

Communism or Nationalism?

Revolutionary Communist Organization, Mexico

The world we live in is horrendous and has to change. It is a world of growing ecological disaster, rent by reactionary wars, in which 3 million children die of hunger every year,¹ and in which millions and millions of women and children are enslaved in international trafficking for the “industries” of prostitution and pornography,² among other horrors.

In order to be able to radically change this world, it is essential to understand its nature and how it really can be changed. Part of this is how to understand and how to completely transform a more and more globalized world also marked by profound national oppression and divisions. Everybody knows that we live in a globalized world: the labels on your clothes show that they largely come from faraway countries, the youth chat online with people on the other side of the world, and economic crisis in one place provokes havoc in another. And nevertheless, the abyss grows between the immense riches concentrated in some nations and the extensive poverty characteristic of the majority, one nation or nationality oppresses another, and immigrants in search of work are hunted down like animals on several national borders.

It is very commonly accepted, even by people who identify themselves as revolutionaries or communists, that the fundamental problem and its solution are to be found essentially within the borders of each country. Is that the case? Are the system we live in and the possibilities of breaking free of it determined more by the characteristics of each nation or by the world system and struggle internationally? Is there a world system, and is a world revolutionary process needed to overcome it? Does achieving a radically different and liberating future require being the best representatives of the people or the proletariat of one’s own nation, or does it require being representatives of the emancipation of humanity? Should revolutionaries in the third world aspire simply to the liberation of our nation, or to the elimination of class distinctions and all forms of oppression in the entire world?

The answers to these questions are fundamental in order to be able to open the doors to a new future full of promise. The new synthesis of communism developed by Bob Avakian,³ which, among other contributions, has strengthened the theoretical foundations of internationalism, is essential for answering them scientifically and for guiding the struggle for that future all over the world. However, as Mao points out, “From time immemorial, nothing progressive has ever been favorably received at first and everything progressive has invariably been the object of abuse,”⁴ and the new synthesis has not been the exception. It has encountered opposition, in particular, from various forces who, although they identify themselves as communists, actually adapt communism to nationalism and therefore are fighting for a very different goal. Here we take an extensive article from Ajith as representative of these positions.⁵

¹ Azteca Noticias (Azteca News), “3 millones de niños mueren de hambre al año”, <http://www.aztecanoticias.com.mx/capitulos/internacional/151315/3-millones-de-ninos-mueren-de-hambre-al-ano>.

² A figure of approximately 2.5 million victims of trafficking is given, but it is also estimated that for each person identified there are 20 that are not, which would imply a total of some 50 million people. “Informe Mundial sobre la Trata de Personas 2012” in http://www.miguelcarbonell.com/docencia/Informe_mundial_sobre_la_trata_de_personas.shtml.

³ For a brief summary of the new synthesis of communism, see Revolutionary Communist Party, United States of America (RCP,USA), *Communism: The Beginning of a New Stage*, RCP Publications, Chicago, 2009, available at revcom.us. Bob Avakian has developed this new synthesis and is the chairman of the RCP,USA. On line at <http://revcom.us/Manifiesto/index.html>

⁴ Mao Tsetung, “Talks at a Conference of Secretaries of Provincial, Municipal, and Autonomous Region Party Committees,” *Selected Works*, Volume V, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1977, p. 380.

1. Two opposing positions, two fundamentally different and opposed goals

The new synthesis of communism developed by Bob Avakian embodies a very correct and crucial application of materialist dialectics in the service of proletarian internationalism and the advance of the proletarian revolution toward the ultimate goal of a communist world. The following statement is a concentration of this new understanding: “The achievement of [the necessary conditions for communism] must take place on a world scale, through a long and tortuous process of revolutionary transformation in which there will be uneven development, the seizure of power in different countries at different times, and a complex dialectical interplay between the revolutionary struggles and the revolutionization of society in these different countries...[a dialectical relation] in which the world arena is fundamentally and ultimately decisive while the mutually interacting and mutually supporting struggles of the proletarians in different countries constitute the key link in fundamentally changing the world as a whole.”⁶

This dialectical relationship in the struggle for communism between the world arena, which is ultimately decisive, and the interrelated proletarian struggles in different countries, which are the key link, has a material basis in the fact that, towards the end of the 19th century, a world capitalist-imperialist system took shape.

Ajith and many others insist, on the contrary, that the tasks of the revolutionaries “emerge from the particularities internal to their country and are more determined by them”⁷ and that the world level only exerts its influence through the internal contradictions of each country. In the limited degree to which he comments on any material basis for this position, he argues that it resides in the proletariat arising from a process that is “specifically national in form and characteristics”,⁸ as well as the “real historical process” of “emergence and union” of two historically separate components, “the socialist revolutions in the imperialist countries and the new democratic revolution in the oppressed countries”.⁹

Based on the real nature of the world communist revolution, the new synthesis insists on “Internationalism—The Whole World Comes First”¹⁰ and that the communists in any country are and can only be fighters for the emancipation of humanity and not essentially representatives of one or another nation. To Ajith, on the contrary, the proletariat and the communists represent the “progressive, democratic traditions of a nation”¹¹ and, at least in the oppressed countries, must be “patriotic on an internationalist ideological basis.”¹²

⁵ “Against Avakianism” (henceforth “Against”), *Naxalbari*, No. 4, July, 2013, online at <http://thenaxalbari.blogspot.com/2013/07/naxalbari-issue-no-4.html>, retrieved as of July 28, 2014 (also at: <https://liberationbase.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/agnstavk-lnkd.pdf>). The article is on the Naxalbari site both as part of the journal cited and as a separate file. Here we use the page numbers of the separate file. When he wrote this article, Ajith was the secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Naxalbari, which participated in the opportunist initiative of some former participating groups in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) to form a new international organization distinct from the RIM united by its opposition to the new synthesis, which we analyzed in “The New Synthesis of Communism and the Residues of the Past,” available in English and in Spanish at <https://d83b7796-a-62cb3a1a-sites.googlegroups.com/site/aurorarojamx/home>. Since then the CPI (ML) Naxalbari has merged with the Communist Party of India (Maoist).

⁶ *Basics from the Talks and Writings of Bob Avakian*, 2:12, RCP Publications, Chicago, 2011, pp. 43-44. The text cited originally appeared in *Phony Communism is Dead...Long Live Real Communism!*, RCP Publications, Chicago, 1992 (Second Edition, 2004).

⁷ “Against,” “A Perversion of Internationalism” section, p. 24.

⁸ “Against,” “The National Question in Imperialist Countries” section, p. 35.

⁹ “Against,” “The National Task in Oppressed Nations” section, p. 30.

¹⁰ *Basics*, op. cit., 5:8, p. 156,

¹¹ “Against,” “The National Question in Imperialist Countries” section, p. 35.

¹² “Against,” footnote 71, p. 27.

We will demonstrate that on these, as on other questions, the new synthesis of communism is essential in order to be able to lead a new wave of revolutions in the world toward the goal of communism and the emancipation of all humanity. Although Ajith maintains that he bases himself on the method and approach of communism, his position is actually an eclectic¹³ jumble of communism and nationalism. Due to his narrow view of the world, which proceeds from the nation outward, he does not understand and perhaps cannot understand the actual dialectical dynamics of the capitalist-imperialist system and of the communist revolution synthesized in the cited formulation from comrade Avakian.

In the real world of today, the struggle to free ourselves from the world capitalist-imperialist system requires the guide of communism and not Ajith and others' eclectic jumble of communism and nationalism that, in essence, in spite of their "communist" rhetoric, does not go beyond the narrow limits of the current capitalist-imperialist system in their theoretical vision, and therefore cannot lead a struggle to overcome them in practice.

So these controversies are not "sectarian struggles on the left": they are about the difference between liberating people from oppression, exploitation, and degradation by means of communist revolution in different countries and in the world, or condemning them to continue to be chained by the capitalist-imperialist system with all its horrors.

2. Continue developing the science of communism or cling to and magnify the errors of the past?

From the beginning Ajith demands that the new synthesis be rejected before examining it thoroughly: "... [W]hen it is declared that MLM [Marxism-Leninism-Maoism] must be replaced with Avakianism, isn't this enough reason to reject it outright as liquidationist and revisionist? Isn't this an urgent, necessary step that must be taken immediately even while one reserves the responsibility of thorough examination and refutation at one's convenience?"¹⁴

In reality, the new synthesis is precisely a new synthesis of *communism*, placing it on an even more scientific foundation by further developing the previous understanding and also discarding those elements that have been proven not to correspond to the real world and its revolutionary transformation. As such, as is indicated in materials that Ajith himself has cited, it is principally a continuation and further development of the revolutionary science identified with the immortal contributions of Marx, Lenin, and Mao, and secondarily, yes, a necessary rupture with secondary but important errors.

On the contrary, the "Marxism-Leninism-Maoism" of Ajith and others goes against genuine communism and actually consists of clinging to and magnifying past errors in the service of adapting communism to nationalism and bourgeois democracy.

Moreover, let's consider the method implicit in Ajith's demand that the new synthesis of communism be rejected before thoroughly examining its content: a person comes to us with the product of thirty years of work. He says that he considers it to be an advance in science and asks that we examine it. And suddenly a man

¹³ Eclecticism, in this sense, is an approach that tries to unite and conciliate opposing elements: in this case, communism, which is internationalist, and nationalism. It also refers to the error of placing two aspects of a single phenomenon on a par without indicating which is principal, which obscures its essential nature. For example, "the capitalist-imperialist system exploits and oppresses people but it also develops the productive forces." Both aspects are true, but what is fundamental is its exploiting and oppressive nature. Bob Avakian has pointed out that "All eclectic approaches have the same basic character and effect: They serve to muddle things and to deny or undermine the principal aspect and essence of things." ("Crises in Physics,' Crises in Philosophy and Politics," *Revolution* No. 161, available at revcom.us and http://demarcations-journal.org/issue01/crisis_in_physics.html)

¹⁴ "The Challenges before the Maoists," *Naxalbari*, No. 4, July, 2013, p. 4.

exclaims: ‘He’s saying that we should replace the science we already know with his work! Isn’t that sufficient reason to reject it outright now and examine it later?’

Can science advance with such a method of rejecting what is new simply because it is new and criticizes some aspects of the previous understanding? This demand on the part of Ajith does not represent a scientific method and approach but rather a dogmatic and religious attitude toward Marxism. In our opinion, science requires examining first—and, yes, “thoroughly”—any theoretical proposition, whether it is the new synthesis, the positions of Ajith and company or any other proposal, with the aim of determining *whether it does or does not correspond or to what degree it may correspond to the real world in its motion and development*, and it is only on *that* basis that it can be determined whether it should be accepted or rejected completely or in part.

Let us proceed, then, to examine the controversies we have delineated here in this way.

3. The capitalist-imperialist system is a world system

As we have already mentioned, part of the material basis for the dialectical relationship “... in which the world arena is fundamentally and ultimately decisive while the mutually interacting and mutually supporting struggles of the proletarians in different countries constitute the key link in fundamentally changing the world as a whole” is the shaping of a truly world economic system with the rise of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism toward the end of the 19th century.

Capitalism, since its origins, has had a pronounced international character. As Marx observed, “The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production.”¹⁵ It is with the impulse of the nascent capitalism of the 16th century that various Europeans undertook the misnamed voyages of “discovery” and a world market began to take shape, the product of the extraordinary dynamism of the new mode of production that, by means of a prolonged and violent process, would replace feudalism in various European countries.

However, although a world market took shape, it was still not possible to speak of an integral world economic system as such, and it was not the case that the world arena played a more decisive and determining role than the particularities of each country, although colonial aggressions often caused catastrophic upheavals and international links grew more and more.

The growth of the world market was based on an international circuit of commodity capital, *i.e.* the capital associated with commerce and the purchase and sale of products in the world. One decisive change, among others, in the transition to the imperialist stage of capitalism was the creation, in the last half of the 19th century, of an *international circuit of productive capital*, which involves not simply international trade but an *internationalized productive process*, product of the predominance of the export of capital, and no longer just commodities, from the “advanced” countries. This international character has progressively developed and intensified since then until reaching the so-called “globalization” of recent decades. To cite an example from the multitude of facts of modern economic life, a “German” VW that is sold in the United States may well have been assembled in Mexico and may include parts coming not only from Germany and Mexico but also headlights from Hungary, drive chain parts from several South American countries or Japan, a cooling system from France, etc. In fact, virtually no brand of car is assembled from parts from a single country. The same is true of services: a dissatisfied buyer of a Japanese product in Great Britain may end up complaining by making a phone call to some call center in India.

¹⁵Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume I, Chapter 31: “The Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist”, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 527.

This shaping of an international circuit of productive capital constitutes an essential element of the economic base of *an integral world system*, the world capitalist-imperialist system, that nevertheless is a highly distorted and disarticulated system, characterized by a profound contradiction between the imperialist countries of the “north” and those countries of the “south” that are oppressed by imperialism, the violent division of the world among the main imperialist powers, as well as among enormous monopolistic blocks of finance capital, and the intensification at a world level of almost all the contradictions of previous capitalism.

With the rise of this world capitalist-imperialist system, the world arena now begins to play a fundamental and ultimately decisive role in dialectical interrelation with the particularities and internal contradictions of each country, as well as its position in the world system.

For example, how should international economic crises be understood? Are they principally the product of the internal contradictions of each country that for some reason react similarly to “external factors”? No. On the contrary, they are the product and expression of the fact that the capitalist-imperialist system is a world system with a world economic and financial structure. In the most recent case, whose impact persists until today, what began, among other things, as the collapse of the speculative bubble in the housing market in the United States rapidly came to threaten the entire international financial structure. The development of that crisis was not simply the sum of each country’s internal changes. On the contrary, the international arena, and specifically the economic and financial system in this case, played a fundamental and decisive role, even as this was in *dialectical relation* with both the position of different countries in the world system and their internal particularities, which influenced, for example, the specific forms that this crisis assumed in different countries and the fact that it affected some countries much more seriously than others.

Or how should the fact that a large part of the peasantry has been ruined nearly everywhere in the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, provoking such extremes as more than 17,000 peasant suicides in one year in India because of not being able to sustain their families,¹⁶ producing the swelling “belts of misery” around cities in virtually all oppressed countries? Evidently it is determined in part by the particularities of each country: the situation is very different, for example, in a country like Argentina, where the rural population is now very small, than the situation in Mexico, and the current situation in the rural areas is still more catastrophic in India. But is it simply happenstance that this process has occurred more and more in so many countries at the same time? No. It is decisively determined by international factors, such as the structure and circulation of imperialist capital in the world, which is expressed in the oppressed countries as foreign investment and competition with subsidized agricultural products from the developed countries, among other factors.

And this fact, this dialectical relationship between the world arena and the particular contradictions of each country (as well as its position in the world system), also has importance for revolutionary tasks. It is not the case, as Ajith asserts, that these simply “emerge from the particularities internal to their country and are more determined by them.”

4. In the oppressed countries: fight for an independent capitalist country or for a revolution that takes the socialist road as part of the transition toward world communism?

Although he claims to apply a Marxist method, Ajith does not deal with the question of the economic base that forms the foundations of the current world capitalist-imperialist system, in spite of dedicating a chapter to various distortions of political economy that have been amply refuted by Raymond Lotta.¹⁷

¹⁶ “17,368 farm suicides in 2009”, *The Hindu*, Dec. 27, 2010, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/columns/sainath/article995824.ece?homepage=true>.

Insisting that the tasks of the revolutionaries “emerge from the particularities internal to their country and are more determined by them”, Ajith argues the following against the new synthesis:

Formally it accepts the two components of the world socialist revolution – the socialist revolutions in the imperialist countries and the new democratic revolution in the oppressed countries. But in its idealist, upside down, view, these two components are *in fact* taken as emerging *from* the world socialist revolution. This metaphysical construct thus replaces the real historical process by which the latter has taken form through the emergence and union of the two components.¹⁸

In reality, the two components of the world communist revolution in essence emerge from the fundamental contradiction of capitalism,¹⁹ which comes to predominate in the world in the era of imperialism, as well as other contradictions that either arose from this fundamental contradiction or develop in that context. This is true as opposed to both Ajith’s distortion of the new synthesis (“the two components emerge from the world socialist revolution”²⁰) and his argument that the two components emerge historically as separate processes determined by the particularities of each kind of country and then they come together. Both Ajith’s distortion of the new synthesis and his own position express an idealist method that takes the political struggle as its point of departure without considering the changes in the economic base in the imperialist epoch that condition that struggle.

However, let’s analyze his argument. In what sense is there something real related to his assertion that the two component parts of the world revolution emerge separately and then come together? In the sense that there were revolutions or uprisings of some sort in most oppressed countries prior to the emergence of the new democratic revolution: for example, the Opium War and the 1911 Revolution in China, or the 1810 Independence War and the 1910 Revolution in Mexico. However, *these revolutions were not expressions of the new democratic revolution, but rather expressions of the bourgeois-democratic revolution of the old type led by the bourgeoisie with the essential goal of establishing an independent capitalist nation.*

The new democratic revolution has been in *a certain sense* a continuation of these previous struggles, as it deals with similar problems of feudalism and foreign domination (although the form of this domination changes qualitatively in the imperialist stage of capitalism). But it is *completely false* that it emerges separately from the socialist revolution to later unite with it, as Ajith affirms, or that it is a simple continuation of the previous revolutionary struggles. On the contrary, as Mao correctly indicates, the revolution in China could be transformed from a bourgeois-democratic revolution of the old type into a new democratic revolution “... [b]ecause the first imperialist world war and the first victorious socialist revolution, the October Revolution, have changed the whole course of world history and ushered in a new era.”²¹ The new democratic revolution did not emerge separately but precisely as a consequence of the socialist revolution in the nations of the Russian empire, which stretched a bridge from the socialist revolution, concentrated until that time in the countries of Europe, and the democratic revolution in the colonies and semicolonies, and by encouraging the formation of communist parties in nearly every country in the world that united in the Communist International.

¹⁷ See Raymond Lotta, “On the ‘Driving Force of Anarchy’ and the Dynamics of Change”, *Revolution* No. 322 Online, revcom.us. Online at http://demarcations-journal.org/issue03/driving_force_of_anarchy_and_dynamics_of_change_polemic.pdf

¹⁸ “Against,” “The National Task in Oppressed Nations” section, p. 30.

¹⁹ The fundamental contradiction of capitalism is the contradiction between socialized production and private or capitalist appropriation.

²⁰ “Against,” “The National Task in Oppressed Nations” section, p. 40.

²¹ Mao Tsetung, “On New Democracy,” Part IV. “The Chinese Revolution is Part of the World Revolution”, *Selected Works*, Volume II, Foreign Languages Press, Peking 1965, p. 343.

We would like to point out that in the formulation cited, Mao correctly underlines the fundamental role of the world level, in this case the First World War and the October Revolution, that “have changed the whole course of world history and ushered in a new era” that paved the way for the change in the character of the revolution in China and other oppressed countries, in dialectical interrelation with the concrete conditions and particular contradictions of each country. The failure to appreciate the determining role played by these changes in the world situation in this transformation is linked to the nationalist deviations that we are analyzing here, while a failure to appreciate the importance of the specific conditions of a given country, in dialectical interrelation with the world level, also leads to serious errors, such as the tendencies in the Communist Party of China that tried to mechanically apply the model of the Soviet revolution to China’s very different conditions. Once again it is necessary to grasp the dialectic emphasized by Avakian “in which the world arena is fundamentally and ultimately decisive while the mutually interacting and mutually supporting struggles of the proletarians in different countries constitute the key link in fundamentally changing the world as a whole.”

Returning to the criticism of Ajith’s formulation, it may be asked, OK, he made a mistake about the concrete historical development, but what difference does that make? The essential problem manifest in Ajith's attempt here to provide a basis for his dogma that what is fundamental and decisive are the internal contradictions within each country is that, because of his narrow nationalist view, *he is incapable of clearly distinguishing between the old-type bourgeois-democratic revolution and the communist revolution in the oppressed countries.*

The old-type bourgeois-democratic revolution is led by the bourgeoisie or petite bourgeoisie, it is part of the world bourgeois or capitalist revolution, and its essential goal is to establish an independent capitalist country. However, in the era of imperialism, generally speaking, this revolution cannot even achieve that, precisely because the problem is not simply the internal contradictions of an oppressed country but rather the *domination of the world imperialist system and of the oppressed countries as part of this system by imperialist capital*, which blocks the development of a relatively independent national market and economy.

That is why even the democratic task of freeing the country from imperialist domination can generally only be achieved by means of a revolution led by the proletariat and the communist party, that is part of the world communist revolution, and that has the essential goal, not of an independent capitalist country, but rather, through a process in accordance with the concrete conditions of each country, of getting to socialism as part of the transition toward world communism.

Not only Ajith, but also the adaptation of communism to nationalism in general, *is essentially incapable of distinguishing between the illusion of establishing an independent capitalist country and the goal of a revolution that takes the socialist road as part of the world transition to communism.*

This is not a paltry distinction: to date, among the revolutions that have occurred in the oppressed countries, only in China was there a communist revolution that took the socialist road and continued on it for nearly three decades. In spite of heroic and very inspiring struggle in various cases, all the other revolutions, in the last analysis, did not go beyond the narrow limits of the world capitalist-imperialist system, as has been the bitter experience of the Vietnamese Revolution, the Cuban Revolution, the Nicaraguan Revolution, and others. Even when the revolution was victorious and maintained some communist rhetoric and forms of state property, in these cases *it did not break with the world imperialist system and did not undertake a real socialist transformation of the country precisely due in important part to the nationalist and bourgeois-democratic ideology of the leadership* (and ironically, for this same reason, neither have these revolutions been able to achieve their precious goal of a modern, developed, and independent country). In spite of so much sacrifice, the Vietnamese workers are now working as wage slaves in imperialist factories, Cuban women are enslaved as prostitutes or maids in foreign hotels, and President Daniel Ortega is sending Nicaraguan women to jail or to the graveyard because of the ban on abortion, even if it is needed to save women’s lives.

Even in China, with the notable exception of Mao Zedong, Jiang Xing, Chang Chun-chiao, and others, a large part of the main leaders, despite having made important contributions to the revolution earlier on in many cases, degenerated into “capitalist-roaders” who were finally able to restore capitalism after Mao's death. They went from being “bourgeois democrats to capitalist roaders”: people who join the communist party in the period of the democratic revolution of national liberation but do not thoroughly rupture ideologically with nationalism and bourgeois democracy and whose essential goal isn't socialism as a transition to communism but rather a modern, independent, and capitalist nation, although it may call itself socialist and have some forms of state property, as still persist in part in the capitalist China of today.

The inability of Ajith and others to distinguish clearly between the illusion of establishing an independent capitalist country and the goal of achieving socialism as part of the world transition to communism is a product of their nationalist narrowness and bourgeois-democratic prejudices. The serious negative consequences of this have been manifest, among other forms, in their essential support, in spite of eclectic tactical criticism, for the revisionist line adopted after nearly a decade of inspiring people's war by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in 2005, which replaced the revolutionary goal of smashing the old state and establishing a new revolutionary state led by the proletariat with the reformist goal of “restructuring” the ruling classes' state, supposedly as an intermediate stage, which led to dissolving the People's Liberation Army, liquidating red state power in the base areas, and becoming part of the reactionary state, with the proclaimed goal of converting Nepal into the “Switzerland of South Asia”. Could there be a clearer expression of the false illusion of fighting for an independent capitalist country, which in fact serves only to perpetuate the exploitation and oppression of the people?!

Now Ajith tries to deny that he has supported this dismantling of the revolution in Nepal and calls Prachanda a “revisionist”, but based on mere tactical criticisms. By his own admission in this same article, he continues defending the central policies that arose from the 2005 revisionist turnabout that abandoned the new democratic revolution as the goal of the current struggle: “Later, when the CPN (Maoist) took the turn to ceasefire, alliance with ruling class political parties and interim government our party took up an exhaustive study of the issue. On the whole the new tactics of the CPN (Maoist) was accepted as justified. At the same time serious dangers contained in it were also noted.”²² Such is Ajith's typical eclectic fashion: the tactics were “justified” but “dangers...were noted.” For a more complete analysis of the current situation in Nepal and the role of Ajith and others in this regard, we very much recommend Robert Borba's excellent article.²³

Here we only want to emphasize the bitter lesson of this experience, in which many went at the tail of liquidating the new democratic revolution because of the supposed apparent immediate “success” of the party in winning a plurality in the elections to occupy positions in the bourgeois state. The eclectic jumble of communism, nationalism, and bourgeois democracy (the essence of which is shared by diverse forces, in spite of their disagreements) has its attraction and sometimes achieves a certain apparent “success” precisely because it tails and expresses, in apparently Marxist terms, the nationalist and bourgeois-democratic prejudices of the bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie that, spontaneously, without true communist leadership, have a great influence among all classes. But the price of these supposed immediate advantages is always, in the end and at times despite heroic sacrifice, to lock people inside the suffocating limits of the current capitalist-imperialist system with all its horrors.

²² “Against,” “Struggle within the RIM” section, p. 92.

²³ Robert Borba, “The (new) Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist and the Crossroads Facing the International Communist Movement,” *Demarcations*, April 2014, available online at http://demarcations-journal.org/issue03/the_new_communist_party_of_nepal_maoist_and_the_crossroads.htm.

5. The integration of countries into a world capitalist-imperialist system made the socialist revolution possible in less capitalistically developed countries

How can the narrow nationalist focus of Ajith and others explain the fact of the proletarian revolution in a relatively backward country like Russia, where the proletariat amounted only to 10% of the population? How can it explain why it was possible to advance through the new democratic revolution to socialism in China, where the proletariat initially constituted something like half of one percent of the population?

If these problems are simply approached from the narrow viewpoint of the internal contradictions of a country like China (or Russia), it is not possible to understand how capitalist relations so quickly became fetters on the development of the productive forces, and both the social-democrats and the Trotskyites have been using this argument for a long time, from different theoretical frameworks, to attack and disqualify the great unprecedented advances in the socialist period in the Soviet Union (up to 1956) and China (until 1976).

These arguments overlook the fact that the world capitalist-imperialist system integrates all countries into a world system characterized by the fundamental contradiction of capitalism between socialized production and private/capitalist appropriation. This contradiction fetters the development of all countries and the world as a whole—not in a mechanical sense of constituting an absolute impediment to growth, since capitalism continues to be very dynamic, but in comparison with the emancipatory transformations that are possible through the socialist revolution. In the epoch of imperialism, this fundamental contradiction and the contradictions derived from it ultimately constitute fetters on the productive forces in all countries, and this is part of the material basis, in dialectical relation with the struggle led by the proletariat and the specific conditions in the country, that made it possible and necessary in China, after seizing state power, to go directly from the culmination of the new democratic revolution to the socialist revolution, in opposition to the revisionist line of Liu Shao-chi and others who argued that it was necessary to “consolidate new democracy,” which in essence was a program for “consolidating” capitalism.

Avakian has developed a view that is more dialectical and in line with reality than the previous understanding, but in regards to the problem that we are discussing here, it is not out of place to recall as well the basically correct observation in *Foundations of Leninism*, in opposition to the false Marxism of the social-democrats and Trotskyites, which contrasts the situation before and after the emergence of imperialism: “Formerly, the analysis of the prerequisites for the proletarian revolution was usually approached from the point of view of the economic state of individual countries. Now, this approach is no longer adequate. Now the matter must be approached from the point of view of the economic state of all or the majority of countries, from the point of view of the state of world economy; for individual countries and individual national economies have ceased to be self-sufficient units, have become links in a single chain called world economy; for the old ‘cultured’ capitalism has evolved into imperialism, and imperialism is a world system of financial enslavement and colonial oppression of the vast majority of the population of the world by a handful of ‘advanced’ countries.”²⁴

This world process is something that the outlook of Ajith and others – “from the country outwards” – is incapable of understanding.

6. The proletariat: an essentially international class or “specifically national in form and characteristics”?

In this context we can examine the other attempt by Ajith to demonstrate a material basis for his insistence that the internal particularities of each country are fundamental and decisive: his allegation that the proletariat has

²⁴J. V. Stalin, “The Foundations of Leninism,” Section III, “Theory”, from *Problems of Leninism*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1976, p. 26.

ceased to be an essentially international class and has become a class that is “specifically national in form and characteristics”.

Affirming that internationalism is only an ideological question related to the communist goal, a question to which we will return later, Ajith talks to us about the “real historical process of emergence of this class [the proletariat] from within distinct national contexts” and in particular the distinct nature of the proletariat in the oppressed countries due to the development of bureaucrat capitalism.²⁵ Hidden in a footnote he informs us that, “Given the times that they lived in, such complexities were inevitably outside the range of the analysis made by Marx and Engels on the proletariat as a single class.”²⁶ That is to say, if he were capable of speaking more directly, the communist analysis of the proletariat as a single international class is no longer applicable.

It could be the case that this analysis is no longer applicable, but a minimum of intellectual honesty would dictate affirming this directly and openly, and not hiding it in a footnote in obtuse language.

Based on this analysis and other factors, Marx and Engels also declared that, “The working men have no country,”²⁷ but for Ajith it turns out that their country, their national character, is the most fundamental aspect of the emergence and existence of the proletariat. He insists again further on that internationalism is only an ideological question that must not be mixed up with “the complex concreteness of its [the proletariat’s] emergence and existence in different countries. The proletariat of any country emerges and takes form through a historical process, a process specific to that country. This historic process could be initiated by world developments. Even then it would be specifically national in form and characteristics.”²⁸

It should be noted in passing that this reduces “internationalism” at best to good intentions without any material basis in the present world. In reality, both the development of bureaucrat capitalism and the emergence and existence of the proletariat are more complex than what Ajith proclaims without making any reference whatsoever to the facts of the “real historic process”.

In reality, capitalism subordinated to imperialism in the oppressed countries developed through a complex process of the export or expansion of capital from the more developed capitalist countries as part of the rise of the imperialist stage of capitalism, in dialectical interpenetration with the concrete conditions in diverse countries and even distinct national regions. Mao describes the essential role that the penetration of foreign capital played starting in the middle of the 19th century in the development of bureaucrat capitalism in China, and in particular he points out that the proletariat “emerged and grew simultaneously not only with the Chinese national bourgeoisie but also with the enterprises directly operated by the imperialists in China. Hence, a very large section of the Chinese proletariat is older and more experienced than the Chinese bourgeoisie...”²⁹

²⁵Bureaucrat capitalism in the oppressed countries is a capitalism subordinated to imperialism and often related to feudal, semifeudal, or other precapitalist relations. It is a highly distorted capitalism subordinated to the centers of accumulation in the imperialist countries. For example, technical personnel in India produce cheap software for the imperialist countries while peasants commit suicide in desperation because of not being able to sustain their families; transnational companies like Bayer produce pharmaceutical products in highly automated factories in Mexico, the main Latin American pharmaceuticals exporter, while it is estimated that 1.3 million Mexican children have died from curable diseases and malnutrition in the last three decades. Source: “En 5 sexenios murieron un millón 300 mil niños de enfermedades curables: Fonan”, *La Jornada*, June 12, 2012. For a detailed analysis in the case of Mexico, see, “Cómo el imperialismo controla la economía mexicana y lo que significa para nuestras vidas” (How Imperialism Controls the Mexican Economy and What it Means for Our Lives”), *Aurora Roja* No. 9, available in Spanish at <http://aurora-roja.blogspot.mx/2002/10/aurora-roja-9.html>

²⁶ “Against,” footnote 68, p. 25.

²⁷Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1970.

²⁸“Against,” “The National Question in Imperialist Countries” section, p. 35.

²⁹ Mao Tsetung, “The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party,” *Selected Works*, Volume II, op. cit., p. 310.

A similar process, although with its own particularities, also took place in Mexico, with the penetration of foreign capital in the second half of the 19th century, especially in the period known as the *Porfiriato*.³⁰ Similar transformations took place in many of the countries that today we call the “third world” during more or less the same period. Is this simply happenstance, simply a product of “a specific process” in each country? Evidently not: it is a product of the emergence of the world capitalist-imperialist system, with the export of capital from the imperialist countries, the division of the world among the imperialist powers and blocks of imperialist finance capital, interacting with the particularities of each country. On the other hand, it is evident that these particularities also play an important part: if we simply compare the north of Mexico, where relatively more capitalist forms predominate in agriculture, with large areas of the south where a peasant economy still subsists, it is evident that the results of this process are very diverse, and that is even more the case if we examine the great diversity of conditions in the oppressed countries.

It is essential to understand the conditions and the process of development in any given country with all its particularities: an understanding of the general common features in the world process is not enough. Similarly, the process of development in a country cannot be correctly understood either, without a comprehension of its relationship to the world process of which it forms a part. And this is what Ajith’s nationalist narrowness does not comprehend. For him, the whole immense and oppressive process of the emergence and development of the world capitalist-imperialist system and its profound impact on virtually all countries of the world comes down to an insignificant event: “This historic process *could* be initiated by world developments.” (Our emphasis)

It is an historical fact that the world process also played an essential role, in interrelation with each country’s concrete conditions, in the emergence of a proletariat in the oppressed countries. Specific national forms and characteristics do exist and must be taken into account: proletarians as individuals are, like all other people in our epoch, part of one or another nation and national culture. However, the proletariat is essentially an international and not a national class. Unlike the antagonistic contradictions between the capitalists of different nations, the proletarians of all countries have, as a class, the same fundamental interest of eliminating all forms of exploitation and oppression, and the proletariat can only emancipate itself by definitively eliminating classes in the entire world.

It is ironic that some insist otherwise when modern life provides ever more palpable examples of this essentially international character, such as the formation of a multinational proletariat in many imperialist countries and even in various oppressed countries (although generally to a lesser degree) due in important part to massive international migration. It is estimated that more than 232 million people migrated from one country to another in 2013.³¹ However, Ajith’s dogmatic method gives little importance to the facts of the real world.

7. The philosophical basis of proletarian internationalism

The more dialectical and scientific understanding of the interrelation between the world arena and the struggle in diverse countries embodied in the new synthesis was a product, in important part, of a philosophical advance in regards to the interrelation between what is internal and what is external.

In the process of movement and change in the things we observe in the universe, what is fundamental is their internal contradiction and “external causes are the condition of change and internal causes are the basis of

³⁰ For a more complete analysis of these transformations in Mexico, see Isidro Serrano, *Revolución agraria y semifeudalismo* (Agrarian Revolution and Semifeudalism), La Chispa, Mexico, 1991 —parts were reprinted in English in *A World to Win* No. 20 — and Revolutionary Communist Organization, Mexico, “200 años de opresión y resistencia, ¡Hace falta una nueva revolución emancipadora! (200 Years of Oppression and Resistance: A New Emancipatory Revolution Is Necessary!), Editorial Flor de la Sierra, 2010. Available in Spanish at aurora-roja.blogspot.com.

³¹ United Nations, *Total International Migrant Stock*, <http://esa.un.org/unmigration/TIMSA2013/migrantstocks2013.htm?mtotals>. This figure is very likely an underestimation, due to the great flow of “illegal immigration.

change, and... external causes become operative through internal causes,” as Mao sums up in “On Contradiction”.³² He gives the example, among others, of a fertilized egg that can give rise to a chick at a proper temperature (external cause) due to its internal nature or contradiction, while a stone cannot because its internal nature or contradiction is different.

Applying this to the relationship between countries, he says the following:

In the era of capitalism, and especially in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution, the interaction and mutual impact of different countries in the political, economic and cultural spheres are extremely great. The October Socialist Revolution ushered in a new epoch in world history as well as in Russian history. It exerted influence on internal changes in the other countries in the world and, similarly and in a particularly profound way, on internal changes in China. These changes, however, were effected through the inner laws of development of these countries, China included.³³

This is also essentially correct *at this level of analysis*, i.e. the “interaction and mutual impact of different countries,” in this case the impact of events in Russia, as an external factor, on internal changes in China. Avakian points out that with the development of this point here and in other writings, “Mao struck a real blow against metaphysical thinking and tendencies, which view the basic (or even the only) cause of things as external; and the application of this principle in China was crucial in the fight against dogmatism...”³⁴ However, in the text cited here, although Mao mentions that the October Revolution ushered in a new epoch in world history, he does not explicitly take into account here its impact *at a world level* (and not just as the influence of one country on another) *and the impact in turn of these changes at the world level in countries in general* (which we have already examined, for example, in relationship with their role in the origins of the new democratic revolution).

In regards to this problem of the interrelationship between what is external and what is internal, Avakian makes this criticism:

[T]o a certain extent, there was the tendency to conceive and apply this principle itself metaphysically, which was linked to a certain amount of nationalism in the Chinese party, including among the genuine Marxist-Leninists, even Mao. In fact, this tendency was in opposition to another principle stressed in “On Contradiction”: that “Because the range of things is vast and there is no limit to their development, what is universal in one context becomes particular in another,” and vice versa. This means that what is internal in one context becomes external in another, and vice versa. China, for example (or the U.S., or any other country) has its own particularity, its own particular contradiction; and in one context, the rest of the world (and struggle and change in it) is external (to China, or the U.S., etc.). But it is also true that, in another context, China, the U.S. and the rest of the countries in the world form parts of the world (of human society) as a whole, with its internal contradiction and change, determined in an overall way by the fundamental contradiction of the bourgeois epoch, between socialized production/private appropriation.

This means that in an overall sense the development of the class (and national) struggle, the development of revolutionary situations, etc., in particular countries are more determined by developments in the world as a whole than by developments in the particular countries—determined not only as a condition of change (external cause) but as a basis of change (internal cause). In my opinion, this was not so before the advent of imperialism...³⁵

³²Mao Tsetung, “On Contradiction,” Section I. “The Two World Outlooks”, *Selected Works*, Volume I, op. cit., p. 314.

³³Ibid., p. 314.

³⁴ Avakian, “On the Philosophical Basis of Proletarian Internationalism.” http://www.revcom.us/bob_avakian/philbasis-intlism.htm

³⁵Ibid

In order to illustrate the basic point that what is internal in one context becomes external in another and vice versa, it may be observed that, in the context of human society, the world capitalist-imperialist system is internal and the rest of nature is an external factor, but in another context or level of analysis, a country may be considered to be what is internal and the world system as what is external. And we can continue. From the point of view of a region in a given country, the rest of the country is external; from the point of view of a village, the region is external; from the point of view of an individual, the village is external; from the point of view of the kidneys, the rest of the individual's body is external; and so on, successively. If the correct principle that the fundamental cause of the development of things is not external but internal is applied in an idealist and metaphysical way, we could reach absurd conclusions (which unfortunately have certain acceptance in daily life due to empiricism³⁶) such as the prospects for revolution are fundamentally determined by what happens internally in my region or my village (or even my kidneys, to take it to absurd extremes).

The question of what level of organization of matter (nature, human society, a country, etc., in our example) plays the more determining role for certain phenomena cannot be resolved only on a philosophical basis but rather only by analyzing this in the material world, taking into account at the same time that there is constant interpenetration and interaction between all levels of organization of matter, as we have been doing.

For example, in the case of the human body as an integral system, what happens in the body as a whole is generally and ultimately decisive and determining for life and death. What happens in an internal organ—a case of kidney failure, for example—may be decisive at a certain time not only for that organ but also for the life or death of the person, but this is ultimately the case in relationship to the system as a whole, which includes, in this case, for example, the consequences of not eliminating certain substances from the body. What would we say about a doctor who, when examining a cadaver with a slit throat, pronounced it to be a case of loss of kidney function due to the internal contradiction in the kidneys? Obviously the poor doctor would be very confused, although within a very narrow sphere, he would be right: part of the internal contradiction or nature of the kidneys, like other organs and tissues of the human body, is that they need blood to survive, and for that reason the loss of blood in the system as a whole would lead to the loss of kidney function, as well as that of other bodily organs.

In the epoch of imperialism, an integral world system exists with its own *internal* contradictions *as the basis of change in the system as a whole*, which also mold and condition the events and internal contradictions in each country, and not simply as something *external* to those countries, just as the integral system of the human body is not simply something *external* to its internal organs. And in this dynamic, the world arena or level, for the reasons we have already explained and exemplified in certain detail, is generally and ultimately more decisive and determining than the particularities of a country taken by themselves, although these continue to be an important part of the basis for change, and the key link for the advance of the world revolution are the proletariat's mutually interacting and mutually supporting struggles in different countries.

8. Narrow nationalism's inability to conceive of the world process and its dialectical interaction with countries' internal contradictions

From the outset, Ajith demonstrates that he does not understand and perhaps is not capable of understanding Avakian's argument: "Avakian's charge is that Mao's view of considering factors internal to China as the basis of its revolutionary change represented a nationalist view."³⁷ This is absurd. How could Avakian point out that

³⁶Empiricism refers to the idea or methodology that considers that direct sensorial experience in and of itself explains the reality of a thing to us, without the need to take into account more general social practice or elevate it to the level of theory. Mao gives the example of a frog in the bottom of a well who is convinced that the sky is a small circle.

³⁷"Against," "A Perversion of Internationalism" section, p. 23.

this idea was “a real blow against metaphysical thinking and tendencies” if it was simply wrong? In fact, as Ajith is no doubt aware, Avakian directly states in the same article (“On the Philosophical Basis of Proletarian Internationalism”), “All this does not mean that internal contradiction in a particular country is not after all the basis of change there, as discussed earlier. But it means that this is *relative*.”³⁸

Mao’s general philosophical principle—that internal causes are the basis of change and external causes are the condition of change—is correct, but it needs to be applied taking into account the interrelations in the real world between one level of organization of matter and another. The error in the text cited from Mao, which had broader influence, was not taking clearly into consideration not simply the influence of other countries as an external factor but also the *internal* contradictions of the world process in dialectical interaction with the internal contradictions in each country.

In the real world, in the epoch of imperialism, there is a world system with its internal contradictions that are the basis for change in the system as a whole, and there are diverse countries with their internal contradictions that are also the basis for change. The problem is to analyze and understand the dialectical, dynamic, and changing relationship between these two levels. Ajith does not even understand the problem: in his narrow nationalist view, if the world level ultimately plays a decisive role, that means that the internal contradictions in a country are no longer the basis for change, so he thinks that it is not necessary to demonstrate anything in the real world, but just disqualify the analysis that he does not manage to understand.

His argument continues as follows:

The contradictions of the world situation ‘*as a whole*’ are certainly internal to it. And yes, the world is certainly made up of ‘*parts of the world*’ (different countries). But ‘*the world as a whole*’ is distinctly different from ‘*parts of the world*’. We can analyse and speak of the contradictions seen in the world *as a whole* only at a level distinctly different from that of the countries – even though they make up the world, are influenced by the world situation and in turn influence it. The world situation is neither the sum total of the situations of different countries, nor is the situation in any country a fragment of the world situation. Avakian juggles with the word ‘context’ when he states that ‘what is internal in one context becomes external in another.’ In the specific instance examined here, the change of ‘context’ (from the situation in a country to the world situation as a whole) signifies a totally new, qualitatively different, dimension. Therefore, appealing to the relative nature of internal and external does not in any way substantiate the conclusion Avakian arrives at. His arguments in fact only go to expose the logical contortions he indulges in (a matter of criticism at the 2nd Conference).³⁹

Ajith demonstrates again that he does not understand or does not want to understand or cannot understand his opponent’s argument. He ignores the central argument that although each country has its own particularity, “form parts of the world (of human society) as a whole, with its internal contradiction and change, determined in an overall way by the fundamental contradiction of the bourgeois epoch, between socialized production/private appropriation” and that this is, in an overall sense, more determining precisely with the “advent of imperialism”. He does not even take into account the essential change in the world with the advent of imperialism that we have analyzed in certain detail. He does not comprehend the essential point that there is a world process with its own *internal* contradictions that are the basis for change in the system as a whole, or how these are the context for and constantly interact with the internal contradictions of each country. The fundamental dialectical understanding that there are different levels of organization of matter that constantly interact is only understood by Ajith as “juggling” with the word “context”. And the poverty of his argument comes down to affirming that since the world level is qualitatively different from the level of a given country

³⁸Avakian, “On the Philosophical Basis of Proletarian Internationalism,” op. cit.

³⁹ “Against,” “A Perversion of Internationalism” section, p. 23.

(which is true)... apparently there is no need to analyze their interaction and it may be declared, without any evidence whatsoever, that the national level is determinant, with the implication that the world level is something very separate and distant from the events in a particular country.

9. What does the real historical experience of the Bolshevik Revolution teach us?

If he could leave his idealist and dogmatic tower for a moment, how would Mr. Ajith explain the facts of the real world? How would he explain, for example, the Bolshevik Revolution and its impact in the world? Was it simply the product of the internal contradictions of the Russian empire with some secondary influence of external factors? No. It cannot be correctly understood without understanding what happened in the context of the First World War, which “gathered... into a single knot” all the major contradictions of imperialism and “threw them onto the scales”⁴⁰, giving rise to revolutionary situations, not only in the Russian empire but also in several other countries. Will it be necessary to explain to Ajith that the First World War was not exactly an internal event in Russia or an external event that only made an appearance through internal factors, but rather that the “qualitatively different” world level made an uncomfortable appearance, among other forms, in the bloody clash of the imperialist powers’ immense armies over a vast territory that cut across many national borders?

On the other hand, we would be mistaken if we did not take into account the Russian empire’s position in the world system as well as the internal contradictions of Russia and the series of nations trapped in the “prisonhouse of nations” that was the Russian empire. These include the fact that, although it oppressed many nations, it was a weak imperialist power with less capitalist development, where the great majority still lived in the chains of semifeudal relations, with an awakening of movements against the national oppression imposed by Russia, and various other factors that had to do, on the one hand, with why the revolutionary crisis was more intense there and also with the program and particular development of the revolutionary movement. Due to the concrete conditions of the Russian empire, there was a need for an agrarian program to overcome semifeudal relations, a program for the large number of oppressed nations, etc.: elements that were different from what would have been applicable at that time for France, for example.

And here we can see in a living way the importance of Avakian's observation that the “mutually interacting and mutually supporting struggles of the proletarians in different countries constitute the key link in fundamentally changing the world as a whole”. The Bolshevik Revolution was the product not simply of more propitious conditions but also of the revolutionary line of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party. In all countries, a large part of the socialist leaders capitulated, aligning themselves with “their own” bourgeoisie in the reactionary imperialist war. Even the revolutionary opposition that arose in several countries to this betrayal—and which Lenin and the Bolsheviks worked hard to encourage—did not come to a consistently revolutionary position. This was the case even with its best representatives, such as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in Germany, as is reflected in Luxemburg’s criticism from a bourgeois-democratic standpoint of the Leninist vanguard party and the Bolshevik Revolution itself (and we might mention in passing that it is not accidental that Ajith proposes taking up this criticism at least in part—a reflection of his own bourgeois-democratic ideology).⁴¹

The interrelation between the international level and countries is constant, dynamic, and continually changing. In particular, based on the emergence of the world capitalist-imperialist system and in the context of the imperialist First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution had an impact in turn not only on the level of the influence of one country on another as an external factor but also, together with the War, *on the entire world*,

⁴⁰J. V. Stalin, “The Foundations of Leninism,” Section I. “The Historical Roots of Leninism”, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴¹When criticizing Avakian's “one-sided” analysis of these errors, Ajith argues that his analysis “fails to examine Rosa’s views in the light of the advances made through Maoism” and that “it would be more profitable to go back to Rosa Luxemburg’s criticism against the Bolsheviks for suppressing dissent.” “Against,” “Socialist Democracy” section, p. 61.

changing, in Mao's phrase already cited, "the whole course of world history and usher[ing] in a new era"⁴² in which the communist revolution soon was placed on the order of the day in virtually all countries, including the change in the nature of the revolution that was necessary and possible in the oppressed countries as we have already noted.

How can this change in "the whole course of world history" be understood with Ajith's narrow nationalist dogma that the tasks of the revolutionaries "emerge from the particularities internal to their country and are more determined by them"?⁴³ It can't.

10. Has the imperialist crusade been essentially determined by the particularities of each country?

Ajith continues to argue that Avakian's analysis "on internal contradiction and changes in the world as a whole 'determined in an overall way by the fundamental contradiction of the bourgeois epoch' is a rather shallow treatment of the issue" because, according to him, the principal contradiction and not the fundamental one as such is more determining.⁴⁴ Well, in the first place, the essential question is what is true. On the other hand, there is an intentional distortion of Avakian's position here, which, according to Ajith, is that the only thing that is important is the fundamental contradiction, when in fact Avakian analyzes (taking up and developing Engels' analysis) that the fundamental contradiction has two forms of movement, the driving force of anarchy (reflected, for example, in the dynamic changes in the world economy, crises, the contradictions among imperialists) and the class contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat that also has its expression in the contradiction between the imperialist and oppressed countries and between capitalism and socialism, when socialist countries exist.⁴⁵ He also points out that there are various contradictions (women's oppression, national oppression, etc.) that, although they develop within the framework of the fundamental contradiction, cannot be reduced to it. We will leave it to the reader's judgment whether this analysis is more "superficial" than the position expressed by Ajith, in which, apparently, the only thing that needs to be taken into account at the world level is "the contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed nations and peoples, [which] is principal".⁴⁶ We recommend Lotta's excellent article that analyzes and refutes the errors of Ajith and others on these questions,⁴⁷ and we will not delve further into this subject here.

After reducing the international situation to the contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed nations and peoples, Ajith proceeds to reduce this world contradiction to the particularities of the situation in each country: "But though India, or an occupied country like Afghanistan or Iraq, are all oppressed countries, the influence exerted by the principal contradiction on the situation in each country is distinctly different. This is obviously determined by the socio-political-cultural-economic particularities of these countries. If these internal specificities are not grasped, the Maoist forces will never succeed in their tasks. And they will never grasp them if they fail to understand that they emerge from the particularities internal to their country and are more determined by them."⁴⁸

Yes, "obviously" the contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed nations is expressed differently in different countries and it is necessary to understand these particularities. But it is neither obvious nor true that

⁴² Mao Tsetung, "On New Democracy," op cit., p. 343.

⁴³ "Against," "A Perversion of Internationalism" section, p. 24.

⁴⁴ "Against," "A Perversion of Internationalism" section, p. 24.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Bob Avakian, "Fundamental and Principal Contradictions on a World Scale," *Revolutionary Worker*, No. 172.

⁴⁶ "Against," "A Perversion of Internationalism" section, p. 24.

⁴⁷ See Raymond Lotta, "On the 'Driving Force of Anarchy' and the Dynamics of Change," *Revolution* #322 Online, revcom.us. Online http://demarcations-journal.org/issue03/driving_force_of_anarchy_and_dynamics_of_change_polemic.pdf

⁴⁸ "Against," "A Perversion of Internationalism" section, p. 24.

the different situation in each country is essentially determined by the particularities of each country. In reality, it is determined by a dialectical, constant, and dynamic interaction between the world situation, the country's position in the world, and its specific particularities.

Let's look at the real world: hasn't the imperialist occupation of Iraq or Afghanistan been part of the "different" situation in those countries? Clearly it has. Can we say that this is "obviously determined by the socio-political-cultural-economic particularities of these countries"? It did not occur apart from these particularities and it was conditioned by them, but it was not the simple product of these particularities, nor simply of these in interaction with the internal "particularities" of the United States and other powers. It was part of a whole imperialist crusade, planned in important part before the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, that sought to "redraw the map" of the Middle East and other parts of the globe in which U.S. imperialism, in alliance with other powers, has sought, among other things, to expand its domination in the face of the collapse of Soviet social-imperialism and to subdue forces like Saddam Hussein and the Taliban, which, although they are reactionary bourgeois and feudal forces, clashed with the interests of US imperialism. They also sought to prevent any other potential rivals from challenging their dominance.⁴⁹

Ajith's nationalist approach, together with his instrumentalism, which is not based on objective reality but rather in what would apparently be more convenient for the revolutionary movement, leads him to real nonsense. He complains that, "The obvious fact that the WTC attack was being utilised to launch a worldwide attack in order to roll back the growing mass resistance to globalisation, to throw back the 'emerging new wave of world revolution', was reduced to a secondary aspect"⁵⁰ in the analysis by Avakian and others of the roots of the imperialist crusade.

Although it is true that the so-called "war on terrorism" has been used to brand revolutionaries and progressive people as terrorists (and there has been a great deal of exposure of this in the press of the RCP,USA, contrary to what Ajith would have us believe), Ajith's insistence that this is not "a secondary aspect" implies that it was the principal aspect and at least implicitly an essential motive of the imperialist crusade. In the simplistic world of Ajith, the only thing that exists is the confrontation between the enemy and the people. Should we believe, for example, that it was mainly to "roll back" revolution and the struggle against globalization... that they overthrew Saddam Hussein and the Taliban? It's a matter of public record that Bush wasn't exactly a genius, but the architects of U.S. imperialism's strategy evidently understood that Saddam and the Taliban were not exactly the center of the revolutionary and people's movements in the world.

11. Nationalism and economism in the name of "particularities", or transform conditions to the maximum degree possible to make revolution?

In what we have cited above, Ajith tells us that the communists "will never grasp" the specificities of each country unless they understand that they "emerge from the particularities internal to their country and are more determined by them". Apparently Ajith thinks that it is only necessary to understand what is most determining (since, according to him, the particularities will only be understood if it is accepted that they are more determining). But this is completely false. In the example of the egg that Mao mentions, although its internal nature is the most determining aspect that gives rise to the possibility of it being transformed into a chick, does that mean that the other aspect, the temperature, doesn't matter and we can just put it in the freezer and wait for the chick to hatch?

⁴⁹See, among other writings, Bob Avakian, "The New Situation and the Great Challenges," *Revolution* No. 036, 26 Feb 2006, <http://revcom.us/a/036/avakian-new-situation-great-challenges.htm>.

⁵⁰"Against," "The World Situation" section, p. 51.

Or to give an example more directly related to the question of the context for what is internal and external that Ajith doesn't understand, if one correctly insists that state power has to be taken at the national level and that therefore the national level in this regard is more decisive and determining overall and ultimately than what happens in a given region, does that necessarily mean that you will pass over regional particularities, which have quite a bit of importance for the revolutionary struggle? No, clearly it doesn't.

Then Ajith warns us that, “Avakianism’s distorted version of internationalism... is a recipe for getting isolated from the people.”⁵¹ Here we come to another fundamental principle of false Marxism. Anyone who has participated in some way in the revolutionary movement knows the argument in one or another form: the majority of people are only concerned about the country; the majority are nationalist; they don’t agree with communism. If we’re going to tell people that we should be concerned not only about the country but the entire world, that we should not champion nationalism but rather internationalism, that what is needed is communist revolution and the emancipation of humanity, *we’re going to get isolated from the people*. Here *what is true doesn’t matter any more*, but just the economist⁵² “recipe” of tailing spontaneity.

And it is evident that this is part of the “recipe” of Ajith and his motley crew of associates. As we have already seen, they have tailed behind revisionism in Nepal, impressed by its electoral “successes”. They also tail behind the supposed “anti-imperialist” impact of Islamic fundamentalism,⁵³ negating the immense damage that Islamic fundamentalism—and that of other religions—does to people, due to the *false* understanding of the world it inculcates and how, as a consequence, people act or do not act,⁵⁴ not to mention its reactionary political role in re-imposing barbarous forms of oppression on women, the murder of revolutionaries, etc. It is true that fundamentalist forces like the Taliban and Al Qaeda have caused problems for Western imperialism, but they are not in any way “anti-imperialist”: they do not have any intention whatsoever of breaking out of the world capitalist-imperialist system but rather, at most, only improving the position of some big exploiters at the expense of others and imposing a fundamentalist ideology and program of political, social, cultural, and religious changes that are completely reactionary.

Whoever goes at the tail of mistaken ideas among people may perhaps be able to avoid “getting isolated” and even have some temporary “success” speculating on the backwardness of the masses, but in doing so *they have in fact abandoned the struggle for communist revolution*, however much they may spew out Marxist quotes. Because any *communist* revolution (which includes, so that Mr. Ajith may understand us, the new democratic revolution where it is applicable) requires taking out and training people in *communist* ideology and no other. In the absence of such a revolution, people continue suffering under this reactionary system and that, and not ephemeral “successes” achieved in exchange for abandoning the revolution in fact if not in words, is and must be the fundamental purpose of all communists.

Ajith’s last accusation against Avakian’s thesis is that, “Even worse, it provides an excuse for marking time on the plea of waiting for the revolutionary situation to get ‘determined by world events’.”⁵⁵

⁵¹“Against,” “A Perversion of Internationalism” section, p. 24.

⁵² Economism is tailing behind whatever people may think or do spontaneously, without science, instead of basing oneself on what can be determined scientifically (which includes but is not reducible to learning from the people) and struggling to change people’s consciousness and actions on that basis.

⁵³For example, they praise the armed struggle waged in large part by Islamic fundamentalist forces in Afghanistan and Iraq for “delivering a heavy blow to U.S. imperialism’s plans, encouraging anti-imperialist sentiments....” “Against,” “The National Task in Oppressed Nations” section, p. 28.

⁵⁴For important lessons in this regard, see Samuel Albert, “Egypt, Tunisia and the Arab Spring: How the Revolts Came to an Impasse and How to Get Out of It,” <http://demarcations-journal.org/issue03/egypt-tunisia-and-arab-revolts-impasse.pdf>.

⁵⁵ “Against,” “A Perversion of Internationalism” section, p. 24.

This is a ridiculous distortion in the light of all of Avakian’s work to deepen the criticism of determinism,⁵⁶ and Ajith has to admit in a footnote that Avakian says the opposite, but he does not discuss his actual position. In fact, Avakian takes up and adapts Mao’s concept of “hastening or awaiting changes in the international situation”.⁵⁷ Ajith launches a lot of attacks on the new synthesis in the name of a supposed “Maoism”. Why doesn’t he have anything to say about *these* words of Mao? Because they clearly express both the decisive role of the world arena and the need to struggle actively to change conditions as much as possible both in the country and in the world as a whole. Avakian applies a frank and scientific method, taking up Mao’s great contributions that have been proven to correspond to the real world and how to transform it, but also clearly indicating where he thinks that Mao made certain secondary but important mistakes. Ajith, on the other hand, applies a dogmatic and idealist method of selectively choosing the quotes that can serve to “prove” his preconceived ideas, passing over those that contradict them in silence, and not considering the facts of the real world.

The specific context Mao was speaking about was the need to hasten while awaiting changes in the international situation and the weakening of Japanese imperialism to be able to go over to the strategic counteroffensive, avoiding the opposite errors of going over to the counteroffensive before the conditions existed for its success, on the one hand, or, on the other, conducting a passive defense of not making the greatest effort possible to accelerate the changes that would make it possible to go over to the counteroffensive. This approach had and has a more general application, both for the victory in China and for the revolutionary strategic orientation in the world as a whole.

Although the international stage is fundamental and decisive in the last instance and overall, the struggles of the proletariat in different countries is the key link precisely because this is the way that the revolutionary forces can have an influence to change conditions, both in a given country and at a world level, to the maximum degree possible in order to be able to make revolution. In this regard, two opposite errors may be made.⁵⁸ One error is the one made by Ajith and many others of not taking into account that the international arena is fundamentally and ultimately decisive: it is not accidental that the two socialist revolutions to date have occurred in the context of world wars that cannot be understood correctly (and consequently a correct strategy and tactics could not have been developed) simply based on the particularities of each country. The opposite error would be to think that there always has to be a conjuncture of intense concentration of contradictions in the world system for the communist revolution to be able to triumph in a given country. To say that the international stage is “ultimately” decisive also means that it is not always immediately decisive everywhere. As we have indicated, the internal contradictions in each country continue to be an essential part of the basis for change, and therefore, it is possible that the concrete conditions in a given country may be more propitious than the international situation as a whole. This was the case, for example, with the people’s wars in Peru and Nepal that, for a time, achieved important advances in conditions of a relative low tide in the world revolution. In fact, in any situation, no one can foretell precisely in advance everything that the determined struggle of revolutionary forces guided by a basically correct line might be able to transform in interaction with other changes in the situation, actions by other class forces, etc.

That is why Avakian’s criticism of revisionist determinism is so important. Such determinism declares “...that until some *deus ex machina*—some god-like EXTERNAL FACTOR—intervenes, there can be no essential change in the objective conditions and the most we can do, at any point, is to accept the given framework and work within it, rather than (as we have very correctly formulated it) *constantly straining against the limits* of the

⁵⁶See, for example, the beginning of the second part of *Making Revolution and Emancipating Humanity*, available at www.revcom.us/avakian/makingrevolution.

⁵⁷Mao Tsetung, “Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War against Japan”, Part IV, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, op. cit., p.85.

⁵⁸This point was developed in a talk by Bob Avakian, “The Strategic Approach to Revolution and Its Relation to Basic Questions of Epistemology and Method,” Part 2, Posted April-May 2014, available at revcom.us/avakian/makingrevolution2/.

objective framework and seeking to *transform the objective conditions to the maximum degree possible* at any given time, always being tense to the possibility of different things coming together which bring about (or make possible the bringing about of) an actual qualitative rupture and leap in the objective situation...”.⁵⁹ This basic orientation—and not the economism and nationalism proclaimed by Ajith—is what the international communist movement needs in order to be a vanguard of the future.

At the end, Ajith says: “We will conclude this matter with Mao’s words,”⁶⁰ and he proceeds to reproduce the quotation from Mao that we have already considered and criticized in part about the relationship between the revolution in Russia and China. This is precisely the error (and even the same text) that Avakian is criticizing, and in order to “prove” that this criticism is erroneous, Ajith demonstrates that Mao said otherwise! In effect, Ajith’s “weighty” conclusion is “Mao said it, I believe it, end of argument”. We will leave it to the judgment of the reader whether this represents a scientific method and approach or rather a dogmatic and religious attitude toward Marxism.

12. Internationalism: the whole world comes first

Proletarian internationalism is a fundamental question of ideological and political orientation that is based on the material reality that communism is only possible as a world system, the proletariat is an international class, the system to be vanquished is a world system, the revolutionary transformation of the capitalist-imperialist system to the communist system is a world-historic process, and throughout this process, the international arena is generally and ultimately fundamental and decisive, at the same time that the key link is the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat in different countries, mutually interacting and united by internationalism.

Ajith indicates, on the contrary, that internationalism is only an ideological question based on the final goal of communism,⁶¹ and he criticizes Avakian for having “eclectically mixed up two separate aspects. One of them is the internationalism of the proletariat, a matter of its ideology. The other is the complex concreteness of its emergence and existence in different countries”.⁶² And this “complex concreteness”, as we have already seen and refuted, according to Ajith, means that the proletariat is not essentially an international class but rather that it is principally defined by its national character, and for this reason, among others, what is decisive is the “internal particularities” of each country.

The question of the internationalist ideology of communism is fundamental, in contrast, in this case, to the ideology to confound communism and nationalism. However, the argument that, because it is based on the communist goal, internationalism *is restricted* to an ideological question goes together with treating this final goal as an abstract and distant question, with little importance for the current struggle. In fact, if the struggle is not waged *now* with the very real guide of the final goal of communism, the struggle will inevitably go off course, regardless of anyone’s intentions, and end up in one or another form of accommodation with the current system.⁶³ And both this and the denial of the essential material bases for internationalism in the present correspond to an insistence on a nationalist interpretation of “internationalism”.

Internationalism is a question of proceeding, in the words of Lenin, “not from the point of view of ‘my’ country... but from the point of view of *my share* in the preparation, in the propaganda, and in the acceleration

⁵⁹ *Basics*, op. cit., 3:28, pp. 93-94.

⁶⁰ “Against,” “A Perversion of Internationalism”, p. 24.

⁶¹ “Against,” “A Perversion of Internationalism”, p. 25.

⁶² “Against,” “The National Question in Imperialist Countries”, p. 35.

⁶³ This question is dealt with in some detail in an article against the same tendency of which Ajith has been a part: “The New Synthesis of Communism and the Residues of the Past,” available in Spanish and English at aurora-roja.blogspot.com

of the world proletarian revolution”.⁶⁴ Or as Avakian has expressed it, “Internationalism—The Whole World Comes First.”⁶⁵

The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, in their *Letter to Participating Parties and Organizations of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement*⁶⁶ (RIM), contrasts this correct orientation of Lenin with another point of view (that of James Connolly, among others, an Irish revolutionary who was a contemporary of Lenin) that proceeds not from the world revolution but rather from “my” country and from the view that Marxist revolutionaries are essentially the best representatives of their nation and that internationalism is simply the support the proletariat or people of one country extend to the people of other countries.

In this regard, Ajith accuses the RCP, USA of “doctoring quotes”. After quoting somewhat more of Lenin’s text before this phrase, he assures us that, “When quoted in full it immediately becomes obvious that the ‘point of view’ Lenin attacked was not about some different view on world proletarian revolution or internationalism as implied by the Avakianist’s. He was exposing bourgeois chauvinism and differentiating proletarian internationalism from it.”⁶⁷

As they say, if you have to lie, lie, but don't exaggerate. The quotation comes from *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, precisely from the chapter entitled, “What is Internationalism?”, which in fact does criticize “some different view” on internationalism: that of Kautsky, who was a prominent leader of the socialist 2nd International in the period of the first imperialist world war. The chapter begins: “Kautsky is absolutely convinced that he is an internationalist and calls himself one.” It indicates that, “the internationalism of Kautsky and the Mensheviks amounted to this: to demand reforms from the imperialist bourgeois government, but to continue to support it, and to continue to support the war that this government is waging...”. Lenin exposes the reasoning of the “Kautskyites” and others that, “Socialism presupposes the equality and freedom of nations, their self-determination, hence, when our country is attacked, or when enemy troops invade our territory, it is the right and duty of the Socialists to defend their country.” And he demonstrates that the fundamental error of this nationalist version of “internationalism” is that it doesn’t proceed from an “appraisal of the war as a whole from the point of view of the world bourgeoisie and the world proletariat” but rather from the point of view of “my country”, which was attacked.⁶⁸

But what’s fundamental here is not simply the distortion of a text from Lenin. It is the fact that Ajith seeks to deny that proletarian internationalism means or should mean proceeding from “my contribution to the world proletarian revolution” and not from “my country”, because, in essence, *his point of view is that one should proceed from the country and not from the world*, because, according to him, what is internal and particular to each country is always what is fundamental, because the new democratic revolution and the socialist revolution emerge separately, because the proletariat is a class that is “specifically national in form and characteristics,” etc., etc., as we have already seen. But *to insist on proceeding from the country instead of and in opposition to proceeding from the world proletarian revolution is nationalism, not internationalism*, in addition to ignoring the real nature of the system in which we live.

And this becomes even more evident when Ajith immediately opposes another quotation from Lenin to the one we’ve been commenting on:

⁶⁴ V.I. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, “What Is Internationalism?” section, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1972, p. 80.

⁶⁵ *Basics*, op. cit., 5:8, p. 156.

⁶⁶ Available at www.revcom.us/a/274/rimipublish-final.pdf.

⁶⁷ “Against,” footnote 77, pp. 28-29.

⁶⁸ V.I. Lenin, from the section “What is Internationalism?” of *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, op. cit.

But on another occasion Lenin wrote, “There is one, and only one, kind of real internationalism, and that is – working wholeheartedly for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in one's own country, and supporting (by propaganda, sympathy and material aid) this struggle, this, and only this, line in every country without exception.”⁶⁹ What are we to make of that? Should we conclude, following the Avakianist logic, that the second quote is an example of “Lenin departing from Leninism”? Or is it the case that the RCP is legitimately arguing for conceiving “development of revolutionary struggle in one’s own country” as doing “my share in the world revolution”? But, if that were true, it would be negating its own attack on Mao.⁷⁰

Ajith doesn’t realize that he exposes himself with such witticisms. To him, a “legitimate” conception of “my share in the world revolution” is the “development of revolutionary struggle in one’s own country,” period. *He leaves out* the specifically international or internationalist tasks in the second quote from Lenin of “supporting (by propaganda, sympathy and material aid) *this struggle, this, and only this, line in every country without exception*”.⁷¹ Here he very clearly expresses the narrow nationalist view that, among other problems, guided the shameful silence and even open opposition to struggling for “this, and *only this, line*” in the face of the revisionist deviations in the guiding line in Peru and Nepal that are summarized in the cited *Letter* from the RCP.⁷²

Reducing “internationalism” to simply the “development of revolutionary struggle in one’s own country” is nothing but nationalism. It is, of course, essential to make revolution in the country where one is, and that is even, in general, the principal contribution that can be made, *provided that it is developed with the perspective of advancing the world communist revolution*, and not from the nationalist perspective of simply “freeing my country”. As we have mentioned, ultimately nationalism *is not even capable of achieving that* in the epoch of imperialism. All this brings to mind another jumble of communism and nationalism, that of the first faction that split our organization and then got to work “rebuilding” a party aligned with the right opportunist line in Peru, who proclaimed that their “internationalism” consisted of struggling in the country and also accepting help from other countries!

Bourgeois and petit bourgeois revolutionaries, like the leaders of the French Revolution of 1789, Sun Yat-sen in the Revolution in China in 1911, and Hidalgo and Zapata in Mexico (we invite others to include examples from their own national context) also struggle for the “development of revolutionary struggle in one’s own country” (and they support and sympathize in some form with some revolutions in other countries, although Ajith doesn't even mention this). However, they do not do so as part of or with the goal of advancing the world communist revolution, but rather with the goal, in essence, of trying to achieve an independent capitalist country. There is still a great deal that can be learned, in both a positive and negative sense, from these experiences, and in the oppressed countries in particular it is possible and necessary to ally in many cases with progressive and revolutionary nationalists, *but if nationalism (including when it is mixed up with communism) leads the struggle, it will ultimately not go beyond the limits of the world capitalist-imperialist system*, and the masses will continue to be exploited and oppressed, as is the case in Vietnam, Nicaragua, Cuba, and many other cases that are less well known because they never led to any revolution.

⁶⁹ Lenin, “The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution”, *Collected Works*, Volume 24.

⁷⁰ “Against,” “The National Task in Oppressed Nations” section, pp. 28-29.

⁷¹ The emphasis is in the original. Ajith does not include it when citing it. Lenin, V. I., “The Tasks of the Proletariat in our Revolution”, chapter entitled “The Situation within the Socialist International”, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1964, Moscow, Volume 24.

⁷² Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, *Letter to Participating Parties and Organizations of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement*, available at www.revcom.us/a/274/rimipublish-final.pdf. This is essential reading for understanding the current struggle in the international communist movement and it is based on analyzing fundamental questions of line that are a matter of public knowledge, instead of Ajith’s method, writing pages and pages of distortions and gossip based in large part on what supposedly happened in this or that non-public meeting.

13. In the imperialist countries: “appeal to national pride”, or apply revolutionary defeatism?

Just as a dog’s sense of smell always finds the shit, revisionists always find the Marxist quotations most appropriate for “proving” their anti-Marxist positions. Or as Mao insightfully observed, after my death the Right will use some of my words to justify their revisionist position. And Ajith finds for his own purposes, as several have before him, an article by Lenin⁷³ that has been criticized by Avakian for combining the correct orientation of revolutionary defeatism with an appeal to the “national pride” of the Great Russians, the dominant and oppressor nationality in the Russian empire. In the article, Lenin essentially appeals to the “national pride” of the Great Russians and argues that the best way to “defend the fatherland” is to desire the defeat of the oppressive Czarist government in the First World War. And Ajith applauds this as “an artful presentation of the Bolshevik position, penetrating the extreme jingoism that existed in the initial period of the war”, and he proceeds to insist that internationalism and the national character, according to him, of the proletariat should not be “eclectically mixed up”, proclaiming that, “the proletariat represents progressive, democratic traditions of a nation”.⁷⁴

In the first place, the communists of all countries represent or should represent *communism* and not essentially the “progressive, democratic traditions of a nation”, or there will never be any socialism, not to mention communism. Without doubt, there is the need to learn from, encourage, popularize, and *lead* everything that mainly contributes, including indirectly, to an atmosphere more favorable to the communist revolution, which includes many things that are not, in and of themselves, directly revolutionary. For example, progressive pacifists in the imperialist countries have played a sometimes very positive role in opposing imperialist wars of aggression in Vietnam, Iraq, etc. They are part of a “progressive tradition” with which there should be unity and struggle. Does the proletariat therefore represent or should it represent pacifist traditions? On the other hand, the implicit idea here that the communists need to concern themselves only with the traditions of “their own” nation is a nationalist and not an international criterion. Is Lu Hsun only for the Chinese? Is the movie *Yol* only for the inhabitants of Turkey and Kurdistan? Is *La Jaula de Oro* (The Golden Cage) only for Mexico and Central America? Is *Twelve Years a Slave* only for the United States?

Returning to the article by Lenin already mentioned, in fact, as Ajith should know, the Bolshevik position was not essentially the promotion of “national pride” but rather revolutionary defeatism, working for the defeat of their “own” government and bourgeoisie in order to launch a revolutionary war against them. And this internationalist position, especially at the beginning of the imperialist world war, resulted not only in repression by the government but also even stoning by sections of the masses. (The Bolsheviks, unlike what Ajith advises us, did not abandon consistent internationalism for fear of “getting isolated from the masses.”) This situation did not change due to Lenin’s “artful presentation” in a single article on “national pride” and the best way to “defend the fatherland” (among a mountain of articles he wrote denouncing the calls to “defend the fatherland” as a betrayal of socialism). It was in fact the experience of the war itself and the revolutionary struggle against it that ultimately demonstrated the correctness of their revolutionary internationalist position and won adherents *for revolution*.

Ajith raises this secondary error committed in a difficult situation to a fundamental principle of appealing to “national pride” even in the imperialist nations, just as *any reformist democrat* in the United States (or the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, etc.) opposes the invasion of Iraq, etc., under the banner of “what’s best for the United States and its democratic traditions”, instead of telling people the truth that the United States is an imperialist country, its national interests are essentially the interests of its bourgeoisie in world exploitation and oppression, and that instead of identifying with *those* interests, one should identify with the interests and above all the revolutionary struggle of oppressed and exploited people all over the world. On

⁷³ V.I. Lenin, “On the National Pride of the Great Russians” (1914), *Collected Works*, Vol. 21.

⁷⁴ “Against,” “The National Question in Imperialist Countries” section, p. 35.

the contrary, a consistent application of Ajith's position would imply, for example, that the communists in the United States should appeal to the “national pride” of the American people in these situations. How lovely that would be for the world revolution!

At the same time as he argues for appealing to “national pride,” Ajith also accuses the RCP,USA of “imperialist economism”, *i.e.* of denying the need to struggle against national oppression in the world, as well as the need for new democratic revolution in many countries. In fact, appealing to “national pride” in the imperialist countries leads precisely toward imperialist economism, because the interests of the United States in the world can only be strengthened based on the oppression of other countries.

Ajith has to admit that, “Avakian and the RCP have written quite a lot about imperialist oppression and have never denied the national component of the new democratic revolution” but this, according to him, is only “a lot of nice words”.⁷⁵ However, the fact is that their practice corresponds to their words. Who criticized nine years ago the line of liquidating the new democratic revolution in Nepal in the name of a “stage” of “restructuring” the old state? And who continues defending the central theses of that liquidation?

According to Ajith, “in the early 1980s it was dismissing almost all resistance struggles in the oppressed nations as mere extensions of inter-imperialist contention”.⁷⁶ In reality, the RCP,USA, correctly pointed out that “inter-imperialist contention” was playing a decisive role in the world arena at that time (between two imperialist blocs headed up by the U.S. and the USSR). At the same time they applied a position of revolutionary defeatism, working for the defeat of the U.S. in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Iran, denouncing the reactionary character of the imperialists and their puppets and highlighting the just character of the revolutionary struggle in those countries, at the same time as they pointed out that the leadership in Nicaragua and El Salvador and the Islamic or bourgeois-democratic forces in Iran were not going to take the struggle to the point of rupturing with imperialism and taking the socialist road. And they were right.

Ajith makes the same false accusation in regards to Afghanistan and Iraq because the RCP,USA does not tail the Islamic fundamentalists. What did the RCP,USA do in the face of the attack on the World Trade Center, the wave of patriotism this provoked, and the imperialist aggressions in Afghanistan and Iraq? They applied revolutionary defeatism, denounced the imperialism of “their own” country and broadly mobilized the masses to struggle against it in unity with the peoples oppressed by “their” country in initiatives like “Not in Our Name” and “The World Can’t Wait”, declaring that “American Lives are *Not* More Important Than Other People’s Lives”.⁷⁷ If Ajith’s nationalist “principle” were to be applied, one would think they should have made an “artful presentation” of U.S. “national pride”.

In reality, the line and practice of the RCP (and its forerunner, the Revolutionary Union) throughout its history, in its opposition to U.S. aggression in Vietnam and in countless other ways down to the present time, has been a model and inspiring example of internationalism. Anyone looking into this at all objectively will be struck by the fact that this has always been, and remains, one of the most outstanding features of the RCP. The fact that Ajith refuses, or is unable, to recognize this, and instead raises outrageous and ridiculous accusations that the RCP is guilty of “imperialist economism” and chauvinism, is yet another expression of Ajith's outlook, which confuses and combines nationalism with communism, and which leads him to tail and render support to reactionaries and imperialists in the name of “internationalism”—something which the RCP has consistently and very correctly refused to do.

⁷⁵ “Against,” “The National Task in Oppressed Nations” section, p. 26.

⁷⁶ “Against,” “The National Task in Oppressed Nations” section, p. 28.

⁷⁷ *Basics*, op. cit., 5:7, p. 156.

14. The communists' ideology in the oppressed countries must also be communism and not nationalism

We've said that the communists must represent communism and not essentially the "progressive, democratic traditions of a nation", and this is also true in the oppressed countries, although the question in this case is somewhat more complex.

The nationalism of the imperialist powers that oppress other nations is reactionary.⁷⁸ In the oppressed countries (and also in the case of oppressed nations or national minorities within the borders of imperialist countries), the situation is different, precisely because they suffer national oppression. In this situation, nationalism can play a progressive and even revolutionary role *to the degree to which it is directed against the oppressors* and not against the oppressed masses of the oppressor country, of other countries, or against the oppressed nationalities that also exist within many oppressed countries (such as the case of the indigenous peoples in Mexico and most of Latin America).

However, communism and not nationalism (including the adaptation of communism to nationalism) has to lead the revolutionary struggle. Nationalism in these countries focuses essentially on the oppression of the country and, as we have seen, is not even capable of overcoming this oppression in the epoch of imperialism. But there is also much more that needs to be combated and overcome: women's oppression, the exploitation of wage labor, the destruction of the environment, the oppression of people of differing sexual orientation, the oppression of nationalities within the oppressed country, the contradiction between mental and manual labor, etc. Only communism provides us with a scientific understanding of the interrelation of all these contradictions in the real world and how these and others can be and have to be overcome in the course of the revolutionary struggle towards the emancipation of all humanity.

In regards to national oppression in the countries of the so-called "third world", ideas of national inferiority—promoted by the ruling classes and also arising from the material fact of imperialist domination and large inequalities in the world—are generally a problem among important sections of the masses. They're expressed, for example in Mexico, in the belief in the superiority of the United States, in ideas that the riches of the neighboring country have their origin in the greater intelligence, diligence, or education of the people there, as well as the question "What's wrong with us Mexicans?" It is essential to combat these ideas, demonstrating, among other things, that the riches of U.S. imperialism have their origin in the enslavement of the black people, the genocide of the Indians, its wars of conquest, and imperialist exploitation of large parts of the world, and not in some special characteristic of its inhabitants. The problem of ideas of national inferiority is the only problem that Ajith mentions. But there is another one.

Nationalism also plays a negative role in several ways. This is (or should be) more evident when it reinforces the oppression of others. To again use Mexico as an example, Mexican nationalism also assumes retrograde expressions in favor of national oppression and racism against the diverse indigenous nationalities, Afro-Mexicans and black people in general, Chinese, Jews, etc. It is necessary to wage ideological struggle against these reactionary ideas among the masses.

A more contradictory expression of nationalism is summarized in the epithet "fucking gringos". On the one hand, many times it is a reaction, at least in part, to the domination of the country by U.S. imperialism. On the other, it doesn't distinguish between the exploiting capitalist class of the U.S. and the proletariat and broad exploited and oppressed masses on the other side of the border. In the course of uniting people against the imperialists and other ruling classes, it is essential to wage an ideological struggle here too. Ironically, the nationalist opposition to U.S. imperialism frequently ends up capitulating to it, among other reasons because of

⁷⁸ In order to avoid confusion, this does not mean that all patriotic or nationalist people are reactionary, just as, on another level, indicating that the bourgeois parties are reactionary does not mean that all the people who vote for them are.

overestimating the supposed monolith and not understanding the possibility and need to forge revolutionary unity between the proletariat and oppressed masses in both types of countries.

Finally, an important problem, which Ajith essentially denies, is that the ruling classes of the oppressed countries also make use of nationalism to try to unite all classes under their leadership, justifying all their policies in the name of “what’s good for Mexico” (or India, or whatever country). This is often simply the rhetoric of lackeys. However, there are also cases involving diverse representatives of the big bourgeoisie and other reactionaries in the oppressed countries who, without going outside the world capitalist-imperialist system, come into contradiction with one or several imperialists in pursuit of their own class interests: for example, Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Saddam Hussein at a certain point and al Qaeda and Taliban-type jihadists, among others. And when this occurs, a whole gang of supposed communists often go running to come under the wing of the big bourgeoisie and other reactionary forces, with the supposed justification of the struggle against imperialism. Something similar has happened in Mexico with the subordination of the old Communist Party of Mexico to Lazaro Cardenas in the 1930s or the current infatuation of a variety of supposed Marxists with Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.⁷⁹ Ajith, as we have mentioned, goes at the tail of the supposed “anti-imperialist” impact of the Islamic fundamentalists.

The examples are very diverse and different, but this idea of the need to go at the tail, in one way or another, of reactionary forces has always led and will always lead to the liquidation of the communist revolution and to condemn the oppressed to continue being oppressed. The advance toward the victory of the proletarian revolution may or may not require certain alliances with reactionary forces at a particular time, but *it always requires struggling for the leadership of the communist party*, and not tailing other class forces, as preached by the adaptation of communism to nationalism.

Perhaps Ajith’s other most “weighty” argument is the following quote from Mao:

The victory of China and the defeat of the invading imperialists will help the people of other countries. Thus in wars of national liberation patriotism is applied internationalism.⁸⁰

The first sentence is generally omitted, since training in internationalism is not exactly the motivation of these forces for using the quote, just as they do not promote other declarations by Mao and the CPC either, like “On the national question the world outlook of the proletarian party is internationalism, and not nationalism.”⁸¹

The problem with this formulation of Mao’s on patriotism is that it confuses internationalist ideology with political program: in the concrete case, the Communist Party’s responsibility to lead a war of national liberation against the invasion of China by Japanese imperialism. Politically it was very correct and necessary to lead that war, and in a fundamental sense, Mao did not lead it with a nationalist but rather an internationalist approach: insisting on unity with the Japanese people and communists, although the opposition in Japan to the war of aggression was very weak; struggling for dignified treatment of Japanese prisoners and for doing political work with them; and pointing out the contribution of this war to “the people of other countries”, among other things.

The “best” interpretation of the quote is that Mao is talking about the “application” of internationalist ideology to the political program of waging a just war of national liberation. However, patriotism is not limited to the question of supporting and waging just national wars. It also has an ideological component, and as an ideology it is nationalism, an outlook that approaches and understands the world from the point of view of a nation and

⁷⁹An oppositional politician who represents a wing of the big bourgeoisie in Mexico.

⁸⁰ Mao Tsetung, “The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War”, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, op. cit., p. 196.

⁸¹ In point 9 of *A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement*, Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1963.

national interests. And this problem is not only found in this quote but rather, as Avakian points out, “it is fair to say that he did not recognize the contradiction between being an internationalist and at the same time attempting to be the representative of the highest interests of the nation.”⁸²

Not recognizing the contradiction is a secondary but important error in Mao’s overall internationalist position. Insisting that *there is no contradiction* leads necessarily to adapting communism to nationalism. Ajith insists that making this distinction means avoiding “the ideological question Mao poses of being patriotic on an internationalist ideological basis.”⁸³

Pearls of eclecticism! As we have seen, to Ajith, internationalism is a question of ideology that shouldn’t be confused with the national character of the proletariat, etc., etc. And now it turns out that “being patriotic” is *also an ideological question*. The eclectic addition of “on an internationalist ideological basis” only serves to hide and obfuscate the essential point of what he is saying: that “being patriotic” is a question of ideology and that *“being patriotic” is part of communist ideology*, so this ideology turns out to be, in the interpretation of Ajith and others, an eclectic jumble of nationalism with internationalist communism.

According to Ajith, the new synthesis of communism has “an absolutist, purist concept of proletarian internationalism”.⁸⁴ Should we therefore have a relativist, adulterated “concept” of proletarian internationalism, adulterated with nationalism?

As we have pointed out several times and illustrated with the examples of Vietnam, Nicaragua, Nepal, and others, *such adulteration of communism with nationalism does not go beyond the limits of the current capitalist-imperialist system and therefore is incapable of liberating people, and ultimately emancipating humanity*, whatever the subjective intentions of its proponents. Communism, which is internationalist, is capable of doing so.

15. The world-historic transformation from the capitalist-imperialist system to the world communist system

Communism can only be achieved in the world as a whole and the world-historic process of revolutionary transformation from the current capitalist-imperialist system to the world communist system of the future has not been, isn’t, and will not be a simple linear process in which each country advances separately toward communism. On the contrary, it is “a long and tortuous process of revolutionary transformation in which there will be uneven development, the seizure of power in different countries at different times, and a complex dialectical interplay between the revolutionary struggles and the revolutionization of society in these different countries”. In order to advance toward the communist goal, it is essential to break, when seizing state power, with the world capitalist-imperialist system, but socialism in different countries, as part of the transition to communism, exists in a world still dominated by the capitalist-imperialist system and because of this and other reasons, it also develops as part of a dialectical relationship “in which the world arena is fundamentally and ultimately decisive while the mutually interacting and mutually supporting struggles of the proletarians in different countries constitute the key link in fundamentally changing the world as a whole”.⁸⁵

⁸² See a more complete discussion by Avakian of this in *Advancing the World Revolutionary Movement: Questions of Strategic Orientation*, first published in *Revolution* magazine in Spring, 1984; online, revcom.us/.../advancingworldrevolution/advancingworldrevolution.htm.

⁸³ “Against,” footnote 71, p. 27: it is often in footnotes that Ajith gives us more of an idea of what he really means to say.

⁸⁴ “Against,” “A Perversion of Internationalism” section, p. 25.

⁸⁵ *Basics*, op. cit., 2:12, pp. 43-44.

As Marx indicates, “This socialism is the *declaration of the permanence of the revolution*, the *class dictatorship* of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the abolition of *class distinctions generally*, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionizing of all the ideas that result from these social relations.”⁸⁶ With Mao's greatest contribution—the theory and practice of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat—a much deeper understanding has been reached of the need to abolish these “four alls”: the class differences, production relations, social relations, and ideas inherited from the old society, which in part persist and are reproduced after the basic socialization of the economy. The class struggle persists during the entire historical period of socialism, and it centers in good measure on the struggle to restrict or expand the inequalities, backward relations and ideas that still persist and are reproduced in the new society. What’s more, Mao and his comrades discovered that stopping along this road will necessarily lead to the restoration of capitalism.

Although experience has demonstrated that it is possible to establish socialism in one country, will it be possible to continue along the socialist road—which means continuing with these transformations—indefinitely, without liberating more parts of the world? No. *A large part of the relations and ideas that need to be transformed (the “four alls”) are not found within the borders of a given country but rather at a world level*, in the capitalist-imperialist system. In a way analogous to how the failure to continue transforming the four alls within a socialist country will end up strengthening the basis and forces for restoration and lead to the restoration of capitalism, *the failure to keep transforming more of the world by means of the advance of the world communist revolution will also strengthen those restorationist forces and the danger of restoration.*

So Avakian points out that, “there is a limit,... to how far you can go in transforming the base and superstructure within the socialist country without making further advances in winning and transforming more of the world; not in terms of conquering more resources or people as the imperialists do, but in terms of making revolutionary transformations... As far as I understand it, the reason for this is, first of all, that there is the ideological influence, as well as the actual military and political and other pressure, from the imperialist encirclement. But there’s also the fact that this is the era of a single world process and that has a material foundation, it’s not just an idea. What may be rational in terms of the production, even, and utilization of labor power and resources within a single country, carried beyond a certain point, while it may seem rational for that country, is irrational if you actually look upon a world scale.”⁸⁷

In this context, how can the restoration of capitalism in China be explained after almost thirty years of socialism and ten of the Cultural Revolution? It’s true that there were secondary errors of line and method and it’s true that there were objective difficulties relatively internal to China, but however important these factors in fact are, this cannot be understood properly without taking into account the international arena and in particular the context of unfavorable international factors in which the coup occurred. The restoration of capitalism in China (and in the Soviet Union before that) was not merely an internal Chinese matter—in essence, socialism was defeated by the international bourgeoisie, which still was and is a lot stronger in the world.

Due to his narrow nationalist view, Ajith either does not understand or is not interested in the objective problem, *i.e. the interrelation between the continual revolutionization of socialism in the country or countries where it exists and the advance of the revolution in other parts of the world*. He doesn’t understand Avakian’s argument either, that there is *a relative limit to the advance of a socialist country without achieving more advances in the world revolution*, by taking power in other places. He simply accuses him of wanting to impose bourgeois

⁸⁶ Karl Marx, “The class struggles in France 1848 to 1850”, Section III. “Consequences of June 13, 1849”, *Marx, Engels Selected Works (MESW)*, Vol. 2, p. 282.

⁸⁷ Bob Avakian, *Conquer The World? The International Proletariat Must and Will* (1981), “More on the Proletarian Revolution as a World Process” section, posted on revcom.us/bob_avakian/conquerworld/

economic rationality, which is so absurd in light of Avakian’s work criticizing precisely that line in the Chinese and Soviet experience that it doesn’t even merit a response here.

Then Ajith declares that, “the victorious proletariat in any country *cannot and must not* make what’s best at the ‘world scale’ its criteria. Because, no matter what the political rhetoric, its content will inevitably be narrow economic rationality... For a long time, the proletariat must address the production tasks *primarily* at the ‘national scale’. It must strive for self-reliance for the country as a whole and its regions, as a matter of principle. In the narrow (bourgeois) economic sense this would be irrational; a waste of resources. In its view, even a rational utilization of resources within a country could be unnecessary and irrational from the viewpoint of the world economy (Avakian’s ‘world scale’). From the long term view of world proletarian revolution, in order to overcome and end the lop-sidedness in the world so that all can become equals and thus create favorable grounds to advance to communism, it would be eminently rational.”⁸⁸

Ajith tells us that, “what is best at the ‘world scale’... will inevitably be narrow economic rationality.” Why? Because the bourgeoisie says so? We would not be doing the world proletarian revolution any favor by insisting that “what is best at the ‘world scale’” is bourgeois economic rationality governed by maximum profit with their theory of “comparative advantages”. Let us take, for example, a problem that threatens the very future of the planet and of the human race: global warming due to the use of fossil fuels (oil, natural gas, coal), which the bourgeois rationality of maximum profit demands continue to be used until the planet and many forms of life are destroyed, if not humanity as well. Isn’t it evident that this is not “what is best at the ‘world scale’” and that to “address the production tasks *primarily* at the ‘national scale’,” as Ajith proposes, is not going to solve this problem? A socialist country can (and in our opinion, should, as quickly as possible) stop using fossil fuels, but the actions of one country (or even of several countries) are not going to stop that race toward world catastrophe. On this question and on others, the victorious proletariat should proceed from what is best on a world scale and urgently call to unite scientists and people all over the world to act together with the socialist country or countries against global warming in such a way as to also serve hastening the advance of the world revolution, which is essential to resolve the roots of this problem and many others.

In regards to the problem of how to overcome the profound inequality between the imperialist and oppressed countries in the world, Ajith essentially proposes, in what we have quoted, that both, after establishing socialism, should practice self-reliance. If we think a little about the real world, it should be evident that, even by eliminating the exploitation of other countries with the socialist revolution, if both the formerly imperialist countries and the formerly oppressed countries simply practice self-reliance, it is most likely, not that they will “become equals” but rather that the gap separating them will widen—because the more developed countries in all probability will still have more productive forces, technology, trained people, etc. Self-reliance is a correct basic principle, but it is a *relative* principle. In socialist China, for example, they did not simply insist that all regions equally practice self-reliance, which would have led to widening and not reducing the great differences between town and country and one region and other. They gave priority in assigning resources and in other regards to the countryside, to less-developed regions and nationalities, precisely in order to progressively overcome inequalities. The same basic approach will be essential for closing the gap between previously oppressed and previously imperialist countries. And that will require looking at things on an international level and not simply on the national level to which Ajith wants to cling.

Bourgeois democracy and nationalism do not see beyond formal equality. But formal equality results in *inequality* in the real world, because the same measure is applied to people, nations, etc., that find themselves in different circumstances. In order to overcome the enormous imbalances and inequalities that this system has produced, *unequal treatment that favors* those disfavored yesterday is required: the poor, women, previously

⁸⁸ “Against,” “The National Task in Oppressed Nations” section, pp. 32-33.

discriminated minorities, and yes, the oppressed countries, proceeding, yes, from “what is best at a world scale” for the proletariat and the great majority of humanity.

The *Constitution for a New Socialist Republic in North America* by the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, is a provocative and inspiring document in this and many other senses, and Mr. Ajith gets into very deep intellectual sewer water trying to accuse the RCP,USA, and Avakian of “expansionism” and of a hidden intention to annex Mexican territory. His supposed evidence is that, “the formulation ‘in *North America*’, along with the mention of territory liberated from *other reactionaries*, indicate that the new state could also extend beyond the present territory of the USA”,⁸⁹ and specifically into Mexico, because that is where, according to his strange logic, “other reactionaries” would be found.

The extremes of distortion to which nationalist opportunism is capable of going are little less than amazing. Apparently Ajith couldn’t even imagine the real meaning and intention of the name “New Socialist Republic in North America”, which, among other things, repudiates the chauvinism inherent in the name “United States of America”, as if the United States included all of America or the Americas.

Moreover, does Mr. Ajith really not understand that in the United States, as in every country, there are also reactionaries who are not precisely members or direct representatives of the ruling classes? Wasn’t he able to read in the same paragraph that he quotes selectively that it talks about the “victory of the revolution that would have put an end to the imperialist USA and *replaced* it with a new, revolutionary society”?⁹⁰ But he didn’t have to speculate in this regard, it was only necessary to read what the document actually says about relations with Mexico and policy toward the U.S. Southwest, which prior to the War of 1846-1848 was part of Mexico. It states, among other things, that, taking into account the situation in the region and the world, “In this overall context, and also taking into account the sentiments and aspirations of the people in the region [the southwest region of the U.S.], in particular those of Mexican origin and descent, the question of whether to return at least parts of this region to Mexico, and/or whether there should be established, within parts of this region, a country that is separate from both Mexico and the New Socialist Republic in North America, shall be taken up by the government of the New Socialist Republic in North America... In any case, within this region—or the part of it that remains within the New Socialist Republic in North America—the right of autonomy of Mexican-Americans shall be recognized and approached in accordance with the principles and objectives set forth in this Article and in this Constitution as a whole.”⁹¹

That is to say, Ajith wants to make us believe that a program that even contemplates ceding part of the current territory of the United States to Mexico or a new country to be formed in the region historically linked to Mexico is “a dangerous recipe for expansionism”⁹² to steal territory from Mexico.

In addition to demonstrating Ajith’s opportunism, this demonstrates the inability of nationalist revisionism to distinguish between the ruling class in the United States, on the one hand, and the proletariat and its communist party on the other. About which we will only comment, taking the liberty of paraphrasing Lenin, that if a Marxist in the third world “allows himself to be swayed by his *quite legitimate and natural* hatred of the” U.S. imperialists “*to such a degree* that he transfers even a particle of this hatred, even if it be only estrangement, to the proletarian culture and proletarian cause” in the United States, “then such a Marxist will get bogged down in bourgeois nationalism”. Similarly, the Marxists in the U.S. or any other imperialist country “will be bogged

⁸⁹ “Against,” “The National Task in Oppressed Nations” section, pp. 38-39.

⁹⁰ Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, *Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America (Draft Proposal)*, RCP Publications, Chicago, 2010, p. ii, emphasis added. www.revcom.us/a/216/preamble-en.html

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 57.

⁹² “Against,” “The National Task in Oppressed Nations” section, p. 39.

down, not only in bourgeois, but also” profoundly counterrevolutionary nationalism, if they lose sight, even for a moment, of their duty to support the cause of national liberation in the countries oppressed by imperialism.⁹³

Another contribution of great importance by Bob Avakian to understanding more scientifically the process of the world communist revolution is the recognition that there is a contradiction between the advance of the world revolution and the defense of socialism in a given country (or the interests of the national state under socialism). Although this contradiction does not necessarily have to be antagonistic, it has become very acute in the past, and without a doubt this will happen again when new socialist countries are established. It is very important to defend socialism wherever it exists, but it is essential to subordinate, as the part to the whole, the defense of the socialist country (or countries) to the advance of the world revolution. This is also related to what we have already commented about the relative limits to revolutionary transformation in socialist countries without greater advance at a world level. The socialist countries, when they exist, must be above all base areas for the world communist revolution.

In the history of the international communist movement, this contradiction was not understood, and in fact in many cases the world revolution was subordinated to the defense of socialism in the Soviet Union and later in China, which caused or contributed to serious errors that even threw away various revolutionary opportunities, especially during the Second World War and its outcome. This is a complex and extensive subject that we will not deal with here beyond observing that although Ajith formally accepts that there was an error of subordinating the world revolution to the defense of the Soviet Union before, during, and after the Second World War, he essentially defends (with his typical eclectic “buts”) the profound deviations toward nationalism and bourgeois democracy of the “United Front Against Fascism” that had their origin in that error and derailed possibilities of advance and even the triumph of the revolution in several countries.

Ajith’s nationalist orientation is so non-revolutionary that he even goes so far as to say: “The struggle waged by a socialist state in the realm of diplomacy is an important part of the world revolution. We must never forget that the socialist state will be the main instrument through which the international proletariat can intervene at the world level, until the world revolution reaches a high level.”⁹⁴

No, Ajith. Socialist diplomacy is a necessary part of the world revolution, but the “main instrument through which the international proletariat can intervene at the world level” has been and is *revolution*. For whoever is capable of taking off the nationalist blinders of looking at the world country by country, it is evident that the October Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution had an immense world impact much greater than even the best diplomatic interventions of those countries when they were socialist.

16. Communism or nationalism?

To conclude, it should be remembered that modern nations—which are such a palpable reality in the world of today—are just a creation of the capitalist epoch,⁹⁵ and that in order to definitively supersede that epoch and

⁹³ V.I. Lenin, “Critical Remarks on the National Question”, Part 3. “The Nationalist Bogey of Assimilation”, *Collected Works*, 4th English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964, Volume 20, p. 32.

⁹⁴ “Against,” “Infantile Criticism of United Front Tactics” section, p. 44.

⁹⁵ We are talking here about nations in the modern sense, characterized, as Stalin correctly summarized, by “a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.” (J.V. Stalin, “Marxism and the National Question,” Section I. “The Nation”, *Works*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954, p. 307). There were other previous formations that are sometimes called “nations,” such as, for example, the Aztec empire or the Roman empire, but, in spite of certain trade, tribute, etc., they lacked the common economic life created by capitalism with the creation of the national market, in addition to lacking in many cases

reach communism it will be necessary to both eliminate national oppression and finally overcome the division of the world into nations themselves.

Nationalist narrowness, which views the world “from my country outward” and is incapable of understanding the real nature of the world capitalist-imperialist system and the real process of its revolutionary transformation toward world communism, is not capable of going beyond the limits of the narrow horizon of the bourgeois epoch in theory and, therefore, as we have demonstrated, neither is it capable of overcoming the oppressive relations of the capitalist-imperialist system in practice.

Communism, on the contrary, by understanding scientifically the dialectical interrelation between the world process and the revolutionary struggle in each country and by correctly identifying the material basis in the contradictions of the capitalist-imperialist system itself that provide both the need and the real possibility of its revolutionary transformation toward communism, can and needs to guide the process of opening up the road by means of a difficult and tortuous struggle to a very different and much better future.

Only communism, and not nationalism, can liberate the people and lead to the emancipation of all humanity.

several others of the elements mentioned.