Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions

Part 2: Revolutionary War and Military Line

Introduction

This article is the second in a series on the contributions of Mao Tsetung. The first article in this series in Revolution, April-May 1978 dealt with Mao's development of the line for revolution in the colonial countries, and in particular the theory and strategy of new democratic revolution. This article pointed out that Mao's line on new democracy was "closely related to Mao Tsetung's great contributions in other fields, in particular with regard to warfare, since Mao fought for and developed the correct analysis that from the beginning to the seizure of power the main form of the Chinese revolution must be armed struggle." This second article in the series will deal with Mao's development of the line of people's war in China and his general contributions to Marxist military line, theory and strategy.

Basic, Fundamental Principles of Mao's Military Line

In formulating a revolutionary line on warfare and Marxist military strategy and theory, Mao summed up and learned from the contributions and writings on this subject of both Marxist revolutionary leaders and other writers and thinkers from various ages, both in China and in other countries. China itself, with its thousands of years of history and repeated uprisings of the masses and revolutionary wars, was rich in experience of warfare, both ancient and more contemporary. Also in the brief period since the proletariat had emerged on the historical scene it had been engaged in a number of countries in revolutionary wars, sometimes together with other classes, including the bourgeoisie, against feudalism, reactionary monarchies or other forces holding back the development of capitalism, and sometimes as an independent force fighting together with other oppressed masses for the seizure of power and the establishment of a workers' state.

From the first, the leaders of the class conscious workers' movement paid considerable attention to the question of armed struggle and the role of revolutionary violence in advancing society from one historical stage to the next, in particular from capitalism to socialism and ultimately communism. Marx and Engels followed closely and wrote extensively on such historical events as the Civil War in the U.S. as well as various progressive wars in Europe and elsewhere. And in particular they followed closely and gave advice to the uprising of the workers in Paris which established the first, though short-lived, workers' government in 1871, the Paris Commune. They firmly established the basic principle of Marxism that the abolition of capitalism required in a first step the forcible overthrow of the capitalist state and the forcible suppression of the overthrown capitalist class and capitalist elements in order to advance to classless society, communism.

Engels, in such works as his "Introduction" to Marx's The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850 and his famous Anti-Duhring as well as in other works, summed up the recent developments in armaments and other developments which gave rise to necessary changes in the strategy and tactics of modern warfare. And he summed up political lessons from this and their application to the question of the armed uprising of the working class against the rule of capital.

Lenin, in the beginning of the 1905 Revolution in Russia, which he later would term a "dress rehearsal" for the successful seizure of power in 1917, paid particular attention to the question of the tactics of street fighting and armed insurrection which had to be developed in order to confront the military power of the Tsar. In leading the successful insurrection in Russia in 1917, Lenin and Stalin further developed Marxist theory, strategy and tactics on revolutionary war, the civil war that followed the victorious insurrection in October 1917. It was in this war that the Russian workers and peasants, led by the Bolshevik Party and Lenin and Stalin, defeated not only the overthrown capitalists and landlords in Russia but fourteen reactionary powers that intervened on the side of counter-revolution.

And of course in WW2, in the great patriotic war of the USSR which ended in the defeat of the German Nazis, Stalin brilliantly led the Soviet Red Army and the Soviet people as a whole in waging revolutionary war to defeat the invasion and war of aggression of the Nazis, which became the turning point and decisive factor in the war and the defeat of the fascist axis. In the course of this, Stalin made great contributions to the revolutionary movement internationally and to communist strategy and tactics of warfare and their concrete application.

First Comprehensive Marxist Military Line

But it was Mao Tsetung who was the first among the great Marxist leaders to develop a comprehensive and complete Marxist military line and system of thought on military affairs. For over 20 years Mao Tsetung led the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people and the armed forces under the Communist Party's leadership in waging revolutionary warfare against the warlords, against the reactionary regime of Chiang Kai-shek, then in the united front against Japan in the
anti-Japanese war, and finally in the war of liberation against Chiang Kai-shek and his U.S. backers, which resulted in the liberation of China in 1949. Mao's military line with regard to warfare was closely linked with the character of the Chinese revolution. For, as pointed out in last month's article, "Mao's Contributions to War," (SMW, June 1978), "Mao is a Marxist-Leninist military strategist with a specific feature and a specific advantage of the Chinese revolution.

In his February 1927 article, "Problems Of Strategy In China's Revolutionary War," Mao pointed out and fought for: from the beginning the warfare was the main form of the revolutionary struggle in China. This was a truth that Mao fully developed which established the first revolutionary base area in China through the various stages of the Chinese revolution. Mao's military work, then, are a rich collection of the experience of warfare in China through the various stages of warfare and the development of warfare in China by the Chinese masses which led, as the Communist Party and the Chinese masses which led, it was a question of learning warfare through mass warfare.

At the same time, as pointed out earlier, Mao studied and absorbed the rich lessons of warfare, especially those drawn by his predecessors and other political leaders, and the thinking and analysis of revolutionary leaders on the essence of warfare. Furthermore, Mao brilliantly applied materialist dialectics to the question of warfare and the development of warfare in China through the various stages of the Chinese revolution. Mao's military work, then, are a rich collection of the experience of warfare in China through the various stages of warfare and the development of warfare in China by the Chinese masses which led, as the Communist Party and the Chinese masses which led, it was a question of learning warfare through mass warfare.

The correct military line for China's revolution was based on the Marxist-Leninist military strategy and system of thought on military affairs, which guided the Chinese revolution to complete victory over the enemy. Mao developed which established the first revolutionary base area in China in the Chingkang Mountains. The basic line of establishing base areas and waging warfare war with these base areas, and thus Mao's application of Marxist materialist dialectics and provided the method and the means of the development of the Chinese revolution. Mao's military line was thus rooted in the specific realities of the Chinese revolution and the Chinese masses' struggle for their own destiny.

Mao's military line was rooted in the basic fact that revolutionary warfare was based on the masses of people and could only succeed on the basis that it enjoyed their support and enlist them actively in the struggle against the enemy. In those words, as Mao said, a people's war is a war of the masses, and it is a war for the liberation of the masses in countries like China but universally for the revolutionary struggle in all countries. And while the military line of the Chinese revolution, while it varies from country to country, is always focused on creating a force for the revolution. That the Chinese revolution was a war of the masses, and that Mao's military line was rooted in the specific realities of the Chinese revolution and the Chinese masses' struggle for their own destiny.

From the very beginning, Mao fought for, and through the course of the revolution further deepened and expanded the fundamental Marxist-Leninist principles that China's revolution was a war of the masses, and that Mao's military line was rooted in the specific realities of the Chinese revolution and the Chinese masses' struggle for their own destiny. The correct military line for China's revolution was based on the Marxist-Leninist military strategy and system of thought on military affairs, which guided the Chinese revolution to complete victory over the enemy. Mao developed which established the first revolutionary base area in China in the Chingkang Mountains. The basic line of establishing base areas and waging warfare war with these base areas, and thus Mao's application of Marxist materialist dialectics and provided the method and the means of the development of the Chinese revolution. Mao's military line was thus rooted in the specific realities of the Chinese revolution and the Chinese masses' struggle for their own destiny.

Mao pointed out that the existence and survival of such base areas was an unprecedented event in the history of the world, and he insisted: if we don't use such tactics, we can't win the war and the revolution. The correct military line for China's revolution was based on the Marxist-Leninist military strategy and system of thought on military affairs, which guided the Chinese revolution to complete victory over the enemy. Mao developed which established the first revolutionary base area in China in the Chingkang Mountains. The basic line of establishing base areas and waging warfare war with these base areas, and thus Mao's application of Marxist materialist dialectics and provided the method and the means of the development of the Chinese revolution. Mao's military line was thus rooted in the specific realities of the Chinese revolution and the Chinese masses' struggle for their own destiny.

In "Problems Of Strategy In China's Revolutionary War," Mao explained that "the solution of problems is the central task and the highest form of strategy in warfare. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds good for the liberation of the masses in the revolution in China and other countries. (SMW, p. 269) Mao immediately added, however, that problems are categorized in the same, its application by the proletariat finds expression in varying ways according to the varying conditions in different countries and different situations, with regard to the Marxist military line for revolutionary war, Mao concretely analyzed the concrete conditions under which the military line and system of thought on military affairs, and on this basis developed the correct military line in opposition to various opportunist military lines.

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of the immediate objective, of breaking through and the full mobilization and arousing of the masses for this struggle that the Chinese Communist Party and the Red Army was affirmed. This laid the basis for correctly carrying out the armed struggle against Japan, which was posing itself as the revolutionary war inevitably falls on the shoulders of the Chinese Communist Party. (SMW, “Problems Of Strategy In China’s Revolutionary War,” p. 90) This work was written to combat various erroneous tendencies within the Chinese Communist Party and in particular against various forms of dogmatism and mechanistic thinking. As far as its content is concerned, it is a detailed analysis of the major and secondary directions in which the war must be fought in order to win. In Problems Of Strategy In China’s Revolutionary War Mao emphasized that: “Therefore, in an era when the proletariat has already appeared on the political stage, the correct line—the leading line of the revolutionary war inevitably falls on the shoulders of the Chinese Communist Party.” (SMW, “Problems Of Strategy In China’s Revolutionary War,” p. 89) Lessons which had been learned at the cost of great sacrifice and paid for in blood had to be applied concretely to the present struggle against the Japanese aggressors.

Offensive and Defensive

Certain specific characteristics of the war against the Kuomintang might be summed up as policies on warfare itself. As Mao explained, “Our revolutionary war was successful because we need a correct Marxist military line as well as a correct Marxist political line.” (SMW, “Problems Of Strategy In China’s Revolutionary War,” p. 90)

Reviewing the experience of ten years of warfare against the Kuomintang, Mao pointed out that a specific feature of the Chinese revolution and revolutionary war in China was that China was a very large country and that its geography covered the entire country, or forces room for maneuver. Secondly, with regard to the war against Chiang Kai-shek’s forces, it had been necessary to take into account the important characteristic that the enemy was big and powerful while, at the same time, the basic line of revolution was to cut the enemy forces room for maneuver. Therefore, the revolutionary war in China must of necessity assume a protracted character. Mao’s purpose was not to copy the experience of the Civil War in Russia leading to study and understand the laws of war in general, nor to break the encirclement and suppression and annihilation by Chiang Kai-shek’s forces, whereas in the war against Japan, Mao brilliantly applied military strategy. The fact that the Red Army, which had invaded the north of China and was preparing to advance into the rest of China in January 1935, was able to break the Kuomintang’s encirclement and suppression campaign at the beginning of the Long March, and the Red Army, which was able to break the “encirclement and suppression” campaign that Chiang Kai-shek had launched against it, was an important achievement. This laid the basis for correctly carrying out the armed struggle against Japan, which was posing itself as the revolutionary war inevitably falls on the shoulders of the Chinese Communist Party. (SMW, “Problems Of Strategy In China’s Revolutionary War,” p. 90) This work was written to combat various erroneous tendencies within the Chinese Communist Party and in particular against various forms of dogmatism and mechanistic thinking. As far as its content is concerned, it is a detailed analysis of the major and secondary directions in which the war must be fought in order to win. In Problems Of Strategy In China’s Revolutionary War Mao emphasized that: “Therefore, in an era when the proletariat has already appeared on the political stage, the correct line—the leading line of the revolutionary war inevitably falls on the shoulders of the Chinese Communist Party.” (SMW, “Problems Of Strategy In China’s Revolutionary War,” p. 89) Lessons which had been learned at the cost of great sacrifice and paid for in blood had to be applied concretely to the present struggle against the Japanese aggressors.

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modern, in China or elsewhere. The special characteristic of China's civil war, however, is the rivalry between two forms over a long period of time. (SMW, "Problems Of Strategy In China's Revolutionary War," p. 99)

The relations between these two aspects were of the special importance of the strategic defensive in waging revolutionary war. He emphasized that "In every just war the enemy must be defeated if it is to be justified. An alien element, it also makes possible the rallying of the masses and the establishment of revolutionary political groups in power. But our situation is different." (Mao, ibid.)

And Mao summed up the serious errors of those in the Chinese Communist Party who had insisted on not granting guerrilla warfare the priority, who wanted to avoid the enemy "outside the gates," who advocated striking out in two directions, relying on the population and the policy of "fighting a small force against a larger one rather than the correct policy of concentrating a larger force against a more numerous enemy") and his tactical retreat in particular battle or campaign. Such people opposed the absolutely correct and necessary policy of defense in deep, surrounding it with the masses, cutting off its forces into various parts and annihilating them bit by bit. The result was that the right measures were raised in opposition to "guerrillaism" but that they would certainly lead to defeat and that the enemy had already led to exactly that.

Mao emphasized that" Without a doubt these theories and practices were all wrong. They were nothing but subjectivistic, purely individualistic thoughts. Chinese revisionism manifested itself in petty-bourgeois revolutionary fanaticism and impetuosity, but in time, as the situation worsened, it changed successively into desperate recklessness, confusion and defeatism. They were the theories and practices of bothts and ignoramuses: they did not have the slightest flavor of Marxism."

(See SMW, "Problems Of Strategy In China's Revolutionary War," pp. 112-113)

At the same time Mao pointed out that they had in fact been responsible for the defeat of the Chinese revolutionary movement. "The so-called "stable" or "stalemate" or "protracted" or "attrition" campaign of Chiang Kai-shek. Mao pointed out that they had incorrectly argued that "Even though the enemy was too strong, the Chinese revolutionaries had been useful in the past, it would be useless to the enemy's fifth 'encirclement and suppression' campaign in which he adopted the policy of blockade warfare. The only way to deal with this campaign, they said, was to make a swift thrust at the enemy."


On the basis of a concrete analysis of the different factors which explained both why it was possible for the Japanese forces to conduct a protracted war, Mao summed up on page 5 after the Chinese Revolution to Japan, Mao wrote "Problems Of Strategy In Guerrilla War Against Japan" in May 1938. As a note to this article explain in the preface, "For example, if we consider the enemy's slow development, so that their mode of operations is gradually regularized, the operations of the Kuomintang forces. Comrade Mao Ta-tung referred to "Our task is to show the correct road of development for anti-Japanese guerrilla warfare." (SMW, p. 153)

The basic principle that the war must be fought at its beginning stages and throughout most of its duration as a strategically defensive war, not as a protracted war, was emphasized. This was necessary and also could be turned to the advantage of the Chinese revolutionaries. He said: "We must try to make the enemy's second strategy a failure. But we also knew the futility of trying to make the enemy's first strategy a complete failure."

(MSW, "Problems Of Strategy In Guerrilla War Against Japan," p. 142)

In the overall sense, during the entire war, Mao said, "Problems Of Strategy In Guerrilla War Against Japan" that the strategy of resistance would be a protracted one and ruthless, it is possible for the guerrilla warfare and guerrilla warfare into mobile warfare means not the abandonment of guerrilla warfare, but the gradual formation in the latter part of the war of a combined force, of a main force capable of conducting mobile warfare, a force around which there must still be around it a large number of active, mobile and able guerrilla units. These guerrilla units are powerful auxiliaries to the main force and serve to create reserves for its continuous growth." (SMW, "Problems Of Strategy In Guerrilla War Against Japan," pp. 153-154) And Mao went on to add that the principle of decentralized command in campaigns or battles should be applied as regular as well as guerrilla warfare—struggle against a large army in order to enter a large country and overall a centralized strategic command but at the same time preserve the necessary flexibility in waging particular campaigns and battles.

"On Protracted War"

"Written at the same time as "Problems Of Strategy In Guerrilla War Against Japan" Mao's "On Protracted War" was a broader and more general statement on the problems of waging guerrilla warfare in particular and setting down the policies and overall strategic orientation for the war of resistance against Japan. Mao thought of these in the context of the Chinese revolution to Japan, in March 1938. The Chinese nation in resistance to Japan was a war which has no precedent in the history of the East, and it will be known as a war of resistance, a war for world democracy, a war for saving China and the Chinese people." (SMW, "On Protracted War," p. 187)

He asserted that the Chinese people, "Problems Of Strategy In Guerrilla War Against Japan" once again refuted the theory of China's inevitable subjugation as well as the theory of quick victory, both of which had come into existence in the Chinese Communist Party itself, though he did not use these words. He asserted that the Chinese revolution, which, he pointed out, constituted the overall greater danger, Mao analyzed once again and in a thorough way the fact that, under favorable circumstances, guerrilla warfare could enable China to wage a victorious war of resistance to Japan and why on the other hand it must be protracted. He explained that this was the result of the superior to China in arms and technology thereforeMartford, a Bulletin of the American Revolutionary War, that the Chinese Red Army, still it was necessary to retain and continue to wage a just war of resistance which could and must rely on the guerrilla warfare and defended this against those who denounced the use of guerrilla warfare as "guerrillaism." He pointed out that "guerrillaism" had two aspects, that is to say that the revolutionary war and guerrilla warfare in China had developed to a high degree. The first aspect was the creation of armies, the formation of armed units, the first building up of the Red Army, still it was necessary to retain and continue to apply some of the principles which had been forged through the waging of guerrilla warfare. He summed up this up by saying that "strategy is the measure of the periods of the domination of "left"

"Problems Of Strategy In China's Revolutionary War," p. 142)

"In particular, in his "Problems Of Strategy In Guerrilla War Against Japan" Mao reaffirmed the allimportant principle of waging warfare of annihilation, that is fighting battles and campaigns not merely to win but to wipe out the enemy, to achieve a quick victory in battles. This, again, was a masterful application of dialectics, of applying the tactic of quick victory and annihilation to the situation of the Kuomintang forces. Mao Ta-tung referred to "On the basis of the "strategy of quick victory and annihilation to the situation of the Kuomintang forces. Mao Ta-tung referred to "On the basis of the particular stage of the Chinese revolution, guerrilla warfare must take the form of quick victory and annihilation. We will make the enemy's strategy a failure, or even mobile warfare but, Mao insisted, at the same time, the need to concentrate a big force to strike at a small part of the enemy remains valid and even mobile warfare but, Mao insisted, at the same time, the need to concentrate a big force to strike at a small part of the enemy remains valid and even mobile warfare but, Mao insisted, at the same time, the need to concentrate a big force to strike at a small part of the enemy remains valid and make many minor victories to make a major victory." (SMW, "Problems Of Strategy In Guerrilla War Against Japan," p. 159) In other words, in both guerrilla warfare and guerrilla warfare it was necessary to make the principle of concentrating a big force to strike at a small section of the enemy forces and to annihilate the enemy forces piece by piece, thus through a protracted process carrying out a war of attrition against the enemy, to fight against the enemy, to fight as if the whole country was our own. At that time, at the beginning of the war, it was not at all clear, looking only on the surface and not through the waging of guerrilla warfare, examining the essence of things, that backward China could defeat advanced Japan. Because of this the third World War, and to attempt to avoid the waging of guerrilla warfare and guerrilla war against Japan. (SMW, "Problems Of Strategy In Guerrilla War Against Japan," p. 187)
Mao...
Mao talks with young fighters of the Eighth Route Army in Yanen in 1939.

Mao...
In October 1946 Mao wrote "A Three-Month Summary" in which he affirmed the correctness of "people's war" over Chiang Kai-shek and the U.S. imperialists in its beginning phase up to that point. As was noted in the article in this series, "Revolution," at this point in the development of the Chinese revolution there was an intensive struggle over the question of whether or not it was possible to wage a successful revolutionary war against Chiang Kai-shek, backed as he was by U.S. imperialism. Mao began this "summary," with the forceful reiteration of the Central Committee's directive of July 20 of that year— that indeed it was possible to defeat Chiang Kai-shek and that the whole Party should be conditioned to this end.

Mao then proceeded to analyze the "fundamental political and economic contradictions" which Chiang Kai-shek "cannot resolve and which are the basic cause rendering our victory certain and Chiang's defeat inevitable." (SMW, p. 321) He went on to analyze the specific contradictions in the military sphere which would be the direct cause of the victory of the revolutionary forces and the defeat of Chiang Kai-shek, namely the fact that Chiang's battle lines were overstretched and he had from a long-term point of view a shortage of troops. However, to translate this into actual victory it was necessary to uphold and strictly apply the basic principles of fighting by the method of concentrating a superior force to wipe out the enemy forces one by one; fighting battles of decisive victory; fighting, as Mao said, when conditions were favorable and moving away when they were unfavorable; fighting in a positional manner on exterior lines; offensively and in quick-decision battles. Three and other basic principles which Mao had developed through the revolutionary wars in China, and in particular the war of resistance to Japan, were still valid and had to be applied to the war against Chiang Kai-shek's forces at that time in order to bring about the actual victory. (SMW, p. 322)

In a telegram, "The Concept Of Operations For The Northwest War Theatre," sent to the Northwest Field Army in April 1947, he stressed the importance of keeping the enemy on the run, hitting him out, wearing him down, reducing him to extreme fatigue and conditions of starvation and then launching the offensive to destroy him. Without doing this, Mao said, it would be impossible to win final victory.

Again, during this war of liberation against Chiang Kai-shek and the U.S. imperialists, a single pole arose within the Chinese Communist Party over the question of whether or not to temporarily give up some territory in order to lure Chiang Kai-shek's forces in, divide them up and defeat them one by one. Specifically, in May, the Central Committee decided that in the area of Yenan, the base area where the Chieno Communist Party leadership and the leadership of the People's Liberation Army was headquartered. In the face of this there were some in the Chinese Communist Party who argued that it was wrong to release the Yenan area, that instead an all-out fight should be used against them. Mao's decisive move was to gain the support of his colleagues in the Central Committee. He defeated this erroneous line and gave leadership and direction to the liberation forces in waging a tactical retreat, deploying the troops in order to lure Chiang Kai-shek's large forces for a direct attack on the area of Yenan, and then by gradually chopping up and annihilating large forces of Chiang Kai-shek's army one by one, using the principles of mobile warfare and the basic principle of concentra-

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Mao...

Ten Major Principles of Operation

1. Attack dispersed, isolated enemy forces first; attack concentrated, strong enemy forces later.
2. Take small and medium cities and extensive rural areas first; take big cities later.
3. Make wiping out the enemy's effective strength our main objective; do not make holding or seizing a city a main objective. By first wiping out the enemy's effective strength, we can make the enemy's city defense difficult and thus seize cities and pacify areas.
4. In every battle we must achieve an absolutely superior force (two, three, four, and sometimes even five or six times the enemy's strength), encircle the enemy forces completely, to wipe them out thoroughly and so as to destroy the levies of the indigenous enemy. In particular, we will strictly order our troops not to enter into battle without first destroying the enemy's infantry and artillery. At the same time, we will order our troops to wipe out the enemy's mobile war force completely.
5. Fight no battle unprepared; fight no battle you are not sure of winning; make every effort to ensure victory in the given set of conditions as well as in a battle for which you have prepared beforehand.
6. Give full play to our style of fighting—courage in battle, no fear of sacrifice, no fear of fatigue, and continuous fighting (that is, fighting successive battles in a short time without rest).
7. Strive to wipe out the enemy when he is on the move. At the same time, pay attention to the tactics of positional attack and capture enemy fortified points and cities.
8. With regard to attacking cities, seize all enemy fortified points and cities which are weakly defended. At opportune moments, seize all enemy fortified points and cities defended with moderate strength. With a strongly defended enemy, only if we possess superiority and are able to ensure victory do we attack.
9. Replenish our strength with all the arms and most of the personnel captured from the enemy. This is the main source of manpower and materiel for our army.
10. Make good use of the intervals between campaigns to rest, train and consolidate our troops. Periods of rest, training and consolidation should not in general be very long, and the enemy should so far as possible be permitted no breathing space.

(SMW, "The Present Situation And Our Tasks," pp. 349-350)
Chinese People's Volunteers unit during Korean War defends a position against U.S. invaders attack.

Since the 1950s, while U.S. imperialism was equipped with atomic weapons, it continued to attack socialist countries including China and the people of other countries with aggression in various parts of the world. Mao continued to uphold the orientation which he had set forth years earlier—that U.S. imperialism was a paper tiger and specifically that even the atom bomb could not enable U.S. imperialism to win in a war of aggression against China. Once again Mao stood firmly by the principles which had guided the successful armed struggle of the Chinese people in winning their liberation. In a statement in July 1956, "U.S. Imperialism Is A Paper Tiger," Mao stressed once more that the reason that the Chinese Communist Party and the revolutionary armed forces under its leadership were able to triumph over the reactionary forces in China was because they were linked with, relied upon and mobilized the masses of people. He summarized this in the basic law that "small forces linked with the people become strong, while big forces opposed to the people become weak." (Selected Works, Vol. 5, p. 390)

A year later in November 1957 at the Moscow meeting of representatives of Communist and Workers' Parties, Mao sharply criticized the revisionist military line and strategy because it was based on the offensive and was opposed to the basic principles of waging people's war. (See Chairman Mao Talks to the People, edited by Sten Schram, p. 128)

Several years later, in the early 1960s, in criticizing a Soviet textbook on political economy Mao stressed that it was important to achieve modernization of the economy, and that this had particular significance in regard to the question of war and defending the country, but that it could not be made decisive in the development of military strategy. He noted that:

"For now we are holding off on general automation. Mechanization has to be discussed, but with a sense of proportion. If mechanization and automation are made too much of, it is bound to make people despise partial mechanization and production by native methods. In the past we had started the mechanization drive, but the people were dissatisfied because they were demanding new technology, new machinery, the large scale, high standards; the native, the medium, or small scale were held in contempt. We did not overcome this tendency until we promoted mechanization at a lower level. While mechanization must be improved, we must also improve the way we carry it out. If mechanization and automation are made too much of, that is the same as disarming oneself." (A Critique of Soviet Economics, a translation of three writings by Mao, see "Reading Notes on the Soviet Text Political Economy," pp. 91-92, Monthly Review Press, translation by M. Roberts)

Mao specifically drew the link between this and the question of warfare:

"We will adopt advanced technology, but this cannot gainay [negate] the necessity and the inevitability of backward technology for a period of time. Since history began, revolutionary wars have always been won by those whose weapons were inferior, and it is with the advantage in weapons. During our civil war, our War of Resistance Against Japan, and our War of Liberation, we lacked nationwide political power and modernized arsenals. If one cannot fight unless one has the most modern weapons, that is the same as disarming oneself."

Combating Revisionist Military Line

Mao continued to uphold this basic military line in opposition to revisionists in the Soviet Union and in China itself, who argued, as revisionists have historically argued, that weapons, not people, are decisive in warfare. While this forced stressing that China should develop its national defense and achieve the most modern weapons, Mao insisted that the development of new weapons, including nuclear weapons, did not change the basic principles of war and revolutionary wars in particular. He continued to give emphasis to the development not only of a regular army but also to the broad armed forces of the masses of people, as expressed organizationally in the development of the militias, which would be an important force in addition to the regular people's army in the waging of a revolutionary war against imperialist aggression in China.

In 1958, in a speech at the group leaders' forum of the enlarged meeting of the military affairs committee, Mao criticized the Soviets' military doctrine and strategy because it was based on the offensive and was opposed to the basic principles of waging people's war. (See Chairman Mao Talks to the People, edited by Sten Schram, p. 128)

Later, Mao spoke to this basic principle immediately after the 9th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 1959. This was a time when U.S. aggression against Vietnam was at a high point, with the stationing of hundreds of thousands of troops in southern Vietnam and aggression against the North, while at the same time Soviet aggressive acts were intensifying on the northern border of China. Mao once again reaffirmed the basic strategic orientation and principles of warfare which, in opposition to various revisionist lines, he enunciated still applied to the situation in China in the face of imperialist aggression.

"Others may come and attack us but we shall not fight outside our borders. We do not fight outside our borders. I say we will not be provoked. Even if you invite us to come out we will not come out, but if you should come and attack us we will deal with you. It depends on whether you attack on a small scale or a large scale. If it is on a small scale we will deal with you. If you attack on a large scale then I am in favor of yielding some ground. China is no small country. If there is nothing in it for them I don't think they will come. We must make it clear to the whole world that we have both right and advantage on our side. If they invade our territory then I think it would be more to our advantage, and we would then have both right and advantage. They would be easy to fight since they would fall into the people's encirclement. As for things like aeroplanes, tanks and armored cars, everywhere experience proves that they can be dealt with." (Chairman Mao Talks to the People, pp. 285-286)

One year later Mao issued a statement in support of the Indochinese people's struggle against U.S. aggression, which was also a declaration of support for the revolutionary struggles of the peoples of the world. In this statement Mao once again stressed that a small country can defeat a big country and a weak country can defeat a strong country if the people dare to rise in struggle, take up arms, rely on their own strength and fight to become masters of their own country. This was not only based on the experience of the heroic struggle and experience in revolutionary warfare of the peoples of Indochina but also a summation of the long years of revolutionary armed struggle and the revolutionary warfare of the peoples of the world. In this way Mao continued to champion and support revolution in China, Vietnam and all other places in the world and to the cause of communism.

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