

Approaching the Summits: Examining Principles of Leadership

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STRUGGLESSESSIONS



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by Kavga

This examination will remain fairly restrained in order to get some clarity on the question of leadership. Like an agitation, we will remain sharp and focused, dispensing up front with any false originality. This kind of precision means a limited examination; we will therefore restrain from entering into questions which brush up against and overlap with the question of leadership, like that of guiding thought. We will only touch on issues of distortion and the issue of “personality cults” in order to draw up a relief of leadership. We will also not go into the question of methods of leadership here.

It is wrong to counter-pose the summits, the great leaders of communist revolution. Each operated in a specific time and set of conditions. Efforts to counter-pose them, to place Lenin at the expense of Marx, or to contradict Stalin with Chairman Mao, are vulgar and crude; Maoism is understood as a whole synthesis of the history of the proletarian class struggle, as an ideology which is at war with bourgeois ideology—not at war with itself. Counter-

posing in this way is the preferred method of Avakianism, which was for a time an effort to “de-Stalinize” Maoism, then an effort to dispense with Maoism.

Why do we say “summits”? We do so because a single mountain range has many summits; it remains the same range, but with towering giants and such is the history of the Communist struggle internationally. Recognizing the height and the conditions in which the summits were reached and developed is instrumental to getting at the truth, but note that it is not to oppose the summits to one another.

Three questions must be taken into consideration to understand leadership and the conditions which generate leaders: the revolution, the leading class, and the Party—these three generate leaders; they are the source.

It is impossible to believe, and indeed dangerous to fantasize about, leadership emerging in the absence of revolutionary struggle. Revolutionary struggle is the first source of leaders, it is the factory converting raw material into that which will be assembled into a leader, and, considering the contradiction between necessity and coincidence, revolutionary struggle requires leadership to develop—this is itself a contradiction between revolutionary struggle and revolutionary leadership.

The leading class is the proletariat; without understanding this fundamental aspect of Marxism it is impossible to understand the Marxist theory of leadership. The proletariat leads the revolution via its party—it generates the Communist party within revolutionary struggle. Therefore the proletariat is one of the sources as its best children are forged into leaders.

The Great October Socialist Revolution ended the period of progressive bourgeois revolution, cementing the role of the proletariat as the leading class. This class cannot be replaced by any other class. In order to understand anything, one must have an understanding of this economic reality. There are classes which might be poorer, or might have a worse lot in life, but this is not enough to make them replace the proletariat.

The proletariat as the leading class has developed its ideology, first as Marxism, this is the first stage, then as Marxism–Leninism, which is based on and contains Marxism and is the second stage, and then as Marxism–Leninism–Maoism, which is based on and contains the two former stages and has risen to a new summit—a third and superior stage. Marxism–Leninism–Maoism is the ideology of the proletariat and not of any other class; it maintains, since it is Marxism, that the proletariat is the leading class. Without this foundational understanding, leadership is hopelessly illusive.

The Party has the important task of forging proletarians as leaders within the revolution. It is in the Party that Communists are forged, not outside of it. Communists are not grown on trees. We repeat they are forged in the Party, by the Party—this is also a contradiction. In its infancy, the Party or efforts to reconstitute it will still be undergoing a process of development, a process of struggle, internal and external, forging its members as Communists, within a Communist organization. This takes many years of struggle; it is not a task that can be performed in a day or at a few meetings. Every Communist is a leader among the proletariat and in the revolution; every Communist leads Communist work among the masses. There are also leaders forged among these “general” leaders at every level, and thus top leaders, and the one who rises up to lead these top leaders. From this, summits are reached; there are many summits in history, but none have the stature of the founder Marx, the great Lenin, and Chairman Mao.

Understanding the sources is a starting point: the revolution, the leading class, the Party. Understanding the process of forging leaders means understanding that leaders do not come in large numbers; it takes time and a process to forge top leaders. Leaders who represent such a leap as to be called summits and great summits are rarer still. It would be foolish to claim that there will be a Lenin in every generation, let alone a Chairman Mao who led two of the greatest revolutions in human history—the Chinese revolution and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The footprints of these giants are the result of a great process, involving coincidence and necessity—the rarity of these summits are treasures for our class, and it is therefore correct to cherish and

revere them. This is not to speak of slavishness, but of the correct assessment of their monumental and outstanding contributions.

It is inevitable in the process of class struggle that leaders will emerge, but who they are is determined by circumstance, a convergence of that which is inevitable with that which is unpredictable, made possible by complex conditions, by the objective and subjective contradictions. If it were not so, there would be nothing more to do than simply elect the most appealing representative and expect them to fill the role of Marx, Lenin or Mao—a ludicrous proposition.

We must demarcate between two types of leaders: leaders in terms of post and leaders in terms of recognized authority, and then examine the third type, great leaders, which is the rarest of the three.

On one hand a leader is someone assigned or elected to a post, given an organic authority. He or she has been granted leadership for whatever reason as a formality, it matters little, in terms of conditionally defining this type, if the leader is qualified or not. It also does not matter if this is formal or informal; leaders will emerge and they will lead with or without democracy, with or without formal title. This often happens in spontaneous mass movements, for instance. This first type will be granted or will seize for him or herself the status of leader—regardless of qualification. This post does not guarantee essential qualities of proletarian leadership; in fact, in some cases the post is just due to a lack of suitable material—they are leaders nonetheless. There may be many of these in any given movement, but they are always by definition not too many, a minority within an organization or movement.

On the other hand, regardless of post, there are leaders who conquer and inspire. They lead not by position of authority alone but on the basis of their ability. These are rarer than the former type. It is through the class conscious application of democracy that these leaders can obtain the official post of leadership, performing the role both in essence and in form. Every revolution without exception depends on these. Whether their leadership is good or bad,

and how good or how bad, depends on their links to the masses, and their international proletarian ideology.

Over a relatively long period of time, revolution establishes a sole head, a great leader distinguished above all. To repeat, there are three great summits which reach the highest in terms of communist leadership and tower above all others: Marx, Lenin, Mao. There are also other summits, conquests of revolutionary struggle in a given country: for the Turkish the Communist leader Ibrahim Kaypakkaya is such a summit, and for the Indian Comrades there is Majumdar and there is Chatterjee. These countries have other remarkable leaders, proletarian and revolutionary, but the comrades make no confusion on this point regarding their summits—their heads and their symbols. The summit is not counter-posed to the other leaders, or to the Party that concentrates them; rather, the summit is an ideological political headquarters. We are now beginning to get to the essence of the question of leadership from the proletarian point of view.

All revolutions have a head, even the ones which are not universal, and those who went wrong or made serious mistakes: Enver Hoxha, Ho Chi Minh, Kim Il Sung, Fidel Castro etc. These served as a headquarters in the sense of their leadership. You will not find a revolutionary struggle that is headless and at the same time accomplishes anything.

Even the bourgeois “democratic confederalists” of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) have their rotten old head Öcalan. The Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) has its empty flowery head in “Insurgente” Marcos, and so on. Counter-revolutionary forces, revisionists and reactionaries, have their heads—even when generated differently than the proletarian heads—the bourgeois headquarters of counter-revolution posed against the proletarian headquarters of revolution. There is always a head, or is it not so?

There are three aspects of leadership we should highlight here. Authority: they must have authority. Recognition: they must be recognized by others. Lineage: here we mean ideological and political roots that can be traced back, that they

do not fall from the sky blessed with godlike truths or prophetic vision, a synthesis of blocks building from others in a long sequence.

There is a reason that Trotsky or Bukharin did not lead the Bolsheviks while Lenin and Stalin did. It is coincidental but not without reason. Here we understand coincidence as the merging of what will happen eventually with what can happen in given conditions, not reducing it to simple chance alone. Why did Comrade Stalin come to lead the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and not Trotsky? Not by plot or intrigue as the defeated might protest, but on the basis of the conditions, the qualifications and the ability to unite on the Left line; in fact, it is the Right which plots and intrigues.

With the question of struggle in mind, we can consider a quote from José Carlos Mariátegui, the founder of the Communist Party of Peru:

“The Bolshevik Party, therefore, neither is nor can be a peaceful and unanimous school. Lenin imposed his creative leadership until shortly before his death, but not even with this extraordinary leader’s immense and unique authority were violent debates unusual inside the party. Lenin gained his authority with his own strength; he later maintained it through the superiority and perspicacity of his thought. His points of view always prevailed because they best corresponded to reality. Many times, though, they had to defeat the resistance of his own lieutenants of the Bolshevik old guard.”

Unchallenged leadership is not realistic; it has never existed purely and it will not exist for any long period. Leadership is recognized in a process of intense class struggle—specifically two-line struggle. Top leadership, or great leadership develops through being challenged. History proves this thesis; we see it with Marx and Engels in their struggles against the anarchists. We see it with Lenin in the struggle against the Menheviks. We see it with Stalin particularly in the 12 year struggle against the Trotskys, Zinovievs, Kamanevs, Bukharins—the rightists. We see it clearly with Chairman Mao in the struggles around the Zunyi Conference. We see it with Chairman Gonzalo in the period leading up to ILA80 in the struggles against the right and left deviationists.

These processes include attacks on leadership and on the great leaders directly. What is this indicative of? The long years of struggle which both forged leadership and allowed recognition of leadership, where great leaders were shaped, developed and recognized. We repeat, this is not a question of mere organizational post; it is the organization as a whole performing a task. And yes, it is a task to forge and recognize leadership.

We see that two-line struggle within the party generates great leaders. The party depends on a guiding thought and a revolutionary political line to unite and direct itself, and it is through two-line struggle in the midst of class struggle that the party generates all this. This process spreads and disseminates leadership, and allows it to flow up and down the ranks as well as to be concentrated and conceived. Objective reality generates leaders, top leaders, and a top leader who symbolizes the revolution even on a world-scale: this was Marx, then it was Engels for a time before his death, then Lenin, and for a time Stalin until his death when there was Chairman Mao as the symbol and leader of the world proletarian revolution. Even as such world symbols and world leaders, these greats were challenged by opportunism and revisionism desperate to rob them of recognition and to oppose the content of their teachings and examples.

Recognition and reverence of these leaders serves to improve the morale of the ranks—it means unity. It is not simply hiding behind an image to avoid substance. Rather, it is giving a face to the essence of the summit; it is a choice to use symbols. Communists have always done this: the symbol of the workers and peasants is the hammer and sickle. The symbols of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism by which complex ideas are suggested visually is the likeness of the three great summits; their names represent the three stages of the ideology of the international proletariat. The red flag its another indispensable symbol: cherished by revolutionaries, it means something and its color must not be changed. The image of Mao when presented with this brings even more clarity to the picture—it indicates the ideology in the most simple way possible, a summary showing unity.

Symbolism is produced by the struggle, to express the struggle. Even in the absence of such aesthetic symbols, in any organizational activity there must be a head; communism specifies that the highest summit of a Communist Party is the leader of the party and the revolution, generated in hard struggle. Since great leaders represent not only the basis of party unity, the guiding thought and political line, but, also, the left line in command, reverence of these leaders as symbols means upholding the left line and fostering party unity.

As for “Jefatura and the personality cult”:

These are revisionist charges rooted in a revisionist criteria. Why is it revisionist? Because it seeks to attack basic principals derived from Lenin and to reverse these principles to counter-revolutionary ends, attacking not only specific leadership but the principal of leadership itself. How is it a revisionist criteria? Because it is rooted in the criteria of Khrushchev, as he outlined in his secret speech at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, aimed squarely at attacking socialism by attacking Comrade Stalin.

We quote at some length from the People’s Daily article “On the Question of Stalin”, which lays out a succinct history of the revisionist attacks against proletarian leadership in the International Communist Movement as part of its defense of Comrade Stalin and the ideology of the international proletariat:

“It is not a new thing in the history of the international communist movement for the enemies of Marxism–Leninism to vilify the leaders of the proletariat and try to undermine the proletarian cause by using some such slogan as ‘combating the personality cult’. It is a dirty trick which people saw through long ago.

“In the period of the First International the schemer Bakunin used similar language to rail at Marx. At first, to worm himself into Marx’s confidence, he wrote him, ‘I am your disciple and I am proud of it.’ Later, when he failed in his

plot to usurp the leadership of the First International, he abused Marx and said, 'As a German and a Jew, he is authoritarian from head to heels' and a 'dictator.'

"In the period of the Second International the renegade Kautsky used similar language to rail at Lenin. He slandered Lenin, likening him to 'the God of monotheists' who had reduced Marxism 'to the status not only of a state religion but of a medieval or oriental faith.'

"In the period of the Third International the renegade Trotsky similarly used such language to rail at Stalin. He said that Stalin was a 'tyrant' and that 'the Stalinist bureaucracy has created a vile leader-cult, attributing to leaders divine qualities.'

"The modern revisionist Tito clique also use similar words to rail at Stalin, saying that Stalin was the 'dictator' 'in a system of absolute personal power.'

"Thus it is clear that the issue of 'combating the personality cult' raised by the leadership of the CPSU has come down through Bakunin, Kautsky, Trotsky and Tito, all of whom used it to attack the leaders of the proletariat and undermine the proletarian revolutionary movement.

"The opportunists in the history of the international communist movement were unable to negate Marx, Engels or Lenin by vilification, nor is Khrushchov able to negate Stalin by vilification."

Those who make revisionist charges on revisionist criteria also rely on translation errors, refusing to translate the original Spanish word *jefatura* in order to trick and confuse. Why make it sound exotic by refusing to translate it? It is mainly a gamble or a sleight of hand on the part of opportunist translators, as the common English speaker's understanding of the root word *jefe* is "boss," which, in the English speaking left, maintains the negative connotation of administrators of exploitation who lord over the workforce and are granted privileges on its back. However, *jefe* also means "leader", and lacks the

negative connotation that the word “boss” has in English; in fact, the term has a positive, respectful connotation in Spanish usage.

Chairman Gonzalo differentiates between *jefes* and *dirigentes*, with the latter signifying leaders in a post and translated as “directors” in English. We should not, however, erect a wall between the two types of leadership here specified, acknowledging that the two are not mutually exclusive by default but are merely terms of precision. The opportunist or the ignorant cannot acknowledge this fact. The phrase “*Jefe del Partido*” would simply mean “head of the Party” without the undertone or connotation of English, whereas “Party boss” mimics the language of cold-war anti-communism.

Jefatura in English is simply summed up as leadership, and, in its specific use, to indicate top leadership, the thought headquarters, the highest summits. This is no mystical imposition to imply infallibility; the Spanish language provides more choices in terms to demarcate between a leader working in a post and the kind of leadership forged in struggle, recognized by the entire organization as a symbol of revolution. Marx, Lenin, and Chairman Mao are not just men; they are a synthesis, a symbol for the ideology, not only a touchstone or a watershed, but important symbols to trace exactly how the history of class struggle of the proletariat has generated its thought.

Chairman Mao has established the correct criteria in the face of Khrushchev’s phony criteria when examining the issue of the “personality cult,” dividing the matter into two in order to get at its essence:

“Khrushchev’s complete demolition of Stalin at one blow was also a kind of pressure, and the majority of people within the Chinese Party did not agree with it. Others wished to submit to this pressure and do away with the cult of the individual. There are two kinds of cult of the individual. One is correct, such as that of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and the correct side of Stalin. These we ought to revere and continue to revere for ever. It would not do not to revere them. As they held truth in their hands, why should we not revere them? We believe in

truth; truth is the reflection of objective existence. A squad should revere its squad leader, it would be quite wrong not to.”

Chairman Mao establishes that it is correct to revere leadership, determining that they represent the truth, that they hold the truth in their hands. This criteria is tossed aside by those who make attacks on reverence for great leaders on the basis of Khrushchev’s criteria. These types take broad strokes in denouncing the “cult of personality” without having the constitution to examine if one represents the truth, hence they conflate the minuscule circus around Avakian, for instance, with the correct and proper reverence for Chairman Gonzalo. They claim that all reverence is the second type of the cult of the individual expressed by Mao; it is worth noting that Mao already lays bear their possible intentions:

“Then there is the incorrect kind of cult of the individual in which there is no analysis, simply blind obedience. This is not right. Opposition to the cult of the individual may also have one of two aims: one is opposition to an incorrect cult, and the other is opposition to reverence for others and a desire for reverence for oneself.”

We find far more numerous arguments that *jefatura* indicates “personality cult” than we find articulated arguments as to why these vermin believe it is wrong for Maoists to revere Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and Gonzalo. Because there is a tendency among this type of critic to hide behind Mao, let us look closer at what the Chairman had to say:

“The question at issue is not whether or not there should be a cult of the individual, but rather whether or not the individual concerned represents the truth. If he does, then he should be revered. If truth is not present, even collective leadership will be no good. Throughout its history, our Party has stressed the combination of the role of the individual with collective leadership. When Stalin was demolished some people applauded for their own personal reasons, that is to say because they wanted others to revere them.

Some people opposed Lenin, saying that he was a dictator. Lenin's reply was straightforward: better that I should be a dictator than you!"

Regarding the role of combining collective and individual leadership, the same view is expressed by the Communist Party of Peru:

"We base ourselves on the collective leadership and individual leadership and we are mindful of the role of leaders and how through the People's War, through the renewal of leadership, the leadership of the revolution is coalescing and being tempered. We maintain the principle that the leadership never dies."

How is it then that the opportunists can claim to base themselves in the positions of Chairman Mao when they denounce the "personality cult"? Simply by way of a subjectivist view of history, cherry picking quotations to fit their perspective. Chairman Mao and his Party had to proceed in their conditions; they sought to allow the struggle of two lines to develop, and not rush into an all-out attack. This meant basing themselves in reality, appraising Stalin and then defending him from all-out attack, or, as Chairman Mao put it:

"When Stalin was criticized in 1956, we were on the one hand happy, but on the other hand apprehensive. It was completely necessary to remove the lid, to break down blind faith, to release the pressure, and to emancipate thought. But we did not agree with demolishing him at one blow. They do not hang up his picture, but we do."

The opportunist will confuse lifting the lid while revering the good with demolishing in one blow; he will consider any truthful reverence of our commanders to be blind slavish obedience without regard for who represents the truth. He will use every device to accomplish this. Following Chairman Mao, it is correct to view the cult of the individual as secondary to the question of truth, of which leaders represent the truth.

Maoism holds that leadership develops in the midst of class struggle. Great Leadership becomes recognized in the midst of two-line struggle within the party, where those leaders representing the left line distinguish themselves and conquer leadership. These leaders establish a basis for party unity through the application of proletarian ideology to concrete conditions, generating a guiding thought and a political line which directs the revolution. In this regard they act as symbols: great symbols of the revolution, of the left line, and of the unity of the party on this basis. To revere these symbols, to revere great leadership means to uphold the left line and the revolution against revisionism and reaction; it is revolutionary and scientific and has nothing to do with blind adoration, as revisionist jackals have claimed for over a hundred years. Revisionism and reaction seek to cut leaders off from the masses, to cut the head off the revolutionary movement; they use the fallacy of the “cult of personality” to achieve this. We close with the immortal words of the great Lenin:

“But the Germans only smile with contempt at these demagogic attempts to set the ‘masses’ against the ‘leaders’, to arouse bad and ambitious instincts in the former, and to rob the movement of its solidity and stability by undermining the confidence of the masses in their ‘dozen wise men’. Political thinking is sufficiently developed among the Germans, and they have accumulated sufficient political experience to understand that without the ‘dozen’ tried and talented leaders (and talented men are not born by the hundreds), professionally trained, schooled by long experience, and working in perfect harmony, no class in modern society can wage a determined struggle.”

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