

## Statement by Former Contacts of MCU

We have grown much from our time with MCU, in both our theoretical understanding of MLM and our ideological development as communists. We have sharpened our ability to engage in criticism and self criticism and forged and tempered our commitment to becoming revolutionaries. It is to the many comrades who have helped us in our development with genuine enthusiasm, humility, and most importantly, a deep love for and trust in the masses, we are addressing this document.

Throughout our visits to NYC, we have grown increasingly concerned about the degree to which Ryan exercises control over members of MCU. This control is not overt and direct, but rather it is subtle and pernicious, relying upon the ideological investment of all members of MCU and is therefore difficult to identify directly and therefore criticize. After learning about allegations (linked below) against Ryan of extensive patterns of sexual abuse, the myopic complacency with which we had been treating our own previous concerns and/or vague criticisms of MCU suddenly sharpened into painful focus. It has been made clear to us that all of the leadership in MCU is complicit in his efforts to discredit and attack his victims.

And it is also clear to us that Ryan and his defenders have learned much from their past experiences. For example, after getting banned from the Lucy Parsons Center in Boston along with Alice, he now uses other members to act as the face of investigations and/or primary lines of defense of his behavior to gain credibility. They seem to have different archetypes from which they draw caricatures of their victims and/or critics, often resorting to such cheap weapons as gossip and slander to spread shocking details which are designed to portray themselves as victims of attack by unreliable, dangerous, and anti-Marxist characters.

*“First is participation in semi-Marxist circles. Second, is a systematic and methodical approach to contacts. Third is our education work for contacts, sympathizers, and supporters. Fourth, is carrying our agitation and propaganda specifically online and through social media. Fifth is our work in the labor unions.”* Growing as a Pre-Party Organization and the Development of MCU’s Political Line

Many degrees of separation are therefore added between contacts and leadership. You are encouraged to unload your deepest ideological struggles and insecurities, and in exchange you are fed tantalizing bits and pieces of information about this organization you are ostensibly committing your life to (and oftentimes for which you uproot your entire life to move to a completely new city). We must connect this to MCU’s line of targeting unconsolidated semi-Marxist (read: petit bourgeoisie) spaces for contacts and potential cadre recruitment. The fact that most current cadres have been historically recruited from petit-bourgeois backgrounds and/or are recent students of usually prestigious higher institutions is part and parcel with Ryan’s tactic of informal control over all cadres through isolation tactics and the weaponization of genuinely existing personal ideological issues by Ryan.

The ideological struggles specific to communists from petit bourgeois backgrounds (i.e. pragmatism, empiricism, nihilism, adventurism, academicism) make them especially vulnerable to the above strategies. For example, this demographic is one that is especially vulnerable to the kind of “shock and awe” strategy that Ryan has developed to intentionally overwhelm others with his seemingly infallible theoretical knowledge, as well as his weaponization of “ideological struggle” in order to ideologically disarm, gain control over, and also discredit and confuse each member within the organization, often preying on genuinely existing ideological issues. One phrase he repeats often is that “people are often ideologically invested in their own failure.” Despite railing against this tendency, usually identified as laziness and lack of responsibility, because of which people cannot even “complete basic political tasks” and criticize mistakes by leadership, this deep ideological dependency upon Ryan is actively fostered by constant and sarcastic reminders of how little everyone knows about even “basic” theoretical concepts (i.e. situation, science, qualitative, quantitative, foundation) in comparison to Ryan. You are led to self-censor and doubt your own analysis, criticism, and even your interpretation of events, leading to the conclusion that you cannot criticize his politics because you simply don’t know enough to do so. This especially was one of the main reasons why it took us so long to reach the conclusion that MCU is being led by an opportunist and revisionist (i.e. who puts forward that we must “move away from the conception of Marxism as a science” without even bothering to wage a theoretical struggle with the entire organization openly) with a power trip alongside his collaborators.

But what actually made it the most difficult to realize the truth about MCU was the extent to which we have grown and developed as communists through our interactions with junior cadres. In all honesty, we would not be able to write this statement without our studies, conversations, experiences with them. We owe much to them. And now we must criticize them.

These comrades are often Ryan’s soldiers on the frontline of his tactics of social isolation. These “junior cadres,” are generally young and are ostensibly very critical in general of cults of personality and sexual abuse. These people are assigned with creating and maintaining new contacts, helping them become sucked into the organization in the way they were. They earnestly share their own ideological struggles with these contacts while encouraging them to open up about their own deep insecurities and negative behaviors, before reporting them to leadership/Ryan. They push contacts to intensely criticize the people in their lives and then eventually push them to distance themselves from their outside relationships, in the same way they had, in order to dispose of liberalism and progress as communists. These comrades, not Ryan, are the ones who primarily encourage contacts to move to New York City without any consideration for their financial situations, having just made similar moves themselves. They justify this by saying that MCU is “not at the stage at which it can develop contacts unless they are in person” (i.e. in Ryan’s immediate vicinity).

In addition to this, junior cadres are often forced to defend the behavior of Ryan by repeating the narrative given to them, which blames the departure of various comrades from the MCU on internal contradictions or issues. Instead of addressing the criticisms of Ryan,

leadership chooses to attack those who are accusing Ryan of sexual abuse themselves. This distracts from Ryan's own allegations, and results in the entire operation devolving into a blame-game. Such methods of distraction are politically infeasible for the development of a "Maoist" organization, which should take new knowledge of its leadership in stride. However, this is not the case with the leadership of the MCU, which continues to perpetuate itself through rampant abuse and classic DARVO (Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim and Offender) tactics.

### Our Criticisms of MCU

- **Bureaucratic Response to Criticism/Overemphasis on individual ideological struggle**

Responses to criticism brought to MCU are flipped onto the individual by emphasizing their "ideological issues." Political slogans/phrases are used to discredit and stifle individuals' criticism. Genuine ideological issues are weaponized to distract from the main topic at hand and finally, if these criticisms are not within the realm of what is "acceptable," they are accused of being propagations of anti-proletarian ideas. This line was particularly propagated during expulsions and/or resignations during the second CDC (Cadre Development Course). One member resigned, as they were being challenged to leave their fiancée, to which senior cadres (i.e. cadres who are not Provisional Members) said that this individual was falling into anti-communist patterns claiming that "party organizations" are "cults." This seems to be a misrepresentation of what the individual was saying, as they were a dedicated cadre who broke off their engagement to continue with the MCU. Another was expelled due to a facial expression they made during a CDC meeting, which was interpreted as competition between cadres. A concrete example of the weaponization of ideological struggle is that there are definite pressures to undermine relationships with family, friends, and romantic partners, as they are often generalized as either outright antagonistic relationships or negative influences. Question: What are the ideological struggles and vulnerabilities that Ryan has offered to the rest of the organization? Is the vulnerability demanded of the average cadre expected of Ryan?

- **On Theoretical Struggle - Liquidation of two line struggle via avoidance of outright theoretical struggle**

The typos throughout many of MCU's theoretical documents make it clear that there is no editorial oversight by even one other person for grammatical errors. This is not only unprofessional, but a deeply troubling example of the extreme lack of democracy within the organization.

The most recent theoretical document is littered with references to Badiou's works, but he is never cited (The most blatant example is footnote 2, in which it is written: "To better understand the dialectic of being and existence, it is helpful to read some Marx." This is quite a dishonest way to frame this dialectic within this piece, which draws firstly and

most deeply from Badiou, then completely obscures its roots by citing a brief instance in which Marx mentions this dialectic.) This is another example of stifling struggle through the use of underhanded maneuvering.

Question: What are instances of genuine two line struggle about the different “theoretical advances” put forward by leadership?

- **Encouraging “lackeyism” or dependency/deferral to authority** on key theoretical questions (male-chauvinism, theoretical questions on Badiou and other “new” philosophers, theoretical questions on the reproductive cycle of capital, theoretical questions on different modes of productions, etc).

Question: What kinds of criticisms are encouraged and what kinds of criticisms are rejected on the basis of the different characteristics of the individual making them, rather than a focus on their argument itself? Are they often limited to the specific committee work or do they address the political line of MCU itself?

- **The creation of a “siege” mentality/constant state of emergency** (Enemies are both at the doors and within our ranks)

Related to the points above, this is a specific way in which leadership justifies and cements its control over each rank-and-file member. A culture of competition, gossip, intrigue, backstabbing is deliberately cultivated in order to dissolve any solidarity amongst cadre which is not immediately subsumed by a rigid devotion to the organization.

- **Lack of formal cadre development process (no collectively established channels of cadre development).** In addition to this, when supposed Cadre Development Courses are held, these courses are implicitly designed to promote competition between cadres. There are no explicit directions of how to properly develop within the course, thereby leading to rampant confusion in the ranks of potential cadres. The entire CDC mimics the structure of “collective interviews” done by marketing agencies, which encourage applicants to one-up each other in order to get the job. Aside from this, cadre are chosen based on geographical proximity to New York City — this has been explicitly stated by senior cadres within the MCU. The rhetoric of “centralization” used by the MCU is not indicative of attempts at expansion, but rather attempts at centralizing political and theoretical control over the organization.
- In relation to the above point, **the MCU has a history of retreats**, which correlate with an intensive centralization of branches in NYC. When asked about these retreats, leadership has 1) stated that these retreats are due to a lack of positive internal conditions within the city or region that the branch was in; 2) claimed that there was a need for centralization in the NYC branch in order to promote qualitative growth; 3) given no

explanation at all, dodging the issue (this is specifically in relation to the San Francisco Branch and the Austin Branch).

- People who have interacted with the organization **have a tenuous status, as they are not directly classified as sympathizers, supporters, or cadres**. This creates a dynamic of nebulous relationships within the MCU for those who have completed the cadres development course, taken open studies, or done other activities with the MCU. Sure these people know members of the MCU and interact with the organization through them, but they have no status in the organization itself. This results in stagnation, even if ostensibly this will lead to “qualitative growth” for the MCU.
- **Senior cadres in MCU did not mention allegations of abuse perpetrated by Ryan Costello and his previous sexual partners against young women and junior cadres.** Actively choosing to hide these allegations and defend Ryan Costello’s leadership is a deep manifestation, not only of male-chauvinism in the Maoist Communist Union, but also of liberalism. Hiding allegations, quelling questions – these actions do not represent the development of an organization, but rather its degeneration.

After we send this statement to you all, we expect that everything will be done to discredit us– whether it be our “politics,” aspects of our ideological struggles which we have shared with the people we grew to trust, our level of theoretical knowledge, and the way we conducted our criticisms. We will leave it to you to decide whether you believe these characterizations (i.e. that we are engaging in “left-liberal” cancel culture politics, sectarianism, anti-proletarian perspectives of communist leadership, immaturity, silliness, conspiracy - as *non-cadre*, to name a few things we have been accused of by leadership). All we will allow ourselves to say here is that we do not feel that it is worth engaging with arguments that refuse to address the root of our criticisms and/or also engage in tactics of DARVO to foreclose concrete investigation of events from the perspective of the victim. So at any point, be it today or at any point in the future, if you decide that you would like to investigate these claims for yourself, have further questions about our perspective, or even if you have any criticisms (that are respectful, original, do not engage in DARVO) please don’t hesitate to reach out. Despite the circumstances, we have met people in MCU we believe to be honest and genuine revolutionaries, who are sharply critical of many manifestations of bourgeois ideology. We therefore encourage these comrades to apply this same level of criticism to ideas, practices, and people within MCU, instead of suppressing them.

Sources:

[On “Guiding Thoughts” and the “Cult of Personality”](#) - Communist Workers Union (MLM)

[Union Obrera Comunista-mlm]

[Against Avakianism](#) - Ajith

[Warning Signs One is Dealing with Guru-ism in Political Organization](#) - Tom Paine

On Badiou’s (very open) “anti-proletarian perspectives of communist leadership”:

The Meaning of Sarkozy, especially “The History of the Communist Hypothesis and Its Present Moment” - Badiou

Badiou by Badiou, especially Chapter 6 - Badiou

Page 44-45 of *Against Avakianism*

Statements from Former MCU Members

["Externalizing" Proletarian Feminism: Against Ryan Costello of the Maoist Communist Union](#)

(DM for our critical analysis of the intro/non-testimony section)

[Statement by Former Members and Former Members of Affiliate Organizations of the MCU](#)

(DM for our critical analysis of the statement/non-testimony section)

[Growing as a Pre-Party Organization and the Development of MCU’s Political Line](#)