

organization is legal and the form of struggle bloodless (non-military). On the issue of war, the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries oppose the imperialist wars waged by their own countries; if such wars occur, the policy of these Parties is to bring about the defeat of the reactionary governments of their own countries. The one war they want to fight is the civil war for which they are preparing. But this insurrection and war should not be launched until the bourgeoisie becomes really helpless, until the majority of the proletariat are determined to rise in arms and fight, and until the rural masses are giving willing help to the proletariat. And when the time comes to launch such an insurrection and war, the first step will be to seize the cities, and then advance into the countryside, and not the other way about. All this has been done by Communist Parties in capitalist countries, and it has been proved correct by the October Revolution in Russia."

MC5 adds:

The greatest socialist revolutions have had the advantage of having the ruling class's state smashed in world war—e.g. Russia, China, Albania. The world wars cleared the ground so to speak to leave the bourgeoisie "really helpless." In China the reasons for that helplessness are addressed by Mao in his *Selected Works*.

Korea saw the ground cleared in a special war between the East and West. The Vietnamese also benefited to some extent from WWII and precisely because the imperialists were not so "helpless," their revolution involved intense suffering at the hands of U.S. imperialism. Other long-drawn out protracted wars have gone on in Eritrea, the Philippines and Peru. Such is possible in the oppressed countries for reasons Mao explains. Yet, even in the oppressed countries, intra-bourgeois and inter-imperialist wars speed up the victory of revolution.

Focoism

The following article is from MIM Theory 12, 1988 (before the new MIM Theory journal started)

MIM readers consistently ask about various

proponents of focoism, a political line which MIM has yet to address. There is a good reason to review the question at this time. According to a newspaper in Mexico City there was recently a splinter expelled from the Sendero Luminoso for Castroite deviations from Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought.

Certain supporters of the Shining Path were supposedly expelled for indiscriminately distributing weapons. Furthermore, according to the bourgeois press, and there is no confirmation from the Senderos, the Maoists have used armed struggle against the pro-Cuban Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement.⁽¹⁾ In any case, there are two distinct armed struggles going on in Peru right now. One is led by Maoists, the other by Castroites/focoists.

It appears that so far the Maoist struggle is more successful, but it would be difficult to say that therefore Maoism is better than focoism, especially since no one has brought the Peruvian revolution to complete victory yet. [In 1993, we can safely say that Maoism has proved itself more successful than focoism in the case of Peru as well, because the focoists have disbanded in a total capitulation to the state. The focoists didn't even have the good sense to surrender to the PCP instead of Fujimori. There is now no political trend in Peru that has not belonged to the government or capitulated to the government except the Maoist PCP—MC5, 1993]

Furthermore, the bourgeoisie seems to vilify both movements in the mass media. As for the Amerikan "left," one might expect that it will converge in support of the Castroites if possible. [This also turned out to be a correct prediction. Some "Left" organizations like Solidarity even tailed after parliamentary groups in Peru that supported Fujimori in the elections and subsequently joined his cabinet—MC5, 1993] The Guardian has already run an article sympathetic to the Castroites and critical of the Maoists. [Given mistakes like that, it is not surprising that the Guardian has since folded—MC5, 1993]

If it is true that the Senderos expelled Castroites from its party, it is not necessarily true that the Senderos were guilty of liberalism, as Hoxhaite might contend. As every ideological stripe of reformism and revisionism in the world is involved in parliamentary cretinism in Peru, the social base in favor of armed struggle appears to have backed up the Senderos. It is perhaps inevitable in Latin America that part of that social base finds itself attracted to focoism.

What is perhaps more worthy of serious analy-

sis is the influence of focoism on the Sendero line, if any. In a previous issue, MIM comrades discussed the Sendero line in favor of "militarization of the party."

The Senderos appear to claim that this is part of their original summation of Chinese experience including the Cultural Revolution. On the other hand, readers of Régis Debray and other focoists would notice his stress on military action as the highest form of propaganda.(2) Debray is also explicit on the relationship of the army to the party: "To subordinate the guerrilla group strategically and tactically to a party that has not radically changed its peacetime organization, or to treat it as one more ramification of party activity brings in its wake a series of fatal military errors." (3) For this reason, Debray opposes the Maoist conception that the party should command the army because he believes that military action is at the center and should not be separated from political experience.(4) In Cuba, it was the army that created the party.(5) Likewise, the Senderos' call for "militarization of the party" implies that the party is not already militarized, and is not already directing the revolutionary armed forces.

Furthermore, spectacular acts of urban sabotage performed by the Senderos if stressed at the expense of rural base-building also seem to indicate a focoist influence. Nonetheless, MIM currently has no definitive information or analyses of possible focoist influences on the Senderos. [MIM has since received much deeper information about the Shining Path and distributes all Shining Path literature available on this and other questions—MC5, 1993]

The debate in the United States today

In the United States, the line between focoism and Maoism is more blurred. This is not surprising given the fact that after Khrushchev denounced armed struggle as the path to revolution, revolutionary-minded people in the United States lumped together all Third World revolutionaries in order to discredit the reformist Communist Party, USA.

This kind of thinking has its place. It is still worthwhile to ponder the failure of Trotskyism and reformism in the Third World.

On the other hand, there are concrete differences in how Maoists and focoists organize in the United States.

George and Jonathan Jackson and the Black Panther Party often mentioned Ché and Mao in the same breath. The Weatherman and other descen-

dants of the Revolutionary Youth Movement did the same. For example, in the present, people such as J. Sakai, author of a history book on the United States from a proletarian perspective (*Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat*), and E. Tani and K. Sera cite Mao to support focoism.

These Castroites are different than the mere servants of Soviet revisionism in that they see success in Cuba, but do not necessarily uphold the Communist Party in the USA or USSR.

George and Jonathan Jackson summed up the focoist position in the United States well by saying that "we cannot raise consciousness another millimeter" without armed struggle.(6) Focoists believe that small cells of armed revolutionaries can create the conditions of revolution through their actions. Good examples set by foco units will be copied by the masses, according to the focoists.

Ultimately, the focoist is scornful of analysis of concrete conditions except those of military struggle. "Conditions will never be altogether right for a broadly based revolutionary war unless the fascists are stricken by an uncharacteristic fit of total madness.... Should we wait for something that is not likely to occur at least for decades? The conditions that are not present must be manufactured." (7)

George Jackson gives the example of the 1930s as a case where conditions for revolution were present in Amerika, but "the vanguard elements betrayed the people of the nation and the world as a result of their failure to seize the time. The consequences were a catastrophic war and a new round of imperialist expansion." (7) Therefore, the C.P. of the 1930s bears responsibility for the enormous crimes of U.S. imperialism committed since the 1930s, according to Jackson.

There are two levels at which revolutionaries must deal with this argument. First, is it factually correct that revolutionary conditions will not appear for decades to come unless the bourgeoisie makes an uncharacteristic mistake? According to MIM's founding documents, especially on the international situation, this is not the case. Even according to the Weatherman in 1969, this was not the case: "Winning state power in the US will occur as a result of the military forces of the US overextending themselves around the world and being defeated piecemeal; struggle within the US will be a vital part of this process, but when the revolution triumphs in the US it will have been made by the people of the whole world." (8) The pressures of Third World liberation struggles are supplemented by

U.S.-Soviet contention, which has become more of a factor since the time that the Weatherman spoke of the principal contradiction, which was undoubtedly between U.S. imperialism and the Third World at the time. [Obviously this aspect of U.S. militarism has since changed with the near collapse of Russian empire—MC5, 1993]

Secondly, George Jackson, RYM I and J. Sakai all point to the alliance between the bourgeoisified workers and the imperialists as one of the main reasons for the failure of revolution in the United States. Thus, there is a scientific analysis of why the masses in the United States will not support revolution, but no scientific rationale for the course of action supported by Jackson, Sakai, E. Tani, Kaé Sera, et. al. They explain why there are no conditions for mass armed struggle, but then proceed to engage in armed struggle.

The focoists have two replies to this argument. One is an argument with suspiciously Judeo-Christian overtones. Basically, it says the masses of the United States are part of the enemy. They will never support revolution or at least not until the revolutionaries force the state to bring down repression on everybody. All that revolutionaries in the United States can do is serve as an isolated detachment of the Vietnamese, Filipino, Salvadoran, Filipino, etc. proletarian revolutions. Individual revolutionaries will fail in the United States but they will take some of the repressive forces/enemy with them and thus make some contribution to the success of revolutions elsewhere.

This argument smacks of Judeo-Christian ethics because it basically says do what is morally pure even if the real world impact is slight. This is a particularly vicious disease (Judeo-Christian individual conscience-salving, guilt-tripping and existentialism) in the United States where the relatively free market economy provides a material basis for individualistic thinking as opposed to class consciousness.

Additional evidence that Judeo-Christian ideology is at work in the focoist line in the United States comes from Tani and Sera. While Tani and Sera claim to uphold Mao faithfully, along with Ché, Ho, etc., they are quite blunt about Maoist movements in the United States: "We are not going to discuss the 'M-L Party-Building' tendency, since it was always a rightward trend of Bourgeois Marxism imitating the old CPUSA. To us the development of revolutionary forces within the U.S. oppressor nation rested with the efforts and decisions of the overall

Anti-imperialist tendency." (9) Sakai, Tani and Sera carefully document their argument against lame pro-Soviet revisionism, reformism and the "Left" generally, but when it comes to what they admit was the largest trend in SDS, they snicker and guffaw without explanation.

The lack of explanation of why armed struggle tactics are appropriate now in the United States, contrary to what Mao and Lin Biao [when Lin Biao was still correct] said, is itself powerful evidence that there is no explanation, only ideological presupposition. These people initiate armed struggle, not because they think that armed struggle offers the best chance of success now, but because they as individuals can feel morally correct for making the greatest sacrifices to fight imperialism now. Such people remind one of the Catholic activists who advised all the workers at a factory to quit their jobs because their production was military-related. These people are not much different than those who leave the United States to demonstrate moral distaste for U.S. policies or to join Third World revolutionary movements to which they can make no contribution. People like these who do not employ the science of Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought in order to win state power for the international proletariat actually endanger the revolution for their own selfish, moralistic ends.

The other rejoinder that focoists have is that subjective conditions create the material conditions for revolution. According to the focoists, the mere example of seeing one bullet down a helicopter will shatter the invincibility of the enemy. Those who believe that it is impossible to defeat the technologically advanced U.S. military will see otherwise in practice: "How would they have felt [the pigs and the people] if the nameless, faceless, lightning-swift soldier of the people could have reached up, twisted the tail of their \$200,000 death bird, and hurled it into the streets, broken, ablaze!! I think that sort of thing has more to do with consciousness than anything else I can think of." (10)

Secondly, the focoists say that the bourgeoisie will necessarily wreak repression on the masses in order to attack the revolutionaries.

The Maoist reply to these two arguments is two-fold. First, by ignoring material conditions, the focoists will not demonstrate the weakness of the imperialist state, but instead make themselves Christian martyrs who are useful to the imperialists in search of public proof of their invincibility. That is to say the focoists will unintentionally convince the

masses more than ever before of the myth that the imperialists cannot be defeated—by losing decisively to the imperialists.

Secondly, the imperialists will not have to impose heavy repression to oppose a failed revolution of martyrs/superheroes/media stars. Where it does impose repression, the ruling class may gain the popular support of the bourgeoisified workers in favor of "law and order."

The crux of the issue is this: Do conditions exist for successful armed struggle in Amerika? If not, starting the armed struggle too soon will only taint armed struggle in the minds of those who would otherwise favor armed struggle when conditions are conducive. Premature armed struggle sets back the onset of successful armed struggle. At this stage in history, even setting back the armed struggle a few days may result in a nuclear catastrophe for humanity.

Therefore, Maoists do not regard focoism with a liberal eye.

Lin Biao, second-in-command to Mao at the time, put it this way in 1965:

"If they are to defeat a formidable enemy, revolutionary armed forces should not fight with a reckless disregard for the consequences when there is a great disparity between their own strength and the enemy's. If they do, they will suffer serious losses and bring heavy setbacks to the revolution." (11)

A favorite Mao quote of George Jackson is "When revolution fails. . . it is the fault of the vanguard party." (12) However, this quote can be interpreted to mean that revolution may fail if the vanguard party starts armed struggle too soon or too late. But the real Mao quote that focoists need to come to terms with is as follows:

"Internally, capitalist countries practise bourgeois democracy (not feudalism) when they are not fascist nor at war; in their external relations, they are not opposed by, but themselves oppress other nations. Because of these characteristics. . . In these countries, the question is one of long legal struggle . . . and the form of struggle bloodless (non-military) . . . the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries oppose the imperialist wars waged by their own countries if such wars occur, the policy of these countries is to bring about the defeat of reactionary governments of their own countries. The one war they want to fight is the civil war for which they are preparing. But this . . . should not be launched until the bourgeoisie becomes really helpless."

Mao continued to uphold this basic line 30 years

later, as evidenced in the Lin Biao article of 1965:

"Taking the entire globe, if North America and Western Europe can be called 'the cities of the world,' then Asia, Africa and Latin America constitute 'the rural areas of the world.' Since World War II, the proletarian revolutionary movement has for various reasons been temporarily held back in the North American and West European capitalist countries, while the people's revolutionary movement in Asia, Africa and Latin America has been growing vigorously. In a sense, the contemporary world revolution also presents a picture of the encirclement of cities by the rural areas. In the final analysis, the whole cause of world revolution hinges on the revolutionary struggles of the Asian, African and Latin American peoples who make up the overwhelming majority of the world's population." (13)

Grounds of unity: the RYM I line on the Euro-Amerikan masses

Although Maoists need to demarcate from the focoists' military line, the focoists' class analysis of the United States is often right on target. There is nothing in the RYM I class analysis that corresponds to its military line. Rather, the Weatherman's class analysis of 1969 (and Sakai's class analysis today) demonstrate why armed struggle is out of the question at the moment:

"As a whole, the long-range interests of the non-colonial sections of the working class lie with overthrowing imperialism. . . . However, virtually all of the white working class also has short-range privileges from imperialism, which are not false privileges but very real ones which give them an edge of vested interest and tie them to a certain extent to the imperialists, especially when the latter are in a relatively prosperous phase." (14)

Since the RYM class analysis does not correspond to its military tactics, it is possible for MIM to adopt the RYM class analysis wholesale.

How clearly Jackson formulates the question of the middle classes in the United States compared with Bob Avakian's statement in "Charting. . ." While Avakian claims to break new ground by re-emphasizing Lenin's formulations on economism, Jackson's explanations were short and easy to understand already by 1971: "A new pig-oriented class has been created at the bottom of our society from which the ruling class will be always able to draw some support." (15) Jackson adds that with victory in World War II, the bourgeoisie was able to offer Euro-Amerikan workers "the flea market that

mutated the workers' more genuine demands.... The controlling elites have co-opted large portions of the lowly working class." (16)

There is a difference between someone like Avakian, who tries to form the most revolutionary pole to divert workers' movements and someone like Sakai, who sees white workers allied with the imperialists. Avakian focuses on the history of "economism" in communist efforts in the United States and implies that a correct approach to workers would produce better results. Avakian thus shares with P.L. [Progressive Labor Party] the conviction that incorrect organizing has damaged revolutionary movements among American workers. On the other hand, RYM I types including Sakai focus on the "alliance" of white workers that "tie them to a certain extent to the imperialists." (Despite the difference of emphasis in "economism" vs. "alliance," neither school of thought necessarily holds that there has been a revolutionary opportunity in the United States since 1929.)

MIM should wish Avakian well with the Revolutionary Communist Party's (RCP) effort to fight "economism" in efforts to organize the bourgeoisified working class. Of the groups that do not see the white working class allied with imperialism in the short run, the RCP is the best. It emphasizes the decisiveness of the Black masses as of Avakian's most recent interview in *Revolution* magazine. The RCP also emphasizes the other oppressed nationalities and immigrants in the United States while falling short of saying that there is no Euro-American working class.

Nonetheless, MIM has been moving toward an acceptance of RYM I/Weatherman class analysis of the United States. (See MIM Theory issues 9-11; a political economy for this analysis was developed in new MT1 in 1992.)

Other questions and pro-RYM arguments

There is another possible reason to support RYM military tactics. Perhaps they work, but the public does not know it. When the bourgeoisie wins, as in the Brinks case, everyone hears about it. Yet, the people who are part of the Revolutionary Armed Task Force (RATF) are very capable people, often millionaires in their own right.

This is not to put them down for being capable and resourceful people. In particular the common scorn for the Weatherman as a bunch of rich white kids is incorrect. If they are doing the best thing for the revolution of the international proletariat, then it

does not matter who they are.

The question is whether covert gains of the RATF outweigh its public losses. Are there covert gains that the various focoists of the RATF and BLA have won worth the public losses to the revolution?

Undoubtedly there are some successes that the public does not hear about. On the other hand, the Weatherman typically released communiques to publicize its victories.

If the BLA, RATF, etc. cannot publicize their gains, then that in itself is reason to oppose their military tactics. The operation of Mao's mass line depends on the summation of information of the whole movements' successes and failures. Both in terms of propaganda and internal organizational life, communication is necessary.

It is the author's impression that there are focoist cells in operation in the United States. These cells stay separate for security reasons.

On the other hand, on behalf of the focoists, there is perhaps no reason for the labor aristocracy, which is most of the white people in the United States, to hear about victories in armed struggle. Propagandizing among the oppressed masses would be good enough. Between the opportunist strategy of grabbing bourgeois media time and the anarchist approach of influencing only those one meets in day-to-day life, there is a lot of room. However, it has always been a hallmark of focoism to seize the greatest amount of publicity possible and thus spark the prairie fire. It seems unlikely that there are tremendous secret focoist successes.

Tani and Sera describe the anti-imperialists this way: "In late 1969, SDS, the mass national organization of student radicalism and protest, split into two political tendencies. The first was the Anti-imperialist tendency, most visibly led by the Weather Underground Organization.... The second, opposing school of thought was the 'Marxist-Leninist party-building' tendency, initially led by the Progressive Labor Party's 'Worker-Student Alliance' and the Revolutionary Youth Movement 2 student bloc (whose elements became the October League, Revolutionary Communist Party, etc.). This tendency viewed the struggle as a classic, European-style worker vs. capitalist workplace conflict, and advocated using trade union reform campaigns to build a party like the 1930s Old Left. China was seen as the only world vanguard by them."

Ultimately, for Régis Debray and Tani and Sera, the failure of a reputedly revolutionary organization to take up armed struggle immediately defines that

organization as bourgeois. For this reason, Tani and Sera skip over any polemic with Maoism in the United States. Nowhere in the book by Tani and Sera is there any argument why failure to take up armed struggle is bourgeois. Hence, the argument must be gleaned from Jackson and Debray and others.

Notes:

1. Ann Arbor News 1/17/88, p. B1.
2. Debray, Régis. 1967. *Revolution in the Revolution?* NY: Grove Press, p. 56.
3. Ibid., 67-8.
4. Ibid., 88-91.
5. Ibid., 108.
6. George Jackson, *Blood in My Eye*, Bantam Books, 1971, p. 10.
7. Ibid., p. 14.
8. Harold Jacobs, ed. "You Don't Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows", p. 53
9. Tani, E. & Sera, Kaé. 1985. *False Nationalism False Internationalism: Class Contradictions in the Armed Struggle*. A Seeds Beneath the Snow Publication, p. 133.
10. Jonathan Jackson in George Jackson, Ibid., p. 19.
11. K. Fan, ed. "Long Live the Victory of People's War!" in Mao Tse-tung and Lin Biao: Post Revolutionary Writings, p. 383.
12. George Jackson, op cit., p. 27.
13. Fan, op. cit., p. 396.
14. Jacobs, op. cit., p. 65.
15. Ibid., p. 49.
16. Ibid., p. 102.