

What should be “centered” is scientifically-based truth, and in particular the scientifically-based truth regarding the fundamental interests of the masses of humanity: the need and the basis for a thoroughgoing, emancipating revolution.

Here is an important lesson from the historical experience of revolution—and counter-revolution. Shortly after the death of Mao Zedong, in 1976, those who had been seen as his closest followers in the Chinese Communist Party (the so-called “gang of four,”) were arrested and declared to be “counter-revolutionaries.” Especially because of the truly world-historic importance of what was involved in this, I was determined to learn the truth and to speak the truth about it. Analysis of this made clear that what had taken place was a *reactionary coup*, which reversed the revolution in China and set the country on the path of restoring capitalism (those who had carried out this coup were the *actual* counter-revolutionaries.) But you had to apply a scientific method and approach, in order to penetrate beneath the surface appearance of things and get to the deeper and essential reality.

There were some people, then, who *insisted that it was “not the place” of anyone outside of China to make this scientific analysis*— that it should be left to the Chinese people to determine what had happened and what to do as a result.

Sound familiar?

That position (“not your place”) was, of course, nonsense—and worse—an attempt to cover up for the capitalist coup that had taken place. It had to be pointed out then—as it definitely does now—that *there is no such thing as this or that “people” as some kind of uniform whole, but rather there are different classes and other social groups among every people, and many different outlooks and programs.* (Obviously, the capitalist forces that arrested the “gang of four,,” on the one hand, and the “gang of four” on the other, were not part of some uniform “Chinese people,,” but were on *opposite sides* of the profound struggle over what direction China should take: further on the revolutionary road of socialism, or backward with the restoration of capitalism—leading, as it has, to the emergence of China as a major capitalist-imperialist exploiter, and wrecker of the environment).

Most fundamentally, China, with Mao’s leadership, had been a powerful stronghold of revolutionary socialism and a source of inspiration and support for the revolutionary struggle of oppressed people everywhere—and it was not only the “right” but the *responsibility* of everyone who cared about this, and especially those actively working for the same emancipating revolutionary transformation of the world, to scientifically analyze what had happened in China after Mao’s death, and to firmly oppose and expose this capitalist coup.

The masses of people in China were now under the rule of new capitalist exploiters and oppressors, who controlled the decisive institutions of society and systematically used them to spread lies about what had actually taken place, and to viciously repress forces opposing this coup. As Mao himself had said: If, after his death, revisionists (capitalist forces) in China seize power, then people throughout the world should unite with revolutionaries in China to oppose those revisionists. *But how could people throughout the world do this, if they did not scientifically analyze whether, in fact, there had been a capitalist coup and then take a stand on that basis?*

All this talk about “it is not your place,” to tell oppressed people in another country or part of the world how they should understand their situation and what to do about it”—this is completely bankrupt politically and philosophically, and does real harm. It contributes to keeping people, everywhere, from finding out the truth about truly profound things, and from acting on that truth.

As I emphasized in message number Twenty-Three (“Truth is...truth”) people of different nations or different “identities”

will have significant experiences in common, *but there is not one “uniform” view among them about their own experience* (let alone things in general). So, the all-too-common notion that this or that “identity” should decide about things relating to them as an “identity,” ignores the fact that there are divisions among every “identity” (individual differences—and, more importantly, social and class divisions—and, along with this, many different ideas and views of things); and it ignores the decisive fact that, once again, truth does not flow directly from experience, but needs to be determined *scientifically*, and the ability to make that determination is not restricted to people of any particular “identity.”

I have always had the orientation that *everyone* has the responsibility to determine what is true, and not true, and to act on the truth. And especially since developing as a revolutionary, and then a revolutionary communist, from the time of the 1960s, I have always acted on the principle that everyone who is actually working for the emancipation of the masses of oppressed humanity needs to take responsibility for determining what will, and what will not, lead to that emancipation, in any particular country, and in the world as a whole.

I acted on this principle when I visited China in the 1970s (before the capitalist coup): I raised some serious criticism to representatives of the Chinese Communist Party about certain aspects of China’s foreign policy then—including its support for the regime of torture headed by the Shah of Iran and the murderous rule of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines. (In the article at revcom.us *Scientific Communist Theory And The Problem With The “Mass Line,”* I discussed some of the reasons why these wrong and harmful policies were adopted by the Chinese Communist Party during that period, while at the same time emphasizing that, even while these very wrong policies were being carried out and did real harm, in the first part of the 1970s, Mao and those following his leadership in the Chinese Communist Party continued to support various revolutionary struggles in different parts of the world during that time, while also giving leadership to the continuing revolution within China itself.)

I acted on this same principle when working closely with the Black Panther Party, during its revolutionary days in the 1960s: When I had disagreements with them, I would raise them, and we would struggle—yes at times sharply—over this. To be clear, when we had disagreements, sometimes I was right, and sometimes they were—but always it was a question of *what is true, and not true, what is correct and not correct, what will advance the revolutionary struggle, and what will work against that?*

That was the spirit, the orientation and approach, on both sides. *And that is the orientation and approach that is urgently needed now—in opposition to any and all attempts to shut down crucial discussion and debate about what is the fundamental problem facing oppressed humanity, and ultimately humanity as a whole, and what is the fundamental solution to this.*



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