

Armed Struggle and the Third World

The Growth of People's War

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels developed scientific socialism in 1847-48 with the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*. That was the real birth of communism. They wrote a series of masterly theoretical works addressed mainly to the working classes of Europe who were closest to proletarian revolutionary consciousness. At that time a working class had only begun to develop among the great masses of the colonies. The works of Marx and Engels spanned all the major spheres of human thought: philosophy, political economy and the class struggle, which together formed the integral ideology of Marxism, so called because of the leading part in creating the theory of communism played by Marx, without at all downplaying the great contribution made by Engels.

The body of Marxist theory created a revolution in human thought. To begin with, it established the philosophical standpoint of modern materialism, utilising the theories developed by Marx's forebears, the classical German philosophers Georg Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach. This was a new, fully scientific world outlook, a profound theory of development. A basic feature of this was historical materialism, the *only* science of history, which was integral to their philosophy. Extending this conception to society Marx discerned the clue to understanding modern capitalism and indeed all class society in the existence of the class struggle between contending classes, in modern times, the struggle between the two main classes of workers and capitalists. For the first time it became possible to see beyond the seeming labyrinth and chaos of events to their underlying cause, the class struggle.

Modern, capitalist society rests on the relations between the two main classes in capitalism, the proletariat (working class) and the capitalist class (bourgeoisie). Marx studied capitalist production with the ultimate aim, as he put it, of discovering the law of motion of capitalist society, which he analysed and expounded in his great work, *Capital*.

Marx also made penetrating studies of French and European history, ending with a burning defence of the Paris Commune of 1871, in which, he wrote, the workers of Paris 'stormed heaven', and from which he and Engels drew important lessons, later made use of by Lenin in leading the epoch-making socialist revolution in Russia in 1917.

Engels also made brilliant contribution to Marxist theory with such works as *Anti-Duhring*, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, and his philosophical essays popularising Marxism.

The work of Marx and Engels not only developed theory; they founded and led for many years the International Working Men's Association which united the European working-class movement and set before it the aim of overthrowing capitalism and establishing a workers' state, a dictatorship of the proletariat.

Marx and Engels were towering figures in the 19th century. They lived and worked in the era of what was known as 'free competition' capitalism, a system where small and medium-sized capitalists competed to expand their own share of the market. But at the end of the century the growth of monopolies towards the latter part transformed the economic system into monopoly capitalism. Marx and Engels, who analysed free-competition capitalism did not live long enough to analyse monopoly capitalism. That task was taken up by the great continuator of Marx and Engels, V.I. Lenin.

Russian Tsarism, so beloved today by spokesmen for capitalism - including scoundrels such as Khrushchev, Yeltsin and Gorbachev - was known as the bloodiest tyranny of the age and was popularly called the prison of peoples. Understanding the necessity of developing a vanguard party of the working class such as was required to overthrow capitalism in its imperialist stage Lenin, at the head of the advanced workers of Russia formed, organised and educated such a party of the working class. This party led a democratic revolution to overthrow Tsarism, which almost succeeded in 1905. It did succeed in February (old calendar), 1917 but unlike 19th century democratic revolutions which were led by the capitalist class against feudal rule, this was one led by the working class. But the revolution did not stop there - it proceeded to overthrow capitalist rule in the world-historic socialist revolution of October (November 7, new calendar).

This event totally changed not only the Russian but also the world situation. A new social order was born, the aim of which was first to build socialism, i.e., working class state power, then to move to the establishment over time of a classless society. International capital furiously tried to crush the new state, the Soviet Union; fourteen imperialist armies invaded it, but the Russian masses, with help from the world's working classes, smashed their invading forces by 1919 and proceeded to organise the construction of the new socialist society.

From this time on the overriding aim of world capitalism which determined international capitalist policy for generations was the smashing of Soviet socialism and the world socialist movement, which now threatened their existence as exploiters and oppressors.

In the 1930s a vast economic crisis known as the Great Depression today, gripped the capitalist world. Major imperialist powers - Germany, Italy and Japan - sought to block any transition to socialism by establishing a system of open terroristic dictatorship known as fascism. They joined in a pact (the Anti-Comintern Pact) to destroy the Soviet Union. The old capitalist-imperialist powers, Britain, France and the USA, though still utterly hostile to socialism, clashed with the fascist powers over the division of the world and the right to dominate the world market and the world's colonies which were a major source of huge profits to their rulers. This in fact was the cause of the Second World War.

In that war the Axis powers, Germany, Japan and Italy, were defeated, principally by the socialist Soviet Union which, as Churchill commented, 'tore the guts out of the Wehrmacht'. The Nazi invaders killed millions of soldiers and citizens in Russia and caused immense destruction. But socialism remained, and the Soviet Government in a relatively short time carried out a massive reconstruction. Despite making mistakes, some of them serious, Stalin had carried out Lenin's plans for the construction of socialism. However, he died in 1953. Soon after, Khrushchev, a sycophant of the first order during Stalin's lifetime, was able to usurp the

leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This was made possible by the existence of a new capitalist class, or to use Lenin's term a new bourgeoisie, which was able to seize political power with the Khrushchev clique heading them. Their main ideological weapon was a special form of opportunism within the working class known as revisionism, which used Marxist phraseology to disguise their bourgeois outlook.

Revisionism might be made to appear like Marxism but it was completely hostile to the teachings of Marx and Lenin. The latter had given full backing to the colonial revolution which had developed earlier in the century. The Soviet revolution had had a profound influence in the colonies and semi-colonies of imperialism. In the forefront of the latter was China. The 400 million people of that country were ripe for revolution. Its advanced elements among the workers and socialist intellectuals formed the Communist Party of China in 1921. At first it had a united front with the bourgeois Kuomintang party headed by Chiang Kai-shek. But in 1927 Chiang treacherously carried out a coup d'état against the Communists, 50,000 of whom were massacred by the Kuomintang. The remnants, including the force led by Mao, reorganised themselves into a guerrilla army to carry on armed struggle against the exploiters.

For 22 years the liberation forces of the Communist Party fought a people's war to overthrow the landlords, the local monopoly capitalists and the imperialists. By 1949 they succeeded, defeating Chiang's army of 9 million, armed, financed and equipped by US imperialism.

The Chinese Revolution was a gigantic movement led by the Communist Party of China headed from 1935 by a new great Marxist, Mao Tse-tung, who became known as the Chinese Lenin. In the course of this revolution Mao evolved the profound political-military theory known as people's war. Its very title give the clue to its nature. It expresses the concept of a war of the great mass of the people against exploiting and oppressing classes or states.

Marxist parties examine the character of every war from the standpoint of Marx's philosophy, dialectical materialism. Basically, this divides wars into two types, just wars and unjust wars, according to the class interests of the belligerents. Imperialist wars are unjust because they are wars of great powers for conquest of territory and plunder. Revolutionary wars to overthrow imperialism or other exploiting social systems such as feudalism are just wars. Imperialism serves the class interests of the exploiters and oppressors of the people. Wars of liberation from the oppression of imperialism and for revolutionary overthrow of the exploiters by the masses, led by the working class, serve its interests and are just wars.

To understand any particular war one must study it in its historical development and with this, the class forces involved. Lenin made just such an analysis of World War I, which he denounced as an imperialist war on both sides, a war between two blocs of monopoly capitalists for world domination. In this war the working classes had no class interests to be advanced. They were treated as cannon-fodder, as cattle led to the slaughter. Millions on both sides were forced into fighting for the interests of one bloc or the other for the profits of monopoly capital.

Under the leadership of Lenin and his party the working class of Tsarist Russia adopted the slogan: 'Turn the imperialist war into a civil war;' that is to say, to end the imperialist war rise against your capitalist governments, overthrow them and establish a socialist order. The Russian

workers did this successfully in November 1917, establishing the first durable workers' state in history. Their example gave a tremendous impetus to revolutionary developments not only in Europe but also in the colonies and semi-colonies exploited by the imperialists. In China the wave of revolutionary socialism swept forward under the leadership of Mao Tse-tung, intensifying as a result of the invasion of the country by Japanese imperialism in 1936.

In the course of this struggle Mao developed the theory of a New Democratic revolution which, while led by the working class, would be waged by a coalition of anti-feudal, anti-imperialist classes as distinct from the Russian socialist revolution which overthrew capitalism in a directly socialist insurrection led by the working class.

In China, Mao pointed out, conditions were not the same as in Russia. The working class was small. It could lead a broad-front revolution but not one that seized power, as was done in Russia, in a directly socialist insurrection. In the course of the practical struggle against the Kuomintang Mao drew vital lessons from this experience. Because China was a peasant country the Communist Party could not achieve power through city insurrections. The cities were strongholds of imperialism, too powerful to confront in city insurrections. This latter policy had been tried after Chiang's power seizure in 1927 but it had failed. In economically backward China most of the population were peasants, not workers. Instead of the revolution proceeding from the cities to the countryside as had been done in Russia, the road forward was to wage a protracted war in which the countryside would in fact surround the cities and take them in due course. This was the strategy of people's war successfully brought to fruition in China in 1949 under the leadership of the Communist Party of China headed by Mao Tse-tung.

After Stalin's death in 1953 a new bourgeois clique which had grown up in the Soviet Union in Stalin's time based on a stratum comprising left-over bourgeois elements from the socialist revolution, a rising middle class of professional and technical people, higher paid state cadres and a labour aristocracy of better-paid workers, bid for political power. Led by the Khrushchev clique of revisionists inside the Party leadership, they usurped power and turned the once-great workers' state on to the capitalist road.

This was broadly the picture in the late 1950s. In the earlier years world socialism had grown more powerful, particularly with the accession of People's China to the socialist camp, so that before Stalin's death it was generally recognised that over one-third of the world's population was living under socialism. The new socialist order was challenging capitalism all along the line. But in a matter of 3 years after Stalin's death the new bourgeoisie in the Soviet Union were in power and had already begun the destruction of socialism from within, its main ideological weapon being revisionism.

A great ideological struggle took place between the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of China under Mao's leadership and the revisionist Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), of Khrushchev and Co. Because of its great past achievements the CPSU was able to turn most Communist parties on to the revisionist-capitalist road. By 1964 the split in the world communist movement between revisionists and Marxist-Leninists had crystallised. Marxist-Leninist parties throughout the world formed a new Marxist-Leninist world movement. This movement lasted until Mao's death in 1976.

In this period following 1956 Mao had seen the CPSU taking the capitalist road, analysed its causes, and reached the conclusion that, owing to previously following Soviet policies which at the time were accepted as the only correct ones, coming from the socialist practice of the Soviet Union, in fact the same revisionist tendencies as had destroyed Soviet socialism were also operative in China.

Mao sought for means to prevent such an eventuality. Finally he turned to the concept of a cultural revolution (CR), one that would use mass democracy to bring up a new generation that would bar the door to revisionism. Followed a stormy decade of class struggle. After years of turbulence a temporary calm was restored, but Mao died and within a month a revisionist group in the leadership of the Party and state seized power in a coup d'etat, imprisoned Mao's lieutenants on the Central Committee and proceeded openly to restore capitalism, led by Deng Xiaoping.

Marxist-Leninists outside China sought to create a new world Marxist movement without revisionist China. They might have succeeded at that time had it not been for an erstwhile ally of Mao's, the leader of the Albanian Party of Labour Enver Hoxha. During 1977 he launched a violent ideological attack on Mao, denouncing him as a lifelong revisionist. Using this ridiculous assertion as a wedge he managed to seize control of most former pro-China Marxist-Leninist parties which swallowed his phoney assertions.

Followed a period of theoretical chaos among Marxist-Leninists. This resulted from first, the triumph of revisionism in most socialist countries, and second the splitting activities of the Hoxhaites. However, gradually a Marxist-Leninist revival began to take place. People's war came back on their agenda. Mao had said that in undeveloped countries with large peasant populations which were former colonies or semi-colonies of imperialism it could be possible to utilise China's people's war strategy of fighting a protracted war in which the countryside surrounded the cities.

Peru was one such country. After an internal struggle against opportunists in the Communist Party of Peru who denied the possibility of people's war, a revolutionary wing was formed under the leadership of Abimael Guzman. In 1980 it launched a people's war of liberation. Great support for it developed among the exploited masses. Following the basic strategy and tactics utilised in China, the new Communist Party of Peru (PCP) succeeded in establishing bases and both political and military control in most of Peru's administrative departments.

Throughout this tremendous piece of initiative the stalled train of the world communist movement began to move again. Despite the later arrest of Comrade Guzman other Marxist-Leninist parties began to take the same road of people's war, that is, to seek to accomplish a New Democratic revolution by means of a protracted war in which the strategic line is one of the countryside surrounding the cities by setting up bases and building military strength, conducting armed struggle in order to seize political power. Besides the PCP the Communist Party of the Philippines had also been waging armed struggle, but it had come under the influence of Chinese revisionism and for some years followed a 'left sectarian' path of city insurrectionism until the former Party Chairman, Jose Maria Sison, was able to take the reins again after a long spell of

imprisonment. The leadership then began a campaign to rectify the Party line and soon moved to the people's war position which it occupies today, a struggle which has a large following.

In India armed struggle has been waged for nearly two decades by several Maoist parties. In 1998 the Communist Party of India (ML) Party Unity merged with the Communist Party of India (ML) People's War, marking a significant step towards revolutionary unity. Another people's war party exists, the Maoist Communist Centre, which has friendly relations with the CPI (ML) PW.

Despite all the imperialist propaganda about India being the world's largest democracy (with its population of nearly one billion) the Indian state is in reality fascist. It has just a veneer of democracy behind which the state operates with brutal repression against all forms of resistance - not just against revolutionaries, but even bourgeois liberal activists and trade union leaders. Many have been shot in cold blood.

Over a long period and in the face of intense repression the people's war has developed to the point of establishing guerrilla zones in Dandakaranya and North Telangana - areas with a population numbering 20 million. These areas are not fully liberated but both the revolutionaries and the ruling classes are contending for power. The guerrillas are able to operate to a large degree while the Indian state forces no longer have full state power. This is a big step towards achieving a base area in which New Democracy can be established. In other areas where the level of guerrilla zone has not yet been reached there is a great deal of guerrilla activity. The influence of the CPI (ML) PW spans across vast areas of India and can operate even in the harshest conditions because it has mass support. The development of people's war in a country the size of India is of the greatest significance.

In neighbouring Nepal, which is ranked as the second poorest country in the world, people's war began in 1996 and has swept the country. The people's war is being led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and is proving itself to be a party of great bravery and determination. The state forces have reacted with fascist repression and are backed not only by openly right wing parties but also the phoney communists who would not step outside the parliamentary arena to wage a revolution despite all their big talk in the past. Put to the test they have sided with the counter-revolutionaries.

In Turkey the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP/ML) which formed in 1972 has initiated people's war in extremely difficult conditions. The Turkish state is one of the most fascist in the world today and employs the strategy of low intensity warfare to try to crush the revolution. Backed by the USA and Israel the Turkish state forces carry out tortures and massacres with impunity.

These people's wars, in Peru, the Philippines, India, Nepal and Turkey are all being led by genuine communist parties. Their representatives gathered together in a seminar in December, 1998 both to pay tribute to the founder of people's war, Mao Tse-tung, and to review the world development of people's wars. Present were representatives of parties actually waging people's war, together with others from parties in support of people's war, such as the Workers' Party of

New Zealand. Their common aim was to consolidate the renewal of the world communist movement.

The centre of world revolution, formerly Peru, is no longer confined to one country - it is now that group of countries waging people's war. This supports the view that the main contradiction (conflict of ideas and interests) in the world today is that between the oppressed nations and imperialism, principally US imperialism.

There is also the contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie and the contradiction between the imperialists themselves. All three contradictions are interconnected and interact, but the main contradiction remains between the oppressed nations and imperialism.

What is meant by a contradiction? It is a struggle of opposed forces and tendencies within things. In every thing, process or phenomenon there is *a unity of opposites* i.e., a pair of mutually opposed forces or tendencies, interpenetrating but nevertheless opposed. This is the law of contradiction, the basic law of dialectics, as Mao put it. The unity and struggle of such opposites is what brings about all forms of development in nature, society and human thought.

What do capitalism and imperialism have to offer? Poverty, misery and war. Where there is oppression there is resistance. This is an incontrovertible fact. Fascism is evident in all countries where there is people's war. That is capitalism's answer to the demand of the masses for an end to exploitation and oppression.

The people's war parties have some differences between them, but generally these are differences which can be categorised as contradictions among the people. They are non-antagonistic in character and if handled correctly can be resolved peacefully. The parties waging people's war are leading the struggle against imperialism. They are weakening it. Once cut off from the superprofits derived from the exploitation of the underdeveloped countries, imperialism will no longer be able to bribe an upper stratum of workers who carry bourgeois ideology into the working class to serve the exploiters. Accordingly, a revolutionary upsurge among the proletariat of the industrially-developed capitalist countries is bound to take place. How long it will take will be determined by the objective and subjective conditions in each country.

The oppressed peoples and nations are at present taking the lead, but in time the workers of the advanced capitalist countries will join the struggle properly, and these two great streams will converge to finish off imperialism.

We are just at the beginning. But it is a beginning. While the world communist movement has encountered some devastating setbacks, if Marxist-Leninists are prepared to learn the lessons of history - and there is a rich reservoir of experience to draw from - the situation can be transformed. Socialism can be realised, and mankind can proceed to develop a classless society. That is wholly in the interests of the working class and the oppressed peoples. Their unity is the key to the future.