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The Worker is an organ of revolutionary working-class expression, with the aim of uniting class-conscious workers and proletarian revolutionaries under Maoism, serving the effort to reconstitute the Communist Party.

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An Activists Asks: Why We Don't Use the Term "Global South"



An activist asked why we at *The Worker* do not use the term “Global South” in articles and editorials or even in conversations concerning the question of imperialism. We find this term in most “progressive” analysis, in lots of revisionist articles, and of course in what is coming out of the universities. “Global South” is used to replace several other terms presumably because it provides a better conceptual framework for understanding the division of the world between the wealthy and poor. Third World, “Developing Countries,” and Nations Oppressed by Imperialism are replaced by this term, this unscientific and un-Marxist conception of Global South.

First, no Marxist ever has been too concerned with pedantry. The words are not the most important thing, but lurking behind terms are concepts which are very important. Whereas Nations Oppressed by Imperialism means one thing and Third World means another, both have a precise ability to highlight the principal contradiction in the world today—between imperialism and the masses of people crushed under it comprising the oppressed nations. “Developing Nations” and “Global South” convey a positive or neutral judgment respectively, and were termed as they were on this basis.

“Global South” is a term and or a concept found in the pages of the revisionist publication, among those who denounce armed struggle in the oppressed nations conflating it with terror and those who will not. It is often associated with other obscurantist contraptions like “Neo-Liberalism”, “Neo-Colonialism,” “centers and peripheries,” and “Globalization” etc., all things that, when taken together or in combinations, attempt to create a framework free of Leninism for explaining the world in the age of imperialism and world proletarian revolution, drawing the masses unto unscientific dead ends, which ultimately perpetuate the myth of a “new path” or “peaceful means” to achieve radical social change. Advocates of the term often talk of a way in which these countries (often they deny they are nations as such) comprise a whole, and can develop on their own, without “western hegemony”, new modes of commerce and production through “South on South cooperation.” The armed

and so they come up with or utilize new terms in acquiescence of bourgeois sentiment, and gradually move away from accepting Marxist concepts. We see this certain concession in the use of “global south.”

In the process of developing an anti-imperialist movement one must be concrete, one must defend the theory, language and concepts of scientific Marxism in order to express the interests of, and indeed show full solidarity with the oppressed and exploited peoples of the world, and this means defending upholding, and applying correct strategy and tactics. After all, we do not stand against imperialism on purely moral grounds, but in the tide of history, in which this old decomposed system fetters all human growth and attempts at all turns to halt the emancipation of human beings—we oppose imperialism because it is the living-dead forces making hell for the living. It is parasitic and stands in the way of the future which is coming—and coming fast—from the third world, whether ones likes it or not.

base force as the national liberation struggles. The world revolution is established as a unity, with concrete perspectives.

As the Soviet Union restored capitalism and advanced Soviet social-imperialism, colluding and contending with the main imperialism represented by the US, the political division of the world is delineated into three by Chairman Mao. Where is the weight of the masses, and where are the contradictions the most sharp? In the exploited and oppressed nations, and at the time of Mao developing his theory, this included China and a lot of the socialist camp—this brings an entirely new concept to the term “Third World”, and for Mao and subsequently all those who follow his scientific approach, this perspective indicates that the third world generates a great storm against imperialism, and will develop faster in a revolutionary direction.

Here is what Chairman Gonzalo says, “Because the weight of the masses in history has begun to express itself more and more and that is fundamental, if the masses make history and this is a very great truth, then the weight of the masses will decide the revolution in the world.”

The understanding represented by the Marxists, of national oppression at the hands of imperialism and the delineation of three worlds, determines the strategy and the tactics for world proletarian revolution. The understanding and its determinate strategy and tactics are concealed and confused with the influence of the bourgeoisie—in the form of distorting reality with new terms loaded with a mutated concept, whether they do this by the way of revisionism, or academic pressure external to the revolutionaries matters very little. The purpose is the same: divide the national liberation struggles from the socialist revolution. Their rationalizations may not always look alike, but don't be fooled.

Many on the left, who have not approached the matter of revolution with a scientific perspective, based in the only scientific ideology represent a certain trend to make concessions to the bourgeoisie

struggle against imperialism and the leading force is conveniently forgotten in these perspectives. Of course, there are those who use the term while opposing imperialism and defending national liberation struggles on the basis of the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination; these are not the target of our rejection for any other offense than unprincipled theoretical concession or simple ignorance.

Global South was popularized by the Catholic journal Commonwealth in 1969 via an article written by Carl Olsby, who was kicked out of Students for a Democratic Society the year before for being too conservative. The term was intended to issue moral opposition to the imperialist war of aggression against Vietnam, without saying too much or sounding too Marxist; hence it was a way to condemn the atrocities of war without supporting the objectives of the Vietnamese Workers Party leading the Vietnamese people's war of liberation. Olsby considered that the war was unconscionable and the result of the “global north” “dominating” the “global south”, domination that had created an “intolerable social order.”

Olsby was only anti-imperialist in the most loose and liberal sense, that is, when he was not seeking a “left and right alliance.” The search for a term that could overcome the positive implication of “developing nation” without the precise denunciation implied by being honest and identifying that these are nations oppressed by imperialism, allowed the new term to develop a whole concept when it became more widespread bourgeois currency. This takes the term further than how Olsby likely intended it. A glance at the political line represented by Catholic “progressives” today helps illustrate the matter—we find headlines with a certain cynicism like “The Israeli-Gaza War Will Fail” carrying with it the subtitle “coexistence remains the only road to peace” and other such spineless hand-wringing.

The term gained favor in the 2010s, it was intentionally used to be “less hierarchical” and over time became mired in postmodern

thinking. Imperialism in every respect is hierarchical: the financial domination, military invasions, occupations, and constant supervision have a material effect and this is called oppression, forced backwardness in the mode of production. It happens on a national scale. The domination of foreign capital has the effect not of developing a country, not of lifting it out of poverty, but of parasitism. This is not only in terms of the old-colonial theft of resources, but the most sophisticated forms of oppression which undermine independence and prevent ossified modes of production from being wiped out, preserving large aspects of feudal production. If we seek out non-hierarchical terms, we reject hierarchical solutions. That is to say, we end up denying the national question and the right to self-determination for oppressed nations, which today is expressed in the battles against imperialism. One cannot simultaneously oppose imperialism on moral ground and also deny the armed struggles of the oppressed nations fighting wars of national liberation for the right to self-determination. “Global South” obscures who our friends and enemies are, as well as obscuring the theoretical (and military) approach to solving the contradiction.

This postmodern criteria prevents it from reconciling its empty moralism. It cannot say “developing” because this is patently false. It cannot say “third world” because, while true, the moralist framework considers the implication of backwardness to be an insult and a moral judgment itself rather than a fact of economics and the mode of production. For this framework, even the admittance of oppression can stigmatize the oppressed. In the most dramatic attempt to correct the so-called “Eurocentric” quality of western science, the proponents of this concept slide into a denial of semi-colonialism and semi-feudalism, which along with imperialism are the three mountains that the people of the third world must move.

So why insist on the terms Third World and Nations Oppressed by Imperialism? Is it enough to just insist because these terms were used by Lenin and Mao? Perhaps not, but their reason and method which are expressed in terms are completely valid and scientific.

The precise scientific validity stands today in contrast to bourgeois attempts to rethink the matter through new terms. Let’s see why they used these and not others.

The term Third World emerges as a political category, drawing a comparison with the Third Estate associated with the French Revolution. The imperialist countries defined it as the countries that were not aligned with either imperialist powers or socialism. Chairman Mao correctly defines the delineation of the world into three camps and used the term in this radical context. Mao’s concept would be theorized incorrectly by the revisionist criteria of Deng Xiaoping. Chairman Gonzalo offered a vivid defense of the Maoist concept. We have a false theory and a true theory respectively.

Chairman Gonzalo bases himself on the contradiction between the fact that the world revolution is an integrated whole, yet cannot proceed in unison. History proved that the revolution could proceed in 1917 in only one country; Lenin realized and acted upon this fact in the fight for socialism and the accomplishment of the Russian revolution, and it was Comrade Stalin who realized the construction of the first socialist state. This would serve as part of the world revolution, a nexus of the entire revolutionary movement from 1917 until Stalin’s death.

Imperialism determines that the revolution will not proceed only from the advanced capitalist countries. Chairman Gonzalo stated this: “If one reads Lenin carefully, one can see that he turns his eyes to the backward countries, not because he didn’t want revolution within the heart of imperialism, no, that is not the problem, but rather that he sees the reality and the perspective of the world.”

In the experience of the socialist revolution in China, it was Chairman Mao who built on the teachings of Lenin, and the experience of the entire Russian revolution. He presented the problem of the world revolution with an emphasis on the exploited nations, training communists and aiding the national liberation struggles. Chairman Mao establishes the leading force as the socialist revolution and the