

Point 18 as a Line of Demarcation  
by the Tucson Marxist-Leninist Collective

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### Introduction

The two-line struggle that exists over Point 18 of the Organizing Committee for an Ideological Center's eighteen points of unity has reached a crucial stage. As presently constituted, this point identifies US imperialism as the main enemy of the peoples of the world. A minority within the OC has proposed a new point 18.

In this document we will discuss this two-line struggle, demonstrate our unity with Point 18 as it presently stands, and attempt to provide a political/theoretical basis to maximize the effectiveness of Point 18. We hope that this document will aid in clarifying the theoretical and political issues which have arisen in this struggle, and help lay the basis for a further consolidation of the forces supporting Point 18 as presently stated.

### The Political Stakes of the Debate

The political stakes in this debate are high. What is at issue is not so much Point 18, but rather, the concrete practice of proletarian internationalism itself. The OC minority holds that the best way to serve proletarian internationalism is through adherence to a new point 18 which would state that "The chief responsibility of US revolutionaries is to overthrow US imperialism, while fighting against all imperialism."

The reasons given by the minority for this new formulation are basically two-fold. Point 18 as presently constituted is seen as being harmful to the unity needed for building a genuine communist party, and therefore is the wrong way to demarcate the advanced forces of the party-building movement. It is also held that the formulation of the new point 18 is more true to proletarian internationalism because it opposes all imperialism - a character which the minority finds lacking in the present point 18.

We will demonstrate in what follows, that the position of the OC minority is objectively in unity with class collaboration and opportunist betrayals of proletarian internationalism.

We agree with Lenin, who faced similar attitudes from the Social Democratic movement during the First World War. In confronting those who refused to struggle against their own bourgeoisie during that conflict, he said that, "The most dangerous of all in this respect are those who do not wish to understand that the fight against imperialism is a sham and a humbug unless it is inseparably bound up with the fight against opportunism."(1)

Lenin could hardly be clearer in illustrating the nature of proletarian internationalism. A dialectical approach to fighting imperialism is impossible without a struggle against opportunism as it emerges in the struggle to overthrow our own bourgeoisie.



We oppose the line of the OC minority because it is the expression of political practices which have proven their historic inability to unite the struggle against imperialism and opportunism, or even to see their organic relationship. It is through the political practice of the OC minority, and their mentor PUL, that we judge their line, and not their slogans embodied in their new point 18. By surveying the political practice of these organizations we are better able to judge the real content of their new point 18.

### Opportunist Deviations

The unwillingness and inability of these forces to fight both imperialism and opportunism is seen in various areas. The PUL, for instance, can only see that the CP(M-L), the leading voice of class collaboration, has "*sometimes failed* to realize that its chief responsibility lies in overthrowing the US bourgeoisie." (our emphasis) (2). Likewise, with hardly less shame, the OC minority is willing to admit that the CP(M-L) "has made serious errors in its international line" (3). But these forces are completely unwilling to assume that the errors of the CP(M-L) are based on much more than tactical aberrations from an otherwise sound "superpower" strategy. They even try to sidestep the opportunism of the CP(M-L) by diverting the discussion into a question as to whether the CP(M-L) is really "*the example*" of "left" internationalism or not (4).

This unwillingness to honestly assess the opportunist practices of the CP(M-L) and its origins are but one of the instances where the OC minority and the PUL objectively ally themselves with the opportunist camp.

In the same light, the PUL's position on Zaire (5) is a not so guilty echo of the position taken by the Chinese opportunists who were pleased that the "second world" French could "render some logistic support" to the reactionary Mobuto regime (6). Nowhere does the OC minority criticize PUL's unwillingness to oppose this example of opportunism. Their position in the *OC Bulletin #1*, in fact, entirely ignores the question of Zaire, demonstrates the shallowness of their commitment to struggling against opportunism and class collaboration. (7) Can we really take the admonishments of the OC minority and the PUL seriously when their own opportunism and that of the Chinese is so gracelessly ignored?

The most graphic example of the minority's opportunism is their position on Angola (8). They speak of promoting "the unity of national liberation struggles" and not their disunity. At the same time they forget that the FNLA and UNITA were receiving massive CIA aid (UNITA fighting side by side with South African forces), and that their objective role as neo-colonialist agents provided very clear material reasons for lending all possible support to the MPLA (9). Trying to assume, as the minority does, that those Marxist-Leninists supporting the MPLA were motivated by a sectarian spirit of favoritism is once again indicative of their opportunist obscurantism (10). Their plea to "be good at uniting, not splitting" is as inappropriate here as it is in their call for unity with opportunists like the PUL (11).

After these few examples, it should be evident that the political practice of these organizations shows a consistent lack of struggle against opportunism. Yet, as we know, proletarian internationalism insists that the struggle against imperialism is inseparable from the struggle against opportunism.



## Historical Antecedents

This betrayal of proletarian internationalism, however, should not be surprising. The inability to combine the struggle against one's own bourgeoisie with the struggle against opportunism has a long and inglorious history in the world socialist and communist movements.

Most of the parties of the Second International capitulated to their own ruling classes during the First World War because the struggle between nations was placed above the class struggle. This was the culmination of a long process of the unchecked growth of opportunism in these parties.

In the late 1940's the Communist Information Bureau revived this tradition of forgetting the class struggle by dividing the nations of the world into two camps; the imperialist and anti-imperialist camps. The Cominform called on communists to subordinate the class struggle to the struggle to convince their own bourgeoisie to adopt a foreign policy in line with the interests of the USSR (12).

The most recent, and increasingly notorious, expression of opportunistic disregard for the class struggle is found in China's "Theory of Three Worlds" (13). In this theory the division of the world into three units on the basis of crass economist notions of the level of productive forces, is joined with equally non-Marxist positions on the class struggle. Nations are once again posited as the basis for analysis, in the place of classes, with workers of the "second" and "third" worlds being asked to collaborate with their own ruling class against the "first" world. This theory attempts to unite the interests of objectively opposed classes. It also divides the working classes of the world from one another according to national criteria which obscure the proletarian unity which should exist between them.

Presently, the logic of the "Theory of Three Worlds" is calling for the US and China to form a united front against the USSR. Given the past history of this theory's practice (Chile, Iran, Angola, etc.) we can easily guess the fate of class struggle tactics in the US which this action implies.

In all these cases the opportunist avoidance of class struggle and its Marxist analysis are singularly evident. In all these cases, proletarian internationalism is clearly betrayed.

In short, the OC minority's new point 18 is heir to the last 65 years of opportunism and obscuring of class struggle. The new point 18 fits squarely into the political/theoretical practices of this tradition. Based as it is on a non-class "superpower" conception of the world imperialist system, the new point 18 implies a practice encompassing the deviations from proletarian internationalist practice which can be seen as organic to the non-class theses of the Cominform and the "Theory of Three Worlds."

The political practice of the OC minority and PUL is characterized not only by a failure to struggle against opportunism (CPM-L), and a preoccupation with fighting other "bourgeoisies" (Soviet Union), but also by a singular inability to fight our own bourgeoisie (Angola, Zaire). The new point 18 of the OC minority parallels the parties of the Second International which spent their efforts on the exposure of every bourgeoisie but their own during the First World War. Lenin's practice in this period illustrated that such exposures were a part of "imperialist intrigue and not an internationalist duty." (14). This perspective is as true now as it was then.



## A Political/Theoretical Framework

The TMLC supports point 18 as presently constituted. This point, however, must be infused with a political/theoretical content which provides for more than an organizational defeat of the minority's line, or a refutation which does not break with the terrain on which it rests. In other words, we must go to the root of the OC minority's political and theoretical practice to ensure the decisive liquidation of their line. To accomplish this task, we must examine the basic Marxist-Leninist understanding of imperialism as a world system, and the practice of the OC minority in relation to it. (15)

Marxism-Leninism understands capitalism's dynamic as a two-fold tendency of expansion; the tendency to reproduce and extend capitalist relations on both a national and an international scale.

On a world scale this results in an uneven international hierarchy of countries, in which some see their productive forces grow, while others see their's blocked. This international hierarchy is dominated by a hegemonic power whose economic, political and ideological strength and influence are decisive for the cohesion of the world system. Today that power is the United States.

This structure of the world imperialist system makes the practice of proletarian internationalism account for the tendencies of capitalist expansion and reproduction both nationally and internationally. This means that proletarian internationalists must deal with both the nature of the class struggle in the nation in question, and its location in the world imperialist system.

There are many factors which determine the position of a given country within the imperialist system. However, central to all these factors is the class struggle. It is the bourgeoisie which maintains imperialist relations, and it is only by overthrowing the bourgeoisie that imperialism can be destroyed. It is, therefore, the main strategic task of the communists in each country to organize and lead the struggle against their own bourgeoisie - at all times linking this struggle to the struggle against opportunism.

### Angola: The Decisive Moment

The events in Angola were the catalyst that brought into sharp focus the depth of the opportunism and class collaboration of key sections of the anti-revisionist movement.

At this crucial moment these opportunist forces failed in their obligation to struggle against the imperialist activities of the US bourgeoisie, and failed to struggle against the opportunist lines on Angola of Chinese origin. This failure has been seen by the most advanced forces of Marxism-Leninism in the US to be so important as to require a demarcation between ourselves and the practice of these backward organizations.

The present line of the minority is the embodiment of practices which failed to consider the nature of the class struggle in Angola, Angola's location in the world imperialist system, and the need to direct the main blow at our own bourgeoisie. In



calling for the support of all "liberation" forces in Angola, these organizations abandoned the class struggle in that country by seeing the interests of competing national entities on a world scale as primary. In other words, they took their "superpower" thesis so seriously that the class struggle in Angola was forgotten.

In following the logic of their "superpower" perspective, the backward forces could not understand the struggles in Angola as being more than mere wars by proxy. This meant that the popular struggle to break with a subordinate location in the world imperialist system was reduced by the "superpower" thesis to the machinations of foreign powers. The interests of states once again superceded the interests and perspective of the class struggle.

Finally, by falling prey to the opportunist tendency of viewing the world through the non-Marxist, non-dialectical prism of classless, homogeneous states (and not the class struggle), the backward forces could not direct their attention to the US bourgeoisie. Instead, they capitulated to imperialism and opportunism by seeing "Soviet agents", or a homogeneous national liberation struggle which was unfortunately caught up in internal conflict, rather than seeing a complex class struggle with external causes becoming operative by internal ones.

This non-class, non-dialectical view distorted their practice and resulted in the cultivation of "imperialist intrigue", which led them to concentrate more energy in denouncing every "bourgeoisie" but their own. This diverted them from attacking the US bourgeois class with the necessary determination.

Thus, Angola was a turning point for the anti-revisionist movement in the US. It was a nodal point which helped us view the practical culmination of the various strands of historically non-Marxist practice in our own movement. The dogmatism and flunkyism of those who tailed after the "superpower" theses and Chinese foreign policy, made clearer than ever the crisis through which world and US Marxism is passing.

Angola, and subsequent events, point to the fact that sections of the world and US anti-revisionist communist movement have come full circle - from opposition to revisionist class collaboration, to another variant of the same which merely *claims* to fight class collaboration.

This disparity between political practice and political slogans is the same disparity found in the line of the OC minority and its historic practice.

### Conclusions

Point 18 as presently constituted reaffirms proletarian internationalism because it targets the hegemonic force in the world imperialist system - the United States, while rejecting the speculation on the relative strengths of various other imperialisms.\* Point 18 provides the greatest degree of unity at this time among those forces trying to break with opportunism and class collaboration, recognized in the backward forces as far back as 1976.

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\* To argue that the majority of the world's people live in the imperialist system dominated by the United States is not to rule out the possibility that another imperialist system dominated by the Soviet Union could exist. Such a possibility would add an important external factor acting on the first imperialist system, but it would not invalidate our theory.

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As constituted, point 18 lays the basis to oppose both imperialism and opportunism. While targetting our own bourgeoisie as the principal enemy of the US revolutionary movement, it necessitates a break with imperialist intrigue and those forces unwilling, or unable, to struggle against the opportunism derived from the thesis of the "two superpowers."

Finally, point 18 can be the beginning of a developing political line which will demarcate the genuine communist forces in the US from those whose practices will never lead to a genuine communist party. This demarcation must be initiated if we are to move forward to higher levels of unity.

Angola, Deng's visit to the US, and China's invasion of Vietnam all point to the crisis of our movement. This is certainly not the first crisis of the communist movement. In the midst of another crisis, Lenin wrote,

In our opinion, the crisis of socialism makes it incumbent upon any in the least serious socialists to devote redoubled attention to theory - to adopt more resolutely a strictly definite stand, to draw a sharper line of demarcation between themselves and wavering and unreliable elements. (16)

Our movement would do well to heed Lenin's advice.

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However, if a genuine Marxist-Leninist analysis of the Soviet Union as a "social imperialist" power was produced and accepted, it would in no way resemble the current plethora of "superpower" theories, or the "Theory of Three Worlds." Such a theory would resemble the theory outlined in the *Theoretical Review* #9, and would have to be a product of similar methods of conceptualization and analysis. Thus, adopting the picture of imperialism that we have presented will help resolve the issue of the character of the Soviet Union because it begins to furnish us with the Marxist-Leninist approach we require.

#### Footnotes

- (1) Lenin, "Imperialism", *Collected Works*, vol. 22, p. 302.
- (2) PUL, *On the "Progressive Role" of the Soviet Union and other Dogmas*, p. 62.
- (3) BPO, et al, *OC Bulletin* #1, p. 13.
- (4) *Ibid.*
- (5) PUL, *op cit.*, p. 70-74.
- (6) Editorial department of *People's Daily*, *Chairman Mao's Theory of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds is a Major Contribution to Marxism-Leninism*, p. 57. For a further analysis of the events in Zaire see the *Guardian*, issues from May 31, 1978, through the end of July, 1978.
- (7) BPO, *op cit.*, p. 15.
- (8) The Milwaukee Alliance has distinguished itself from the rest of the minority on this one question, see *Angola: National Liberation and the US Left*
- (9), (10) & (11) BPO, *op cit.*, p. 15.
- (12) "World Imperialism and Marxist Theory: On the International Line of the Communist Movement", *Theoretical Review* #9.
- (13) *Ibid.*, and "The Albanian Critique of the Theory of Three Worlds", *Theoretical Review* #3.
- (14) Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 23, p. 209.
- (15) "World Imperialism...", *op cit.*
- (16) Lenin, "Revolutionary Adventurism", *Collected Works*, vol. 6, p. 186.