The Third Instrument[1]

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Note: These views reflect those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of any organization in the US and especially abroad and should not be taken as such.

Introduction

"Concrete political aims must be set in concrete circumstances. All things are relative, all things flow and all things change." –VI Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution.*

The history of the United Front is one of the most misused and misunderstood theories in Marxism. There are those who, through ignorance, sectarianism, or a narrow view of the masses, diminish the role of the united front. Then, there is the more common and historically detrimental mistake of distorting the United Front to service the bourgeoisie; this still takes place but is most evidenced in, for instance, the Browder-Foster cliques of the CPUSA, Togliatti of the PCI, and Thorez of the PCF. We must begin examining some of this history in its inception from the Comintern, mainly through Comrade Dimitrov, to its elevation through Mao and its application in Peru. The purpose here is theoretical intervention on the topic which can present a

[1] https://struggle-sessions.com/2019/12/02/the-third-instrument/

more precise and clear understanding of the United Front, operationalizing this better conception through practice.

The principal contradiction in the world today is between imperialist countries and countries dominated by imperialism; this means mainly the fact that US imperialism dominates the oppressed countries in collusion and contention with other imperialist powers, remembering that US imperialism is the main antagonistic force in the world today. These facts only conjure up evidence to support the argument that the united front is indispensable in the communist arsenal, which is why Mao considered it one of what he called the "three magic weapons." The Communist Party of Peru would take this invaluable lesson from Mao and incorporate it into an integral whole as the New State-Front in what they formulated as the three instruments of revolution which are to be constructed concentrically with the Communist Party at the center, the Army around the Party, and the New State-Front around that.

The theory of the united front has passed through great vacillations. On one hand, it has been used in a distorted way by rightist liquidators, and it has been used in a thoroughly revolutionary way by genuine Communists, among them the Maoists who have further developed the understanding of the concept. The united front, or the New State-Front as it was later understood, will always present problems of implementation. When used correctly it solves one of the most major problems of all—that by itself, without any allies, the proletariat is not capable of making revolution. That the proletariat has to secure the support of all revolutionary classes in making its revolution. So, it must be understood that the united front will appear quite different in different conditions, that its universal aspect is uniting all who can be united, while "all who can be united" varies in various conditions.

There are practical requirements for this desired unity: independent initiative, the role of Communists, the struggles for unity, the practice of criticism, and—for our purpose here—the strategic interests of the proletariat in the world proletarian revolution.

The Comintern, Dimitrov, and Problems of the United Front

Understanding the Comintern position on the united front necessitates understanding one of its chief architects, Georgi Dimitrov, a giant in the history of Communism. Dimitrov was not simply a theorist who left behind works of great value, he was a revolutionary and antifascist hero who stood against the top Nazi leaders defiantly at his trial and would rise in the ranks of both the Comintern and his native Bulgarian Communist Party. For our purpose we must evaluate his work the *United Front*, a collection of speeches and articles which he produced in his capacity as General

Secretary of the Communist International 1935-1937, which were delivered to the VII Comintern Congress.

Various opportunist trends seek to disguise the united front as a retreat, as something that is inherently class collaborationist. Their arguments tend to hinge on refraining from placing criticism on the agents of social-democracy, at least when unity is needed or desired. This is the first distortion of Dimitrov's teachings. A thoroughgoing Marxist divides the subject in question into two parts, and Dimitrov demonstrated this:

> "[W]e stress the need to see the difference between the two different camps of Social-Democracy…, there is a reactionary camp of Social-Democracy, but alongside of it there exists and is growing the camp of Left-Social-Democrats, of workers who are becoming revolutionary."

We must warn against mechanistic reading of Dimitrov on this point and ask ourselves, with our specific concrete conditions in the forefront of our minds, is this camp growing today in our case? In Dimitrov's times, as he pointed out, Social-Democracy was dwindling as the bulwark of the bourgeoisie and, with the conditions of growing fascism, came increased revolutionary thought among the Social-Democrats, even among their most fertile base—the labor aristocracy. This is still true but to a far lesser extent. In the US, Social-Democracy seeks with its every move to become the bulwark of the bourgeoisie; it seeks to ready the ground, albeit unknowingly for fascism. Nonetheless there is a (slowly) growing camp of left wing revolutionaries who can be united with, in given conditions for given tasks. These remain the secondary aspect of Social-Democracy; the above position cannot be applied with lifeless rubber stamping. What is valuable is the insistence of dividing a thing into two, in this case dividing all forces which can possibly be integrated into a united front. His basis for division is universal in any conditions, and was based on a willingness to support Communists in a united front. While the right opportunist concocts charges of ultra-leftism leveled at all who insist upon these principles, Comrade Dimitrov sets this matter to rest with precision:

"In the struggle to establish the united front the importance of the leading role of the Communist Party increases extraordinarily. Only the Communist Party is at the bottom the initiator, the organizer and the driving force of the united front for the working class." (1)

Calls to uncritically accept and support Social-Democratic regimes in the name of the united front, with no important role assigned to Communists, result in a united front that only exists in the daydreams of right opportunists. Following Dimitrov

we begin to unearth the strategic importance of the united front for the proletariat, bringing the aforementioned right opportunism into focus; the united front must in all instances strengthen the role of the Communist Party, which is the initiator, organizer, and driving force, it must do so by the Communist Party strengthening the front itself: "[W]e must strengthen the Communist Parties in every way and increase their membership for the very reason that we seriously want to strengthen the united front. The strengthening of the Communist Parties is not a narrow Party concern but the concern of the entire working class." (2)

Never for a moment was the theory an excuse for permanent, long term, or unprincipled class alliance. Far from it—the united front was a tactical alliance in the strategic interests of the working class:

> "We have combined, and shall continue to combine our readiness to march jointly with Social-Democratic Parties and organizations to struggle against fascism with an irreconcilable struggle against Social-Democracy as the ideology and practice of compromise with the bourgeoisie, and consequently also against any penetration of the ideology into our own ranks."

Of the utmost importance is his emphasis on ideological struggle against social democracy as the ideology and practice of compromise with the bourgeoisie. It remains such to this day all over the world and cannot be forgotten.

As dialectical materialists we can understand that it is possible to tactically unite with something while combating and resisting it strategically; this kind of thinking is lacking in positions of right opportunism. The Comintern analysis on both the Third Period and Peoples Front periods contained errors; it is also an error when grasping potential over-correction to place these in diametric opposition. The analysis historically was based on the strength and composure of Social-Democracy in the concrete conditions which it existed. Whether it is characterized in the dominant aspect as Social-Fascism (the bulwark of the bourgeoisie) or divided between the reactionary capitulators to the bourgeoisie and the progressive elements which will unite with Communists is a matter of conditions, subject to flow and change. They do not remain fixed, divorced from the subjective and objective conditions which compose Social-Democratic Parties. As Lenin rightly insisted political aims must be set in concrete circumstances.

Of course, impediments exist in the form of left-sectarianism which are tempted to view life as something stagnant, a refusal to observe the political and conditional shifts and changes. These shifts and changes give ammunition to the class collaborationists and conciliators (the latter of which is the dominant trend, at least in imperialist cen-

ters). The main danger of sectarianism is the assumption that leadership and influence need not be won, likewise opportunists make the same error, while the sectarian will believe combat is unnecessary due to the infallibility of their ideas, the right opportunist will see combat as sectarianism on the basis that ideas are inconsequential and only "divide the movement." The only correct path from this quagmire is to insist on principled ideological struggle, two-line struggle, consistent criticism and self-criticism. Dimitrov offered the following insight:

> "Self-satisfied sectarianism will not and cannot understand that the leadership of the working class by the Communist Party does not come of itself. The leading role of the Communist Party in the struggles of the working class must be won. For this purpose it is necessary, not to rant about the leading role of the Communists, but to merit and win the confidence of the working masses by everyday mass work and correct policy."

Thus, self-satisfied sectarians will inevitably view their ideas as so correct that anyone not aware of these ideas is instantly deemed a counter revolutionary. As so they see no need at all to enrich the existing mass struggles with MLM, they see no internal contradictions within the social democratic camp which make them ripe for the influence and corrections possible only through discovery of MLM or its application. In short, their correctness forbids them from proving it, because such labor is beneath them, they would after all have to engage with incorrect ideas or worse yet be polluted by their presence which is anathema to their core value, sectarianism. They need nothing but ideas and nourished on these without practice, experience or two-line struggle, they are self-satisfied because they have removed themselves from the real world. Such elements must not be harbored or concealed.

While sometimes sectarianism will be the principal aspect over right opportunism, other times right opportunism will be the principal aspect over sectarianism. While which is principal at a given time is subject to conditional change, at all times presses the need to struggle against both as errors simultaneously, as one tends to over-correct with the other in the dialectical process of a thing turning into its opposite. Dimitrov understood this well when he instructed that:

> "While fighting most resolutely to overcome and exterminate the last remnants of self-satisfied sectarianism, we must increase in every way our vigilance toward right opportunism and the struggle against it and against every one of its concrete manifestations, bearing in mind that the danger of right opportunism will increase in proportion as the wide united front develops."

This is a problem all united front work will encounter and it must be navigated competently with two-line struggle inside of every united front and inside of the Party that leads it. Dimitrov concluded that:

> "Already there are tendencies to reduce the role of the Communist Party in the ranks of the united front and to effect a reconciliation with Social-Democratic ideology." Dimitrov and those who earnestly took up his theories, including Mao, understood that the united front had the task of winning over the rank and file of the non-class parties and workers organized under their banners, against reformism and class conciliation. That the united front was not in "reconciliation with Social-Democratic ideology and practice" but that its successful application demands "constant struggles within our ranks to against tendencies to depreciate the role of the Party, against legalist illusions, against reliance on spontaneity and automatism…"

For a united front to accomplish its aims, there must be a single Party of the proletariat in each country; this means the struggle to reconstitute the Communist Parties in each country takes precedence. Furthermore, once these Parties are reconstituted the struggle will still be long, drawn out and difficult to become the single, recognized Party of the proletariat. The united front must be placed in the service of this necessity at every level of its development; from its small embryonic form to its most fully realized form.

In the principal aspect, the teachings and positions of the Comintern and its General Secretary Comrade Dimitrov were correct; nonetheless we would lack diligence to ignore some of the specific shortcomings. In spite of highlighting the need to remain vigilant against right opportunism and the recognition that right opportunism increases in strength with the expansion of the united front, many Parties were able to successfully utilize People's Front policy to their own nefarious, liquidationist ends. As mentioned this is most exemplified in the policies and positions of Browder-Foster, Togliatti, and Thorez. Unlike Italy and France, the USA was not occupied by fascist Axis powers, yet it saw similar liquidations of its CP as Italy and France, plummeting head first into revisionism, legalism, reformism and capitulation. The vast majority of the blame should be rightly placed on the opportunists themselves—in the United States' case Earl Browder and William Z. Foster. We must examine instructions which they were able to distort, or mistake, or which aided them. There was also Comintern advice which was incorrect to begin with.

When speaking directly of the antifascist struggles in the USA, Comrade Dimitrov made many correct and useful observations, he stated that:

> "Embryo American fascism is trying to direct the disillusionment and discontent of the masses into reactionary and fascist channels. It is a peculiarity of the development of American fascism that at the present stage this fascism comes forward principally in the guise of an opposition to fascism, which it argues as being an 'un-American' tendency imported from abroad. In contradiction to German fascism, which acts under anti-constitutional slogans, American fascism tries to portray itself as the custodian of the Constitution and American democracy."

This analysis was true then and it still is today, we see this form of fascism daily, while groups like the National Socialist Movement, with their swastikas and SS logos appear to middle-America as pariahs, the US flag, the thin blue line, and constitutional rhetoric are the stables of purebred American fascists, and what is more these actually find traction among the masses disillusioned with the old bourgeois parties—in particular the labor aristocrats and petty bourgeoisie threatened by imperialist crisis, who find unity behind the open reactionary rhetoric of Donald Trump.

Dimitrov was correct to insist that American Communists find ways to immediately begin winning the masses away from fascist sympathies; hindsight offers corrections to his proposed method of doing this. His argument was to form a third Party for the purpose of uniting against fascism, and that this Party, electoral in nature was to be composed of "workers and farmers":

> "[O]f course, it will be neither socialist nor communist… The program of this Party must be directed against the banks, trusts, and monopolies, against the principal enemies of the people, who are gambling on the woes of the latter."

Using this position, Browder would carry out in the post-war liquidation of the CP with his forming of the Communist Political Association. Instead of learning from the shortcomings of Comintern guidance and correcting these mistakes (notably as Mao Zedong did in China), Browder would instead incorporate the fascist means of making an all-American brand of bankrupt "communism" which was designed to be a non-partisan "association" that in essence carried water for the ruling class. This open negation of the Party was opposed by the rightist faction under Foster who would seek to reconstitute the CP leaving Browderism intact only under a different name. In essence they sought to prolong indefinitely the class alliance made necessary in war time, not only its continuance but they chose to make the "neither socialist nor communist Party" their principal form of organization, while Browder failed to maintain the Communist Political Association, Foster succeeded in its maintenance only by this time calling it the CPUSA.

All People's Front policies were divorced from their revolutionary content by this clique of proto-Khrushchevites who used them against all gains and revolutionary victories of the foregone Third Period. While we can understand that Khrushchev and his brood used Lenin (divorced of context) against Leninism, the situation with the US revisionists was both one of using the Comintern (divorced of context) against Communism as well as relying on the genuine mistakes of the Comintern's guidance to ultimately oppose its revolutionary qualities. Tying this to the conditions of the time, one of Browder's arguments for this collaboration was to support the needs of the Soviet Union in obtaining war reparations to financially rebuild the country, this real need was operationalized by Browder and Foster in liquidating the CPUSA.

Author Anna Louise Strong recounts the duplicity of the US imperialists which compelled certain hopes and aspirations not only among Soviet leaders, but among the people: "During the war they had been led to expect a big 'Reconstruction Loan' from America to rebuild the ruins incurred in the joint war. Donald Nelson, who went to Moscow, in 1943, as Roosevelt's emissary, talked of six billion dollars as the right amount. Other American representatives confirmed this in the following years. Russians took it seriously; they were hungry, cold. Then Roosevelt died, and Truman stopped even Lend Lease aid so suddenly that Russian-bound shipments were taken off ships in New York Harbor. When Russia, listing her losses, asked for 'the first billion' of that loan, the State Department 'lost' the letter for nearly a year. Many Russians died of hunger that victory year, for lack of a loan."

Such conditions compelled the Soviet Union to at all costs secure the needed loans, and this included their advice to the Communists in the US, who made pretext of ceasing hostility so that the imperialist ruling class of the US might pursue 'peace' with the Soviet Union—such peace that can only be understood then as predatory peace that serves imperialism. Thus the American revisionists went all in for conciliation and capitulation, using the plight of the Soviet people as a phony justification to make social peace. Mao Zedong was able to do just the opposite, he embodied all the finest lessons of the Comintern, applied rigorously its correct directives and decisively broke with its mistaken advice and incorrect formula, becoming the beacon for both the path forward and for the overall correctness of the Communist International.

There is temptation to gloss over the fact that China under the leadership of Mao blazed a new path for revolution precisely by disregarding certain incorrect advice from the Comintern, but to do so would rob revolutionaries of the full recognition of certain advances. This problem was not lost on Comrade Kang Sheng who, in a 1964 discussion with Chairman Mao, remarked that:

> "On New Democracy has had great significance in the world Communist movement. I asked some Spanish comrades who said that their problem was that they undertook only bourgeois democracy and not New Democracy. They did not undertake these three things: the army, the rural villages, and political power. They subjected their work entirely to the needs of the Soviet Union's foreign policy, with the result that nothing was accomplished… They did not want political power and did not mobilize the peasants. The Soviet Union told them that if they set up a dictatorship of the proletariat, England and France might oppose them, and that this would be bad for the Soviet Union… When they fought they also fought conventional battles, just like the bourgeoisie, and they made a last ditch stand in Madrid. They did everything they could to comply with the foreign policy of the Soviet Union."

This not only indicates Chinas course corrections to the united front, but a deeper issue, that of class power. Kang is furthermore highlighting the fact that erroneous advice from the Comintern was affecting other sections of the Communist movement outside of China, and that On New Democracy contained the solution to these mistakes. In agreement Chairman Mao responded that:

> "The Third International [Comintern] had not yet been dissolved, and we did not go along with it. The Zunyi Conference did not go along with it."

The Zunyi Conference, which took place during the Long March in 1935 was a turning point for the Chinese revolution in which the revolutionary line of Mao Zedong defeated the dogmatist line of Bo Gu and Comintern representative Otto Braun which sought to implement the rightist error of "pure defense" or "defensive defense" to gloss over their own military mistakes. Mao on the other hand struggled to implement the principles of People's War, and in particular his mobile warfare tactics. This strategy would prove instrumental to the victory of the Communist Party of China, and the dogmatists were demoted when Chairman Mao's line won out. This is but one of many examples of the higher level which Mao's theories on military strategy and the united front played out. The revolutionary situation in many countries might have been very different had leaders of the same caliber as Chairman Mao been able to take control of their Communist Parties, instead of relying on mechanical, subservient or opportunist application of Comintern policy. Instead of pondering hypotheticals, though, we should proceed with an analysis on the Maoist united front.

Mao Zedong and the United Front "Capitulationism must be strenuously opposed. When we make concessions, fall back, turn to defensive or halt our advance in our

relations with either allies or enemies, we should always see these actions as part of our whole revolutionary policy, as an indispensable link in the general revolutionary line, as one zigzag course. In a word, they are positive." – Mao Zedong, *The Question of Independence and Initiative in the United Front*, 1938

Chairman Mao understood the concessions necessary to the maintenance of the united front with the same finesse and clarity which he understood most things, including People's War. He grasped the importance of advances and retreats, preservation of Communist forces and annihilation of the enemy's forces, demarcation between positive and negative concessions, principled and un-principled retreats, etc. In short, he understood the function of contradictions and the identity of opposites to a degree which only enriched and further developed the theory of the united front as well as its application in China.

According to Mao, the principal feature of the united front in semi-feudal semi-colonial countries oppressed by imperialism was to, "subordinate the class struggle to the national struggle," which in this case meant against Japan. This means that in countries oppressed by imperialism, the anti-imperialist struggle is the main struggle, reflecting the principal or main contradiction in the world today—that is, between imperialism and countries oppressed by imperialism, mainly US imperialism. For Mao and all genuine revolutionaries, this does not imply subservience to whatever struggle happens to spontaneously emerge, regardless of political line and the class which leads it—contrary to what the most servile and decrepit organizations dominated by revisionism think, and in spite of their trafficking in Mao's great teachings. Mao insisted time and again that Communists must initiate and lead the united front, that they must do so as part of the central goal of taking power: of the united front as strategic to the interests of the oppressed via the interests of the proletariat.

Furthermore, he placed maintaining Communist initiative right in the center of this concept: "independence and initiative of Parties in the united front should be preserved," and that essential rights should not be sacrificed in the name of cooperation and unity, that these must be upheld within certain limits. The nature of these limits can be summed up by maintaining the unity of the united front. National struggles which subordinate the class struggle do not do away with the class struggle. On the contrary, the class struggle is expressed through them. In a struggle with a national character, the class struggle takes the character of national struggle. Thus, the demands of the national struggle are only the departure point for class struggle.

Mao stressed that working with others—be they other proletarian organizations like unions, or other Parties of other classes in a united front—meant, importantly, also maintaining an independent nature. While the Kuomintang sought to restrict and

oppose Communist Party growth at every turn and prevent it from growing entirely, Mao correctly focused on opposites, a unity which maintained independence:

> "In short, we must not split the united front, but neither should we allow ourselves to be bound hand and foot, and hence the slogan of 'everything through the united front' should not be put forward, if 'everything through the united front' is intended as 'everything must be submitted to Chiang Kai-shek and Yen Hi-shan, then the slogan, too, is wrong. Our policy is one of independent initiative within the united front, a policy of unity and independence."

Through reliance on the law of contradiction and particularly the identity of opposites, Mao was able to consistently keep the united front in the strategic interests of the proletariat. To do this, he had to struggle internally within the CP and externally with those in the united front. There were at times elements within the CPC who sought through dogmatism or sectarianism to end the united front via capitulation and liquidation to the Kuomintang or withdrawal of the Communists on the basis of the reactionaries within the Kuomintang. There were elements within China and within the Kuomintang itself who sought to capitulate to Japan. Mao addressed a group of these who did so in the name of "peace" and brought to light the fact that the capitulationist groups was forced to invent stories and carry out slander campaigns which relied on fabrications when they could not compromise or wreck the unity of the united front. New Democracy answers the question of making revolution for the backward countries. Its conclusions were possible only through diligent application of the united front. As Comrade Kang Sheng was quoted as stating in the last section that On New Democracy would be of great significance to the world Communist movement. In this text Mao places utmost importance on the developments of the Great October Socialist Revolution, which ended the period of bourgeois democratic revolutions by ushering in the period defined by proletarian socialist revolutions. This breakthrough is of critical importance to the whole united front. Mao says that:

> "Since these events [1917 Russian Revolution], the Chinese revolution has changed, it has come within a new category of bourgeois democratic revolutions and, as far as alignment of revolutionary forces is concerned, forms part of the proletarian socialist revolution…The first imperialist world war and the first victorious socialist revolution, the October Revolution, have changed the whole course of human history and have ushered in a new era."

This new era meant the old method of revolutions developing under the leadership of the bourgeois, developing a capitalist society, under the dictatorship of the bourgeois

could not result in national liberation, that these old-type revolutions could not attack imperialist influences at its root. The new-type of revolution had to: 1) be led by the proletariat, via its vanguard the Communist Party, 2) it must establish a new kind of democratic state, a New Democratic state, 3) place this state under the joint dictatorship of the revolutionary classes, 4) clear and widen the path for socialism, and 5) carry out socialism and implement the dictatorship of the proletariat. This of course placed genuine national liberation from imperialism squarely within the strategic interests of the proletarian world revolution with no conciliatory aspect.

The theory of the Chinese revolution being part of the world proletarian revolution went back to 1924-7 but as Mao stressed it was not completed or fully understood. The theory of New Democracy alone offered such completion and understanding. New Democratic revolution was understood as the first stage of socialist revolution applied in semi-feudal, semi-colonial countries and because of the necessity of class alliance it relies on the united front to be carried out. Its application in the backward countries, underdeveloped and dominated by imperialism, necessitates a different type of class composition than we would encounter in an imperialist country, though it holds several lessons which all revolutionaries would be deft to learn. The alliance sometimes includes the national bourgeoisie, as was the case in the Chinese revolution, and this fact did not prevent Chairman Mao from presenting an honest and grounded analysis:

> "The Chinese national bourgeoisie also has another quality, namely, a proneness to conciliation with enemies of the revolution. Even when it takes part in revolution, it is unwilling to break with imperialism completely and, moreover, it is closely associated with the exploitation of the rural areas through land rent, thus it is neither willing nor able to overthrow imperialism, and much less feudal forces, in a thorough way."

While Mao was speaking of the Chinese national bourgeoisie, this general outlook holds true for this type of bourgeoisie anywhere it exists in the world, and as such, offers a warning against the tendencies of right opportunism toward championing the national bourgeoisie, to reconcile with them and offer them uncritical support. Mao conveyed that there was "Possible participation in revolution on the one hand, and proneness to conciliation on with enemies on the other." By looking at the dual nature of this class Mao was able to get to the root of the matter. His use of terms must be grasped here, "possible" in no way guarantees their participation even in the short term, he uses "possible" and not probable. Combine this with the use of the word "proneness" and we can only understand that conciliation and betrayal are the more likely outcomes. He even stated clearly that:

"When confronted by a formidable enemy they [the bourgeoisie] unite with the workers and peasants against him, but when the workers and peasants awakened, they turn round to unite with the enemy against the workers and peasants. This is a general rule everywhere in the world, but it is more pronounced in the Chinese bourgeoisie." For the coordination of classes in the united front, it is indispensable that a firm grasp of dialectical materialism be in place. Mao presents conditional, temporary conditions in which a class enemy might possibly come to the side of the workers and peasants, and likewise division is inevitable and struggle is permanent. We see two important aspects: temporary conditional circumstances which make unity desirable, and the struggles for unity which make unity possible. Both of these aspects can change in relation to the location of the principal enemy. What is important is the understanding that while the revolution should not go against the interests of the national bourgeoisie convincing them to side against it, the national bourgeoisie is not automatically a natural ally and it is prone to siding with the enemy.

Understanding this dialectically, in the ebbs and flows, in the motion of life, means understanding that the need to unite all who can be united against the common enemy is ever present, but that who can be united is ever changing. This does not allow for opportunism, alliances of convenience, or conflict avoidance, etc. On the contrary it means asserting communist principles and not foregoing them:

> "We Communists will never push aside anyone who is revolutionary, we shall preserve in the united front and practice long-term cooperation with all those classes, strata, political parties, groups, and individuals that are willing to fight Japan to the end. But it will not do if certain people want to push aside the Communist Party; it will not do if they want to split the united front… Moving forward we cannot tolerate anyone who tries to capitulate, cause splits, or move backward."

Flowing from this, we see that due to the proneness to conciliation in the bourgeoisie, splits and antagonism are inevitable. Mao simply chose to utilize the united front to win over as many within the bourgeoisie as possible, understanding fully well that the use of arms and the policies of war between the classes would return. It was this united front which was cleverly itself used to split up the bourgeoisies between those temporarily progressive elements who would extend support to the Communists, that later would in turn be bought out by them during the beginning of the socialist state, and those who would go against the Communists in the service of imperialism and that would be ultimately expropriated by them. This is how the second united front played out in China.

Chiang Kai-shek, as expected, was a snake waiting to strike. No one was surprised or disappointed with his decision to strike. It was inevitable that he would lead sections of the Kuomintang against the united front and against the CPC, at the behest this time of US imperialism. This included rearming the captured Japanese imperialist soldiers and setting them loose on communist supporting areas in the north, an act that exposed him as an agent of imperialism and a vile enemy of the people. Mao's teachings were prophetic, in the lack of a formidable enemy, Chiang wasted no time siding with the enemy to attack the awakened workers and peasants. Upon the end of the war of resistance against Japanese imperialism, the Kuomintang took to utilizing US bombers to destroy dykes and earthworks in the villages in Communist base areas. This anti-people crime flooded around 500 villages which housed over 100,000 people; he continued bombing the thousands of people who assembled to reconstruct. Mao would summarize this logic later:

> "How different is the logic of the imperialists from that of the people! Make trouble, fail, make trouble again, fail again . . . till their doom; that is the logic of the imperialists and all reactionaries the world over in dealing with the people's cause, and they will never go against this logic. This is a Marxist law."

Chiang and the Kuomintang were expecting a ragged army, a war weary people, and one that would be easy enough to bomb and blast to surrender, yet their every action only helped the cause of the Communist Party. The CPC was prompted in 1947 to take military and political offensive, the Party banned landlordism and promised to go all the way on this issue by drafting new agrarian laws. Historian and tractor mechanic William Hinton details this moment in history vividly in his defining work *Fanshen*:

> "With these provisions of law the revolutionaries once again throw the gauntlet at Chiang Kai-shek and his American backers. They now demanded, not some modified relationship between the classes such as had served to unite the nation against Japan, not a settling of accounts with profiteers and collaborators such as had stirred in the liberated areas after Japans surrender, but the abolition of the rural class system itself, complete, unequivocal, universal."

The new draft law was not confined to the liberated areas already under Communist control; Mao's new law reverberated across China. 20 billion US dollars' worth of property had been confiscated, ending all possibility of compromise between the CPC and Kuomintang. Supporting or opposing this was what defined someone politically at the time, and the law saw overwhelming revolutionary support. Hinton describes Mao's teachings and predictions playing out in real time, in his descriptions of the

recruitment of "huge blocs of Chiang Kai-shek's soldiers into the Peoples Liberation Army," peasant unrest in the far-flung regions of the country, mass demonstrations of workers, students, and intellectuals in the Kuomintang controlled cities, etc.

Mass support for the communist cause broke out like a violent storm across all of China. Hinton describes the events:

> "Red flags, which had entirely disappeared during the years of the Japanese war, suddenly blossomed over streets, courtyards and village gates. The Chinese sun on a blue field, [a] symbol of the Anti-Japanese United Front, vanished from badges that adorned many caps and lapels, and in its place the red star and hammer and sickle emblem reminiscent of the Red Army of the 1930s reappeared. Down from the compound walls came the six feet high slogans of moderation and defense, and up in their place went the flaming words of the offensive, 'equally divide the land' and 'drive to Nanking; capture Chiang alive!"

In accordance with the theory promoted by Dimitrov the Communists had extended the united front policy to the youth, with special focus on recruiting and educating students, as Hinton accounts, "the university was a guerrilla institution which moved according to the dictates of war."

For his part it is evident that Chairman Mao took the correct guidance of the Comintern, applying it with the finesse of great leadership and at the same time, refusing to implement its incorrect lines. This rejection goes as far back as the rejection detailed in the last section around the Zunyi Conference, through his opposition to blockhouse warfare, his opposition to "defensive defense", and his adherence to unconventional warfare and reliance on the peasantry, even before the Long March and the triumph of Mao Zedong Thought over the work of the Party. All of this was essential to the emergence of Guiding Thought in the Chinese revolution.

This rejection was never seen by Mao to be anything but his commitment to lead the Chinese revolution to victory by creative application of the general to the specific. Author Han Suyin details one of the post-Comintern rejections of Soviet advice as late as 1949: "Countrywide victory was imminent; the People's Liberation Army stood poised, ready to advance into south China. Although Mao Zedong was to receive an urgent cable from Stalin, asking him to desist from prosecuting the war to the end, 'leave south China to Chiang' Stalin advised, he ignored it, and the Plenum would back him. In April, Mao would issue orders for the Army to advance, and on October 1, the People's Republic of China would come into being."

Stalin would later self-criticize for this mistake, stating he underestimated the ability of the Chinese comrades to secure countrywide victory. Mao would speak of this much later in the same 1964 conversation with Kang Sheng:

"Stalin realized he had made some mistakes on the China problem, and they were by no means small mistakes. We are a great nation of several hundred million people. He opposed our revolution and seizure of political power throughout the entire nation, we had prepared for many years and the entire war of resistance was preparation." In the above Mao expresses perfectly the fact that the united front in China was planned and carried out so that its strategic concern remained that of the central question of taking power for the proletariat, an improvement over the Soviet interpretation, far sighted beyond the surrender of Japan, and so it was preparation for victory and not compromise which would have partitioned the Country. This is the strategic interests of the proletariat as central to the united front, a unity which means victory for the proletariat. While the front does seek to strengthen the Communist Party by strengthening of the whole front (as instructed by Dimitrov) it does so in the exclusive long-term interests of the proletariat, interests that align with the peasantry and come into inevitable and antagonistic contradictions with the bourgeoisie, due to the very existence of immutable class struggle. And so, Communists have the responsibility to handle the united front with this in mind. The cooperation of sections of the exploiting classes aids in socialist construction, Mao proved that it is preferable to buy out patriotic elements and achieve greater unity, and this is how unity is preserved from the united front through the period of socialist construction.

This brings to the fore several lessons embodied in the theory of the united front itself. Communists must remain in command of the united front, they must insist on independent initiative, they must insist on actions that do not split the front, and they must finally divide all non-Communist parties and organizations into two, between either progressive forces which can be united with communists, or capitulationist elements opposed to unity. Furthermore, Communists must initiate and guide the front itself against these trends. The type of united front as well as its composition is completely dependent on the given conditions. Above all it is strategically in the interests of only the proletariat as a class, as the final class which must overcome all other classes and impose its dictatorship in uninterrupted stages. The second united front in the Chinese revolution occurred in the context of World War II, in conditions of direct fascist imperialist invasion of China. The case of China as well as the fascist occupations of Italy and France necessitate different forms of the united front which contain within them numerous and different pitfalls. None of these lessons can be transposed as-is on non-World War situations, either in the imperialist countries or in the countries oppressed by imperialism.

Like Chairman Mao, revolutionaries must grasp the correct and universal aspects of the theory and apply these aspects creatively to their specific circumstances. Many of us have heard the tired old argument, "if Mao was able to unite with the Kuomintang, then we should be able to unite with [insert revisionist, opportunist, or bourgeois organization here]." The simple answer to this idiotic line of thinking is, the Chinese united front existed the way it did in given conditions, and it was justified every step of the way by very detailed analysis of those conditions which, in the vast majority of their aspects, do not currently exist.

Far from being a clarion call to mechanically impose a set of lifeless principles,which promote unprincipled unity with opportunists, revisionists, the bourgeoisie, etc., the history of the International Communist Movement post-WWII is a warning against such an interpretation. As right opportunism won out in many places, the parties in imperialist centers were most prone to liquidation or continuing in name only as a hollowed out shell of their former selves. These experiences of the ICM, through bitter setbacks, as well as the later lessons of capitalist restoration of the former socialist countries have brought with them many great lessons which have advanced the ideology of the proletariat, among these are numerous examples of how *not* to apply the united front.

The New-State Front

"With Chairman Mao Zedong the class understands the need to build the three instruments of the revolution; the Party, the Army, and the United Front in an integrated way." –The Communist Party of Peru, *General Political Line*, 1988

Building on Chairman Mao's teachings, Chairman Gonzalo asserts that power is the central task of the revolution and understood the united front as the third instrument required to take power. Being a country oppressed by imperialism, the Peruvian revolution seeks to establish the joint dictatorship of the revolutionary classes, which they refer to as the People's Republic of New Democracy. This comes in the form of the Revolutionary Front for the Defense of the People (FDRP) in the countryside, which began with the establishment of People's Committees. In the cities these were called the Revolutionary Movement for the Defense of the People (MDRP) establishing Struggle Committees.

The United front, implemented through concrete struggles and revolutionary actions— mainly People's War—develops the New State, which is referred to as the New State-Front. The New State-Front operates in the base areas conquered and carved out in the People's War as the joint dictatorship of the revolutionary classes. These are the workers, peasants, and the petty bourgeoisie, also respecting the interests

of the middle bourgeoisie, functioning as a system of government through People's Assemblies—the string of People's Committees and Struggle Committees which link together to form a support base for the People's Army, once called the People's Guerrilla Army, now known as the People's Liberation Army.

In *the General Political Line* of the Communist Party of Peru they express that: "The New State is built amidst the People's War and follows a process of specific development, being built in our case in the countryside first, until the cities are surrounded, and it is formed through the entire country."

Chairman Gonzalo teaches that the New State is carried with the revolutionaries from the smallest inception to the largest expression, that it is born out of "modest and simple actions." The PCP began by establishing through its PGA the first People's Committees only a few years after the Initiation of Armed Struggle, one year later in 1983, the Party embarked upon its Great Plan to Conquer Bases, and they formed the Organizing Committee of the People's Republic of New Democracy as the embryo of the New State and United Front. In the ebbs and flows of people's war, its advances and retreats, new power was developed: "Thus, New Power, passing through the blood bath develops the People's Committees, which are being tempered in hard battles against the enemy, watered by the blood of the masses and peasants, the fighters and militants."

Peru, a country with a sizable but utterly weak legal left, in a non-World War situation, necessitated that the Communists apply the united front in new and specific ways. The conditions to unite the assorted parliamentary cretins were not present. This unity would necessarily mean uniting against imperialism, mainly US imperialism. The so-called left, through integration into the old decadent, land selling state, subservient to imperialism, had long gone over to the side of the enemy, it had surrendered and capitulated to reformism, opportunism, and in some cases, it had prostituted itself to armed revisionism. For these reasons and more, the Party chose to initiate and develop the united front of all progressive classes, in order to establish the People's Committees, support bases, and the People's Republic of New Democracy:

> "The People's Committees are materializations of the New State, they are committees of the United Front; led by commissars who assume their state functions by commissioning, elected by the assemblies of representatives, and subject to recall."

In essence, through warfare the PCP was able to establish the New State in the ruins of the old. Through destruction they managed to create the new world always in battle with the old. These represented new ideas, and the creative application of the united

front to a post-World War, post restoration society. Just as the imperialists themselves were poised to declare total victory over socialism, the People's Republic of New Democracy proved that the Communists were not beaten.

The New State-Front model was so successful in fact, that over the course of the People's War it developed from the rural base areas, in the highlands and jungles into the shanty towns of the major cities, especially Lima, a city larger than any US city. In these shanty towns, populated by the deepest and most profound sections of the masses of workers and peasants, the poorest Peruvians, the united front administered to the day to day needs of the people. The committees provided electricity, waterworks, and other amenities to the people, sometimes for the first time ever. More so, anti-people crimes had been eliminated. The New State-Front administered to all aspects of daily life; the old-state and its NGO complex was obsolete. In New State areas, the quality of life was higher than the revolutionary classes could achieve in similar neighborhoods where the revolution had not yet spread: "The People's Republic of New Democracy in formation shines defiantly against the old state, and opens up the perspective of conquering total power. This example encourages the revolutionaries of the world, most especially the international proletariat."

The international encouragement and inspiration provided by the People's Republic of New Democracy in formation cannot be understated, evidence of it can be seen in the support organizations for the Revolution in Peru and the Peruvian People's Movement (MPP) internationally. Supporters of the Party, even in exile, would never relent. They took the line of constituting and reconstituting the Communist Parties seriously and worked to this end, they did not content themselves simply with generating support for revolution in their homeland, but acted as genuine internationalists, making Maoism incarnate.

By taking part in the struggle of the masses in their host countries, they expanded the principles of the united front in the true spirit of internationalism. According to reactionary bourgeois writer Simon Strong ,the Party mobilized emigrant Peruvians to carry out actions abroad. "Reports of the Maoists' presence in the Bolivian province's bordering Lake Titicaca grew persistently during the 1980s."

According to Strong, the abroad work of the PCP was so effective that it generated two-line struggle in the Communist Party of Bolivia, and People's Schools had been initiated by the Maoist faction. Giving some details about the MPP's presence in Europe:

> "Apart from the Peruvian nationals, wherever there is a significant population of immigrants, they [PCP] are strongly represented. The MPPs under orders to seek our immigrants do their best to cater to their needs. In Madrid, a Peruvian immi-

> grant reported that an office festooned with [PCP] posters operated a telephone exchange with stolen lines where people could call anywhere in the world… and forged passports were available."

Reports from bourgeois sources should be regarded with the appropriate skepticism, yet if there is any truth at all to these claims, they would imply that the united front of the PCP extended to immigrant communities in Europe via its broad mass work. In every country in which MPP had a presence, support for the revolution did flourish, carried out under the general line of constituting or reconstituting the CPs of those countries, through the concrete service to the broad masses.

Conclusion

The role of the united front being integrated into the three instruments of revolution, its articulation as constructed concentrically around the army and the Party has been completely theorized by Chairman Gonzalo, but it existed as untheorized well before this. It must be understood that these three instruments are integral to one another's existence, and that the health of all are interrelated, meaning that the united front is of utmost importance to grasp, uphold and apply.

This is no easy task; those who proceed only from abstract principles, the red-moralists, will find construction of the united front daunting, undesirable and finally impossible. Those who find the united front theory as a good cover story to conceal their own capitulationist, collaborationist ambitions are class traitors undercover, and they will never be able to construct the front around the Party and seek to either keep it separate or bend and break the Party for the sake of "unity." We must insist that principles which can only remain in the abstract, ones that forbid proper response to actual conditions are in most cases a well-meaning hindrance, and likewise we must insist, as Mao did, that all unity proceeds through struggle. Education, debate, two-line struggle, criticism and self-criticism are the means to overcome genuine mistakes.

Without a solid united front, on a solid basis, the army lacks recruitment options; it becomes disconnected and cannot accomplish mass work. Without the front the fish lack water to swim in. Likewise the Party becomes largely defenseless and the people themselves suffer, the leadership is ceded to the bourgeoisie, and there are no communists to contend for leadership against the main enemies. We see this in the US in most spontaneous mass struggles, given time and attention, the representatives of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie swoop in and take command; in short order they fill the task of liquidating the mass movements, secure NGO funding and channel everything into reformism and the deathlike stranglehold of the Democratic Party imperialists. Correct application of the united front within the mass struggles gives

impetus to communist leadership and is essential to winning any mass support by direct confrontation against recognized class enemies.

Likewise, the unity front is not a wholesale argument to "unite the left" as this kind of unprincipled unity is never defined concretely according to concrete conditions and all calls for it fail to observe circumstance. Unity, even among the broad category people mean when they say the "left", is only possible through concrete struggles, real struggles where working groups overlap and find a basis to desire unity, which again proceeds through struggle. This is not an unconditional thing; to view it as such makes a neat return back to the foundations of sectarianism which proceed from the dogma of abstract principles divorced from concrete conditions.

This tendency to cling to abstract principles is then the likely culprit behind both left and right deviations from the united front. This tendency is only defeated with diligent insistence on raising theory to contend with reality as it exists objectively of leftist desires, impetuosity and aspiration. We can neither proceed from the confused notion that Communists are the only revolutionary people, nor can we allow the notion that anyone is just as revolutionary as anyone else and that everyone should just shut up and unite etc. Any and all "principles" which lead to this must be examined and corrected without hesitation. The united front is essential to the practice of revolution in all countries without exception—failure to grasp, uphold and apply it has caused stagnation, loss of movements, and loss of leadership, compromise, betrayal and isolation of the militants from the masses etc. Instead of abstract principles, comrades, activists, combatants and communists must revisit and give deep study to the classic works on the topic of the united front, which with precision define powerful theoretical tools for organizing and correcting past errors. It is not enough to just study these works as great historical contributions, but to do so with a good understanding of present conditions in mind the whole time. The united front is not just useful, it is a requirement for the health and existence of revolution, and it is this understanding which frees up the bravery and creativity needed to correct past mistakes and ward against future ones.

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