

# All About that Base? No struggle?

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STRUGGLESSESSIONS





ALL ABOUT THAT BASE? NO STRUGGLE?



“The basic question of every revolution is that of state power. Unless this question is understood, there can be no intelligent participation in the revolution, not to speak of guidance of the revolution.” – VI Lenin, *The Dual Power*

Marxist Center, and especially its supporters in the Seattle area and to a lesser extent Philadelphia promote what they call the “base building tendency”, while we do not view this as a tendency it is important to engage with their published content and hold it up against MLM, seeking to understand its flaws as well as any possible positive attributes.

The main author behind this “tendency” is Sophia Burns, who claims that base building means avoiding both reformism and protest culture. We hope to provide an argument here that “Base Building” is nothing innovative and that the “dual power” ideas behind it, in essence, are reformism. DB Cooper summarizes Burns’ conception like this: “‘Dual power’, while not strictly synonymous, can essentially be understood as another term for base building; although it emphasizes itself as a political strategy for revolution, rather than a political methodology for organizing the working class, which base building can be defined as”; Cooper goes on to state that this ‘tendency’

“...emphasizes the need for revolutionaries to consciously and actively reject liberal narratives and modes of debate”.

We are compelled to agree with the last part, opposing liberal styles of debate, although “liberal” here does not conform to the Maoist definition, nonetheless we must be forward with our disagreements, and call for a public theoretical exchange.

The major point of contention with the “dual power” argument and Maoism are on the basis of Leninism: while Maoists fight for increased centralism, via its correlation with democracy, the “base building tendency” argues for decreased centralism, in essence falling into the age-old arguments that condemn all the major protest movements to spontaneity. According to Burns this means the “dual-power” conception “insists that each of them [“dual power” organizations] become self-sustaining and independent of our control as quickly as possible”.

This reveals both a negation of Leninism and a diffused power conception. Power being the central question of Maoism can only be understood in real class terms, not only is a decentralized dual-power a false formula, but it also lacks coherency about how this is established—for Maoists power is conquered through revolutionary war and class struggle; the avoidance of the military question is a unifying characteristic in the Marxist Center. In this regard, there is no meaningful demarcation between them and anarchists or social-democrats.

By rejecting any form of Party-building Burns has no choice except to fall into economism and spontaneity. The goal for them is to form these “dual power projects” which directly empower “the working, disabled, and oppressed people” avoiding politicizing and recruiting them into either a Party or a revolutionary mass organization. Marx, Lenin and Mao all were clear on the fact that trade union consciousness is the climax of these types of mutual aid organizations without the influence and leadership of the very formations that Marxist Center is in strict

opposition too. There is little to no argument made on how these “dual power projects” plan to cultivate class consciousness or take up a revolutionary program as their own, let alone how they relate to and interpenetrate with the Communist movement. Let us turn to Lenin for an answer: “There can be no competition between a mutual aid society and a revolutionary circle; and when *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya* ascribes to the latter the determination to destroy the former, it is talking sheer nonsense. But if in this same mutual aid society there develops a certain political tendency—not to aid revolutionaries, for instance, or to exclude illegal books from the library—then every honest ‘politically minded’ person is *in duty bound* to compete with it and combat it outright” (VI Lenin, *The Tasks of the Revolutionary Youth*).

What is an even harder mistake to witness is that these “dual-power” theorists see the “empowerment” of the masses in irreconcilable contradiction with the needs of the proletariat to constitute for itself a political Party—to organize its most advanced expression—the Communist Party. In doing so they have posited the empowerment of the masses as fully divorced from the question of political power—their “dual power” opposes itself to class power.

While Marxist Center provides us with a nebulous “base building” and the vague “political revolutionary strategy of dual power”, Lenin’s thoughts on the topic come out in stark relief when discussing the revolutionary side of dual power opposed to the bourgeois power: “What is the class composition of this other government? It consists of the proletariat and the peasants (in soldiers’ uniforms). What is the political nature of this government? It is a revolutionary dictatorship, i.e., a power directly based on revolutionary seizure, on the direct initiative of the people from below, and *not on a law* enacted by a centralized state power”.

There are a few points that the great Lenin is making here which deserve some commentary: 1) he is specifically talking about forming a government, 2) the workers and peasants in soldier’s uniforms speaks to both the militarized nature of this government as well as the masses which are formed into it, this is what Maoists call

the New State and the Sea of Armed Masses, 3) Lenin leaves no room for doubt that dual power is won through “revolutionary seizure” meaning the conquest of power—taking it from the enemy by force—that it is not something that is built exclusively through independent mutual aid organizations with no central push, no military and no Party.

Lenin lays out the characteristics of dual power, in both its militarized and mass aspects and we must quote at length:

“The fundamental characteristics of this type are: (1) the source of power is not a law previously discussed and enacted by parliament, but the direct initiative of the people from below, in their local areas—direct ‘seizure’, to use a current expression; (2) the replacement of the police and the army, which are institutions divorced from the people and set against the people, **by the direct arming of the whole people**; order in the state under such a power is maintained by the armed workers and peasants *themselves*, by the armed people *themselves*; (3) officialdom, the bureaucracy, are either similarly replaced by the direct rule of the people themselves or at least placed under special control; they not only become elected officials, but are also *subject to recall* at the people’s first demand; they are reduced to the position of simple agents; from a privileged group holding ‘jobs’ remunerated on a high, bourgeois scale, they become workers of a special ‘arm of the service’, whose remuneration *does not exceed* the ordinary pay of a competent worker” [Our emphasis].

Lenin argues here for the construction of the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, the formation of a workers state which simultaneously fights the enemy and reproduces itself—this theory and the central question of power forms the basis for the Maoist theory of Protracted Peoples War and its universality. What Marxist Center gives its followers is a domesticated house-broken version of “dual power” and “base building”.

Let us return once more to Burns who provides her definition of “dual power”. After explicitly stating that “dual power projects” are not initiated or led by the Party she goes on to state that: “Dual Power is both a type of institution and a strategy to change the world. Dual Power means new, independent institutions for people to meet their own needs in ways capitalism and the government can’t or won’t. Unlike nonprofits, where a board of directors (and usually wealthy donors!) makes the decisions, Dual Power institutions are created and controlled by the people they benefit. By developing them, people create a second kind of social, economic, and even political power, separate from government and capitalism”.

Without any discussion on armed struggle, its necessity or even its possibility, the author has jumped to cultivating a disorganized lot of nongovernmental bodies which can separate from capitalism and even accomplish political power!

This kind of economism holds a particular appeal. It seems scientific in its formulas and tries to rely on notions of good-will, that as long as the masses are being provided for materially in some way, that they will respond by flocking to such a “dual power institution” with no threat of the (for some reason) repugnant “communist recruitment”.

Never the less, this conception is reminiscent of Robert Owen, the target of Engels’ great work *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*. The idea of wholly independent “cooperative societies” is renounced by Engels when confronting Owen: “He introduced as transition measures to the complete communistic organization of society, on the one hand, cooperative societies for retail trade and production. These have since that time, at least, given practical proof that the merchant and the manufacturer are socially quite unnecessary. On the other hand, he introduced labor bazaars for the exchange of the products of labor through the medium of labor-notes, whose unit was a single hour of work; institutions necessarily doomed to failure, but completely anticipating Proudhon’s bank of exchange of a much later period, and differing entirely from this in that it did not claim to be the panacea for

all social ills, but only a first step towards a much more radical revolution of society” (Engels, *Socialism Utopian and Scientific*).

As quoted above, while these cooperative societies can prove that the merchant and manufacturer are unnecessary, they do not bring us any closer to political power, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the abolition of the capitalist mode of production.

Burns discusses different types of “dual power institutions”, demarcating them into two main categories. The first being Alternative Institutions, which are, “worker owned businesses”, “neighborhood vegetable gardens”, “house-sharing projects”, and “community owned free-clinics”. The second being Counter-Institutions, which are, “Labor Unions”, “campaigns against a new Wal-Mart store”, “tenants unions”, and “planned parenthood defense group[s]”.

While Burns attempts to demarcate the “dual power projects” from NGOs, she does not hesitate to formulate them around the defense of an NGO (a bourgeois organization like Planned Parenthood) uncritically of course, while giving no mention to the need for any mass organizations, “dual power institutions”, or mutual aid societies coming to the defense of the revolution as Lenin insisted above. Both types of “dual power institutions” lack any and all mention of conquering terrain to organize independently of the bourgeoisie in any coherent way and both promote merely cultivating something on what is very much contested turf, through sheer will and a moral high ground, again lapsing into utopian socialist concepts already resolutely crushed by the emergence of Marxism. Further, no analysis is given to the class question of “labor unions”; they are seen without contradiction as a fighting organization—divorced from all the historical evidence to the contrary which proves them to have a capitulationist aspect, which in an imperialist country is its dominant aspect. All of Burns’ theory is contingent on bribing workers out of politics—NGOism to a fault.

“Dual power projects” are peddled in various different forms, from the ideas of Burns to the muddled musings of anarchist Scott Crow, in which “power” is constructed through similar cooperative engagement (staring small and mostly failing businesses, community organizations etc.) without conquest.

Burns and Crow might as well be preaching from the same pulpit; he states his conception of power thusly: “We can take care of our own security, we take care of our own food, we can exchange food with other people. We take care of our own health care. When I say build a clinic, or when I say build food security, I’m not talking about one clinic for 100,000 people. I’m talking block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood”. Of course he fails to elaborate how this plays out in the context of urban gentrification, mass incarceration, and predatory real-estate investment. He fails to mention how the masses and their organic institutions can compete for retail space, how they can defeat an aggressive police force and hold on to anything meaningful without force, conquest, and a grasp of revolutionary violence. For both Burns and Crow the solution seems to be the formation of NGOs who hoist a red or black flag respectively. Burns and Crow alike suffer the same delusion that power is just free for the taking, you just have to pull up your boot straps and stop being lazy. They act as if lack of power—meaning disempowerment and oppression—are not violently imposed. Understanding this imposition means we know that any question of power and of attaining power is a question of using revolutionary violence.

For Maoists, the question rests with real power centralized in the hands of the New State, not diffused power floating ephemerally above material conditions. We understand power as a result of conquest, built in class struggle leading up to armed struggle, with the development of militias and a Red Army which can defend these gains. For us dual power is not stagnant coexistence but part of an active war strategy. The New State exists in the form of People’s Committees which use a three-in-one combined leadership—that is one part Communist, one part masses, and one part military.

The General Political Line of the Communist Party of Peru succinctly lays out the Maoist position on the matter:



**“Thus taking the Party as the axis of everything, build the Army around it and with these instruments, with the masses in the People’s War, build the new State around both.** That the militarization of the Party can only be carried forward through concrete actions of the class struggle, concrete military-type actions; this does not mean we will only carry out various types of military actions exclusively (guerrilla actions, sabotages, selective annihilation, armed propaganda and agitation) but that we must carry out mainly these forms so as to provide incentive and development to the class struggle, teaching with deeds, with these types of actions as the principal form of struggle in the People’s War” [Their emphasis].

And:

**“The construction of the new State follows the fluidity of the People’s War, it can expand or contract, disappear in one place and appear in another. It is fluid.”** [Emphasis original]

“Strengthen the People’s Committees, develop the Bases and make advances in the People’s Republic of New Democracy!’ That is the slogan which continues to guide its construction.”

“This is a process in which the old State is being destroyed and the contradiction old State–new State is being expressed. This causes all the political and military plans of reaction to fail and incorporates the masses into the struggle.”

And finally:

“[T]he 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 [*por encargo*], elected by the Assemblies of Representatives and subject to recall [*remoción*]. They are, up to now, clandestine; they march forward with Commissions [*con Comisiones*], led by the Party applying the rule of the “three thirds”: One third of them are Communists, one third are peasants and one third are progressives, and are sustained by the Army. They apply people’s dictatorship, enforcement and security, exercising violence firmly and resolutely so as to defend the new Power against its enemies and to protect the rights of the people.”

All of the above advances from the positions held by Lenin and accords with dialectical materialism.

Burns, however, does not grasp the dialectical process which goes on in all sequences of destruction and construction—subjectively only focusing on the construction aspect, she claims that: “By putting together a new system parallel to the current one, Dual Power can eventually provide enough of a second power base to totally replace capitalism.”

History has concretely proven that the capitalist class and the Old State which serve it do not cede ground peacefully and will not tolerate the simple construction of “a new parallel system” which in any way threatens its existence, if such a construction even could meaningfully threaten capitalism to begin with. In fact, the very reason for the state’s existence is to suppress classes which could threaten the existence of the ruling class; Burns negates the existence of the state by assuming such pleasant construction could do away with capitalism.

While Burns makes a valid attempt at pointing out the shortcomings (as well as the positive aspects) of traditional activism she does not view the matter as a dialectical materialist in all of its contradictions and hence comes to an incorrect conclusion. Her main thrust is against organized leadership, positing all leading bodies of the masses as a hostile clique.

The suggested guidelines fall equally short and cannot look past material needs and meeting them with economism. Providing for basic needs and holding concomitant public meetings which encourage “participatory democracy” are not meaningful representations of actual power, and hence cannot challenge the power of the state.

Activism, instead of being viewed in the traditional sense, must be taken over by Maoists and all forms of activism—including pickets, protests, rallies, and marches—must be viewed mainly as *a school of war*, a place to hone fighting skills and embolden the masses. None of this is meaningful unless the masses themselves are drawn up into stable organizing bodies—which Burns no doubt would denounce as “front groups”. These revolutionary mass organizations and Party generated organisms however are decisive in consolidating the most advanced masses and training them to become Communists, Red Army soldiers, militia members or local new state administrators. Through these bodies—and with the Party as the central axis—real power is accomplished. This conception gives respect and full play to both the destructive and constructive aspects, and thus the masses are able to fully express their infinite creative potential and embrace their right to rebel against reaction.

Other adherents to the “base building tendency” include Tim Horras of the group Philly Socialists, whose approach is more thought out and a better attempt at dialectical materialism than the conception of Burns. He views “base-building” and “mass upsurge” as complementary along with “self-defense”. Like Burns, however, Horras comes to incorrect conclusions that often times lack self-critical introspection. He states that: “Large mobilizations, when successful, have a dynamic which activates the periphery of a social movement while exhausting and even

burning out the activist core, the latter of whom have been working hard to prepare for the event and need to decompress after a big outing...at precisely the moment that new people need to be onboarded!”

A few points have to be made here, first is that the constant concern regarding “activist burnout” is a uniquely first world condition. This is due to both the influence of postmodernism and revisionism on methods of organizing, as well as the back burner treatment of ideology. It is almost laughable to think of advanced struggles led by third world Communists being threatened by “burn out”; if this was at all a factor massive historic events like the Long March, the Great Leap Forward, the battles of Leningrad etc. would be impossible. The same attitude which produces the “dual power tendency” is at play in burning people out and failing to ideologically steel them for the heavy task ahead while demanding a certain amount of labor; this is typical of all strands of economism. Massive protests on the other hand should accomplish a significant moral boost, proof that hard work and revolutionary organizing pay off — these should not be seen as the source of exhaustion.

Here we have two distinct view points and two distinct class stands. The excuse that “decompression” is necessary simply neglects the role of ideology in serving the people—it is ideology which steels us into unrelenting servants, willing to make any sacrifice. While “self-care” is not exactly what is promoted here, the concerns come from the same petty bourgeois ideology.

Horras correctly states that protest hopping and waiting for the mass movement are not enough to become the sole focus, and of course he is right to expose the fact that much of the left is blinded by this exact pursuit, that something must be done sustainably in between each swell or mass uprising to establish real and meaningful links with the community and the working class. The positive aspects of this argument are already proven by groups Horras detests; the Red Guards organizations across the US, most notably in Austin, have in several short years been able to create a red movement and a diverse array of mass organizations that do not engage in protest hopping, but remain capable of taking the streets and outflanking the cops or

bashing back against fascists and assorted reactionaries. These organizations have proven speed and durability in the tests of practice, in part by facing heavy state repression—including serious injury and long potential jail sentences all while not suffering any “burn out” or requiring any “decompression”.

While on the surface it would seem there are similarities to the positions held by Horras and the Red Guards movement, digging a little bit deeper surfaces the main dividing contradictions, the very same contradictions that put Burns and Horras on the same team and more or less in the same category as Owen or Crow. This becomes sharp when the hollow theorizing of self-defense is held up to actual Maoist practice in the US.

Horras states that: “As a final note, our trend unconditionally endorses the right to self-defense by the working class and oppressed communities. One of the central historical reference points for a socialist base-building project in the USA is the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. While we are not of the opinion we need to naively seek to recreate these and similar formations from a different time, we do think that their model, which incorporated elements of armed self-defense and service to the people, is an essential component of socialist organizing in our day and age”.

Horras only skims over the question of armed self-defense and does not analyze either the positive or negative aspects of the Panthers, resulting in lip service that cannot take a line on armed self-defense or service to the people and how these two came into contradiction within the Panthers. What is worse than his sloppy treatment of the Panthers is that self-defense itself is not viewed with dialectical materialism—it is reduced to being nothing but the masses being forced to defend themselves; its other aspect, the offensive, is neglected. Armed propaganda of course suffers the same neglect.

Holding “self-defense” classes is nothing radical in and of itself, and is often divorced from politics. Capitalist society already has a slew of these classes for free and for charge. What capitalist society is strictly against, and what Horras and his counterparts systemically avoid, is that the masses must learn to make war by making war—must learn to fight by fighting—to reclaim revolutionary violence and make physical offensives as part of an overall defensive. No amount of free “community controlled self-defense classes” can provide this kind of practice, and at best could only complement a revolutionary program with a pedigree for combat.

The revolutionary line of constructing community defense militias and building the Red Army in embryonic form, leading to its realization as a force capable of waging Protracted Peoples War is not espoused by Horras’ regretful handling of the self-defense question. He shows an unnatural restraint here. Perhaps he desires going deeper into the matter but was bound by the topic at hand, or more likely was bound by a fear of seeming “ultra-left” a charge he himself levels against Maoists. Self-defense is always okay, in theory, but once the masses and militants grasp the axe handle, or the grip of a rifle — that is another matter. His counterparts in Austin hold regular self-defense classes but they do not fight physically against actual class enemies, in the meantime, Maoists are constructing fighting bodies and armed bodies as an expression of the right to self-defense.

The main conclusion Horras comes to is a call for respecting “a diversity of tactics”, this argument tends to fail to engage with the way in which tactics come into inevitable contradiction with other tactics and more importantly with revolutionary strategy. A diversity of tactics can also be a necessity in targeting different opponents in different conditions with differing forces, never the less a diversity of tactics in and of itself lacks the force of a conclusion and cannot stand in as a conclusion. Bad tactics are as diverse as good ones are, by simply arguing for a flattened vague “diversity” without demarcation between good and bad tactics, Horras and his counterparts spin their wheels, their “base building” gets hollowed out and reaches its natural limitations quite fast. What the Maoists seek to grapple with is two-line struggle, which can be organized according to a centralized strategy so that the bad tactics within the diversity of good tactics can be culled in the

interest of pushing the class consciousness of the proletariat further along the revolutionary path to socialism, cultural revolution, and ultimately to Communism.

As an example of bad tactics commonly employed by the US “left”, let us look at electioneering and the hoisting of third party “socialist” candidates, candidates who seek to legitimize the electoral system while pretending to criticize it. This tactic is not only undesirable but is counterproductive, as well, and must be combatted from a revolutionary standpoint. We can understand many pacifist and legalist tactics similarly in the ways that they decrease, harm, or even destroy mass initiatives. It is correct to fight for a diversity of good tactics while at the same time demarcating bad tactics which will rout movements, campaigns, or actions or force them to tail behind the Democratic (or other bourgeois) parties. “Diversity of tactics” becomes a hollow mantra so often repeated that many well-meaning people forget to even view tactics critically!

The rejection of strategy, including revolutionary strategy, military strategy and political strategy is the clearest shortcoming of those who uphold this so-called “base building tendency”. To justify this avoidance the defenders of this line will undoubtedly use a variety of excuses, the “lack of a mass base”, the need to approach everything as it comes and an aversion to theoretical approaches to organizing are among many such excuses. The conclusion to “It’s All About that Base”, while summarizing Burns even argues that: “Rather than thinking big, their work should be centered where they have the capacity to cultivate a meaningful influence”.

Maoists assert that we can do two things at one time — we can both “think big”, that is act strategically with long term goals in mind, while at the same time develop sober assessments of our subjective capabilities and how to bring these up to match and contend with the concrete conditions objectively. This is part of conquering the mass support base and embedding ourselves in combat trenches; this requires a revolutionary ideology and a revolutionary attitude.

Mao summed this up well in *Combat Liberalism*: “We must use Marxism, which is positive in spirit, to overcome liberalism, which is negative. A Communist should have **largeness of mind and he should be staunch and active**, looking upon the interests of the revolution as his very life and subordinating his personal interests to those of the revolution; always and everywhere he should adhere to principle and wage a tireless struggle against all incorrect ideas and actions, so as to consolidate the collective life of the Party and strengthen the ties between the Party and the masses; he should be more concerned about the Party and the masses than about any private person, and more concerned about others than about himself. Only thus can he be considered a Communist” [Our emphasis].

What rings true in the above statement is that ideology and “big ideas” are far from being a negative influence on our work, but are foundational to it.

The conclusion to the D.B. Cooper text asserts the very valid point that small groups, especially ones that are just being established need to settle on a specific site of struggle, be it a warehouse or shop floor or specific community somewhere, the argument to go among the masses and carry out work is correct—but it is incomplete and, when taken at face value, divorced from the need to conquer a base area to have meaningful power established, thus falling short of its progressive intentions. In all of the talk about a “specific contingency or area” no mention is made of how to materially carry out class combat—this is the main demarcation between the “base builders” and the Maoists who establish a mass base through concrete struggle in a **trench of combat**. This is no mere vernacular difference nor is it a matter of word choice, any reformist can settle on a “specific contingency or area”, in fact most NGOs already do this and divide the struggles of the masses among themselves fairly equitably, seeking to avoid conflict between them.

On the other hand, it takes a disciplined Communist organization to initiate a trench of combat. Maoists by approaching everything through contradiction, grasp well that



the masses, popular neighborhoods, the workplace, etc. are always going to be contested terrain. Spaces where backward and progressive ideas come into sharp contradiction, where revolutionary, reformist, and revisionist politics will also come to blows. In any given sequence of struggle, in any trench of combat, the bourgeois and the proletariat will battle it out in an attempt to win masses behind whatever initiative, campaign or struggle is underway. It is the Party itself which links these disparate struggles and unifies them into one singular revolutionary struggle. The Party alone can do this as it is where the most advanced are consolidated, where the few converge.

Without talking about the Party, and by leaving this question unanswered by Cooper and Horras and directly opposed by Burns, these “dual power projects”, “tenants unions”, etc., remain dispersed, as dispersed as the Marxist Center is, and as dispersed as their conception of “power” is. Maoists on the other hand have articulated a far clearer position on the need to build the Party, to construct the United Front around it and to develop the Red Army to defend both. Much of the movements and events which produced the dispersed groupings in the Marxist Center have placed their birth marks on it. From the anti-globalization movement, to the anti-war movement, to occupy, BLM etc. the most common thing which hindered all of these was an aversion to centralism, an aversion to discipline and a negation of the Party form—in essence a rejection of the foundations of Leninism. Anti-Leninism in the United States has taken on a gigantic “common sense” appearance: liberalism and postmodernism, as well as various forms of horizontalism have become the default sensibility informing the left and its directionless spiraling. At least these organizers attempt to break with the old worn-out activist model, albeit in an incomplete and incorrect way which shifts its appearance and approach but ends by making the same mistakes.

Our only conclusion is the understanding that what Lenin proved concretely in October of 1917 is still correct, that not only was it correct for him in that time, but its universal content was synthesized and replicated the world over, bringing the whole of the proletariat closer to revolution and more than half of it to power once the Chinese revolution was accomplished. A return to the principles of Leninism is in accordance with proletarian common sense, but runs counter to the petty-bourgeois

and bourgeois notions of common sense. It should not be a controversial position at all that we must carry out better education on what democratic centralism means, and at the same time learn through practice how to implement it in a way which cultivates our movement and makes it stronger and healthier.

It would appear to most observers that it is the left itself which struggles the most with stubborn anti-communism, that the working class itself is not moved by the old fears of centralized Parties and military planning; the masses are not suffering from anti-communism in the working class neighborhoods—it is the left which still has this toxin in its system, which so fears the term and more importantly fears its essence expressed in the personages of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and Gonzalo. For the people genuinely wishing to build a base among the working class, they are halfway between something good and something terrible; to make any meaningful steps forward they should embrace mainly Marx, Lenin and Mao. With this embrace they can truly break from old ideas and dare to think and act in new ways.

It is not enough to try and replicate what was successful in the past, any return must keep in it the revolutionary desire for progress—this means applying the universal lessons proven in practice creatively to our present day conditions, in this process new socialist ideas emerge and old capitalist ideas meet their end. Sadly, the “base building tendency” is really not a new socialist idea, but an old capitalist one that seeks to sweep armed struggle off the agenda, make it taboo and forbidden to theorize. It is an old idea which opposes the best of Leninism but still traffics in some of its vocabulary and rhetoric. Its positive aspects are completely embargoed by its negative aspects.

There is no other prospect as fulfilling and exciting as the initiation of armed struggle in the world’s worst imperialist superpower. Embracing this necessity of armed struggle will not turn away the workers, but timid avoidance of the question most certainly will. It is not denied that we must accomplish not only base building but base building as a result of conquest—by ripping power out of the clutches of the

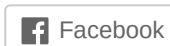
death system and bringing it to life in revolutionary base areas. Maoism is the culmination of the overall class struggle toward Communism, fellow travelers who insist that they must empirically come to understand every process, in their subjectivism will only take the roundabout path to coming to correct ideas, along this journey they either become revolutionaries or committed to counter-revolution because there are only these two options in the final analysis. Sadly, the default anti-communist thinking of many in the left prevents them from just embracing the science of revolution, and leads them to conciliatory charity-type work.

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