

Editorial Note: the following article was written a few weeks before Ray Nunes, WPNZ Chairman, died. It was submitted to the *Vanguard*, a website of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist organisations. Ray had long thought that an international theoretical journal where differing views on basic questions could be argued at adequate length was very necessary. He hoped such a journal could assist in the achievement of an internationally accepted theoretical standpoint. He viewed a clash of opinions as part of the process of strengthening Marxism-Leninism ideologically, just as Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao had. At the International Seminar on Mao and People's War in December 1998 the WPNZ expressed its desire to see such a journal established, although our Party did not have the resources to be able to produce and edit it. The organisers of the seminar, three parties waging peoples war - the Communist Party of India (ML) [PW], the Communist Party of the Philippines and the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP/ML) - established Vanguard which will also appear as a quarterly in print form.

Marxism-Leninism or Eclecticism

by Ray Nunes

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A reply to the *Vanguard* article 'The Crisis of World Capitalism: A Favourable Situation for Revolution'

by Thomas Gounet and Bert De Belder, Workers' Party of Belgium November 1998

There are some strange ideas abroad about some countries said by some to be still socialist, or to have 'socialist elements' which perhaps can still win back socialism, or by others, to be led by 'parties of the proletariat' which can be taken as an oblique way of saying that in such countries socialism still exists.

In our opinion such views are erroneous, tinged with revisionism to a greater or lesser degree. We take a similar view to Comrade Gonzalo who rejected unity with certain parties that were, as he put it, 'tainted with revisionism'. It seems to us that there is a reluctance to apply Marxist-Leninist or Maoist ideology to countries that are in fact not socialist but thoroughly bourgeois in their practice and theory, particularly those that once were in the socialist camp. These include China, North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam.

While I regard definitions as not able to give a full assessment of a social order, nevertheless they can be very useful in establishing its basic features. I call to mind Lenin's definition of imperialism as having as its main feature monopoly capitalism. Thus, I make no apology for defining socialism as: *the first or lower stage of communism in which the decisive thing is the*

dictatorship of the proletariat. As Marx showed, this dictatorship is the inevitable outcome of the class struggle within capitalism.

As Mao declared, once revisionism has displaced Marxism-Leninism as the ruling ideology in a given state, the dictatorship of the proletariat is replaced by the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. We saw this in the former Soviet Union and in China after Mao's death. In our view the countries we have named all have had revisionist regimes that became dictatorships of the bourgeoisie.

Let us take the two most obvious cases first of all, the Soviet Union and China. In the Soviet Union the Khrushchev clique usurped power soon after Stalin's death and began attacking Marxism-Leninism all along the line. The record of their betrayals is to be found in the documents of the polemic on the general line of the world communist movement. On November 15 1956, only nine months after the 20th Congress of the CPSU, in a speech to the Central Committee of the Chinese party Mao declared that the CPSU had not only thrown out Stalin but also most of Lenin. Quite clearly this resulted in the onset of the restoration of capitalism in the USSR under a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

Of course, what might be construed as 'elements of socialist economy' still remained, such as the existence of state-owned enterprises. The point is that these were no longer socialist but state-monopoly capitalist enterprises, and the ruling system in the new Russia was state-monopoly capitalism in reality, even with a so-called Communist Party at its head. This regime was one of phoney communism, real capitalism.

As is well known, China had had a New Democratic revolution. While it did not have a fully developed dictatorship of the proletariat, because the Communist Party of China was a Marxist-Leninist party playing the leading role in the state and because the construction of a socialist economy was more or less completed by 1957, in essence China already had a proletarian dictatorship, although not complete in certain spheres. The aim of the Cultural Revolution was to fully achieve it.

In his article *Beat Back the Attacks of the Bourgeois Rightists*, Mao gives a striking and profound definition of what socialism consists of.

'Socialist transformation is a twofold task, one is to transform the system and the other to transform man. The system embraces not only ownership. It also includes the superstructure, primarily the state apparatus and ideology ... Until at least the extinction of imperialism the press and everything else in the realm of ideology will reflect class relations. School education, literature and art, all fall within the scope of ideology, belong to the superstructure and have a class nature.'

One of Mao's vital teachings is that once a revisionist new bourgeoisie has succeeded in seizing political power in a socialist state, the dictatorship of the proletariat is overthrown and straightaway replaced by a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. That is borne out by all modern historical experience.

What happened in the former Soviet Union should hardly need recounting to Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries. On its collapse in 1991-92 the forms of socialism were finally thrown out; the content had been thrown out long before, beginning in 1956. Despite all the efforts of Mao Tse-tung and the Communist Party of China to assist the many CPSU members who wished to hold fast to socialism, the Khrushchev revisionist clique heading the new ruling class – the new bourgeoisie – ploughed ahead on its chosen path of restoration of capitalism in the USSR, dragging behind it most communist parties in the people's democracies.

It might seem from some of the comments by Thomas Gounet and Bert De Belder of the Workers' Party of Belgium in their article *The Crisis of World Capitalism: A Favourable Situation For Revolution*, November 1998, that the writers have a clear conception of the degeneration of the socialist states and the restoration of capitalism in them. I have to say that taken as a whole all the ex-socialist countries which fell under the influence of Soviet revisionism have restored capitalism in its essentials. They have abandoned state or collective ownership of the means of production, replacing it either in whole or in part with private ownership.

In the former Soviet Union the Soviet system was legally and practically abolished by 1993. The Communist Party was dissolved, the state dismantled into a collection of independent republics though under the sway of Great Russia and its pro-imperialist rulers, in particular Gorbachev and Yeltsin, deep-dyed enemies of socialism.

Right up to the time of the dissolution of the Soviet system and the open restoration of capitalism there were revisionist groups which asserted that socialism still ruled in Gorbachev's Russia. Nobody does that now, notwithstanding the existence of some state-owned industries or enterprises. The one-time land of the Soviets has once more become openly a land of imperialism. This is obvious to all the world. Evidently Gounet and De Belder do not accept that China has followed a similar course. Never mind that the people's communes have been privatised or that the door has been thrown wide open to foreign imperialist investment. Never mind also that after Mao Tse-tung's death he was denounced by the Hua-Deng clique as a fascist in order to build up their own ruling clique as genuine socialists. Take no notice of Deng's slogan 'to get rich is glorious', or of their wooing of US imperialism beginning with Deng's visit to the USA in 1978. Take no notice either of their well-publicised plans to fully privatise state-owned enterprises. Only one thing holds them back from pursuing such plans energetically and this is their fear that the mass unemployment that would ensue could or would result in the overthrow of their capitalist power. And all this done in the name of the Communist Party! The ruling clique has found it tactically useful to their restoration of capitalism to keep the phoney, bourgeois ruling party in power under the title 'Communist Party', just as did Khrushchev and his successors.

But surely, isn't it plain that not all socialist elements have been discarded or destroyed yet by the Chinese leadership? Just remember that there were such 'socialist elements' in the former Soviet Union. The only trouble is that they were transformed under revisionist new-bourgeois rule into capitalist elements. If this is to be the criterion of the existence of socialist society then Russia is still socialist and likewise all capitalist states with a substantial amount of state-owned enterprises. There should be few Maoists who think in these terms.

In what I have said I do not forget the other once-socialist states. To begin with why not consider North Korea a fully socialist state in regard to both basis and superstructure? In my pamphlet [‘Politics and Ideology’](#) sub-titled ‘Meetings with Kang Sheng 1966-68’, published in 1997 I have recounted the Communist Party of China’s (CPC) experience of North Korea as told to me by Kang Sheng. In reply to my question at a meeting of both parties’ delegations at the 5th Congress of the Albanian Party in 1966, as to whether they were going to hold discussions with the Korean delegation Kang was short and sharp in replying: ‘Why should we talk to the Koreans? We have nothing to talk with them about!’. Evidently Kang, who headed the Chinese delegation and was in the top leadership of the CPC was relaying the standpoint of the Central Committee of the CPC.

Up to that point the Communist Party of New Zealand (now defunct) was under the impression that in the great ideological dispute North Korea had leaned towards China. Indeed that appeared to be their stand. On a visit to Peking in January, 1968, I again had a discussion with Kang Sheng. In Albania, I concluded from Kang’s remarks quoted above that the Korean Party had changed its position to one of support for the CPSU. At that time I did not pursue the subject further.

My second meeting with Kang Sheng took place in Peking in January, 1968. What he said was quite illuminating on the question of Korea. In my aforementioned pamphlet I wrote:

Kang Sheng began the meeting by outlining the position in regard to North Korea. While earlier the Korean Party led by Kim Il-Sung had leaned somewhat towards the Chinese position, after the fall of Khrushchev in 1964, the CPSU began an intensive drive to win the Korean Party to its side. Kang informed me that Brezhnev, the then CPSU leader, had flown to Pyongyang with a package of bribes. These included undertaking to give Korea substantial financial assistance, and offering a wide-ranging trade agreement on very favourable terms along with essential food and military supplies. Kim accepted, signed appropriate agreements and withdrew any support for China.

I remarked to Kang that this was Korea’s expression of gratitude for the massive and selfless support given by China during the Korean war - or rather, invasion. Kang added that Mao’s only son was killed in action in that war while fighting with the Chinese volunteers.

Although he did not say so at the time, in all probability Kang was explaining to me the reasons why he was short with me on the question of Korea at the Albanian Party Congress in 1966, at which time, like most other parties, the CPNZ knew nothing of Brezhnev’s bribes.

Other questions were also discussed (my pamphlet refers to them) but here I am mainly concerned with Korea’s position. For those interested I suggest that they read my pamphlet in order to get the full gist of our discussion. At the time we met, Kang was a member of the five-man Party Secretariat and very close to Mao. His remarks on Brezhnev’s visit to Korea virtually placed Korea in the revisionist camp. The Korean Workers’ Party had become pensioners of the Soviet revisionists – along with others. Although Korea is still referred to by various Maoist

groups as a socialist state that is not the view of the Workers' Party of New Zealand. How can states lined up with Soviet revisionism be considered socialist? Yes, it has had clashes with South Korea and periods of tension with the USA, but then, so did Khrushchev and the CPSU.

As for its economic development it must be said that, even with Soviet assistance it proceeded at a terribly slow pace. It is not difficult to see that had Korea had a genuine socialist regime there would have been no famine. As we see, the last two or three years have created crisis conditions in North Korea. It has had to import for food aid from America and Japan. That is where reliance on Russian revisionist 'aid' has got them.

It might have been thought that the victory of the Vietnamese people over the invading forces of the US aggressors and their satellites would have firmly established socialism in Vietnam. In that struggle the People's Republic of China gave tremendous selfless support to the Vietnamese people's war. Nevertheless the Vietnamese Communist Party, which had its headquarters in the North, sided with the Soviet revisionists whose aid came too late and was too little. Was there a tendency in this direction earlier? Yes there was. It showed itself in the 1960 81-parties' meeting. That was the scene of a great ideological battle between the revisionist CPSU and the Marxist-Leninist CPC. This was the consequence of the surprise assault by Khrushchev and Co. on the Chinese Party and its leader, Chairman Mao Tse-tung, carried out at the Rumanian Party Congress earlier in 1960. Khrushchev had tried to bludgeon that Congress into passing a resolution condemning the CPC but many parties would not back it. Instead a meeting of the world communist movement later in the year was decided on. It took place in November, with representatives of 81 communist and workers' parties in attendance.

There was actually an unbridgeable gap between the two sides. Our Party, the Communist Party of New Zealand, stood firmly with the CPC. But some parties, notably the Vietnamese led by Ho Chi Minh and the Indian, led by Ajoy Ghosh took a centrist position in order to avoid a split. Although an agreed statement was arrived at and issued, it was plainly a compromise document. Events soon after showed that there was no middle ground between revisionism and Marxism-Leninism. The CPSU kept trying to bludgeon and bribe other parties into line, before long resulting in an open and permanent split.

I am not too critical of Ho Chi Minh, who had led the people's war to overthrow French imperialism during a period lasting many decades. However, the ideological struggle was too sharp to be solved by temporising; by 1964 the split between the CPC and the CPSU was final.

What had begun as a centrist tendency of the Vietnamese had by then hardened to a point where behind the scenes the North Vietnamese leadership was siding with the revisionists. This became obvious by the time of the 5th Congress of the Albanian Party of Labour in 1966.

In my already quoted pamphlet I commented:

'In my speech to the Congress I named no specific party but directed my attack against any centrist position. I declared that there was no middle ground between Marxism-Leninism and revisionism. I have never since seen any reason to change that opinion.'

‘Before the Congress started our delegation also held discussions with the Vietnamese Party delegation which was headed by a member of their Political Committee. In our discussion I stressed our Party’s staunch support for the Vietnamese Party and people in their struggle against the US imperialist alliance. We went as far as we could by informing the Vietnamese that parties adhering to revisionism would prove false friends. Of course, we were referring to the CPSU and its satellite parties.

‘The leader of the Vietnamese delegation said hardly anything. He was cold and distant. It was fairly evident that the Vietnamese Central Committee, while appearing to treat the CPC and the CPSU equally, strongly favoured the CPSU. This, of course, was borne out after the defeat of the US-led interventionists in 1975.

‘The above was the main burden of our delegation discussions at the PLA Congress in 1966.’

From what is said here it is clear that the Vietnamese party already had one foot in the revisionist camp. It was not too long before they stood there with both feet. They joined the imperialist-sponsored ASEAN group of states. Like China, they began seeking foreign capital for investment. They were not able to get a lot, but they offered various concessions – mining, oil etc – which tied them to imperialism.

Once more we see the progress of parties which accepted Soviet revisionist ‘aid’ towards capitalism. In due course that revisionism led to the total collapse of the Soviet Union. Today the Vietnamese have opened their doors to Western capital investment, and US ‘investigators’ and investors are welcome. Perhaps Vietnam, as the Belgian authors put it, is a country which ‘still possesses strong socialist elements’. To us of the WPNZ they are well on the capitalist road. If the authors classify it as a fully socialist country they are shutting their eyes to the reality which is certainly more capitalist than socialist. The so-called ‘socialist elements’ are only forms which are filled with bourgeois content. Is Cuba fundamentally different? Is it still a fully socialist country? Are its production relations (the basis) and the political and ideological superstructure socialist as those who talk of Cuba being a socialist country still assert? To these questions we answer categorically, no, they are not.

Not long after the Cuban revolution in 1959 Cuba was recognised by the world communist movement as a socialist state. It maintained comradely relations with China and vice versa. However, this situation did not last. Castro soon placed Cuba under Soviet tutelage. Even before the 1962 missile crisis Castro had openly begun criticising China, placing responsibility for the ideological dispute between the Soviet Union and China on the latter.

At the time of the missile crisis of 1962 China hit back. In a statement the CC, CPC without actually naming the Soviet Union (the differences between the USSR and China were still under wraps in the world movement) China attacked the policy of adventurism and capitulationism being followed by Khrushchev towards the United States. It pointed out establishing a nuclear base in Cuba was sheer adventurism. China opposed such a policy of relying on Soviet nuclear arms for Cuba’s defence when Marxism-Leninism demanded reliance on the masses. By the time of the crisis and the ignominious withdrawal of Soviet forces from Cuba and the withdrawal of

its supply ships, Cuba had already broken off diplomatic and political relations with China. Under Soviet advice Cuba had turned itself into a one-crop country, namely, sugar. This meant abandoning self-reliance in the economy and rejection of industrial development.

We have seen today where that policy has led Cuba. Up unto the complete collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991-92 Cuba was wholly dependent on that country for food and capital equipment. Like the other ex-socialist countries, Cuba has for years opened its doors to foreign capital and foreign capitalists. The so-called 'socialist elements' are in reality bourgeois elements and Cuba is firmly in the capitalist world.

What was Mao's opinion of Castro? For those Maoist parties of the opinion that Cuba is still socialist, here it is: 'We have said that traitors and scabs oppose China. Once they opposed us, we shall have essays to write. Traitors and scabs have always opposed China. Our banners must be new and fresh in colour, they must not be bedraggled. *Castro is nothing more than a bad man in an important position.*' (Talk at an enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau, March 20, 1966: 'On Not Attending the 23rd Congress of the CPSU' Part II, Volume IX, Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung. My italics).

At one point in their article Thomas Gounet and Bert De Belder talk of the restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union and other formerly socialist countries of East and Central Europe, as well as the introduction of capitalist elements and bourgeois ideas in China. First, capitalist elements and bourgeois ideas were not introduced from the outside – they existed up to and beyond the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949. Why else do they think that Mao called for a cultural revolution? At this point they assert: 'The restoration of capitalism in those countries debunks the revisionist illusions regarding the "peaceful coexistence between socialism and capitalism", the "peaceful competition" between the two systems and the "peaceful transition" to socialism. This is an admission that capitalism has been restored in those countries. However, this is contradicted further on. Here we see a subtle blurring of the distinctions. There it is said (Point 4): 'Imperialism has never allowed and will never allow the existence of socialist countries, as attested to by their permanent aggression against Cuba and the People's Democratic Republic of Korea. Imperialism will continue to wage war against socialism as long as there remain socialist countries and countries that maintain significant elements of socialism'. This is identifying socialist countries with countries which have significant elements of socialism, obliterating any distinction between them.

Towards the end of the article quoted, the authors say: 'The remaining socialist countries [unspecified] and the countries that still possess strong socialist elements, are waging complex struggles to maintain their independence from imperialism and to defend their socialist character and achievements'. What in fact we have seen and are seeing is the inability of the authors to distinguish the wood from the trees. They are trying to conjure up a socialist camp where none exists.

Apparently the authors believe that socialism can be made up of bits and pieces and does not exist as an integral whole.. If one has enough of the ingredients, i.e., 'significant elements of socialism', voila, one has socialism. Only that presumes that socialism can grow up within the womb of capitalism as capitalism did within the womb of feudalism, instead of having to smash

the state machine of the capitalists in order to clear the ground to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. They write: 'Socialism has given China, in 1949 still a very poor Third World country, so strong a base that it may well become the world's first economic power by 2010 or 2020.' But what sort of power? If they imagine present-day China to be socialist they are indulging in wishful thinking, subjectivism. According to this view, which can only be characterised as eclectic, socialism was *not* lost nor capitalism restored in China. The authors speak with a blithe disregard for the facts which tell us – not to mention the rest of the world – that socialism was overthrown in China by the rightist coup d'état of 1976 and the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie established in place of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

When Gounet and De Belder tell us that 'socialism has liberated hundreds of millions of people from feudal bondage and capitalist wage slavery' they are saying in fact that capitalism is *not* back as the ruling system in former socialist states. The question is are they living in this world or some other? The world has yet to see socialism restored in any country where it has been lost. It also has yet to see where ruling communist parties which have come under the influence of Soviet revisionism have cured themselves of the revisionist virus.

The two authors show themselves to be eclectics of a high order, not in the least dialectical materialists. To accept their theoretical views is to accept revisionism!