

*Defend and apply the universality of
Protracted People's War!*

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STRUGGLESSESSIONS



*Struggle Sessions reposts this article originally on [Tjen Folket Media](#), to make it available to our readers because we find it to be a highly useful response to the right opportunism of Jose Maria Sison and because we unite with its contents.-
Struggle Sessions Editorial Board*

By Ard Kinera, June 6th 2019

What is the path of revolution in imperialist countries? This is a burning question for every revolutionary in this part of the world, in Western fortresses of imperialism. It is a question that for a 100 years have been answered incorrectly by the overwhelming majority of self proclaimed revolutionaries in Europe.

Maoism puts forward the universality of People's War strategy, puts this forward as the sole military strategy of the international proletariat, applicable in each and every country applied concretely in accordance to the different concrete conditions. But some people are stubbornly denying this, and cling to the old strategy of protracted legal struggle until conditions are "ripe for revolution" due to a cluster of crises and the revolutionaries accumulating overwhelming forces against the old capitalist state, making them able to sweep it away in some kind of blitz war.

This is a strategy that has failed in practice while People's War has been victorious. The theory of accumulation of forces is more than ready for the dustbin of history. But still, some are still attracted to the old, like flies are attracted to garbage.

Sison's sinister attack on the strategy of People's War

The founding chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines has again spoken out against the universality of Protracted People's War (PPW) in a text dated 5th of June 2019:

On the Question of People's War in Industrial Capitalist Countries by Jose Maria Sison

Sison writes:

"I will deal with the notion of some people that Mao's theory of protracted people's war is universally valid and applicable."

This is a sinister way of putting the question. Is this theory just a "notion"? Who are "some people"? For most Maoists, it is well known that when Maoism was synthesised for the very first time, it was done by Chairman Gonzalo and the Communist Party of Peru. This was finalized by the Party in 1982 in the midst of People's War. In 1988 the Party adopted an updated document explaining the Ideology, "On Marxism-Leninism-Maoism", where they state:

"People's war is the military theory of the international proletariat; people's war sums up for the first time, in a systematic and all-encompassing way, the theoretical and practical experience of the struggles, military actions and wars waged by the proletariat as well as the people's long experience in waging armed struggle, especially the war waged by the Chinese peasants. It is because of Chairman Mao that the class has a military theory; however, there is much confusion and misunderstanding around this issue. (...) A key and decisive question in understanding the universality of people's war is understanding its

universal validity and consequently applicability, taking into account the different types of revolutions and the specific conditions of each revolution. To understand this key question it is helpful to keep in mind the fact that since the Petrograd insurrection this model has not been repeated, and to consider the antifascist resistance and guerrilla wars in Europe during World War II, as well as the armed struggles being waged in Europe today, and to see that in the end, the October Revolution was not only an insurrection but a revolutionary war that lasted several years. Consequently, in the imperialist countries the revolution can only be conceived of as revolutionary war and today this can only mean people's war."

Why is the Communist Party of Peru, and other parties and organizations that take up the same view, chief and foremost among these the Maoist Parties and Organizations of Latin-America, referred to by Sison as "some people"? The names of the Parties and Organizations today, and the line they put forward, can be read in statement after statement. They should be well known by Sison. They are serious and dedicated Parties that have shed blood for the revolution. But Sison talks about the "notion" of "some people". There cannot be any other explanation than Sison choosing the most cowardly way of struggle, not even recognizing his opponent as worthy of a name, and thus not having to answer what they actually have written. There is no references to documents, just to "notions".

The whole of Sison's text is written in a way as if the theory of the university of PPW was never even formulated. His text is written as if his objections against it have never even been answered, even though every single one was answered a long time ago, in the very act of synthesising Maoism. This method of Sison is quite shameful.

On the People's War in urbanized versus mainly rural countries

His text begins with the following paragraph:

“I have been asked many times by avowed proletarian revolutionaries whether protracted people’s war as carried out by Mao in China can be successfully waged in capitalist countries where the industrial proletariat has become the majority class and the peasantry has become a minority class.”

We must ask ourselves, what countries is Sison speaking of? There is no country in Europe or North America at least, where the industrial proletariat is the majority. The proletariat is the largest class in the world, but there are large segments in it, especially in the so called “industrialized countries”, that are employed in public or private services. By far, they outnumber the industrial proletarians in most imperialist countries. This is not a key question of the text, but it shows its lack of quality and precision.

Also, we would claim that the most important defining characteristic of the countries he must be referring to is not “industrialized” but “imperialist”. Many third world countries, even with very large rural populations could be defined as more “industrialized” today, than many imperialist countries. Most industrial products in the world are produced in the oppressed countries.

Sison writes:

“In industrial capitalist countries, the proletarian revolutionaries cannot begin the revolutionary war with a small and weak people’s army in the countryside and hope to use the wide space and indefinite time in the countryside to sustain the war.”

Who made this the defining factor of People’s War? Not the Communist Party of Peru at least. It is crystal clear from all Maoists that adhere to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, principally Maoism, that the path of surrounding the cities is not a universal law of PPW. This is the path in mostly rural oppressed nations of the world. The Communist Party of Peru defined the People’s War in Peru as a Unified People’s War, where the urban areas played a greater role from the beginning of the People’s War, than in China. And others have been clear that

the People's War will not be a rural peasant war in imperialist countries. This must be well known to Sison, but he acts as if it is not.

Falsehood, prejudice and opportunism

Sison writes on waging war in industrialised countries:

“As soon as that army dares to launch the first tactical offensive, it will be overwhelmed by the huge armed army and the highly unified economic, communications and transport system of the monopoly bourgeoisie.”

This is a known objection against People's War. And it has been dealt with before. It is simply not true that an armed group must be overwhelmed by “the huge army” (!) as soon as it acts. The Red Brigades of Italy was active from 1970 up to 1988. The Red Army Faction of Germany was active from 1970 up to 1998. Japanese Red Army was active from 1971 to 2001. The Weather Underground was active in the US from 1969 to 1977. The Black Liberation Army was active in the US from 1970 to 1981. The ETA of the Basque Country was active from 1959 to 2018. To this day, there are several active armed groups in Ireland. The list goes on, with guerillas active in urban areas all over the world.

What is important is that most of these groups were not armed with the omnipotent ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. They were not led by a militarized Maoist Communist Party. As a Maoist, one would identify this as a major weakness that would hamper them in the struggle. And still, these armed groups were almost never “overwhelmed” by the Army or the reactionary state. In most cases, the groups capitulated due to loss of morale or lack of Ideology and political leadership! That is true of many of these groups. Sison's claim, hypothetical and theoretical, is completely false. It is not rooted in reality. It is just the rotten old opportunist stance, that the enemy is almighty, sees and knows everything, and thus we have no way of fighting him.

Sison writes:

“However, the term “people’s war” may be flexibly used to mean the necessary armed revolution by the people to overthrow the bourgeois state in an industrial capitalist country. But definitely, what ought to be protracted is the preparation for the armed revolution with the overwhelming participation of the people.”

This is a classic opportunist way of “unifying” what cannot be unified. Sison knows very well that this is not what is understood and stated when Maoists define revolution just simply as People’s War, universally applicable also in the imperialist and mainly urbanized countries. We are all in favor of being flexible in tactics, but one should not be “flexible” in Ideology. One should be, as Lenin and Mao thought, be principled in this realm. Or else, it is not Marxism but Opportunism.

Sison here states his line, which is the only line opposed to People’s War but posing as revolutionary; the line of accumulation of forces through protracted legal struggle. This was what the Communist Party of Peru challenged from the beginning. This is the line of the whole heterogenic flora of “Marxist-Leninists”, hoxhaistes, trotskyites and western adherents of Mao Zedong Thought today. Protracted, very protracted, preparation by all legal means and sometime in the future, an armed revolution. It must be said again and again, that this has never happened. Not in a 100 years has this happened, even though hundreds and thousands of groups and parties adhered to this strategy. And the practice of these groups and tendencies has always been more or less identical to the practice of the openly reformist forces.

There is no qualitative difference between the work and practice of the British Socialist Workers Party, Belgian PTB, German MLPD or German Die Linke. And this is the practice hailed by Sison and supported by many of his followers, who support the revolution in the Philippines, but partake in the reformism of such parties here in Europe. The theory differs, but the practice is the same. How is this possible? It is possible because they lag behind, they lag behind the wheel of time that is constantly turning and has long time ago proved the theory of protracted accumulation to be nothing but a sham. It is possible because there

is no connection between their theory of revolution and their practice of reformism and legalism. They have a goal of revolution that is totally and fundamentally alien to their life and practice.

October road or really no road at all?

Sison writes:

“In imperialist Russia, the Bolsheviks had the foresight to sow cadres as revolutionary seeds within the Tsarist army. When the masses of troops became discontented like the people in the course of World War I, they rose up to overthrow the Tsar and then the Kerensky bourgeois government.

Subsequently, they waged a successful war against the reactionaries and the foreign interventionists in the countryside of the vast Russian empire.”

On the question of Russia, the Communist Party of Peru stated in the above mentioned document:

“In the final analysis, the October Revolution was not only an insurrection but a revolutionary war that lasted for several years. Consequently, in the imperialist countries the revolution can only be conceived as a revolutionary war which today is simply people’s war.”

The armed struggle of Russia in 1917 cannot be mentioned without also bringing forward the failed revolution of 1905. This was pretext to 1917. And the war lasted to 1921, over a span of 15 years, where there was a lot of armed activity not only in 1905 and 1917. But still, we have had to wait for more than a hundred years for any Western “acumulationists” to finally accumulate enough forces, and also experiencing what Sison explain as the necessary objective conditions: “the capitalist state (...) [in] grave debilitation by its internal crisis, the crisis of the world capitalist system, involvement in an inter-capitalist or inter-imperialist war“. No wonder we have waited for a long time, and by this method one could go on forever, was it not for the fact that imperialism is doomed.

These people want to do revolution by doing everything but revolution! This is a charade and an expression of intellectual bankruptcy.

Even the question of accumulation was answered by Lenin a long time ago, stating that only when they see Socialism triumph will the majority of the People finally be convinced.

Sison writes:

“Even if the material foundation for socialism exists in capitalism, the proletariat must first defeat fascism, thus winning the battle for democracy, before socialism can triumph.”

We know this strain of thought from our homely Moscow-revisionist “CP”. It is not far from the anti-monopoly theory developed in Soviet Party Schools to sell the idea of European revisionist parties working tirelessly to build a pro-Soviet position in the Western European states, in parliament, and in allying with parts of the Social Democratic parties. It was a formula to “first secure world peace” (!) or “first establish an anti-monopoly-capitalist government”, and then after this, the socialist revolution. It is nothing other than “peaceful transition”. Even if it is masked as first winning against fascism, then armed revolution. The armed revolution will not be unfolded in this way, it has never happened. The only way to smash fascism is People’s War. And the only way to wage People’s War is waging it as a protracted war of the masses led by a militarized Maoist Communist Party, and waged by a People’s Army and a United Front.

An utter lack of knowledge on laws and possibilities in imperialist countries

Sison writes:

“By the current constitutional and legal standards of the industrial capitalist countries that pretend to be liberal-democratic, any individual can legally acquire firearms for the purpose of sport and self-defense against criminals as well as against the potential of the state to become tyrannical and oppressive.”

Again, what countries is Sison talking about? This is by no means the situation in Europe. In most European countries there are strict gun laws, and it is far from being an option for “any individual” to acquire firearms for self-defence! By all means, there are legal possibilities in many countries and revolutionaries can take use of them. But this statement again show a gaping lack of precision in Sison’s knowledge.

Sison writes:

“It is therefore possible to organize proletarians with firearms as sporting gun clubs, as community self-defense organizations and as voluntary security for public events and structures.”

We must disappoint Sison, if he cares to read our short text, with the fact that this is considered a criminal offence in most of Europe. And was it not illegal, we might speculate that the “huge army” Sison spoke of earlier, could choose to act as if it was, if armed proletarian gun clubs where organized in large scale by a revolutionary movement!

The theory also remind us of Trotsky’s transitional program and his advocating of Workers Militias in the factories. Neither Trotsky nor Sison has ever tried to organize such gun clubs or militias in Europe, but this is a very poor and naïve alternative to the People’s Army we need for waging People’s War. Done in the open or semi-openly and in the framework of legalism, it will be almost defenceless against state prosecution and repression. The proletariat needs its army. Militias should be formed and integrated into the army, but this is not possible inside a legalist framework of protracted legal struggle.

Is it wise or opportunist to hide our intent?

Sison writes:

“It is wise for the revolutionary party of the proletariat not to declare publicly the intent of building a people’s army before the conditions are ripe for armed

revolution.”

Again, the typical opportunist is at work. This is also something we heard many times before. So called revolutionaries saying “we should not declare our intent publically”, but who are they fooling? If this is a real intent, stated internally, it is quite hard to keep the secret from the intelligence services. At least if the Party is as loosely and legally organized as Sisons friends in some European countries. Is the purpose to hide our intent from the masses? To hide the necessity of building a People’s Army from the People themselves?

Who are to be fooled by this hidden intent? By this “wiseness”? We dare to propose, that the only ones being fooled, are the honest revolutionaries that believe the opportunists have any intent of building a People’s Army. Fooled by Sisons concessions by advocating gun clubs and political and practical exchanges with the revolutionary wars in the oppressed countries. Fooled by prestige more than content, because the content is old and in the same tune as the one played in every opportunist reformist group in the west.

The plan to dogmatically repeat what they conceive as the October path of Lenin, more than 100 years later and against an enemy that has studied insurrection and how to beat it for just as long, as some kind of surprise attack, is extremely naïve. Criminally naïve, if applied as a real strategy by a self proclaimed Communist Party.

On the question of hiding our intent, the great first teachers of Marxism, Marx and Engels, has answered this in the only Communist way already in the Communist Manifesto:

“The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.”

Compare this daring statement with the “wise” advice of Sison of waiting for ripe conditions to declare our intent...

Also, let us note that Sison talk about proletarian revolutionaries, not Communists, and about the party of the proletariat and not the Communist Party. This is in our point of way not the most correct and clear language for this matter.

Even the imperialists understand the universality of People’s War

Let us leave Sison and listen to Dr. Thomas A. Marks, a yankee political risk consultant working in the business of counter-insurgency:

“In any discussion of insurgency, the works of Mao Tse-tung are unavoidable. His innovations resulted in “people’s war,” a formulation that lifted the asymmetric challenge from the tactical and military to the strategic and political. Mao was to irregular war what Napoleon and Clausewitz were to regular warfare.”

And:

“To the contrary, as Mao made clear time and again, violence is integral to all phases of insurgency. It is merely used at a level appropriate to the situation to eliminate resistance and government presence so that insurgent politics can produce mass and resource mobilization.”

And:

“The FARC case illustrates that, whether Maoist or not, insurgencies must pursue the Maoist strategic essentials as realized in operational art.”

Bourgeois intellectuals specializing on guerilla warfare and insurrection often refer to Mao in this way. His theory of People’s War is not referred to, by them, as peasant war or “encircling the cities from the countryside”. It is referred to as

lifting guerilla warfare to a strategic level and synthesising the laws of irregular or asymmetric or guerilla warfare. What bourgeois experts understand, many revolutionaries fail to grasp; People's War as synthesised by Mao Zedong is universally applicable in all countries of the world. It is the only military strategy of the Proletariat, and thus of the oppressed masses of the World.

The People's War is an essential and integral part of Maoism

Further on, the Communist Party of Peru wrote in its International Line:

“In the face of this situation, in 1979, at the PCP's First National Conference, President Gonzalo called upon the whole party to defend and apply Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought against the revisionist triple assault. The Party's principled positions remained firm and unalterable. In 1980, the PCP launched the People's War based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought. And it is with the application and development of the People's War that the PCP has advanced further in the comprehension of Maoism as the third stage of Marxism. Hence, at the Second National Conference held in May 1982 the Party agreed that Marxism-Leninism-Maoism was the third stage of Marxism. The PCP was the only party in the world in the vanguard of the defense of Maoism, assuming the task of struggling for the unity of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoists of the world so that this ideology be the command and guide of the world and Peruvian revolutions.”

This is the line put forward by chairman Gonzalo and the PCP, a red line in the International Communist Movement, to struggle for the unification under Maoism. Let us emphasize the statement that Maoism was comprehended only through the People's War in Peru and that the PCP was the *only* Maoist Party in the world in 1982. This is completely true. What is important is not the word, but the content, and the content of Maoism was not clearly stated before 1982 and then only by the PCP. People's War is an integral part of this third and higher stage of the Ideology of the Proletariat; Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, principally Maoism.

It is good that Sison put forward his line, even in a cowardly and mediocre way. It makes for another good opportunity to put forward the correct line of Protracted People's War in each and every country as the only path to communism. The counter-arguments are well known to us and has been answered many times, but they are not to every revolutionary. Now, they can see for themselves, what is put forward against People's War, what is the "alternative", and they can for themselves evaluate if this is a victorious path, or just the same old goose step down to the swamp of reformism, opportunism and parliamentary cretinism that so many of our forerunners have made only to drown in this bitter muddy water.

Let us also recommend the following three great texts which is very relevant to this topic, not only to highlight the strategy of People's War, but on the question of how to view Chairman Gonzalo and how to evaluate the October Revolution of Russia from our higher viewpoint today, conquered due to Maoism.

Redaction of Klassenstandpunkt, German Federal Republic: People's War – The sole path to liberation <http://www.demvolkedienen.org/index.php/en/t-theorie-en/2259-klassenstandpunkt-people-s-war-the-sole-path-to-liberation>

Maoist Communist Party, French state: To defend the life of Chairman Gonzalo is to defend

Maoism! <http://www.demvolkedienen.org/index.php/en/t-dokumente-en/1778-pcm-to-defend-the-life-of-chairman-gonzalo-is-to-defend-maoism>

Revolutionary Front in Defence of the People's Rights, Brazil: Long Live the Shining October Path! <http://www.demvolkedienen.org/index.php/en/t-dokumente-en/1852-long-live-the-shining-october-path>

This is expressions and examples of the great efforts of the red line to forward the line of Gonzalo, to promote and propagate the line of the PCP and to give a new impulse to the International Communist Movement. It is expressions of

how the red line gives guidance and support to Maoists in the whole world, and why Maoism is advancing now also amongst revolutionaries in the Imperialist countries. The efforts must be saluted and studied by every Maoist.

The red line will unite the International Communist Movement under Maoism

This response to Sison's text is made in a hurry. The question of People's War has been investigated and formulated a lot more thorough many a time, for example in the three texts above, and especially in the great documents of the Communist Party of Peru. It is written polemically, but it is not written with any disrespect of the Communists and Fighters of the Philippines.

For 50 years the Communist Party of the Philippines has waged a glorious People's War. Communists and Masses have shed blood as a living and struggling part of the World Proletarian Revolution. It is not only a practical contribution to the International Communist Movement, but again proof of the invincibility of People's War and the universality of the People's War. The People's War of the Philippines is one of four People's Wars in the World today, and thus it is important and deeply cherished by every true Communist. We wish for it to develop further and to succeed in wiping away the old state, for New Democracy, socialist transition and cultural revolutions till Communism. As long as the fire of People's War is burning, however meek the fire might become in periods, we salute the fire and celebrate it.

This hope and support is unwavering, whatever José Maria Sison might recommend as wise or flexible, but such support cannot and must not put a lid on the two-line struggle. Unprincipled unity is an expression of the black line, the bourgeois line, the line of liquidation and revisionism. Two-line struggle must be waged without fear of being out of order, because we know it to be a struggle of life and death for the World Proletarian Revolution.

The red line of the International Communist Movement upholds as true the fact that Maoism is the third and higher stage of the Ideology of the Proletariat and

that People's War is universally applicable in each and every country. This is the position of the left, this is the correct position proven true again and again, this is the position that will prevail and is already uniting the International Communist Movement under one glorious banner for the first time in ages.

Unite under Maoism!

Reconstitute and reconstruct Militarized Communist Parties!

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