to understand the difference between what is Maoism as a revolutionary theory and what was a product of that theory under particular conditions. Some radicals incorrectly equate Maoism with a military strategy for mobilizing peasants for rural-based guerrilla warfare and will dismiss Maoism on the basis that Canada is an imperialist country with a very different class structure. This is of course partly true - Canada is not a semi-feudal semi-colonial society. Anyone who has ever been on a long car trip from one major Canadian city to another will note that our countryside isn't teeming with peasants and that the overwhelming majority of our population is concentrated in urban eras. We could establish a rural base area, but without a large rural population or a social order to transform it would be politically indistinguishable from an extended camping trip.

However, this outlook is partly wrong as it confuses theory with the product of that theory as it both emerged from and was applied to Chinese society. It is to confuse

the essence of the method with the particular conclusions it reached in a specific context. Every particular experience of revolution has some universally significant principles that are important to recognize, still we cannot mechanically transport aspects that are particular to that experience.

This incorrect tendency was reinforced by the early history of some Maoist movements outside China, elements of which identified themselves as Marxist-Leninists and supported the ongoing revolution in China and opposed Soviet revisionism. Their political outlook was overly tied to a particular time and place, rather than the revolutionary methodology that needed to be creatively applied, adapted to their own local concrete conditions, and further developed. Without a firm but flexible ideological grounding these former Maoists missed much of the point of revolutionary dialectics and lost their way when the Chinese revolution was defeated by the revisionists in the CCP. Some drank Deng Xiaoping's kool-aid about "socialism with Chinese characteristics" while others retreated into dogmatic forms of anti-revisionism that they imagined to be more "pure" forms of Marxism-Leninism. None of them established a significant base amongst the people that was capable of contending for state power.

The revolutionary movements that did successfully grasp the universal essence of Maoism were those that correctly applied revolutionary dialectics and figured out what they needed to keep and what they needed to cast aside. This was true even for movements based in countries with conditions much closer to China than Canada, such as the Philippines, Nepal, and India. Since the Philippines is shredded into an archipelago and separated from other countries by the ocean, it has war fronts that are extremely narrow. Rather than the highly mobile regular warfare and fixed base areas that characterized much of the Chinese civil war, the CPP fights a war that is based on intensive, highly fluid guerrilla warfare, with fixed base areas and regular warfare only appearing in later stages. (See: "Specific Characteristics of our People's War") The Maoists in Nepal also modified PPW by combining it with aspects of insurrectionism in what they called the "fusion concept."

This need for adaption, development and breaking with inherited ideas is just as necessary for Canada as for semi-colonial semi-feudal countries. This does not make Maoism “inappropriate” for Canada but rather that the dialectical process of continuity and rupture is inherent to and an integral part of Maoism and what makes it a revolutionary theory. Maoism is not a collection of final conclusions but a way of approaching,

forces. The main and leading force of the revolution was to be the proletariat and the countryside only became truly important after the seizure of power in the urban areas. As such, the CCP did not hear the growing rumblings amongst the hundreds of millions of peasants whose anger at the semi-feudal semi-colonial regime was growing. Based on assumptions inherited from the ICM, they did not even think to listen

(Mao: Problems of War and Strategy)

They needed to break with inherited Communist strategy and orientation, so that their strategy could be based on the strengths and advantages they possessed in their particular conditions. This is what we need to do in Canada: pay the utmost attention to all the particularities of this society at this time in order to identify the sites and means by which red counter-power can be built. How is it that red political power will exist in Canada? To answer this question we need to apply rigorous social investigation and class analysis.



understanding, and engaging in ongoing revolutionary practice. If we are to develop a genuinely revolutionary program for Canada we will need to apply and develop Maoism to Canadian conditions. What that will produce will scarcely resemble the program or experience of the Chinese revolution – or any other revolution – but will still be Maoism.

Social Investigation and Class Analysis

The equation of Maoism with peasant-based Protracted Peoples War neglects to ask an important question: How did revolutionaries in China determine their strategic line? Where did it come from? How did they orient themselves?

It certainly did not come from received wisdom. During the formation of the Chinese revolutionary movement, the insurrection strategy was the orthodox theory in the International Communist Movement. It was assumed, based on the experience of the Paris Commune and the Russian revolution that the universal path for revolution in all countries was one of urban proletarian insurrection. The Party would lead an armed mass uprising in key urban areas, rapidly construct a Red army, then prosecute a civil war in the countryside against the counter-revolutionary “White” armies and foreign intervention

and their dogmatism and mechanical thinking led to disaster. The urban uprisings of 1927-28 were brutally suppressed and tens of thousands of proletarians lost their lives. The initial conclusion in the ICM and in the majority of the CCP was that the CCP had practiced the right strategy, but had made errors in carrying it out. It was not a problem of strategy, but of execution.

Mao saw things differently. Mao introduced Protracted Peoples War not by proclaiming it as a new universal but by describing what was absolutely unique about China and Chinese conditions by asking, “Why Is it That Red Political Power Can Exist in China?” He affirmed the basic truth that power had to be seized through revolutionary popular violence but he saw that the proletariat needed a different way of fighting that was better suited to Chinese conditions and the class character of their society:

“The seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds good universally, for China and for all other countries. But while the principle remains the same, its application by the party of the proletariat finds expression in varying ways according to the varying conditions.”

Social investigation means the investigation of the conditions of society while class analysis is the means by which that investigation takes place. All societies are made up of classes, but each society has its own particular class structure and this class structure is embedded in some level of the imperialist international division of labour. These classes must be differentiated and studied in terms of how they relate to each other, how they relate to imperialism, what conditions they face, and how they function in the economy, politics, and culture. However, class does not exist in a pure form, untouched or unaffected by other contradictions. Therefore all the various sectors of society must also be understood in terms of their own internal contradictions and how those contradictions relate to the class struggle. Only then can we understand how the society as a whole works and how to change it. It is through this process that we identify who are our friends and who are our enemies, who we must mobilize and rely on principally and secondarily, and who we must isolate and make the targets of the revolutionary movement at any particular stage of its development.

This is what determines the strategy and tactics in all countries and constitutes the living essence of Maoism: the concrete analysis of concrete conditions. When this point is lost there is an attempt to jump over this process and declare PPW as being either a rival to insurrection (that there are “two roads” for revolution) or that it has supplanted insurrection as the new universal model for all countries. Perhaps that is true, but that is not the means by which we should arrive at that conclusion. Even if a truth is universal it must be studied in terms of how it presents itself in the specific. If we have a correct understanding of our particularities - our society and

context - we will be able to avoid this casual (and deeply wrong) tendency to declare particular ideas and strategies as universals, a tendency that has had disastrous consequences for revolution throughout the previous century. We will be able to study revolutionary successes, experiences, and ideas without being tempted to copy them in a mechanical way. It was through this method that Mao was able to identify the sites where the all the contradictions of Chinese society were most acute and most likely to produce a rupture capable of bringing down the old society; where new organs of political and military power could be built based on the boundless initiative and enthusiasm of the Chinese people; and where the enemy was weakest and how they could be defeated. It is through this same method that the correct strategy for the Canadian revolution will be developed.

Mass Line

Once Communists identify where they must “dig in” and who they must rely upon, how should they relate to those social forces? How should they prepare minds and organize forces for revolution? It is not enough for a Party to have a comprehensive analysis of their society, a correct program, and a willingness to trumpet their ideas from on high. It must also have method of relating to the people that unites the consciousness of the revolutionary avante guard with the consciousness of people in all their infinite complexity.

Mao called this method the mass line.

“The people, and the people alone are the motive force in making world history.”

“In all the practical work of our Party, all correct leadership is necessarily ‘from the masses to the masses’. This means: take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action . . . And so on, and over and over again in an endless spiral, with the ideas becoming more correct, more vital and richer each time.



US Soldiers turn against US Imperialism

Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge.”

Mao, “Some Questions Concerning Methods Of Leadership”, 1965.

The reason for this method is that revolution can only be an act of the people themselves. Socialist revolution in particular will require large numbers of people to consciously embrace communist methods of organization and communist ideas. It cannot be done on their behalf or in their name. Previously, the masses were a motive force in tearing down particular forms of class rule, but they could not eradicate class rule as such. Slave owners were replaced with feudal lords who were replaced by capitalists yet humanity still remained divided between a people that laboured and a minority that exploited and repressed. Only with the dawn of the era of socialist revolution could humanity create a new socialist order, one based on a consciously planned economy dedicated to social needs, one that over a period of transition could dig up the roots of all social relationships based on domination and exploitation. This cannot be done by the existing state apparatus or by any group of professionals claiming to be the peoples’ representatives. It must be carried out through the conscious agency of the people themselves, through their involvement in creating new organs of political power and their crystallization around the desire for radical change.

How we employ the mass line now also impacts how the revolutionary process plays

out during later stages. Revolution is not just the violent overthrow of one class by another, it is also a war amongst the people and how a society polarizes impacts the options available to the revolutionary movement and the political form of the new society. The Bolshevik focus on urban workers during the early days of the socialist movement led to a much smaller base amongst the peasantry. When the society sharply polarized it left the Bolsheviks with a fairly narrow base for the revolution, a large portion of it’s best and brightest dead from the civil war, and a new regime facing the incredibly severe choice between capitulation to the forces of reaction or to forge ahead and in the process forcibly impose socialist transition on a large section of the population under threat of the gun. Under these conditions the formation of the one party state under Stalin was both an act of choice and necessity, but it made it much more difficult to create the radically democratic structures of power and ever broadening mass participation in the administration of society necessary to advance towards communism. It also contributed to the growth of capitalist elements within the Party and the state and a silent political culture that was ill-equipped to carry forward class struggle under socialism.

There are two main wrong interpretations of the mass line.

The first is rightist and economic. It is based on the assumption that building mass movements will on it’s own produce revolutionary forms of organizing and consciousness amongst the people. “From

the masses to the masses" is limited to taking a survey or summarizing lessons out of immediate struggles and coming back to the masses with something that is better at achieving this or that particular and immediate aim. It reduces the revolutionary organization's role to that of a flattering clothing-shop mirror: reflecting a slightly improved image of the masses as they currently exist back upon themselves. This may inspire people to be better activists and organizers of various campaigns (of which there are plenty, for a variety of causes) and it may get more people in a given community "active", but it will not train communists or build a revolutionary movement. Conceiving of the mass line in this way reduces leadership of revolutionary movements of people into effective administration of things and postpones radical politics into the indefinite future.

The second is "left-in-form right-in-essence" and equates the mass line with popularization of the Party. It limits the mass line to a means of figuring out how to give the open promotion of revolutionary ideas as they currently exist some mass appeal. It assumes that we already have the correct line and analysis as a complete package, or at least an understanding of "universal principals" and that the mass line is the means by which that package is done up in a shiny new wrapper. It disdains any involvement in mass struggle as "economism" and a distraction from the real work of making revolution. At its worst, it comes off as painfully awkward and out of step. Amongst youth it may be appreciated – but only ironically. We certainly want revolutionary ideas to be popular, but without deep roots amongst the people it will be

difficult for the people to adopt these ideas as their own – because they are not their own if they are not linked in any real way with their actual lived experience.

What both interpretations have in common is that they are non-dialectical – they have no synthesis. It is not that communists do not engage in mass struggle – far from it – but rather that the mass line is the means by which communists both lead people and transform consciousness. The mass line as a distinct method of communist leadership, one that illuminates the universal in the particular because it unites all of the scattered discontents and just demands of the people with the goals of the communist revolution. The mass line produces explicitly revolutionary and communist work because it is the synthesis of the ideas, moods, and insights of the people (the product of day-to-day struggles and conditions) with communist theory (which largely emerges from outside of direct, immediate experience). Without this the people cannot be organized to carry out their own liberation and form the foundation for an ongoing revolutionary process. The means by which this synthesis will take place in Canada needs to be developed, both theoretically and practically, and is one of the immediate tasks of our movement if we are to get beyond our current stage of backwardness.

Maoism and Strategy

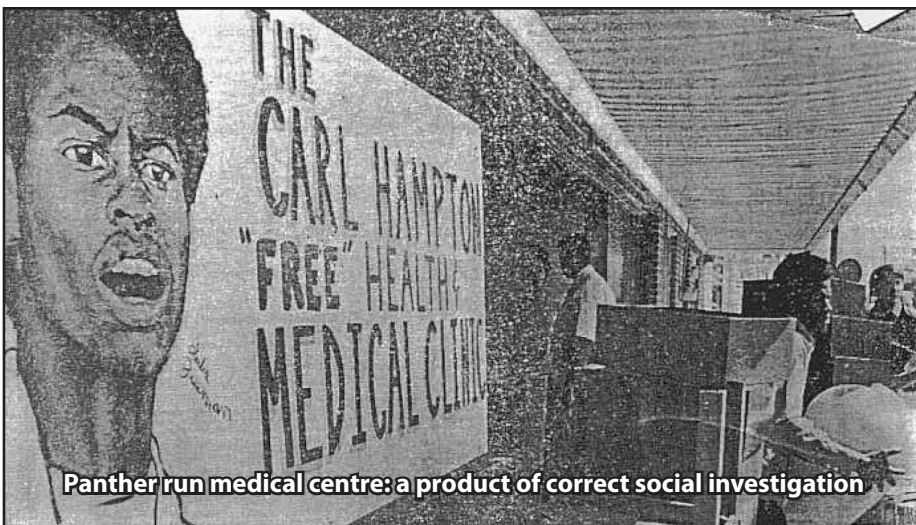
"Marxists are not fortune-tellers. They should, and indeed can, only indicate the general direction of future developments and changes; they should not and cannot fix the day and the hour in a mechanistic

way." (Mao Zedong, "A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire")

We should not attempt to make up schemes for events that are not just unknown, but at this stage are also unknowable. Many Marxists have compared the absence of theory to stumbling about in the dark, but the danger at this stage is closer to walking in a desert, where we may become convinced that we are heading towards an oasis when it is nothing more than a phantom.

The 20th century contains many examples of phantom strategies. Previous insurrection theory of the Comintern era did have a general conception that there were stages to revolutionary struggle, with different tasks unique to each stage and a necessity for political and organizational transformation as one transitioned to another. This was vulgarized by revisionist parties into two stages: the legal and the illegal. The Party would develop in a fairly linear and entirely legal way until there was (somehow) a mass (possibly armed) uprising or until the Communists in parliament had won such decisive support that the society could peaceful transition into socialism. Until that point all work had to be within the bounds of bourgeois legality and within the framework of the bourgeois state and institutions (running in elections, struggling within state-funded NGOs, attempting to capture formal leadership of bourgeoisified unions, etc). Since this strategy kept them trapped within the mire of legalism and electoralism it was guaranteed to never go beyond a certain level, so preparing for revolution could always be delayed indefinitely or outright opposed as "adventurist."

In reaction to this, certain militarist conceptions of revolution won over a section of the movement with the idea that an armed underground could immediately, in fairly ordinary times, declare war on the state. This war would be based on either urban or rural guerrilla warfare and would (somehow) inspire the masses to rise up for revolution and elevate the political-military organization to its leadership in a telescoped way. For those with a Guevarist conception, armed activity was to be carried out by professional "heroic guerrillas": soldiers that were members of a political/military organization that worked on behalf of, but quite separate from, a mass movement that would be inspired by their



Panther run medical centre: a product of correct social investigation

daring deeds. Other groups attempted to apply Mao's PPW strategy in a mechanical way to an imperialist context. While some fared a bit better than others (the Red Brigades during their early years for example), their misreading of the international balance of class forces and political economy, and expectations of victory in the short term resulted in militaristic errors and inevitable defeat. Those forces that went to a war footing during ordinary times were either quickly rounded up by the state or were driven so deep underground that they became for all practical purposes politically irrelevant or merely symbolic: little more than armed attacks and paper manifestos, all issued without any real prospects for gaining influence amongst the people or building new forms of political power.

What all of these conceptions had wrong was their failure to understand the different stages of revolutionary struggle, the specific content of each stage, and how those stages related to each other. As a whole, revolutionary struggle is the struggle to unite all the just demands of the people against the imperialist state, the building of new organs of peoples power, and the dispersal of the former by the latter. That process breaks down into distinct phases, each with their own characteristics, main tasks, and objective and subjective requirements to reach before passing through to the next.

The stages are:

- the accumulation of forces

- strategic defensive
- strategic equilibrium, and
- strategic offensive.

The accumulation of forces is a pre-strategic stage, in that the proletariat has not produced a general strategic line or the organizations to carry it out. It is almost entirely under the leadership of the bourgeoisie and has limited autonomous capacity for political action and has little ideological, political, or organizational unity. There may be demonstrations, campaigns, even small rebellions here and there, but without a revolutionary Party or united strategic orientation there is little consolidation as these largely spontaneous movements ebb and flow. Each grouplet either remains fixed on their own parochial areas of interest or contents itself with delusions of grandeur, never pressing forward with a common program capable of uniting all oppressed sectors of Canadian society. The central task of this stage is the development of that program. This will involve developing an in-depth understanding of how the society was historically constituted, its basic problems, the relationship between the various contradictions in that society and the path for its transformation – hence this article's focus on social investigation and the mass line. To carry this out, revolutionaries must unite in some form of pre-Party organization, which may take the form of a revolutionary mass organization, a network of collectives, or organizing committees. These may or may not

practice democratic centralism, depending on various conditions.

The strategic defensive is achieved with the launching of a genuine Communist Party. The necessary achievements that the pre-Party organization must meet before it can transform itself into a genuine Communist Party we believe to be laid out in Revolutionary Initiative's "On The Preconditions For The Founding of a Genuine Communist Party in Canada" document. During this phase the superiority of the bourgeoisie is overwhelming and revolutionary forces will have to be developed under these conditions of power. The central task of this phase is to build the Party and the broader revolutionary movement by extending the Party's influence and capacity to coordinate and heighten struggle. It must train new waves of revolutionaries out of the popular masses, strengthen their consciousness and fighting capacity. It must build a mass movement that is autonomous from the bourgeois state. It must do all this while out-maneuvering the repressive apparatus of the imperialist state and its counter-revolutionary programs.

Strategic equilibrium is a stage of transformation, when qualitatively the revolution and the state have achieved a qualitative parity of forces and yet neither is capable of dispersing the other. There exists a condition of dual power, in which the proletariat has developed to some degree new organs of political power and social organization that are outside the control of the bourgeois state. This is the stage during which revolution has become the order of the day and the Party must practically prepare itself and the masses for decisive forms of struggle through new forms of organization and mass uprisings that will be "dress rehearsals" for the seizure of power. The bourgeoisie may choose to violate its own legality and pretense of liberal democracy and opt for increasingly violent and authoritarian solutions to the combating the revolutionary forces. The proletariat must work to politically disintegrate and split the standing army of the ruling class so that the bourgeoisie cannot assert its military superiority as well as ensure the protection and expansion of its own armed forces. During periods of rebellion the revolutionary forces must prepare for retreat as well as offensive so



A tactical offensive



Red guards defend Peoples Power

that they do not over-extend themselves.

Lenin laid out the basic objective and subjective requirements necessary to move from this stage to the strategic offensive, which are: 1) That the ruling class is in crisis within itself and is no longer able to rule in the old way; 2) That the lower classes can no longer live in the old way, that they are convinced that revolution is necessary and are willing to fight and die for it; and 3) That a communist vanguard has achieved the leadership of an upsurging mass movement and has developed the necessary strategy and tactics to carry the struggle through to victory.

During the strategic offensive moves to decisively break the states physical power, which protects and perpetuates the social relations of oppression and exploitation. Historically, this stage has been characterized by an open war for territory between the revolutionary forces and the die-hard defenders of the old order (both domestic and any foreign intervention forces). The central task is the transfer of all political power to the new order, first through armed insurrections that captures multiple major cities followed by a civil war to liberate the remainder of the country. All normal forms of class struggle become subordinate to the war effort.

These phases are not absolutely distinct. It is not that a movement has one set of tasks one day and then a completely different set of tasks on the next. Rather, each phase prepares the ground for the one that follows. For example, while during the early stages the work of the Party will be almost entirely within the bounds of bourgeois legality, yet the Party must

also train it's members, supporters, and the mass movement ideologically and politically to actively uphold the right of the people to engage in militant resistance, to appreciate open rebellion by the masses, and the need to practically prepare for a decisive confrontation with the state. It must resist the lures of respectability and becoming "responsible" to the bourgeois system.

Should there be a significant change in the conjuncture of contradictions this may require a new set of tasks and forms of struggle. While generally urban guerilla warfare cannot advance beyond a very low level in an imperialist country this can change under certain conditions, such as during the foreign occupation of many countries in Europe during WWII or in Ireland under British occupation. The addition of that additional antagonistic contradiction changed the alignment of contradictions in such a way as to allow for the immediate transition to a war footing. However, this change in context does not necessarily advance the struggle from a lower stage to a higher stage – if anything it is more likely to cause the reverse as the revolution is forced to regroup and reorient itself under the new conditions. It only changes the content of the stages.

Conclusion

It is important to emphasize that these three particular aspects of Maoism (social investigation and class analysis, mass line, revolutionary strategy) are not the only contributions that are relevant to Canada at this and every stage of our movement's development. Mao's contribution to

dialectical materialism has a direct impact on how we interpret and relate to the various contradictions in society. The concept of "two line struggle" improves how even a pre-Party formation can carry out principled debate and struggle without splitting into micro-sects. Knowing that class struggle continues under socialism clarifies not just how to struggle, but what we're struggling for. These concepts and others are important to grasp firmly as we develop our revolutionary ideas and practice.

What constitutes our conception of Maoism at this moment may be substantially different from the Maoism that is produced at a later stage, such as when we have actually performed a comprehensive class analysis of Canadian society and deduced from it the correct strategy and tactics – which is to say a program. Currently, Revolutionary Initiative is a pre-Party organization. We have some ideas, which are constantly being developed, accumulated, checked and refined but we do not pretend to know in advance what will be the living reality of the revolutionary movement that is yet to be built. However, through a Maoist practice we are confident that we can carry the question of the Party and the revolution into the midst of the people. Through investigation, class analysis, the mass line, class struggle, verification and rectification, we can build on strengths and overcome weaknesses and develop from a lower to a higher level.



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