

# A Strategic Approach to Proletarian Internationalism

by Comrade Pierce

The RI Document [\*Proletarian Internationalism: A Duty for all Revolutionaries\*](#) has been a useful document in guiding the work of RI and there is much in this document that should be upheld and studied by revolutionaries.[\[i\]](#) In particular the document is very clear about the nature of Canada as an imperialist country based on settler colonialism, and that challenging Canadian imperialism is a key responsibility of proletarian revolutionaries in Canada.

The core of the document is a good summary of the history and development of proletarian internationalism, tracing this history through the three communist internationals, to Mao's critique of the Third International and a summary of Maoist principles for multi-lateral relations between revolutionary parties. This section is a good introduction for party members and a good basis for further study, discussion and elaboration.

The document, however, suffers from a major inadequacy. It's assessment of the international situation ends with the 1960s and it does not attempt to analyse and assess the major contradictions shaping the world today. As a consequence the section Priorities and Directions for Our Movement stays at the level of general principles. Lacking an up to date analysis of the international situation, it could not propose a strategy for the proletarian and revolutionary forces internationally, or for our forces within that context.

This weakness led to mistakes in the work put into building relationships at the international level. Time and energy was put into building relationships and solidarity with essentially social democratic forces that would have been better used in strengthening long term alliances with other revolutionary organizations. The lack of sharpness in international analysis also contributed to confusion and muddling of the distinct tasks of building the multi-national united front within the borders currently claimed by Canada, and building alliances and unity at the international level.

This paper tries to correct this inadequacy by providing:

- An assessment of the current international situation and the major contradictions in the world today
- A strategic orientation for our proletarian internationalism
- Tasks for our organization based on this strategic orientation[\[ii\]](#)

## 1. An Assessment of the current international situation and the major contradictions in the world today

The major contradictions in the world today are:

1. The contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat;
2. The contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed nations and peoples;
3. The contradiction between the imperialist powers and their blocks (inter-imperialist rivalry); and
4. The contradiction between Patriarchy and women. [\[iii\]](#)

Of these contradictions, the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is the most fundamental contradiction because it underpins and shapes the others. But the main contradiction in the world today is between imperialism and the oppressed nations. This is the contradiction around which the most intense struggles are being waged and where there is the greatest chance of a revolutionary breakthrough that would shift the balance of forces on a world scale. [\[iv\]](#) As Jose Maria Sison explains:

The main contradiction today is between the imperialist powers and the oppressed peoples and nations. It is so in two respects: first, because imperialist oppression and exploitation are the most intensive and extensive among the oppressed people and nations; and second, because armed revolutions led by revolutionary parties of the proletariat are today taking place in Asia, Africa and Latin America and will probably increase and intensify before a global war can break out among the imperialists or before the proletariat can seize power from the monopoly bourgeoisie in any imperialist country (*At Home in the World – Portrait of a Revolutionary: Conversations with Ninotchka Rosca*).

Even within the imperialist countries this main contradiction is apparent, for example in the growing resistance of Indigenous people and nations in Canada, renewed Black rebellion in the U.S. and the periodic uprisings of immigrant youth in France and other European countries. These struggles have a greater potential for breaking through bourgeois ideological hegemony, evolving new and more intense struggle, and shifting the balance of class forces than any recent struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

But the main event is in the oppressed and colonized countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, where the political, ideological and military infrastructure of imperialism is weakest, and where there is the greatest potential for a revolutionary breakthrough that could intensify the crisis of imperialism and generate new bases and resources for proletarian revolution.

As proletarian revolutionaries in Canada it is strategic for us to support these struggles that have the most potential to generate breakthroughs, intensify the crisis of imperialism, and hasten the conditions for proletarian revolution in the imperialist countries!

## **2. A strategic orientation for our proletarian internationalism**

Given the strategic importance of the struggles of the proletariat and revolutionary forces in the oppressed nations, what is the responsibility of proletarian revolutionaries in the imperialist countries? We recognize that imperialism is not an ‘optional’ policy of the Canadian monopoly capitalist ruling class, and therefore, working within the confines of the bourgeois ‘democratic’ process, even a strong international solidarity movement can only have a marginal impact on the policies and practise of

Canadian imperialism.<sup>[v]</sup> We therefore take the position that as communists in the imperialist core we need to have something more substantive to bring to the table in terms of solidarity. We need to accumulate forces and create a revolutionary organization capable of posing a real threat to the Canadian imperialist state and ruling class, and forcing them to wage a struggle on two fronts.

The accumulation of revolutionary forces gives us a base for active solidarity with the most advanced proletarian revolutionary forces and the capacity to take advantage of changing conditions to strike blows against Canadian imperialism and advance towards revolution in Canada.

However, this long-term strategic orientation should not be used to dismiss the difference that our solidarity can make for our brothers and sisters fighting on the frontlines, even in our context of bourgeois dictatorship and unfavourable balance of class forces. There is solidarity that we can provide in the short term that is requested, meaningful and appreciated by revolutionary movements in the oppressed nations. We should also remember how a militant practice of proletarian internationalism actually strengthens our efforts towards accumulation of revolutionary forces; as a bulwark against reformism, economism and movementism, and in attracting revolutionaries and potential revolutionaries to our organization.

So we should pursue a long term strategy of accumulating revolutionary forces and building an organization that will eventually be capable of posing a revolutionary threat to Canadian imperialism and forcing the imperialists to fight on two fronts; and in the short term should provide whatever meaningful concrete support we can to those revolutionary forces in the oppressed and colonized countries that are making the greatest contributions to the international proletarian cause.

This leaves us with two important questions: (i) how do we identify which revolutionary forces and struggles should be most prioritized for support? and (ii) in the short term what forms of support are the most useful to our revolutionary comrades in the oppressed nations?

### ***(i) Identifying revolutionary forces***

It's important to begin here by upholding basic principles of proletarian internationalism including general support for all proletarian forces engaged in class struggle, anti-imperialist people's struggles, and struggles of national liberation, and the fostering of good relationships with a broad array of proletarian revolutionary forces (avoiding the sectarian mistake of focusing only on 'Maoist' parties or organizations).

But given our limited resources and capacities it's important to be strategic and focused in where we put our energies as an organization. We need to differentiate between those movements, struggles and organizations deserving of support on basic principles of proletarian internationalism and those which have a special strategic merit and make a significant contribution to the whole revolutionary project of the proletariat. Criteria to use in making this distinction should include:

(a) mass proletarian base

(b) participation of women and revolutionary women's leadership

- (c) proletarian revolutionary theory
- (d) armed struggle
- (e) dual power/ pre-socialist practice
- (f) liberated territory

Organizations and movements that meet most or all of these criteria can be considered as exemplary and leading forces.

### ***(ii) Support***

We are best positioned to provide meaningful support to revolutionary movements from the oppressed nations and peoples when we have regular contact with them at multiple levels – between revolutionary organizations; at the level of the mass organizations; and people to people. This will allow our international comrades to communicate what types of solidarity are most useful to them, for us to evaluate these tactics in light of our main strategy of accumulating revolutionary forces and engaging in revolutionary mass struggle and to arrive at practices that support both revolutionary endeavors.

If there are instances where the support requested seems to be in contradiction with our own strategy and tactics we should engage in discussion. If we view the tactics deployed by a revolutionary force as being destructive to the proletarian project as a whole we should engage in a process of constructive criticism.

## **3. Tasks for our organization**

At the level of the organization we can now re-iterate the principles originally laid out in the *Proletarian Internationalism: A Duty for All Revolutionaries* document with a more strategic ordering and articulation:

### ***(i) Accumulation of revolutionary forces***

Accumulation of revolutionary forces and building of a revolutionary movement capable of challenging Canadian Imperialism and forcing it to wage a battle on two fronts and advancing toward revolution in the territories currently claimed and controlled by the Canadian colonial settler state is the top priority. This clarifies that the core tasks of building a revolutionary party – the building of mass organizations, recruitment, political education and development of party infrastructure – are a foundational element of an effective strategy of proletarian internationalism.

### ***(ii) Identify, build relationships with, and provide support to the most exemplary revolutionary and proletarian forces.***

This will require ongoing SICA including the sending of representatives to learn from, study and build up our expertise on the most advanced revolutionary movements. Comrades with organic (organizational, kinship, national) connections to particular struggles and revolutionary movements can be an important source of information and insight on these movements, but our party positions should be based on a rigorous and collective analysis of the best possible information and not the particular loyalties or tendencies of individual party members. The use of criteria such as the ones given above will allow for this kind of maximally objective collective analysis and also for revisiting decisions in a structured way based on ongoing developments.

***(iii) Practice principled proletarian internationalism in building relationships with other proletarian and revolutionary forces.***

In addition to identifying and supporting the exemplary revolutionary forces it is important to work to create a context and culture of principled proletarian internationalism in which a variety of international proletarian and revolutionary forces can begin to relate to each other, cooperate and eventually coordinate and work collaboratively. Recognizing our small size and early stage of development this process can initially begin with building relationships with the forces we come into contact with through our mass work and international alliances.

***(iv) Propagate proletarian internationalism in our mass campaigns, educational program, and propaganda***

At level of day to day work we must be constantly exposing and opposing Canadian imperialism, and promoting and defending revolutionary and national liberation struggles among the masses. This includes campaigns, educational activities and propaganda to support the exemplary forces, but it also includes visible and vocal partisanship to engage and win over the masses that we are organizing based on more immediate class-struggle issues and campaigns.

#### **4. Areas of Responsibility**

Centre:

- Responsible for identifying the exemplary revolutionary forces (with input from units and members) and consciously building bilateral relationships with them at the revolutionary level
- Responsible for identifying the most important and needed tactics to show solidarity with these exemplary forces
- Responsible for engaging multi-lateral formations of revolutionary organizations and modeling a practice of principled, non-sectarian, proletarian internationalism

Units:

- Responsible for regular and ongoing study and discussion on the exemplary revolutionary forces
- Responsible for assigning members and cadres to initiate, lead or join campaigns and activities

to support the exemplary revolutionary forces

- Encouraged to engage in revolutionary propaganda campaigns to popularize the exemplary revolutionary forces

Cadres:

- Responsible for struggling for an anti-imperialist line within the mass organizations they work in, particularly exposing and opposing Canadian imperialism
- Responsible for encouraging the mass organizations they work in to build org-to-org, sector-to-sector and people to people relationships with proletarian and anti-imperialist organizations from the oppressed nations and peoples
- Responsible for promoting and defending the exemplary revolutionary forces amongst the masses
- Share our knowledge and analysis of revolutionary and proletarian forces with our comrades at the unit level and the leadership and participate in the identification of exemplary forces

*Pierce, January 2015*

[i] The only part of the document that really merits a re-write is the first paragraph because it fails to draw a distinction between progressive and reactionary/ chauvinistic forms of nationalism, and possibly conflates sentiments of attachment to a homeland, birthplace or Indigenous territory with narrow bourgeois nationalism.

[ii] This document does not take up the question of relationship to Indigenous peoples, nations and forces within the borders of the Canadian colonial settler state which is a linked issue, but requires its own discussion.

[iii] There are other contradictions that could be discussed and debated such as the contradiction between capitalism's need for growth and the ability of the planet to sustain human life; and the contradiction between imperialism and the countries and states asserting national independence. But the four included above are the ones that we have the most analysis and unity on as RI.

[iv] By using 'fundamental' and 'main' as my descriptors I'm trying to be concrete and avoid a debate about principal versus secondary contradiction at the philosophical level. The language around principal contradiction is a bit of a political minefield among Maoists, so it's important that we work out how we engage this debate as an organization. JoMa has been very consistent over many years that the main contradiction is between imperialism and the oppressed peoples and nations and that the main task for revolutionaries in the imperialist countries is to build revolutionary parties, which is the position I'm advocating here.

[v] As an example a large and well organized movement in solidarity with Palestine, which includes many petty bourgeois church and liberal human rights folks and is able to mobilize tens of thousands of people across the country during Israeli massacres and military operations, has in no way been able to break the relationship between Canada and Israel which is based on shared imperialist interests,

mutually beneficial economic ties and a similar history of racist and genocidal settler-colonialism.