

Mao's Theory of People's War

by the Proletarian Party of Purba Bangla (Bangladesh) [PBSP]

Considering their socio-economic structure, the level of development of their mode of production and their fundamental features, the countries of the present-day world can generally be divided into two groups: a handful of capitalist and imperialist countries, and the great majority of the countries oppressed by imperialism. From amongst the capitalist-imperialist powers, the two imperialist superpowers, the U.S. and the USSR, are the principal enemies of the world's peoples. On the other hand the undeveloped or less developed countries are oppressed by imperialism and tied to its neo (or semi) colonial system. Though these countries are formally independent and native governments are in power, they have no real independence. The native governments are in fact stooges and puppets of different imperialists (or of an imperialist bloc). In spite of differences in their mode of production, the development of their productive forces, the stage or level of development, etc., these neo (or semi) colonial countries have some common fundamental features:

- Except for a few, these countries more or less retain feudalism in agriculture. But in most of the cases feudalism does not exist in its old classical form. Rather, due to a certain development of capitalism as a result of the functioning of imperialism, and to increasing imperialist penetration more generally, feudalism has decayed and is decaying.

- As a consequence, agriculture

has been reduced to semi-feudalism. The feudals do not hold state power by themselves. They are agents of imperialism and are one of the main pillars of continued imperialist plunder.

- The capitalism that has developed (and is developing) in these countries is not independent national capitalism; rather, it is a perverted capital dependent on imperialism and comprador and bureaucratic in its character. This distorted comprador-bureaucratic capitalism is one of the main props of imperialist exploitation.

- The governments of these countries are the representatives of comprador-bureaucrat capitalism and feudalism and are puppets in the hands of the imperialists and serve its interests.

- Imperialist penetration in and domination over these countries impedes the development of national capital and the national bourgeoisie.

- The main obstacles in these countries to the emancipation of the masses of the people and to social progress are foreign imperialism, along with comprador-bureaucrat capitalism and feudalism in unholy alliance with and dependent on imperialism.

These characteristics determine that the nature of these countries is generally neo (semi) colonial and semi-feudal. The stage of the revolution in these countries is bourgeois-democratic, i.e., national-democratic, and its aim is, as Mao Tsetung put it, "to carry out national revolution to overthrow

foreign capitalist oppression and a democratic revolution to overthrow feudal landlord oppression."¹ These two revolutions interpenetrate and are interconnected and dependent on each other — it is not possible to accomplish one without the completion of the other. The path of revolution for these countries is the path of New Democratic Revolution and people's war, charted and developed by Chairman Mao Tsetung and proven correct in the crucible of the great Chinese revolution. Through his personal participation in the Chinese revolution and through his creative application of the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions of the Chinese revolution, Chairman Mao developed this path of people's war and New Democratic Revolution and the related revolutionary theory, strategy and tactics. These tremendously important contributions to the world proletarian revolution and to Marxism-Leninism were not simply applicable to the Chinese revolution; rather, as the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* has accurately said, "The point of reference for elaborating revolutionary strategy and tactics in the colonial, semi- (neo)-colonial countries remains the theory developed by Mao Tsetung in the long years of revolutionary warfare in China."²

Since the victory of the Chinese revolution and since World War 2, many significant changes have occurred in the imperialist system and the world situation as a whole. These

include:

- Neo-colonialism has replaced the old colonial system. In almost all the old colonial countries, so-called "independent national" states have emerged.

- Under the neo-colonial system imperialism has accelerated capitalist development in almost all the undeveloped countries, so that these countries are gradually coming out of extreme backwardness, even in agriculture, though all this is taking place in a distorted way. Powerful centralized military-bureaucratic state machinery now stands on a firm footing.

- During and immediately after World War 2 socialist and new democratic revolutions led by the proletariat won victory in a number of countries, and thus a socialist camp emerged. But owing to the turning back to revisionism and capitalism first in the Soviet Union and then in Albania and China, no socialist country exists in the world today. As a consequence of this renegacy on the part of the revisionists and due to the inevitable impact of all these factors, anti-imperialist national liberation movements throughout the world, as well as the revolutionary movements of the proletariat (i.e. the world communist movement) took a wrong course and suffered tremendous setbacks, and genuine national liberation movements have been deprived of any progressive international help.

Since 1960, the revisionist Soviet Union has developed into a social-imperialist country and stepped onto the stage of world politics as a new imperialist superpower. As a result the imperialist countries are grouped into two contending blocs led by the two superpowers. U.S. imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism are locked in fierce contention, even a life-and-death struggle for redivision of the globe, in order to intensify their oppression and exploitation and constantly expand their spheres of influence. This contention is becoming increasingly sharp. Because of this, the Soviet social-imperialists have started using the anti-imperialist national liberation movements of many countries in their own interests. Likewise, the

U.S. imperialists are using the anti-Soviet liberation struggles for their own purposes. As a result of all this doubt and confusion has arisen as to whether a liberation struggle against one imperialist bloc can win victory without the help of the other.

In the context of these changes, and due to the attacks on Mao Tsetung and the distortion and negation of his contributions since the fall of the Soviet Union and especially of China into revisionism, questions have been raised regarding the relevancy and applicability of the path of people's war to revolution in the neo, semi-colonial countries. Specifically, the pro-Moscow, pro-Deng and pro-Hoxha revisionists are spreading confusion and advocating different revisionist and reactionary lines in the name of their so-called "alternative path" and are causing irreparable harm to the revolutionary movements. It is quite natural that these masquerading agents of imperialism and revisionism will conduct wild attacks and try to distort, discredit and ultimately discard the highest development of Marxism-Leninism, which is Mao Tsetung Thought. They will be able to continue this so long as genuine Marxist revolutionaries do not set examples of victorious people's wars. The advancing people's war in Peru under the leadership of the Communist Party of Peru has in this respect already roused new hopes and aspirations for oppressed people around the world.

In this present article, we will try to beat back the attacks on the principles of people's war and lay bare the fallacies of the so-called "alternative path." We will show that in spite of the changes in the world since World War 2, the path of people's war, forged and charted by Mao Tsetung, continues to possess decisive significance in the oppressed countries for making the New Democratic Revolution victorious. It is not simply that the principles and lessons of Mao on People's War are useful; rather, it is not possible in these countries to gain victory without them.

The path of people's war in oppressed countries is the path of capturing state power by the revolutionary

people under the leadership of the proletariat — that is why it is a question of the overall strategy and political line of new democratic revolution.

People's War: A Question of Mere Tactics, or of Strategy and Overall Political Line?

But there are a good number of forces who are engaged in armed struggle in different countries and claim themselves Marxists, who even speak of taking lessons from Mao, but who in fact only value his contributions in the field of military affairs, especially guerrilla warfare. Some of these forces are pro-Cuba elements, some pro-Moscow, some are Hoxhaites and other left petit bourgeois revolutionaries. Some claim to be Maoists themselves. Although almost all of these forces oppose Mao Tsetung Thought, they speak of his contributions in the military field — the reason being that Mao's contributions in the field of warfare and especially guerrilla warfare are unparalleled in history. Thus, since they themselves are engaged in armed struggle, and compelled to study and apply military strategy, they cannot but recognise Mao's contributions in these fields. However, the advocates of these different views either do not understand or reject or distort the strategic and political essence of the theory of people's war in the interests of their respective opportunist class positions. Many misinterpret Mao's theory of people's war as simply tactics of guerrilla warfare.

The main question of debate with these forces is: what is the path of capturing power by the people under proletarian leadership in the oppressed countries, and why?

Up to the advent of the revolutionary struggles of the Chinese people led by Mao, the science of Marxism had in its treasure-house only one conception of seizing power: the path of the October Socialist Revolution of Russia. The capture of power in some way other than the October road — such an idea was lacking then in Marxist quarters. It was Mao Tsetung who for the first time made a comparative study of the pre-revolutionary socio-economic conditions of both Russia

and China and showed that the Russian path, or the October road, of seizing power is not applicable in a predominantly feudal country like China which is oppressed by imperialism. Mao explained:

"...Internally capitalist countries practice bourgeois democracy (not feudalism) when they are not fascist or not at war; in their external relations, they are not oppressed by but themselves oppress other nations. Because of these characteristics, it is the task of the party of the proletariat in the capitalist countries to educate the workers and build up strength through a long period of legal struggle, and thus prepare for the final overthrow of capitalism.... The only war they want to fight is the civil war for which they are preparing. But this insurrection and war should not be launched until the bourgeoisie becomes really helpless, until the majority of the proletariat are determined to rise in arms and fight, and until the rural masses are giving willing help to the proletariat. And when the time comes to launch such an insurrection and war, the first step will be to seize the cities and then advance into the countryside and not the other way about. All this has been done by communist parties in capitalist countries, and it has been proved correct by the October Revolution in Russia.

"China is different however. The characteristics of China are that she is not independent and democratic but semi-colonial and semi-feudal, that internally she has no democracy but is under feudal oppression and that in her external relations she has no national independence but is oppressed by imperialism. It follows that we have no parliament to make use of and no legal right to organise the workers to strike. Basically the task of the communist party here is not to go through a long period of legal struggle before launching insurrection and war, and not to seize the big cities first and then occupy the countryside, but the reverse."³

Mao showed that in a predominantly agricultural country like China which was oppressed by imperialism and characterised by feudalism, the peasants form the main component of the revolutionary forces and, for this reason,

the countryside was the centre of gravity of party work, and power should be captured first in the countryside and then in the cities. Seizing power in the vast countryside proceeded by phases in the long process of protracted people's war relying mainly on the peasant masses in order to establish liberated areas or base areas and developing and spreading these, and then taking power in the cities. For all these reasons the principal form of struggle in China's revolution would be armed struggle right from the beginning and not mass movements and legal struggles for a long period leading up to countryside insurrection, as in Russia. The principal form of organisations would be armed organisation — the revolutionary army; such an army would be led by the proletariat and mainly filled with peasant fighters. Thus Mao identified the characteristic features of the path of capturing power in the Chinese revolution which were different from those of the Russian revolution.

So it is quite evident that the question of armed struggle or the question of people's war is not a problem of certain tactics, rather it is a basic question of overall line closely linked to a number of significant political questions: the importance of the peasant question, the centre of gravity of party work, the means and forms of capturing power, etc. If it were the case that in the revolution in China (or more generally in countries oppressed by imperialism and characterised by feudalism) the party were to decide that the armed struggle might or might not be the central task, that the capture of power might be possible starting either from the countryside or from the cities, then the party would be reducing the armed struggle to simply a tactical question. But this is not how it was in fact treated in China. Wang Ming and Li Li-san and other such representatives of "left" and right lines in the Chinese party repeatedly tried to put the matter this way. They advocated a line of city-centred insurrection, and relegated work among the peasants and the armed struggle to secondary positions. Due to the influence of these lines, the Chinese revolution

suffered losses. These wrong military lines were also linked with political deviations of a "left" or right variety.

Does the fact that armed struggle and armed organisation are the principal forms of struggle and organisation, respectively, mean that mass organisation and mass movements are rejected? No. Saying armed struggle is the principal form of struggle and saying armed struggle is the only form of struggle are not the same thing. Mao noted the importance of both types of struggles in the Chinese revolution:

"However, stressing armed struggle does not mean abandoning other forms of struggle; on the contrary, armed struggle cannot succeed unless coordinated with other forms of struggle. And stressing the work in the rural base areas does not mean abandoning our work in the cities and in the other vast rural areas which are still under the enemy's control; on the contrary, without the work in the cities and in these other rural areas, our own rural base areas would be isolated and the revolution would suffer defeat. Moreover, the final objective of the revolution is the capture of the cities, the enemy's main bases, and this objective cannot be achieved without adequate work in the cities."⁴

As regards the relation between armed struggle and mass movements, Mao said,

"In China war is the main form of struggle and the army is the main form of organisation. Other forms such as mass organisations and mass struggle are also extremely important and indeed indispensable and in no circumstances to be overlooked, but their purpose is to serve the war. Before the outbreak of a war all organisation and struggle are in preparation for the war.... After war breaks out, all organisation and struggle are coordinated with the war either directly or indirectly."⁵

Basic Features of People's War

Though we have generally discussed the line of people's war, particular discussion of its basic features is necessary here. These include:

- 1- the leadership of the proletariat;
- 2- the central task: guerrilla war, the question of starting the armed struggle

gle right from the beginning;
 3- mass line and the principle of self-reliance;
 4- "surrounding the cities from the countryside" and other related military matters, i.e., base areas, protracted war, the strategy and tactics of guerrilla war, etc.

The Leadership of the Proletariat

This is the first and foremost principle of the strategy of people's war; it is key to victory. Only proletarian leadership can carry forward new democratic revolution through to the end — up to the revolution for socialism and communism. Through the summing up of the experience of contemporary world history, the *Declaration of the RIM* has rightly said:

"...history demonstrates the bankruptcy of an 'anti-imperialist front' (or similar 'revolutionary front') which is not led by a Marxist-Leninist party, even when such a front or forces within it adopt a 'Marxist' (actually pseudo-Marxist) colouration. While such revolutionary formations have led heroic struggles and even delivered powerful blows to the imperialists they have been proven to be ideologically and organisationally incapable of resisting imperialist and bourgeois influences. Even where such forces have seized power they have been incapable of carrying through a thoroughgoing revolutionary transformation of society and end up, sooner or later, being overthrown by the imperialists or themselves becoming a new reactionary ruling power in league with imperialists."⁶

This is exactly what happened in countries like Cuba, Angola, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Nicaragua, etc. Cuba itself has become an abettor to and accomplice of Soviet social-imperialism. The rest of those countries have become neo-colonies of this or that imperialism. All these incidents show that without proletarian leadership even the national-democratic revolution cannot be completed, not to speak of going ahead to the stage of socialist revolution.

To conduct armed struggle under the leadership of a front of anti-imperialist left petit bourgeois or

bourgeois revolutionaries while rejecting the indispensability of proletarian leadership, to refuse the necessity of forming and developing a proletarian party, to reject the path of people's war and reduce the question of armed struggle from a general line to mere tactics, to reject the revolutionary mass line, i.e., the line and principle of depending on the masses of people for waging armed war and the line of mass participation in it, to conduct armed struggle isolated from the masses and simply hiding in favourable geographical areas and in such a way as to conduct the armed struggle along more or less terrorist lines — all these are the features of the so-called "alternative path" which is opposed to Mao Tsetung Thought and the path of people's war. Cuba is the main advocate of this "alternative path." However painful may it be, the fact is that this "left armed revisionist" line has had, and still has, tremendous influence in the Latin American countries.

In recent years another "alternative path" known as the Sandinista model has surfaced, which has many similar features. One other important similarity is that they combine all the stages of revolution into one and raise the slogan of "socialist" revolution. In this way they ignore the actual tasks of the new democratic revolution: they isolate the working class from its allies, especially the peasantry, thus seriously hampering the ability of the working class to thoroughly eliminate imperialism and feudalism. Because of its form this is "left" armed revisionism. These left petit bourgeois revolutionaries who follow this line are some of the means through which Soviet social-imperialism misleads, controls and uses the national liberation movements of the oppressed countries to serve its twisted purposes.

After the USSR's degeneration to capitalism, the Soviet revisionist scoundrels put forward the theory that as a result of the emergence of a strong Soviet "socialist" state and a strong "socialist camp" imperialism and neo-colonialism have weakened and the balance of power between imperialism and socialism definitively changed. They argued

then that this changed balance of power made possible peaceful transition to socialism and, at that time, they opposed the armed national liberation struggle of different countries. After they gained strength as social-imperialists and their appetites grew, they pretended to be sympathetic towards the national liberation movements against U.S. imperialism, with the intent of infiltrating and using them. They trumpeted that due to the increased strength of the "socialist" camp, proletarian leadership in the national liberation movements was no longer necessary and that national liberation movements could win victory by depending solely on the financial, military and other aid of the "socialist" countries, and made possible going directly to socialism (of the Soviet revisionist brand). Naturally this theory gained much acceptance among the left bourgeois and petit bourgeois revolutionaries who began to tilt increasingly towards Soviet material aid. The defeat of socialism in China, the outright rejection of and attacks on revolution by the renegade Deng clique, the absence of strong proletarian leadership in the national liberation movements, the absence of a strong people's war waged under a correct line — these developments also strengthened this line.

Today the above mentioned "left" armed revisionism is becoming increasingly mingled with right revisionism, because their ideological root is the same: rejection of proletarian leadership and of the line of self-reliance and instead complete dependence on foreign (i.e. social-imperialist) aid under the banner of going directly to "socialism." In a word, their line rejects Mao's theory of people's war.

In another variant of this same "alternative path" certain so-called left army officers (generally junior ones), in isolation from the masses but sometimes playing on public sentiments, capture state power through a military coup. They then form a "communist" or "socialist" or even "labour" party and proclaim their action a revolution. They then raise a hue and cry about establishing socialism through of-



Chang Chun-chiao.



Workers from Shanghai rally behind the revolutionaries in the Party.



*Revisionist party leaders were paraded through the streets facing the
sion and criticism of the masses.*



Revolutionary 3 in 1 committees.



Red Guards in Shanghai.

ficial decrees. Ethiopia and Afghanistan are examples of this variation, as is Libya to a great extent. Generally in such cases the leaders of the coup oppose the U.S. bloc and rush to the Soviet fold, thus turning their country into a neo-colony of social-imperialism. Sometimes the Soviets even direct the coup, as in Afghanistan. This path too rejects proletarian leadership and reliance on the masses of people and depends on the good wishes of a group of individuals and on foreign aid, all of which means complete rejection of people's war. Such a path is bound to lead to domination by one imperialist or another.

Mao summed up the question of proletarian leadership in the new democratic revolution this way:

"The people's democratic dictatorship needs the leadership of the working class. For it is only the working class that is most farsighted, most selfless and most thoroughly revolutionary. The entire history of revolution proves that without the leadership of the working class revolution fails and that with the leadership of the working class revolution triumphs. In the epoch of imperialism, in no country can any other class lead *genuine* revolution to victory. This is clearly proved by the fact that the many revolutions led by China's petit bourgeois and national bourgeois all failed."⁷ (emphasis PBSP)

Today the imperialists and other regional hegemonist and expansionist forces are increasingly infiltrating different national liberation struggles and diverting and misleading them with financial, military and other so-called aid. Furthermore, the imperialist superpowers, in their intensifying rivalry over redivision of the globe and expanding their spheres of influence, are continually trying to use liberation struggles directed against their rival for their own use, and so set their respective stooges at the head of these movements. In such a world situation, it is especially imperative that the genuine Marxist-Leninists widely spread the understanding of the indispensability of proletarian leadership in the new democratic revolution.

Leadership of the Proletariat: What Does It Mean?

Many of the forces who call themselves socialist or Marxist — and who we have seen are but pseudo-socialists and pseudo-Marxists — reject or do not give adequate importance to the indispensability of forming an independent political party of the proletariat. The leadership of its party is in fact the most significant aspect of the proletariat's leadership. It is the only way that the proletariat can exert its leadership in revolutionary movements (or in state power and administration). It is impossible to establish the proletarian class's leadership of the revolutionary movement by undermining, negating or opposing the establishment of the independent proletarian party or of its leadership of the movement. Mao put this point in unequivocal language:

"If there is to be a revolution, there must be a revolutionary party. Without a revolutionary party, without a party built on the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary theory and in the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary style, it is impossible to lead the working class and the broad masses of the people in defeating imperialism and its running dogs."⁸

Such a party of the proletariat must be, again in Mao's language, "a well-disciplined party armed with the theory of Marxism-Leninism, using the method of self-criticism and linked with the masses of people."⁹ The overall theoretical basis guiding the ideology of the proletariat is Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought.

How Does the Victory of New Democratic Revolution Pave the Way for Socialist Revolution?

Stalin and Mao repeatedly observed that a new democratic revolution under the leadership of the working class was not part of the old democratic world revolution (whose aim was to establish capitalism and bourgeois dictatorship), but rather a component part of the world proletarian socialist revolution, whose ultimate aim is socialism and communism. Mao made this clearer when he said, "The democratic revolution is the necessary prepara-

tion for the socialist revolution, and the socialist revolution is the inevitable sequel of the democratic revolution."¹⁰ And it is working class leadership that makes it possible to advance the revolution through and beyond new democracy to socialist revolution. As Mao said:

"The new democratic revolution in China is part of the world proletarian socialist revolution, for it resolutely opposes imperialism, i.e., international capitalism. Politically, it strives for the joint dictatorship of the revolutionary classes over the imperialists, traitors and reactionaries, and opposes the transformation of Chinese society into a society under bourgeois dictatorship. Economically, it aims at the nationalisation of all the big enterprises and capital of the imperialists, traitors and reactionaries, and the distribution among the peasants of the land held by the landlords, while preserving private capitalist enterprise in general and not eliminating the rich-peasant economy. Thus, the new democratic revolution clears the way for capitalism on the one hand and creates the prerequisites for socialism on the other. The present stage of the Chinese revolution is a stage of transition between the abolition of the colonial, semi-colonial and semi-feudal society and the establishment of a socialist society..."¹¹

There are other factors to mention too:

Firstly, this process of revolution makes possible the building of the party of the proletariat steeled through revolutionary storms in these countries as strong, mass-based and on a country-wide scale. The party can gain the confidence of the people so as to later initiate and lead the socialist revolution. Mao gave maximum emphasis to this.

Secondly, throughout the entire period of national democratic revolution, which is naturally and generally long, the party has the opportunity to do propaganda work and create public opinion among the masses in favour of Marxism-Leninism, socialism and communism. Thus the party can prepare the people ideologically for carrying through to the socialist revolution. Mao also gave much importance to

this.

Thirdly, the successful completion of the new democratic revolution led by the proletariat creates some material basis for socialism (what Mao refers to above as the "prerequisites for socialism"). By completely eliminating imperialism and comprador-bureaucrat capitalism and nationalising all their wealth and capital, a long stride towards socialist transformation of a major part of the country's capital and industry takes place, because in such countries the imperialists and bureaucrat capitalists own the majority. At the same time during the long process of protracted people's war, the great masses of peasants get organised in innumerable lower and higher types of organisations, including cooperatives and also such an advanced and highly disciplined organisation as the revolutionary army, and they gain much experience. The consciousness of the masses of erstwhile backward peasants develops rapidly in their character under the impulse of war, especially such a swift-paced and creative practice as guerrilla war. All this too is part of the material basis for going over to socialist revolution.

Central Task: Guerrilla War

To be "*What Is To Be Done-ists*" in these countries means to start armed struggle right from the beginning and to grasp guerrilla warfare as the central task.

To build and develop organisation and struggle in the oppressed countries, the central task is armed struggle, the specific form of which is guerrilla war. Thus the central task for building organisation and struggle is guerrilla war. This question is directly linked to the prime importance of work among the peasants in the countryside.

"What is to be done?" — how and when to start? In his epoch-making book Comrade Lenin put forward the solution to this problem in the concrete conditions and epoch of the Russian revolution. He showed that at the initial stages of party building in Russia the central task for building organisation and struggle was to develop an all-Russian political organ. He argued further that revolutionary politics, i.e. the

politics of seizing power, and not reformism and economism, should be taken to the working class right from the beginning, and that the best means for this required a centrally operated all-Russian political organ. For Lenin, revolutionary politics was a science, and so it could not possibly come to the working class spontaneously and automatically through its movements for economic and reformist ends; rather, it had to be brought from outside, from a party of professional revolutionaries which trained the workers with a central political organ. Such an organ also functioned as the centre of preparatory work for the future insurrection and revolutionary war. Lenin established this line of the central party organ as the central task through theoretical struggle and revolutionary practice; the October Revolution proved it correct, and it remains the guideline for revolution in the capitalist countries.

But in the oppressed countries a party organ is not the central task; rather the central task is people's war. In fact, the conclusion that guerrilla war is the central task derives from the line of *What Is To Be Done?* itself. For if one wants to follow the ideology of *What Is To Be Done?* in the oppressed countries, one will have to take revolutionary politics to the countryside and to the peasants. The peasants would have to be united, organised and trained in revolutionary politics, i.e. the politics of capturing power. To organize them some other way, for example on the basis of their economic demands and side-by-side with this to educate them in politics — this is not the Leninist style. Organising peasants in trade unions is not the task of revolutionary communists. To educate and organise the peasants on the basis of revolutionary politics right from the beginning — this and only this is, according to Lenin, "Social-Democratic", i.e. Marxist-Leninist, politics.

The problem then is *how* the peasants can be educated and organised in revolutionary politics right from the beginning. Doing this, for example, with a central political organ, or any other means,

such as economic movements, etc., which is based on educating them for a long time on a more or less peaceful path, is not possible in these countries. Because in the oppressed countries the peasants always live under autocratic rule and, generally, feudal despotism. They do not even have minimum democratic rights. So it is not possible to engage in lengthy education of revolutionary politics in the same way. Before such a thing could happen the peasants are sure to be crushed by the feudal despots' armed attacks. In many cases even simple economic movements of the peasants are dealt with by heavy hands — much less movements based on revolutionary politics. Moreover the peasants are engaged in small-scale production. They are not concentrated in large numbers on huge work-sites. Their mutual isolation is acute, and this is added to by their relative cultural backwardness. Thus in comparison to the organisation, unity and struggle of the workers, that of the peasants is bound to assume a much more local character. Also, because they are isolated and scattered, the peasants' consciousness may rise in a very uneven manner.

For all these reasons the consciousness and struggle of the peasants of a certain area may develop to a higher stage on a local basis, while in some other area it may not develop at all. So while in some areas the peasants' level of consciousness may be very backward, in other areas conditions may be ripe for initiating armed struggle. In such a situation, not to start armed struggle in the favourable areas is tantamount to giving up on revolution itself. Should the party take educating people through a political organ as the central task, such cases of abandoning favourable conditions for initiating armed struggle are bound to arise frequently. Sooner or later this is certain to reduce a proletarian party to an opportunist party.

Mao showed that it is only guerrilla warfare that can awake, unite and organise the peasants crushed under the wheel of feudal despotism and make them conscious of the politics of seizing power. It is only

guerrilla warfare that can give them confidence in their own ability, and allow their participation in the armed struggle for power. And it is only through guerrilla war that the working class, through the leadership of the party and through their own participation in guerrilla war, can unite and build the revolutionary alliance with its main ally, the great majority of the peasantry. In a word, only guerrilla warfare can educate and organise the peasants in revolutionary politics. It is indeed the application of *What Is To Be Done?* to these countries.

If instead work around a political organ is taken as the central task, work will invariably wind up city-centred and mainly among the urban middle class intellectuals and to some extent the workers, and this will result in their isolation from the masses of people. Moreover, in the absence of any link with guerrilla war in the rural districts, work among the workers under this line is ultimately bound to fall into the pit of reformism and economism.

Many people speak of another way of uniting the people in these countries, of "applying the mass line". Their method is to conduct economic movements among the peasants, to build up mass organisations among them for this purpose and to take these as the key link. It follows from the politics of *What Is To Be Done?* that this central task is void of revolutionary politics; it is a reformist, revisionist conception of the mass line. All the legal revisionists who have rejected armed struggle are engaged in this fruitless search.

In sum, once guerrilla war is abandoned, the party either will be isolated from the masses of peasants, or if it is able to retain relations with them these will be relations based on reformism and economism that have no link with revolutionary politics and the revolutionary seizure of power.

There are also those who raise the question in this fashion: Yes, guerrilla warfare is undoubtedly the main task — but should guerrilla activity really be started right from the beginning? Would not armed struggle started from the beginning be isolated from the people? Rather,

would it not be better to first develop some organisational strength through different types of economic and other mass movements based on issues and demands and thus make some advance preparations, and only then launch the armed struggle? The advocates of this view actually serve a reformist and economist line, only in a round-about way. They actually run away from the Leninist stand of *What Is To Be Done?*

To say that armed struggle should be started from the beginning does not neglect the necessity of certain preparations. The real point of debate here is not over preparation, but over what line leads: reformist politics or revolutionary politics. This is exactly the point of *What Is To Be Done?* Depending on the specific circumstances of a country, minimum preparation such as building a primary organisational base, creation of public opinion, etc., must be done, but on the basis of revolutionary politics. Such preparation can *never* be completed based on reformism and economism or through mass movements based on such politics; even revolutionary public opinion cannot be built up in this way.

Many of the forces who put forward such views and who attack the line of guerrilla war right from the start as "adventurist" and "terrorist" are ex-revolutionaries who degenerated to opportunism as a result of the disasters of the 1970s and who have taken pro-Sino or pro-Sino/Soviet middle course lines. They pay lip service to armed struggle but argue that "this is not the way to start." Others, too, centre their attack on the question of starting armed struggle and guerrilla warfare. But whatever the diversity of forms their attacks take, they all come down to this: that people, through spontaneous economic movements, will automatically grasp the politics of armed struggle and capturing power and one fine morning will rise up in arms out of the spontaneous upsurges. In a nutshell, they claim to prepare for revolution, but without revolutionary politics.

Thus in these countries it is not enough for the Marxist-Leninists to simply theoretically accept the

necessity of people's war. They must give maximum importance to solving the problem of how to start it and what is the central task. Revolutionary politics is the vital point. The line that, whatever form preparations take, armed struggle should be started right from the beginning and guerrilla war is the central task — this should be adhered to strictly and firmly. It is demanded by Mao's path of people's war, and by Leninism as well.

A Few Points on "Starting the Armed Struggle Right from the Beginning"

1- One of the main obstacles to initiating armed struggle and guerrilla war right from the beginning is the tendency to magnify the enemy's strength. In actual practice this tendency fails to assess the real state of affairs in these countries. Due to imperialism and neo-colonialism a state of crisis prevails all the time in these countries, and consequently a permanent revolutionary situation generally exists (though with ebbs and flows). That is why a small spark of struggle once ignited even in one remote corner can spread around and flare up. Mao's axiom that "a single spark can start a prairie fire" is generally applicable in these countries. This is also one reason why revolutionary struggle can often take the form of armed struggle right from the beginning in these countries.

2- To start armed struggle right from the beginning does not mean to start guerrilla war from the very first day of party building. Some minimum preparatory work is a must. To grasp the basic theoretical aspects of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought; the theoretical-political formulations of the main issues of basic political and socio-economic analysis; propaganda on theoretical, ideological and political matters; training a minimum number of cadres necessary for initial development of organisation and struggle; the rearing of a few professional revolutionaries and initial practice of professional life; a minimal organisational foundation among the revolutionary intellectuals, workers and peasants; the formation of a few guerrilla units; mak-

ing a Marxist-Leninist class analysis and summation of the movements and revolutionary struggles of the people — this is some of the preparatory work. These must be performed more or less simultaneously, or at least in an orderly manner. So naturally there will be, or might be, a preparatory period or a period of “peaceful” development in the life of almost every revolutionary party.

Sometimes we meet a definite problem here. Under the pretext of “necessary” subjective preparation things sometimes begin to take a much longer time, lines emerge about the need for extensive preparation so as to launch guerrilla warfare overnight, perhaps throughout the country, and so on, all of which unnecessarily delay the starting of revolutionary war. Adherence to such lines runs down the path of reformism, and Marxist-Leninists must resolutely oppose this right deviationist tendency in the party. The root of this tendency is magnifying the enemy’s strength and failing to grasp the essence of Mao’s formulation that “a single spark can start a prairie fire”; it also fails to grasp the application of *What Is To Be Done?* to these countries. Sometimes its adherents indulge in subjective dreams of starting widespread struggle and by-passing the tortuous path of protracted people’s war.

3- Though in the oppressed countries a revolutionary situation generally exists, it has ebbs and flows. Thus, though generally the central task is to start armed struggle right from the beginning, for various reasons (such as an ebb in the revolutionary situation, setbacks to the revolutionary movement, centralisation of cadres for certain jobs other than armed struggle, etc.) at a certain time armed struggle temporarily may not be the central task. But even then political and organisational functions should be directed towards increasing preparation for initiating and conducting the armed struggle so that the revolution can be advanced even while anticipating the development of more favourable overall conditions.

4- The question of isolation from the masses. At the initial stage guer-

rilla warfare is bound to remain, to some extent, isolated from the masses of people, or at least it may appear to be so. In most cases, guerrilla war must be started from almost zero, so that it may not possess, and in many cases it is not possible to possess, all of the characteristic features of what is known as people’s war, in that it is not yet waged as a war of masses of people themselves. At this stage, enemies and revisionists of all hues pour forth their slanders of “isolation from the masses,” “terrorists,” “ultra-left extremists,” etc. This must be opposed and exposed, including by strong politico-ideological propaganda work among the people. For the reality is that the starting of guerrilla war under a correct line is the starting of people’s war itself, and it is exactly through such starting of people’s war on a small scale that it can be gradually spread around the country. The initial stage is almost inevitably begun in small areas or pockets which act as a spark for the masses of people themselves throughout the country to take it up.

Mass Line and Self-Reliance

“The revolutionary war is a war of the masses; it can be waged only by mobilising the masses and relying on them.”¹² This single sentence of Mao excellently reflects the fundamental nature of people’s war and its relation to mass line. There can be no application of this principle of mass line without at the same time applying another principle emphasised by Mao, self reliance and arduous struggle; conversely, firmness in self-reliance can lead one to the application of mass line.

Mao explained self-reliance in the following way:

“On what basis should our policy rest? It should rest on our own strength, and that means regeneration through our own efforts. We are not alone; all the countries and people in the world opposed to imperialism are our friends. Nevertheless, we stress regeneration through our own efforts. Relying on the forces we ourselves organise, we can defeat all Chinese and foreign reactionaries.”¹³

He also explained the relation be-

tween self-reliance and foreign help: “We stand for self-reliance. We hope for foreign aid but cannot be dependent on it; we depend on our own efforts, on the creative power of the whole army and the entire people.”¹⁴

Without implementing the mass line, without dependence on the masses of people, all struggles are bound to be dependent on others. The revolution’s leading force — the working class and its party — and the revolutionary army cannot defeat the powerful enemy alone; they must depend on one of the two forces, foreign aid or the masses of people. Further, at the time Mao spoke of hoping for foreign aid, socialism existed in the Soviet Union, which it no longer does. Foreign aid, especially on a state level, is not now available to genuine liberation struggles, as what is going on in the people’s war in Peru under the leadership of its Communist Party shows. Thus it is more important than ever to fully depend on the masses of people.

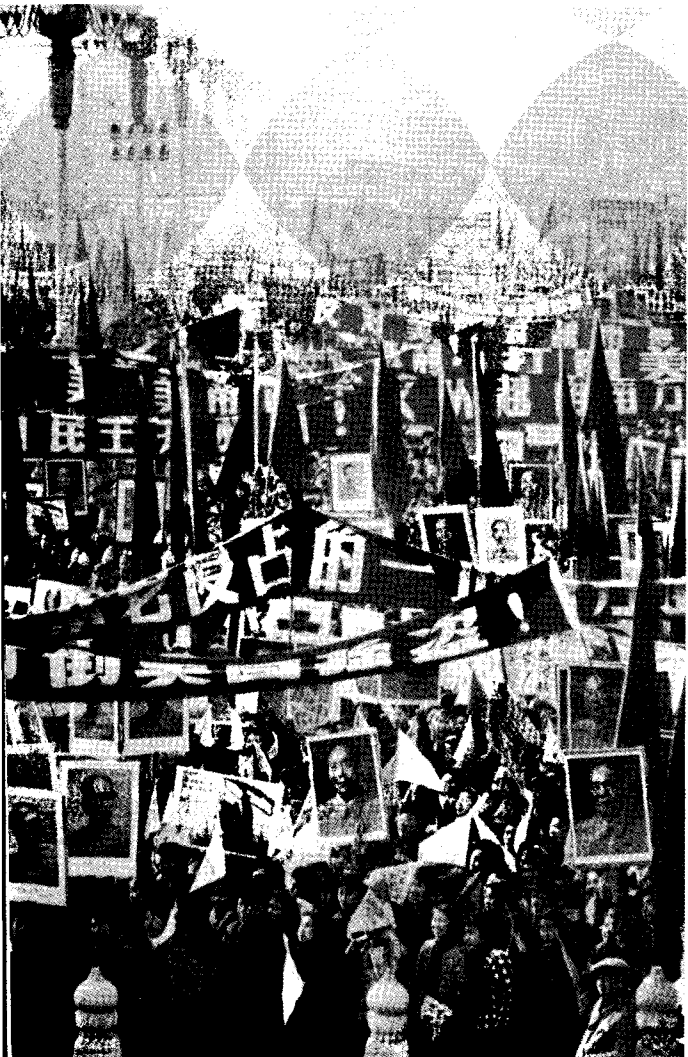
When one turns away from depending on the masses of people one is bound to depend on foreign sources. And whatever pretext this takes place under — “socialism,” “democracy,” “world humanitarianism,” etc. — one is bound to turn into a tool of Soviet, U.S. or some other foreign imperialist and the revolutionary struggle will stray and fail. Examples should not really be necessary to establish the fact that such phenomena are abundant in the present-day world. It should also be pointed out that it is only proletarian leadership that can truly mobilise and depend on the masses.

Surrounding the Cities from the Countryside, and Related Military Matters

The main military matters included here are: the role of base areas; the protracted nature of the war; and the strategy and tactics of guerrilla war. We have already discussed how the basic strategy of surrounding the cities from the countryside is rooted in the nature of the social system and the stage of the revolution in the oppressed countries themselves. The basic theoretical guidelines for-



Demonstration in support of the revolutionary struggle of Vietnamese people in their war against U.S. imperialism.



Mao greets Latin American visitors.





Red Guards give it to "Uncle Sam."

mulated by Mao Tsetung which guide this strategy are still valid, nor has any fundamental development of the theories and principles of people's war taken place since his time. Here we will just touch on these major military points and discuss how far they are still applicable in the new world situation where important changes have taken place in the characteristics of the oppressed countries.

The strategy of surrounding the cities from the countryside demands that base areas should be established in rural areas for capturing power. This is not possible simultaneously throughout the country but must begin in small or limited areas.

Furthermore, base areas are necessary due to the protracted character of the war. At the initial stage the enemy is far more powerful than the revolutionary forces. The revolutionaries start with weak forces and then gain strength, so as to gradually change the balance of forces and conduct the final assault on the enemy. So the war is protracted and necessarily takes the form of a guerrilla war over a long period. Thus in order to protect the revolutionary forces, to spread the revolution and to stand on a firm footing base areas are essential. This is the foundation of the strategy and tactics of guerrilla war.

Mao explained that,

"In the face of such enemies, there arises the question of base areas. Since China's key cities have long been occupied by the powerful imperialists and their reactionary Chinese allies, it is imperative for the revolutionary ranks to turn the backward villages into advanced consolidated base areas, into great military, political, economic and cultural bastions of revolution from which to fight their vicious enemies who are using the cities for attacks on the rural districts, and this way gradually to achieve the complete victory of the revolution through protracted fighting....the protracted revolutionary struggle consists mainly in peasant guerrilla warfare led by the Chinese Communist Party. Therefore it is wrong to ignore the necessity of using rural districts as revolutionary base areas, to

neglect painstaking work among the peasants, and to neglect guerrilla warfare."¹⁵

Guerrilla warfare and the establishment of base areas are offensive actions within the overall defensive stage of protracted people's war. Relative to the whole country, base areas create the conditions for self-protection of the revolutionary forces, but relative to particular parts of the country they are offensive pursuits. Guerrilla warfare spreads the revolutionary war and expands base areas, thus advancing the process of capturing power in the countryside.

Besides these military aspects, there are also political and ideological features of base areas, and these are very important. The establishment of base areas means the growth of the revolutionary political power of the great majority of the peasantry, especially the landless and poor peasants, under the leadership of the proletariat (which is a form of the dictatorship of all revolutionary classes under proletarian leadership, today, in Peru for example, this is called People's Committees). The implementation of the programme of new democratic revolution, the complete or partial elimination of feudalism and the distribution of the enemies' lands among the peasants in accordance with the principle of "land to the tiller," the establishment of people's courts and handing out of revolutionary justice — these and many other revolutionary changes are taken by the new revolutionary political power.

As a consequence, the toiling masses and patriotic people stand up with heads erect, they become immensely confident of their own revolutionary vigour, the people place their hopes and confidence in the party and the army it leads, as the people see concretely the goal of revolution and witness for themselves the form of the future liberated social system. In a word, base areas set examples of revolution before the people. All these things encourage the peasants to come under the flag of the revolutionary war with multiplied enthusiasm, and enable them to participate in the revolutionary pursuit and to

sacrifice themselves with immense spirit. From the viewpoint of the whole country, base areas act as "sparks."

Also, through establishing and consolidating base areas, the proletariat leads people in capturing and wielding state power, however small, and thus the people can conduct experiments with the new state power and in the process prepare themselves for future state administration.

These are the political and ideological roles of base areas.

Post World War 2 Changes and the Path of People's War

On the one hand, since World War 2 developments have taken place such that most of the oppressed nations are no longer as backward as pre-revolutionary China. The wide and increasing penetration of imperialism has wrought many changes, some basic and qualitative. Capitalism has developed, including in agriculture, so that feudalism has been eroded to a great extent; workers have multiplied in number and become more experienced; alongside the industrial workers non-industrial labourers have tremendously increased in number, as have the landless peasants; urbanisation has increased; centralised military-bureaucratic state machines have been established. These changes are continuing, and sometimes even increasing.

On the other hand despite all these changes, the fundamental character of the socio-economic structure and the state remain basically, or mainly, unchanged. The so-called "independent national" states actually are not independent but under the most severe imperialist domination and exploitation. The ruling class is dependent on imperialism; feudal (and semi-feudal) exploitation and despotism still exist extensively in rural areas; cities and towns are still the strongholds of the enemy; the great majority of the population remain peasants, in vast rural areas, where impoverishment is even increasing steadily; the masses have no real democratic rights, and people are often crushed under the wheel of fascist military or civilian dictatorial rule which is in essence fascist. In a

word, the situation in these countries with a few exceptions, is still, in essence, like that of pre-revolutionary China.

Thus despite the changes that have taken place, the basic strategy of surrounding the cities from the countryside remains valid (with the few exceptions). The rapid development of the people's war in Peru under the leadership of its Communist Party proves this truth. But because there *have* been important changes, the necessity of applying the strategy and tactics of people's war creatively — something which Mao always stressed — is more felt than ever.

In undertaking this task, two wrong tendencies are frequently seen. One is the tendency to neglect and even refuse to recognise the changes and differences and so mechanically apply the Chinese experience, instead of creatively applying Mao Tsetung Thought. The other tendency over-emphasises and exaggerates the changes and differences due to inability to grasp the fundamental similarity, and consequently suffers from indecisiveness on the path of revolution. Actually this second tendency, too, takes the Chinese experience mechanically, but in a negative way, and fails to see that Mao Tsetung Thought and people's war *must be applied creatively*. The revisionists too overemphasise the differences so as to deny the fundamental character of the oppressed nations and categorically reject people's war.

The struggle with these two tendencies, and the problem of applying the line of people's war more generally, centres on two questions: firstly, starting armed struggle right from the beginning (i.e., what is the central task and how should it be carried out?); and secondly, the question of establishing base areas.

Because of the changes we have noted it is no longer possible in many countries to try to follow China's model exactly and try to spread guerrilla warfare throughout a country by starting from and depending on a base area established in a certain remote corner of a country. Instead, alongside the initiation of guerrilla warfare with the aim of establishing base areas, country-

wide political and organisational work, mass movements and mass upsurges in urban areas, work among the workers and in the cities, activity centred on a party organ, etc. — all these have gained in importance, and it is imperative to co-ordinate them properly with guerrilla war (Mao gave these importance even in connection with the revolution in China). Otherwise, it will not be possible to lead the revolutionary war correctly. Moreover, the importance of all this work is bound to increase.

This work in urban areas may be helpful in facing enemy pressure in the initial period of the development of guerrilla war and base areas (of whatever kind) where the revolutionary forces are still weak. Conversely, the development of guerrilla war, and especially of base areas, can exert tremendous revolutionary influence in accelerating the mass upsurge and rebellion in urban areas, and giving these a more revolutionary character. Also, work in urban areas, especially among workers and in mass movements, can play a major role in supplying cadres and fighters.

The tendency to neglect all this and blindly apply the Chinese method of proceeding from local base areas was a major reason for the disasters which befell so many of the new generation of Marxist-Leninists who arose in the 1960s. Unfortunately, this tendency is still widespread. Specific reflections of this are:

- an inability to understand and blind denial of the process of capitalist development and the decay of feudal relations (in a non-revolutionary way) in the oppressed countries;

- as a consequence of the above, the inability to understand or again denial of the importance of work in the cities and among workers, of mass organisations and upsurges and of the ability to carry out legal activity;

- inability to understand or denial of the importance of work on a country-wide scale for the establishment of base areas.

This tendency, widespread in the South Asian subcontinent, resulted in the revolutionary movements suf-

fering severe setbacks. As a result a large number of persons degenerated from the ranks of Marxist-Leninists, and rejected Mao Tsetung Thought and people's war. Further, revisionists and other enemies have sought to capitalise on these setbacks to assault anew the line of Mao and of people's war.

Yet though the importance of grasping these changes and the adjustments they mandate in revolutionary work is clear, it must still be affirmed that work among peasants in the rural areas remains principal and that the task of developing guerrilla warfare remains in general the central task. Work in urban areas, or mass movements, etc., cannot advance revolutionary politics beyond a certain limit in the struggle for power without the development of armed struggle in the countryside. Only on-going guerrilla warfare in the countryside can create the conditions for establishing proletarian leadership of the city-centred mass organisations and raising them to higher stages and making use of them in service of the revolutionary war.

In some of the oppressed countries, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, capitalist development and the increase in the number of workers has been extensive, though these countries are not yet "predominantly capitalist." In such countries both the political and the military importance of the cities has increased and is increasing. This is an objective reality. Sometimes in these countries mass movements may leap into mass uprisings or mass revolt, even in the absence of armed struggle in the rural areas. Thus opportunities may arise for initiating armed struggle through first staging mass uprisings in the cities, and this may be quite necessary. That is why, though in such countries surrounding the cities from the countryside is the path of revolution, the party of the proletariat should take into account in its overall strategy the possibility of using such situations and it should remain prepared to do so. So in these circumstances the line of developing guerrilla warfare and capturing power first in the rural areas does not apply in the same static way, but varies with the vary-

ing circumstances.

But if one's conception of overall strategy is hazy or if one neglects the main aspects of the overall strategy one will not be able to reap the fruits of such eventualities, because there is every possibility that the situation may take many turns. For example, in spite of mass uprisings in the cities, it may not be possible to proceed to the overall capture of power; or even if it is possible victory may not last long; or perhaps it will be possible to capture and even maintain power, but it will be necessary to conduct long-term civil war in the rural areas. Here the relevant experience of the Russian revolution is worth remembering. There, though Russia had developed to imperialism, its rural districts were still feudal, and there was civil war in the countryside. Cases may arise in which civil war should be waged according to the principle of people's war relying mainly on the peasants.

As in the case of starting armed struggle and guerrilla war, differences may also arise because of the afore-mentioned changes in the case of establishing base areas. The opponents of people's war like to say that the points Mao mentioned in the article "Why Is It That Red Political Power Can Exist in China?" as conditions for the survival of base areas no longer exist in most oppressed countries. In particular they argue that there are no longer locally fragmented feudal warlords as existed in China, but rather there are now powerful centralised military-bureaucratic state machines. These problems are multiplied, they say, in the relatively small countries that have no hills and forests. They conclude that it is not possible to establish base areas at all.

The material basis for these arguments should of course be examined thoroughly by Marxist-Leninists, so as to accurately understand the problems and limitations imposed by objective conditions. But the more important point here is that under the pretext of "objective conditions" these people present Mao's theory of red base areas in a mechanical and often partial and distorted manner.

The process of summing up base

areas that Mao had undertaken up to 1928, when he wrote "Why Red Political Power Can Exist," did not end there, nor were these conditions something immutable. Mao later showed that even in the absence of the conditions he described in 1928 different types or forms of base areas could be developed. He mentioned, for instance, the following types of base areas: those in the hills and mountains, those on the plains, and those in the river-lake-estuary regions, and showed their comparative advantages and disadvantages. He also mentioned the following variable conditions that would effect the establishment of base areas, and required different and flexible policies: temporary or seasonal base areas in unfavourable terrain, shifting of base areas from place to place, taking advantage of "green curtains" of tall crops in summer in plains areas, of frozen rivers in winters, etc.¹⁶ Thus Mao, in the course of summing up base areas over a long period of time, showed that a revolutionary party should try to start guerrilla war and set up permanent or temporary base areas in all places where people and enemy forces are found.¹⁷

As for the rise of centralised state machines and the absence of feudal warlords, many exaggerate the strength of these state apparatuses. They ignore their internal contradictions, the fact, for instance, that various power-hungry factions of the ruling class are at times locked in even bloody in-fighting in these countries, which throws the state machinery into a state of instability. This is an inevitable reflection of sharp contention among competing different imperialists, especially the two superpowers, over domination of these countries. It is an insoluble crisis under the neo-colonial system.

At the same time this system gives birth to fascist dictatorial rule over and over again in almost all such countries. Even the masquerading social-democrats cannot for long hide their real fascist character. This, and the most severe exploitation, intensely sharpens the contradictions between the people of different strata and the ruling class. As a result, in many of these countries, even where there is no pro-

letarian leadership, a good many armed rebel groups more or less linked to the people have emerged and maintained their existence for long periods. In some countries these groups have strongholds in rural areas and wage powerful armed attacks against the government. And such incidents take place even in small countries.

Thus whatever the diversities of process, form or duration, it is possible for armed struggle and base areas to emerge and develop. As the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* says:

"In these countries the exploitation of the proletariat and the masses is severe, the outrage of imperialist domination constant, and the ruling classes usually exercise their dictatorship nakedly and brutally, and even when they utilise the bourgeois-democratic or parliamentary form their dictatorship is only thinly veiled. This situation leads to frequent revolutionary struggles on the part of the proletariat, the peasants and other sections of the masses which often take the form of armed struggle. For all these reasons, including the lopsided and distorted development in these countries which often makes it difficult for the reactionary classes to maintain state rule and to consolidate their power throughout the state, it is often the case that the revolution takes the form of protracted revolutionary warfare in which the revolutionary forces are able to establish base areas of one type or another in the countryside and carry out the basic strategy of surrounding the city by the countryside."¹⁸

People's War in the "Predominantly Capitalist" Countries

In the "Joint Communiqué" issued by 13 parties and organisations in 1980, it was said:

"There is an undeniable tendency for imperialism to introduce significant elements of capitalist relations in the countries it dominates. In certain dependent countries, capitalist development has gone so far that it is not correct to characterise them as semi-feudal. It is better to call them predominantly capitalist even while important

elements or remnants of feudal or semi-feudal production relations and their reflection in the superstructure still exists.

"In such countries a concrete analysis must be made of these conditions and appropriate conclusions concerning the path, tasks, character and alignment of class forces must be drawn. In all events, foreign imperialism remains a target of the revolution."¹⁹

In addition to South Korea, Taiwan, etc., considerable capitalist development has taken place in a few Latin American and some oil-rich countries.

The capitalist development that has taken place in these countries is not an independent national capitalism, it is not capitalism that has come into being through the overthrow of feudalism and foreign imperialism. On the contrary, it is capitalism introduced *through* imperialism, in the process of its post-World War 2 expansion and under its neo-colonial system. This is comprador-bureaucrat capitalism, shaped by and intimately bound up with and dependent on foreign imperialism. Hence its distorted lopsided character, and, despite the predominantly capitalist character of the society, its continued neo-colonialist domination. The state machineries of these countries are watch-dogs of comprador-bureaucrat capital and imperialism. There is no doubt that imperialism is one of the targets of revolution in these countries.

Since the old feudal/semi-feudal system was not overthrown by revolutionary means but transformed in a non-revolutionary way by imperialism itself, it is quite natural and possible that a big or major part of the property holders under the feudal system have, through a gradual and compromising process, turned into owners under the capitalist agricultural system, still dependent on imperialism. At the same time, the new comprador bureaucrats are bound to participate too in the agricultural economy. Also because of this non-revolutionary transformation, important elements or remnants of the feudal relations of production are bound to persist, and to have on-

going reflections in the superstructure.

That these countries are imperialist-dominated neocolonies is also reflected in the lack of democracy in the political state system, in the absence of legal rights of the people, in the continuation of savage military-bureaucratic dictatorships and their crushing of the people's movements.

All this means that in these countries the task of new democratic revolution has not been completed. One important feature of the new democratic revolution, as Mao showed in China, is that the bourgeoisie divide, that the middle and small bourgeoisie (i.e., the national bourgeoisie) can play a role in favour of revolution, and that is why the proletariat must strive to unite with them. This important formulation of Mao's is completely applicable in these countries. On the one hand widespread capitalist development has inevitably given birth to a large number of national bourgeois. On the other hand the comprador-bureaucratic capital in these countries in close collaboration with imperialism has developed into monopoly capital, and the reactionary state machine protects them. As a result, the small and middle bourgeois is obstructed and impeded. Thus to divide the bourgeoisie and try to unite the national bourgeois in the course of the revolutionary, anti-imperialist struggle is still an important task.

It is clear that the stage of revolution in these countries remains new democratic. The Trotskyites, social-democrats, and different types of revisionists put forward that new democracy in these countries is no longer necessary, that since the economy is capitalist the stage of revolution is directly for socialism. This is not only wrong, it is reactionary, because, in seeing only capitalism, they cover up imperialist exploitation and place imperialist countries and countries under imperialism on a par.

But the question here is: what is the path for revolution in these countries, to what extent are the lines of people's war and surrounding the cities from the countryside still applicable?

It can be said without doubt that the methods and lines applicable to predominantly agricultural countries are not applicable in the same way in these countries. We have already mentioned that in non-predominantly capitalist countries with significant capitalist development work in the cities and among the workers has gained importance, and that it might be possible to even start armed struggle through mass uprisings there, instead of by launching it in the countryside. This is all the more so in the case of the predominantly capitalist countries. And because these are predominantly capitalist countries, the peasantry, though still an important force, is no longer the main revolutionary force here, nor is the countryside necessarily the centre of work. That is why it is probably no longer the case that armed struggle and armed organisation are principal throughout the entire period of revolution in these countries. Even so, it is quite possible that power cannot be captured all at once through armed uprising, so that after some kind of partial capture of power it may be necessary to wage a more or less protracted revolutionary war. Even a total capture of power may be reduced to a temporary victory, so that it may be necessary to retreat and go to the rural areas or areas where the enemy is weak so as to conduct protracted people's war.

In sum then, though the exact path of revolution in these countries is not clear, serious study of Mao's theory of New Democratic Revolution, protracted people's war and guerrilla war by the party of the proletariat and the education of the cadres workers and peasants in these theories, and the creative application of the path of people's war for preparing for and capturing power — these remain very important tasks for the party.

In these countries, because the workers and the cities are now principal, the task of educating the workers through the party organ(s) and through revolutionary mass movements and organisations has gained greater importance than ever.

Finally, only the development of truly revolutionary parties of the

proletariat, based on Marxism-Leninism, will be able to ultimately give a correct answer to the exact path of revolution in these countries.

Conclusion

Through his charting of the path of China's revolutionary war, Mao Tsetung qualitatively developed the Marxist theory of war. He learned from important wars of the world and China, especially progressive and revolutionary wars; he assimilated the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin on war in general and revolutionary wars in particular; and finally, he learned by applying the dialectical materialist outlook in the course of leading war itself — as Mao taught, one learns warfare through warfare. And so Mao forged the path of people's war in illustrating brilliantly how the people of the weak and oppressed countries can courageously rise up to defeat seemingly omnipotent imperialism and its accomplices.

If one looks at the path of people's war from a purely military viewpoint, it is impossible to understand its truly profound significance, nor will it be possible to apply it creatively amidst whatever changes imperialism has wrought in the oppressed nations. Only if one conceives the strategy of people's war as an overall dialectical materialist outlook for solving the problem of revolutionary warfare will it be possible to accomplish these and other critical tasks.

The present world situation is that on the one hand different forms of struggle, including armed struggle, of the people against imperialism and its agents are forming anew. The anti-imperialist national liberation movements are again rising up strong, and symptoms of gathering momentum of worldwide mass upheavals, after a long pause since the 1960s, have surfaced. On the other hand, the two contending imperialist blocs led by the U.S. and Soviet imperialists are hatching conspiracies and preparing to unleash a world war, and are tremendously increasing their war preparations. In such a situation it is imperative to develop national liberation movements and revolutionary struggles under correct leadership in the

oppressed countries. This means, in general, grasping the path of people's war and initiating guerrilla warfare. These obligations have fallen to the true Marxist-Leninists. So it is that it is urgent to hold high, explain and propagate the path of people's war and especially Mao Tsetung Thought, because it is only Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought which can give the guidance required to the upcoming struggles. □

Footnotes

1. Mao Tsetung, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party," *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 318.
2. *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement*, Indian English language edition, p. 31.
3. Mao Tsetung, "Problems of War and Strategy," *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 219-20.
4. Mao Tsetung, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party," *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 317.
5. Mao Tsetung, "Problems of War and Strategy," *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 221.
6. *Declaration of the RIM*, Indian English edition, p.32.
7. Mao Tsetung, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship," *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 421.
8. Mao Tsetung, "Revolutionary Forces of the World, Unite, Fight Against Imperialist Aggression," *Selected Works*, Vol.4, p. 284.
9. Mao Tsetung, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship," *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 422.
10. Mao Tsetung, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party," *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 331.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 326-27.
12. Mao Tsetung, "Be Concerned with the Well-Being of the Masses, Pay Attention to Methods of Work," *Selected Works*, Vol.1, p. 147.
13. Mao Tsetung, "The Situation and Our Policy After the Victory in the War of Resistance Against Japan," *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 20.
14. Mao Tsetung, "We Must Learn to Do Economic Work," *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 241.
15. Mao Tsetung, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party," *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 316-17.
16. Mao Tsetung, "Problems of Strategy in the Guerrilla War Against Japan," *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 94-95.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
18. *Declaration of the RIM*, Indian English edition, p.31.
19. Quoted in the *Declaration of the RIM*, *Ibid.*, p.35.