

Perseverance and patience – an interview with Rickard B. Turesson

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In autumn 2023, the editorial team at maoisme.no – the website of the Revolutionary Communist League in Norway– conducted an interview

<https://www.maoisme.no/2023/11/uthald-og-tolmod-eit-intervju-med-rickard-turesson/>
with Rickard Turesson from the Communist Workers' League (KAF). Rickard B. Turesson has been active in the Maoist movement since the late 1960s and thus represents a continuity from KFML, SKP via SKP(m-l)/SKA, KF and up to KAF today.

Maoists in Sweden have always worked closely with Norwegian Maoists since the late 1960s. This is, of course, because the peoples of Sweden and Norway are linguistically and culturally close and also share a common history. Norwegian and Swedish Maoists have always learned a lot from each other. But that does not mean that we always agree on everything; this is also evident from this interview.

Question: Thank you very much for agreeing to this interview. You have a long history in the Swedish Maoist movement, and we Norwegian Maoists are very interested in learning from the history of the Swedish movement, with both positive and negative experiences. Would you like to start by telling us a little about yourself and how you became politically active?

Answer: I come from a radical home. My father, who was a forestry worker, was not a communist, but rather a syndicalist, without being organised. He used to say, ‘I hate priests, capitalists and farmers’ (by which he meant stingy large farmers, for whom he often worked). My grandfather had been chairman of the local trade union for forestry and log driving workers. Both were also poor farmers, i.e. they had a small farm that could not support them, and therefore wage labour was their main source of income. This used to be very common in rural areas in northern Sweden. My parents had only attended five years of elementary school, but they always read a lot, both books and weekly magazines. My father's library only amounted to three metres of shelf space, but he and my mother were constantly borrowing books from the library. In an article about his political awakening, Set Persson, perhaps Sweden's most prominent communist, mentions how Jack London's books contributed to his radicalisation. My father's library contained plenty of Swedish working-class authors – and Jack London. I had read my father's entire library before I turned 13.

Unlike my parents, I applied to secondary school and later to upper secondary school. I began to become radicalised around the age of 15 thanks to self-studies; before I began to consider myself a communist, I went through a period when I was more of a guild socialist. But by 1961, I was definitely a communist; I regularly read Ny Dag, the SKP's weekly newspaper. I was then portrayed as the school's ‘only communist who listened to Radio Moscow’ in a student revue organised by the student council. I was actually quite proud of that, because I was going against the tide.

In 1962, I dropped out of secondary school after the first term and went to sea instead. Between 1962 and 1968, I had a lot of different jobs, both on land and at sea, including on Norwegian ships. That's why I've been reading books and newspapers in Norwegian since

1963. I didn't stay very long at any one workplace; I never took any holidays, but instead quit my job. I probably worked at around 20 different workplaces of varying nature. This gave me a lot of experience of working life.

In connection with the events of May 1968, I decided it was time to abandon my nomadic existence. I went to Uppsala, studied for my university entrance qualification during the summer, and began studying philosophy and economic history at the university. But it only took a month or so before I became politically active in the Left Youth League (VUF), the youth league of the Left Party Communists (formerly the Communist Party of Sweden, once a member of Comintern). I could have joined the Communist League Marxist-Leninists (KFML) directly, but I reacted very strongly to the so-called rebel movement in Uppsala, which had emerged within the KFML.

The rebel movement's goal was to carry out a cultural revolution in Sweden, even though there had not even been a socialist revolution in Sweden. They tried to recruit workers, for example by going out to construction sites in Uppsala and waving Mao's Little Red Book. However, the rebel movement only lasted one summer. Some of the leading rebels then became bribery theorists, i.e. they claimed that the Swedish working class was bribed, which annoyed me even more. This was completely contrary to my experience, as I had even worked 12 hours a day on a boat for a pittance. Nowadays, however, I am fully aware that anything can come out of a communist party when the cadre degenerates, from outright lunatics to fascists.

I was active in VUF from 1968 to 1970, was elected chairman of VUF-Uppsala and to VUF's federal leadership and executive committee. I quickly became radicalised and began to seriously study the communist classics, including Mao Zedong, as well as the history of the Swedish communist movement, including Set Persson and his Swedish Communist Workers' League, and I aligned myself with the KFML on all essential issues. I participated very actively in the line struggles. Since VUF was an ideologically diverse organisation and was also under strong pressure from KFML, it was inevitable that VUF would split, which happened in the spring and summer of 1970. It split into no less than four parts: one part went to the KFML, including me, one part to the Communist League (a semi-Trotskyist organisation), another part formed the Marxist-Leninist Combat League (which stood to the right of the KFML), and a smaller number remained loyal to the VPK and Trotskyism. The revisionist Left Party Communists lost their youth league overnight and were later forced to rebuild it.

Question: And if I remember correctly, you yourself joined the KFML (Communist League Marxist-Leninists). Three years after the KFML was formed (1967), the organisation split and the breakaway group formed the KFML(r) – we can disregard the eccentric ‘rebel movement’, which never had any major political impact. What were the reasons for the split with the (r) group? How did you perceive the split at the time, and how do you view it now, in hindsight?

Answer: Until October 1970, the KFML developed rapidly, with the turning point being the port and mine workers' strike at the turn of 1969-70. Prior to that, the DFFG (United FNL-

groups, that is the solidarity movement with the Vietnamese people) had, of course, continued to grow at a rapid pace. After the turn of the year 1969-70, Gnistan's (the weekly newspaper) circulation grew rapidly, which was of course due to the general upswing, which was caused in particular by the miners' strike, as well as the KFML's efforts in the actual support work. Gnistan's election issue was printed in 40,000 copies. The KFML thus achieved its successes almost entirely on the basis of propaganda activities (since the activities of the United FNL-groups were also essentially propaganda).

But already in connection with the miners' strike, contradictions arose within the KFML, especially within the leadership, which was fuelled by some right-wing errors.

A 'left-wing' opportunistic line developed, led by Frank Baude. These contradictions were kept secret by the leadership, and a formal decision was even taken by the KFML's leadership not to discuss the contradictions internally within the KFML until the election.

These were serious errors (note that the decision was unanimous) that contributed to the KFML as an organisation being taken by surprise when the open struggle broke out, which soon turned into an open split, just as it did not prevent Frank Baude & Co. from factionalising and preparing the split during the summer of 1970.

The KFML(r) was a 'left-wing' opportunist-Trotskyist current with ultra-proletarian overtones. It also took hold of virtually all of the KFML's shortcomings, which were systematised into a whole line. Characteristic of this 'left-wing' opportunist-Trotskyist line was, among other things:

It denied the necessity of fighting for the daily demands and set this struggle in opposition to the struggle for socialism; it rejected the united front tactic and denied the necessity of uniting as many people as possible on a correct basis. Cooperation was to take place around the KFML(r); it denied the necessity of working in existing mass organisations, especially trade unions, and formulated the anarcho-syndicalist line 'Long live the wildcat strikes! Forward to the socialist revolution!'

It regarded the petty bourgeoisie as a thoroughly reactionary class à la Trotskyism and extended the petty bourgeoisie to include strata such as non-value-adding workers.

At the same time, the KFML(r) had a correct definition of the main contradiction, namely that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, as well as a fundamentally correct view of the grassroots organisations in the workplace. In addition, the KFML(r) also took note of the KFML's weaknesses, especially in terms of general organisational work, and developed a fairly effective propaganda campaign.

Within the KFML, an erroneous view soon emerged of how the KFML(r) should be combated. It was wrong to wage a theoretical-ideological struggle against the KFML(r), because that would 'draw attention' to the KFML(r). Moreover, the KFML(r) would soon collapse on its own. This was, of course, not true. Without constant ideological and theoretical crossfire, the KFML(r) was able to expand relatively quickly until the 1973 election, when its expansion was halted because the election results showed how few people

actually supported the KFML(r). Reality destroyed the violent illusions about the election results that had existed within the KFML(r). This led to divisions within the KFML(r), which were further exacerbated by the SKP's campaign (the KFML had been reorganised into the Communist Party of Sweden in 1973) against the social-imperialist Soviet Union in 1974 and the fact that the SKP began to take up the theoretical struggle against the KFML(r), including through the pamphlet 'KFML(r) och facket' (KFML(r) and the Trade Unions), which was a general attack on the KFML(r)'s trade union line. In 1974, the KFML(r) split and a third of its members left the organisation, many of whom joined the SKP.

The emergence of KFML(r) was a result of a 'left-wing' subjectivist overestimation of the upswing that began in 1968 in Western Europe and Sweden. The slogan "Long live the wildcat strikes! Forward to the socialist revolution!", which was a caricature of the Comintern's line from 1928, bore witness to this. The wave of strikes in Sweden, which began with the dockworkers' strike in 1969, continued until 1975, when the great forestry workers' strike took place. But the upswing was in practice imported, i.e. mainly inspired by the war of liberation against the United States in Indochina and the Cultural Revolution in China. It must be remembered that Western Europe and Sweden experienced an economic boom until the oil crisis of 1973; so the upswing was not primarily an expression of intensified domestic class antagonisms. On the other hand, external factors naturally influenced internal factors, such as pent-up discontent among the working class and progressive intellectuals with both the Social Democratic Party and the revisionist Left Party Communists (VPK).

Furthermore, it is easier to split a communist organisation during an upswing, as everyone assumes that the upswing will continue. If the upswing has turned into a downturn, an ebb in the struggle, the splitters often signal that they want to leave politics altogether. They simply give up. During an upswing, opportunists also often imagine that it is better to be number one in a Roman village than number two in Rome. It is quite interesting that significantly more left-wing organisations were formed in Sweden and Denmark than in Norway from the end of the 1960s onwards; AKP(m-l) in Norway had a much stronger position on the left than the Maoists in Sweden and Denmark.

The KFML/SKP made two major mistakes in its struggle against the KFML(r). The first mistake was that the conflicts within the KFML's leadership, which arose during the miners' strike, should have been brought out to the members despite the 1970 election campaign. It was primarily Frank Baude and company who benefited from the lid being kept on. This meant that they could split the party in peace and quiet. As Mao Zedong pointed out, one need only fear secret factions – not open ones. The second mistake was that the KFML/SKP leadership ignored the open theoretical struggle against the KFML(r) until 1974 because of the right-wing opportunist theory that one should not 'draw attention' to the KFML(r), but nothing rotten falls off by itself. Until 1974, there were also major organisational shortcomings in the SKP's day-to-day leadership. These shortcomings were only remedied when the party left gradually took over the day-to-day leadership from 1974 onwards.

Question: How did the internal line struggle in the KFML/SKP develop after 1974? What were the most important dividing lines between the right and left wings of the organisation?

Answer: The KFML's executive committee launched a corrective movement in May 1971 under the slogan 'The KFML's struggle must be seriously united with that of the masses!' This corrective movement was directed against sectarianism and 'left' opportunist ideas. But one tendency concealed another, and serious right-wing errors developed in the final stage of the corrective movement. These manifested themselves in several ways, including the fact that the slogan 'The KFML's struggle must be united with that of the masses!' did not receive the necessary addition and practical orientation that the working class is both the leading force and the main force of the revolution. All political activity was treated as equal.

A strong liberalism developed in the view of party membership, and new recruitment was seen only in quantitative terms: active work was not even required as a condition for party membership. Organisational issues were neglected and a laissez-faire attitude spread, which was expressed, among other things, in the lack of systematic expansion of the party. Studies were neglected and the role of propaganda work was underestimated. There was a complete lack of security policy.

In 1971, a new 'left-wing' opportunistic organisation emerged, namely the MLF, which insisted that propaganda should be the focus. But the core of the correction movement, namely that the KFML must begin to take up the work in the existing mass organisations, especially the trade unions, as well as develop a concrete daily policy, was, of course, essentially correct. This was an absolutely necessary direction for the KFML to be able to establish itself politically in the working class. The MLF received only limited support within the KFML because of its sectarian attitude. But the MLF was also right in some of its point criticisms, and their criticism of oversights was shared by a large part of the KFML's cadre. But when the dispute broke out, the questions were posed as 'all or nothing', 100 per cent black or white. The rest of the left opposition suppressed their own point criticisms and rallied completely around the leadership of the league. This then made it easier for the United Left line to gain acceptance.

But the most important expression of the spread of right-wing opportunism in the KFML/SKP was the line towards the VPK and modern revisionism. In practice, this meant treating the VPK as a progressive and anti-imperialist party belonging to the left. This line found its main expression during the 1973 election campaign, especially during the United Left campaign. This was combined with a conciliatory attitude towards Soviet social imperialism, which, among other things, was not characterised as social fascist. The party right, under the leadership of Bo Gustafsson/Sture Ring, also prevented the campaign against the Soviet Union from being pursued – on the contrary, it petered out. They also pushed through retreats in the face of Vietnamese blackmail against the DFFG.

The party right wing's open course correction of its line towards the VPK began with Bo Gustafsson's comment on the VPK's programme proposal in the autumn of 1972, which, according to him, contained 'significant progress'. From there, it was not far to emphasising

that the VPK had improved in its day-to-day politics and to gradually toning down the criticism altogether.

The idea of a United Left was also the result of a violent overestimation of one's own strength. The idea of a United Left was certainly born in the days following the large 1-May Day rally with 50,000 participants at Norra Bantorget in 1972. The United Left campaign was pushed through with coup tactics: a proposal for technical electoral cooperation quickly degenerated into a package solution in which the dividing lines with the VPK were blurred. Doubts began to arise about the KFML/SKP's *raison d'être*. This United Left line was summarised in the resolution 'Unite all communists in a strong communist party!', which was adopted at the SKP's first congress in 1973, second half. This resolution suggested that a merger between the two organisations was possible. The dividing lines were reduced to the question of 'communist trade unions' and the question of 'what socialism should look like'.

But the United Left line had complete hegemony in the SKP. At the SKP's first congress only 3-4 delegates voted against one of the most extreme expressions of the compromise with the VPK, namely the final 'compromise proposal' to stand under the VPK's election designation but with its own candidates (except for the first name). There was a line within the party executive that argued that it was right to support the VPK in the election, possibly even to vote for the VPK. The majority of the party executive tried to prevent this line from becoming known to the members. Nevertheless, it leaked out – little by little. The party executive negotiated to achieve a unanimous party executive ahead of the congress. The PS majority accepted independent participation in the election at all levels if the minority accepted the resolution 'Unite all communists in a strong communist party!'.

Opposition to the right-opportunistic line began to develop in 1973-74. It took as its starting point the question of whether or not to take part independently in a new election. The Soviet campaign, which in turn was inspired by the KKP, also supported a tougher stance towards the VPK. But above all, the Soviet campaign led to the SKP coming under fire again. The party executive was divided into two camps: one camp, led by Bo Gustafsson/Sture Ring, began to turn a deaf ear due to the counter-offensive; the other camp saw the Soviet campaign as the beginning of a showdown with right-opportunism in the SKP.

The right-opportunist influence was rolled back step by step within the SKP ahead of the second congress. The showdown took organisational issues as the starting point for a general attack. This was because the state of work ethic and fighting spirit, as well as the organisational situation in general, was clearly deplorable. In the first stage of the showdown with right-opportunism, the following issues were therefore addressed

- stricter membership requirements and the introduction of candidate membership
- systematic expansion of the party and concentration on the industrial proletariat
- discussion of organisational issues in order to abolish triple organisation in the first stage
- security issues
- the role of studies

- the role of propaganda

This led to the Marxist-Leninist line very quickly advancing its positions in the internal party struggle. This was also facilitated by the fact that the programme commission, led by Bo Gustafsson, presented a poor programme proposal for the 1975 summer camps. This immediately led to the conclusion that it would be impossible to adopt a party programme at the 1976 congress.

The first showdown between the two lines took place at the election conference in October 1975, when the Marxist-Leninist line was supported by just over 80 per cent of the delegates. Realising that the upcoming congress would be lost, the party right wing pushed for it to be postponed. But they lost in the general membership vote – 35 per cent to 65 per cent (which was also the result at the congress). The second stage in the showdown with the right-wing opportunist influence began: the line towards the VPK and the United Left tactic, as well as the conciliatory attitude towards the Soviet Union, were attacked. This laid the foundation for the victory at the SKP's second congress over the Bo Gustafsson/Sture Ring faction.

The contradictions were set out by drawing up two different proposals for the political report, the majority and minority proposals. The right-wing opportunist line had a majority in the central committee with 12-9. In this way, the two different lines were set against each other. The SKP's second congress thus became a defeat for the Bo Gustafsson/Sture Ring faction.

The victory was a result of

1. the CC- minority's main line being Marxist-Leninist. The majority of members had never fully embraced the right-opportunistic line uncritically, and the struggle took place both among the membership and among the leadership.
2. The CC- majority did not contest the day-to-day leadership but allowed the CC- minority representatives to hold it. In addition, they allowed an open battle of opinions within the SKP, mainly because they overestimated their own strength and underestimated their opponents. The CC-majority was in fact in the process of degenerating, which manifested itself in a lack of fighting spirit, unwillingness to make sacrifices and a lack of perseverance in the internal party struggle.

But there were major shortcomings in the showdown that took place at the SKP's second congress.

Question: I would also like to return to something you mentioned earlier, about the KFML(r)'s assessment of the principal contradiction. You write that the KFML(r), at least in words, had a correct assessment of the principal contradiction in Sweden, i.e. that it was between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The Norwegian SUF(m-l) launched relatively fierce attacks against the KFML(r) in the early 1970s, and the SUF(m-l) believed that the main contradiction in both Norway and Sweden was between the monopoly bourgeoisie and the people, i.e. all classes that could unite against the monopoly bourgeoisie. How was the principal contradiction perceived in the KFML/SKP, and later in the SKP(m-l)?

Answer: The SUF(m-l) was strongly influenced by the KFML, as the latter organisation was older and more experienced. One of the founders of the KFML, Nils Holmberg, had even worked for the Comintern. This was confirmed by Tron Ögrim and Sverre Knudsen when I met them for the first time in early 1975. On the other hand, the party left in the SKP was inspired by the showdown with the right-opportunistic errors that the AKP(m-l) had initiated shortly before.

Bo Gustafsson, one of the founders of the KFML, was the most ardent proponent in the KFML/SKP of the idea that the principal contradiction was between monopoly capital and the people. The KFML/SKP was the only Maoist party in a capitalist and imperialist country in the world that advocated this principal contradiction until the mid-1970s. Mao Zedong¹ – and the other Maoist parties in the imperialist bloc – advocated that the principal contradiction was between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. This principal contradiction could – and can – of course change under special conditions, either due to external aggression or an imminent threat of a fascist takeover. The principal contradiction in dependent neo-colonial countries may again be different.

Presumably, the principal contradiction was monopoly capital and the people, merely a legacy of the old SKP's talk of big finance capital against the people. But this principal contradiction concealed the fact that two poles, i.e. the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, were opposed to each other, and gave the impression that not only the petty bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeois middle strata, but also the non-monopolistic strata of the bourgeoisie, could be won over to the revolution. Thus, there was no fundamental difference from Khrushchev's anti-monopolistic two-stage revolution. In the international journal *Internasjonalen*, published by the AKP (m-l), four articles were published in issue 1/1976 ² on the programme discussion in the SKP. It is clear that Britta Ring, who belonged to the party's right wing, advocated an anti-monopolistic two-stage revolution. If 99.9 per cent of the population can be united against the monopoly bourgeoisie, then there is no need for an armed revolution, right?

Already in the Communist Manifesto, it is clear that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels see the proletariat and the bourgeoisie as two opposing poles, with the petty bourgeoisie, mainly farmers and small business owners, as a wavering force torn between the two. What is new is that, with the growth of capitalism, a petty-bourgeois middle class has gradually emerged, i.e. people who are formally wage earners but who have various types of managerial or supervisory functions, as well as self-employed professionals.

It can be said that the United Left campaign, as mentioned earlier, was a practical application of the main contradiction between monopoly capital and the people.

The SKP's second congress in 1976 did not take a position on the question of the principal contradiction, even though many on the party's left wing were already in favour of correcting the definition of the principal contradiction.

Since the KFML/SKP had 'invested a lot of capital' in the polemic against the KFML(r) on the question of the principal contradiction, prestige had become an issue and therefore some on the party left also wavered.

However, the SKP(m-l/SKA) had no problem changing the principal contradiction to that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Of course, the SKP(m-l/SKA) interpreted the main contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie differently than the KFML(r)/KPML(r). The SKP(m-l/SKA) saw the petty bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeois middle classes as intermediate forces that the working class and the Communist Party should strive to win over, or at least neutralise, while the KFML(r)/ KPML(r) saw them as a 'reactionary mass' and were not even prepared to cooperate on individual issues with organisations they considered petty bourgeois. The attitude towards the intermediate forces was a key issue for the Bolshevik Party to succeed in leading the October Revolution to victory, as well as for the CCP to succeed in leading the war of liberation against Japan and the civil war against the Guomindang to victory.

Question: The contradictions within the SKP eventually led to a new split, with the result that the left wing founded the SKP(m-l)/SKA. Can you tell us a little about the history of this party? How did the party develop and why was the SKA dissolved in 1993?

Answer: To answer that question, one must explain the conflicts that arose in the SKP after the second congress in 1976 and after the Bo Gustafsson/Sture Ring faction broke with the SKP in the spring of 1977. The new party leadership, which was elected at the second congress, was ideologically divided. It did not agree on issues such as the main contradiction in Sweden, whether or not to have grassroots organisations in the workplace, but above all it did not agree on how to apply the three-world theory, which later proved to be of decisive importance. The three worlds theory was essentially correct. It meant that the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, constituted the first world; the small and medium-sized imperialist states constituted the second world; and the rest of the world constituted the third world. It was not particularly remarkable, **if one realised that the crucial thing was to distinguish between state-bearing and non-state-bearing communist parties and how the theory should otherwise be interpreted** (my emphasis). The revolutionary parties in, for example, the second world that understood this distinction continued to apply their main strategy, i.e. to fight for the socialist revolution. Those who did not understand it but began to support their own bourgeoisie against the rising superpower, the Soviet Union, or advocated support for NATO, quickly made themselves politically impossible.

Those who were later expelled and took the initiative to form SKP(m-l)/SKA were already clear in 1976 that it was not possible to mechanically transfer the three-world theory to Swedish conditions, simply because the KKP was a ruling party and the SKP was a party that had the socialist revolution as its goal.

The CC-minority, which won at the second congress, had also acquired a bad habit – that of unnecessarily forming factions in a party that traditionally prohibited factions. Parts of the CC- minority established a faction both in connection with the election conference and in connection with the second congress. This was an expression of the fact that some within the CC- minority did not have sufficient confidence in their own line and members. In addition,

secret factions, which are unnecessary, lead to factionists supporting each other and secondary conflicts being suppressed.

The new party right, represented by Per Axelsson, Vivi Löfstedt and Stefan Lindgren (who later left the SKP), had learned from the mistakes of the old party right. The aim was to take control of the day-to-day leadership and prevent a democratic, open debate. To achieve this, they had to form factions within the central committee in order to win a majority within it.

Until the autumn of 1977, the Marxist-Leninist line had a majority in the central committee. But the split within the international Marxist-Leninist movement also affected the situation in the SKP. The SKP took an almost unanimous stand – with only half a dozen members as exceptions – against the AAP's criticism of Mao Zedong's theory of the three worlds at its congress in November 1976. However, there was no reason to uncritically rally behind the Communist Party of China (CCP), as the CCP's new leadership was, among other things, reconsidering its position on Yugoslavia, which suddenly became a socialist state again in the autumn of 1977. China's change of course emboldened the new party right wing, especially as two of its leading representatives had been part of a party delegation to China that same autumn; In reality, the new party right wing advocated that the Soviet Union was the main enemy on a global scale and that the Marxist-Leninist parties and the working class in Western Europe should not primarily fight their own monopoly bourgeoisie. In addition, it considered the danger of a third world war to be acute, especially in Europe, which was a qualified misjudgement. The party left, which understood that this line would have devastating consequences for the SKP and reduce it to a left-wing reformist party, began to develop a critique of these tendencies.

The new party right wing had already begun its factional work around the turn of the year 1976–1977. As early as September 1977, Greger Bogården, who had then been dismissed from the standing committee (which ran the party headquarters), was prevented from sending a letter to the rest of the central committee. This was a flagrant violation, unprecedented in the history of the party, of internal party democracy and the SKP's statutes:

the congress elected the central committee, which elected the executive committee (polit bureau), which in turn elected the standing committee. The central committee was, of course, superior to its constituent parts.

At the CC- meeting in January 1978, Greger Bogården was dismissed as a member of the Executive Committee, and the editor-in-chief of Marxistiskt forum, and the chairman of Röd Ungdom (the youth organization), who at the time also belonged to the party left, lost their positions. At the same time, 'Partiarbete' was established, replacing the previous internal organ, 'Informationsbulletinen'. The view behind 'Partiarbete' was based on Deng Xiaoping's line 'Seek truth from facts!', which in plain language meant that a decided line should not be subject to internal criticism while it was being applied. This was in direct opposition to 'The ideological and political line is decisive in everything'. The consequence was that internal party debate was stifled to prevent members from being mobilised. The new party right had learned from the mistakes of the old party right.

During Pentecost weekend in 1978, Greger Bogården was suspended for 'faction work'. 'Catch the thief,' cried the thieves. A subordinate, or provocateur (who later became an ombudsman in the Social Democratic Party), of the new party right wing had submitted a report on a political conversation that Greger Bogården had had with him. Of course, the party left wing split, as we had no way of communicating our criticism to the members. If a revolutionary party threatens to degenerate, it is of course right to split if open debate is made impossible. The party left also split against the factionists.³ Later, Greger Bogården was duly expelled, as were two other CC-members, Kurt Österlund and Göran Nilsson. Kurt Österlund and Greger Bogården then participated in forming SKP(m-l)/SKA.

The unity of the new party right, which was a result of factionalism at the 'top,' was, of course, only temporary. Many of their leading representatives, such as Stefan Lindgren, Klas Borell, Ingemar Eriksson and others, left the SKP, and the SKP's successor, the Solidarity Party, was led to its political grave in 1990 by a political B-team. As early as 1980, it was clear what consequences the policies of the right-wing liquidators would have. The Social Democratic newspaper Arbetet wrote:

"Quietly, the SKP's policies have changed dramatically during the dramatic collective bargaining negotiations:

For the first time, the LO's (the central trade-union organization, led by Social Democrats/SAP) the demands were supported from the outset.

Virtually all of the LO's industrial action was supported by the SKP, and the fire was directed at the employers.

- For the first time, the SKP unconditionally participated in the SAP-LO's 1-May Day march because "the major conflict required unity".
- For the first time, an LO agreement was approved, and the SKP even called it good." (7/6 – 80)

At the SKA congress in 1982, the internal party struggle was evaluated self-critically.⁴ Among other things, it stated:

"The only chance to defeat the liquidators was to wage an open and principled struggle from the outset, to fight fire with fire and to gather as much support as possible around a call to action and the re-establishment of the Information Bulletin. This happened in the Communist Party of Ceylon in 1964, when the Marxist-Leninists immediately responded with a public appeal in defence of the party, when a revisionist majority decided to postpone the decided congress and also prevent the opposition from speaking. However, it is most likely that the Marxist-Leninist opposition would still not have prevailed. But it would certainly have gained as much support for the appeal and the Information Bulletin as it did a year later, and above all, it would have gained time. Then the Marxist-Leninist opposition would have really taken the lead and instilled courage in all the comrades who supported the line of the second congress. Instead, the chosen tactic had the opposite effect. It supported vacillation and indecision, and a 'left-wing' centrist current emerged, i.e. the party left split. This gave rise to

the question: Am I really on the winning side? They saw it in formal organisational terms: membership of the existing organisation was everything. They did not realise that the Communist Party exists solely for the sake of the working class and that it is therefore not an end in itself. They lacked political perspective and became 'afraid for their own skins'. All other mistakes were secondary to this fundamental error. If this fundamental error had not been made, a series of secondary errors would not have been made either. The Marxist-Leninist opposition was partly placed in an emergency situation. The decisive factor would have been to give the struggle the correct principal direction from the outset, if the Marxist-Leninist opposition had rebelled immediately.

Instead, those within the party left who had not been expelled from the SKP were urged to remain until the 1980 congress. The right thing to do would have been to start a public polemic as soon as the right-wing liquidators stifled internal party democracy and, at the latest, when the leading representatives of the party left in the central committee were expelled from the party.

The SKP(m-l) was thus formed in 1980 and changed its name to the Swedish Communist Workers' Party in 1982. Already in connection with the formation of the party, the SKP(m-l) energetically supported the Öjeby-workers' strike. During the internal party struggle, 170 members had signed an appeal 'In defence of the Communist Party of Sweden!', but when the party was formed, only 120 members remained. SKP(m-l)/SKA followed the line of the second congress and published *Kommunistiska Arbetartidningen* (The Communist Workers' Newspaper), which had a print run of 1,000 copies per issue at most.

Why did SKP(m-l)/SKA fail? **Firstly**, there were far too few of us when we were formed. We suffered from the 'smallness syndrome': sympathisers believed we had little chance of survival precisely because we were so few in number. The losses we suffered due to three splits could not be compensated for by new recruitment. **Secondly**, we were formed at a time when the class struggle nationally and internationally was in a downward phase. In Sweden, a bourgeois government had replaced a social democratic one, and the conservative forces had launched an ideological offensive. The split between the CCP and the AAP demoralised the Maoist left; the international right wing, symbolised by Reagan/Thatcher, launched a reactionary offensive; there was unrest in the Eastern Bloc, especially in Poland; Vietnam attacked Kampuchea in 1979; the Berlin Wall was opened in 1989 and the Soviet Union collapsed shortly afterwards; the Tiananmen Square massacre also took place in 1989. This greatly discredited anything with communist overtones. Many Maoist parties, especially within the imperialist bloc, weakened or disappeared altogether during the 1980s.

Therefore, in 1993, SKA, which at that time consisted of only 25 members, decided to take a step back in order to later take two steps forward. This was done by taking the initiative to form a newspaper owners' association together with KPS [5](#) in 1993 by publishing *Nya Arbetartidningen* (NAT).⁶ This led to a temporary upturn in the circulation of *Nya Arbetartidningen*, but soon NAT was back to square one. *Nya Arbetartidningen* was published as a paper magazine until 2011 and was updated digitally until 2014.[6](#) With hindsight, it can

be said that we should have kept our cool in 1993 and safeguarded SKA. Then we would have avoided some unnecessary complications later on.

Question: I would like to hear more about this ‘smallness syndrome’. Could you elaborate on this? Can a small organisation overcome ‘smallness syndrome’ if it pursues a sensible political line? Both RK and KAF are still relatively small; at the same time, we work under completely different conditions than SKP(m-l)/SKA did in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In Norway, we also have the advantage that the revisionists are relatively weak, and we have no ‘Communist Party’ to compete with.

Answer: “Smallness syndrome” was a concept we used in SKP(m-l)/SKA. It simply means that the very fact that a revolutionary organisation is small in number, especially when the class struggle in the country in question is in decline, can be used as an argument against that organisation. Otherwise, progressive and radical people lose faith in the small chances of growth, or capitulationist tendencies have spread even within their own organisation. It is always more difficult to pursue revolutionary politics when a revolutionary upswing has been replaced by defeat, has ebbed away, or when the bourgeoisie has launched a successful counter-offensive using various means.

Such a situation arose in Tsarist Russia during the years of the Stolypin reaction, 1907–1912. The history of the CPSU(b) writes:

“During the years of reaction, it was many times more difficult to work in the party organisations than during the previous period, when the revolution was developing. The number of party members declined sharply. Many of the party's petty-bourgeois followers, especially intellectuals, left the party because they feared persecution by the tsarist government.

Lenin pointed out that in such situations, revolutionary parties must supplement their knowledge. During the upswing of the revolution, they had learned to go on the offensive; during the reactionary period, they had to learn how to retreat properly, how to go underground, how to preserve and consolidate the illegal party, how to take advantage of legal opportunities, and how to use all kinds of legal organisations, especially mass organisations, to strengthen ties with the masses.” (Proletärkultur 1979, pp. 134–135)

A similar situation arose after the Second World War in Sweden and other parts of Western Europe. The Swedish Communist Party, which had belonged to the Comintern until 1943, won major electoral successes in the 1946 elections, but already in 1948, after the events in Prague that same year, the tide turned when US imperialism, the bourgeoisie and the right social democracy in Sweden went on the counter-offensive. The electoral successes of 1946 proved to be largely due to the prestige that the Soviet Union had gained because of its efforts during the Second World War. In addition, the SKP had already begun to act as a friendly driving force in relation to the Social Democrats during the Second World War.

Set Persson, a member of the SKP's central committee, gradually developed a critique of this revisionist line, especially after the end of the war. However, he was isolated within the SKP and forced to leave the party at the 1953 congress. The revisionist leadership of the SKP did

everything in its power to prevent his criticism from reaching the members. Set Persson took the initiative to form the Swedish Communist Workers' Union (SKA) in 1956. The SKA initially gathered 250 members, but the party was unable to grow; especially after Set Persson's death, a period of decline began. The SKA was dissolved in 1967, with the 25 remaining members joining the KFML. The SKA levelled entirely justified criticism at both right social democracy and the SKP, and Set Persson was the first person in the world to publicly attack Khrushchev in his 1956 pamphlet 'Where does Khrushchev want to lead the communists?' 1956. Nevertheless, SKA failed to expand, as the class struggle was in decline after 1948 and US imperialism, the bourgeois parties and right social democracy in Sweden were waging a fierce anti-communist offensive.

The same was true of the SKP(m-l)/SKA, which applied the same principal line as the SKP's second congress in 1976. The party left had gathered 170 members behind the appeal 'In defence of the Communist Party of Sweden' in 1978, but when the SKP(m-l) was formed in 1980, its strength had already been reduced to 120 members. The SKP(m-l) was formed at a time when the class struggle nationally and internationally was in a downward phase. In Sweden, a bourgeois government had replaced a social democratic one in 1976, and the bourgeois forces launched an ideological offensive against the left in 1978. The split between the KKP and the AAP demoralised the Maoist left; moreover, both Albania and China rapidly degenerated. The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and Vietnam Kampuchea in 1979. The imperialist bourgeoisie, symbolised by Reagan/Thatcher, launched a broad-based reactionary ideological offensive; unrest brewed in the Eastern Bloc, especially in Poland; the Berlin Wall was opened and the Tiananmen Square massacre took place in 1989, and the Soviet Union and the rest of the Eastern Bloc, including Albania, collapsed shortly thereafter. All of this together discredited most things with communist overtones. The vast majority of Maoist parties, especially within the imperialist bloc, encountered major problems and were no longer able to advance, suffering divisions, degenerating into revisionism or even disappearing from the political map. As mentioned earlier, the SKP(m-l)/SKA was also unable to hold its ground.

This really only illustrates the fact that if a communist party is to grow strong, it is not enough to have a correct ideological and political line; the objective conditions must also be favourable. On the other hand, a communist party can never fully exploit favourable objective conditions, primarily an intensification of the class struggle, if it does not represent a fundamentally correct ideological and political line. If we look at the 1968 movement in Sweden – which actually began in 1964 with the formation of the DFFG – and the subsequent upswing, this was not due to an intensification of the class struggle in Sweden. On the contrary, Sweden and other Western European countries experienced an economic boom until the oil crisis in 1973. The upswing was essentially imported: solidarity work with the people of Indochina, the CCP's break with modern Soviet revisionism and the Cultural Revolution in China initially radicalised young people and intellectuals. The upswing later spread to the working class in the form of the dockworkers' and miners' strike in 1969–1970, which started a wave of strikes that peaked with the big forestry workers' strike in 1975. In fact, all organisations in Sweden to the left of the VKP expanded during this period; the one that

expanded the most was the KFML/SKP, because the KFML/SKP had a clear principal line and, in addition, a comprehensive policy.

Today, the Gonzalists are trying to conjure up an upswing that does not exist and even claim that the international communist movement is on a strategic offensive. At the same time, neither of the two most battle-hardened Maoist parties in the world, i.e. the Communist Party of India (Maoists) and the Communist Party of the Philippines, are even on the strategic offensive in their own countries, according to their own statements; the former is on the strategic defensive and the latter is on the way to achieving strategic equilibrium.

It cannot be said that there is a corresponding upswing in the world today, especially in the imperialist countries, as there was in the mid-1960s and continued until Mao Zedong's death. But that does not mean that today's communists should give up the fight in advance or succumb to pessimism. On the contrary, it is important to consolidate and expand communist organisations, and the decisive factor in this regard is that it is done on the basis of a correct ideological and political line, since this is decisive in everything. This is the prerequisite for a communist party to be able to take advantage of a coming upswing or a drastic intensification of the class struggle. And that will happen!

Question: I would also like to talk about how you perceived Maoism in the SKA, and how you perceive Maoism today. If I understand correctly, the SKA called itself Marxist-Leninist, while the KAF follows Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (and when the Communist League was formed, it was also on the basis of MLM). At some point, there must have been a shift, where Maoism was recognised as a new stage in the development of Marxism, and something qualitatively different from Marxism-Leninism. In RK, we usually say that it was during the Cultural Revolution in China that Maoism took its actual form, and that MLM was 'synthesised' by Mao's supporters on the left wing of the CCP and further in the international communist movement after the coup in 1976.

Incidentally, is there any difference between 'Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought' and MLM? If so, what is the difference?

Answer: I have previously addressed this question in an article entitled 'Is revolution based on labels?' in Marxist Forum No. 1/2017. [7](#) Therefore, I will partly repeat myself here. My view is that revolution is not based on labels but on the correctness of the ideological and political line.

Firstly, among the parties that claim to represent MLM, some, led by the Communist Party of Peru, believe that people's war is universal, i.e. also applicable in imperialist states, while others, such as the Communist Party of India (Maoists) and the Communist Party of the Philippines, do not believe that people's war is applicable in imperialist states to resolve the principal contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. These views cannot both be correct; on the contrary, they are mutually exclusive, i.e. antagonistic. This shows that a label in itself does not determine whether the ideological and political line is correct or not; instead, it is practice that determines this.

Secondly, if, like the Communist Party of Peru, one claims that people's war is universal, which is in direct contradiction to the principled politics of Marx/Engels, Lenin, Stalin, the Comintern and especially Mao Zedong, then this is in fact a provocation. It is neither Marxism, Leninism nor Maoism. To date, no communist party has ever attempted to resolve the principal contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in a capitalist and imperialist country by initiating a people's war. None of the Gonzalist parties within the imperialist bloc has ever attempted to initiate a people's war. On the other hand, successful people's wars took place in Europe during the Second World War, i.e. in Yugoslavia and Albania, two relatively backward feudal-capitalist countries, because the principal contradiction had changed due to Nazi German aggression. The war of liberation in Greece failed for various reasons. In several other European countries during World War II, resistance movements against the Nazi German occupation did arise, but these were never full-fledged people's wars.

Thirdly, history also shows that a label can mean anything. Did not Plekhanov and Kautsky call themselves Marxists, even after they had become revisionists? After Lenin's death, all leading Bolsheviks called themselves Leninists, but this naturally led to a discussion about the actual content of Leninism – see Stalin's polemic in 'The Problem of Leninism', especially the section 'The Definition of Leninism'.⁸ Don't Trotskyists call themselves Marxists? Some Trotskyists even claim to be Leninists. Didn't the Khrushchev revisionists still call themselves Marxist-Leninists during the Great Polemic?

Conversely, does the absence of a label mean that a programme is not revolutionary? In Lenin's 'Draft Programme of the Social Democratic Party and Explanations Thereof' (1895–1896)⁹, Lenin does not mention the word Marxism at all. Yet, under his leadership, the Bolshevik Party later led the October Revolution to victory. In a later commentary, 'Our Programme' from 1899¹⁰, Lenin speaks of 'the teachings of Marx and Engels'. Ho Chi Minh's programme for the Indochinese communists ¹¹ from 1930 merely states that 'the Communist Party of Indochina has been formed', but the programme contains no explanation of what communism meant. Nevertheless, the Vietnamese Workers' Party and the Viet Minh succeeded in driving the French occupiers out of North Vietnam in 1954.

Fourthly, all the classics were opposed to their teachings being elevated to 'isms'. Marx and Engels never described themselves as Marxists. They considered that they had developed scientific socialism (including in polemics against utopian socialism). According to Engels, Marx only used the term Marxist once in connection with a comment on French 'Marxists': "The materialist conception of history has many of them (dangerous friends – my note) nowadays, for whom it serves as a pretext for not studying history. As Marx used to say when commenting on the French "Marxists" in the late 1870s: "All I know is that I am not a Marxist."¹² Not even at Marx's funeral did Engels refer to him as a 'Marxist,' but only spoke of 'Marx's teachings." Lenin called himself a Marxist – never a Leninist. Stalin, who was primarily concerned with defending Leninism, never elevated his teachings to "Stalinism" or allowed anyone else to do so. The Trotskyists, on the other hand, have, as is well known, used the term in a derogatory sense.

A 1988 statement by the Communist Party of Peru [13](#) states:

‘In short, the struggle in China to establish Mao Zedong's Thought began as early as 1935 at the Tsunyi meeting, when Chairman Mao took over the leadership of the Communist Party of China.’

This is a false account of history. Mao Zedong himself never worked to establish Mao Zedong's Thought or Maoism as the guiding principle of the CCP. The only thing that is true in the CPP's statement is that Mao Zedong's line won a majority at this meeting. It is also true that at its 1945 congress, the CCP established Mao Zedong Thought as its guiding ideology [14](#) at a time when Japanese imperialism had been defeated.

But as Mobo Gao points out, it was

" ... also Mao who, as early as 1954, proposed avoiding the term ‘Mao Zedong Thought’ because it was too arrogant. In accordance with Mao's proposal, the CCP issued a directive to refer to “Mao Zedong's instructions” and “works by Mao Zedong” instead (Lin Ke et al. 1995: 50). All these facts can be confirmed by official documents, such as those found in Mao's published collected speeches." [15](#)

There are many examples of how uncomfortable Mao Zedong was with talk of Mao Zedong Thought and, in particular, Maoism. In a conversation with representatives of the Albanian Labour Party in 1967, he said, among other things:

"In addition, there were some other inaccuracies. They began to use and abuse the expressions “Mao Zedong Thought” and “Maoism”... I don't like this “-ism”...

Chairman Mao: They have also given me epithets such as “Great Teacher”, “Great Leader”, “Great Strategist” and “Great Helmsman”. I don't like these. But there is nothing I can do. They do this everywhere." [16](#)

Already in a letter [17](#) to Jiang Qing, his wife, on 8 July 1966, Mao Zedong expresses concern about how he is being praised to the skies by Lin Biao:

‘His (i.e. Lin Biao's – my note) speech was entirely devoted to a political coup. There has never been a speech like his before. I was quite concerned about some of his ideas. I never thought that several of the pamphlets I wrote would have such supernatural power.’

Fifth: What is meant by ‘synthesising’? According to the standard dictionary definition, it means to make a synthesis, i.e. to summarise something into a whole or to achieve a holistic view of something. According to the Hegelian-Marxist dialectical scheme, thesis and antithesis are set against each other, resulting in a synthesis, which stands at a higher level. In the synthesis, elements from both the thesis and the antithesis remain, but at a higher level – suspended but still preserved.

If we stick to the latter definition, I do not know of a single example of anyone having been able to create a synthesis of Mao Zedong's teachings, either during the Cultural Revolution or afterwards. Who or what would that be? There are, of course, plenty of summaries of Mao Zedong's theories and his political activities. Lenin wrote ‘The Three Sources and Three

Components of Marxism' (1913)[18](#), an excellent educational text, but it is still only a summary. However, by designating Marxism as an -ism, Lenin added no further value to Marx's teachings. Marx had already developed his theories and carried out his activities. On the other hand, Lenin was of course able to further develop Marx's theories, especially through his own practical and theoretical activities, since Marx had worked before the breakthrough of imperialism, particularly with regard to party theory, the view of imperialism and the coming world war, party theory, the socialist revolution and the first phase of socialist construction. The same applies to Stalin in 'The Foundations of Leninism'; he added nothing new to Lenin's teachings in this book. Stalin did, however, make important theoretical contributions in the form of 'Marxism and the National Question' and a couple of other writings, but above all he led the socialist construction in the Soviet Union and the defence of the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany. The same applies to Mao Zedong. He further developed the theories of his predecessors in a number of important respects, which also sprang from his practice; this applies to dialectical and historical materialism, party theory, united front tactics, the mass line, people's war, the national-democratic revolution and its relationship to the socialist revolution, socialism and the continuation of class struggle under socialism. Mao Zedong once said that he wanted to be remembered above all for having triggered the Cultural Revolution.

The Communist Party of Peru claimed to have 'synthesised' Maoism. But this was and is a laughable proclamation, since their 1988 statement [19](#) and their later theories are characterised by a religious and idealistic undertone, and their additions such as the universality of people's war, the militarisation of the party, concentric circles and the jefatura theory, etc., are definitely in direct opposition to Maoism.

Both Stalin and Mao Zedong were opposed to party cadres acquiring Marxism solely through summaries, believing instead that party members, especially the leading cadres, should go to the sources, i.e. the original texts. [20](#) If you read the classics in their original form, you can also see how they apply dialectical and historical materialism in the ongoing analysis of concrete conditions, i.e. in political practice. This kind of reading can never be replaced by a summary, which may also be "repackaged", i.e. contain incorrect interpretations.

Finally, at its Midsummer Conference in 1969, the KFML stated that "the task of the Communist League is to form a revolutionary communist party in Sweden **based on Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tsetung's Thought** (my emphasis)." [21](#) Since the KFML/SKP never adopted a party programme, this formulation remained in force until the liquidators took power in 1978. However, this formulation did not prevent five splits until 1978, nor did it prevent the liquidators from taking power in 1978. At the same time, the KFML/SKP's principal line was essentially correct until 1978, even though serious right-opportunistic errors were made in connection with the United Left campaign in 1973, which were corrected at the second congress in 1976.

The KFML/SKP grew steadily in strength until 1977, as we applied a correct united front tactic – see the solidarity work with the people of Indochina and the struggle against the two superpowers – as well as applying the mass line, for example in the form of the slogan "Make

the trade union a fighting organisation! Unity on the basis of class struggle!" This orientation was directly inspired by Mao Zedong's theories.

The leading cadre of the KFML/SKP was also well versed in Mao Zedong's works. Oktoberförlaget, the KFML/SKP's publishing house, published five volumes of Mao Zedong's selected works (four of which were sanctioned by him), *Skrifter i urval* ('The Big Red Book') and *Den lilla röda* ('The Little Red Book'), *Citatboken* ('The Quotation Book'), in 100,000 copies, as well as 'Den stora polemiken' ('The Great Polemic'). No other party has done so much to spread Maoism in Sweden. The KFML/SKP had direct contact with the Communist Party of China, partly through ongoing contacts with the Chinese embassy in Stockholm and partly through regular party delegations to China, where we were able to hold political discussions with leading representatives of the CCP.

The Swedish Communist Workers' Party (SKA) was formed in 1980 in opposition to the liquidators and Deng Xiaoping's political line and stood on the same basis as the SKP's second congress in 1976.²² The programme²³ adopted by the SKA in 1985 stated only:

'Every political party represents class interests and is guided by an ideology. The party's ideology is historical and dialectical materialism, the scientific socialism originally developed by Marx and Engels and today referred to as Marxism-Leninism.'

The reason we did not use the term "Mao Zedong Thought" was, if I remember correctly, that we considered the term "Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought" to be cumbersome. Incidentally, we were in good company with Mao Zedong, who never referred to himself as anything other than a communist or Marxist-Leninist. On the other hand, we considered ourselves Maoists and also accepted being referred to as Maoists. The main question is also whether this programme was essentially Maoist or opportunistic. I believe it was Maoist. During the 1980s, the Swedish Security Service also considered SKA to be the most dangerous left-wing organisation in Sweden.

Significantly, the same programme stated:

'Throughout the socialist transition period, the class struggle will continue, above all to strengthen and develop socialist production relations and within the superstructure. Bourgeois ideology must be eradicated and replaced with a socialist ideology.'²⁴

The Communist Workers' Association's current draft party programme builds on SKA's programme, which in turn was a modernisation of the programme adopted by Set Persson's SKA:

"2. Every political party represents class interests and is guided by an ideology. Our ideology is historical and dialectical materialism, the scientific socialism originally developed by Marx and Engels. Their theories were further developed by Lenin, which led to the victory of the October Revolution and the establishment of the first socialist workers' state. The third stage is represented by Mao Zedong, who led the Chinese people to victory against Japanese imperialism. Mao Zedong further developed Marxism-Leninism in a number of areas, both

with regard to the path to socialism and the socialist construction. That is why we also call ourselves Maoists."25

KAF and Oktoberförlaget continue, like KFML/SKP, to spread Mao Zedong's works in Sweden through practical action, which is the only thing that counts. Oktoberförlaget has published volume 6 of Mao's selected works, *Skrifter i urval* (Selected Writings), and plans to publish volumes 7, 8 and 9 of *Valda verk* (Selected Works). The difference compared to the 1970s is that we have access to significantly more texts and speeches by Mao Zedong today.

There is continuity from KAF to SKA, SKP (until 1978) and KFML, as KAF represents the same revolutionary main line. Personally, I represent the same main line and principled politics that I stood for in 1970. Along the way, I have of course adjusted my positions several times, especially in view of changes in the class struggle situation in Sweden and the world situation. But I can still stand by certain articles I wrote as early as 1969 on the question of Stalin, on the united front tactic, against Appel's bribe theories and against Trotskyism.

The only person who has 'synthesised' Mao Zedong's theories is Mao Zedong himself. Not even his allies or supporters during the Cultural Revolution added anything qualitatively new to Mao Zedong's teachings. Why did they not prevail, then? There are only different kinds of summaries.

My view is that the discussion about labels is a dead end. The classics never engaged in such discussions; they focused on the content of the ideological and political line and especially on practice – see, for example, 'The Great Polemic'. Labels such as Marxist, Marxist-Leninist, Maoist, Marxist-Leninist-Maoist only serve to define positions. They are no guarantee against division, against political degeneration, or for victory in the socialist revolution or the new democratic revolution. A given label is not a sufficient condition for success. Since the Communist Party of Peru takes credit for the fact that it, and Gonzalo in particular, has "synthesised" Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, there is a special reason to be sceptical of this designation.

When SKA was approached in the mid-1980s by a group of sympathisers of the Communist Party of Peru, we declined further contact. The reason was that our gut feeling, our political intuition, told us that their poster politics, their policy of claiming victory in advance, and their almost religious propaganda would lead to the PKP 'going down the drain,' which the party did in 1992. This does not contradict the fact that the CPP's struggle was legitimate.

It is no coincidence that parties such as the Communist Party of the Philippines and the Communist Party of India (Maoists) have taken a stand against the theory of the universality of people's war. These parties began people's wars as early as the 1960s and are led by cadres with long experience of struggle who apply Maoism creatively to domestic conditions. Neither of them claims to be leading the world revolution.

Question: When it comes to the question of synthesis, I largely agree with you on the content. A small clarification about my own choice of words: when I talk about synthesising in this context, I mean 'to summarise, to boil down to the essentials', not 'to raise to a new

level'. It was Mao who developed Maoism and raised Marxism-Leninism to a new level – developed a new synthesis, if you will – but it was his supporters on the left wing of the CCP and in the international communist movement who determined that Mao had further developed Marxism in all important areas (philosophy, proletarian strategy and tactics, state theory, political economy) and could summarise what these new developments were about. As far as I know, Mao never made any attempt to summarise his own contributions to Marxism-Leninism.

A parallel: Lenin developed Leninism, thereby raising Marxism to a higher level, but it fell to the Comintern, and especially Stalin, to work out a systematic summary of Lenin's new contributions. The term 'definition' is therefore perhaps more precise than 'synthesis,' and I note that the Gonzalist magazine Røde Fane has switched to writing that Gonzalo and the PKP defined (and did not synthesise) Maoism.

I would also like to emphasise that synthesis (or definition) is not done once and for all. Definitions are relative and subject to ideological struggle, and as we know, the debate on the content of Maoism is still ongoing today – even though some claim that Maoism was fully defined in 1982.

We have been talking for a long time now, and it is a good time to start wrapping up. I would like to ask one more two-part question: How do you see the development of the Maoist movement in our two countries in the coming years, and what is your best advice to the emerging new generation of Maoists in Norway?

Answer: In principle, I agree with your reasoning on how to define Maoism at present, rather than talking about 'synthesising' – and in this case, I include what has traditionally been referred to as Marxism-Leninism in Maoism. Incidentally, I would like to thank you for all your interesting questions before I address your final question. It will not be a remarkable answer.

Firstly, it must be remembered that Sweden and Norway are two monopoly capitalist and imperialist countries with a high standard of living and bourgeois democracy. Lenin already pointed out in 'Radicalism – the infantile disorder of communism' that it would be considerably more difficult to carry out a socialist revolution in Western Europe than in Tsarist Russia. So far, he has been absolutely right. For a socialist revolution to be carried out in our countries, a revolutionary situation must arise as a result of a comprehensive social crisis, generated either by a deep economic depression or by war. It is not possible to create a revolutionary situation – nor can a communist party, which lacks mass influence, lift itself up by its own bootstraps.

The most recent upsurge in our countries, i.e. from 1968 onwards, was partly imported due to the impulses from the Indochina War, the Cultural Revolution and the great polemic between the CCP and the CPSU – and not primarily a result of drastically intensified class antagonisms in Norway and Sweden. This meant that when the international communist movement suffered setbacks in the late 1970s, first in the form of the split between the CCP and the AAP in 1977 and then in the form of the restoration of capitalism in China and

Albania, respectively, communist cadres in both Sweden and Norway became disillusioned, and far too many took the opportunity to throw the baby out with the bathwater, i.e. to reject Maoism altogether. Those who left the movement had no problem finding ways to retreat.

Secondly, it is important to conduct ideological and political studies in a communist organisation. Both Stalin and Mao Zedong emphasised the necessity of conducting studies, both organised and self-study. Mao Zedong, who studied until the very end, once said somewhat pointedly that the leading cadre must at least know the difference between idealism and materialism. When a party stops organising studies, it is usually a sign that the party has begun to degenerate. That is why Oktoberförlaget – and thus KAF – attaches such importance to the republication of Mao Zedong's works, which have not previously been published in Swedish, as well as the republication of other Marxist classics. Of course, study activities must not lead to the party degenerating into a “train cadres”-line, which separates the party from mass work.

Thirdly, Maoists in Sweden and Norway must not only be familiar with the history of the international communist movement, primarily the Comintern, but also with the history of the domestic communist movement and learn from its successes and mistakes. Some lessons are simply culture-specific, and no one knew these better than our predecessors. That is why Oktoberförlaget has published ‘The True History of the Swedish Communists,’ which contains documents reflecting the activities of the communist movement in Sweden since 1921. There is certainly much to learn from both the AKP and the NKP (until 1956) in Norway. The Maoist movement in Sweden and Norway is not starting from scratch.

Fourthly, communists must think independently. The reason why the Chinese revolution succeeded was that Mao Zedong and the CCP managed to apply Marxism-Leninism to the concrete Chinese conditions. The reason why a number of communist parties in, for example, Western Europe slavishly embraced Khrushchev's revisionism in 1956 – and only a limited number of members went against the tide – was that they were unable to think for themselves and suffered from a belief in authority. The same thing was repeated after Deng Xiaoping took power in the CCP after Mao Zedong's death. The overwhelming majority of both the SKP's party leadership and party cadres were unable to see through Deng Xiaoping's policies, which ultimately led to the party's liquidation.

Fifthly, perseverance and patience. This follows from the first point about the conditions for revolution in Western Europe. It was no coincidence that ‘The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains’ was included in the KFML's first study circle. It is about an old man who set out to dig away two mountains. When he was reproached for this project, he replied:

‘When I die, my sons will continue, and when they die, my grandsons and then their sons and grandsons will do so, and so on for all eternity. The mountains are high, but they cannot get any higher, and for every bit we dig away, they will become that much lower. Why shouldn't we be able to get rid of them?’

Mao Zedong recounted this fable in his closing speech at the CCP Congress in 1945, just four years before the final liberation of China. Nevertheless, he wanted to emphasise the necessity of perseverance and patience. For the revolutionary movement in Sweden and Norway, the main danger is usually right opportunism, as history has shown so far. The SKP in Sweden was liquidated by a right-opportunistic movement inspired by Deng Xiaoping. This danger stems from the material conditions in Sweden and Norway, the hegemony of bourgeois ideology and all the retreats that are thus objectively offered to all revolutionaries. It is possible to find plenty of fanatics. 'Left' opportunism, which is only left in form but right in content, is obviously no alternative to right-wing opportunism. Left opportunists are always looking for shortcuts, because they are driven by wishful thinking and are characterised by a lack of perseverance and patience. The latest addition to this trend is Gonzalism, which asserts the infantile theory that people's war is universal, even though this contradicts what the classics of Marxism have always asserted. Moreover, they have the audacity to call themselves Maoists. The only thing that distinguishes left opportunists from right opportunists is that the former at least desire revolution, but in practice they only achieve the same mess as right opportunists, to quote Mao Zedong.

Last but not least, mass struggle and concrete investigations. After the SKP congress in 1976, when the old party right had been defeated, the new party leadership set the internal slogan 'Unite revolutionary mass work with advanced ideological struggle!' This was a good direction. A communist organisation cannot just engage in mass struggle – nor can it just engage in advanced ideological and theoretical struggle. It must walk on two legs, no matter how small it is. Otherwise, there is a great risk that the organisation will remain a sect.

Mass struggle means supporting, triggering and seeking to lead the struggle in workplaces and residential areas. Mass struggle does not primarily mean painting graffiti in pedestrian tunnels and on house walls and hanging banners on bridges, as the Gonzalists in Europe have specialised in. The only people impressed by this are other Gonzalists. The necessity of conducting concrete investigations follows from the necessity of thinking for oneself. It is never possible to mechanically transfer experiences, slogans and courses of action from one country to another, not even between Sweden and Norway, countries that are nevertheless so similar in terms of language, culture and social conditions.

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1 See 'On Contradictions', Mao Zedong on philosophical questions. Oktoberförlaget 2016, pp. 69-70

2 <https://www.akp.no/ml-historie/pdf/internasjonalen/index.html>

3 See the following article by Greger Bogården, 1978:

<https://www.bannedthought.net/Sweden/SKP/WhatMethodsDoRevisionistsUseToSeizePower-c1978-Eng.pdf>

4 See ‘Den sanna historien om de svenska kommunisterna’ (The True History of the Swedish Communists’), Oktoberförlaget 2020, pp. 245-254 or <https://marxistarkiv.se/sverige/kfml-skp/ska/ska-82-verksamhetsberattelse.pdf>

5 KPS, the Communist Party of Sweden, was a pro-Albanian organisation, but stood very close to SKA on practical class struggle issues in Sweden. However, its members were actually even more disillusioned than SKA members.

6 Nya Arbetartidningen still operates as a website – <http://www.nat.nu/typo3/startside/> – and the blog – <http://nyaarbetartidningen.bloggplatsen.se/> – linked to the website is active.

7 <https://marxforum.se/index.php/2021/07/07/gors-revolution-utifran-etiketter/>

8 ‘The Problems of Leninism,’ Foreign Language Publishing House, Moscow, 1952, pp. 161–177

9 Marxist Forum No. 1/2017

10 Op. cit.

11 Ibid.

12 Letter to Schmidt, 1890

13 <https://kommunisten.nu/?p=14067>

14 Peking Review, 1 July 1966 – <https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/peking-review/1966/PR1966-27a.htm> In the same article, three leading members of the CCP, namely Liu Shaoqi, Lin Biao and Deng Xiaoping, speak out on the importance of Mao Zedong's Thought, all of whom later became opponents of Mao Zedong's principal line.

15 Mobo Gao: ‘The Battle of China's Past’, Pluto Press 2008, p. 105

16 <https://www.bannedthought.net/China/MaoEra/Foreign-General/Albania/ZhouEnlai-Albanians-Conversation-1962-0627.pdf>

17

<https://www.bannedthought.net/China/Individuals/MaoZedong/Letters/Mao'sLetterToJiangQing-660708-Alt3.pdf>

18 <https://www.marxists.org/svenska/lenin/1913/03.htm>

19 <https://kommunisten.nu/?p=14067>

20 See “Classical Works Recommended To High-Ranking Cadres” (1960) – https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_56.htm . Note that Mao Zedong does not even recommend “Capital” to leading cadres.

21 ‘Den sanna historien om de svenska kommunisterna’ (“The True History of the Swedish Communists”) Oktoberförlaget 2020, p. 128

22 'Den sanna historien om de svenska kommunisterna' ("The True History of the Swedish Communists"), Oktoberförlaget 2020, pp. 132–205

23 <https://marxistarkiv.se/sverige/kfml-skp/ska/ska-principprogram.pdf>

24 Cited work

25 <https://arbetarforeningen.se/utkast-till-principprogram/>