

# *Revolutionary Optimism*

**NOVEMBER 24, 2018**

**STRUGGLESSESSIONS**



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(Read by Lee Hanbyul)

## Revolutionary Optimism

“Being communists, we fear nothing. Moreover, our Party has steeled us to challenge death itself, and to carry our life on our fingertips so that we may give it whenever the revolution demands it.” (Chairman Gonzalo, Interview with *El Diario*, 1988)

“On the question of nuclear weapons and nuclear war the second difference between us and those who attack the Communist Party of China is whether one should view the future of mankind with pessimism or with revolutionary optimism.” (Editorial in *Renmin Ribao*, December 31, 1962)

Through unwavering faith in the masses, Communists and revolutionaries have grasped the essential truth that to be a revolutionary is to be an optimist. This of course does not mean that revolutionaries engage in any of the various sorts of bourgeois optimism, which operate blindly and do not consider the prevailing conditions and contradictions. The revolutionary’s unwavering confidence and undefeatable, singular will stem from deep love and faith in the

broad masses and especially in the proletariat. Regardless of the will of any individual or group, the people will triumph in making history. Our aim and purpose here is to bring clarity to the vital principle of revolutionary optimism and oppose several bourgeois trends that smuggle in negative influence.

To be a revolutionary optimist is not to be delusional or idealistic, or to view the world through rose-tinted lenses. In short, it is to fear nothing and to remain resolute in service to the people, fortified by the truth that it is the masses who make history and that Communism will be achieved regardless of man's will. The class struggle will continue and it will produce Communists—this is the irrefutable truth. Communists realize the necessity of revolution, and will do what they must.

It is bourgeois society and the ideological leanings of the petty bourgeoisie that encourage both defeatism and self-deprecation, a dual attack to simultaneously carry out counterinsurgency in the minds of the masses and encourage such behavior as a coping mechanism in response to the brutal alienation imposed by capitalism. As revolutionaries we must oppose such maneuvers and devices, first by combating the social habits we have formed and then by challenging the pessimistic thinking of our friends and comrades.

### **What is most important is to be an optimist**

One of the universal contributions of Gonzalo Thought, which is applicable to every revolutionary effort on the planet, is the principle of revolutionary optimism. Building upon Mao's teachings, which revolved around serving the people, fearing no sacrifice, and living one's life as an incorruptible soldier, Chairman Gonzalo made the following proclamation.

“Fear? I believe that fear and lack of fear form a contradiction. The point is to take up our ideology, and unleash the courage within us. It is our ideology that makes us brave, that gives us courage. In my opinion, no one is born brave. It is

society, the class struggle, that makes people and Communists courageous—the class struggle, the proletariat, the Party, and our ideology. What could the greatest fear be? Death? As a materialist I know that life will end someday. What is most important to me is to be an optimist, with the conviction that others will continue the work to which I am committed, and will carry it forward until they reach our final goal, Communism. Because the fear that I could have is that no one would carry on, but that fear disappears when one has faith in the masses. I think that the worst fear, in the end, is not to have faith in the masses, to believe that you're indispensable, the center of the world. I think that's the worst fear and if you are forged by the Party, in proletarian ideology, in Maoism principally, you understand that the masses are the makers of history, that the Party makes revolution, that the advance of history is certain, that revolution is the main trend, and then your fear vanishes. What remains is the satisfaction of contributing together with others to laying the foundation so that someday Communism may shine and illuminate the entire earth.”

This is essential to grasp firmly in order to comprehend the power and importance of revolutionary optimism. Not only has Chairman Gonzalo left us with clear instruction on how to overcome any fear or hesitation, but he has also provided us with a living example of how to conduct oneself as a revolutionary. He presented us with this again from the cage of the old, decaying Peruvian State, when he issued his transcendental speech. Later he would prove the correctness of this speech by his own example. He refuses to be broken by many decades of isolation, unwavering in his post as the world's greatest living Communist and the fourth pillar of Marxism. He would transform Callao Naval Base Prison into the most shining trench of combat!

We should pay close attention to his words above and get into the matter a little deeper. By applying the law of contradiction Gonzalo has identified what causes both fear (for the sake of our discussion, pessimism) and courage (for the sake of our discussion, revolutionary optimism). Fear and pessimism are the leanings of the petty bourgeoisie, whose worldview relies heavily on subjugation of the many to the individual. For them, all matters are viewed through the lens that everyone is first an individual, separated from everyone

else into a unique center of the world. This is a product of the desperation of that class to ascend to the ranks of the bourgeoisie proper. While rarely they manage to do so, it is only through exploitation, but they will always, without fail, attribute it to their personal “hard work.” Because of the inability of almost all petty-bourgeois people to ascend into another class (due to economic laws that make it far, far more likely that they will be thrust into the ranks of the proletariat) they develop a sort of individualist negative subjectivism—in a word, pessimism. They have no confidence in the masses of people and begin to hate themselves as a result, as the conditions that the proletariat always lives with loom closer and closer for them. As a class they are doomed to follow and never to lead—they will follow either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie, as Lenin insisted:

“A simple majority of the petty-bourgeois masses does not and cannot decide anything, for the disunited millions of rural petty proprietors can *only* acquire organisation, political consciousness in action and centralisation of action (which is indispensable for victory) when they are led either by the bourgeoisie or by the proletariat.” (“Constitutional Illusions”)

Evaluating what Lenin says here makes it easy to see why petty-bourgeois people sink into a pessimistic, counterrevolutionary worldview when they lack the leadership of the proletariat, when they cannot be remolded into a Communist worldview. Attitude must therefore be seen not as a question of individual personality but instead as one of class stand. The proletarian class stand develops the Communist worldview, and this is exactly where we develop a revolutionary attitude. This attitude, contrary to its opposite, is not vindictive, shallow, or driven by uncontrollable emotion; it rises above all that with its modesty, its faith in the masses, and its adherence to Communist leadership.

Returning to the view expressed by Gonzalo, he insists clearly that *it is our ideology that makes us brave*. This understanding is rejected by those who view Maoism as nothing but a loose collection of ideas and not a consolidated ideology. When considering the role of ideology in converting fear (which is

default in bourgeois society) to fearlessness, we should examine some opposing views expressed by the opportunists.

## **A World of Shadows**

When we examine the conditions in which these opportunists operate, we can observe that what motivates them in the first place is a pessimistic worldview, what we above called negative subjectivism, which is the united-opposite of positive subjectivism. Both subjectivisms are alike in their petty-bourgeois rejection of reality, and hence they run counter to dialectical materialism.

This phenomenon is seen clearly in, for example, the slogans created in the absence of organized struggle and purely for the audience of others in a small group, who socialize mainly on the internet in spaces like Facebook. These slogans appear in meme format and promote being a social outcast or misfit, or even embracing a declassed identity. They promote nihilism in the face of Communism, antisocial behavior in the face of socialism etc. This has always been seen among anarchists, who use emotive considerations, things like shame and guilt, to attempt to improve a person's political activity or motivate them to act. In reality, people act according to their class interests, so the only thing that can change this is taking up the proletarian class stand. You cannot guilt someone into rallying around the oppressed. What will convince them that it is correct to stand with the proletariat is grasping the truth that the proletariat is the class that will inevitably come to power, as well as the truth that going against the tide of history is reactionary, and that all reactionary ideology—and the legacy of every reactionary—will be cast into the grave. This is a matter of winning people to focus on their long-term interests and to avoid being distracted by short-term interests, in short placing rational interest in command of perceived interest, via practice.

Positive subjectivism assumes that, because the class struggle produces Communists and Communists make revolution, specific individuals have no

obligation, no post to take up. This is a negation of armed struggle and an obstinate refusal to pay the quotas demanded and ordained by class struggle, it is in essence negative. “Leftist” internet subculture relies on and reproduces this idea, and is utilized appropriately in service to the ruling class.

Those who lack faith in the masses, who lack a proletarian worldview, are easily susceptible to hearsay and even the lies generated by class enemies. Inactive individuals who treat revolution as a sporting match actually take up such abhorrent activity as rumor-spreading and gossiping. A simple Twitter search about Maoism will find no shortage of accounts belonging to disorganized individuals with a fetish for the historic failed revisionist projects, and generally they are found spreading around what they consider to be the best gossip. They have fully given in to pessimism regarding any and all practical organizing carried out by Communists. Instead of going among the masses, they have cocooned themselves in the false reality of their internet echo chambers. Their “self-care” includes more pessimism, more self-deprecation, and more gossip. It is obvious that immersion in this environment has a powerful corrosive effect on these individuals.

One of the most obvious examples of a pessimistic, petty-bourgeois approach to revolution can be found in the way revisionists more often than not promote elections. They view revolution as impossible, and in their lack of faith in the masses they proceed to lead people into one of the ruling class’s most powerful methods for legitimizing themselves.

There are also examples of organized and theoretical approaches to damaging morale among those who seek revolutionary change. While as far as we are concerned the matter of Joshua Moufawad-Paul has been settled with our publication of “‘Maoism’ from Below” and his subsequent failure to defend his opportunist line, we should still revisit his attempts to propagate metaphysics by taking up the position of “revolutionary realism,” which he opposes to both pessimism and optimism (one divides into three?!). For the sake of this article we will contend mainly with his attacks on revolutionary optimism, which he tries to define as irrational faith in a “sect” to carry out an “insurrection,” the

view that “everything is on the up-and-up for socialist organizing.” This however is not what is meant by *revolutionary* optimism; what he is describing is bourgeois optimism that cannot accurately assess its subjective factors. It is not a great shock to us that Moufawad-Paul conflates bourgeois and proletarian views here and cannot tell the difference between the red and white lines regarding optimism. Revolutionary optimism, contrary to Moufawad-Paul’s obscurantism, relies on strong ideology rooted in faith in the masses and of course the class struggle. These things are the product of a dialectical materialist approach and not a subjectivist approach. After all, it is ideology that leads a poor subjective condition into a good one; it is ideology that forges (in class struggle) the best children of the proletariat into Communists. This is something to be optimistic about, instilling further courage to take up one’s post in the International Communist Movement and begin challenging death. Yet according to Moufawad-Paul,

“conversely, revolutionary optimism is another form of myopia: a starry-eyed belief that the revolution is coming no matter what, a refusal to engage with all of the actual failures, a sectarian delusion. Both positions are revolutionary in that they understand that the only solution is a revolutionary overthrow of the current state of affairs; they’re problem is that they are simply not *realist* positions. These are revolutionary deliriums rather than revolutionary realisms.” (“Against Revolutionary Pessimism and Optimism,” 2016)

Revisionism, which is negative in spirit, must be held up to Marxism, which is positive. Moufawad-Paul displays his cynical worldview that revolutionary optimism is “myopia.” His misuse of the word “myopia” notwithstanding, this must be evaluated next to what Mao teaches on the subject:

“Marxist-Leninists have always had an attitude of revolutionary optimism towards the future of the cause of the proletarian revolution. We are profoundly convinced that the brilliant light of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of socialism and of Marxism-Leninism will shine forth over the Soviet land. The proletariat is sure to achieve complete and final victory on earth.” (Mao, “Refutation of the So-called Party of the Entire People”)



The above quotations are antithetical. Moufawad-Paul—with his lack of faith in the class struggle to produce Communists, with his lack of understanding that imperialism itself can go no further, combined with his lack of faith in the masses to respond to the concrete objective conditions under Communist leadership—is the one suffering from myopia. Mao, on the other hand, is clear that the proletariat is sure to achieve victory. This is no boisterous claim; on the contrary, it is a precise analysis of the world's conditions and the trajectory of class struggle. Mao, like Marx and Lenin, insists that the future epochs of socialism and Communism will be arrived at independent of man's will.

Moufawad-Paul, in his rupture from Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, finds himself closer to the position of the revisionist Bob Avakian, far from Mao. Avakian insists,

“So there is no ‘stately and ordered process’ that has led from one stage of society to another (from early communal to slave, to feudal, to capitalist and then socialist society—and then on to communism). There is no ‘grand waltz of history’ (one, two, three; one, two, three) or no ‘feudal minuet,’ nice and dainty and orderly, which has unfolded as society has gone forward somehow inevitably toward communism. *There is no ‘grand process’ leading inevitably to communism.* We must combat tendencies to that kind of thinking (*this was marked in Stalin*, for example) that borders on a religious viewpoint (if, in fact, it does not ‘violate the law’ and ‘cross over that border’!). But human historical development, with all its complexity and diversity, throughout the world and through thousands of years, has in fact—though not ‘by design’—laid the foundation for and *made possible—not inevitable but possible*—the world-historic leap to communism.” (“Views on Socialism and Communism”)

Both Moufawad-Paul and Avakian share this position, and both maintain it through repeated attacks on Stalin. The former (calling himself a Maoist) avoids the inconvenient, glaring fact that Mao taught the exact opposite.

## **The Negative Views of the Dying Class**

In a philosophical lecture in 1986, Chairman Gonzalo, while attacking the bourgeois philosophy of existentialism as posed by Heidegger, summarized existential philosophy in this way:

“Analysis of existence, the creator God. Philosophy must focus on the existence of things. Man is the expression of existence, comes from nothing and goes to nothing. He does not know anything about his existence, where he comes from. In this transit there is anguish. When this happens, there are two attitudes: facing or running away from that anguish. The problem is to face his anguish, face his death, be for death, that is the identity of man, live for death. It served Nazism. It is the expression of a class that is dying. Expression of philosophical decadence.”

And in regard to the forefather of fascism, Nietzsche, and his superman theory:

“The theories that seek an exit to imperialism. Moral theory based on the best and their domain. Privileged men and sheepish minds, aims against Christianity, trying to restore the moral of the gentlemen. Christianity confuses goodness with virtue. Christians are the most powerful, the strongest. This is pure racism.”

The two trends that Gonzalo is addressing find root most often among declassed and petty bourgeois youth who would feign commitment to progressive causes and even go so far as to claim participation in revolutionary class struggle. Mainly existentialism and nihilism form the ideological backbone the contemporary pessimist—though centering on death and the individual the pessimist by embracing the ideology of the bourgeois can even come to embrace anti-Communist tropes as a good thing, which gives them identity and purpose.

## **Illuminate the Whole World**

Marxism, and all higher developments of it, maintain a far more positive philosophical spirit by centering the struggle of opposites as the only fundamental law. It is this struggle that lays the basis for revolutionary optimism and the transformation of the world through People's War. Explaining dialectical materialism, Gonzalo goes on:

“War is the origin of all things, the struggle of two opponents and of that struggle we have a constant process of development, everything is a permanent flow, nobody bathes twice in the same waters. Here we have the dialectic.”

Gonzalo, following Mao, maintains that the world has entered the age of the strategic offensive of world proletarian revolution, that the period of the next 50 to 100 years will see dramatic upheaval and developments that favor the final defeat of imperialism (principally US). This is an economic analysis and has little to do with the subjective aspects of the International Communist Movement. It pertains to the course that imperialism cannot divert from as well as the wealth of lessons gained by the Communists throughout history. This thesis breathes with revolutionary optimism. While the cynic will use fear-mongering and guilt to motivate their audience, the Communist needs only the facts—that the objective conditions for revolution have never been better, and, following this, that the subjective factors can rise to the occasion of these conditions under the firm, unwavering ideology of MLM by reconstituting the Communist Parties and going lower and deeper among the most profound masses. Lenin himself insisted that pessimism is bourgeois ideology attempting to mislead the revolutionary effort, and that this pessimism was a certain type of subjectivist opportunism:

“It must not be forgotten that the current pessimism about our ties with the masses very often serves as a screen for bourgeois ideas regarding the role of the proletariat in the revolution.” (“Two Tactics of Social Democratic Revolution,” preface)

The “current pessimism” of 1905 still exists today, especially among those who prattle on about the “lack of a mass base,” using this “lack” as an excuse to jettison all tactics and actions that can conquer one. What the pessimist is truly saying is that the masses are ignorant and complacent, that they will not positively respond to revolutionary violence or militancy—in essence that the masses themselves do not grasp the correctness of rebellion and that anything rebellious will automatically and certainly alienate them. This is a prime avenue for attacking revolutionary organizations the world over who seek to reconstitute their Communist Parties.

What these strikes against the masses and against revolutionary optimism all have in common is that they rely on the ideology of the dying class—the old, bourgeois ideas, rooted in metaphysics. Nihilism, existentialism, revisionism, right-opportunism, and so on are all philosophically decadent, with a distrust and fear of the masses, motivating the proponents of these ideas to contortions that believe the class struggle can be silenced. In the face of their negativity and cynicism, the Communist has but one weapon, the light of truth that is expressed in MLM. While the enemy parasitically lives for death, the Communist rises up to challenge death.

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