

DEBATES IN THE PHILIPPINE LEFT: THE 1990's

# PPW : “New Type” Revolution of the Wrong Type

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**Note from ESSF: “PPW” means “Protracted People’s War”.**

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**Metro Manila-Rizal Regional Committee**

**Communist Party of the Philippines**

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In the critique of *PPDR* [1], we have shown, that due to his betrayal of the proletarian class line, Sison’s “people’s revolution” is not a “new type” revolution. It is ultra-revolutionary in form but bourgeois-reformist in content.

He abandons the independent class line of the proletariat and the socialist class movement in the struggle to complete the democratic revolution. All Sison does is pay lip service to proletarian leadership and to its socialist aim. However, in his program and policies, what he pursues is a petty bourgeois, purely national-democratic, ultra-revolutionist line.

Sison’s “people’s revolution” can only be understood as “new type” in the sense that it’s a “Marxist-Leninist” revolution of the wrong type. A Maoist type of vulgarized revolution. The way our national democratic revolution was reduced and transformed, absolutized and dogmatized into a protracted war type of revolution proves that it is a wrong type of revolution of the worst kind. It signifies a complete rupture with Marxist-Leninist theory and practice all along the line. “War revolution” is a poor imitation of Sison’s Chinese paradigm. Engels once admonished: *“Do not play with insurrection”*. He should have added: *“More so, with war.”*

## **Universality of PPW: Sison’s Chinese Universe**

Sison presents PPW to our revolutionary forces as a “universal truth”. The question is: from what universe did he abstract this “universal truth”?

What is a universal truth? For a theoretical proposition to be considered universal, its inner logic must be of general application, and is validated in universal practice.

From what part of the planet earth has this PPW been validated as a universal truth in the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed masses?

Sison must be reminded that what he wants to be upheld as universal is not “people’s war” in general, but the “protracted war” type of “people’s war”, the principles and strategy of protracted war as developed by Mao Ze Dong.

Again, we should beware of Sison’s rhetorical shuffle once cornered in theoretical debate. If Sison is just talking of “people’s war” and not of “protracted war”, he is phrase-mongering. All revolutions are people’s war, it’s but another name for revolution. As Engels said: “*All revolution, whatever form it may take, is a form of violence.*” And Lenin said: “*Revolution is war*”. Both are referring to the violent character of revolution, to the necessity of revolutionary violence. But what specific form or combination of forms this revolutionary violence will take is a different question and is beyond the generic category of the term “people’s war”.

Mao’s protracted war is a people’s war, but a specific type of people’s war. What distinguishes it from other forms of people’s war? On two counts: *Mao’s concept of the three strategic stages of protracted war and his strategic line of encircling the cities from the countryside.*

These two basic features of protracted war characterize and define it as a distinct type of people’s war or revolutionary war. These two basic features make a people’s war a protracted war. This is Sison’s people’s war, a protracted people’s war and this is what he wants to be reaffirmed as a universal truth as it has been upheld as an absolute truth in our twenty-five years of revolutionary struggle.

Protracted war was proven correct in semicolonial and semifeudal China with outstanding success. But does it mean it is universal, an absolute truth for all semicolonial and semifeudal societies?

Does it mean it is correct and applicable in “semicolonial and semifeudal” Philippines? If a country is semicolonial and semifeudal, does it automatically follow that its people’s war must take the form of protracted war? Is the semicolonial and semifeudal question the decisive determinant in the strategy of protracted war?

Let us first review Mao’s revolution, the internal logic of his protracted war theory, and why it was proven successful in China.

After the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921, the national democratic revolution in China passed through four periods. The first covers the “First Revolutionary Civil War”(1924-27) also known as the Northern Expedition. The second covers the “Second Revolutionary Civil War”(1927-37) also known as the “Agrarian Revolutionary War” or the period of reaction. The third covers the period of the “War of Resistance Against Japan” (1937-45). And the last and final stage, the “Third Revolutionary Civil War”(1945-49) which resulted in the victory of the people’s democratic revolution in China led by the CCP.

The first two periods both ended in defeat. Mao took over the leadership of the CCP in the latter stage of the second period (January 1935 Tsunyi Conference) during the Long March, and from thereon, the Chinese revolution took the path of protracted war.

In 1921, the year it was founded, the CCP was minuscule, with less than a hundred members. It grew very slowly in its first years. At the time of the Second Congress (1922) there were only 123 members, and 432 by the Third Congress (1923). It reached a thousand members by the time of the Fourth Congress in 1925. The CCP was deeply entrenched in the cities, among the workers, but was marginal in the countryside. From 1925, it expanded rapidly to about 30,000 members by 1926. By

1927, it reached a high of 58,000. The CCP's united front tactics with the Guomintang was crucial in this upsurge.

As early as 1922, there were already talks with Sun Yat-sen for the possibility of an alliance between the Guomintang and the CCP, between China and the Soviet Union. By 1923, the Guomintang approved a proclamation affirming a united front struggle with the CCP against the Northern warlords and against the unequal treaties imposed by the imperialist countries on China.

A delegate from the Communist International — Maring, a Dutchman who was very familiar with the Far East and attended the founding congress of the CCP — played an important personal role in forging this united front with Sun Yat-sen. By August 1923, Sun sent a mission to Moscow led by Chiang Kai-shek. In return, a Soviet mission led by Michael Borodin arrived in Canton in September.

Borodin participated actively in the movement to reorganize the Guomintang, serving as its political adviser. A provisional executive committee of the Guomintang was formed in October which included a CCP member. A Congress for reorganizing the Guomintang was planned for January 1924. During this time, the gap between Sun Yat-sen and the imperialist countries continued to widen. Sun declared publicly that he had lost all faith in the Western powers and no longer trusted anyone but the USSR.

The national congress of the Guomintang of January 1924 in Canton deepened the content of Sun Yat-sen's "Three People's Principles". The principle of nationalism was equated with anti-imperialist struggle; the principle of democracy underscored the power of the people; and the principle of the well-being of the people meant socialism. These three principles were extended into three new policies: cooperation with the Soviet Union, alliance with the Chinese Communists, and support of the worker and peasant movements.

The Guomintang apparatus was reorganized and some key positions were given to CCP members, particularly in the organization and propaganda departments. Most of the effort was concentrated on the army. A military academy was founded in Whampoa in May 1924. Head of the academy was Chiang Kai-shek (who was integrated by Stalin into the Comintern!), adviser was Soviet general Vasily Blucher (better known as Galen), and its political commissar was Chou En-lai. The army itself was reorganized and given political commissars.

This united front created extremely favorable conditions for the advance of the Chinese revolution and the rapid growth of the CCP. By 1925, broad popular movements suddenly exploded, participated in by millions of people across China. All preparations were already underway for the Northern Expedition against the warlords and the struggle to unify China under a central government when Sun Yat-sen died of cancer in March 1925. His sudden death triggered intense struggle within the Guomintang, between its left and right wings which ultimately led to the collapse of the united front and the defeat of the revolution.

In an attempt to stop the splintering of the Guomintang after Sun's death, the left wing, with the support of the CCP, convened the Second Congress of the Guomintang in January 1926. The left consolidated its positions: out of 36 members of the Central Committee, 13 were from the left and 7 from the center.

But the victory of the left wing in the Second Congress was shortlived. Chiang Kai-shek, organized a probing attack in March 1926 against the Soviet advisers and the CCP. By May, the Communists were ousted from the leadership of the departments of organization and propaganda, and measures were taken in Canton to restrict the activity of the unions. Chiang officially took control of the government army by June 1926.

The CCP, preferred to bide its time and not provoke a confrontation. It hoped that the Northern Expedition, which was now imminent, would allow it to reestablish its influence. But the Expedition, though it was successful militarily in defeating most of the Northern warlords, became instead an opportunity for Chiang to consolidate his position with the support of these warlords plus their colonial patrons. By 1927, the right wing of the Guomintang decided on a total realignment of political forces in China, entered into agreements with the imperialist powers while breaking up relations with the revolutionaries who had now become a threat. Since the North has been weakened due to the Northern Expedition and many of its armies have defected to the South, this became increasingly possible.

Chiang set up headquarters in Nanchang, the capital of Jiangxi while the official Nationalist government moved to Wuhan. The Wuhan-based government was dominated by the left wing of the Guomintang, especially by Xu Quian, Sun Yat-sen's widow. Borodin and the Soviet advisers exerted quite an influence and the Communists were very active, as were the mass organizations they influenced: the peasant associations, the student organizations, and specially the General Pan-Chinese Union, which had three million members.

The struggle between Wuhan and Nanchang reached a crucial stage in the struggle for Shanghai. This was China's largest city, the center of the workers' movement after 1919 and the base of Chinese financial groups and their imperialist cohorts. Twice, in November 1926 and February 1927, the Shanghai Communists with the workers' unions attempted armed uprisings in the city but failed. On their third attempt, on March 18, 1927, the General Union of Shanghai, led by the CCP, unleashed an insurrection involving 800,000 workers. In four days the union militias succeeded in defeating and routing the northern troops of the warlords and took control of the city. Chiang Kai-shek's troops did not arrive until March 23, when the fighting was over. The victory of the General Union of Shanghai precipitated the open crisis within the Guomintang.

Chiang Kai-shek did not immediately make his decisive move. Political authority was held by a provisional popular government which included Communists. But Chiang's army occupied the city. Though it refused to dissolve the armed militias of the unions, the CCP however, left them and the whole working class politically unprepared for Chiang's offensive. In this volatile condition, the CCP continued to pursue the conciliatory and capitulationist line established by the Comintern. They agreed not to threaten the status of the imperialist concessions. They also agreed to confine union activities to economic action. They continued to treat Chiang Kai-shek like a trustworthy revolutionary leader.

Early morning of April 12, Chiang Kai-shek made his decisive move. The buildings of the union militias were attacked and the people inside were massacred. Chou En-lai just managed to escape but other Communist leaders were killed. Unarmed, the worker's movement was virtually defenseless. The unions were banned and the Communists were defeated. The repression of the unions, other mass organizations and the Communists spread to all the provinces controlled by Chiang Kai-shek's army. In the areas held by the Northern warlords, anti-Communist repression intensified for they no longer feared reprisals from the Nationalist army now firmly controlled by Chiang Kai-shek.

Up to this point, the official Nationalist government based in Wuhan continued to hold the two provinces of Hubei and Hunan and to rely on the coalition between the left-wing Guomintang and the CCP. The peasant associations there remained strong and active (with 9 millions members). On May 1, 1927, the labor unions held their Fourth National Workers Congress, attended by 300 delegates (representing 3 million unionized workers).

Because of the April 12 attack, Chiang Kai-shek was expelled by the Wuhan government from the

Guomintang. But on April 18, he established a rival “national government” in Nanking claiming to be the legitimate heir of Sun Yat-sen’s Guomintang. However, because of the class character of the Wuhan leadership plus the indecisiveness of the CCP and its conciliatory line to both the right and left wings of the Guomintang, the Wuhan government finally succumbed to Chiang Kai-shek’s unrelenting pressure.

By July 15, Wang Jing-wei, the nominal head of Wuhan, officially announced the expulsion of the Communists from the Guomintang and made peace with Nanking. The Communists went underground and the Soviet advisers were expelled.

In a special meeting on August 7, 1927, the Central Committee of the CCP abandoned its policy of a united front with the Guomintang. Chen Du-xiu, who had been secretary-general since the party’s founding, was discharged and replaced by Qu Qiu-bai who had lived in Moscow for some time and an avid follower of the Stalin.

Chen Du-xiu was held responsible for all the opportunist errors and failures of the party. But it was very clear that all major policies and tactics pursued by the CCP from 1924-27 emanated from Moscow and transmitted by the representatives of the Comintern in China. Even Mao, in his writings, failed to cite Stalin and the Comintern for these Right errors and heaped all the blame upon Chen Du-xiu. Even the swing to “Left” errors by the adventurist elements who succeed Chen Du-xiu was not traced to Stalin and the Comintern. A series of unsuccessful armed uprisings during the second half of 1927 followed the opportunist errors in the period of the united front.

On August 1, 1927, Zhou En-lai led an uprising in Nanchang, capital of Kiangsi Province, with the support of He Long, Ye Ting and Zhu De, leaders of the local Nationalist armies. More than 30,000 troops took part in the uprising. They were successful for a few days but by August 5, they were forced to evacuate Nanchang because of the pressure from Chiang Kai-shek’s army. They suffered a major defeat while withdrawing from Nanchang towards Kwantung Province. Some of the insurgents joined Peng Pai’s rural Red base in east Guandong. Peng Pai pioneered the building of rural guerilla Red bases long before Mao started his in the Chingkang Mountains. Zhu De, a former warlord turned Communist, and another group of insurgents remained in Hunan for a time before rejoining Mao’s troops the following year. The anniversary of this insurrection is celebrated as the beginning of the People’s Liberation Army.

The Autumn Harvest Uprising led by Mao was launched in September 1927 on the Hunan-Kiangsi border. He was put in charge of the uprising because a year before it was in this area that Mao carried out his famous investigation of the peasant movement. The first attempt to mobilize the peasants there around a revolutionary army led by the CCP was a failure. The revolutionary troops were routed and retreated to the mountains inland. Some of them retreated to the Chingkang Mountains with Mao.

At the end of 1927, the CCP prepared for a third insurrection. Canton was chosen because of the strong Communist mass base among the workers, the internal rift among the region’s Guomintang authorities, and the support anticipated from the neighboring rural Red base of Peng Pai. Qu Qiu-bai, was encouraged in his plans by the Comintern. The Comintern delegates in China pushed for this insurrection and this in turn, was related to the struggle between Stalin and Trotsky which was reaching a critical point at that time with the Chinese revolution as one of the major disputes. On December 11, the Communists occupied the city and proclaimed a revolutionary government. Property was confiscated and nationalized. All debts were cancelled. But Chiang Kai-shek’s generals, whose troops were five times larger than those of the revolutionaries, reacted immediately. The insurgents could not defend themselves and a wave of brutal repression swept through the city. With the crushing of the Canton uprising, the first period of the Chinese revolution came to an abrupt

end. The retreat to the Chingkang Mountains signalled the beginning of the second period.

What is the decisive significance of this detailed narration and clarification of the first period of the Chinese national democratic revolution immediately after the founding of the CCP? It **belies the universality and absoluteness of the protracted war strategy even in China and stresses the historical context and particular conditions from which it arose in the development of the Chinese revolution.**

At that time, China was already semicolonial and semifeudal. There as no unified reactionary rule, various warlords across China were engaged in incessant wars, imperialist powers contended for spheres of influence. The broad masses of the Chinese people were in revolt. In short all the factors for protracted war were present. But Mao never insisted that they should have pursued the line of protracted war even as early as the first period of the revolution.

Mao, in all his writings, never condemned this first period and the tactics pursued as “Left” adventurism, or in the words of Sison, as “urban insurrectionism”. He even hailed the three armed uprisings in the latter period of 1927 as glorious revolutionary struggles of the Chinese working class. What Mao condemned as erroneous were the Right opportunist errors principally in the united front and criticized the failure to give proper emphasis and correct policies on the peasant question. Never did Mao insist or insinuate, in retrospect, that the CCP should have pursued, at the very outset, the strategy of protracted war upon the establishment of the Chinese party in 1921. Mao affirmed the basic correctness of pursuing a united front policy during this period determined by the peculiar objective and subjective conditions prevailing in China from 1921-27. He never thought of imposing the strategy of protracted war under these conditions although China, even at that time, was semicolonial and semifeudal, and autonomous warlord regimes predominated — the very objective conditions for his strategy of revolution.

According to Mao: *“The revolutionary war of 1924-27 was waged, basically speaking, in conditions in which the international proletariat and the Chinese proletariat and their parties exercised political influence on the Chinese national bourgeoisie and its parties and entered into political cooperation with them. However this revolutionary war failed at the critical juncture, first of all because the big bourgeoisie turned traitor, and at the same time because the opportunists within the revolutionary ranks voluntarily surrendered the leadership of the revolution.”*

This is a most precise assessment and never did Mao say in all his assessment of this period that this revolutionary war failed because it did not pursue the strategy of protracted war and was guilty of urban insurrectionism or it did not transform itself at the critical juncture into a protracted people’s war. In another article, Mao said: *“Because the proletariat failed to exercise firm leadership in the revolution of 1926-27 which started from Kwangtung and spread towards the Yangtse River, leadership was seized by the comprador and landlord classes and the revolution was replaced by counter-revolution. The bourgeois-democratic revolution thus met with a temporary defeat.”*

The basic point here is not merely to cite a particular period in the history of the Chinese revolution to simply belie protracted war as an absolute imperative in a semicolonial and semifeudal society. The more essential point is to insist that neither tactics nor strategy are universal formulas or unchanging absolutes based on general categories of socio-economic conditions. They are but forms of struggle concretely determined by the confluence and totality of factors in the historical development of a revolutionary struggle.

It should be stressed that Mao began to evolve the rudiments of a protracted war strategy only after the defeat of the first revolutionary civil war, after the collapse of the united front, the crushing of the armed uprisings in the cities, and after the forced retreat to the Chingkang Mountains due to the

bloody and brutal anti-communist offensive of Chiang Kai-shek and his open declaration of civil war against the revolutionary forces.

Mao began to evolve the separate elements of protracted war not simply because in his analysis China is semicolonial and semifeudal but because these are correct military principles determined and dictated by the overall conditions and confluence of factors then prevailing in China after the crushing defeat in the first period of the Chinese revolution and the beginning of the second period which was a period of reaction. But it was really during the last years of the second period at the time that Japan began its war of aggression against China that Mao was able to systematize his protracted war theory into an integral strategy of revolutionary struggle. And it was only then that he was able to conceptualize such a strategy not because it was only at that time that he became "aware" of the correctness of such a strategy but because it was only then, during the impending war of aggression of Japan, that the conditions for such a strategy in China arose and became dominant. In the second period, Mao was more concerned on how the armed revolutionary forces can survive and develop in rural Red bases through an agrarian war towards a nationwide revolutionary high tide, while in the third period, it was already a question of how the armed revolutionary forces can succeed from the strategic defensive to the strategic offensive, from the countryside to the cities through a strategy of protracted people's war.

In Mao's basic writings during the early part of the second period (*"Why Is It That Red Political Power Can Exist In China," "The Struggle In The Chingkang Mountains"* and *"A Single Spark Can Start A Prairie Fire"*) what he was developing and evolving was how to correctly conduct a peasant revolutionary war and build rural Red bases while waiting for or creating a "nationwide revolutionary high tide". In fact, in all these writings, never did he use the term "protracted war" and he was not, in theory and practice, advocating at this time a strategy of protracted war.

**Hence, in two historical periods of the Chinese revolution, Mao never advocated protracted war as the "strategy" for the Chinese revolution in the conditions prevailing in China in those times.**

Only by 1936-38, during the end of the second period and the beginning of the third period, during the transition and strategic repositioning from the second to the third period highlighted by the Long March, did Mao push forward the complete and comprehensive line of protracted war into an integral strategy as presented in his four basic military writings (*"Problems Of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War," "Problems Of Strategy In The Guerilla War Against Japan", "On Protracted War,"* and *"Problems Of War And Strategy"*).

Let us trace and study how Mao's conception of "protracted war" evolved from 1928 to 1938. In 1928, speaking of the reasons for the emergence and survival of red political power in China, Mao said: *"The long-term survival inside a country of one or more special areas under Red political power encircled by a White regime is a phenomenon that has never occurred anywhere else in the world. There are special reasons for this unusual phenomenon. It can exist and develop only under certain conditions."*

By "Red political power" encircled by a White regime, Mao was principally referring not to guerilla zones or guerilla bases like we have here in Philippines, but a "Chingkang-type" armed independent regime. And for Mao, as he wrote it in 1928, the long-term survival of this "Red political power" is an "unusual phenomenon" that has never occurred anywhere else in the world and "can exist and develop only under certain conditions." Mao cited five conditions which he calls "special reasons for this unusual phenomenon."

First: *"it cannot occur in any imperialist country or in any colony under direct imperialist rule, but*

*can only occur in China which is economically backward, and which is semicolonial and under indirect imperialist rule."*

So Mao, at this time, believed that Red political power can only emerge and exist in a backward semicolony and **not in a colonial country** directly ruled by imperialism. How did Mao explain the significance of this "semicolonial" status to the emergence and survival of "Red political power"? Unlike Sison who automatically concluded that just because a country is backward (semifeudal) and semicolonial protracted war is correct, Mao on his part attempted to elaborate the concrete connection and meaning of this "semicolonial status" of China to his view of the "long term survival" of Red political power surrounded by a White regime.

Mao explains why this Red political power, this unusual phenomenon can only occur in semicolonial China: *"this unusual phenomenon can only occur in conjunction with another unusual phenomenon, namely war within the White regime. It is a feature of semicolonial China that, since the first year of the Republic (1912), the various cliques of old and new warlords have waged incessant wars against one another, supported by imperialism abroad and by the comprador and landlord classes at home. Such phenomenon is to be found in none of the imperialist countries nor for that matter in any colony under direct imperialist rule, but only in a country like China which is under indirect imperialist rule."*

Therefore for Mao, in elaborating the significance of the semicolonial character of China, he asserted that this unusual phenomenon of Red political power can only occur in conjunction with another unusual phenomenon which is war within the White regime that is encircling the armed independent regime of Red political power.

At this point, Mao was interconnecting three points: the backward and semicolonial character of China, the unusual phenomenon of war within the White regime, and the unusual phenomenon of long-term survival of Red political power. How did Mao explain the interconnection or the logical sequence of this three points into an integral whole?

Referring to the second unusual phenomenon — war within the White regime — Mao said: *"Two things account for its occurrence, namely, a localized agricultural economy (not a unified capitalist economy) and the imperialist policy of marking off spheres of influence in order to divide and exploit. The prolonged splits and wars within the White regime provide a condition for the emergence and persistence of one or more small Red areas under the leadership of the Communist Party amidst the encirclement of the White regime. The independent regime carved out on the borders of Hunan and Kiangsi Provinces is one of many such small areas."*

This is how Mao interconnected the three points. The White regime cannot unite and instead, will be enmeshed in prolonged internal splits and wars because the economy is localized and not unified and because several imperialist countries ruling indirectly in China and competing with each other are pursuing a policy of grabbing spheres of influence in collusion with local warlords and are pitting one warlord clique against another to divide and exploit China. Mao was speaking not of an ordinary semicolonial country ruled indirectly by a single imperialist country but a complex and unique semicolonial country ruled indirectly by several imperialist countries with their own spheres of influence across China and with their own warlord cliques maintaining autonomous regimes through independent warlord armies.

The essential interconnection is that there is no unified reactionary rule in China as a result of this multi-imperialist semicolonial rule competing for spheres of influence and autonomous warlord regimes engaged in prolonged wars and splits encouraged by imperialism. This is the essential connection and significance of the "semicolonial" character of China relevant to the emergence of Red political power.



In concluding his explanation of the first “special reason” for the long-term survival of Red political power, Mao said: *“In difficult or critical times some comrades often have doubts about the survival of Red political power and become pessimistic. The reason is that they have not found the correct explanation for its emergence and survival. If only we realize that splits and wars will never cease within the White regime in China, we shall have no doubts about the emergence, survival and daily growth of Red political power.”*

In this statement, it is very clear that the “semicolonial” question as a “special reason” for the emergence and survival of Red political power is essentially interlinked, or to use Sison’s fancy term, intertwined, and cannot be separated with the question of the incessant wars within the White regime or the fundamental question of unified or divided reactionary rule.

In Mao’s *A Single Spark Can Start A Prairie Fire* written on January 1930, the presentation is more direct to the point: *“China is a semicolonial country for which many imperialist powers are contending. If one clearly understands this, one will understand first why the unusual phenomenon of prolonged and tangled warfare within the ruling classes is only to be found in China, why this warfare is steadily growing fiercer and spreading, and why there has never been a unified regime.”*

Mao’s second special reason was *“the regions where China’s Red political power has first emerged and is able to last for a long time have not been those unaffected by the democratic revolution, such as Szechuan, Kweichow, Yunnan and the northern provinces, but regions such as the provinces of Hunan, Kwangtung, Hupeh and Kiangsi, where the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers rose in great numbers in the course of the bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1926-27.”*

Again, Mao was referring to the concrete context for the emergence and survival of Red political power. For him, the living political experience and tempering of the masses in revolutionary struggle, a people that have gone through the revolution of 1924-27 is a vital factor. The armed independent regime and armed struggle in the provinces of Hunan, Kwantung, Hupeh and Kiangsi was a **direct and immediate** continuation of the revolutionary struggles of the first period of the Chinese revolution.

The Red army that was built in the Red areas during the second revolutionary war, according to Mao, was a *“split-off from the National Revolutionary Army which underwent democratic political training and came under the influence of the masses of workers and peasants.”* It was the same army that fought in the three great uprisings in the latter half of 1927 and a part of which retreated and converged at the Chinggang Mountains.

It should be noted with great emphasis, that like Vietnam, China had a history of uninterrupted wars, and its revolutionary war was a direct and immediate continuation of the preceding wars that has put the country in constant turmoil. China, since the Opium War of the 1840’s was virtually in a permanent state of war.

Mao’s third point is quite revealing. According to Mao: *“whether it is possible for the people’s political power in small areas to last depends on whether the nationwide revolutionary situation continues to develop. If it does, then the small Red areas will undoubtedly last for a long time, and will, moreover, inevitably become one of the many forces for winning nationwide political power. If the nationwide revolutionary situation does not continue to develop but stagnates for a fairly long time, then it will be impossible for the small Red areas to last long.”*

Here, Mao hinged the long-term survival of the Red areas and the growth of its armed struggle on the development of the “nationwide revolutionary situation”. If nationwide revolutionary situation “stagnates for a fairly long time” then the long-term survival of the small Red areas was impossible.

Mao was categorical in asserting the decisive significance of a “nation-wide revolutionary situation” in determining the prospect of the growth or decline of the Red areas.

The prospect of survival and advance is not determined solely by social conditions remaining as it is, meaning, semicolonial and semifeudal or by correct subjective steps like military strategy and tactics, but by a continuous development of a “nation-wide revolutionary situation”. When Mao wrote his article, his evaluation was that *“the revolutionary situation is continuing to develop with the continuous splits and wars within the ranks of the comprador and landlord classes and of the international bourgeoisie. Therefore, the small Red areas will undoubtedly last for a long time, and will continue to expand and gradually approach the goal of seizing political power throughout the country.”*

Mao's fourth point was *“the existence of a regular Red army of adequate strength is a necessary condition for the existence of Red political power.”* According to Mao: *“even when the masses of workers and peasants are active, it is definitely impossible to create an independent regime, let alone an independent regime which is durable and grows daily, unless we have regular forces of adequate strength.”*

What is this regular Red army that Mao is referring to?

The Red Army in the Red areas were organized into divisions and regiments down to the squad level. Mao's Fourth Army of Workers and Peasants numbered about 40,000 men concentrated in the Chinggang Mountains in 1928 when Mao's troops were reinforced by those of Zhu De, Lin Biao and Chen Yi.

The Chinggang military base, at the border of Hunan and Kiangsi, was an isolated region of hills covered with forests. The territory (250 kilometers in circumference) was almost unpopulated. It included only five villages, where 2,500 people lived in almost total isolation and where social relations were still based on the clan system. At the end of 1928, this Red base was further strengthened by the defection of a large Nationalist unit whose leader, Peng De-huai, would later become one of the principal leaders of the Red army.

In 1930, there were about fifteen small Red areas scattered in South and Central China. In that same year, the Tenth Army was organized by Fang Zhi-min in Northeast Kiangsi. In the Henan-Hubei-Anhui border, Chang Kou-tao formed the Fourth Group of Armies. But all these Red areas resembled those of the Chinggang mountain. By the time the Red Army began the Long March in October 1934, it numbered around 300,000 troops.

According to Mao, *“if we have local Red Guards only but no regular Red Army, then we cannot cope with the regular White forces, but only with the landlord's levies.”* Indeed, how can the Red area cope with the regular pattern of encirclement and suppression campaigns of the White forces if it has only local guerrillas and local militias like we have in our guerilla fronts? In our case, we cannot even cope with the landlord's levies or the struggle for rent reduction after 25 years of protracted war!

Just imagine the magnitude of the battles in the Red areas. In the first encirclement campaign in late 1930, the White forces employed about 100,000 men against the 40,000 of the Red Army concentrated in a single county in Kiangsi. In the second campaign which lasted only one month before it was smashed, the enemy troops numbered 200,000 against the 30,000 of the Red Army. One month after the second campaign, the third campaign began with the enemy numbering about 300,000 against the Red Army's 30,000. No figures are available regarding the fourth campaign. But this was logically larger in magnitude for it attacked almost all Red areas. The fifth campaign began

at the end of 1933 which resulted in the Long March and the strategic retreat and shift of 12,500 kilometers for the Red Army from Southern Kiangsi to a new base area in Northern Shensi. It began the Long March with 300,000 men. By the time it reached Shensi, it was reduced to a few tens of thousands.

Mao's fifth point is the necessity for a strong Communist Party organization whose policy is correct. In seven years, after the CCP was founded in 1921, it grew from less than a hundred to almost 60,000 members. Before the Long March of 1934, even before Mao took over the leadership of the Party, it reached a high of 300,000 members!

**Let us sum up Mao's five "special reasons" or "certain conditions" for the emergence and long-term survival of Red political power. First, no unified reactionary regime in semicolonial China for which many imperialist powers are contending bringing about continuous splits and wars within the ranks of the ruling classes and of the international bourgeoisie. Second, the regions where China's Red political power had first emerged and was able to last for a long time were those that passed through the direct experience of the 1926-27 democratic revolution. Third, a developing nationwide revolutionary high tide characterized by continuous splits and wars among reactionary forces without which the long term survival of Red areas is impossible. Fourth, the existence of a regular Red Army of adequate strength is a necessary condition for the existence of Red political power. Fifth, a strong Communist Party organization with a correct policy is also required.**

Any revolutionary element without the deadweight of dogma cramping his brain can easily understand that Mao's concept of the emergence and long-term survival of rural Red political power depends on very concrete and peculiar conditions then prevailing in China. His concept of building rural Red areas is not simply the product of a general analysis of the semicolonial and semifeudal character of Chinese society but the product of a particular analysis of its peculiar features which he calls "special reasons" or "certain conditions" for the emergence and long-term survival of Red political power in the countryside.

Mao's general analysis of the semicolonial and semifeudal character of Chinese society determined the national democratic or bourgeois nature of the Chinese revolution and the necessity to complete this revolution before proceeding to the socialist revolution. Nothing astounding about this because even in Russia, a capitalist country, Lenin saw the necessity to first complete this bourgeois revolution before proceeding to his socialist revolution because of the existence of Tsarism and the widespread survivals of serfdom.

Mao's particular analysis of the peculiar features of semicolonial and semifeudal China at given historical junctures determined the tactics (or what we usually call strategy) in conducting revolutionary struggle. In the first period, the revolutionary war was conducted through a united front with the Guomintang against the warlords and the imperialist powers. In the second period, under conditions brought about by the defeat in the first period, it was conducted through an agrarian revolutionary war, building rural Red areas and building a rural-based Red army in anticipation of a revolutionary high tide which will culminate in urban armed insurrections and the Red army advancing from the countryside. In both periods, the "strategy" or what should properly be called tactics was not protracted people's war and Mao supported the Party line as correct.

Even in the early part of the second period of the Chinese revolution, during the period of the agrarian revolutionary war and period of reaction, Mao's line was not yet a strategy of protracted war. He opposed the "Left" adventurist line of Li Li-san not because it deviated from the strategy of protracted war since even Mao's strategy was not protracted war at that time. In January 1930, Mao wrote *A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire* criticizing certain pessimistic views then existing in

the Party. In this article, he criticized those comrades who “though they believe that a revolutionary high tide is inevitable, they do not believe it to be imminent.” The point of dispute was how to correctly appraise the prevailing situation in China at that time and how to settle the attendant question of what action to take. Mao took the position that the revolutionary high tide is imminent and not only inevitable and proposed a corresponding course of action that opposed the ideas of “guerrillaism” which was dominant in the Central Committee led by Li Li-san.

Here is how Mao formulated his criticism: *“They seem to think that, since the revolutionary high tide is still remote, it will be labor lost to attempt to establish political power by hard work. Instead, they want to extend our political influence through the easier method of roving guerilla actions, and, once the masses throughout the country have been won over, or more or less won over, they want to launch a nationwide armed insurrection which, with the participation of the Red Army, would become a great nationwide revolution. Their theory that we must first win over the masses on a countrywide scale and in all regions and then establish political power does not accord with the actual state of the Chinese revolution. This theory derives mainly from the failure to understand clearly that China is a semicolonial country for which many imperialist powers are contending.”*

In opposing “the policy which merely calls for roving guerilla actions” which according to Mao cannot accomplish the task of accelerating the imminent revolutionary high tide, he proposed *“the policy of establishing base areas; of systematically setting up political power; of deepening the agrarian revolution; of expanding the people’s armed forces by a comprehensive process of building up first the township Red Guards, then the district Red Guards, then the county Red Guards, then the local Red Army troops, all the way up to the regular Red Army troops; of spreading political power by advancing in a series of waves, etc. etc. Only thus is it possible to build the confidence of the revolutionary masses throughout the country, as the Soviet Union has built it throughout the world. Only thus is it possible to create tremendous difficulties for the reactionary classes, shake their foundations and hasten their internal disintegration. Only thus is it possible to create a Red Army which will become the chief weapon for the great revolution of the future. In short, only thus is it possible to hasten the revolutionary high tide.”*

The policies proposed by Mao are elements of protracted war as we understand them in our own revolutionary practice. But by themselves, do they constitute the strategy of protracted war? Was Mao, by enumerating these policies, actually proposing a strategy of protracted war in seizing political power without calling it protracted war? If we abstract Mao’s proposals from his analysis of the political situation at that time, we might really get the impression that Mao is already proposing a strategy of protracted war. But this was how Mao appraised the political situation in China or the balance of forces at that time: *“Although the subjective forces of the revolution in China are now weak, so also are all organizations (organs of political power, armed forces, political parties, etc.) of the reactionary ruling classes, resting as they do on the backward and fragile social and economic structure of China. This helps to explain why revolution cannot break out at once in the countries of Western Europe where, although the subjective forces of revolution are now perhaps somewhat stronger than in China, the forces of the reactionary ruling class are many times stronger. In China the revolution will undoubtedly move towards a high tide more rapidly, for although the subjective forces of the revolution at present are weak, the forces of the counter-revolution are relatively weak too.”*

Will this appraisal lead to a protracted war strategy of revolution? Compare this to Mao’s appraisal of the balance in December 1936 when he wrote *Problems of Strategy In China’s Revolutionary War*. Here, Mao elaborated his strategy and tactics ensuing from four basic characteristics of China’s revolutionary war at that period. The second characteristic was that the enemy was big and powerful and the third characteristic was that the Red Army was small and weak. According to Mao, *“from this sharp contrast have arisen the strategy and tactics of the Red Army...it follows from the second*

*and third characteristics that it is impossible for the Chinese Red Army to grow very rapidly or defeat its enemy quickly; in other words, the war will be protracted and may even be lost if mishandled."*

How did Mao appraise the enemy in December 1936? Mao said: *"How do matters stand with the Guomintang, the enemy of the Red Army? It is a party that has seized political power and has more or less stabilized its power. It has gained the support of the world's principal imperialist states. It has remodelled its army which has thus become different from any other army in Chinese history and on the whole similar to the armies of modern states; this army is much better supplied with weapons and material than the Red Army and is larger than any army in Chinese history, or for that matter than the standing army of any other country. There is a world of difference between the Guomintang army and the Red Army. The Guomintang controls the key positions or lifelines in the politics, economy, communications and culture of China; its political power is nationwide."*

How did Mao appraise the Red Army in December 1936? *"Our political power exists in scattered and isolated mountainous or remote regions and receives no outside help whatsoever. Economic and cultural conditions in the revolutionary base areas are backward compared to those in the Guomintang areas. The revolutionary base areas embrace only rural districts and small towns. These areas were extremely small in the beginning and have not grown much larger since. Moreover, they are fluid and not stationary, and the Red Army has no really consolidated bases. ..The Red Army is numerically small, its arms are poor, and it has great difficulty in obtaining supplies such as food, bedding and clothing."* Not to mention the fact, that after the Long March, according to Mao, *"the revolutionary bases were lost, the Red Army was reduced from 300,000 to a few tens of thousands, the membership of the CCP fell from 300,000 to a few tens of thousands, and the Party organizations in the Guomintang areas were almost all destroyed."*

With the sharp contrast of Mao's appraisal of the political situation or balance of forces in January 1930 with that of December 1936, how can we speak of Mao advocating protracted war in the former? The truth is, during the second period of the Chinese revolution, Mao's "strategy" was not protracted war and it was very apparent in his writings at that time.

According to Mao: *"The subjective forces of the revolution have indeed been greatly weakened since the defeat of the revolution of 1927. The remaining forces are very small and those comrades who judge by appearances alone naturally feel pessimistic. But if we judge by essentials, it is quite another story. Here we can apply the old Chinese saying, 'A single spark can start a prairie fire' In other words, our forces, although very small at present, will grow very rapidly. In the conditions prevailing in China, their growth is not only possible but indeed inevitable, as the May 30<sup>th</sup> Movement and the Great Revolution which followed have fully proved."*

What is this May 30<sup>th</sup> Movement and Great Revolution? Mao is referring to the May 30, 1925 massacre of unarmed Chinese demonstrators by English police of the international concession at Shanghai killing 10 and seriously wounding 50. They were protesting the killing of a Chinese worker on May 15 by a Japanese foreman in a Japanese cotton mill that was on strike. This incident triggered a nationwide upsurge of protest bringing together diverse forces. It was the impetus that led to the 1926-27 revolution. The "Great Revolution" Mao is referring to is the revolution of 1926-27.

Now, by using the May 30<sup>th</sup> Movement and the Revolution of 1926-27 as his reference point in proving not only the inevitability but the imminence of a revolutionary high tide, Mao is speaking not of a protracted war type of revolution but a revolution similar to that of 1927 which was insurrectionary in character. Mao, in Sison's standard, is guilty of urban insurrectionism! This "single spark" concept of Mao is not protracted war but an insurrectional "strategy" that gives

premium to an objective revolutionary situation, to a revolutionary high tide not to the balance of military forces, not to the stage by stage development of the military struggle from the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate and finally towards the strategic offensive from the countryside to the cities.

Listen to how Mao asserted his point: *"We need only look at the strikes by the workers, the uprisings by the peasants, the mutinies of the soldiers and the strikes of the students which are developing in many places to see that it cannot be long before a 'spark' kindles a 'prairie fire'.* The fire of "insurrectionism" is raging in Mao's appraisal of the situation!

What was the official 'strategy' of the CCP at that time as approved by the Sixth Congress of 1928 in Moscow? It was still basically the launching of armed uprisings led by the working class in the cities and the peasantry as its main reserve. Did Mao oppose such a "strategy"?

Mao did not oppose but supported the "strategy" of the Sixth Congress. According to Mao: *"The political line and the organizational line laid down by the Party's Sixth National Congress are correct, i.e., the revolution at the present stage is democratic and not socialist, and the present task of the Party [here the words 'in the big cities' should have been added: Mao] is to win over the masses and not to stage immediate insurrections. Nevertheless, the revolution will develop swiftly, and we should take a positive attitude in our propaganda and preparations for insurrections."* Mao never proposed a protracted war strategy as opposed to the "insurrectional" line of the Sixth Congress.

What Mao tried to stress in his polemics with the Central Committee of Li Li-san was this: *"Building a proletarian foundation for the Party and setting up Party branches in industrial enterprises in key districts are important organizational tasks for the Party at present; but at the same time the major prerequisites for helping the struggle in the cities and hastening the rise of the revolutionary tide are specifically the development of the struggle in the countryside, the establishment of Red political power in small areas, and the creation and expansion of the Red Army. Therefore it would be wrong to abandon the struggle in the cities, but in our opinion it would also be wrong for any of our Party members to fear the growth of peasant strength lest it should outstrip the workers' strength and harm the revolution. For the revolution in semicolonial China, the peasant struggle must always fail if it does not have the leadership of the workers, but the revolution is never harmed if the peasant struggle outstrip the forces of the workers."*

The main line of criticism of Mao against the Central Committee at that time was on the question of "dispersal" or "concentration" of the Red Army. Mao quoted the letter of his Front Committee to the Central Committee: *"To preserve the Red Army and arouse the masses, the Central Committee asks us to divide our forces into very small units and disperse them over the countryside... This is an unrealistic view. In the winter of 1927-28, we did plan to disperse our forces, with each company or battalion operating on its own and adopting guerilla tactics in order to arouse the masses while trying not to present a target for the enemy; we have tried this out many time, but have failed every time."*

The letter cited the reasons why the Red Army failed every time it tried to disperse its forces. But Mao was dissatisfied with the reasons cited because they were negatively presented and far from adequate. According to Mao: *"The positive reason for concentrating our forces is that only concentration will enable us to wipe out comparatively large enemy units and occupy towns. Only after we have wiped out comparatively large enemy units and occupied towns can we arouse the masses on a broad scale and set up political power extending over a number of adjoining counties. Only thus can we make a widespread impact (what we call 'extending our political influence'), and contribute effectively to speeding the day of the revolutionary high tide."*

This debate on the question of “dispersal” and “concentration” of the Red Army was not a question of insurrectionism or protracted war between the Central Committee of Li Li-san and the Front Committee of Mao Ze Dong. But for Sison, this kind of debate on the mode of operation of the People’s Army became a question of insurrectionism or protracted war in his Reaffirm.

The funny thing is, he identified the question of “concentration” with insurrectionism, and “dispersal” with protracted war! In China’s case, it was Li Li-san, the famous “Left” adventurer who aspired for a “quick victory” who was the advocate of dispersal and guerrillaism — small and roving guerilla units to arouse the masses on a widescale. While it was Mao, the founder of the theory of protracted war, who insisted on the basic principle of “concentration” and building of a regular Red Army as a condition for the long-term survival of Red areas and for the advance of the armed struggle.

It was in his article *Problems of Strategy In China’s Revolutionary War* written on December 1936 that Mao systematically criticized the “Left” errors of the second period in direct relation to his protracted war theory at a time when this theory had completely evolved in Mao’s thinking and the third revolutionary war had commenced — the War Of Resistance Against Japan.

According to Mao: *“In the period of the Li Li-san line in 1930, Comrade Li Li-san failed to understand the protracted nature of China’s civil war and for that reason did not perceive the law that in the course of this war there is repetition over a long period of ‘encirclement and suppression’ campaigns and of their defeat (by that time there had already been three in the Hunan-Kiangsi border area and two in Fukien). Hence, in an attempt to achieve rapid victory for the revolution, he ordered the Red Army, which was then still in its infancy, to attack Wuhan, and also ordered a nationwide armed uprising. Thus he committed the error of ‘Left’ opportunism.”* Mao criticized the “Left” opportunists of 1931-34 (Wang Ming and the “28 Bolsheviks”) also on the same grounds. According to Mao, they also *“did not believe in the law of the repetition of ‘encirclement and suppression’ campaigns.”*

This law of the constant repetition over a prolonged period of “encirclement” campaigns and counter-campaigns against it was the main pattern of the civil war. He said: *“In the ten years since our guerilla war began, every independent Red guerilla unit, every Red army unit or every revolutionary base area has been regularly subjected by the enemy to ‘encirclement and suppression’.”* When will the pattern of repeated “encirclement and suppression” campaigns come to an end? According to Mao: *“In my opinion, if the civil war is prolonged, this repetition will cease when a fundamental change takes place in the balance of forces. It will cease when the Red Army has become stronger than the enemy.”*

By this time, Mao had already evolved protracted war as an integral “strategy” of revolution relying principally on the internal dynamics of this “campaign” and “counter-campaign” struggle, the success of the revolution depending mainly on the development and change in the overall balance of forces between the enemy armed forces and the people’s armed forces. Mao was no longer relying on the development and imminence of a “revolutionary high tide” that shall determine the longterm survival of the Red areas, no longer hoping for *“a single spark that can start a prairie fire.”*

This shift in Mao’s thinking was brought about by changes in the political situation from the time he wrote *Single Spark* to the time when he wrote *Problems of Strategy* after the bitter experiences of “Left” errors from 1930-34. When he wrote *Single Spark* in January 1930, Li Li-san was afflicted with pessimism and Mao tried to convince him that the “revolutionary high tide” is not only inevitable but imminent. He obviously overcame this affliction because by June 1930, his appraisal was that the “high tide” was not only imminent but had arrived. The resurgence of the working class movement in the cities, the widespread expansion of the Red areas in Central China, the unrelenting

conflicts between Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jing-wei and between Chiang and the warlords, all led Li and the Central Committee to believe that the time had come to launch a general offensive.

On the basis of this appraisal, Li Li-san drew up an adventurist plan for organizing immediate armed insurrections in the key cities throughout the country. The object of the 1930 offensive was to take the three large cities of Central China: Changsha, Wuhan and Nanchang. The Third Group of Armies under Peng De-huai was to attack Changsha. The attack on Nanchang was assigned to the Red Army in Shiangsi under Mao and Zhu De. The attack on Wuhan was to be launched by the armies of He Long in western Hubei and Hunan.

Changsha was occupied when Peng De-huai's troops entered it on July 27. Ten days later they were dislodged and had to retire to the region of Liuyang. Ferocious repression followed which destroyed the party organization in Changsha. After the retreat from Changsha, Mao and Zhu, who disapproved of the general plan of the offensive, decided not to pursue the attack on Nanchang. They headed for Liuyang to reinforce the Third Army. The combined troops formed the First Front Army, of which Zhu became the commander in chief and Mao the political commissar. In the other cities, the uprisings, doomed from the start, were suppressed, and the terror that ensued destroyed the party and its legal organizations.

Li Li-san's adventurous policy was totally defeated and he was removed from the leadership at the Third Plenary Meeting of the Sixth Central Committee in September 1930. Qu Qiu-bai, the Comintern representative, and Zhou En-lai, who had recently returned from Moscow, presented a report recognizing that the CCP leadership had overestimated *"the unequal development of the revolutionary movement in different regions, and that if a revolutionary situation was developing in China, it did not objectively exist in July 1930."*

The Li Li-san line lasted only four months. But another "Left" adventurist line succeeded in dominating the central leadership. It was represented by the so-called 28 "Bolsheviks" led by Wang Ming and Po Ku, newly arrived from the Chinese Revolutionary University of Moscow with their professor Pavel Mif. It was mainly to criticize the military mistakes of the Wang Ming line that Mao wrote the article "Problems of Strategy". This line was dominant in the CCP from the Fourth Plenary Meeting of the Sixth Central Committee in January 1931 to the meeting of the Political Bureau at Tsunyi in January 1935. This was what Mao called the "Left" opportunism of 1931-34 *"which resulted in serious losses in the Agrarian Revolutionary War so that, instead of our defeating the enemy's fifth campaign of 'encirclement and suppression', we lost our base areas and the Red Army was weakened."*

How did Mao characterize the military error of the Wang Ming line? According to Mao, as early as May 1928, *"basic principles of guerilla warfare, simple in nature and suited to the conditions of the time, had already been evolved."* This was called the sixteen-character formula: *"The enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue."* (It must be clarified, that these operational principles, by themselves, do not constitute the strategy of protracted war but of guerilla warfare. Secondly, these are not Mao's original ideas but were drawn from the writings of the ancient Chinese military philosopher Sun Tzu.) At the time of the first counter-campaign against "encirclement and suppression" (late 1930) in the Kiangsi base area, these operational principles were developed a step further to include the principle of *"luring the enemy in deep"*. By the time the enemy's third campaign was defeated (middle of 1931), according to Mao, *"a complete set of operational principles for the Red Army has taken shape."* Though they basically remained the same as in the sixteen-character formula, they transcended their originally simple nature.

But beginning from January 1932, according to Mao, *"the 'Left' opportunists attacked these correct*



*principles, finally abrogated the whole set and instituted a complete set of contrary 'new principles' or 'regular principles'". From then on, the old principles were no longer to be considered as regular but were to be rejected as "guerrillaism." The opposition to the old principles which were branded as "guerrillaism" reigned for three whole years. According to Mao, "its first stage was military adventurism, in the second it turned into military conservatism and, finally, in the third stage it became flightism."*

How did Mao describe this military adventurism? According to Mao: *"The view that the Red Army should under no circumstances adopt defensive methods was directly related to this 'Left' opportunism, which denied the repetition of 'encirclement and suppression' campaigns..."* He also criticized *"those comrades in Kiangsi who called for a Red Army attack on Nanchang, were against the work of linking up the base areas and the tactics of luring the enemy in deep, regarded the seizure of the capital and other key cities of a province as the starting point for victory in that province, and held that 'the fight against the fifth encirclement and suppression campaign represents the decisive battle between the road of revolution and the road of colonialism'. This 'Left' opportunism was the source of the wrong line adopted in the struggles against the fourth 'encirclement and suppression' campaign in the Hupeh-Honan-Anhwei border area and in those against the fifth in the Central Area in Kiangsi; and it rendered the Red Army helpless before these fierce enemy campaigns and brought enormous losses to the Chinese revolution."*

However, Mao did not substantiate his conclusion that it was this "Left" opportunism of Wang Ming that caused enormous losses to the Chinese revolution. Mao was not able to cite in his writings (or his publishers to provide footnotes) of instances of urban armed insurrections during the 1932-34 period that caused great losses to the Red Army or the CCP. Even in history books of the Chinese revolution, no such accounts could be found.

He gave as an example the loss of freedom of action in the fourth counter-campaign in the Hupeh-Honan-Anhwei border area *"where the Red Army acted on the theory that the Guomindang army was merely an auxiliary force"*. But again, no substantial account regarding the losses suffered by the Red Army during this fourth counter-campaign which can directly be traced to this "Left" error. In historical accounts of the Chinese revolution, the fourth enemy campaign was aimed at all the Red areas and first to be attacked was Hupeh-Honan-Anhwei border area. Because it was more accessible to the attacking Guomintang armies, this region had to be abandoned by the Red Army. In this border area, it was the Fourth Group of the Armies of the Front that confronted the Guomintang forces. And this unit of the Red Army was commanded by Chang Gou-tao, the infamous Right opportunist who in 1938 capitulated to the Guomintang.

Mao also gave as an example the fifth enemy campaign against the Central Area in Kiangsi. But in the very same article, he attributed the heavy losses in Central Base Area to Right opportunism. According to Mao: *"The most striking example of the loss of a base area was that of the Central Base Area in Kiangsi during the fifth counter-campaign against 'encirclement and suppression'. The mistake here arose from a Rightist viewpoint. The leaders feared the enemy as if he were a tiger, set up defenses everywhere, fought defensive actions at every step and did not dare advance to the enemy's rear and attack him there, which would have been to our advantage, or boldly to lure the enemy troops in deep so as to concentrate our forces and annihilate them. As a result, the whole base area was lost and the Red Army had to undertake the Long March of over 12,000 kilometers."*

Upon reading this, one wonders why Mao blamed "Left" adventurism as the "source of the wrong line" that "brought enormous losses to the Chinese revolution." This is how Mao explained the link: *"This kind of mistake (Right opportunism) was usually preceded by a 'Left' error of underestimating the enemy. The military adventurism of attacking the key cities of 1932 was the root cause of the line of passive defense subsequently adopted in coping with the enemy's fifth 'encirclement and*

*suppression' campaign.*" Now we know where Sison got his strange logic!

How come the Red Army was forced to undertake the Long March of more than 12,000 kilometers? This is a most basic question which Mao failed to provide in his writings with a satisfactory answer. A footnote of *"Problems of Strategy"* clarified: *"In October 1934 the First, Third and Fifth Army Groups of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (that is the First Front Army of the Red Army, also known as the Central Red Army) set out from Changting and Ninghua in Western Fukien and from Juichin, Yutu and other places in southern Kiangsi and started a major strategic shift."* This was the beginning of the Long March. This First Front Army numbered around 120,000-130,000 troops. Aside from the First Front Army, the Red Army also had the Second Front Army of He Long and Fourth Front Army of Chang Gou-tao, and a host of other independent Army Groups. Before the Long March began, the Red Army numbered around 300,000.

With a Red Army this big, how come it was forced to undertake a strategic retreat and strategic shift of the magnitude of the Long March? According to Mao, the Red Army had to undertake the Long March of over 12,000 kilometers in October 1934 because the Central Base Area in Kiangsi was lost. Why did they lose the Central Base Area? Because they failed to smash Chiang Kai-shek's fifth "encirclement and suppression" campaign. Why did it fail to smash this particular campaign unlike the first four campaigns? Because, according to Mao, the counter campaign began with military adventurism, then turned to military conservatism, and finally, it became flightism.

Granting that this was the real causes for the failure to smash the enemy's fifth campaign until the beginning of the Long March in October 1934, which in the words of Mao was conceived as a "headlong flight" not as a strategic retreat, the fact was, by the end of 1934, at the party conference in Liping on the Hunan-Guizho border, Mao began to seize the initiative within the central leadership of the CCP. This Liping Conference was actually the turning point. It was in this conference that Mao was able to change not only the geographical direction of the march but also the "headlong flight" and "straight-line" tactic. By January, when they reached Tsunyi, Mao and all his close associates formally took over the leadership of the CCP. Wang Ming's faction was completely ousted with Zhou En-lai the only member of the old Politburo in the new Maoist leadership. (Wang Ming was retained by the Stalinist Comintern as one of its vice-presidents.)

Mao took over the leadership of the CCP barely three months after the Long March with the Red Army still adequately strong despite the losses in the initial months. The big question is: Why is it that, instead of opting to recover the lost base areas in southern China, he decided to continue with the strategic retreat and the Long March from Tsunyi to Yennan in northern China? To this, Mao had no clear answer in his writings. From January to October 1935, Mao continued the Red Army's strategic retreat (the Long March) which he called the continuation of its strategic defensive while Chiang Kai-shek was in strategic pursuit which was a continuation of his strategic offensive. It was actually during these 10 months of this one year Long March that the Red Army lost the bulk of its forces.

Mao opted to continue with the Long March towards northern China rather than maneuver and attempt to recover the Red areas. This was because: First, he was aware that the situation in these parts of southern China was already untenable if not irreversible and Chiang Kai-shek's strategic offensive in these areas had reached a stage that it can no longer be smashed and defeated. Second, since the situation in southern China is already lost, the only option was to make a strategic shift to northern China where Chiang Kai-shek was relatively weak and will be weakened by his strategic pursuit of the Long March, and reposition the Red Army for the war of resistance against Japan (the northern part of China were the areas threatened by Japan).

By the end of the Long March, 90% of the party membership, of the armed forces and of the base

areas were lost. The second period of the Chinese revolution ended in defeat although Mao preferred to call it "*a temporary and partial defeat*". To sum-up, Mao began the second period of the Chinese revolution still adhering to the "insurrectionist" line of the Sixth Party Congress of 1928. But at the latter part of this second period, he shifted to a protracted war strategy in advancing China's revolutionary civil war.

We now return to our main point — the universality and absoluteness of protracted war in a semicolonial and semifeudal country. What caused the defeat of China's second revolutionary civil war is beside the point and highly debatable as Mao's account and the available materials regarding the fifth "encirclement and suppression" campaign are quite inadequate. The essential point is this: There is no positive revolutionary practice that proves that an agrarian civil war can succeed along the path of protracted war even in China for the second revolutionary war ended in defeat!

But the Maoists will argue: The Chinese national democratic revolution or Mao's protracted people's war succeeded in the fourth period which was a revolutionary civil war!

The basic point, however, is this: Could it have succeeded without the victorious national war of liberation, the heroic war of resistance against Japan?

The fourth period of the Chinese revolution or the third revolutionary civil war began with Mao already in command of more than 1 million revolutionary troops against Chiang's 4 million. The Guomintang began its offensive in the middle of 1946. By late 1947, the Red Army which had grown into 2 million troops launched its counter-offensive. By 1948, Chiang Kai-shek began his strategic retreat and by October 1, 1949, Mao announced the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

This civil war in the fourth period took only three years to achieve total victory! Is this the historical proof that an agrarian war can succeed through a protracted war strategy, a revolutionary civil war that took only three years to achieve complete victory? A revolutionary civil war that started with a million revolutionary troops and tens of millions of revolutionary masses in liberated areas?

The real and essential historical practice of protracted people's war was the War of Resistance Against Japan in the third period of the Chinese revolution (1937-45). It must be stressed that this was a national war and not a civil war. The total victory achieved by the three years of civil war in the fourth period (1945-49) cannot be detached and cannot be understood apart from the victorious eight years of national war in the third period.

The historical validity of protracted war based on the Chinese experience is essentially a question of national war. If we are to consider the Vietnamese experience as a validation of a protracted war strategy, it is also essentially a national war of liberation. These two revolutions are the only historical experiences in protracted war strategy and both succeed on the basis of successful national wars of liberation.

Revolutionary movements, proletarian led or influenced, in several countries throughout the world have assumed political power through democratic revolutions and they succeeded by various means peculiar to their national conditions. In all these people's revolutions, only China succeeded by means of a strategy of protracted war. Even Vietnam refuses to call its revolution a protracted war strategy and prefer to call it a political-military strategy.

So many Maoist revolutionary movements in Third World countries have attempted to duplicate the Chinese experience. Not a single one have so far succeeded for the past 44 years since the Chinese victory. Most have suffered terrible defeats. Only three major Maoist parties are persevering in protracted war: the Shining Path in Peru, the Khmer Rouge in Kampuchea, and our very own the

New People's Army. And all are engaged, not only in a vulgarized type of Marxist-Leninist revolution, but a vulgarized type of Maoist protracted war and all are in the decline after decades of bloody warfare. Their ideological leaders are all like Mao's "frog in the well". To them, the universe is no bigger than the mouth of the well, and that universe is their Chinese paradigm of protracted war.

## **A Vulgarized Type Of Protracted War**

Let us now study Mao's protracted war theory and see if Sison, the Great Pretender, is really faithful to the principles of the Great Helmsman. Let us see how Sison understood Mao's protracted war theory and how he applied it to the Philippine revolution.

Mao's protracted war is a three-act drama. It consists of three successive strategic stages with the war advancing from the countryside to the cities. The first stage is the strategic defensive. The second stage is the strategic stalemate. The third stage is the strategic offensive (strategic counter-offensive, to be more exact, according to Mao).

These three stages are essentially a question of balance of forces. The revolutionary forces will move from inferiority to parity and then to superiority and the enemy will move from superiority to parity and then to inferiority. The revolutionary forces will move from the defensive to the stalemate and then to the counter-offensive. The enemy will move from the offensive to the stalemate (in a national war, to the safeguarding of his gains) and then to retreat. Such will be the course of the war and its inevitable trend.

According to Mao: *"By strategic defensive we mean our strategic situation and policy when the enemy is on the offensive and we are on the defensive; by strategic offensive we mean our strategic situation and policy when the enemy is on the defensive and we are on the offensive."* This applies to the war situation as a whole as well as to its parts.

The basic question is how will this strategic changes in relative strength and position be achieved? Meaning how to advance the war as whole as well as in its parts in a protracted way from the defensive to the stalemate and finally to the offensive. Here, Mao is quite clear and categorical in his basic operational principles.

The only thing that Sison copied from Mao is to assert that our people's war will be a protracted war encircling the cities from the countryside passing through three strategic stages. In how to conduct this protracted war, specially in the strategic defensive so as to advance to the higher strategic stages, i.e., achieve strategic changes in the balance of forces — Sison completely deviated from Mao's protracted war theory, completely negating and vulgarizing this war strategy. For Sison, protracted war is just a war of prolonged duration warped in a time dimension. It is essentially a war of attrition and not a war of annihilation which is the principal nature of Mao's protracted war.

Before proceeding to the basic operational principles of Mao in conducting protracted war, let us first study how Mao characterized this protracted war specially in the period of the strategic defensive.

According to Mao, enemy "encirclement and suppression" and the Red Army's counter-campaign against it is *the main pattern of China's civil war*. He said: *"For ten years this pattern of warfare has not changed, and unless the civil war gives place to a national war, the pattern will remain the same till the day the enemy becomes the weaker contestant and the Red Army the stronger."*

When will this pattern of repeated “encirclement and suppression” campaigns come to an end? Mao is very clear in this regard: first, “*when a fundamental change takes place in the balance of forces*”, i.e. the Red Army has passed through the stage of the strategic defensive, or second, “*the civil war gives place to a national war*”. In a national war, it will be “*a war of jigsaw pattern*” which according to Mao, “*is a marvelous spectacle in the annals of war, a heroic undertaking of the Chinese nation, a magnificent and earth-shaking feat.*” This jigsaw pattern manifests itself : Interior and exterior line operations, possession and non-possession of a rear area, encirclement and counter-encirclement, big areas and small areas for both the enemy and the Red Army.

Since our protracted war is a civil war, the main pattern, theoretically, will be the repeated “campaign and counter-campaign” cycle or spiral which Mao considered a “law” of a protracted civil war in his *Problems of Strategy*. In elaborating Mao’s basic operational principles in such a protracted war, we will use as reference this article although it should be stressed that these were not validated in a consummated revolutionary practice and were superseded by the principles developed by Mao during the more successful national war against Japan. In fact, the chapters on the strategic offensive, political work and other problems were left undone and only five chapters of this *Problems of Strategy* were completed.

It should be noted that there were major differences in Mao’s ideas of the warfare in the three strategic stages of a national war compared to a civil war, particularly, on guerrilla warfare and on the strategic stalemate, and these ideas were the ones consummated and validated in revolutionary practice and proven brilliantly correct in a national war.

Our main thrust here is how Mao envisioned the development of protracted war strategy in a civil war through this repeated pattern of campaign and counter-campaign in the period of the strategic defensive until a fundamental change in the balance of forces is achieved and the war advances to a higher strategic stage. In short, the operational principles of Mao in defeating the enemy in the strategic defensive so as to advance to the strategic offensive. In *Problems of Strategy*, Mao does not talk of a strategic stalemate.

In the enemy’s campaign and the Red Army’s counter-campaign, the two forms of fighting — offensive and defensive — are both employed, and here, according to Mao, “*there is no difference from any other war, ancient or modern, in China or elsewhere.*” The special characteristic of China’s civil war, however, is “*the repeated alternation of the two forms over a long period of time.*” By repeated alternation over a long period, Mao meant the repetition of this pattern of warfare and these forms of fighting, and this is what constitutes “protracted war” and not the simple prolongation of the war.

According to Mao: “*In each campaign, the alternation in the forms of fighting consists of the first stage in which the enemy employs the offensive against our defensive and we meet his offensive with our defensive, and of the second stage in which the enemy employs the defensive against our offensive and we meet his defensive with our offensive.*”

As for the content of a campaign or a battle, it does not consist of mere repetition but is different each time. As a rule, with each campaign and counter-campaign, the scale becomes larger, the situation more complicated and the fighting more intense. But this does not mean that there are no ups and downs.

The basic question here is how to conduct the defensive when the enemy is on the offensive (the first stage of the campaign and counter-campaign) and how to conduct the offensive when the enemy is already in the defensive (the second stage of the campaign and counter-campaign) both in the period of the strategic defensive in the war situation as a whole. This question resolves itself into how to advance the protracted war through this repeated pattern of campaign and counter-campaign, the

enemy getting weaker and the people's army getting stronger; from a position of superiority the enemy becomes inferior, and from a position of inferiority, the people's army becomes superior through the repeated pattern of campaign and counter-campaign until the war situation as a whole reaches a strategic change in the relations of strength.

This question of how to conduct the defensive and the offensive in the period of the strategic defensive characterized by the repeated pattern of campaign and counter-campaign is what Mao tried to resolve in his *Problems of Strategy* with the main objective of how to put an end to this pattern and reach a higher strategic stage of warfare. This is where Sison deviated completely from Mao's theory of protracted war and developed his contraband theory of "protracted guerrillaism" smuggling it as Maoist protracted war and using the Maoist stamp to pass it off as genuine.

First on the question of defence. In *Problems of Strategy*, regarding this question, Mao tackled the problems of (1) active and passive defence; (2) preparations for combatting "encirclement and suppression campaigns"; and (3) strategic retreat. According to Mao: *"The defensive continues until an 'encirclement and suppression' campaign is broken, whereupon the offensive begins, these being but two stages of the same thing; and one such enemy campaign is closely followed by another. Of the two stages, the defensive is more complicated and the more important. It involves numerous problems of how to break the 'encirclement and suppression'. The basic principle here is to stand for active defense and oppose passive defense."*

What is active defense in protracted war and why is it the only correct form of defense? What is passive defense and why should we absolutely reject it?

Active defense is inseparable to the concept of strategic retreat, which in Kiangsi was called *"luring the enemy in deep"* and in Szechuan *"contracting the front."* According to Mao, no previous theorist or practitioner of war has ever denied that this is the policy a weak army fighting a strong army must adopt in the initial stage of a war. The object of strategic retreat is to conserve military strength and prepare for the counter-offensive. Retreat is necessary because not to retreat a step before the onset of a strong enemy inevitably means to jeopardize the preservation of one's own forces.

But what makes a strategic retreat a form of active and not passive defense? A strategic retreat, according to Mao, *"is a planned strategic step by an inferior force for the purpose of conserving strength and biding its time to defeat the enemy, when it finds itself confronted with a superior force whose offensive it is unable to smash quickly."* What distinguishes it from a "headlong flight" and "passive defense" is that, first, it's a well-planned withdrawal with all the elements of a trap, hence, it is essentially a policy of *"luring the enemy in deep."* Second, it is a policy of withdrawing in order to attack, in order to defeat the enemy's offensive. According to Mao: *"Strategic retreat is aimed solely at switching over to the counter offensive and is merely the first stage of the strategic defensive. The decisive link in the entire strategy is whether victory can be won in the stage of the counter-offensive which follows."*

Therefore, the aim of the Red Army in a particular defensive campaign is to defeat this offensive. To defeat this offensive, the Red Army relies on the situation created during the retreat. It takes many elements to make up such a situation. But the presence of this situation does not mean the enemy's offensive is defeated. It only provides the condition for victory of the Red Army and defeat for the reactionary army, but do not constitute the reality of victory or defeat.

To bring about victory or defeat in a defensive campaign, according to Mao, *"a decisive battle between the two armies is necessary"*. He added that: *"Only a decisive battle can settle the question as to which army is the victor and which the vanquished. This is the sole task in the stage of the*

*strategic counter-offensive. The counter-offensive is a long process, the most fascinating, the most dynamic and also the final stage of a defensive campaign. What is called active defense refers chiefly to this strategic counter-offensive, which is in the nature of a decisive engagement."*

In all the preceding discussion, Mao is using the term "strategic" to refer to the "campaign situation as a whole" and sometimes to the "war situation as a whole," to the nationwide protracted war. Let us sum-up the discussion up to this point in their logical sequence.

First: Mao characterized the repeated alternation of "campaign and counter-campaign" in a long period of time as the main pattern of China's civil war in the period of the strategic defensive. This essentially constitutes protracted war.

Second: This main pattern is also the repeated alternation of the two forms of warfare — the defensive and the offensive. In every enemy campaign, the Red Army in its counter-campaign, meets the enemy's offensive with its defensive in the first stage of the counter-campaign, and in the second stage, meets the enemy's defensive with its offensive.

The counter-campaign is essentially a defensive campaign because, in the war situation as a whole, the enemy is still in the strategic offensive and the Red Army is still in the strategic defensive, and this pattern of "campaign and counter-campaign" occurs only in the strategic defensive.

Third: In pursuing the policy of the strategic defensive in every enemy campaign, the Red Army employs active defense and rejects passive defense. This strategic defensive, in its first stage, employs the policy of strategic retreat to conserve its strength and bide its time for its counter-offensive in the second stage. The aim of strategic retreat, essentially, is to switch over to the counter-offensive when the favorable situation for it is achieved through the strategic retreat.

Fourth: The sole aim of the strategic defensive in every counter-campaign is to defeat the strategic offensive of the enemy's "encirclement and suppression" campaign. This necessitates a "decisive battle" in the second stage of the counter-campaign, in the period of the counter-offensive. This counter-offensive is in the nature of a "decisive engagement" in the sense of decisively smashing and defeating the enemy campaign and ending this particular campaign. Active defence refers chiefly to this counter-offensive — the smashing of the enemy offensive in each repeated "encirclement and suppression" campaigns. This is the meaning of the Red Army taking the strategic defensive against the enemy's strategic offensive in the repeated alternation of "campaign and counter-campaign" — an active defense warfare in the form of a counter-offensive in a defensive campaign!

**This is what constitutes Mao's protracted war theory. A small and weak Red Army against a big and strong White Army gradually advancing from inferiority to superiority in prolonged warfare characterized by the repeated alternation of "campaign and counter-campaign" and accumulating strength through a policy of a strategic defensive against the enemy's strategic offensive — a policy of active defense warfare chiefly in the form of a counter-offensive in a strategically defensive counter-campaign. This is the essential meaning of the strategic defensive, not only as a stage of development of the protracted war reflecting a given balance of forces but as a definite military strategy in advancing this protracted war and shifting the relation of strength to our favor.**

Mao's basic idea is for the Red Army to grow in strength while weakening the enemy in the repeated alternation of "campaign and counter-campaign" by accumulating victories in counter-offensives in defensive counter-campaigns and the enemy accumulating decisive defeats in his offensive campaigns all through a policy of active defense and never by a policy of passive defense until it reaches a point that a shift in the strategic balance is achieved and this pattern of "campaign and

counter-campaign" comes to an end.

The most fundamental question here is how to conduct this active defense form of warfare, this strategy of the strategic defensive and this is of utmost importance in criticizing Sison's vulgarization of protracted war. Mao's "sixteen character" formula plus the principle of "luring the enemy in deep" constitutes the basic operational principles in combating "encirclement and suppression. According to Mao, it covers the two stages of the strategic defensive and the strategic offensive, and within the defensive, it covers the two stages of the strategic retreat and the strategic counter-offensive. What came later was only a development of this formula.

In Mao's *Problems of Strategy*, he developed the Red Army's basic operational principles by tackling the basic questions involved in the counter-offensive, chiefly the questions of (1) starting the counter-offensive; (2) the concentration of troops; (3) mobile warfare; (4) war of quick decision; and (5) war of annihilation. Mao's ideas on these questions are of fundamental importance because they basically answer and clarify how the protracted war will advance through the strategic defensive towards the strategic offensive and these questions expose Sison's ignorance and distortion of Mao's protracted war theory, and confirm the impossibility of our people's war advancing from the strategic defensive towards the strategic offensive guided by Sison's vulgarized ideas on military strategy.

We will not deal much with the first point because although it is of utmost importance to the question of winning the counter-offensive, it has no direct relevance on the subject at hand, i.e., comparing Mao's protracted war with Sison's protracted guerrillaism. This first point of point of Mao deals directly with the problem of the "initial battle" or prelude, how to select this first battle which has "a tremendous effect upon the entire situation, all the way to the final engagement."

We proceed directly to Mao's second point, the question of "concentration of troops" which is of decisive importance in conducting the strategic defensive, in the question of gaining the initiative in defensive warfare and developing active defense.

The strategic defensive is defensive warfare and according to Mao, it is easy to fall into a passive position because of its defensive character, which gives it far less scope for the full exercise of initiative than does offensive warfare. However, Mao stresses that *"defensive warfare, which is passive in form can be active in content, and can be switched from the stage in which it is passive in form to the stage in which it is active in form and content."*

Mao added: *"In appearance a fully planned strategic retreat is made under compulsion, but in reality it is effected in order to conserve our strength and bide our time to defeat the enemy, to lure him in deep and prepare our counter-offensive." Here at this stage, defensive warfare is passive in form but active in content. In the stage of the counter-offensive, defensive warfare is active both in form and content. According to Mao: "Not only is a strategic counter-offensive active in content, but in form, too, it discards the passive posture in the period of retreat. In relation to the enemy, our counter-offensive represents our effort to make him relinquish the initiative and put him in a passive position."*

Hence, if the enemy attacks or is in the offensive, and we just retreat and engage in evasion or flight to avoid the enemy's blows and do not have any definite plan to defeat the offensive by a counter-offensive and rest content in frustrating the enemy by just exhausting him by punching the air, this defensive warfare is not only passive in form but also in content. If we do not plan and launch a counter-offensive to precisely smash and defeat the enemy campaign, if we do not consciously maneuver and engage in battle to put the enemy in the defensive and actually take the offensive and achieve a victorious decisive engagement in a counter-campaign, we cannot reach the stage wherein



our defensive warfare is both active in form and content. In relation to the enemy, the counter-offensive in defensive warfare represents the effort of the Red Army to make the enemy relinquish the initiative and put him in a passive position.

What are the necessary conditions for the strategic defensive or for defensive warfare to become active defense in both form and content and thus advance the protracted war? According to Mao: *"Concentration of troops, mobile warfare, war of quick decision and war of annihilation are all necessary conditions for the full achievement of this aim. And of these, concentration of troops is the first and most essential."*

Before we proceed to the discussion of the purpose and logic of this "concentration of troops" which according to Mao is the "first and most essential" in defensive warfare and *"victory in the strategic defensive depends basically on this measure,"* it should be made clear that this "concentration of troops" is not a question of tactics but a question of strategy and is decisive in attaining the initiative in warfare, in both defense and offense, and which, in military struggle, can spell the difference between victory and defeat.

According to Mao: *"The concentration of troops seems easy but is quite hard in practice. Everybody knows that the best way is to use a large force to defeat a small one, and yet many people fail to do so and on the contrary often divide their forces up. The reason is that such military leaders have no head for strategy and are confused by complicated circumstances; hence, they are at the mercy of these circumstances, lose their initiative and have recourse to passive response."*

Our failure to achieve this "concentration of troops" after 25 years of "protracted war" proves that Sison has no "head for strategy" and this is not simply because he is no military leader, and does not read well and understand his idol's military writings. The basic reason is because Sison is just a plain and simple demagogue, a pseudo-intellectual and pseudo-theoretician, and above all, a rabid phrase-monger and war-monger of the Guzman and Pol Pot-type.

In the beginning, he actually tried to imitate Mao's protracted war by attempting to build a Chingkang-type of "armed independent regime" or "central base area in Northern Luzon" during those "Isabela days" and immediately formed "three Red companies" in the area geared for "regular mobile warfare". He even tried to smuggle a shipload of armaments from abroad enough to arm thousands of revolutionary fighters and he actually created an artificial condition just to produce the necessary number of revolutionaries that will carry those arms.

But when the enemy began its massive "encirclement and suppression" campaign and the people's army failed to smash this campaign, Sison got confused and overwhelmed, and decided to deviate fundamentally from Mao's basic principles in protracted war. Confused by the complicated circumstances, particularly the archipelagic character of the country, he shifted to a strategy of protracted guerrillaism, which after 25 years, he wants to be "reaffirmed" by the Party as a basic, absolute and universal Maoist truth.

We will return later to this most important quote from Mao regarding the difficulty of the "concentration of troops" for people who have no "head for strategy" and are confused by "complicated circumstances". But first, we must clarify Mao's purpose for the "concentration of troops" as a basic operational principle in protracted war and its direct relation or crucial role to mobile warfare, war of quick decision and war of annihilation which are all necessary conditions for advancing the strategic defensive.

According to Mao, this concentration is necessary for reversing the situation between the enemy and ourselves. First, reverse the situation with regard to advance and retreat. Second, reverse the

situation with regard to attack and defense. Third, reverse the situation with regard to interior and exterior lines. This is how crucial the “concentration of troops” is to the entire strategy and tactics of protracted war. Hence, according to Mao: *“The winning of victory in the strategic defensive depends basically on this measure — concentration of troops.”*

On the first purpose, Mao said: *“Previously it was the enemy who was advancing and we who are retreating; now we seek a situation in which we advance and he retreats. When we concentrate our troops and win a battle, then in that battle we gain the above purpose and this influences the whole campaign.”* Without concentration, we cannot truly advance and force the enemy to retreat.

On the second purpose, Mao said: *“In defensive warfare the retreat to the prescribed terminal point belongs basically to the passive or “defence” stage. The counter-offensive belongs to the active, or “attack” stage... it is precisely for the purpose of the counter-offensive that troops are concentrated.”* Without concentration, we cannot effectively attack and force the enemy into a defensive position in a counter-campaign.

On the third purpose, Mao said: *“We can put the enemy who is in a strong position strategically into a weak position in campaigns and battles. At the same time we can change our own strategically weak position into a strong position in campaigns and battles. This is what we call exterior-line operations within interior-line operations...”* Again, without concentration, we cannot reverse the strategic advantage of the enemy operating on exterior lines and the disadvantage of the Red Army operating on strategically interior lines.

The principle of concentration is opposed to military equalitarianism. In China, this equalitarianism occurred under the slogan of “attacking on all fronts” or “striking with two fists”. According to Mao: *“The Chinese Red Army, which entered the arena of civil war as a small and weak force, has since repeatedly defeated its powerful antagonist and won victories that have astonished the world, and it has done so by relying largely on the employment of concentrated strength. Any one of its great victories can prove this point... Whether in counter-offensives or offensives, we should always concentrate a big force to strike at one part of the enemy forces. We suffered every time we did not concentrate our troops... Our strategy is “pit one against ten” and our tactics are “pit ten against one” — this is one of our fundamental principles for gaining mastery over the enemy.”*

Military equalitarianism reached its extreme point in the fifth counter-campaign in 1934. It was thought that the Red Army could beat the enemy by “dividing the forces into six routes” and “resisting on all fronts”, but instead they were beaten and the reason was fear of losing territory. According to Mao: *“Naturally one can scarcely avoid loss of territory when concentrating the main forces in one direction while leaving only containing forces in others. But this loss is temporary and partial and is compensated by victory in the place where the assault is made. After such a victory is won, territory lost in the area of the containing forces can be recovered. The enemy’s first, second, third and fourth campaigns of “encirclement and suppression” all entailed the loss of territory — particularly the third campaign, in which the Kiangsi base area of the Red Army was almost completely lost — but in the end we not only recovered but extended our territory.”*

Debunking the idea that it is impossible to operate with concentrated forces against blockhouse warfare and all the Red Army can do is to divide up its forces for defence and for short swift thrusts, Mao said: *“The enemy’s tactics of pushing forward 3, 5, 8, or 10 li at a time and building blockhouses at each halt were entirely the result of the Red Army’s practice of fighting defensive actions at every successive point. The situation would certainly have been different if our army had abandoned the tactics of point-by-point defence on interior lines and, when possible and necessary, had turned and driven into the enemy’s interior lines. The principle of concentration of troops is precisely the means for defeating the enemy’s blockhouse warfare.”*

Obviously, Sison did not review Mao's *Problems of Strategy* when he wrote *Reaffirm*. He said that the AFP's "gradual constriction" strategy is basically "blockhouse warfare". But this rabid Maoist prescribed the dispersal of the NPA units into small formations against this "blockhouse warfare" while in Mao's protracted war, *the concentration of forces is precisely the means for defeating the enemy's blockhouse warfare!* What he wants us to "reaffirm" is not Mao's strategy and tactics in protracted war but Li Li-san's and Wang Ming's line of military equalitarianism and guerrillaism.

Concentration of forces does not mean the abandonment of guerrilla warfare. According to Mao: *"Considering the revolutionary war as a whole, the operations of the people's guerrillas and those of the main forces of the Red Army complement its other like a man's right arm and left arm, and if we have only the main forces of the Red Army without the people's guerrillas, we would be like a warrior with only one arm. In concrete terms, and specially with regard to military operations, when we talk of the people in the base area as a factor, we mean that we have an armed people. This is the main reason why the enemy is afraid to approach our base area."*

Concentration of forces does not also mean that all the forces of the Red Army should be concentrated. Red Army detachment should also be employed for operations in secondary directions. The kind of concentration Mao is advocating *"is based on the principle of guaranteeing absolute or relative superiority in the battlefield. To cope with a strong enemy or to fight on a battlefield of vital importance, we must have an absolutely superior force... To cope with a weaker enemy or to fight in a battlefield of no great importance, a relatively superior force is sufficient."*

Concentration of forces does not also mean that numerical superiority is always required in every occasion. In certain circumstances, the Red Army may go into battle with a relatively or absolutely inferior force. In this condition, a surprise attack on a segment of the enemy flank is of vital importance. According to Mao: *"In our surprise attack on this segment of the enemy flank, the principle of using a superior force against an inferior force, of using the many to defeat the few, still applies."*

After establishing the principle of concentration of forces as the most essential in the winning of victory in the strategic defensive, we must now proceed on how such a Red Army applying the principle of concentration conducts its warfare, particularly in the strategic defensive. This basically concerns the principles of mobile warfare, war of quick decision and war of annihilation, and all these basic principles should be welded into an integral whole as the mode of warfare in a protracted people's war specially in the strategic defensive so as to advance into the strategic offensive.

Mao, in his military writings, used "mobile warfare" and "regular warfare" interchangeably. It is "mobile" warfare in contrast to "positional" warfare and it is "regular" warfare in contrast to "guerrilla" warfare. Hence, the term "regular mobile warfare".

In his *Problems of Strategy*, Mao stressed the primacy of mobile warfare over positional warfare. But he did not bother to formulate its primacy over guerrilla warfare in the strategic defensive nor contrast it with guerrilla warfare unlike in subsequent military writings. It is because in summing-up the second revolutionary civil war, the debate was more on mobile warfare versus positional warfare. The question of the primacy of mobile warfare over guerrilla warfare was never posed as a matter of dispute. In fact, mobile warfare, at that time, was criticized by the "Left" adventurists as "guerrillaism" while Mao called the advocates of positional warfare *"exponents of the strategy of 'regular warfare'."* The terms used should be understood in this context. Mao took a more positive and indulgent view on "guerrillaism" to emphasize his opposition to the tendency towards positional warfare (point-by-point defence during the fifth counter-campaign) and his advocacy of mobile warfare.

Mao's indulgent view and positive use of the term "guerrillaism" in his Problems of Strategy should not be misconstrued as advocacy of such a tendency. As early as 1930 in his *Single Spark* article, Mao vehemently opposed the "guerrillaism" of Li Li-san's line that gave primacy to "roving guerrilla actions". In Li Li-san's view, to preserve the Red Army and arouse the masses, it should divide its forces into very small units, disperse them over the countryside and engage in the easier method of roving guerrilla actions.

According to Mao, *"In the winter of 1927-28, we did plan to disperse our forces over the countryside, with each company or battalion operating on its own and adopting guerrilla tactics in order to arouse the masses while trying not to present a target for the enemy; we have tried this out many times, but have failed every time."* This dispersal is precisely what Sison is advocating but in a more extreme form (companies and battalions to be dispersed into squads and platoons) in his *Reaffirm*. This is for also the very same reason as that of Li Li-san's — to arouse the masses while trying not to present a target for the enemy — which Mao had already criticized as early as 1930!

For Mao, when faced by a strong enemy offensive or campaign, the correct policy and principle is to concentrate to be able to defend and counter-attack effectively and successfully. For Sison, his principle and policy is to divide and disperse into small units and merely frustrate the enemy by letting them "punch air".

When Mao speaks of the Red Army, he always refers to the concentrated regular troops. When he talks of the Red Guards, he refers to the local guerrillas and militias in the locality dispersed and operating independently in wide areas. For Mao, *"the principle for the Red Army is concentration, and that for the Red Guards dispersion."* No wonder Sison advocates dispersal and knows nothing but dispersal and vehemently resists concentration because, after 25 years, we have failed to build a regular army conducting regular mobile warfare. What we were able to build in two and a half decades of ruthless war are small "roving guerrilla units" engaged solely in "roving guerrilla actions" inside and outside extremely fluid "guerrilla zones and bases." Even our companies and battalion which Sison wants dispersed are basically guerrilla in character and operations.

Since Mao's Red Army was a regular army from the very beginning, its mode of operation was regular mobile warfare, and Mao opposed any tendency to transform it mainly into guerrilla warfare or positional warfare.

Why mobile warfare and not positional warfare? According to Mao, *"one of the outstanding characteristics of the Red Army's operations, which follows from the fact that the enemy is powerful while the Red Army is deficient in technical equipment, is the absence of fixed battle line... The Red Army's battle lines are determined by the direction in which it is operating. As its operational direction often shifts, its battle lines are fluid... In a revolutionary civil war, there cannot be fixed battle lines... Fluidity of battle lines leads to fluidity in the size of our base areas... This fluidity of territory is entirely the result of the fluidity of the war."* This absence of fixed battle lines, this fluidity of the war, determines the mobile character of the Red Army's basically regular warfare.

This mobile nature of the Red Army's regular warfare lends it a guerrilla character. According to Mao: *"... we should not repudiate guerrillaism in general terms but should honestly admit the guerrilla character of the Red Army. It is no use being ashamed of this. On the contrary, this guerrilla character is precisely our distinguishing feature, our strong point, and our means of defeating the enemy. We should be prepared to discard it, but we cannot do so today. In the future this guerrilla character will definitely become something to be ashamed of and to be discarded, but today it is invaluable and we must stick to it."*

What is this guerrilla character of the Red Army that does not negate the regular character of the

Red Army and its operations, a “guerrillaism” that is its “distinguishing feature” yet does not reduce the Red Army into a guerrilla army? The guerrilla character of the Red Army is its mobility determined by the fluidity of the war. According to Mao: *“‘Fight when you can win, move away when you can’t win’ — this is the popular way of describing our mobile warfare today... All our ‘moving’ is for the purpose of ‘fighting’, and all our strategy and tactics are built on ‘fighting’.” This “fighting” nature of the Red Army constitutes its “regular” character as an army. Mao then cited four situations when it is inadvisable for the Red Army to fight and he said: “In any one of these situations, we are prepared to move away. Such moving away is both permissible and necessary. For our recognition of the necessity of moving away is based on our recognition of the necessity of fighting. Herein lies the fundamental characteristic of the Red Army’s mobile warfare.”*

In the ten years’ civil war, the guerrilla character of the Red Army and the fluidity of the war underwent great changes. The period from the days of the Chingkang Mountains to the first counter-campaign in Kiangsi was the first stage in which the guerrilla character and fluidity were very pronounced, the Red Army being in its infancy and the base areas still being guerrilla zones. In the second stage, comprising the period from the first to the third counter-campaign, both the guerrilla character and fluidity were considerably reduced, the First Front Army of the Red Army was formed and base areas with a population of several millions established. In the third stage, which comprised the period from the end of the third to the fifth counter-campaign, the guerrilla character and the fluidity were further reduced, and a central government and a revolutionary military commission had already been set up. The fourth stage was the Long March. The mistaken rejection of guerrilla warfare and fluidity had led to guerrilla warfare and fluidity on a great scale. The period after the Long March was the fifth stage.

It took only ten years for the Red Army to develop and undergo such changes in its guerrilla character and mobile warfare, and considering that the central leadership of the CCP was then dominated by people like Li Li-san, Wang Ming, Chang Kou-tao, etc. In the Philippines, with Sison and his fanatics in command all the time, we have already consumed 25 years of protracted war, and still not a single, little sign of our guerrilla warfare developing into regular mobile warfare, and in fact, we are being pushed back to the early substage of dispersed roving guerrilla units and operations.

Guerrillaism, according to Mao, has two aspects. One is irregularity, that is decentralization, lack of uniformity, absence of strict discipline, and simple methods of work. These features stemmed from the Red Army’s infancy, and some of them were just what was needed at the time. As the Red Army reaches a higher stage, according to Mao, *“we must gradually and consciously eliminate them so as to make the Red Army more centralized, more unified, more disciplined and more thorough in its work — in short, more regular in character. In the directing of operations we should also gradually and consciously reduce such guerrilla characteristics as are no longer required at a higher stage. Refusal to make progress in this respect and obstinate adherence to the old stage are impermissible and harmful, and are detrimental to large-scale operations.”* In the Philippines, our People’s Army is a 25 year-old infant, we are still in the period of infancy in building our People’s Army because of Sison’s infatuation with “guerrillaism”, his refusal to advance from this “guerrillaism” and obstinate adherence to this “guerrillaism”.

The other aspect of guerrillaism, according to Mao, *“consists of the principle of mobile warfare, the guerrilla character of both strategic and tactical operations which is still necessary at present, the inevitable fluidity of our base areas, flexibility in planning the development of the base areas, and the rejection of the premature regularization in building the Red Army. In this connection, it is equally impermissible, disadvantageous and harmful to our present operations to deny the facts of history, to oppose what is useful, and rashly leave the present stage in order to rush blindly towards a “new stage”, which as yet is beyond reach and has no real significance.”* Here, the “guerrillaism”

that Mao is referring is not guerrilla warfare as a distinct form of warfare from mobile warfare, or “roving guerrilla actions” as we are familiar with in the Philippines. Mao is speaking of “mobile warfare”, taking what is useful in “guerrillaism” — its extreme mobility and fighting without fixed battle lines — while maintaining the Red Army’s regular character. Mao’s rejection of the “premature regularization” of the Red Army has nothing in common with Sison’s rejection of “premature regularization” in his Reaffirm. What is referred to as “premature regularization” in Mao’s *Problems of Strategy* is “positional warfare” as opposed to “mobile warfare”. What he is criticizing are those “exponents of the strategy of ‘regular warfare’” which dominated the fifth counter-campaign, i.e., the exponents of the “point-by-point defence of the base areas” which is a form of positional warfare. What Mao is referring to as rushing blindly “towards a ‘new stage’, which as yet is beyond reach and has no real significance” is positional warfare.

We now proceed to Mao’s principle of “campaigns and battles of quick decision” of which the principles of concentration of troops and the primacy of regular mobile warfare are crucial and basic requisites. According to Mao: *“A strategically protracted war, and campaigns or battles of quick decision are two aspects of the same thing, two principles which should receive equal and simultaneous emphasis in civil wars and which are also applicable in anti-imperialist wars.”*

Here, Mao had synthesized two contradictory aspects into one integral whole — the elements of a long drawn-out war and the series of short-term battles, the elements of gradual strategic advance and quick tactical victories into his protracted war theory. It is a war of quick decision — referring to campaigns and battles — within a war of prolonged duration — referring to the war situation as a whole — to the strategic balance of forces.

According to Mao: *“Because the reactionary forces are very strong, revolutionary forces grow only gradually, and this fact determines the protracted tactinature of our war. Here impatience is harmful and advocacy of “quick decision” is incorrect.”* Although this is only one aspect of Mao’s protracted war theory, this is the most important and is the starting point of all his operational principles. But not everything in protracted war is protracted. The campaigns and battles that constitute this protracted war are resolved through quick decision. In this campaigns and battles are found the vibrancy, the dynamism, the swiftness of this protracted war. According to Mao: *“The reverse is true of campaigns and battles — here the principle is not protractedness but quick decision. Quick decision is sought in campaigns and battles, and this is true at all times and in all countries.”*

In his *On Protracted War* (May 1938), Mao made a more dialectical formulation of this synthesis: *“...fighting campaigns and battles is one of ‘quick decision offensive warfare on exterior lines’. It is the opposite of our strategic principle of ‘protracted defensive warfare on interior lines’, and yet it is the indispensable principle for carrying out this strategy. If we should use ‘protracted defensive warfare on interior lines’ as the principle for campaigns and battles too, as we did at the beginning of the War of Resistance, it would be totally unsuited to the circumstances in which the enemy is strong and we are weak; in that case we could never achieve our strategic objective of a protracted war and we would be defeated by the enemy... This principle of ‘quick -decision offensive warfare on exterior lines’ can and must be applied in guerrilla as well as in regular warfare. It is applicable not only to any one stage of the war but to its entire course.”*

**Here, Mao’s protracted war theory is crystal-clear. Firstly, protracted war is not a simple realization of the fact that the war is protracted but a clear-cut strategy of warfare just as the strategic defensive is not a simple characterization of a historical stage in the development of the war but is a definite and complete form of strategy in launching protracted war. It is both a situation and a policy. Secondly, the strategic defensive defines the protractedness of the war, and at the same time, as a definite strategy in protracted**

**war, is the means to eliminate the conditions for such protractedness. Thirdly, the strategic defensive as a definite strategy in protracted war is one of “quick decision offensive warfare on exterior lines” within the framework of the strategic principle of “protracted defensive warfare on interior lines” and the former is the indispensable principle for carrying out the latter. Fourthly, without “quick decision offensive warfare on exterior lines” within a strategy of “protracted defensive warfare on interior lines” we cannot actively, in a military sense, adopt to and advance under a condition in which the enemy is strong and we are weak, and could never achieve our strategic objective of a protracted war, of transforming ourselves into a big and strong People’s Army while annihilating and weakening the enemy, and we would ultimately be defeated by the very protractedness of the war.**

A quick decision cannot be achieved simply by wanting it, and Mao required many specific conditions for it. The main requirements are: adequate preparations, seizing the opportune moment, concentration of superior forces, encircling and outflanking tactics, favorable terrain, and striking at the enemy when he is on the move, or when his is stationary but has not yet consolidated his positions. Unless these conditions are satisfied, according to Mao, it is impossible to achieve quick decision in a campaign or battle.

Among these requirements, the concentration of forces is the most important and the most basic. In advocating the operational principle of “quick decision offensive warfare on exterior lines” in the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, Mao said: *“That is why we have always advocated the organization of the forces of the entire country into a number of large field armies, each counterposed to one of the enemy’s field armies but having two, three or four times its strength, and so keeping the enemy engaged in extensive theaters of war in accordance with the principle outlined above.”*

In our own experience, the principle of quick decision is exclusively applied in our tactical offensives which are basically “roving guerrilla actions” in the form of small-scale ambushes and raids. In Mao’s theory, the principle of quick decision is applied not only in specific battles but also in campaigns. According to Mao: *“The smashing of an enemy “encirclement and suppression” is a major campaign, but the principle of quick decision and not that of protractedness still applies. For the manpower, financial resources and military strength of a base area do not allow protractedness.”*

Mao cited the experiences of the Red Army in its five counter-campaigns to illustrate the application of this principle of quick decision. According to Mao: *“The smashing of the first enemy ‘enemy encirclement and suppression’ campaign in Kiangsi Province took only one week from the first battle to the last; the second was smashed in barely a fortnight; the third dragged on for three months before it was smashed; the fourth took three weeks; and the fifth taxed our endurance for a whole year. When we were compelled to break through the enemy’s encirclement after the failure to smash his fifth campaign, we showed an unjustifiable haste.”* In all these campaigns and counter-campaigns, it should be noted that the central leadership of the CCP was in the hands of assorted “Left” and Right opportunists, yet the Red Army was able to smash in quick decision the four enemy campaigns. In our protracted war, in the main, we are not actually “smashing” enemy campaigns but merely “frustrating” the enemy by letting him “punch the air”.

Despite the failure of the fifth counter-campaign, Mao insisted on the principle of shortening the duration of a campaign by every possible means, and according to him: *“Campaign and battle plans should call for our maximum effort in concentration of troops, mobile warfare, and so on, so as to ensure the destruction of the enemy’s effective strength on the interior lines (that is, in the base area) and the quick defeat of his ‘encirclement and suppression’ campaign, but where it is evident that the campaign cannot be terminated on our interior lines, we should employ the main Red Army force to break through the enemy’s encirclement and switch to our exterior lines (that is, the*

*enemy's interior lines) in order to defeat him there. Now that the enemy has developed his blockhouse warfare to a high degree, this will be our usual method of operation."* Here Mao is already developing the principle of "quick decision offensive warfare on exterior lines" within "protracted defensive warfare on interior lines" which he unleashed against the Japanese aggressors during the War of Resistance.

A regular Red Army operating by concentrating its forces, engaging in regular mobile operation as its main form of warfare, and accumulating strength by campaigns and battles of quick decision — this is Mao's protracted war theory. All these basic operational principles are aimed and designed to preserve one's forces and destroy the enemy in protracted war.

According to Mao: *"The principle of preserving oneself and destroying the enemy is the basis of all military principles."* We are not in protracted war just to preserve ourselves in perpetual struggle. We preserve ourselves through active defense by destroying the enemy and we preserve ourselves for the single purpose of destroying the enemy through offensive warfare and putting an end to this ruthless war.

The fundamental point is in what form do we destroy and defeat the enemy in a protracted war? To this, Mao has a very clear and categorical answer, by waging a war of annihilation.

According to Mao: *"For the Red Army which gets almost all its supplies from the enemy, war of annihilation is the basic policy. Only by annihilating the enemy's effective strength can we smash his 'encirclement and suppression' campaigns and expand our revolutionary base areas... A battle in which the enemy is routed is not basically decisive in a contest with a foe of great strength. A battle of annihilation, on the other hand, produces a great and immediate impact on any enemy. Injuring all of a man's ten fingers is not as effective as chopping off one, and routing ten enemy divisions is not as effective as annihilating one of them."* In our 25 years of protracted war, we have not annihilated a single enemy company as an integral unit of an enemy battalion much more an enemy infantry battalion as an integral unit of an AFP brigade or division. We have slain, for the past 25 years, thousands of enemy troops through guerrilla warfare, through a war of attrition, but we "exterminated" them only as individuals, as squads, and in very rare occasions, as platoons, and they were easily replenished by their mother units.

According to Mao: *"Our policy for dealing with the enemy's first, second, third and fourth 'encirclement and suppression' campaigns was war of annihilation. The forces annihilated in each campaign constituted only part of his total strength, and yet all these 'encirclement and suppression' campaigns were smashed. In our fifth counter-campaign, however, the opposite policy was pursued, which in fact helped the enemy to attain his aims."*

In the first counter-campaign, the Red Army successfully hit two of the enemy's brigades and his divisional headquarters, annihilating the entire force of 9,000 men and capturing the divisional commander himself, without letting a single man or horse escape. This one victory scared another two enemy divisions into headlong flight. The Red Army then pursued one of the divisions and wiped out one half of it. Fearing defeat, all the enemy forces retreated in disorder.

In the second counter-campaign, the Red Army, in fifteen days marched seven hundred li, fought five battles, captured more than 20,000 rifles and roundly smashed the enemy's campaign. There was an interval of only one month between the end of the second enemy campaign and the beginning of the third. The Red Army (then about 30,000 strong), with neither rest nor replenishment, had just made a detour of one thousand li in the western part of the southern Kiangsi base area.

In the third campaign, the enemy pressed hard from several directions. After doing the necessary



defensive maneuvers, it unleashed its counter-offensive. It launched three successive battles against three separate divisions and won all three battles and captured over 10,000 rifles. At this point, all the main enemy forces maneuvered and converged to seek battle. The Red Army slipped through in the high mountains. By the time the enemy discovered this fact and tried to pursue, the Red Army had already had a fortnight's rest while the enemy forces were hungry, exhausted and demoralized, and so decided to retreat. Taking advantage of their retreat, the Red Army pursued and wiped out one entire division and a brigade of another division. In the fourth counter-campaign, the Red Army in the first battle, annihilated two divisions at one stroke, and as the enemy tried to send reinforcements, the Red Army again annihilated another division. In these two battles, the Red Army captured more than 10,000 rifles, and in the main, smashed the enemy campaign.

The Red Army could not have annihilated these enemy forces and smashed its four campaigns, if it did not apply the concentration of superior forces and engage in mobile warfare in the form of encircling or outflanking tactics. Mao said: *"War of annihilation entails the concentration of forces and the adoption of encircling our outflanking tactics. We cannot have the former without the latter."*

In *Protracted War*, Mao discussed the relationship between war of annihilation and war of attrition. The anti-Japanese war is at once a war of attrition and a war of annihilation because the enemy is still exploiting his strength and retains strategic superiority and strategic initiative. According to Mao: *"... unless we fight campaigns and battles of annihilation we cannot effectively and speedily reduce his strength and break his superiority and initiative... Hence campaigns of annihilation are the means of attaining the objective of strategic attrition. It is chiefly by using the method of attrition through annihilation that China can wage protracted war."*

Mao then proceeded to a general differentiation of the three basic forms of warfare and their role on this question of annihilation and attrition: *"Generally speaking, mobile warfare performs the task of annihilation, positional warfare performs the tasks of attrition, and guerrilla warfare performs both simultaneously; the three forms are thus distinguished from one another. In this sense war of annihilation is different from war of attrition. Campaigns of attrition are supplementary but necessary in protracted war."*

Speaking theoretically, and in terms of China's needs, Mao said: *"In order to achieve the strategic objective of greatly depleting the enemy's forces, China in her defensive stage should not only exploit the function of annihilation, which is fulfilled primarily by mobile warfare and partially by guerrilla warfare, but also exploit the function of attrition, which is fulfilled primarily by positional warfare (which itself is supplementary) and partially by guerrilla warfare."*

To sum-up all that were discussed above: A regular People's Army operating by concentrating its forces, engaging in regular mobile warfare as its main form of warfare, accumulating strength by campaigns and battles of quick decision, and preserving itself and destroying the enemy by a war of annihilation in a strategic defensive characterized by campaigns and counter-campaigns — this is Mao's protracted war theory in a revolutionary civil war. All these basic principles can only be applied if we have armed independent regimes or relatively stable revolutionary base areas.

The simple, basic question is: Does our protracted war for the past 25 years, have anything in common with China's protracted war?

**If we cannot build stable base areas, if we cannot build a regular army, if we cannot engage in regular mobile warfare, if we cannot accumulate enough strength through campaigns and battles of quick decision to build a regular army and engage in regular mobile warfare, if we cannot preserve ourselves and destroy the enemy through war of annihilation — and**

**what we can only do, for the past 25 years, is to spread out our forces in extremely fluid guerrilla zones and bases, build only small and scattered roving guerrilla units of squads and platoons, engage only in widespread but sporadic guerrilla warfare in the form of roving guerrilla actions, and merely harass and frustrate the enemy by a war of attrition without affecting the strategic balance of forces — why call our people's war a strategy of protracted war, pretending to use Mao's strategy and tactics of protracted war when in truth, the only thing that we are using is the authority of Mao's name and using it in vain.**

Starting out with a small and weak People's Army against a big and strong reactionary army, does not by itself make our war a protracted one in a scientific and military sense. This is only a statement of the duration of the war, a description of its situation, a characterization of the strategic balance. Mao's protracted war is not a simple situational description but a definite war strategy. The essence of Mao's protracted war is not in its protractedness in terms of duration but in its strategic and tactical content that deliberately protracts the war by using the strategic defensive as a strategy of warfare and takes advantage of this protracted defensive warfare by using quick decision offensive warfare. Mao's theory of protracted war cannot be detached from its strategy and tactics, cannot be separated from its basic operational principles. To do so is to vulgarize it in theory and practice.

In theory and practice, our's is not a strategy of protracted war but a strategy of prolonged and perpetual guerrilla warfare which had already consumed 25 years. And Sison wants this vulgarized strategy "reaffirmed" as Mao's basic principle and "reaffirmed" up to the year 2000 and beyond. Our "protracted war" will be a prolonged and perpetual guerrilla warfare because Sison is afflicted with a terminal disease of guerrillaism and has absolutely no idea or is mired in wishful thinking on how this protracted guerrilla warfare can develop to a higher stage and change the strategic balance.

We only have to read Sison's *Specific Characteristics Of Our People's War* of 1976 and his *Reaffirm* of 1992 to see that Sison's version of protracted war completely deviates from Mao's strategy of protracted war, and worst, he does not really have a clear idea, after 25 years, of how to go about with this people's war. Except for *Specific*, Sison had no other major military writing regarding our armed struggle. This is also the case with the agrarian question. Except for *Guide for Revolutionary Land Reform* (1974?), which we assume was written by Sison, he has written no other major article that deals exclusively on the peasant question. Yet, he has always insisted that armed struggle is the main form and the agrarian struggle the main content of our revolution. In fact, even *Specific* cannot really be categorized as a military writing and cannot be compared with Mao's military writings. Out of 36 pages, only 12 pages dealt with "military" questions, and here we insist that it should be treated in quotation marks.

In three short sections of "*Specific*" (*Protracted War In The Countryside, Fighting In A Small Mountainous Archipelago*, and *From Small And Weak To Big And Strong*) Sison tried to develop his "military" ideas.

In the first section, how did he explain why it is possible to wage a protracted war in the Philippines? This is what Sison said: "*In our country, it is possible to wage a protracted people's war because we have a relatively wide backward countryside where the bulk of the population is. There are many parts which are relatively far from the enemy's center and main lines of communication and where the people live basically on their diversified agricultural produce. This situation is completely different from that obtaining in a capitalist country.*" So for Sison, if a country has "a relatively wide backward countryside where the bulk of the population is," protracted war is possible. Simple. This is all he had to say in the first section entitled *Protracted War In the Countryside* on why protracted war is possible in the Philippines in an article hailed as our guide in waging protracted people's war.

How does Sison compare this “backward countryside” to China where this protracted war theory originated? According to Sison: *“This backward countryside of our small country is not as large as that of China but is certainly large in comparison to our cities. This is the basic setting for our people’s war. The bulk of our population is here.”* With regards to the “bulk of our population,” Sison should explain the implication to our protracted war of the growing number of our urban population. In 1990, our urban population has grown to 48% of the total population and it is still growing.

The fact that our countryside does not have the vastness of China’s countryside is irrelevant to Sison. What is important is that this countryside is certainly larger in comparison to our cities as if comparing the territorial size of the countryside with the cities has any military sense in protracted war. What is of military value is the size of the countryside in relation to the requirements of mobile and guerrilla warfare, and not whether it is “large in comparison to our cities.”

Mao once said: *“Given a big country, guerrilla warfare is possible... it can be victorious only in modern times and only in big countries...”* And he also said, referring to the vastness of China’s territory: *“This is an important, even primary condition, as far as the possibility of waging guerrilla warfare is concerned...”*

However, Mao’s editors, followers of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, corrected Mao (it is presumed, as approved by Mao) — by affixing a footnote — in their attempt to universalize Mao’s protracted war: *“Ever since the end of World War II... in the new historical circumstances... the conditions under which the people of various countries conduct guerrilla warfare today need not be quite the same as those which were necessary in the days of the guerrilla warfare waged by the Chinese people against Japan. In other words, guerrilla war can be victoriously waged in a country which is not large in territory, as for instance, in Cuba, Algeria, Laos and southern Vietnam.”*

If by “guerrilla warfare” they mean armed struggle, this is not a world phenomenon peculiar to historical conditions after World War II. If by “guerrilla warfare” they mean Mao’s protracted war, they are wrong. The leaders of countries they cited as concrete examples will readily deny that their revolutions were of the “protracted war type.”

The “new historical circumstances” — the world era of the total collapse of imperialism and total victory of socialism — was also proven wrong by concrete historical developments.

They also did this footnoting to Mao’s statement that Red political power *“cannot occur in any imperialist country or in any colony under direct imperialist rule, but can only occur in China...”* According to these editors: *“... it has become possible for the peoples of all, or at least some, of the colonial countries in the East to maintain big and small revolutionary areas and revolutionary regimes over a long period of time, and to carry on long-term revolutionary wars in which to surround the cities from the countryside, and then gradually advance to take the cities and win nationwide victory.”*

In fact, Lin Biao rendered Mao more profound by applying protracted war strategy on a world scale — declaring that the “countryside of the world,” referring to countries like the Philippines, should encircle the “cities of the world” referring to the imperialist countries. Sison is an assiduous follower of these footnotes, and of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four — the conspirators of the Cultural Revolution in China, and applied these to the Philippine revolution.

How did Sison explain why it is necessary to wage protracted war in the Philippines?

This is what Sison said: *“In the Philippines, it is as necessary as it is possible to wage a protracted people’s war. It is only through a long period of time that we can develop our forces step by step by*

*defeating the enemy forces piece by piece. We are in no position to put our small and weak forces into strategically decisive engagements with militarily superior enemy forces. In the first place, we have just started from scratch. Neither could we have postponed the start of our people's war. The more time we have for developing our armed strength from practically nothing the better for us in the future. It is our firm policy to fight only those battles that we are capable of winning. Otherwise, we circle around at an enemy that we cannot defeat and look for the opportunity to strike at an enemy force that we can defeat."*

Actually, he did not explain why it is "necessary", but why it is "possible". As Sison implies, it is necessary to wage protracted war — because we have no other choice — without bothering to explore and explain the other "choices". Waging people's war is already assumed and whoever questions this is playing a "fool's game" (Sison: *"To have a few seats in a reactionary parliament and to have no army in our country is to play a fools game"*).

The only thing left that must be explained is why it must be protracted. And the answer is also simple and logical. We are starting from scratch, we are small and weak against a militarily superior enemy force. Only through a long period of time can we develop our forces step by step by defeating the enemy forces step by step.

Why start immediately our people's war? To this Sison answer 's *"the more time we have for developing our armed strength from practically nothing the better for us in the future."* What convoluted logic! Its just like asking, "why marry early?" And Sison will answer, *"the more time you have for developing your marriage from practically nothing the better for you in the future"*.

How did Sison envision the development of this protracted war? According to Sison: *"In carrying out protracted people's war, we apply the strategic line of encircling the cities from the countryside. We steadfastly develop guerrilla bases and zones at various strategic points in the country. In a subsequent stage, these areas shall be linked by regular mobile forces which shall be in a position to defend larger and more stable revolutionary bases in the countryside. From such stable revolutionary bases, we shall be able ultimately to seize the cities and advance to nationwide victory."* This one paragraph was all Sison said on how he envisions the development of our protracted war, at least in the first section.

So Sison is also speaking of regular mobile forces and stable base areas "in a subsequent stage", after *"we steadfastly develop guerrilla bases and zones at various strategic points in the country"*. What is the role of these "regular mobile forces"? According to Sison, it shall "link" the guerrilla bases and zones at various strategic points of the country" and defend larger and more stable base areas in the countryside, and *"from such stable revolutionary bases, we shall be able ultimately to seize and advance to nationwide victory."*

After talking of "linking" and "defending", he suddenly shifts to "seizing" and "advancing" to nationwide victory without mentioning the "offensive fighting" and "annihilating" role of the regular mobile forces? For Sison, essential role of mobile warfare is something to be assumed! How this guerrilla bases and zone will develop, what will be the factors for their development, how to build this regular mobile forces, how they will conduct their warfare in the strategic defensive, how to build stable base areas, what are the factors necessary for the development of stable base areas, what are the conditions for the emergence and long-term survival of these bases areas, etc. etc., all these Sison ignored in his first section which was supposed to be a general discussion of protracted war.

So Sison finished this section — *Protracted War In The Countryside* — without introducing the basic theory and principles of Mao's protracted war and how it should be understood, applied or related to

the Philippine situation. Sison was more concerned with impressing his readers with his smooth literary style than presenting a systematic exposition of the basic theory and strategy of protracted war.

We now proceed to Sison's second section — *Fighting In A Small Mountainous Archipelago* — which was supposed to be an attempt to particularize Mao's theory of protracted war in the concrete conditions of the Philippines and highlight the specific characteristics of our people's war. But since in the preceding section, he did not introduce the "universal" theory of Mao's protracted war, what will he try to particularize? Let us see how Sison ignored and obscured this problem in his second section.

What are the specific characteristics of our people's war that ensue from the specific characteristics of the Philippines? Sison began with the description of our country as a small mountainous archipelago with the eleven largest islands composing 94% of the total land area and 94% of the total population. So the Philippines is small, mountainous and archipelagic. So this is what is specific to the Philippines: its terrain!

The fact that the Philippines is a small country as compared to China is actually insignificant to Sison's strategy and tactics. What is important to Sison is that *"the backward countryside of our small country ... is certainly large in comparison to our cities"* and he even said that *"the countryside is so vast that enemy armed forces cannot but be spread thinly or cannot but abandon vast areas when concentrated at certain points."*

Hence, the Philippines as a small country has no real bearing to waging our protracted war, and in Sison's discussion of the second section where he mentioned this characteristic, he almost completely ignored its strategic or tactical relevance to our armed struggle, while for Mao, the vastness of China is a major factor.

Sison focused mainly on the archipelagic and mountainous character of our country. The Philippines as a mountainous country is actually not specific to the Philippines if we compare our country to China or Vietnam. So the only specific or peculiar characteristic of the Philippines, comparatively speaking, is the archipelagic character of the country.

According to Sison: *"There are three outstanding characteristics of the Philippines in being an archipelago. First, our countryside is shredded into so many islands. Second, our two biggest islands, Luzon and Mindanao, are separated by such a clutter of islands as the Visayas. Third, our small country is separated by seas from other countries. From such characteristics arise problems that are very peculiar to our people's war."*

What are these "very peculiar" problems ensuing from our being an archipelago? Sison explains: *"On the one hand, it is true that our countryside is wide in relation to the cities. On the other hand, it is also true that we have to fight within narrow fronts because the entire country is small and its countryside is shredded. The war between us and the enemy easily assumes the characteristics of being intensive, ruthless and exceedingly fluid."*

This is Sison's first "peculiar" problem — an intensive, ruthless and exceedingly fluid war because we have to fight within narrow fronts. The war becoming "intensive, ruthless and exceedingly fluid" is not something specific or peculiar to our people's war. These are fundamental characteristics of a protracted war whether it is waged within narrow or broad fronts. These characteristics ensue from the fact that this is a protracted war between a weak revolutionary armed force and a strong reactionary armed force.

*"We have to fight within narrow fronts", according to Sison, "because the entire country is small and its countryside is shredded". Sison had just stated, a few pages before, that "the countryside is so vast that the enemy armed forces cannot but spread thinly or cannot but abandon vast areas when concentrated at certain points" But now he is saying that we have to fight in narrow fronts because "the entire country is small and its countryside is shredded." What do we believe? By the way he discussed his second section, the real problem is not this "shredded countryside", the real problem is Sison's shredded thinking.*

*According to Sison: " While we have the widest possible space for the development of regular mobile forces in Luzon and Mindanao, these two islands are separated by hundreds of kilometers and by far smaller islands where the space immediately appears to be suitable only for guerrilla forces throughout the course of the people's war. The optimum condition for the emergence of regular mobile forces in the major Visayan islands will be provided by the prior development of regular mobile forces in Luzon and Mindanao."*

So Sison accepts that the territorial area of Luzon and Mindanao provide the "widest possible space" for the development of regular mobile forces. If so, why does he insist that we are "fighting in narrow fronts" because the country is small and the countryside is shredded? Of course, since ours is a protracted war, we have to "fight within narrow fronts" in the beginning and extend it step by step through the strategic defensive. So again, what is Sison's peculiar problem?

Actually, when speaking of a *shredded countryside*, what should be referred to are the Visayas and this shredded countryside separates the countryside of Luzon and Mindanao. So what is the "peculiar" problem in waging protracted war in a situation wherein the big islands of Luzon and Mindanao where *"we have the widest possible space for the development of regular mobile forces"* are separated by the *"shredded"* Visayan countryside where *"the space immediately appears to be suitable only for guerrilla warfare"*? In short, what is the implication of this fact, of this "shredded" Visayan countryside in waging guerrilla warfare and developing regular mobile warfare in Luzon and Mindanao?

Sison is like a boy twisting his hands and contorting his body but cannot seem to confess what the problem is. Up to this point, Sison had not identified the problems very peculiar to our protracted war ensuing from the archipelagic character of the country. He made the impression that he is on the "threshold" but can not seem to penetrate, and finally decided to withdraw from the effort.

In his immediately succeeding paragraph, Sison said: *"Waging a people's war in an archipelagic country like ours is definitely an exceedingly difficult and complex problem for us."* Indeed, and our 25 years of protracted war testify to this fact. But again, what is this exceedingly difficult and complex problem? This is Sison's answer: *"At this stage that we are still trying to develop guerrilla warfare on a nationwide scale, the central leadership has had to shift from one organizational arrangement to another so as to give ample attention to the regional Party and army organizations. This is only one manifestation of the problem. Armed propaganda teams and initial guerrilla units scattered in far-flung areas are susceptible to being crushed by the enemy. This is another manifestation of the problem."*

So these are the "peculiar" problems of our protracted war ensuing from the archipelagic character of the country. First, "the central leadership has had to shift from one organizational arrangement to another"! So this is the "peculiar" problem, the "specific" characteristic of our protracted war — how Sison and what was left of the central leadership at that time will exercise leadership, what "organizational arrangement" they will institute! He is not even talking of shifting from one guerrilla base to another but shifting from one organizational arrangement to another! What a big "peculiar" problem for our military "strategist" arising from the archipelagic character of the country! It

seemed, by 1986, upon release from prison he was able to finally solve this “peculiar” problem of our protracted war — he shifted from Manila to Utrecht, and for Sison this is the best “organizational arrangement” for leading our people’s war.

For Sison’s second manifestation of the problem – the susceptibility of our APTs and initial guerrilla units in far-flung areas being crushed by the enemy – well, this confirms what kind of a military leader Sison is. Imagine the Chairman, the architect of our protracted war, worrying that our small scattered units in far-flung areas might be crushed by the enemy because our’s is an archipelagic country! How thoughtful of Sison to worry! But is this war-monger really decided in waging war? Every unit, small or large, is always in danger of being crushed by the enemy because of subjective mistakes and casualties are inevitable in war. So what is Sison’s problem? Was he really thinking when he attributed this “susceptibility” to the archipelagic character of the country and is this the peculiar problem of our protracted war arising from this archipelagic character?

Obviously, these are not acceptable “peculiar” problems of our protracted war arising from the fact that our country is an archipelago. So again, what is the peculiar or specific characteristic of our people’s war, according to Sison?

Sison continues: *“There is no doubt that fighting in an archipelagic country like our’s is initially a big disadvantage for us.” So Sison believes that this is an initial disadvantage. But, concretely, in what form? It is a disadvantage because, according to Sison: “Since the central leadership has to position itself in some remote area in Luzon, there is no alternative now and even for a long time to come but to adopt and carry out the policy of centralized leadership and decentralized operations. We must distribute and develop throughout the country cadres who are of sufficiently high quality to find their own bearing and maintain initiative not only within periods as short as one or two months, period of regular reporting, but also within periods as long as two or more years...”*

This is what Sison means by *fighting in an archipelagic country like our’s is initially a big disadvantage for us?* Again, a question of how to exercise leadership. Sison is really so self-centered that all he thinks is how he can exercise his leadership as if its the single biggest problem of the revolution, of the war. The archipelagic character of the country has no bearing on the question of centralized leadership and decentralized operations. Even in China, this was a basic principle in protracted war. Distributing and developing cadres throughout the country who can find their own bearing and work by themselves for long periods of time is not something peculiar to an archipelagic country. In fact, this is a Maoist principle.

In his subsequent paragraph, Sison said: *“The development of the central base area somewhere in Luzon will decisively favor and be favored by the development of many smaller bases in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Thus, we have paid attention to the deployment of cadres for nationwide guerrilla warfare. In a small country like the Philippines or more precisely in an island like Luzon, it would have been foolhardy for the central leadership to ensconce itself in one limited area, concentrate all the limited Party personnel and all efforts there and consequently invite the enemy to concentrate his own forces there. It would have been foolhardy to underestimate the enemy’s ability to rapidly move and concentrate his forces in an island where communications are most developed.”*

Here, Sison is saying something regarding the specific strategy he has in mind but he presents it in a deliberately obscure way by not referring to the archipelagic character of the country as the determinant. In fact, he is referring more directly to the “smallness” of the country, or particularly Luzon.

Base building in different parts of the country, one of them being developed as the central base, is

not something new or peculiar to an archipelagic Philippines as this was also attempted and done in China favoring the development of the central base, and the establishment of the central base favoring the development of the other base areas. According to Sison, this is the reason why *“we have paid attention to the deployment of cadres for nationwide guerrilla warfare.”* By the way he carefully formulated this statement, again nothing specific or peculiar arising from the archipelagic character of the country for this was also done in China. But Sison connected this deployment of cadres for nationwide guerrilla warfare with his refusal to “concentrate” in one limited area calling it “foolhardy” in a small country or in an island like Luzon.

Here, Sison seems to be only insinuating, the specific strategy of advancing protracted war in the Philippines. What is very clear is his opposition to concentrate in only one area (which the CCP even before Mao never did) but this point he did not connect with the archipelagic character of the Philippines but more on its size.

While opposing the concentration of all forces in one limited area, Sison still held the idea of building a central revolutionary base after strengthening the seven regional Party and army organizations, specially those of Northwest, Northeast and Central Luzon. Meaning, even in an archipelagic country, Sison believes that a central revolutionary base can be established along with many smaller bases in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. How and when this can be built he did not clarify except by saying “after strengthening” the rural regional organizations that have already been established throughout the country at that time.

So after all these discussions, what did Sison specify as *“the problems that are very peculiar to our people’s war”* arising from the archipelagic character of the Philippines?

Nothing, virtually nothing. He did not say that because of this archipelagic character, the building of stable revolutionary base areas of the Ching kang-type is impossible or will take a very long time. He did not say that the repeated alternation of “campaign and counter-campaign” will not be the main pattern of the Philippines’ civil war. He did not say that the principle of the concentration of troops for regular mobile warfare, quick decision offensive warfare and war of annihilation is impossible in the Philippines or will take a very long time to develop.

So, what did he say that is of any military substance? Nothing. All he said was because the Philippines is archipelagic, we will have to “fight within narrow fronts”; this war will be “intensive, ruthless and exceedingly fluid”; in Luzon and Mindanao we have the “widest possible space” for regular mobile forces while in the Visayas “the space immediately appears to be suitable only for guerrilla warfare”; the central leadership will have to “shift from one organizational arrangement to another”; the APTs and initial guerrilla units scattered in far-flung areas are “susceptible to being crushed by the enemy”; there is no alternative but to adopt “centralized leadership and decentralized operations”; we must distribute and develop cadres throughout the country who can “find their own bearing”; the development of the central revolutionary base in Luzon will “decisively favor and be favored” by the development of many smaller bases in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao; it will be “foolhardy to concentrate all our forces in one limited area”; and finally, “after strengthening the existing regional organizations”, we can more confidently look forward to and take the steps towards building the central revolutionary base.

After saying that *“there is no doubt that fighting in an archipelagic country like our’s is initially a big disadvantage for us”*, Sison went on to say that, *“in the long run, the fact that our country is archipelagic will turn out to be a great advantage for us and a great disadvantage for the enemy.”* Here, Sison is trying hard to sound like Mao. But the question is how sure is Sison of the correctness of his “dialectics”. After 25 years of protracted war, what is true is actually the reverse!



How did Sison explain that in the long run, this will become a great advantage for us and a great disadvantage for the enemy?

According to Sison: *"The enemy shall be forced to divide his attention and forces not only to the countryside but also to so many islands. Our great advantage will show when we shall have succeeded in developing guerrilla warfare on a nationwide scale and when at least we shall have been on the threshold of waging regular mobile warfare in Luzon or in both Luzon and Mindanao."*

This is plain and simple sophistry. What has the Philippines being an archipelago got to do with "the enemy being forced to divide his attention and forces not only to the countryside but also to many islands"?

Even if the Philippines is not an archipelago, *"when we have succeeded in developing guerrilla warfare on a nationwide scale,"* and if the enemy, and this is a big IF, decides on a stupid strategy of trying to contain and pursue our guerrilla forces nationwide, then he will be dispersing his armed forces. This strategy of dispersal is not determined by the geographical character of the country but by how the general staff and field commanders of the enemy appraise the situation and devise their strategy to best combat our revolutionary war strategy from their point of view.

Even if the enemy decides to disperse its forces, still, the country as an archipelago does not become a great disadvantage for the enemy nor a great advantage for us. The bodies of water surrounding our islands are not so much an obstacle for the enemy since they have naval, air and other transport facilities. While on our part, it will remain a great disadvantage because of our logistical inferiority in case we need to concentrate and maneuver for regular mobile warfare and strategic shifting of forces.

According to Sison, *"our great advantage will show when we shall have succeeded in developing guerrilla warfare on a nationwide scale and when at least we shall have been on the threshold of waging regular mobile warfare in Luzon or in both Luzon and Mindanao."* Nothing is farther from the truth.

If our strategy was to engage first in widespread nationwide guerrilla warfare before embarking on a concentration of forces for regular mobile warfare, the archipelagic character of the country is more of an advantage than a disadvantage during this initial period of the war and this was proven by our concrete experiences in the first decade of protracted war. Deploying back and forth enemy forces through naval and air transport is much too costly just to pursue "roving guerrilla units" and strike back at "roving guerrilla action" scattered in different islands nationwide.

Archipelago or not, the enemy can not really do anything up to a certain point against roving guerrilla units scattered on a nationwide scale. This will only become a ruthless war of attrition with no decisive engagements. The real struggle will begin as soon as we reach a certain point in our guerrilla warfare when we shall have been on the threshold of regular mobile warfare. By the 1980's we began to knock at this "threshold" in our advanced and more stable areas. Here, the archipelagic character will gradually become a negative or complicating factor in concentrating and coordinating our forces for regular mobile warfare as they are widely dispersed nationwide and in different islands.

The above quote from Sison is actually the most significant. When he said that our great advantage will show *"when we shall have succeeded in developing guerrilla warfare on a nationwide scale and when at least we shall have been on the threshold of waging regular mobile warfare,"* he actually and suddenly unfolded his strategic idea of how to conduct our protracted war although crude and incomplete, though not presented and formulated in a categorical or straightforward manner. His idea is to "first develop guerrilla warfare on a nationwide scale" and when we have succeeded in

these undertaking, only then should we begin waging regular mobile warfare.

This is a fundamental departure from Mao's basic principles of the concentration of forces for regular mobile warfare, quick decision offensive warfare on exterior lines and war of annihilation as the main forms of warfare at the very outset of the strategic defensive and the principal means of advancing in the strategic defensive. To Mao, guerrilla warfare is only secondary and supplementary to regular mobile warfare (although in other writings, he calls this mobile warfare as a higher level of guerrilla warfare).

The problem with Sison is he did not even bother to explain why, in the Philippines, these basic principles of Mao are not applicable and what is applicable is his own strategic idea of widespread and nationwide guerrilla warfare as the principal and exclusive form of warfare at a given period or stage of our strategic defensive. In fact, he did not even bother to explain Mao's basic theory and principles of protracted war and try to relate his own ideas to the Chinese experience given the fact that all of us were made to believe that we are following Mao's basic ideas in protracted war.

It very clear that Sison is deviating from Mao's basic theory. For Sison, guerrilla warfare is not only principal in the initial stages of the war but is the exclusive form of warfare, and it's development on a nationwide scale is the condition for the development of regular mobile warfare. The basic question here is this: Is there anything in Mao's theory that says that guerrilla warfare (clearly counterposed to mobile warfare) can become not only the principal but the exclusive form of warfare at a given period of the strategic defensive (except of course if you do not have yet an armed force to "regularize")?

What happened to Mao's ideas of the emergence and long-term survival of armed independent regimes and its crucial role in the development of the Red Army? What happened to Mao's ideas of the repeated alternation of enemy campaign and counter-campaign of the People's Army as the main pattern of the strategic defensive and advancing from the strategic defensive to the strategic offensive by the process of victorious counter-campaigns? What happened to Mao's ideas of the concentration of troops as the main operational principle of the Red Army, to the waging of regular mobile warfare as the main form of warfare specially in the strategic defensive, the waging of quick decision offensive warfare on exterior lines within protracted defensive warfare on interior lines as the main method of advancing from the strategic defensive to the strategic offensive, and the waging of war annihilation mainly through regular mobile warfare as the best way of preserving oneself and destroying the enemy and war of attrition as supplementary?

All this will have to wait until we have developed extensively our guerrilla warfare on a nationwide scale! Meaning, Mao's protracted war will have to wait until Sison's version is consummated? What then is left of Mao's theory in Sison's protracted war? Sison's version of protracted guerrillaism is Li Li-san's line in his low period of deep pessimism!

It would not matter much if this "deviation" from Mao's basic operational principles lasted only for a brief, transitory period. But it has now taken us 25 years pursuing Sison's version of protracted war! And he wants us to "reaffirm" this further up to the year 2000 and beyond. Why are we saying that he wants us to "reaffirm" this protracted guerrilla war into perpetuity? Because, just as in his *"Specific"* of 1976, Sison, in his *"Reaffirm"* of 1992, still has no clear, complete and integral strategic conception of how to conduct and advance our protracted war aside from waging nationwide guerrilla warfare. He does not even have the vaguest idea of how and when to conduct regular mobile warfare in an archipelagic Philippines, and the farthest he got on this question in his *Specific* is reach the "threshold of waging regular mobile warfare". In his *Reaffirm*, his main concern is to push back the armed struggle to the early forms of our guerrilla warfare, to the level of the 1970's, and "reaffirm" his *Specific* as the bible of the protracted war in the Philippines.

From the archipelagic character, Sison shifted to the “mountainous” character of the Philippines, pursuing further his “terrain” theory of protracted war. According to Sison: *“The mountainous character of the country countervails its archipelagic character from the very start... If on the one hand the archipelagic character of the country has a narrowing effect on our fighting front, its mountainous character has both a broadening and deepening effect.”* Again, vintage Sison, with his penchant for fancy formulations.

Can the mountainous character of the country really “countervail” its archipelagic character? But since, according to Sison, the archipelagic character is a great advantage for us in the long run, the necessity for “countervailing” it is only in the initial stages of the war when it is still a big disadvantage for us. The question is, how is this archipelagic character “countervailed” in the initial period of the war? What should be “countervailed”? According to Sison, what should be “countervailed” is the “narrowing effect on our fighting fronts” by this archipelagic character. How is it “countervailed”? By the “broadening and deepening effect” of the mountainous character of the country.

Can we get any military “sense” in these “narrowing,” “broadening” and “deepening” terminologies of Sison? Again, this is nothing but rhetorical sophistry devoid of any military sense. Sison is hiding behind fancy non-military terms to conceal his ignorance of military theory. How can a mountain “broaden” and “deepen” the “narrowing” effect of an island? Terrain provides physical limitations and advantages for warring armies. How to adopt to these limitations and take advantage of opportunities provided by terrain is a question of strategy and tactics. We will achieve nothing by indulging in fancy formulations. The point is to concretize in military strategy and tactics the effect of terrain in varying circumstances.

The more basic question is how do we concretely make use of this mountainous character in the conduct of our war. According to Sison: *“The fact that we have given the highest priority to creating guerrilla bases and zones in mountainous areas has helped us in a big way to preserve our guerrilla forces in the face of so many small and big campaigns of ‘encirclement and suppression’ launch against us. Without the use of the Sierra Madre, our small forces in Cagayan Valley with only three companies as main force could not have preserved themselves against 7,000 enemy troops. Without the use of the mountainous areas of Sorsogon, our small initial forces there could not have expanded to their peak of one platoon-size main force and eight squads and could have been more easily reduced upon the coming of 1,000 enemy troops.”*

Is this what Sison means, in terms of strategy and tactics, of the “broadening” and “deepening” effect of the mountainous character of the country — make use of it to “preserve” our forces but not in destroying the enemy? Because he talks only of preserving ourselves, thanks to the “mountains”, but says nothing of destroying the enemy.

In citing the many small and big campaigns’ launched against us, Sison only speaks of how we “preserved our forces” by giving priority to the mountainous areas but does not say anything of how to use this mountainous areas to destroy the enemy and smash its many small and big campaigns. One will get the impression that the use of the mountainous character of the country is only as a sanctuary for our guerrilla forces, as a cover to hide from the enemy so as to preserve our forces and not as terrain extremely favorable for fighting and annihilating the enemy.

Sison wrapped-up this second section without discussing the basic principles of Mao’s protracted war and how they are applied or modified in the particular conditions of the Philippines so as to show the specific characteristics of our people’s war. And up to the third section — *From Small and Weak To Big and Strong* — Sison failed in this task of theoretically clarifying our protracted war in the light of Mao’s basic principles.

From its title, one will expect from Sison an exposition on how he envisions the development and advance of our protracted war from the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate and finally to the strategic offensive, how the New People's Army will grow "from small and weak to big and strong" and how the "big and strong" AFP will be weakened, annihilated and finally defeated.

Again, this section could have been an opportunity for Sison to clarify Mao's basic principles. Here, Sison begins to talk of enemy "campaigns of encirclement," "concentration of forces," "regular mobile warfare," "battles of quick decision", "policy of annihilation," etc. but again, without saying anything.

Sison began with the existing balance of forces at that time. According to Sison: *"We must recognize the existing balance of forces between us and the enemy. This is the first requirement in waging either an entire war or a campaign or a single battle. As matters now stand, we are small and weak while the enemy is big and strong. There is no doubt that he is extremely superior to us militarily in such specific terms as number of troops, formations, equipment, technique, training, foreign assistance and supplies in general. It will take a protracted period of time for us to change this balance of forces in our favor. Thus protractedness is a basic characteristic of our people's war."*

Sison is talking only of duration, of the protracted duration of the war as a basic characteristic of our people's war and not of the protracted strategy of Mao's people's war. Let us cross our fingers as to where this emphasis of Sison on the protracted duration of the war will lead in his strategy and tactics, whether he will rely more on the attritive not on the annihilative character of this protracted war in changing the balance of forces.

Sison then proceeded to giving a detailed description of the balance of forces and a narration of how we started from scratch. Then he goes to describe the enemy campaigns of encirclement and how the NPA "confronts" these campaigns.

According to Sison: *"It remains a gross disadvantage and weakness for the NPA to have so few rifles and small concentrable forces to face an enemy who launches campaigns of "encirclement and suppression" by deploying so many units no smaller than a half-company for outpost work and oversized platoons, rallying to a full regular company or even a full battalion, for seeking encounters with us within an area of encirclement. Under such circumstances, it is quite difficult for us to maintain the initiative and carry out the policy of annihilation in battles. The opportunity to wipe out an enemy squad or platoon does not often present itself. The enemy even goes so far as to force the evacuation of the entire population by perpetuating massacres, looting, bombardment and arson. Deprived of mass support within a given area, our small guerrilla forces have to shift elsewhere in the main."*

Sison talks of enemy campaigns of "encirclement and suppression". He laments the "gross disadvantage and weakness" of the NPA, its lack of rifles and small concentrable force to face an enemy column of one company or a full battalion. Under such circumstance, he admits that "it is quite difficult for us to maintain the initiative and carry out the policy of annihilation in battles." Sison, therefore, admits that the NPA because of its "gross disadvantage and weakness" in the face of an enemy campaign, is pushed into a passive defense. In fact, our small guerrilla forces, if deprived of mass support, is forced to "shift elsewhere in the main."

Given the "gross disadvantage and weakness" of our guerrilla forces, what does Sison prescribe?

Sison fails to pinpoint what the main pattern of the war will be. Will it be like the Chinese experience of "campaign and counter-campaign" or will it take a different course? In Mao's theory, this was his starting point in defining the strategic defensive and formulated his strategy and tactics on the basis

of the recognition of this pattern or what he calls a law of protracted war (in a civil war). All his principles of concentration of troops, regular mobile warfare, quick-decision offensive warfare on exterior lines, war of annihilation, etc. ensued from the recognition of this main pattern in China's civil war. Sison completely ignored this basic question and starting point in formulating his strategy and tactics and in discussing the strategic defensive.

Instead of clarifying correct strategy and tactics or the basic principles of Mao if he believes they are applicable, or modifying them if they are not applicable, Sison prescribed "patch-up" solutions and hazy formulations. Read Sison's first prescription: *"At the moment, the only way to amplify our armed strength and fighting effectiveness is to give full play to the popular support that we enjoy."* What he means by this is combine the bolos, spears, crossbows, traps and other indigenous weapons of the masses with homemade explosives and the few rifles of the guerrilla units. Of course, we must mobilize the people for the war. This is basic.

But does this solve the question of strategy and tactics, or of military theory. The problem is what our military theory and principle, our strategy and tactics in developing the fighting capacity of the NPA in confronting, smashing and defeating the "encirclement and suppression" campaigns of the enemy are. Mobilizing the people for the war is a basic precondition since this is a people's war, but it does not answer the basic question of what kind of fighting force must we build and what are its operational principles.

Sison followed this up with some words of caution: *"Especially because of our smallness and weakness, there are two opposite dangers that we have to avoid and counteract. One is trying to cover an area that is actually wider than we can sufficiently cover. This usually involves overdispersing our guerrilla squads. The other is concentrating on so small an area that at one whiff of the enemy we do not know how to shift."* Again, Sison is evading the question.

Of course, what he is saying are important practical tips summed-up from our practice. But why does he continuously avoid giving a clear exposition of what is required in terms of strategy and tactics to preserve our forces and destroy the enemy in "campaigns and counter-campaigns" or whatever is the main pattern in our civil war?

Sison actually tried to tackle this question though in a very hazy manner: *"Guerrilla forces in relation to regular mobile forces operate according to the principle of dispersal. But since all that we have are small guerrilla forces, with absolutely no regular mobile forces yet to serve as main force on any occasion, then we have to have some relative concentration and some relative dispersal according to the scale of our guerrilla warfare. We have to have main guerrilla units as well as secondary guerrilla units, guerrilla bases as well as guerrilla zones."*

Sison's first point is: since we do not have any regular mobile forces yet, we have to make do with what we have. Again, he is not clarifying a military theory or principle, defining strategy and tactics but simply improvising and solving practical problems of the moment. He does not clarify on a theoretical plane the role of regular mobile forces and regular mobile warfare in advancing our protracted war and how it can be developed. He simply accepts the fact that we still do not have such forces and we are still not ready for such warfare. With this kind of "strategist", should we still wonder why, after 25 years, we still have to reach the level of regular mobile warfare? Instead of clarifying the principle of concentration and dispersal, he just content himself in simply and safely saying that we have *"to have some relative concentration and some relative dispersal according to the scale of our guerrilla war."*

He follows this up with these statements: *"Our action takes the form of either concentration, shifting or dispersion. We concentrate to attack the enemy, mainly in the form of ambushes and raids on*

*small enemy units that we can wipe out. We disperse to conduct propaganda and organizational work or to 'disappear' before the enemy. We shift to circle or retreat to gain time and seek favorable circumstance for attack. Our guerrilla warfare is characterized by flexibility or timely shifting from one mode of action to another and by fluidity or frequent shifting of ground. We must grasp and give full play to this characteristic to maintain the initiative against the enemy."*

When do we concentrate, shift or disperse? According to Sison, *"we concentrate to attack the enemy"*. Correct. But according also to Mao, when attacked by the enemy, we also concentrate so we can effectively defend ourselves and effectively counter-attack. In fact, we also use the principle of dispersal when we begin to counter-attack. This principle applies not only to regular units but to guerrilla units. The essential theoretical question is how to pursue active defence and avoid passive defence, how to relate this to the principles of concentration, shifting and dispersal and how to develop the fighting capacity of the peoples' army not just to engage in idle talk that we need to be "flexible," we need to "shift", we need to maintain "initiative", etc. etc. This is impressing people with rhetoric not with strategy and tactics.

Before wrapping up his "pointers", Sison reaffirmed the justness of our war and the correctness of our ideological and political line and here lies *"our superiority over the enemy"*. Indeed, this is the foundation for victory. But this alone is not enough. After settling the justness of our cause and the correctness of our line, what is decisive is how to conduct our war. It is utterly useless to keep on repeating that the NPA is *"bound to grow into a big and strong force as it perseveres in its correct ideological and political line"* instead of systematically clarifying our strategy and tactics in protracted war.

According to Sison: *"... the NPA is confident of winning victory because wherever it is and goes it proves to be politically superior to the enemy because it has a flexible strategy and tactics based on concrete conditions that it comprehends."* What is this rhetoric of "political superiority" based on "flexible" strategy and tactics? How can Sison talk of "flexibility" in strategy and tactics in our revolutionary war when he has yet to lay down our strategy and tactics in winning this "protracted war", which until now, after 25 years, he has failed to accomplish?

Sison then went on to the question of the strategic defensive. According to Sison: *"As matters now stand on a nationwide scale or even on the scale of every region, the NPA has no alternative but to be on the strategic defensive in opposition to the strategic offensive of an overweening enemy. But the content of our strategic defensive is the series of tactical offensives that we are capable of undertaking and winning. By winning battles of quick decision, we are bound to accumulate the strength to win bigger battles and campaigns to be able to move up to a higher stage of the war. To graduate from guerrilla warfare to regular warfare as the main form of our warfare, we have to exert a great deal of effort over a long period of time. We are still very much at the rudimentary and early substage of the strategic defensive."*

This one short paragraph is all that Sison can muster with regard to the most crucial and essential question in the Maoist theory of protracted war, a question that determines its protracted character and strategy. He deals with truisms learned by rote but fails miserably in explaining their meaning in the concrete context of our civil war.

He declares that we are on the strategic defensive against the strategic offensive of the enemy but understands it only as a situational characterization of the existing balance, as the given situation between us and the enemy not as a definite policy or a definite strategy in confronting and defeating the strategic offensive of the enemy. Hence, he does not clarify the entire dimension of this strategy on the basis of Mao's basic principles and its application or applicability to the specific character of our revolutionary war. He does not talk of the main pattern of this strategic defensive and how the

NPA will conduct this strategic defensive on the basis of this pattern or law of development of the protracted war.

He talks about the “tactical offensives” as the content of our strategic defensive but does not clarify the nature, aim, requisites, context, features, progress and dimension of this “tactical offensives” which Mao calls the “counter-campaign” to the enemy’s “encirclement campaign” or “quick-decision offensive warfare on exterior lines within protracted defensive warfare on interior lines”. He just asserts that “the content of our strategic defensive is the series of tactical offensives that we are capable of undertaking and winning”, period.

This is not a statement of strategy and tactics but just a statement of fact. The strategic concept behind the question of engaging in offensive warfare within defensive warfare or what Mao calls “active defence” is not a question of what “we are capable of undertaking and winning”. It is a question of developing the optimum capability of the People’s Army to undertake effective and successful offensive warfare within the defensive to preserve itself and destroy the enemy and thus advance the strategic defensive. What we are “capable of undertaking” at a given time is a tactical question, a question of selecting the battle that we are “capable of winning”.

He talks of “winning battles of quick decision” to be able to “accumulate the strength to win bigger battles and campaigns” and thus “move to a higher stage of the war”. He talks of graduating from “guerrilla warfare to regular mobile warfare as the main form of our warfare” but for this we “have to exert a great deal of effort over a long period of time.” It seems that Sison is just impressing comrades that he knows these military “terms” — “battles of quick decisions”, “regular mobile warfare”, etc. , but he does not even bother to give to it any military “sense”.

He does not clarify the strategic role of this “battles of quick decisions” and “regular mobile warfare”, and their connections to the question of winning counter-campaigns, concentration of troops and war of annihilation, and most important of all, how we can develop to be able to make these principles operational in our protracted war, if we believe in their validity.

Just to amplify this point, what does Sison prescribe for us to be able “to graduate from guerrilla warfare to regular mobile warfare as the main form of our warfare”. On this most important question — developing regular mobile warfare as the main form of warfare — what did Sison say? He just said: “we have to exert a great deal of effort over a long period of time”! It just like asking: “How can we advance the revolution?” And Sison answers: Well, simple: “we have to exert a great deal of effort over a long period of time”.

No wonder, we have been exerting a great deal of effort for 25 years now in guerrilla warfare and we still have to see the dawning of our regular mobile warfare!! Imagine, 25 years is consumed, and according to Sison we need several years more, just to develop the supplementary or secondary form of warfare — guerrilla warfare — and not yet the main form — regular mobile warfare. By the time we “graduate” from guerrilla warfare, how many years again must it take for this regular mobile warfare to advance the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate and finally to the strategic offensive.

Obviously, it will take much more time because we are still in the preparatory or introductory stage of this three-act drama, we still have to develop the main form of warfare, we still have to start the real war. It is now a confirmed fact that what Sison understands in Mao’s people’s war is its protractedness in terms of duration not the actual strategy of protracted war.

We should now remind ourselves of what Sison said on why we could not have postponed the start of our people’s war: “The more time we have for developing our armed strength from practically

*nothing the better for us in the future”!!!* Indeed, Sison’s people’s war is a vulgarized version of Mao’s protracted war with a convoluted logic.

So, how does Sison envision our growth from “small and weak to big and strong”? According to Sison: *“We may state that in the long process of its growing from small and weak to big and strong, our people’s army we will have to undergo certain stages and substages.”* How profound! In our growth, we have to pass through not only through stages but through substages.

What are these stages? According to Sison: *“It is now undergoing the first stage, the strategic defensive. Consequently, it shall undergo the second stage, the strategic stalemate, when our strength shall be more or less on an equal footing with the enemy’s and our tug-of-war with the enemy over strategic towns, cities and larger areas shall become conspicuous. Finally, it shall undergo the third stage, the strategic offensive, when the enemy shall have been profoundly weakened and completely isolated and shall have been forced to go on the strategic defensive, a complete reversal of his position at the stage of the strategic defensive.”*

Did Sison say anything that can enlighten us how we will grow from “small and weak to big and strong” by just repeating Mao’s three strategic stages? The basic question that Sison failed to answer and he simply obscured with literary sophistry and demagoguery is how to conduct the strategic defensive of the people’s army against the strategic offensive of the enemy and in the process accumulate strength through a protracted war strategy until we reach a strategic shift in the balance of forces.

Mao has very clear, systematic and integral strategy and tactics on how to conduct this strategic defensive in a civil war and in a national war. He laid down the most basic principles in a most integral way in conducting this strategy of protracted war specially in the strategic defensive: building armed independent regimes and revolutionary base areas in strategic points and guerrilla zones and bases in wide areas; preserving oneself and destroying the enemy in victorious counter-campaigns against the repeated encirclement campaigns of the enemy; concentrating one’s troops in active defense and in offensive warfare; engaging in regular mobile warfare as the main form and guerrilla warfare and positional warfare as supplementary forms; engaging in quick-decision offensive warfare on exterior lines within the framework of protracted defensive warfare on interior lines; engaging in war of annihilation as the main form of destroying the enemy with war of attrition as secondary.

This is how Mao saw the development of the strategic defensive and entire protracted war against Japan: *“... if we take the War of Resistance as a whole, we can attain the aim of our strategic defensive and finally defeat Japanese imperialism only through the cumulative effect of many offensive campaigns and battles in both regular and guerrilla warfare, namely through the cumulative effect of many victories in offensive actions. Only through the cumulative effect of many campaigns and battles of quick decision, namely, the cumulative effect of many victories achieved through quick decision in offensive campaigns and battles, can we attain our goal of strategic protractedness, which means gaining time to increase our capacity to resist while hastening or awaiting changes in the international situation and the internal collapse of the enemy, in order to be able to launch a strategic counter-offensive and drive the Japanese invaders out of China. We must concentrate superior forces and fight exterior line operations in every campaign or battle whether in the stage of strategic defensive or in that of strategic counter-offensive, in order to encircle and destroy the enemy forces, encircling part if not all of them, destroying part if not all of the forces we have encircled, and inflicting heavy casualties on the encircled forces if we cannot capture them in large numbers. Only through the cumulative effect of many such battles of annihilation can we change the relative position as between the enemy and ourselves, thoroughly smash his strategic encirclement — that is, his scheme of exterior -line operations — and finally, in coordination with*



*international forces and the revolutionary struggles of the Japanese people, surround the Japanese imperialists and deal them the coup de grace. These results are to be achieved mainly through regular warfare, with guerrilla warfare making a secondary contribution. What is common to both, however, is the accumulation of many minor victories to make a major victory. Herein lies the great strategic role of guerrilla warfare in the War of Resistance.”*

Why does Sison fail to write like Mao in discussing protracted people's war? Because Mao knows what he is saying and Sison does not. More importantly, Mao is a great military and revolutionary leader with a head for strategy while Sison is a plain war-monger and phrase-monger with a head for sophistry. Actually, Sison knows Mao's theory by rote and he tried to dogmatically apply it in Isabela during the early years of our people's war. But he got burned in his early baptism of fire. And because he does not have the grit and the wit of a military strategist and tactician and only the flair and fancy of a petty bourgeois pseudo-theoretician, he was confused by the complicated and peculiar circumstances of our war and began to grope and improvise pointing to the archipelagic character of the country as an excuse. What is despicable with Sison is he does not even have the intellectual honesty to admit his complete rupture with Mao's protracted war, and instead continued to use Mao's mantle to give credence to his contraband type of vulgarized protracted war.

### **A Vulgarized Type Of Revolution**

Sison did not only vulgarized Mao's protracted war strategy. He also vulgarized a Marxist-Leninist revolution. This is his original and greater sin. His worst sin is deceiving the revolutionary forces in our country with his contraband concepts of war and revolution. He cost the proletariat and masses untold sacrifices and hardships not commensurate to the gains achieved pursuing his vulgarized line of war and revolution. He laid to waste historical opportunities for great advances or even decisive victory, and in the process petrified the proletarian vanguard party into the worst kind of dogmatism and rigidity.

The most difficult task at hand is how to restore the real essence and spirit of Marxism-Leninism; revive the revolutionary movement guided by its fundamental principles and historical lessons creatively applied in the concrete conditions of our country, rebuild the proletarian vanguard party in fierce struggle with its dogmatic and empiricist past and fanatical elements that continue to wrought havoc in the revolutionary ranks; and to do all these simultaneously as dictated by the real dynamics of the struggle outside and inside the revolutionary movement.

What is a Marxist-Leninist revolution? What are its fundamental principles? In what form and scale did Sison deviate from this type of revolution and from its fundamental principles?

Revolution, in essence, is class warfare, and armed warfare is only an extension and expression in form of this class warfare. Only in this sense can we say that revolution is war and war can become a revolution. This is our basic thesis which we believe fully corresponds to Marx's and Lenin's ideas of proletarian-led revolution and we cannot allow any demagoguery on this most fundamental point. For revolutionary demagoguery and phrase-mongering grew insanely when separate elements in Marx's and Lenin's doctrine of class struggle and revolution were dogmatized and absolutized.

What then is a Marxist-Leninist revolution? It is a revolution guided by the principles of Communism and by Communist revolutionary elements. We call it a Marxist-Leninist revolution because it is primarily the basic ideas of Marx and Lenin that constitute the main body of what we call Communism.

What then is Communism? Communism, according to Engels, *“is the doctrine of the conditions for*

*the emancipation of the proletariat.*” A Communist revolution, therefore, is a revolution guided by the Communist doctrine that lays the conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat, and ultimately, of human society transforming class or civil society into socialized society.

Engels enumerated in “catechistical form” the main principles embodied in this doctrine in his *Principles of Communism*. Marx with Engels further developed these principles in a “programmatic way” in the *Communist Manifesto*. The *Communist Manifesto* is the basic guide for a Communist revolution which all Communist revolutionaries must take to heart. Lenin further developed and enriched the Communist doctrine of Marx and Engels in the era of imperialism and guided the first victorious Communist revolution — the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.

This is how Lenin appreciated the *Communist Manifesto*: *“With the clarity and brilliance of genius, this work outlines a new world-conception, consistent materialism, which also embraces the realm of social life; dialectics, as the most profound doctrine of development; the theory of the class struggle and of the world-historic revolutionary role of the proletariat — the creator of a new, communist society.”*

What are the most fundamental principles of Communism? Lenin summed-up the Communist doctrine into “three component parts”: first, philosophical materialism whose cornerstone is the doctrine of dialectical and historical materialism; second, political economy whose cornerstone is the doctrine of surplus-value; and third, scientific socialism whose cornerstone is the doctrine of class struggle.

According to Lenin: *“... the genius of Marx consists precisely in his having furnished answers to question already raised by the foremost minds of mankind. His doctrine emerged as the direct and immediate continuation of the teachings of the greatest representatives of philosophy, political economy and socialism.”* And Lenin adds: *“The Marxist doctrine is omnipotent because it is true. It is comprehensive and harmonious, and provides men with an integral world outlook irreconcilable with any form of superstition, reaction, or defence of bourgeois oppression. It is the legitimate successor to the best that man produced in the nineteenth century, as represented by German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism.”*

This comprehensive Marxist doctrine crystallizes itself into an integral theory of revolution the essence of which is the doctrine of class struggle, the most original contribution of Marx to social science, the concentrated form of Marx’ philosophical, political and economic doctrine and whose cornerstone is the dictatorship of the proletariat. And Lenin is the best pupil of Marx on this theory of revolution and the best teacher of the international proletariat in class struggle in the era of imperialism, integrating comprehensively and creatively all the fundamentals of the Communist doctrine in his revolutionary practice and polemics against all sorts of revisionists and opportunists.

What is this doctrine of the class struggle, how does it crystallize the fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist doctrine and constitute itself as the Marxist-Leninist theory of revolution?

*“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle”,* declared the *Communist Manifesto* (with the exception of primitive community, Engels added subsequently). Marx and Engels wrote: *“Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.... The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones. Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however this*

*distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat."*

What is the significance of his discovery of the law of class struggle, one of the "many important discoveries through which Marx has inscribed his name in the annals of science."

This new conception of history "is of supreme significance", according to Engels, for "it showed that all previous history moved in class antagonisms and class struggles, that there have always existed ruling and ruled, exploiting and exploited classes, and that the great majority of mankind has always been condemned to arduous labor and little enjoyment. Why is this? Simply because in all earlier stages of development of mankind production was so little developed that the historical development could proceed only in this antagonistic form, that historical progress as a whole was assigned to the activity of a small privileged minority, while the great mass remained condemned to producing by their labor their own meager means of subsistence and also the increasingly rich means of the privileged. But the same investigation of history provides a natural and reasonable explanation of the previous class rule, otherwise only explicable from the wickedness of man, also leads to the realization that, in consequence of the so tremendously increased productive forces of the present time, even the last pretext has vanished for a division of mankind into rulers and ruled, exploiters and exploited, at least in the most advanced countries; that the ruling bourgeoisie has fulfilled its historic mission, that it is no longer capable of the leadership of society and has even become a hindrance to the development of production...; that historical leadership has passed to the proletariat, a class which, owing to its whole position in society, can only free itself by abolishing altogether all class rule, all servitude and all exploitation; and that the social productive forces, which have outgrown the control of the bourgeoisie, are only waiting for the associated proletariat to take possession of them in order to bring about a state of things in which every member of society will be enabled to participate not only in production but also in the distribution and administration of social wealth and which so increases the social productive forces and their yield by planned operation of the whole of production that the satisfaction of all reasonable needs will be assured to everyone in an ever increasing measure."

In explaining the "supreme significance" of the theory of class struggle, Engels integrated all the fundamentals of the Marxist doctrine — philosophical materialism, political economy and scientific socialism. And Marx' economic doctrine, particularly the discovery of the "theory of surplus value", which according to Lenin is "the principal content of Marxism", provided the theory of class struggle a most profound scientific and historic basis as required by philosophical materialism while at the same time using the theory of class struggle as a basic scientific approach in economic analysis. Marx deduced, according to Lenin, "the inevitability of the transformation of capitalist society wholly and exclusively from the economic law of development of contemporary society."

Lenin called "the class struggle the mainspring of events". According to Lenin: "By examining the totality of opposing tendencies, by reducing them to precisely definable conditions of life and production of the various classes of society, by discarding subjectivism and arbitrariness in the choice of a particular "dominant" idea or its interpretation, and by revealing that, without exception, all ideas and all the various tendencies stem from the condition of the material forces of production, Marxism indicated the way to an all-embracing and comprehensive study of the rise, development and decline of socio-economic system." This is the materialist conception of history whose cornerstone is the theory of class struggle. Since "the class struggle is the mainspring of events", it is incumbent for a consistent materialist to take a consistent class viewpoint in approaching social phenomena. This is how Lenin applies the theory of class struggle.

Integral and most essential to the doctrine of class struggle is the world-historic revolutionary role

of the proletariat. Lenin quoted a passage in the *Communist Manifesto* which according to him will show us what Marx demanded of social science as regards an objective analysis of the position of each class in modern society, with reference to an analysis of each class' conditions of development: *"Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern Industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product. The lower middle class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are therefore not revolutionary but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. If by chance they are revolutionary, they are so only in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat; they thus defend not their present, but their future interests, they desert their own standpoint in place themselves at that of the proletariat."*

The above-quoted passage, according to Lenin, *"is an illustration of what a complex network of social relations and transitional stages from one class to another, from the past to the future, was analyzed by Marx so as to determine the resultant historical development."* It should be noted that when Marx and Engels wrote the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, even the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Germany has yet to be completed. In Europe, bourgeois social revolutions of different types were still ongoing and in many countries still had to erupt, and yet Marx and Engels found it correct to declare that *"the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class."*

Does this declaration preclude any positive relations with other class forces by the proletariat? Nothing of this sort. In fact, in the 1850's, right after writing the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels formulated the thesis concerning the three major forces of the revolution in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and its three main stages.

*"The gist of this thesis"*, according to Lenin, *"is the first stage of revolution is the restriction of absolutism, which satisfies the bourgeoisie; the second is the attainment of the republic, which satisfies the 'people' — the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie at large; the third is the socialist revolution, which alone can satisfy the proletariat."*

*"In a number of historical works"*, according to Lenin, *"Marx gave brilliant and profound examples of materialist historiography, of an analysis of the position of each class, and sometimes of various groups and strata within a class, showing plainly why and how 'every class struggle is a political struggle'."*

A product of this analysis of the complex network of social relations and a corollary of the thesis that *"the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class"* is the declaration that *"the emancipation of the workers will be the act of the working class itself"*. This is the meaning of the proletariat taking as its starting point its own independent class line and interest in its relations with all other social forces, promoting and safeguarding it at all times. This is the most fundamental point in the determination of the tactics of the class proletariat for anyone adhering to the theory of the class struggle.

Summing-up the discussion above, the theory of the class struggle is the materialist class analysis in the interpretation of social phenomenon and the proletarian class standpoint in changing social phenomenon. We now proceed to the question of the tactics of the class struggle of the proletariat and here, we will exclusively deal with Marx's views on tactics as summed-up by Lenin so we can theoretically appreciate the fundamental logic of proletarian tactics in their original and essential form. According to Lenin, Marx justly considered that without this aspect — the tactics of the class struggle of the proletariat — *"materialism is incomplete, one-sided, and lifeless."* The fundamental task of proletarian tactics was defined by Marx, according to Lenin, in strict conformity with all the

postulates of his historical-dialectical materialist viewpoint.

First, the historical materialist basis of the correct tactics of the proletariat. This means, according to Lenin, *"only an objective consideration of the sum total of the relations between absolutely all the classes in a given society, and consequently a consideration of the objective stage of development reached by that society and of the relations between it and other societies, can serve as the basis for the correct tactics of an advanced class."*

Second, the dialectical materialist analysis in defining correct tactics. This means, according to Lenin, *"all classes and all countries are regarded, not statically but dynamically, i.e., not in a state of immobility, but in motion... Motion in its turn, regarded from the standpoint, not only of the past, but also of the future, and that not in the vulgar sense it is understood by the 'evolutionists', who see only slow changes, but dialectically."*

Here, Lenin is quite emphatic with Marx's dialectical view on tactics: *"At each stage of development, at each moment, proletarian tactics must take account of this objectively inevitable dialectics of human history, on the one hand, utilizing the periods of political stagnation or of sluggish, so-called 'peaceful' development in order to develop the class-consciousness, strength and militancy of the advance class, and on the other hand, directing all the work of this utilization towards the 'ultimate aim' of that class' advance, towards creating in it the ability to find practical solutions for the great tasks in the great days, in which 'twenty years are embodied'."*

Lenin pointed out two of Marx's arguments which are of special importance in this connection: one of this is contained in *The Poverty of Philosophy* and concerns the economic struggle and economic organizations of the proletariat; the other is contained in the *Communist Manifesto* and concerns the political tasks of the proletariat.

The former concerns the program and tactics of the economic struggle and of the trade-union movement for all the lengthy period in which the proletariat will prepare its forces for the *"coming battle"*. Lenin cited numerous references by Marx and Engels to the British labor movement, which he said, *"the tactics of the economic struggle, in connection with the general course (and outcome) of the working class movement, are considered here from a remarkably broad, comprehensive, dialectical and genuinely revolutionary standpoint."*

In the latter, Lenin cited a passage in the *Communist Manifesto* which advanced a fundamental Marxist principle on the tactics of the political struggle: *"Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement."*

The proletariat has immediate and ultimate aims. The ultimate aim is the conquest of power for socialism. Its immediate aim can be classified into two: its day-to-day economic struggle and organizing itself as a class on the basis of this struggle, and its immediate political task, the struggle for democracy and the attainment of political liberty which will greatly facilitate its political and organizational development as a class. In the fight for the *"immediate aims of the proletariat"*, what is *"represented and taken care of"* is not only *"the enforcement of the momentary interests"* of the working class but the *"future of its movement"*, the class struggle for socialism. This is the conscious and consistent application of the theory of class struggle, this is the tactics of the proletariat in the historical period prior to the actual conquest of power for the attainment of its socialist aim.

This is the class basis of the tactics, cited in the *Communist Manifesto* when, *"In France, the Communists ally themselves with the Social-Democrats against the conservative and radical bourgeoisie, reserving, however, the right to take up a critical position in regard to phrases and*

*illusions traditionally handed down from the great Revolution. In Switzerland, they support the Radicals, without losing sight of the fact that this party consists of antagonistic elements, partly of Democratic Socialists, in the French sense, partly of radical bourgeois. In Poland they support the party that insist on an agrarian revolution as the prime condition for national emancipation, that party which fomented the insurrection of Cracow in 1846. In Germany, the fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy, and the petty bourgeoisie."*

In pursuing these tactics, Marx and Engels, however, emphasized: *"But they never cease , for a single instant, to instil into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, in order that"*, citing as an example the German workers, *"may straightaway use, as so many weapons against the bourgeoisie, the social and political conditions that the bourgeoisie must necessarily introduce along with its supremacy, and in order that, after the fall of the reactionary classes in Germany, the fight against the bourgeoisie itself may immediately begin."*

In the *Communist Manifesto*, it was categorically stated that *"Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against all existing social and political order of things"*; but, *"..in all these movements they bring to the forefront, as the leading question in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time."* This was the reason why, in ending the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels declared: *"The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win."* We "disdain to conceal our views and aim" because only by a relentless and tireless exposition of these views and aims can we truly organize the proletariat into a class, can we truly make them class conscious of their ultimate and immediate aims, and urge them to assume the leading role, in the spirit of the class struggle, in the fight to overthrow all reactionary social orders. This is the very logic of Communist tactics.

What then are Communist tactics? They are exclusively tactics for the advancement of the immediate and ultimate objective of the class struggle of the proletariat for they are tactics aimed at advancing a Communist revolution that will lay down the conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat, and in the process, human society.

Sison's "protracted war" revolution, both in content and form, in theory and practice, is a complete rupture from this Marxist-Leninist theory and tactics of revolution.

It completely vulgarizes all the fundamental ideas of Marx and Lenin, and yet he has the temerity to call upon the Party to "reaffirm" the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and oppose all those that "deviate" from these principles. But the truth is, what he wants "reaffirmed" are his own theoretical concoctions which are completely alien to the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism, and though very close in affinity with Stalinism-Maoism, are basically Sison's very own, vulgarized version.

First and foremost, in Sison's "protracted war" revolution, the overwhelming bulk of the Party forces and its main attention and main activity is concentrated with the peasantry and in the countryside, and not with the working class in both urban and rural areas.

The ongoing democratic revolution in the Philippines, undoubtedly, is a bourgeois-democratic revolution and not a simple bourgeois revolution. Meaning it is a peasant agrarian revolution, but in the sense that its not the industrial bourgeoisie that will achieve complete victory in this revolution but the peasantry if this revolution will triumph in a sweeping way. However, even if this revolution

is a peasant revolution, it does not follow that the revolutionary party of the proletariat must shift and concentrate overwhelmingly its forces, attention and activity in organizing the peasantry, directly shoulder the whole burden of “inciting the peasantry to revolt”, tie its hands and commit itself to this peasant “revolt”, to the detriment of the task of organizing and politicizing the working class both in urban and rural areas.

We are the revolutionary class party of the proletariat and not of the peasantry or of any other class. Why are our main forces in the hinterlands not in the industrial centers and agricultural farms where the working class in their millions are enslaved by wage-labor and waiting to be “incited” for class struggle, waiting to be educated to socialism? Are the peasantry incapable of organizing themselves for their agrarian revolution that it must require the party of the proletariat to abandon the working class to concentrate in organizing this “alien” class?

Are the conditions in the countryside not enough to “incite” the peasantry to organize themselves in struggle, bring about their own peasant class organizations, and by themselves advance their agrarian revolution as was the case in many historic peasants movements in so many countries, and even in China? Is not the best way to “incite” the peasantry to organize, struggle and revolt is for the party of the proletariat to unleash a most vigorous working-class movement in both urban and rural areas and inspire the peasant masses to follow suit and link up with this proletarian movement? Is the working class in the Philippines so insignificant that its revolutionary party must look for an alien class to which it will concentrate its attention and activities?

The truth is: we concentrate our forces in the countryside not because the peasantry is incapable of organizing themselves (because if they are incapable, what kind of agrarian revolution is this?), but because the party of the proletariat had decided to make the countryside the main arena for its military struggle, for its military strategy which also has become the very essence of its revolutionary struggle, the very essence of its revolutionary “strategy”.

Just to emphasize this basic distortion, let us cite what Lenin said in relation to this point: Criticizing Plekhanov’s formulation in the draft of the agrarian program which says *“International Social-Democracy stands at the head of the emancipation movement of the working and exploited masses. It organizes its fighting forces...”*, Lenin said: *“Not at all. It stands at the head of the working class alone, of the working-class movement alone, and if other elements joins this class these are only elements and not classes. And they come over completely and absolutely only when they ‘desert their own standpoint’. ‘It organizes their fighting forces...’ Wrong again. Nowhere does Social-Democracy organize the ‘fighting forces’ of the small producers. It organizes the fighting forces of the working class alone. The formulation chosen in the draft is all the less appropriate the less it applies to Russia, the more restricted the exposition is to ‘developed’ bourgeois society.”*

In another article, Lenin said: *“The emancipation of the workers must be the act of the working class itself, and for this reason Social-Democracy represents — directly and wholly — the interests of the proletariat alone, and seeks indissoluble organic unity with its class movement alone.”* This is how Lenin applied with remarkable consistency and integrity the Marxist theory of the class struggle and its proletarian class stand. And the Bolshevik Revolution won with Lenin’s party forces heavily concentrated among the working class but wielding decisive leadership and widespread influence among the peasant masses and soldiers by the correctness of their slogans, by the strength of the independent Russian working-class movement, and by the experience of the broad masses with bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties and leaders.

In another instance, Lenin said: *“We spoke of Social-Democracy’s ‘revolutionary appeal’ to the peasants. Does this not mean diffusion, is it not harmful to the essential concentration of forces for work among the industrial proletariat? Not in the least; the necessity for such a concentration is*

*recognized by all Russian Social Democrats; ...there are absolutely no grounds at all to fear that the Social-Democrats will split their forces... No one will dispute the necessity to speak in the program of rural, as well as industrial, workers, although in the present situation there is not a single Russian Social-Democrat who would think of calling upon the comrades to go the village. The working-class movement, however, even apart from our efforts, will inevitably lead to the spread of democratic ideas in the countryside."*

This was the "orthodox", if we may say so, Marxist-Leninist class stand on class organizing. This was the reason why in the Communist Manifesto, it was the word "support" that was consistently used in determining the position of the Communists in relation to the various opposition parties existing at that time, in determining the correct policy in relation to other revolutionary-democratic class movements.

It was on the basis of this Marxist-Leninist tradition that even in China, an overwhelmingly peasant country with a very small and "weak" proletariat, in the first period of the Chinese revolution, the CCP concentrated almost all its efforts in organizing the working class. The CCP failed because of Right opportunist errors in the united front and because they ignored the peasant movement which were already spontaneously breaking out in proportions unparalleled in the world — and this occurred despite not having proletarian cadres "concentrated" in the countryside to "organize" and "incite" them to revolt. They decided to give greater stress to peasant work not by "choice" but by "force" because they were driven to the countryside by the defeat of the revolution and by the bloody reprisals in the cities, and they already have ready-made revolutionary armed forces of division sizes that must seek suitable areas for retreat after the defeat of the 1927 uprisings. Even in the second period, the stress of the CCP was still in urban industrial areas while maintaining and expanding Red areas in the countryside.

We are not advocating that we follow to the letter what Lenin prescribes. It is not wrong in principle for the proletarian vanguard to send contingents of cadres to the countryside to do work among the peasants, and if we are forced by circumstances to withdraw from the cities and concentrate in the countryside, this is not a matter of principle but a question of exigency.

What we are advocating is to restore the essence, the "orthodoxy" of a class party, its class organizing, its class struggle. We are the class party of the proletariat. We are not a peasant party and we must exert the greatest effort to hasten the class consciousness and class organizing of the Filipino working class in both urban and rural areas. For the working class, and not only its proletarian vanguard, to truly and effectively assume the leadership in this democratic revolution, for it to win over to its side its most reliable ally in this revolution — the peasantry — we must develop the broadest and strongest working-class movement in the Philippines. A working class movement which is class conscious in its politically correct slogans and tactics, and proving in both mass struggle and in class struggle that it is the working class that is the genuine vanguard in the struggle for democracy and freedom.

We see nothing wrong with the working-class movement being outstripped by the peasant movement in a democratic revolution since this revolution is "their" revolution in the sense that it is a bourgeois-democratic revolution. In fact, this is a most positive development if this is the result of the internal dynamics of the peasant class movement, of the real class and mass struggle in the countryside. What is wrong is the working-class movement being outstripped by the peasant movement because its party vanguard "abandoned" its own class in favor of an "alien" class, opted to concentrate its forces in the hinterlands rather than in the factories and farms where millions and millions of workers are enslaved and are waiting to be organized by their supposed vanguard and are actually organizing themselves without waiting for their class vanguard. What is wrong is the working-class movement being outstripped by the peasant movement in terms of breadth or



magnitude without this working-class movement being able to assume the real vanguard role in actual struggle in the general-democratic revolutionary movement of the people and just because the “vanguard” deserted its “class” in favor of an “alien” class.

It should be stressed that although the Philippines remains an agrarian country, it is now the working class that is outstripping the peasantry in terms of numbers because of the evolutionary capitalist developments in the countryside and the decay of the old feudal system. It should also be stressed that the urban and rural population in the country are now evenly distributed, and the trend in the coming years is the urban population “outstripping” the rural population.

But what’s wrong with concentrating the forces, attention and activity of the Party in the countryside, among the peasantry, if by such concentration, by such “strategy”, the “Party of the working class” can attain victory in the democratic revolution? Cast away “principles”, cast away “orthodoxy”, the important thing is victory! The most important thing in a revolution is the “seizure of power” and we must “seize power” for the proletariat by whatever means possible, and “to hell with principles”!

And indeed, Sison’s “protracted war” revolution is a “strategy of seizure”, and in this strategy there are no parameters, either of principles or ethics. This is Sison’s greatest vulgarization of the Marxist-Leninist theory of revolution. Sison is not a follower of Marx or Mao but of Machiavelli. This “strategy of seizure” of Sison is the most fundamental theoretical question that must be settled in this ideological debate.

Sison is a staunch advocate of the “two-stage revolution” of Stalin and Mao. Let us see if this “two-stage revolution”, specially in Sison’s understanding and practice, corresponds to Marx’s and Lenin’s thesis of “continuing revolution” from the democratic to the socialist.

In this “two-stage revolution”, the first stage is the democratic revolution preparing the grounds for the socialist revolution which is the second stage. In Sison’s strategy and tactics, the “seizure of power” in the democratic stage is the most crucial question in this “two-stage revolution”. It is the main objective of the democratic revolution, and this is the exclusive aim of his strategy of protracted war revolution.

What does Sison mean by the “seizure of power” in the democratic revolution? It means the overthrow of the comprador-landlord class and the building of a democratic coalition government, a people’s democratic dictatorship. This people’s democratic dictatorship, theoretically is what is referred to in classic Marxist terms as the “revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry” as coined by Lenin. Its popular expression in Lenin’s time was the slogan for a “provisional revolutionary government” that shall replace the tsarist autocracy and build a democratic republic in Russia which was the urgent political task of the minimum program of the Bolsheviks in their democratic revolution.

What is the class nature of this provisional government or democratic dictatorship?

Undoubtedly, this is a form of bourgeois rule despite the presence of the proletariat, or even, if by the outcome of the “sweep” of the revolution, the proletariat is able to “dominate” this provisional government or democratic dictatorship.

The theoretical debate between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks on this question was whether it was correct in principle for the proletariat to actively participate in this bourgeois revolution and in the bourgeois government that shall be its outcome, and for the proletariat to seize power with the peasantry in this bourgeois revolution even to the extent of the bourgeoisie “recoiling” from its own revolution.

The Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks were one in affirming that it is correct for the proletariat to actively participate in this bourgeois revolution. But contrary to the position of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks, particularly Plekhanov, Martov and Martynov, believed that it was wrong in principle for the proletariat to participate in the provisional government, to seize power with the peasantry because the “bourgeoisie might recoil”, it was tantamount to “sanctioning bourgeois rule”, etc., and the task of the proletariat was to exert “pressure from below” against this government and not to exert “pressure from above” by participating in this government. And the Mensheviks charged Lenin with advocating a “tactic of seizure” in the democratic revolution which was impermissible in principle and they quoted Engels in this regard.

Lenin’s idea of a provisional revolutionary government or revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry is undoubtedly non-proletarian in class character but a form of bourgeois rule. He calls it the *“last form of bourgeois domination and the best form for the class struggle of the proletariat.”* In fact, Lenin was charged by the Mensheviks, particularly by the infamous Martynov, of *“sanctioning the bourgeois order”* by advocating the participation of the proletariat in such a government. And what did Lenin said with regard to this charge? Did he deny that such a government, such a dictatorship, is bourgeois? No! Instead of denying its class nature, Lenin clarified the correct class view, the correct materialist view on this question.

According to Lenin, *“Social-Democrats do not hold back from struggle for political freedom on the grounds that it is bourgeois political freedom. Social-Democrats regard this ‘sanctioning’ of the bourgeois order from the historical point of view... They have never been afraid of saying, and never will be, that they sanction the republican-democratic bourgeois order in preference to an autocratic serf-owning bourgeois order. But they ‘sanction’ the bourgeois republic only because it is the last form of class rule, because it offers a most convenient arena for the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie; they sanction it not for its prisons and police, its private property and prostitution, but for the scope and freedom it allows to combat these charming institutions.”*

Lenin admitted the dangers of such a participation. Would Lenin be talking of such dangers if the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship is not bourgeois in class character? According to Lenin: *“Far be it from us to contend that our participation in the revolutionary provisional government entails no dangers for Social-Democracy. There is not, nor can there be, any form of struggle that does not involve dangers. If there is no revolutionary class instinct, if there is no integral world outlook on a scientific level, if (with due apologies to our friends in the new Iskra) there are no brains in the head, then it is dangerous even to take part in strikes — it may lead to Economism; to engage in parliamentary struggle — it may end in parliamentary cretinism, to support the Zemstvo liberal democrats — it may lead to a ‘plan for a Zemstvo campaign.’”*

For Lenin, these dangers are nothing. The important thing was the political freedom that this bourgeois revolution can provide and the social progress that it will engender for the development of the proletariat and its class struggle for socialism. This political freedom and social progress are the reasons why it was correct and necessary for the proletariat to actively participate, and not only participate, but assume the leading role in the bourgeois revolution. For this political freedom and social progress are basic and requisite conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat, this political freedom facilitates and clears the ground for the class struggle of the proletariat, for their development as a class for the socialist struggle and for their eventual class rule.

Communists participate and assume leadership in the democratic revolution not because we are patriots and democrats in the bourgeois-democratic sense — patriots simply advocating the sovereignty of the nation and bourgeois democrats simply advocating the sovereignty of the people in an era of world imperialism and class society. We participate and assume leadership not because we care for the rural petty bourgeoisie as a class of small-property owners, not because we care for

the urban petty bourgeoisie with all their pernicious hypocrisy, not because we care for the national bourgeoisie because they suffer oppression from imperialists though they ruthlessly exploit the working class, not because we care for the “people” regardless of class — no, not for these reasons. We participate and strive to assume the leading role in the bourgeois-democratic revolution because the proletariat needs political democracy, because the proletariat needs social progress, even bourgeois progress, for it to develop as a class and create the conditions for socialist struggle.

The fundamental question is: Are these the reasons why we participate and strive to assume the leadership in the national-democratic revolution in the Philippines? Sison is not even a true patriot and a true democrat even in the bourgeoisie-democratic sense but a vulgar Communist, an ugly Communist of the Pol Pot type.

The real reason of Sison for the Party assuming leadership in the democratic revolution and for formulating such a strategy of war revolution is to seize power for the “proletariat” in behalf of the people, in behalf of the peasantry!! Sison’s strategy is a “strategy of seizure” of power for the “proletariat” (read: for the Party) in the national democratic revolution! He had confounded the democratic and the socialist revolution into one, he had short-circuited his own two-stage revolution. But what’s wrong with such an objective if it can be achieved?

Firstly, this precisely is what’s wrong. It cannot be achieved, a revolution cannot succeed by deception. Such a revolution is politically doomed. Engels points to the danger of failure on the part the leaders of the proletariat to understand the non-proletarian character of the revolution and he said: *“The worst thing that can befall a leader of an extreme party is to be compelled to take over a government in an epoch when the movement is not yet ripe for the domination of the class which he represents, and for the realization of the measures which that domination requires.”* The leader of the extreme party, Engels further added, will have to *“advance the interests of an alien class, and feed his own class with phrases and promises, and with the assurances that the interests of that alien class are its own interests. Whoever finds himself in this false position is irrevocably lost.”*

This is the same passage from Engels quoted by Martynov against Lenin in accusing the Bolshevik leader of advocating a “tactic of seizure” in the democratic revolution. Lenin, of course disputed and demolished this accusation, insisting the “non-proletarian character of the democratic dictatorship”, pointing out that its “a form of bourgeois domination but its last form and the best form for the class struggle of the proletariat” and differentiating it with the proletarian dictatorship. To Lenin, it was really the Mensheviks who are confounding the democratic revolution with socialist revolution failing to understand that the democratic dictatorship is not yet the socialist dictatorship, that it is not yet the proletariat conquering power for a socialist revolution but the proletariat with the peasantry overthrowing the tsarist autocracy in the democratic revolution.

According to Lenin: *“Martynov fails to understand this, and confounds the provisional revolutionary government in the period of the overthrow of the autocracy with the requisite domination of the proletariat in the period of the overthrow of the bourgeoisie; he confounds the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry with the socialist dictatorship of the working class.”*

Engels’ warning is not applicable to Lenin’s tactics in the democratic revolution for the Bolsheviks have no intention of establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat through a democratic revolution and Lenin’s concept of a democratic dictatorship is really a form of bourgeois rule and have no intention of “dominating” the peasantry in their *“joint democratic dictatorship”*. In the first place, they were not even directly organizing among the peasantry and are allowed the Socialist-Revolutionaries, Trudoviks, etc., to do the task.

But with Sison’s “strategy of seizure”, Engels’ warning hits the bullseye. He undoubtedly is

conspiring to “seize power” for the “proletariat” in the democratic revolution, is bent on establishing a “dictatorship of the proletariat” through a democratic revolution.

What is the class character of Sison’s *“people’s democratic dictatorship”*? Is this a form of bourgeois rule? Nowhere in Sison’s writings does he theoretically clarify the class nature of this dictatorship or government. This a clear testimony of his abandonment of the theory of class struggle. But how can it be a form of bourgeois rule for Sison when the party in power upon the victory of this revolution will be the “party” of the proletariat, when the army that will seize power will be the army directly under the command of the “party” of the proletariat, when the representatives of the peasantry will certainly, in the overwhelming majority of cases, will be cadres of the “party” of the proletariat, when all the decrees of this government will be determined by the “party” of the proletariat. Undoubtedly, this will be a government for the “class” domination of the of the proletariat which in fact will be the dictatorship of the “party” of the proletariat.

According to Sison: *“The most important political factor for the transition from people’s democracy to socialism is the proletarian class leadership based on the worker-peasant alliance. The proletariat through its most advanced detachment, the Communist Party of the Philippines, is responsible for creating the conditions for socialism or for transforming the people’s democratic dictatorship into the proletarian dictatorship. As in the struggle for the seizure of power, the working class relies mainly on the great masses of the poor and lower-middle peasants and farm workers in the consolidation of the proletarian dictatorship and the socialist transformation of the economic base.”* In another article, Sison declared: *“Through its vanguard detachment, the Communist Party of the Philippines, the proletariat sees to it that the national-democratic revolution is carried out and completed; that the socialist revolution immediately ensues upon the victory of the national democratic revolution; and that for a whole historical epoch socialism creates the foundation for communism.”*

First. Since Sison said that the socialist revolution will *“immediately ensue upon the victory of the national democratic revolution”*, this so-called *“democratic dictatorship”* will immediately be *“transformed”* into a socialist dictatorship of the proletariat upon the victory of the people’s democratic revolution. Since the word “transformed” is used, this will only be a matter of policy. And since this so-called *“democratic dictatorship”* is firmly and absolutely controlled by the Party by its very composition, a smooth transformation and implementation of the Party policy will occur within this so-called *“coalition government”*. Its term of office will not actually expire because it did not really transpire.

Second. Sison’s *“proletarian class leadership based on the worker-peasant alliance”* is actually the proletarian dictatorship. It could not be interpreted as leadership pertaining to “content” because the class content of proletarian leadership cannot be based on the “worker-peasant alliance” but exclusively on the interest of the working class. It could only be interpreted as pertaining to “form”, meaning the class leadership in governmental functions, i.e., the dictatorship of the proletariat. Therefore, in the *“transition from people’s democracy to socialism”* what really is already in place is the *“dictatorship of the proletariat.”*

Third. According to Sison, *“the proletariat through the CPP is responsible for creating the conditions for socialism or for transforming the people’s democratic dictatorship into the dictatorship of the proletariat.”* So it is not the democratic revolution, the bourgeois revolution, and not even the proletariat, but the CPP who will create the conditions for socialism and “transform” a non-existent “people’s democratic dictatorship”. What extreme voluntarism, what extreme reductionism! And we should add, what an omnipotent dictatorship! Imagine, a Communist Party “creating the conditions for socialism”. To our knowledge, it is capitalism that creates the conditions for socialism. And since Sison is not planning to create capitalism, what does he plan to create as a condition for socialism?!

Fourth: According to Sison, *“As in the seizure of power, the working class relies mainly on the great masses of poor and middle peasants and farm workers in the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist transformation of the economic base.”* This is Sison’s coup de grace, the most extreme insult against the proletariat.

*“As in the seizure of power,”* and this was accomplished during the democratic revolution, the working class *“relies mainly”* on other class forces, but not on itself, in consolidating its very “own” class dictatorship and building its very “own” social system, as this is the case. This is not a “slip of the pen” but this is really what is contained in Sison’s brain. Here, it is already very clear that the “seizure of power” for the proletariat has already been accomplished, not in the socialist stage, but in the democratic stage of the revolution. For Sison is not even bothering to differentiate the “seizure of power” by and for the people in the democratic revolution and the “conquest of power” by and for the proletariat in the socialist revolution. Meaning in Sison’s view, they are basically the same, they are one and the same thing, and woe to those who were deceived! Since he is now talking only of the “consolidation the dictatorship of the proletariat,” it means this dictatorship had already been established and what is left is to consolidate it. When was it established? In the “seizure of power” during the democratic revolution!

In the “seizure of power”, which was accomplished in the democratic revolution, the working class relied mainly on other class forces and not on itself. And again, in “consolidating this power”, the working class will again rely mainly on other class forces and not on itself! In the democratic revolution, it was the vanguard not the class that will see to it that it is carried out and completed. In creating the conditions for socialism and transforming the democratic dictatorship into a proletarian dictatorship, it is again the vanguard not the class that will do the task. What is this class doing all this time, in these historical upheavals and events — this proletariat who according to Marx is “the only really revolutionary class”, whose “emancipation depends wholly and entirely on itself”? In Sison’s scheme of things, the working class “relies mainly” on other class forces both in the democratic and the socialist stages of the revolution and on its “vanguard party”, and everything is delivered to him in a golden platter.

Summing-up our first point, it is crystal-clear that Sison had confounded the democratic and the socialist stages of the revolution, that Sison is bent on a “conquest of power” for the proletariat using the name of the people, and the peasantry, in the democratic revolution, and all this slogans about a “democratic” dictatorship is grand deception. And a revolution based on deception is doomed to fail.

Second, while Sison’s “strategy of seizure” artificially “broadens” the objective of the democratic revolution, it narrows the options and possibilities, specially on tactics, for the accomplishment of the real aims of this revolution. Since the conquest of power by the proletariat through the peasantry has become the aim of the democratic revolution, it can only come about by relying absolutely on the peasantry, by relying on the peasantry as the main vehicle of the revolution, by concentrating all the efforts in the countryside — hence, all efforts for the armed struggle, the agrarian revolution, the base building, etc.

In Sison’s strategy, the success of the democratic revolution depends absolutely on the peasantry, on the success of the war in the countryside. If it fails, if the peasantry does not respond, then the revolution is doomed. The struggle for political democracy and liberty for the proletariat is doomed because the party has abandoned the proletariat in the cities and has concentrated its attention to the peasantry in the countryside. Without the peasantry and the peasant war the proletariat is nothing! This sounds familiar — the remarkable parallelism with Sison’s thesis that without feudalism, imperialism is nothing? Aiming for the immediate “conquest of power” for the proletariat in the democratic revolution does not “broaden” this revolution but “narrows” the options and

possibilities for the proletariat in accomplishing, for itself, the real aims of this revolution.

In Sison's "strategy of seizure", revolution is transformed into war and war into revolution, and war and revolution reduced to one form — protracted war. This is Sison's vulgarization of the Marxist-Leninist tactics of the class struggle of the proletariat. The revolutionary forces in the Philippines is being forced to fight on a "narrow front" not because of the archipelagic character of our country, but because of the one-track nature of our tactics or what Sison calls "strategy".

According to Lenin: *"Revolution is war. Of all the wars known in history, it is the only lawful, rightful, just and truly great war. This war is not waged in the selfish interests of a handful of rulers and exploiters, like any and all other wars, but in the interest of the masses of the people against the tyrants, in the interests of the toiling and exploited millions and millions against despotism and violence."* Since revolution is war, indeed, a revolutionary army is needed. According to Lenin: *"The revolutionary army is needed for military struggle and for military leadership of the masses against the remnants of the military forces of the autocracy. The revolutionary army is needed because great historical issues can be resolved only by force, and in modern struggle, the organization of force means military forces."*

These statements of Lenin resolve the question of war and violence in terms of principles. But when to transform revolution into war, when to transform political struggle into military struggle, when does war become "a continuation of politics by other means", is a different question. One thing, though, is definite. War is not something arbitrarily waged on the basis of some fundamental analysis on the historical irreconcilability of opposing forces. There are certain preconditions for waging war and for a war to succeed.

According to Lenin: *"Social-Democracy never stooped to playing at military conspiracies; it never gave prominence to military questions until the actual conditions for civil war had arisen."*

But according to Sison: *"To have a few seats in a reactionary parliament and to have no army in our country is to play a fool's game. Anytime that the enemy chooses to change the rules of the game, say the constitution, he would be able to do so at the people's expense."* This is the argument not of a level-headed Marxist revolutionary but the warlord mentality of a warmonger. Would Sison ever dare accuse Lenin of "playing a fool's game" in Russia for having no army and for having only a few seats in the reactionary Duma? Lenin did not have to face the problem of an enemy choosing to "change the rules of the game, say the constitution", for Lenin was waging a revolution in a country without a constitution.

The conditions in Russia when the RSDLP was established was a hundred times worse than in the Philippines in 1968. Yet, Lenin, played a "fool's game" for several years, never calling for a revolutionary war until the conditions for such a war arose. While Sison, because he does not want to "play a fool's game" immediately waged his protracted war even before the revolution has broken out! Does it mean that Sison is more conscious and profound than Lenin in grasping the antagonistic character of the class struggle, the violent character of the reactionary state, of the reality of an armed counter-revolution? But Lenin won in two decades, and Sison, after two and a half decades, is still at the early substages of his protracted war that is currently on the decline and suffering unprecedented setbacks.

For Lenin, there is such a thing as the timeliness and the untimeliness in waging war, while for Sison, the conditions for protracted war is something timeless as long as a country is semicolonial and semifeudal, and the sooner you start the war, the better. For Sison, war is not an art but a task to be performed no matter when and no matter how.

Let us quote a long passage from Lenin so we can understand the Marxist principle on tactics:

*“By leading the class struggle of the proletariat, developing organization and discipline among the workers, helping them to fight for their immediate economic needs and to win position after position from capital, by politically educating the workers and systematically and unswervingly attacking the autocracy and making life a torment for every tsarist bashibazouk who makes the proletariat feel the heavy paw of the police government — such an organization would at one and the same time be a workers’ organization adapted to our conditions, and a powerful revolutionary party directed against the autocracy. To discuss in advance what methods this organization will resort to in order to deliver a smashing blow at the autocracy, whether for example, it will prefer insurrection, a mass political strike, or some other form of attack, to discuss these things in advance and to decide this question now would be empty doctrinairism. It would be akin to generals calling a council of war before they had mustered their troops, mobilized them, and undertaken a campaign against the enemy. When the army of the proletariat fights unswervingly and under the leadership of a strong Social-Democratic organization for its economic and political emancipation, that army will itself indicate the method and means of action to the generals. Then and only then, will it be possible to decide the question of striking the final blow at the autocracy; for the solution of the problem depends on the state of the working-class movement, on its breadth, on the methods of struggle developed by the movement, on the qualities of the revolutionary organization leading the movement, on the attitude of other social elements to the proletariat and to the autocracy, on the conditions governing home and foreign politics — in a word, it depends on a thousand and one things which cannot be guessed, and which is useless to guess in advance.”*

For Lenin, it will be the masses that “will indicate the method and means of action” to the vanguard and for the vanguard to decide this “in advance” is doctrinairism. But for Sison, for the vanguard to wait for the masses to indicate how and when to “strike the final blow” is tailism.

Our ever-correct and ever- victorious General Jose Ma. Sison did not have to guess “a thousand and one things” for him to decide, not only “in advance”, but at the very outset, in 1968, that the method and only method in “delivering a smashing blow” at the enemy is through and only through protracted war. And our General had decided on this strategy, not only before we had “mustered our troops, mobilize them, and undertaken a campaign” but even before he had built a platoon! For our General, deciding the form of the “final blow” against the enemy does not depend on “a thousand and one things” but only on one thing: the fact that our’s is a semicolonial and semifeudal country. Hence, ours is a protracted war revolution, and the sooner we start this war, the better! For Sison, there is no such thing as the timeliness of starting the revolutionary war for protracted war is timeless.

Force is the midwife of social change. This is a question of principle. But when and how to use force is a question of tactics. Lenin said: *“To arm the people with a sense of burning necessity to arm is the constant, common duty of the Social-Democrats always and everywhere... Wherever there are oppressed classes struggling against exploitation, the doctrine of the socialists, from the very start, and in the first place, arms them with the sense of the burning necessity to arm...”* But when to issue the call to arms is a quite a different matter. According to Lenin: *“What is the force that holds in check this burning necessity to mete out summary justice to the bourgeoisie and its servitors who ill-use the people? It is the force of organization and discipline, the force of consciousness, the consciousness that individual acts of assassination are absurd, that the hour for the serious revolutionary struggle of the people has not yet struck, that the political situation is not ripe for it.”* But for Sison, “to arm the people with a sense of the burning necessity to arm” without actually engaging in armed struggle” is to “play a fool’s game”.

For Sison, protracted war is no longer a question of tactics in its Marxist sense nor is it a mere

military strategy. He has elevated protracted war to the level of a basic principle, to something so sacred that to question it is blasphemy. And worse, he has transformed this war into the revolution instead of transforming our revolution into war.

To equate war with revolution, to treat war as the revolution is to negate the theory of the class struggle and vulgarize a Marxist-Leninist revolution. The basic law of revolution is the class struggle, it develops, advances, intensifies and triumphs on the basis of the development of the class struggle. War — if it is not the development and transformation of the revolution to its highest form, the continuation of political struggle by other means — depends not on the class struggle but on the military balance of forces, on the relation of armed strength. And it advances not on the basis of the changing tide of the political situation of class warfare but on the military balance of forces, on the strategy and tactics of armed warfare. We started a war in 1969 without a revolution. By 1986, because of this war strategy, we missed a revolution. And now, after two and half decades, what Sison wants us to reaffirm is this same, old vulgarized war and vulgarized revolution.

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## Footnotes

[1] *PPDR* refers to the *Program for a People's Democratic Revolution* drafted by Sison in 1968. For its critic; see: [PPDR: Class Line vs. Mass Line](#)