



EXCEPTIONALLY

SERIOUS

RESPONSIBILITY

BY

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SOME NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF THE  
REVOLUTIONARY INTERNATIONALIST  
MOVEMENT AND PROSPECTS FOR  
UNITY IN THE INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNIST MOVEMENT TODAY

*“...the Marxist-Leninist movement is confronted with the exceptionally serious responsibility to further unify and prepare its ranks for the tremendous challenges and momentous battles shaping up ahead.”*

- Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

Despite what certain hagiographies and posters produced in the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China when they were socialist might have us believe, the international communist movement has never progressed with the unity of the proletariat and oppressed marching in a straight line. Instead, it's been the moments of conflict and contradiction, often expressed in two-line struggle, that have advanced the communist movement and demarcated the revolutionary road from opportunism and revisionism. Marx and Engels waged their polemics against the utopian socialists from within the First International. Lenin and other Bolshevik revolutionaries founded the Third International (Comintern) “in clear repudiation of the bankrupt opportunist and revisionist line of the Second International,” as Jose Maria Sison wrote.<sup>1</sup> For some sense of how sharp the debates were in the Third International, watch the movie *Reds*.<sup>2</sup>

The most recent attempt at forging genuine unity among communist revolutionaries internationally was the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM), active from the early 1980s to the mid 2000s. As the ruling capitalist-imperialist system is increasingly gripped by crises without a new tide of proletarian revolution to seize upon the opportunities they present, revolutionaries are taking a fresh look at the history of the RIM in order to forge new forms of unity among genuine communist revolutionaries. In particular, this article's content was inspired by and is intended to be in conversation with comrades from India, Nepal, Italy, and Canada who have published documents, issued statements, and partaken in interviews with the aim of developing revolutionary clarity of line and in the spirit of internationalism. It's my hope that, through a

<sup>1</sup> Jose Maria Sison, “The Role of the Communist International in the Formation of the Communist Party of the Philippine Islands (1930),” available at [prismm.net](http://prismm.net).

<sup>2</sup> In his lengthy memoir, *Black Bolshevik*, Harry Haywood shares the story of how decisive Lenin and the Comintern were in essentially forcing the CPUSA to adopt a revolutionary position on the Black national question.

ruthlessly critical examination of our communist past, revolutionaries today can forge the higher levels of communist theory and practice so desperately needed in the world today.

## ON THE HISTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

The Comintern was founded in the wake of the establishment of the first socialist state in the Soviet Union. It aimed to popularize the lessons of the October revolution and coordinate the activities of communists internationally. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) played the leading role in the Comintern, helping to found new communist parties and spread the flames of revolution worldwide, including bringing revolutionaries from around the world to Moscow for training, a concrete expression of proletarian internationalism. The downside of the dominance of the CPSU in the Comintern was a tendency towards dictating strategy to other revolutionaries in opposition to local conditions. For example, Mao's revolutionary strategy of surrounding the cities from the countryside was developed in direct refutation of Comintern and

Delegates of the Second Congress of the Comintern, 1920. This Congress affirmed the revolutionary position in support of national liberation in the colonies and semi-colonies.



Soviet guidance.

In the midst of a very real existential threat from European fascism, Soviet policy in the international communist movement subordinated the advance of world revolution to the defense of the Soviet Union. While the people of the world owe an absolute debt to the proletariat and struggling masses of the Soviet Union for the defeat of fascism, the international ramifications of Stalin's Popular Front policy were disastrous for the advance of proletarian revolution on a worldwide scale.<sup>3</sup> Subordinating the advance of world revolution to the defense of the Soviet Union from the Nazi threat led many national communist parties and organizations to unite with their own reactionary bourgeois classes where they happened to be temporarily allied with the Soviet Union. In the case of the United States, this led to such abominations as members of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) enthusiastically joining the US military to gleefully fight the war, as well as CPUSA head Earl Browder proclaiming that "communism is 21st century Americanism." Thousands of anti-fascists and communists traveled to Spain from around the world to fight the murderous fascist General Franco. While more strategically sound than those of anarchists and Trotskyists in the field, Soviet policies continuously aligned revolutionaries with the interests of the bourgeois republic, strangling the possibility of proletarian rule.<sup>4</sup>

After the death of Stalin and the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, the Chinese Communist Party under the leadership of Mao Zedong emerged as the leading force in the international communist movement. Mao and other Chinese revolutionaries gained prestige and admiration from having led a successful people's war in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country, and later for their

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3 To be clear, I think that Joseph Stalin was a genuine, if deeply mistaken and flawed, communist leader, and I uphold the Stalin era against bourgeois and revisionist slander, up to and including the ice pick in Trotsky's head.

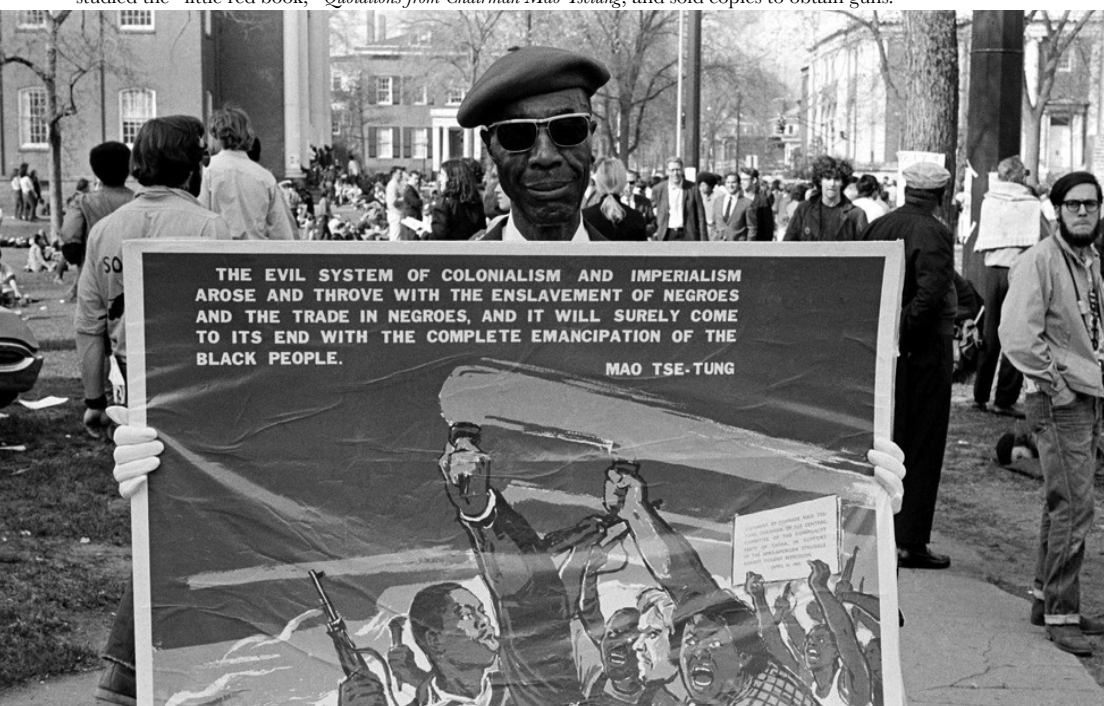
4 For a deeper study of the complexity of the Spanish situation and the errors of Soviet policy, see "The Line of the Comintern on the Civil War in Spain" in *Revolution* #49 (June 1981), available at [bannedthought.net](http://bannedthought.net).

leadership in exposing and combating Soviet revisionism. Despite errors in foreign policy during the end of the socialist period, as a whole, the Maoist era in China was an exemplary model of proletarian internationalism. In the face of great challenges (including the threat of nuclear annihilation from the United States), the Chinese comrades offered material and technical support to the national liberation struggles in Korea and Vietnam and offered other support and propaganda to the progressive and revolutionary causes of the day. The Chinese hosted important international delegations, letting revolutionary cadre from around the world see the new society up close and providing important political and technical education.<sup>5</sup> The Chinese maintained the translation and publishing house Foreign Languages Press, distributing millions of copies of important revolutionary literature internationally.

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5 In addition to those who would go on to found and lead communist parties back home, revolutionary China hosted W.E.B. Du Bois, Huey Newton, and Robert F. Williams. Williams and his family lived in China in the mid to late 1960s.

One of the concrete expressions of proletarian internationalism by Mao Zedong and the Chinese revolution was support for the Black liberation struggle in the US. Here, a demonstrator in 1970 carries Mao's famous quotation at a protest at Yale university in support of the Black Panther Party, which famously carried and studied the "little red book," *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tsetung*, and sold copies to obtain guns.





Despite this overall internationalist stand and the leading role of Mao and the Chinese revolutionaries in the struggle against Soviet revisionism, the Chinese Communist Party, in light of the errors in Soviet domination of the Comintern, chose not to build a new international or other formation of communist parties. In 1984, the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* (RIM Declaration) offered this evaluation of that decision:

While the CPC [Communist Party of China] paid great attention to the development of Marxist-Leninist parties in opposition to the revisionists they did not find the necessary forms and ways to develop the international unity of the communists. Despite contributions to the ideological and political unity this was not reflected by efforts to build organizational unity on a world scale. The CPC had an exaggerated understanding of the negative aspects of the Comintern, mainly those caused by over-centralization, which led to crushing the initiative and independence of constituent communist parties. While the CPC correctly criticized the concept of Father party, pointed out its harmful influence within the international communist movement, and stressed the principles of fraternal relations between parties, the lack of an organized forum for debating views and achieving a common viewpoint did not help resolve this problem but in fact exacerbated it.

## THE REVOLUTIONARY INTERNATIONALIST MOVEMENT

The period following the 1976 overthrow of socialism in China was a time of disorientation for the international communist movement. Many revolutionaries with roots in the great upsurges of the 1960s and 1970s took the opportunist road and gleefully upheld the coup in China,<sup>6</sup> leading to splits and disorientation, and there was no international center to lead discussions or facilitate debate and exchange. Many of the comrades who came out of this era with revolutionary principles intact, upholding the positive experiences of the revolutions in the Soviet Union and China, especially the Great

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6 In the US, you can still find these hacks collecting pensions from their jobs as union bureaucrats and reminiscing about Jesse Jackson's presidential campaigns in 1984 and 1988.

Proletarian Cultural Revolution, went on to establish the RIM as the embryonic center of the world's communist movement.

Mao Zedong once remarked that “going against the tide is a Marxist-Leninist principle,” and the 1984 founding of the RIM was a concrete expression of that principle. In the face of real threats of nuclear war between the imperialist US and the social-imperialist Soviet Union and the reactionary assaults of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and their comrade Deng Xiaoping on the proletariat and popular classes, many former radicals spent the 1980s capitulating to the hegemony of global capitalism-imperialism, either giving up entirely on revolution or burrowing into pathetic parliamentary organizations. The RIM was a profound rejection of those capitulationist trends, boldly upholding the revolutionary legacy of Maoism and the Cultural Revolution and proclaiming the ongoing urgency and necessity for communist revolution.

Comrades in counter-revolution, Deng Xiaoping with Nancy and Ronald Reagan.



As Kenny Lake has pointed out elsewhere,<sup>7</sup> the RIM didn't simply bring together parties and organizations on the basis of declared fidelity to communist revolution but also important practical experiences in mass political resistance and armed struggle (including the experiences of comrades who had faced serious repression and torture). The shared experience of bitter sacrifice and bold resolve served to strengthen the seriousness of the RIM as an embryonic center of the world communist movement and stands in sharp contrast to calls for unity based on nothing more than stated allegiance to an ideology. Remarking on the significance of the RIM, Comrade Kiran of the Communist Party of Nepal (Revolutionary Maoist) told *kites* in a recent interview that "the formation of the RIM was a victory for revolutionaries over the apologists of imperialism, who were trumpeting the end of history due to the 'failure' of Marxism."<sup>8</sup>

To understand the seriousness of purpose of the RIM, it's instructive to look at the comrades who played important roles throughout the organization's existence. The RIM Declaration said that "the task of revolutionary communists in all countries is to hasten the development of the world revolution." The Communist Party of Peru, a RIM member, gave that call the dignity of immediate actuality (to borrow a phrase from Lenin) by taking up arms in the traditional "backyard" of the US imperialists and mobilizing the masses discarded by the imperialist system in the forgotten highlands of Peru and the newly created slums of its capital in Lima, seriously challenging the Peruvian state for power. Beginning in 1996, the revolutionaries of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), also a RIM member, raised the red flag in the Himalayas, waging a decade of people's war and exercising political power in vast areas of the Nepali countryside.

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7 In particular, see Kenny Lake's "On Infantile Internet Disorders and Real Questions of Revolutionary Strategy" in *kites* #1.

8 See "Against the Tide of Counter-Revolution: An Interview with Comrade Kiran (Mohan Baidya), General Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)" in this issue (*kites* #4).





Graffiti in Colombia in support of CPN(M) revolutionary leader Comrade Guarav, who was imprisoned in India during the people's war. The RIM and AWTW built international support for Guarav and other political prisoners.

RIM members from Iran emerged from the mass uprisings against the hated US-backed Shah, faced torture and brutal repression at the hands of the reactionary theocratic government, and brought their experiences into the RIM while attempting to forge a new vanguard.<sup>9</sup> In Turkey, a country where Maoism has a special place in the hearts of the oppressed, comrades participated in the RIM while waging struggles (including armed struggles) against the US-backed regime in the countryside, cities, and prisons. The Afghan revolutionaries who joined the RIM had been forged through the struggles against the monarchy and the social-imperialist occupation by the Soviet Union. The pro-Soviet puppet government called the Maoist-linked youth organization, the Progressive Youth Organization, its number-one enemy. The RIM also included Maoists from Bangladesh who had experience in armed struggle.

Many of these organizations, and the RIM as a whole, were strengthened through the deep ties their members had to the great upsurges of the 1960s. Due to its vast size and the strength of its communist movement, a number of different Indian parties and organizations were present in the RIM who could trace their origins back to the 1967 Naxalbari uprising. At various times revolutionaries from the imperialist countries were present in the RIM, including the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (RCP, USA), which played important roles upholding the need and possibility

<sup>9</sup> Union of Iranian Communists (Sarbedaran), "Defeated Armies Learn Well," *A World To Win* #4. This, and all other AWTW articles referenced are available at [bannedthought.net](http://bannedthought.net).

for revolution in the belly of the imperialist beast, analyzing and condemning the coup in China, and initiating and promoting the RIM.

The best information that we have for understanding the political line and contributions of the RIM can be found in the pages of the publication it inspired: *A World To Win* (AWTW). In *Ligne de Masse*, a new blog by Quebecois Maoists, Jacques Roux accurately calls AWTW “a true goldmine of political analysis and content worth seriously studying.”<sup>10</sup> In addition to a goldmine of political analysis, the pages of AWTW offer insight into the dialectical materialist methods of the RIM leadership and its interventions in struggles well beyond the existing Maoist movement. AWTW consistently upheld and promoted revolutionary armed struggles, including providing practical coordination to campaigns in support of the people’s wars in Nepal and Peru, and movements defending political prisoners.

Beyond the revolutions waged by RIM participants, the RIM and AWTW are notable for their support of and intervention in struggles outside of the direct participation of its member organizations. AWTW and RIM statements offered support for the ongoing people’s war in the Philippines, including intervening against revisionist winds during the late 1980s. A similar dialectical approach was taken towards just struggles waged by revolutionary masses in Palestine, Kurdistan,<sup>11</sup> South Africa, and Mexico, with the pages of AWTW used to uphold the thrust of those struggles while offering principled criticisms and attempts to influence those struggles in a consistently revolutionary direction. The RIM approach is a pow-

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10 Jacques Roux, “Tendencies and Line Struggle in the International Communist Movement,” available at [en.lignedemasse.com](http://en.lignedemasse.com).

11 When Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) founder Abdullah Öcalan was captured and isolated by the Turkish state (where he remains today), the RIM and AWTW took a principled stand in support of his freedom despite real political differences with the PKK. This stands in contrast with certain anarchist trends that only took notice of the longstanding Kurdish national liberation struggle when Öcalan embraced democratic confederalism.

erful example of the Maoist practice of criticism and self-criticism, unlike today's social-media driven culture of unprincipled sniping without understanding or study.

AWTW lived up to the call of the RIM Declaration to develop a propaganda organ as a tool of reconstructing the communist movement. The history, summations, and analyses published in AWTW helped popularize the Maoist methods of assessment and helped to train comrades internationally in those methods. At its best, AWTW drew general lessons from deep summations and analyses of particular events without losing sight of the need for the concrete analysis of concrete conditions. The RIM was the main defender of the legacy of Mao Zedong and the Chinese revolution, and AWTW was an important vehicle for excavating the lessons of that revolution. The journal reprinted important works by Mao and analyzed the ongoing class struggle in China, both printing documents from Chinese revolutionaries and devoting the bulk of an issue to an analysis of the Tienanmen Square uprising. AWTW upheld and published biographical sketches of Mao's comrades Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao in the face of their imprisonment by the Chinese revisionists.<sup>12</sup>

12 AWTW always used the old Wade-Giles transliteration of Chinese names, in

A pin inspired by the cover of *A World To Win* #11. The RIM and AWTW were steadfast supporters of Palestinian resistance and critics of the capitulationist trends within the Palestinian liberation movement.



Especially important in the years before the spread of the internet, AWTW published party documents and announced the formation of new revolutionary parties and organizations while serving as a reliable source for news and reports on ongoing revolutionary people's wars. AWTW reported on the hunger strikes and struggles of imprisoned revolutionaries in Turkey, published an important summation from the Communist Party of the Philippines, and analyzed the shortcomings of the revolutionary process in Cuba.<sup>13</sup> The journal played an important role as a center of debate within the Maoist movement. When a RIM participant in India dissolved itself and denounced revolutionary communism as anti-democratic, AWTW devoted an entire issue (#17) to the debate on dictatorship and democracy. Other issues engaged documents and resolutions published with the aim of uniting various Marxist organizations outside of the Maoist tradition. In the course of these debates and polemics, AWTW upheld the Maoist tradition of printing documents from both sides of the debate so readers could compare and contrast political lines. Attention was paid to the review of works of fiction and art, and the journal engaged other radical and philosophical trends. Over two decades, AWTW welcomed the rebel music of reggae, memorialized Palestinian intellectual Edward Said, and polemicized against the political line of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, which had gained prominence in struggles against capitalist globalization.<sup>14</sup>

The existence of the RIM was clearly an important inspiration in the formation of new communist parties and the initiation of

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line with the English translations by Foreign Languages Press. *kites* editorial standards use the Pinyin system, developed in China during the socialist period.

13 "Turkey's Prisons: Shining Trenches of Combat," *A World To Win* #27; Communist Party of the Philippines, "Putting Mao at the Heart of Party Life," *A World to Win* #23; Rudi Mambisa, "Notes on the Political Economy of Cuba—Burn Down the Cane Fields!" *A World to Win* #14 and #15.

14 Rita Forest, "Reggae: Jamaica's Rebel Music," *A World to Win* #3; J.S., "Remembering Edward Said: An Extraordinary Citizen of the World," *A World to Win* #30; "On Empire: Revolutionary Communism, or 'Communism' Without Revolution?" *A World to Win* #32.

revolutionary struggles. It's easy to imagine that revolutionaries in far-flung locales were able to initiate their organizations through discussion and debate of AWTW and RIM documents. In India, the intervention of the RIM helped to end the fratricidal violence between different revolutionary organizations, paving the way for a greater unity among Indian communists expressed in the Communist Party of India (Maoist), which is now leading the people's war. The Indian comrades credit RIM with helping to end the violence and bring the organizations that would form the Party together.<sup>15</sup>

## CENTRIFUGAL FORCES

After the capture of Communist Party of Peru (PCP) leader Abimael Guzmán (Chairman Gonzalo) and other top PCP leaders, the RIM launched an international campaign: *Move Heaven and Earth to Defend the Life of Chairman Gonzalo*. Beyond just saying the words, the campaign found concrete expression in the International Emergency Committee (IEC). The IEC held a major international conference in defense of Gonzalo, campaigned in the United Nations, and organized seven delegations to Peru. These international delegations included activists, academics, and religious leaders who faced off against the fascist Fujimori government in Peru, demanding the right to visit Gonzalo and an end to his isolation. Today, the loudest defenders of Gonzalo on the internet are hostile to the legacy of the RIM. This is a grand irony because the RIM and the campaign it inspired reached millions of people around the world and contributed to a political situation where the Peruvian state was unable to murder Gonzalo outright. No similar effort has been extended at ending the isolation and demanding the release of Gonzalo by those who claim to be his most ardent followers.<sup>16</sup>

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15 See the statement by the South Asia RIM Conference, "Appeal to the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (People's War) and the Maoist Communist Centre," *A World To Win* #26, as well the Communist Party of India (Maoist) Central Committee statement "Our Stand on the Formation of an International Organization of the Proletariat" from February 2017.

16 It's doubtful that the Peruvian government feels threatened by pro-Gonzalo graffiti in Austin, Texas.





The seventh delegation of the International Emergency Committee to Defend the Life of Dr. Abimael Guzmán in Lima, Peru, 2001. Inspired by the RIM campaign, these delegations courageously challenged the inhumane conditions of Gonzalo's detention and demanded an end to his isolation.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that through the intervention of the RIM, its participants, and those it inspired, more people learned about the people's war in Peru and dire situation of Gonzalo and other imprisoned PCP leadership than any effort extended since. The delegations and the international support for the people's war in Peru inspired by the RIM contributed to at least keeping Gonzalo alive and popularized revolutionary communism around the world. Prior to the initiation of the people's war in Nepal, a major demonstration in Kathmandu demanded Gonzalo's freedom, while in the US, the radical band Rage Against the Machine extended support for the revolution in Peru and the fight to keep Gonzalo alive (seriously, track down the original cut of the "Bombtrack" music video).

When Gonzalo was presented before the world caged and in prison stripes, he boldly declared that the Peruvian revolution would overcome his capture and the capture of other top PCP leaders, that it was merely a "bend in the road." However, the PCP was

soon embroiled in a two-line struggle over the future of the revolution. The Peruvian government reported that Gonzalo was in favor of a ceasefire and peace negotiations rather than continuing the armed struggle. While, to this day, the veracity of those claims is unknown, it sent shock waves through the movement in Peru and internationally. The RIM and its leading body, the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (CoRIM), upheld a firm materialist stance that the decisive question before the revolution wasn't whether or not Gonzalo himself had called for a ceasefire, but whether that was a correct application of revolutionary principles. The CoRIM said at the time, "[political] line not author is decisive."<sup>17</sup>

Alongside Gonzalo, much of the central leadership of the PCP was captured, and many revolutionaries were unable to contend with the new situation, much less the possibility that Gonzalo might have capitulated from within the enemy's dungeons. Supporters of Gonzalo, notably Peruvian exiles based in Europe, decided that rather than assault the old Peruvian state, they should turn their fire against the RIM for its insistence on the basic empirical fact that people simply did not know the true views of Gonzalo while he was isolated from his comrades, lawyers, and international observers. The RIM insisted that the principle of continuing the revolution was decisive, while the exiles insisted on the religious tautology that Gonzalo couldn't be behind calls for peace, because he wouldn't have done that, so it must be a hoax—a way of thinking that has more in common with dogmatic forms of religion than revolutionary communism.

It's clear that, while facing unprincipled attack from dogmatists, there were significant differences within the RIM on some of the issues surrounding the people's war in Peru and their broader

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<sup>17</sup> Many of these issues are discussed in an article in the final issue of AWTW (#32): "A Sober Look at the Situation of the Peru Revolution and Its Needs." For a more detailed summation of the strengths and weaknesses of the Peruvian experience, see Kenny Lake's "On Infantile Internet Disorders and Real Questions of Revolutionary Strategy" in *kites* #1 and "When We Ride On Our Enemies" in *kites* #3.

implications. An interview with a CoRIM member in AWTW #26 dances around the hoax question, both insisting on the principle that line not author is decisive and referring uncritically to the belief of the PCP that the call for peace accords was certainly a hoax. That same interview criticizes a previous issue of AWTW for having published a more sober appraisal of the stakes of the two-line struggle in Peru. While the RIM was playing an overwhelming positive role in relation to the situation in Peru, that interview indicates that there were differences of political line and centrifugal forces at work within the RIM.

## ANDES TO THE HIMALAYAS

On an international scale, the setbacks in Peru were balanced by the spectacular emergence of the revolution in Nepal. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN(M)), a RIM member, was leading the revolution and sweeping aside the old feudal relations in large parts of the countryside. The RIM, revolutionaries worldwide, and the pages of AWTW spread the news of this revolution and defended and popularized it. RIM-affiliated and inspired organizations (including the World People's Resistance Movement) built support for the Nepali revolution and sent young activists to see the revolution firsthand. The RCP, USA had widespread coverage of the people's war in its newspaper, *Revolutionary Worker*, including firsthand accounts and photographs that would later be published in a book.<sup>18</sup> When key leaders of the CPN(M) were imprisoned in India, efforts were launched to campaign for their freedom and popularized in the pages of AWTW.

While the people's war in Nepal was reaching strategic equilibrium with the reactionary state, it seemed as if the RIM was poised to take a new leap in the early 2000s as well. In the US, the RCP, USA was playing a leading role in parts of the protest movement

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<sup>18</sup> Li Onesto, *Dispatches from the People's War in Nepal* (London: Pluto Press, 2004).



Inspired by the internationalism of the RIM, the World People's Resistance Movement organized volunteers to travel to Nepal during the people's war. In the red base area of Rolpa, they joined the building of the Martyrs Road, a major infrastructure project carried out by the revolutionary government. Here is a cultural performance for the road builders.

against the Iraq war, an important step for a Maoist party in an imperialist country. After periods of setbacks and/or disorientation, Afghani and Iranian revolutionaries had announced the formation of new RIM member parties and devoted themselves to solving the thorny questions of revolution in those countries.<sup>19</sup> The Maoist Communist Party of Turkey and North Kurdistan announced its formation in 2002, with an intention to retake the road of armed struggle.

In this period, South Asia seemed poised to emerge as a revolutionary storm center. In addition to the spectacular advances in Nepal, fratricidal violence between communists in India had ceased, and Indian Maoist organizations inside and outside of the RIM

<sup>19</sup> It's unclear to me whether those Parties had cadre within Afghanistan and Iran or they were strictly based in exile, and I would welcome any summation from those comrades on their experiences and practice.

were moving towards closer unity. The strength of the South Asian revolutionary movement was expressed in a new organization, the Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organizations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA), which promised greater political coordination among the burgeoning Maoist movement, including the CPN(M) and revolutionaries from India, Bangladesh, and at various times Sri Lanka and Bhutan.

At the height of the revolution in Nepal, despite the potential for real advances, fierce line struggles and centrifugal forces were pulling apart the RIM. A core part of the leadership of the CPN(M), concentrated around Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) and Baburam Bhattarai (who had long advocated the bourgeois position of multi-party democracy under socialism), united with the bourgeois political parties against the monarchy. They signed a peace accord which handed over the weapons of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and had the PLA stationed in UN-supervised cantonments (before the PLA was dissolved altogether). While important leaders of the CPN(M) were imprisoned in India, Prachanda and Bhattarai dutifully exchanged the blood of the revolutionary Nepali people for cushy jobs in the new bourgeois government (and increasingly became subservient to Hindu-fascist Indian expansionism).

At the same time as the long betrayal in Nepal was underway, the RCP, USA was in the process of proclaiming its founder and Chairperson, Bob Avakian, to have developed a New Synthesis of communism. They proclaimed that the adoption of that synthesis was a dividing line for the whole of the international communist movement, a bizarre and farcical repetition of the worst aspects of the Peruvian experience without even the dignity of immediate actuality.

The betrayal in Nepal and the degeneration of the RCP, USA would catalyze the end of the already weakened RIM. The final issue of AWTW was published in 2006, and the last CoRIM statement that I'm aware of was issued in 2007. By 2012, an international conference initiated by Indian comrades declared the RIM no lon-



ger existed and offered some initial summations. It's a blight on the legacy of the RIM that the level of disunity was so great that the CoRIM couldn't even issue a simple statement declaring that the RIM no longer existed. This article, and my understanding, owes a debt to those comrades who have offered some summation of the RIM experiences. It would be invaluable to the international communist movement today if other comrades who were involved in the RIM or AWTW would offer their summations, so we can better synthesize those lessons going forward.

I'm aware from internal documents which have since been made public that there was fierce debate, generated by the RCP, USA, within the RIM around 2006. However, to my knowledge, prior to the 2012 conference, there were no public statements announcing the state of the RIM. There were several international developments that contributed to the demise of the RIM or give a sense of how and why it was unable to sustain itself. Following the capture of Gonzalo and the two-line struggle over continuing the revolution in Peru, the PCP was never able to retake the Shining Path. The Communist Party of India (Maoist), which included RIM member organizations consolidated with its formation, emerged in 2004 but never choose to participate in the RIM as a new party.

In Turkey, an important center of Maoism internationally, leading cadre of the Maoist Communist Party of Turkey and North Kurdistan (MKP) were brutally massacred by the Turkish state in 2005 on their way to a Party congress. Over 1,000 Turkish troops were part of this cowardly attack, using helicopters and US-made weapons to execute MKP General Secretary Cafer Cangöz, Berna Unsal, a veteran of Turkish prisoner struggles, and 15 other comrades. This was a devastating setback to the communist movement in Turkey and the whole international communist movement.

## BORN IN THE USA?

For anyone who's encountered the RCP, USA at a protest or public event in the last 10 years, this may be hard to believe, but they played a positive and important role in bringing together the RIM and were an important participant within it. However, the previously referenced *Ligne de Masse* article by Jacques Roux repeats the claim that the CoRIM was dominated by the RCP, USA, and therefore the RIM degenerated with the degeneration of that party. This claim seems to have originated from the Revolutionary Communist Party of Canada (PCR-RCP) and has been in circulation within their circles for some time. The only written source I can find for that claim is *Arsenal*, the theoretical journal of the PCR-RCP.<sup>20</sup> Let's be clear: the PCR-RCP was never a member of the RIM and has no reason to know about the internal workings of the CoRIM. Speculating about membership in international bodies and spreading false information is dangerous and irresponsible.

A number of South Asian comrades (who are in a better position to know) have offered summations of the RIM, some highly critical of the role of the RCP, USA, and none repeat the PCR-RCP claim that the RCP, USA "dominated" the CoRIM.<sup>21</sup> For reasons that should be obvious, there are few public records of the day-to-day work of the CoRIM. However, from analyzing publicly available documents, it's clear that there was line struggle among RIM members. The 2000 interview with a CoRIM member mentioned above contradicts the views of the RCP, USA, including around the Gonzalo "hoax" question. The RIM millennium statement of that same year offered formulations that the RCP, USA clearly (and cor-

20 "On the experience of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) and the fight for regrouping the Maoist forces at the international level," *Arsenal* #7.

21 See Ajith, *Against Avakianism*, available at [foreignlanguages.press](http://foreignlanguages.press), Comrade Kiran in *Maoist Outlook* #4 or Communist Party of India (Maoist), "Our Stand on the Formation of an International Organization of the Proletariat," both available at [bannedthought.net](http://bannedthought.net).

rectly) opposed, such as the formulation that, in the year 2000, “revolution is the main trend in the world today.”<sup>22</sup>

The unsubstantiated claims that the RCP, USA dominated the CoRIM and thus the RIM fell apart when the RCP, USA degenerated do a disservice to the real task of excavating the lessons of the RIM. The notion that the leadership body of the RIM had a nefarious political outlook distinct from the larger organization is both bizarre and, frankly, anti-communist. To get a better sense of how the RIM actually functioned, we can turn to someone who had good reason to know, Comrade Kiran: “It [the RIM] played a very important role in bringing together revolutionary forces internationally, allowing them to learn from and share experiences with one another. Among others, the experiences of people’s war in Peru, Turkey, Iran, and Bangladesh that the Committee of the RIM helped share with our party were of great internationalist help in developing the line of people’s war and advancing it in Nepal.”<sup>23</sup>

## CONTINUITY AND RUPTURE

Idle speculation doesn’t help to excavate the real ideological, political, and organizational challenges that faced the RIM and its member organizations. Neither do the pat answers from social media influencers help us understand how comrades were attempting to wield revolutionary communism to solve those challenges in practice. So while it’s easy (and not entirely untrue) to say that the RIM collapsed because key parties abandoned Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM), I don’t think that’s a sufficient enough basis to understand the collapse. More crucially, I don’t think a simple assertion of fidelity to the principles of MLM is a sufficient basis to

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22 For the interview with the CoRIM member, see “Accelerating the Pace of World Proletarian Revolution,” and for the RIM millennium statement, see “Forward towards the Victory of Socialism and Communism! For a Century of People’s Wars!”, both in *A World To Win* #26.

23 See “Against the Tide of Counter-Revolution: An Interview with Comrade Kiran (Mohan Baidya), General Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)” in this issue (*kites* #4).

build unity and reorganize the communist movement.

Comrades often commend the RIM for its synthesis and adoption of the appellation Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. In the same interview quoted above, Kiran offers this succinct assessment: “The adoption of Maoism as a third, higher stage of Marxism was a great achievement on the part of the RIM.” For communist revolutionaries, the appellation of MLM:

- Demarcates the revolutionary road from revisionism, opportunism, and capitulation;
- Signifies the defense of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union and China;
- Insists on the absolute necessity of armed revolution to smash the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and exploiting classes everywhere and the need for the leadership of a communist vanguard party;
- Upholds the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China and Mao’s crucial insight and theory that class struggle continues and is the driving force within the socialist transition to communism; and
- Marks us as comrades with the historic and ongoing experiences of revolutionary people’s wars.

Unfortunately, we often encounter would-be revolutionaries who raise the banner of MLM to oppose its basic principles. Particularly in the imperialist countries, there are those who declare their fidelity to MLM on social media as if it were an identity category or who carry out some version of basic petty-bourgeois activism (such as community gardens or passing out free food) with the occasional Mao quote, using MLM as radical chic rather than a guide to action. Thus, we find North American activists with copies of Ibrahim Kaypakkaya’s work on the national question who have never talked to basic masses about their problems or living conditions.

The challenge for revolutionaries today is not to simply assert that the basic principles of MLM continue to be relevant and true (as important as that is). The task before us is to apply those principles to new and changed situations, forging new advances for our class in theory and practice. Kenny Lake has described this approach as a “necessary tension between upholding the lessons forged through revolutionary struggle and sacrifice that we have inherited as Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, ruthlessly critiquing our past, drawing from outside the MLM canon, and forging ahead in new ways.”<sup>24</sup>

## FOR A RUTHLESS CRITIQUE

It's worth taking a moment to appreciate the generations of communists who maintained the RIM and produced AWTW for more than two decades despite the risks and despite working under conditions of extreme repression. Within that “goldmine of political analysis” there are some important secondary shortcomings to assess in the spirit of ruthless criticism. Following the death of Mao Zedong and the overthrow of socialism in China, the RIM and AWTW served objectively as the center of the struggle against Soviet social-imperialism and Chinese revisionism. The RIM was one of the few forces to polemicize against the derailing of revolutionary movements by Soviet imperialism and to correctly demarcate that struggle as a dividing line.<sup>25</sup>

Within this correct and crucial struggle were secondary weaknesses, including not engaging with revolutionary movements that were wrong on the Soviet question or that paid insufficient attention to the anti-revisionist struggle. In particular, insufficient attention was paid towards theorists emerging out of the anti-colonial revolutions in Africa and the Caribbean, like Amilcar Cabral, Franz Fanon, and Walter

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<sup>24</sup> Kenny Lake, “On Infantile Internet Disorders and Real Questions of Revolutionary Strategy,” *kites* #1.

<sup>25</sup> In the 1980s, the revisionists and opportunists in North America almost universally dropped references to Maoist China and started fully embracing Soviet social-imperialism. We could call this the international dimension of giving up on revolution.



Rodney. There was a general problem of not engaging with theorists who were revolutionaries but outside of the Maoist canon and an uneven study of revolutions not led by Maoists, leading AWTW to miss potential lessons arising out of revolutionary struggles in Africa and the Caribbean. To be clear, the RIM and AWTW studied and supported outbreaks of protest and rebellion in those areas, including Haiti, South Africa, and the Dominican Republic,<sup>26</sup> but that's not to say that they didn't fall short of their opportunities and responsibility to synthesize what can be derived from those experiences.

AWTW acknowledged that conditions had changed since the death of Mao Zedong but did not devote enough resources towards analyzing those changes. In particular, massive transformations in the oppressed countries resulting from imperialist structural adjustment programs and the growth of slums posed real opportunities to revolu-

<sup>26</sup> For example, see "Apartheid, Your Days are Numbered" and "Santo Domingo: Two Days of Popular Upsurge" in *A World to Win* #1, a cover and several articles dedicated to the struggle against apartheid in South Africa in *A World to Win* #3, and a cover and several articles on Haiti in *A World to Win* #6.

The pages of AWTW stack up to a quarter-century of communist theory and history, an archive to be cherished by any would-be revolutionary today. While hard copies are no longer in circulation, the entire archive of AWTW and other RIM publications can be found at [bannedthought.net](http://bannedthought.net).



tionaries in those countries. While there were important experiences addressing those challenges in Lima, Peru and Davao City, the Philippines, they were never comprehensively summed up in order for the whole international movement to learn from their advances.<sup>27</sup>

Importantly, AWTW devoted attention to reviewing literature, analyzing the impact of popular forms of music, and engaging with intellectual trends that had currency among progressive people. This was an important beginning for deeper communist intellectual engagement, but it could have been expanded. In particular, AWTW failed to adequately challenge the rise of postmodernism among the progressive petty bourgeoisie and in academics. The RIM and AWTW devoted attention to mass political struggles in the imperialist countries, including rebellions by Black people in the US, immigrant upsurges in Europe, and the significant social movements against capitalist globalization and imperialist wars. That said, there was not enough discussion of how to move from those outpourings of resistance towards revolutionary civil war and the seizure of power in the imperialist countries. This wasn't mainly a political error of the RIM but rather the grim reality of the lack of revolutionary advances in those countries.

## AWAY WITH ALL PESTS

It's no coincidence that the decade and a half following the demise of the RIM has seen an atrophy of communist debate and discussion. Instead of AWTW, anyone looking for genuine revolutionary content online (especially in the imperialist countries) finds YouTube charlatans claiming the banner of Maoism, dogmatic proclamations from organizations that disappear overnight, and a culture of sniping, gossiping, shit-posting, and an overall lack of seriousness.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See Kenny Lake's "When We Ride On Our Enemies" in *kites* #3.

<sup>28</sup> One model for revolutionaries to look to in how to use the internet well is the Communist Party of the Philippines ([www.cpp.ph](http://www.cpp.ph)) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines ([www.ndfp.org](http://www.ndfp.org)), who regularly publish documents, reports from the people's war, interviews, and statements online and on social media.

There's a crying need for new forums to discuss and exchange views on any number of crucial questions facing revolutionaries today, to popularize revolutionary struggles, train new communists, and initiate new waves of revolutionary struggles (this is why I'm a partisan of *kites*). To give a few examples of crucial questions for discussion and summation:

- How do communists understand the massive changes in the global capitalist-imperialist system, the increasing transition from a singular, US-led imperialist system to a multi-polar world with increasing inter-imperialist conflict?
- What are the strategic possibilities generated by mass migrations and the massive diaspora populations that exist throughout North America and Europe?
- What are the possibilities and strategic horizons of revolutionary struggle in the imperialist citadels?
- How can communists contend with massive ideological apparatuses and the regime of preventive counter-revolution developed by the bourgeoisie, especially in the imperialist countries?<sup>29</sup>
- What is our assessment of the Rojava project and its promises of social transformations that inspired so many people worldwide yet ended up in an uneasy compromise with US imperialism? How do Kurdish, Turkish, and Arab revolutionaries and progressive forces assess it today?
- What about the governments in Latin America that have delivered some material benefit and/or social transformation to the masses of those countries and come under attack by US imperialism? What are the different political lines in those coun-

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<sup>29</sup> Kenny Lake's work is an invaluable starting point for these last two questions, as is the document *Four main issues to be debated in the International Communist Movement* by the (new) Communist Party of Italy (available online at [www.nuovo-pci.it/eile/en/testi/NPCI\\_Four\\_Issues.pdf](http://www.nuovo-pci.it/eile/en/testi/NPCI_Four_Issues.pdf)).

tries, and how have the masses responded to the social transformations and imperialist machinations?

I agree with comrades internationally who see a necessity for uniting genuine communist forces. The creation of new bi- and multi-lateral exchanges between different revolutionary organizations is an important first step, as are practical collaborations and exchanges of summation wherever possible. The brave revolutionaries who built the RIM did so in the face of anti-communist onslaught, mockery from former comrades who sold out, and extreme threats from the imperialists and reactionaries. A thorough and critical study of their successes, weaknesses, and shortcomings as part of an overall struggle for the unity of genuine communists is the best way to honor those contributions on the road to making revolution. We have a world to win.