

Debate: Answer to a Blog Post Against Gonzalo

This is an English translation of an article earlier published in [original Norwegian form](#) here on Tjen Folket Media.

Tjen Folket Media wishes to be a platform for debate and ideological struggle. We have received articles from individuals, both within Tjen Folket Media, as well as from outside, who wish to answer a blog post on the blog [MLM Thoughts](#) that levied heavy criticism against Maoists in the US and Germany. These comrades are a part of the same movement as Maoists in Norway, and Norwegian activists are eager to counter the criticism. One may send editorials to post@tjen-folket.no. If one wishes to send articles anonymously and securely, we recommend sending it from a public computer with an email address one has created for the occasion. Tjen Folket Media reserves the right to make corrections to any articles received if needed.

Answer to Blog Post Against Gonzalo

Written by Øystein Iversen, one of Tjen Folket Media's contributors. Translated by another contributor.

An article entitled "[Gonzalo and left-deviation](#)" has been published on a new blog site called "MLM thoughts" written in both English and Norwegian.

This article criticizes another article that is in turn translated from German into Swedish, which is published on the page kommunisen.nu. Initially, it has been incorrectly stated that it was Kommunistiska Föreningen that translated and

published the article. The author has since edited this statement after it was pointed out that it was only sent in and posted for debate.

The article is originally from the German periodical *Klassestandpunkt* and writes about Maoism, Chairman Gonzalo, and more. One class – One Ideology – One Party – One Revolution.

The answer from the Norwegian blog against the German text represents a rightist line and contains a very typical revisionist criticism of Maoism

Allegations of Puritanism

The author of the blog post writes: “I think this carries the mark of puritanism as well as have an serious ultra-left deviation. It seems like a trend in the past that several Maoist groups are trying to purify Maoism.”

The claims of “purification” and “puritanism” smack of the same form of anti-communism of countless opportunists and others who are against communism. It is an attack that is simply not based in reality and it takes an old myth as its premise. As communists, we do not speak in terms of ideological “purity”. Our political line comes from 200 years of class struggle. Countless line struggles have separated correct lines from incorrect lines: from Lenin’s break from the Second International and the Mensheviks, to Stalin’s struggle against Trotsky, to Mao’s great polemic against Khrushchev-revisionism. In all these cases, communists met with the same type of allegations. But to fight against revisionism and revisionist errors is not “purification” or “puritanism”. It is a matter of life or death for the red line.

Is Gonzalo being applied mechanically?

The author writes:

It seems that they forget that the most brilliant with Lenin and Mao was their ability to apply and adapt Marxism to the reality they lived under. Marx and Engels did not primarily think of Russia and China when writing their theories. As little as Lenin and Stalin wrote for China.

Much, but not all of what these theorists wrote was written for their own countries. All of them offered great contributions to Marxism. Why should Mao have discounted Marx and Engels' universal contributions to Marxism simply because "they didn't write for China"? All the great contributions of Lenin and Stalin were put to use and fought for by Mao. In the same way, we do not reject Gonzalo's correct and universal contributions for the reason that he "wrote for Peru." Furthermore, all of these theorists fought as active participants in an international movement. They traveled to other countries, exchanged experiences and positions with other communists. Some of them were political refugees and activists for several years in other countries than the ones where they were born.

The Communist Manifesto is not first and foremost about Germany, the birthplace of Marx and Engels. They do not write that "a spectre is haunting Germany". To apply Marxism is the most important thing, but what should be applied? What is the Marxism (or Maoism) that is to be applied? What is universal? Is it not the case that that which was applied by history's foremost communists can be applied by those who make revolution today?

"MLMT" further writes that "In fact, the author of the article argues in favor of mechanically introducing Gonzalo's thinking

in Germany.”

The article in *Klassenstandpunkt* does not argue for this. On the contrary, the article applies these teachings to German conditions creatively. Yet the contributions taken from Gonzalo, the “three with”, are universal.

The “Three With”

The Swedish translation of this German article reads:

...But the fundamental condition is that we strictly apply the “three with” as Chairman Gonzalo has taught us: Work with, live with, and struggle with the masses. Communists ought to live according to the demands of the revolution. In general, comrades should live among the broadest and deepest of the masses, sharing every aspect of the lives of the masses. Communists ought to have a personal production in the sector where they have to develop their respective mass work.

“MLMT” replies with the following criticism:

The reality in Germany, Sweden and Norway is quite different from Peru. The masses in Peru are on another level and are far more susceptible to communist theory and propaganda, then the case is with us. In Germany, Sweden and Norway, there is much longer between everyone who is receptive to being able to organize themselves. There are also fewer large industrial workplaces today in these countries – it is therefore not possible for everyone to come to a workplace with many employees. When you work with few people, the recruitment basis becomes too small. My experience is that the largest recruitment base is with proletarian youth and most of all with politically engaged youth. Work through progressive front organizations that attract a lot of youth is where it is easiest to recruit. Alternatively, talk to many proletarian youths. We must prioritize our forces so that we get the most out of them.

This criticism identifies just two concrete differences between these countries: large workplaces and the masses' receptiveness towards communist propaganda. When it comes to the masses being less receptive, this is simply not a good reason for not following the "three with" teachings of Gonzalo. On the contrary, it simply means that we can reach those groups that are most receptive towards communist propaganda in our respective countries. These can be found among the working proletariat. They can be found in proletarian neighborhoods. And they can be found among the proletariat that is already struggling. The article furthermore does not take into consideration that workplaces and the industrial floor are the main bases for recruitment. That the proletarian youth forms a large basis for recruitment is correct, but this is just more reason to follow Gonzalo's "three with".

Professional Militants

"MLMT" writes:

What is the consequence of a line to only build organization for professional militants in countries such as Germany, Sweden and Norway in 2019? The reality for us is that the time for most young communists is greatly reduced when they come into the establishment phase of work and children. In reality, most experienced cadres will have to choose between work and family towards continuing as organized communists. The result is that we will be left with a small group consisting of militant students, schoolchildren and unemployed people. Most likely, the organization will die out by itself due to lack of experience and too little recruitment related to the number that will disappear over time. It will be especially difficult if one is to combine the goal of being both a professional militant revolutionary and working in an ever-decreasing national industry. How many are there that will pass this narrow requirement?

Maoists, unlike what is claimed, do not attempt to only build organizations for professional militants. Communists wish to build the party, the people's army, and the united front in concentric circles. The party is the core and consists of the most studious, experienced, and dedicated activists. And here is where one may apply Lenin's line on professional revolutionaries being the backbone of the party. Not the entire party, but the backbone of it. A professional revolutionary is one who has revolution as their profession. One who treats revolutionary struggle as their career and as a science. It is a pure idealism if one believes that it is possible to make revolution without a party lead by professionals.

Through the work in the united front, one builds fronts that organize the fighting masses. It has been said that experienced cadres must choose between work and family on one side and continuing to work as organized communists on the other. "MLMT" seems to imply that dedication and self-sacrifice are anathema; something odious that people tend to avoid. But communists recruited from the proletariat often show a great willingness for dedication and self-sacrifice. We wish to build organizations for revolution and people's war. We must therefore also foster a culture of dedication and self-sacrifice, for a life dedicated to the struggle. Our class is forced in a life of capitalist exploitation, and therefore many of us will recognize a duty to dedicate our lives to struggle against it. And we must live simply and struggle hard. It is correct to say that if we are to succeed, a number of people must turn down petit bourgeois careers within the system. But a number of the foremost communist leaders in history have had families, children, and even periods where they have had other careers than party work.

When all this is said, a movement that maintains that the proletariat's liberation must be the proletariat's own work, that the masses are the true heroes, and that the revolution

must be a people's (masses) war must be a movement that has space, room, tasks, and opportunities for development for all types of revolutionaries in all stages of life. There is no room for arrogance towards those who have not dedicated their lives to the struggle in the here and now; for each dedicated and professional cadre, the movement must organize tens, hundreds, and eventually thousands of people. But neither before, during, nor after the revolution is the communist party a party for all or even a party for the majority. The party is to be the general staff of the revolution, a professional leadership of the struggle. The great masses that are mobilized and organized around the party will in general not be members of the party. This is not some new insight of Maoism, even if Maoism provides us with tools to understand and practice it. The essence of this is found in a red line running throughout Lenin's *What is to be Done?* where Lenin writes:

We can never give a mass organisation that degree of secrecy without which there can be no question of persistent and continuous struggle against the government. To concentrate all secret functions in the hands of as small a number of professional revolutionaries as possible does not mean that the latter will "do the thinking for all" and that the rank and file will not take an active part in the movement. On the contrary, the membership will promote increasing numbers of the professional revolutionaries from its ranks; for it will know that it is not enough for a few students and for a few working men waging the economic struggle to gather in order to form a "committee", but that it takes years to train oneself to be a professional revolutionary; and the rank and file will "think", not only of amateurish methods, but of such training. Centralisation of the secret functions of the organisation by no means implies centralisation of all the functions of the movement. Active participation of the widest masses in the illegal press will not diminish because a "dozen" professional revolutionaries centralise the secret functions connected with

this work; on the contrary, it will increase tenfold. In this way, and in this way alone, shall we ensure that reading the illegal press, writing for it, and to some extent even distributing it, will almost cease to be secret work, for the police will soon come to realise the folly and impossibility of judicial and administrative red-tape procedure over every copy of a publication that is being distributed in the thousands. This holds not only for the press, but for every function of the movement, even for demonstrations. The active and widespread participation of the masses will not suffer; on the contrary, it will benefit by the fact that a "dozen" experienced revolutionaries, trained professionally no less than the police, will centralise all the secret aspects of the work – the drawing up of leaflets, the working out of approximate plans; and the appointing of bodies of leaders for each urban district, for each institution, etc. (I know that exception will be taken to my "undemocratic" views, but I shall reply below fully to this anything but intelligent objection.) Centralisation of the most secret functions in an organisation of revolutionaries will not diminish, but rather increase the extent and enhance the quality of the activity of a large number of other organisations that are intended for a broad public and are therefore as loose and as non-secret as possible, such as workers' trade unions; workers' self-education circles and circles for reading illegal literature; and socialist, as well as democratic, circles among all other sections of the population; etc., etc. We must have such circles, trade unions, and organisations everywhere in as large a number as possible and with the widest variety of functions; but it would be absurd and harmful to confound them with the organisation of revolutionaries, to efface the border-line between them, to make still more hazy the all too faint recognition of the fact that in order to "serve" the mass movement we must have people who will devote themselves exclusively to Social-Democratic activities, and that such people must train themselves patiently and steadfastly to be professional revolutionaries.

This relatively short excerpt from Lenin's book in 1903 clears up the misunderstandings that the MLMT blog spreads. Lenin's meaning comes forth clearly here in regards to the correct method of organizing the party (the revolutionary organization) and how it does not stand in contradiction to the broad mass movement, but on the contrary is a precondition for being able to create it in this fashion.

Proletarian Internationalism

"MLMT" writes:

It is impossible to build a Communist party without doing mistakes in the process. It is impossible to correct mistakes without having a climate where people can criticize without being branded as "the worst enemies of the working class". That the author here believes that comrades who criticize that there is too much angulation on foreign affairs at the expense of domestic issues should be branded in this way is an alarming signal.

It has been argued that harsh words have been used against people who approach with a particular type of criticism (people who talk about "too much Peru" and similar, criticism against focusing on the international question). But one should not see this as an isolated criticism of the prioritization of angles. This type of criticism with the focus on foreign affairs and Peru has often been used as an attack against Maoists. And this type of attack on proletarian internationalism has a function. It deals with removing the communist movement from its most advanced international leadership. When interest, studies, and teachings from Peru's Communist Party and Gonzalo lead to great advancements in the line struggle and to the defeat of right opportunists, they answer with attacking Maoists for looking internationally for leadership. The fact that communists in Norway historically looked to Lenin and SUKP(b)'s ideological leadership and

struggle against revisionism advanced the line struggle in Norway towards the establishment of NKP. The fact that communists looked to Chairman Mao and the CCP led to the establishment of AKP(m-l). Studying and following the PCP and Chairman Gonzalo's example is necessary and important for communists in all countries that wish to reconstruct communist parties today, because these must be constituted as Maoist parties. This is central and necessary for the line struggle in Norway, Sweden, and Germany today, and for the line struggle in the entire international communist movement. Revisionists and capitalists did not want us to look to Lenin, they did not want us to look to Mao, and now they do not want us to look to Gonzalo, or at the least attempt to downgrade him to "one of many" revolutionary leaders. This is because they do not want a real communist party, a militarized Maoist party organized for people's war.

Difficult Words?

"Gonzalo stressed Maoism's meaning in MLM. Puritanists take it further and will consequently use it mechanically by using the lengthy, dense, and non-pedagogical 'Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, principally Maoism' rather than simply writing 'Maoism'."

Using correct and precise language in speech and writing can only be a good thing. How specific one is depends on what one is writing on and the context it is being written in. Concepts like 'Marxism', 'Marxism-Leninism', 'Marxism-Leninism-Maoism', 'communism', 'bolshevism', and 'Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, principally Maoism' have all been established or developed in struggles that have demanded making clear lines between oneself and revisionists and in order to describe one's own political theory. It is not part of agitprop in a flier. The terms are not made with the goal of being simple to understand for absolutely everybody. The terms being used in theoretical texts, discussions at a higher level, the international line struggle, the documents describing party lines, and so on, are

not always the same terms one will use on fliers, posters, slogans, and so on. These concepts have their place. The concept of 'principally Maoism' distinguishes the international right-opportunists from the Maoists in an important line struggle today. The concept creates an unambiguous distinction between, for instance, PCP and Gonzalo versus revisionists like Prachanda and his "Maoist" party.

By underlining that MLM is today principally Maoist is completely in line with Mao's claim that all things have a primary side. Of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism's three stages, Maoism is the most recent and the highest level of development; it starts with its predecessors and raises them to a new level, and it must therefore be the primary side. Today, when we wish to understand Marxism and Leninism, we must do so by understanding Maoism. But the claim that it is being used mechanically is simply untrue. It does not take many Google searches to see that most Maoist organizations will simply write "Maoism", contrary to what the author claims that the (unnamed) "puritans" are unable to do.

Nonetheless, these concepts are not particularly difficult for the masses to grasp. Our task is to spread Maoist theory and study with the masses. To attack good Maoist theory for this is typical for revisionists, but we simply place more faith in the masses and know that they can teach us everything. If the theory is correct, the masses will be able to learn it.