

Collapse of
REVISIONISM
in the East

Unleashing
the Masses,
Unlocking the
Future

– Mao
Is the
Key!



*1960s. Liberation fighters from the Congo (now Zaire).
1960s. Demonstration in New York City.*

A WORLD TO WIN 1990/15



"The summation of historical experience has, itself, always been a sharp arena of class struggle. Ever since the defeat of the Paris Commune, opportunists and revisionists have seized upon the defeats and shortcomings of the proletariat to reverse right and wrong, confound the secondary with the principal, and thus conclude that the proletariat 'should not have taken to arms.' The emergence of new conditions has often been used as an excuse to negate fundamental principles of Marxism under the signboard of its 'creative development.' At the same time, it is incorrect and just as damaging to abandon the Marxist critical spirit, to fail to sum up the shortcomings as well as the successes of the proletariat, and to rest content with upholding or reclaiming positions considered correct in the past. Such an approach would make Marxism-Leninism brittle and unable to withstand the attacks of the enemy and incapable of leading new advances in the class struggle — and suffocate its revolutionary essence."

- from the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement*



Mao's polemics against Soviet revisionism and the launching of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution against the capitalist roaders in the Chinese Communist Party gave hope to revolutionaries around the world who saw the rot that had developed in the Soviet Union and were searching for the way to overthrow imperialism and recast the world.

Top: The miners of Mutchengkien energetically repudiate the counter-revolutionary revisionist line of Liu Shao-chi, China's Khrushchev, that was being applied in the mines.

The decade of the 1990s has been ushered in with a series of events of earth-shaking proportions — the collapse of most of the previously constituted regimes in Eastern Europe and the almost complete abandon on the part of the Soviet and East European rulers of any pretext of Marxism-Leninism. For the Maoists, who have been the resolute opponents of these regimes for the

past three decades, this is a most welcome development. The existence of these hideous regimes masquerading as "proletarian" and "socialist" has long been a burden for the genuine revolutionaries. Better that these revisionists openly declare their true colours than that they continue to cloak their crimes in the name of our ideology.

Further, the collapse of these

regimes has opened up a very favourable situation in these countries. Although there is much confusion in the thinking of those who have lived through this travesty of "socialism," the desire for a radical destruction of the existing society, the awakening to political life, the discrediting of the former rulers and the divisions among them, all make for the most favourable objective situation for revolutionary advances in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe since Khrushchev rigged up the capitalist system there in the 1950s. And not only are the revisionist enemies of revolutionary communists weak in those countries where they have held power, the entire pro-Soviet revisionist movement the world over has been profoundly shaken and disoriented by the events of autumn and winter 1989-90.

But while one set of enemies is thrown into disorganisation, another set of enemies, the ruling classes of the Western imperialist states, is puffed up and arrogant. These reactionary gangsters are trying to use the troubles of the rival gangs in the East to claim the final victory of capitalism, the market and "democracy" over what they continue to falsify as "communism" or "Stalinism".

The collapse of these regimes also poses serious responsibilities before the genuine communists. It presents us with the task of wielding our scientific ideology and understanding of the capitalist nature of the phoney socialist regimes and waging a vigorous political and ideological counteroffensive. Without this, it will be impossible for revolutionary Marxism to get a foothold in the East bloc or, more generally, to defeat the anti-communist wave currently unfolding.

Mao Tsetung

Our greatest weapon to understand the current situation and to battle the enemy is the comprehensive teachings of Mao Tsetung concerning the nature of socialist society, the class struggle that takes place under socialism, and the danger of capitalist restoration like that which, Mao analysed, had taken place in the Soviet Union and the East European countries following the death of Stalin.

Not only did Mao understand socialism from a theoretical point of view, he was also able to lead the broad masses in constructing socialism and in waging the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, an unprecedented mass upsurge aimed at overthrowing those top officials of the Communist Party who, like their counterparts in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, were turning socialist public ownership into a mere facade hiding their own private expropriation, whose essence was the same as that of all other capitalist exploiters.

Indeed, the working class and the masses of people in the Eastern European countries have long recognised that a special stratum of privileged people concentrated in the Communist Parties have been appropriating the fruits produced by the labouring people. In Eastern Europe, communist phrases have been used to cover over real inequality and exploitation just as in the West Christian demagogues about "love thy neighbour" has accompanied vicious class exploitation and oppression. Unlike many revisionists, we should not be surprised or shocked that the masses in these countries are hoisting anti-communist banners, when the word "communism" has been used to justify all of the exploitation, inequality and reaction of those regimes. As Mao put it so forcefully when speaking of the capitalist-roaders in China, "It is right to rebel against reactionaries." It is up to us, the genuine revolutionary communists, the Maoists, to strip off the "red" mask from these reactionaries and show everyone their ugly capitalist face.

What is most important to grasp about the discredited regimes of the East is not principally their form of rule and ideology which made them different from the West, but the class essence of these regimes which makes them the same as the capitalist West.

1) A small minority of society controls (and in fact, owns) the means of production (through its control of the state apparatus).

2) This minority functions as a *class* in every way. Thousands of links, visible and invisible, secret or open, bind together top party politicians, directors of factories, schools and hospitals, leading figures in the

media and cultural arena. Furthermore, this class perpetuates itself just as surely as the bourgeoisie in the West by passing on wealth and power to its children.

3) This ruling class uses the police, army, courts and prisons to exercise a disguised dictatorship over the majority of society and to viciously clamp down on anyone who opposes them.

4) The workers are reduced to the status of wage-slaves; they have no control over the affairs of state nor even any real say in the function of their factories and enterprises. Their task is to shut up and work hard and receive their pay in return.

5) Production is determined not by what is needed to benefit the people, but by what will generate the most profit, even if this is often disguised by the state plan.

6) The education system and cultural sphere exalt the way things are and propagate the views of the ruling class. Little criticism of the existing set-up is allowed.

All of these features of the East European regimes are very familiar to our readers in the imperialist West, for they are features of all capitalist states.

Why, then, has it proved so difficult for the genuine communist movement to penetrate these countries? Why is it that even some from the communist movement who have previously opposed these regimes find themselves confused and despondent at the sudden turn of events? At the heart of this question, too, is the question of Mao Tsetung Thought.

It is interesting to note, for example, the avowal of demoralisation emanating from the leadership of the Albanian Party of Labour.¹ The PLA has long tried to portray itself as the guardians of Marxist-Leninist "orthodoxy". They distinguished themselves in the 1960s by siding with Mao Tsetung and the revolutionaries in the Communist Party of China in the struggle against Khrushchev's modern revisionism.² But they never really grasped Mao's analysis and were often puzzled and disturbed by the revolutionary torrent Mao had unleashed in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (despite the fact that Mao and the Chinese had gone to great lengths to inform the Albanian leadership — see specifically Mao's brilliant "Talk

to the Albania Military Delegation" reprinted in AWTW 1985/1). After Mao's death and the counter-revolutionary coup of Deng Xiao-ping and Hua Guo-feng in 1976, Enver Hoxha launched a vicious attack on Mao Tsetung Thought, an attack which did considerable harm to the international communist movement and made the task of regrouping the genuine revolutionary communists all the more difficult.

It must be said the Albanian viewpoint found quite a following in what was the international communist movement, more than can be explained simply by the narrow opportunist fear of a "stateless" international movement for the time being. Albania tried to represent itself as the champion of the heritage of the international communist movement (and especially of Stalin), while attacking its greatest accomplishment — the Cultural Revolution led by Mao Tsetung. In fact, the Albanians defended Stalin's *errors* and not his achievements of building socialism. The fact that so many were won over or disoriented by this line shows that Mao's teachings had not been thoroughly assimilated by much of what then represented the international movement.

What is Socialism?

Some of the most vulgar distortions of Marxism-Leninism have taken place exactly on the fundamental points of what socialism is. For Marxist-Leninists, socialism can only mean a *revolutionary transition period* leading from capitalism and other reactionary forms of class society to the achievement of communism throughout the world. It is the most thorough and radical revolution that has ever taken place in the history of humanity.

History has shown that the socialist revolution can only begin when the proletariat has seized political power by force of arms and has established its own revolutionary dictatorship. This is the road of the October Revolution that, as Mao said, is valid for all countries. Only with political power firmly in its hands is it possible for the proletariat to construct a socialist economic system based on state and collective ownership of the principal means of production (factories, mines, rail-

roads, land, etc.).

It is important to stand firm in the face of the critics of Marxism who would negate the accomplishments of Lenin and Stalin in building the first socialist state. We can say with confidence that the Bolshevik Revolution marked a turning point in the history of mankind. Negating the experience of Lenin and Stalin means abandoning the proletarian dictatorship, the forcible overthrow of the existing property relations and the conscious reconstruction of society in the interests of the proletariat and the masses. It means abandoning the goal of classless society, communism. It means giving up on the very idea of all-the-way revolution.

But this defence of our principles *will not be successful* unless it is coupled with a thorough and penetrating exposure of the class nature of revisionism, of its bourgeois essence. How is it that the *forms* of socialism (state ownership, leadership of the Communist Party, planned economy) have taken on an entirely different content?

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ist society would be born ideologically, politically and economically stamped with the birthmarks of the old society. Furthermore the history of the proletarian revolution has been that power has been seized in first one country or a group of countries surrounded by a hostile world dominated by imperialism. The weight of the past as well as of the world situation in which they found

themselves has placed a tremendous burden on the genuine socialist states that have existed.

How would it be possible to move in the direction of a society based upon "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need" when the economic base in the Soviet Union and later in China were weak and unable to meet these needs?

One of the great contributions of Mao Tsetung was always keeping the final goal of achieving communism throughout the world firmly in mind and evaluating the line and policies adopted in socialist construction from this angle and none other. It was not enough, Mao understood, to develop the productive forces of society — the productive forces certainly had to be developed, but on the *basis* of continually revolutionising the relationships between people and the thinking of people which was still largely marked by the ideologies of the exploiting classes. And the productive forces had to be developed not as an end in itself but to provide the necessary material basis for a higher form of society no longer divided into classes.

In understanding these laws of socialist construction, Mao learned much from the negative as well as positive experience of the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union under Stalin. He pointed out that economic categories ultimately reflected relationships between people, and that it was incorrect to talk only about things and not about people.

Of course, Stalin, unlike those like Khrushchev who attacked him after his death, was also thoroughly committed to the communist goal. But while Stalin waged struggle against many opponents of socialism, he had difficulty seeing how they were being engendered from within the socialist economy itself, that these opportunist elements who strove to transform those sections of the socialist state and economy which they controlled into their own private property represented a new bourgeoisie. Theoretically he had even argued that the existence of a bourgeoisie had become impossible in the Soviet Union with the construction of the socialist economic system. Stalin downplayed the need to continue making *revolution* even

after socialism had been established.

Mao, on the other hand, was able to analyse how a bourgeoisie is inevitably generated under socialism and that, therefore, it is necessary to repeatedly *arouse the masses from below* to strike down the bourgeoisie within the Communist Party itself and, step by step, dig away at the capitalist economic and ideological "soil" which was generating new bourgeois elements batch after batch.

Mao saw that the dictatorship of the proletariat had to be understood, in Marx's words, as the declaration of the permanence of the revolution, and that its strength would come from drawing the proletariat and the broad masses more and more into "affairs of state" — the fundamental questions of the society. Mao knew that the proletariat could not simply "delegate" their dictatorship to the Communist Party. The vanguard communist party is needed to lead the socialist revolution, Mao understood, but he also grasped that the *enemies* of the revolution would also be found within the communist party. Mao had to wage a sharp struggle against the theory that once socialist ownership had been established the main task was to develop the productive forces, arguing instead that further revolutionising society and continuing to battle the capitalist roaders is the decisive factor in advancing socialism.

Mao understood that socialist economic construction required a state economic plan, that this is a vital way in which the proletariat begins to consciously transform nature instead of being merely the slaves of economic laws as under capitalism. But Mao also understood the question of centralised planning in a very dialectical way, that is, he understood the unity and struggle of opposites — between balance and imbalance, agriculture and industry, heavy and light industry, and between the centre and the regions. He knew that centralised planning had to be accompanied with local initiative. On these questions, too, Mao summed up the negative as well as the positive experience of Stalin, and in particular Stalin's tendency to rely on heavy-handed, bureaucratic and overly centralised methods in socialist planning. For Mao, the proletariat must dominate the plan and never the other way around. One

famous slogan during the Cultural Revolution hung over the Shanghai waterfront: "Be Masters of the Wharf, Not Slaves to Tonnage!"

Mao realised that the struggle to achieve communism would be long, protracted and complex, involving

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twists and turns and struggles with which the international communist movement was not yet familiar. This is reflected in his statement that, "The next 50 to 100 years or so, beginning from now, will be a great era of radical change in the social system throughout the world, an earth-shaking era without equal in any previous historical period. Living in such an era, we must be prepared to engage in great struggles which will have many features different in form from those of the past."³

A Long, Bitter Battle

Throughout history, the transition from one social system to another has proven to be a protracted process full of setbacks as well as advances. The Chinese party stressed how the replacement of slavery by the feudal system in ancient China took hundreds of years. Similarly, in Europe the bourgeois revolution took place over several centuries before feudalism was thoroughly supplanted by capitalism. In both Britain and France, for example, counter-revolutionary restorations took place and held sway before the rule of the bourgeoisie was firmly established.

What was true for the bourgeois revolution is all the more true for the proletarian revolution which does not seek to replace one exploiting class by another, but to carry out the most profound revolution in history, a "radical rupture", as Marx put it, with all previous exploiting societies. The seizure of political power by the proletariat is already a great

accomplishment, but this seizure of power *only opens the door* to the struggle to transform the ways in which people interact with each other in all aspects of social life.

The ideas and practices which have grown up on the basis of thousands of years of class society will not go away without a bitter struggle, and these ideas and practices will continually have a tendency to corrupt and ultimately transform even socialist society. When the factory managers believe their role is to decide and that of the workers is simply to produce, when the workers themselves believe that their lot is simply to obey orders, when engineers and technical personnel believe that their better position in society is due to their own natural talent, when teachers behave as tyrants and cultural works extol the traditional role of women, for example, we are not very far from capitalism.

Consider the vital problem of "bourgeois right". Under socialism, a wage system would still be necessary and workers would be compensated according to the principle of "to each according to his work" since the higher form of social organisation "to each according to his need" could not yet be instituted. The realisation of this principle is indeed a big victory over capitalism in that it establishes that "he who does not work, neither shall he eat", and in so doing deals a giant blow to the old capitalist class who lived off the labour of the workers. But at the same time "equal reward according to equal work" invariably brings about real inequalities because, as Marx put it, people have most unequal needs (a single man, for example, compared with a woman responsible for three children). Furthermore, the ideas associated with this principle of "to each according to his work" are most certainly *bourgeois*, such as the idea that "hard work merits reward" and "those who work harder should receive more", etc.

The continued existence of a wage system and the need for goods to be exchanged through money is a reflection that society has not yet gone beyond the barriers of commodity production and distribution according to the value of commodities. This is what Lenin was referring to when he said that "we have

created a bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie." Under revisionist rule this principle of "bourgeois right" is worshipped. In China, following Mao's death, the revisionists have even raised the slogan that "to get rich is glorious". Mao pointed out that under socialism, bourgeois right "could only be restricted" and not eliminated, but he did indeed fight to restrict it and criticise the ideology associated with it. Left unrestricted, bourgeois right would lead right back to capitalism and even the principle "to each according to his work" would, if a new bourgeoisie takes the means of production for themselves, become again the well-known capitalist principle that "he who works the least gets the most."

Mao realised that it would be no quick and easy matter to eliminate the "three great differences" between city and countryside, workers and peasants and manual and mental labour. As long as these differences existed communism would be impossible. The elimination of these relics of centuries of class society also depended upon a higher level of productive forces than existed in China as well as upon radical revolution in the organisation of society.

Mao's response to understanding the difficulties and the protracted nature of the transition to communism was not to throw up his hands and declare "human nature" unbeatable. Rather, he sought the *means* to carry through the revolution under these circumstances and he armed the workers, peasants, soldiers and revolutionary intellectuals of China and the internationalist communist movement with this correct scientific understanding of socialist revolution. For genuine communists worldwide, coming to understand the true contradictory nature of socialist society was not frightening but liberating.

It let us understand how it was that what had long been described as an "impenetrable fortress" of socialism in the Soviet Union had been captured from within and, more importantly, showed that through the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and masses such as during the Cultural Revolution, it was possible to *defeat* those who would drag society back to the capitalist road, and, in so doing, unleash

hundreds of millions of people to make giant leaps in transforming all aspects of society. Mao restored Marx' and Engels' vision of communist society in which men and women would consciously and voluntarily change the world and themselves, untrammelled by the existence of classes, a vision which, at the hands of revisionists, had been distorted, hidden and stripped of any practical significance.

Despite the great victories won in the ten years of the Cultural Revolution, after the death of Mao Tsetung the capitalist roaders in China were able to come to power through a coup d'état aimed at Mao's staunchest followers led by his widow Chiang Ching and Chang Chun-chiao. That socialist revolution in China itself was temporarily defeated was, of course, a great blow for the proletariat worldwide. But Mao had armed us to withstand this blow, to understand it, to carry forward the battle on other fronts and in other countries and never to lose our strategic confidence in the final victory of our cause.

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All of these points are complex and are governed not only by the general laws of nature and revolution but by very specific laws particular to the socialist economy as well. In order to really thoroughly expose the capitalist nature of the Eastern European regimes, and more importantly, to be prepared to do a good job at socialist construction when we come to power, it is neces-

sary for the genuine revolutionary communists to get a deeper handle on this question and a basic mastery of the political economy of socialism. And it is also necessary for the communists to get a firm grasp on Mao's criticisms of Stalin, not to chime in on the anti-Stalin chorus, but so as to be better able to draw, for themselves and the masses, a clear line of distinction between the East European monstrosities and a genuine socialist society. The revisionist regimes inherited many of the *forms* of socialism. Furthermore, they took advantage of the mistakes that had been made by Stalin and genuine revolutionaries. In the countries of Eastern Europe this was even more complicated by the fact that, unlike the Soviet Union, little revolutionary transformation had ever been carried out. To aid this study, we have reprinted some brief extracts from two important works, Mao's *Critique of Soviet Economics* and the *Fundamentals of Political Economy* (a textbook published in Shanghai in 1974 under the leadership of Mao's line) in the hopes that these texts in their entirety and others will be studied.

As the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* puts it, "Lenin said, 'Only he is a Marxist who extends the recognition of class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat'. In the light of the invaluable lessons and advances achieved through the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution led by Mao Tsetung, this criterion put forward by Lenin has been further sharpened. Now it can be stated that only he is a Marxist who extends the recognition of class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat and to the recognition of the objective existence of classes, antagonistic class contradictions and of the continuation of the class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat throughout the whole period of socialism until communism. And as Mao so powerfully stated, 'Lack of clarity on this question will lead to revisionism.'"

Form and Content

It has often been pointed out that Mao was able to develop his penetrating understanding of socialist

revolution because of his excellent grasp of the dialectical materialist method. He was never content with the appearances of things; he always strove to find their essence. He realised that it was the unity and struggle of opposites that determined the nature of every process in nature and in human society and he relentlessly pursued this method when examining socialist society.

The Communist Party has political power? Well and good. But is the Communist Party really a party of the proletariat, is it representing their largest interests or is it becoming a private club in the hands of a minority of society which strives to protect and reproduce the interests of this minority? Mao proved that there was no such thing as the "monolithic party" (as Stalin was fond of calling it) but that the party itself would always be the arena of fierce two-line struggle between the proletarian and revisionist line, whose outcome would determine the very direction of society.

You have established the dictatorship of the proletariat? An important accomplishment. But is this state really putting power in the hands of the workers and peasants? Mao asked, "who criticises?" He cut through the economist/revisionist conception that considered "socialism" simply the improvement of the conditions of the masses and insisted on the political power of the proletariat allied with all of the revolutionary masses. He saw that the state itself was a contradictory phenomenon under socialism. It was absolutely necessary to build and strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat, but this very state apparatus could and would be transformed into a weapon against the masses, a dictatorship of the party bigshots, factory directors and technocrats, or a new bourgeoisie, unless the most tenacious struggle by the masses was carried out.

You say that you have built a powerful socialist country? This is a great accomplishment. But Mao pointed out that to talk about the final victory in one country "runs contrary to Leninism" and that we should never lose sight of the worldwide goal of communism. If the socialist state became an end in itself, if it no longer existed to serve the advance toward worldwide com-

munist, it would cease being socialist at all and become an obstacle in the path of the world revolution — which is exactly what happened in the USSR.

Mao understood that things could, under certain circumstances, be transformed into their opposites. We too should use this method when analysing events. The revolt of the masses in Eastern Europe is objectively a revolt against the evils of imperialism, yet in the minds of most of the people in those countries it is a revolt against socialism and communism. This is not a reason to tail behind the backward sentiments of the masses in those countries. No, these people must be challenged, and boldly, with the truth of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. But it is also very wrong to look only at the surface appearance of things and draw erroneous conclusions as to the revolutionary possibilities in these countries. Phoney "Marxism-Leninism" — real revisionism — has been the official ideology, the state religion, in the countries of the East bloc. No real possibility of inroads for genuine Marxism existed until this state religion was thoroughly repudiated and rejected by the masses. To see only the anti-communist label and ignore the anti-capitalist content is a violation of dialectics — and it is wrong.

The International Dimension

As we mentioned above, one of the reasons for the difficulties of the socialist states that have existed was the fact that they were situated in a hostile world still dominated by imperialism and reaction. As the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* puts it, socialist countries are base areas of the world revolution and are a subordinate part of the latter. The socialist countries are locked in a life and death struggle with the world imperialist system. It is absolutely necessary for the proletariat and the revolutionary masses to take power wherever possible and begin constructing a socialist society. The victories in this process, such as those won in the USSR under Lenin and Stalin and in China under Mao, help propel the whole world revolutionary movement forward, especially by serving as living proof that

exploitation of man by man need not be the organising principle of society. They serve as a beacon to the oppressed of the possibility of a better future.

Socialist states have adopted a policy of "peaceful coexistence" with the capitalist and imperialist states. But such peaceful coexistence can only be a truce in an ongoing conflict which, in the long run, can only be resolved by the victory of one camp or the other. The imperialists have shown that while they might at times be forced to accept the existence of a socialist state, they will never give up their efforts to encircle, harass, subvert, or even invade such a socialist state.

Furthermore, apart from the military aspect, as long as the imperialist system is still dominant in the world, a great deal of the world's productive forces, and with it, important economic lifelines of the world, will be under their control, and this will be used against the socialist society. Given this and given the planetary character of human society, something which has become all the more marked with the advent of imperialism, it is inconceivable to imagine a communist society existing on only part of the earth.

Can Socialism "Deliver the Goods"?

One of Khrushchev's great boasts was that East-bloc "socialism" would "bury" the West through the process of peaceful competition. He thought he could build up an empire that would rival that of the United States and Europe in terms of the living standards it gave to many of its people living in the imperialist metropole. Of course, Khrushchev and his successors were never able to fulfil this boast, and today the relative riches in the West are being used as the ultimate proof of the so-called superiority of the Western capitalist system.

The main reason for the relatively poorer economic situation in the East than in the West is simply that the West has been *more successful* at exploiting an international empire. Not that the social-imperialists of the USSR have not also tried to construct and profit from such an empire — they have. But for a number of historical and geopolitical rea-

sons, the Soviet-led bloc was never able to secure and profitably utilise a worldwide network of countries to the degree that the Western imperialists have.

A genuine socialist country would never enter the race for neo-colonies and Third World feasting grounds. The development of the productive capacity of a genuine socialist state is never an end in itself and even raising the level of living standards of the masses in these countries is subordinate to the goal of advancing toward communism. Put bluntly, it is better to go without if the only way to obtain the desired material goods is by becoming a new exploiter state. The East bloc had no compunction against entering this reactionary competition; they taught their populations that the very goal of socialism was more "goulash" on every table (which is why Mao ridiculed Khrushchev's "goulash communism"). But in the final analysis the West proved a better source of goulash than the East.

It must be added, however, that the "scales" which the imperialist West wishes to use to measure the supposed superiority of its system are rigged. It is easy to show, for example, that revolutionary China under Mao or the Soviet Union under Lenin and Stalin were poor compared with the West. But what about the countries the West exploits? The imperialist system has two "poles" — those who live in the imperialist citadels and benefit to varying degrees from the privileged position of these countries *and* those who live in the vast reaches of Asia, Africa and Latin America where whole countries have been deformed and put at the service of ensuring the wealth of the imperialist countries. China before liberation in 1949 was exactly one of those countries which had been sucked dry by the imperialist nations, and the scars of this oppression were inherited by the proletariat when it took power. But despite these very real economic hardships, revolutionary China was able, step by step, to develop the economy in an all-round way that greatly raised the living standards of the people, especially in such key areas as nutrition, health and education, and that also provided for further advance along the socialist road. In fact, the standard of living

of the masses in China compared very favourably to the standard of living of the labouring people in the oppressed countries.

The collapse of East bloc "socialism" is also being used to say that the only path of economic development is to hitch a country's development to the "motor" of imperialism. It is true that the imperialist exploiting machine is a powerful motor for "economic development." It can chew up people by the millions and spit out tons of broken bones and, in the process, it can build modern cities usually surrounded, in the Third World at least, with equally "modern" slums. Imperialism can only develop a country by creating in miniature what it does in the world as a whole — increasing wealth at one "pole" while increasing misery and desperation at the other "pole". Like a magnet, capitalism and imperialism cannot exist without both poles, within a given country and internationally.

The Soviet Union promoted a "socialist" version of this same theory, calling on the countries of its bloc to step in line with the "international socialist division of labour." The disastrous results of this policy in Cuba are one of the subjects of the article by Rudi Mambisa in this issue.

The Situation is Excellent

The deep crisis of the East bloc regimes and the collapse of Soviet-style modern revisionism provide an excellent opportunity for the genuine communists. Although the trumpets of anti-communism are loudly blaring, the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement and other Maoist forces are equipped with the necessary tool to seize hold of this excellent situation and advance the revolutionary struggle. This tool is none other than Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought — the resolute enemy of pessimism, agnosticism and all forms of revisionism. The lessons that the proletariat have learned in making revolution and building socialism are not in vain; they will permit us to sweep aside the rubbish and construct the new. The fact that the socialist revolution has proven complex and protracted is no argument whatsoever against launching the revolution, but rather

testimony to the greatness of the task of creating a whole new world.

The masses of people in the East bloc and increasingly in the Western imperialist states as well, are being propelled into struggle against the ruling classes. This is because, as Mao put it, "Wherever there is oppression, there is resistance." And where there is resistance people inevitably seek an ideology that will teach them whom and how to fight. Right now many people are following various enemy flags, but they cannot help but be increasingly disillusioned with such false promises.

The possibility of a new wave of revolutionary struggle is certainly not lost on the imperialist enemy. One of their greatest concerns in the East is to swiftly restore some stability to the bourgeois order. The capitalists, East and West, must rapidly unveil the true meaning — the class content — of the "democracy" they have been heralding. Those who have been rising up against the social inequalities and the privileges of a few must now be taught that such privileges and inequality are the very heart of the capitalist democracies to be constructed. The aroused masses must be put back to sleep — and as quickly as possible, given the hardships that are in store for them. But history has shown that this is not always so easily done. □

Footnotes

1. In a speech to the 9th Plenum of the Albanian Party of Labour Central Committee in January 1990, Ramiz Alia, leader of the PLA, describes the recent events in E Europe as being "on the whole favourable to capitalism"; he asks, "how is it possible for the working class, for the masses, to become protagonists and supporters for the restoration of capitalism" and concludes that the communists "should live with this tragedy painfully, but of course not in despair".

2. Nikita Khrushchev was the Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union between 1953 and 1964. In 1956, shortly after the death of Stalin, Khrushchev launched an all-out attack on Stalin and the very principles of Marxism-Leninism and the accomplishments of socialism in the USSR. He presided over the restoration of capitalism in that country until he himself was overthrown in a palace coup by Brezhnev and Kosygin in 1965.

3. Cited in "Capitalist Roaders Are the Bourgeoisie Inside the Party", *Peking Review* No. 25, 18 June 1976.