

Editorial

—Coordinating Committee

A year has passed since the International Conference which issued a Joint Communiqué signed initially by thirteen Marxist-Leninist organisations. Since the appearance and distribution of the Communiqué, numerous parties and organisations have endorsed it.

In order to continue the process of unification initiated by this Conference and to reach a qualitatively higher level, the Coordinating Committee that emerged from the Conference considers it necessary to carry out another International Conference some time in 1982.

The First International Conference was possible due to the sharpening objective contradictions in the world today. Among them are the deep and sustained economic crisis; the increasingly grave threat of a new world war; the growing exploitation and oppression of the international proletariat and the peoples subjugated by imperialism, and as a counterpart, the important struggles of the masses and oppressed nations that this gives rise to. In light of this critical situation—compounded by the counterrevolutionary coup d'état in China—and in order to confront it, it was both essential and urgent to develop the revolutionary subjective factors. This meant trying to formulate a general line as well as strategy and tactics for the international proletariat, and to achieve this, drawing a clear line of demarcation between the genuine Marxist-Leninists and the various existing revisionist tendencies, thus beginning the process of rebuilding the International Communist Movement on the basis of principles and the experiences of the world revolutionary struggle.

A first step in this direction was taken with the International Conference and the Joint Communiqué it gave rise to. The great significance and value of this attempt to reunify the Marxist-Leninists—despite the limitations inevitable in a first joint meeting—consists, first of all, in that a commitment was made to take such an initial step. This initiative could not have been pulled together without overcoming various revisionist, dogmatist and sectarian tendencies; and also of course not without the existence of organisations that agreed on certain essential principles and on an appraisal of the historic moment we are living in; and most especially, it could not have taken place without the common recognition that it was both necessary and urgent to forge the unity of the Marxist-Leninists. The meeting itself, its spirit of unity and ideological struggle, and the Joint Communiqué which is an expression of common views, are all manifestations of the determination to continue advancing—both ideologically and practically—in the unifica-

tion process. Its future success depends on the decision to persist in the debate in order to deepen the unity already achieved and to resolve existing disagreements. If we continue along this path with perseverance and largeness of mind, many Marxist-Leninist streams will merge into this unitary current—as is already being borne out in practise—and together with ever more forces, it will be possible to make advances in the formulation of a general line for the International Communist Movement and the creation of the most effective organisational forms corresponding to the level of unity achieved. Even before reaching this goal, at every step in the development of the unification process it is possible to adopt practical resolutions contributing to its strengthening and permitting joint actions against the common enemy. The agreement to jointly publish a journal in three different languages is a concrete expression of this kind of unified action.

The debate at the International Conference and the Joint Communiqué it issued are outstanding affirmations of Marxism-Leninism, whose fundamental principles are shared by those who took part. The Joint Communiqué is a public endorsement of some of these principles. Certainly, this reaffirmation of Marxism-Leninism is extremely important at a time like the present when the bourgeoisie and opportunists of all sorts, with all the power of their mass media, are trying to show that Marxism-Leninism has failed, by pointing to a socialism that has degenerated into state capitalism in a number of countries as the embodiment of Marxism-Leninism in practise. The International Conference and its Joint Communiqué, even with the shortcomings inherent in a first joint initiative, make it clear that there are forces who do not regard the present state of those countries as the result of the application of Marxism-Leninism, but rather of the betrayal of its fundamental principles or of a failure to understand them. The Conference and the Joint Communiqué constitute a declaration that these forces thoroughly reject the idea that what exists in those countries can be called socialism. Of course, to determine the causes which led to the reestablishment of a new system of exploitation and oppression in a number of countries, as well as to the revisionist degeneration of the old International Communist Movement, is an arduous task requiring joint investigation and discussion so as to arrive at a common scientific assessment. Such a common evaluation must also include, as some organisations have correctly pointed out already, a criticism and self-criticism of the history of the organisations that broke with the old International Communist Movement after the 20th Congress of the CPSU.

As a lesson and inspiration for the future, it is extraordinarily positive that the first International Conference displayed such a scientific and critical attitude in taking up problems through an intense ideological struggle in defence of principles. Independent judgment, opposition to tailism and dogmatism, and fidelity to Marxism-Leninism, along with the sincere objective of learning from others and the ability to recognise mistakes and correct them, are qualities inseparable from the genuine proletarian internationalism that inspired the Conference. This attitude marks a decisive difference from other forces that call themselves Marxist-Leninists. Taking into account the dogmatic and tailist practises which characterised the old International Communist Movement and still prevail among many who claim to be Marxist-Leninists, it is obvious that simple participation in international meetings and the subsequent publication of "joint" resolutions is no proof that there has been struggle to seek truth through independent judgment, faithfulness to the facts and to principles and a genuine interest in learning from the experiences and thinking of others.

The First International Conference, along with reaching a certain level of agreement (as expressed in the Communiqué) on current political questions as well as questions about the history of the revolutionary movement, also revealed the existence of disagreements and a significant unevenness among different organisations regarding the investigation and the resolution of these questions.

Among the numerous historical problems left for discussion and resolution we could mention: a critical evaluation of the work of the Third Communist International; a deepening of the analysis of the objective and subjective conditions which led to the restoration of the system of exploitation in a number of socialist countries; a critical analysis of the policy of the Anti-Fascist United Front carried out before and during WWII; a critical evaluation of the old International Communist Movement and the Marxist-Leninist movement that emerged out of the Sino-Soviet polemics, etc. Clearly, not only can the international proletariat win great victories, but also—despite the errors and/or capitulation of those who have acted in its name—it has the necessary vitality and correctness to explain why some of its practical efforts failed, by uncovering errors and deviations, and betrayal of principles.

Furthermore, the International Conference, in discussing the document presented by the inviting organisations (the RCP of Chile and the RCP, USA), as well as in the course of formulating the Joint Communiqué, revealed the existence of disagreements or of unresolved points that need to be discussed and investigated on a number of questions regarding the political evaluation of current conditions. Among them are, for example: the relation between nationalism and internationalism; the organisational forms that the International Communist Movement should adopt; the character of the revolution in certain countries dependent on imperialism in which capitalism plays a dominant role; the characterisation of the superpowers and their policies with respect to other imperialist countries, as well as the proletarian line towards them; the characterisation of present-day revisionism (in relation to how Lenin defined it in his time); a more precise evaluation of the present crisis, of the tendencies towards war and revolution; the determination of what should be the center of gravity at this time for the Marxist-Leninist parties in relation to the masses; the determination of the principal contradiction today, etc. . . . The need to advance in the unification process demands that these and other important problems be given special attention so that in the future they can be resolved and a unified position taken on them.

The First International Conference was convened on the basis of previously set conditions, so that the participants had general agreement beforehand on certain formulations considered to be fundamental points of departure in order to advance towards a deeper

unity. Among these conditions, a positive evaluation of the theoretical and practical role of Mao Tsetung in the world revolution and of the outstanding significance of the Proletarian Cultural Revolution was given special importance, since it has become a pivotal question in the recent period. Because of this, only organisations which had already taken such a position with respect to both these points were invited. The centrists—who while not openly participating in the assaults on Mao's contributions have neither acknowledged their decisive importance nor broken with those who've launched surprise attacks in opposition to their previous positions on the revolutionary work of Mao—were not invited. Without abandoning the hope of winning over some of the centrist forces, the decision to exclude them from the Conference was based on the principled Marxist stand that you cannot struggle effectively against wavering forces and win over honest elements under their influence by watering down the revolutionary positions to their level of vagueness, but rather only by firmly and explicitly defending these positions.

The positive evaluation of Mao's contributions, a pre-condition complemented by other views which arose at the meeting itself—in particular, the assessment of Mao's development of the theory and practise of the class struggle under socialism—led to the statement in the Joint Communiqué that even though we are still living in the era defined by Lenin, Mao's thought represents a qualitative development of Marxism-Leninism. The clearly defined position on Mao Tsetung's contributions drew a line of demarcation between the participants and signers of the Communiqué—as far as an initial level of unity would permit—and the different types of pro-Soviet revisionism which became public and evident at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, as well as the reactionary theory of the Three Worlds and other views and actions of the present Chinese leadership opposed to Mao. This also made it possible to draw a line of demarcation with those who recently (since Mao's death) have disavowed his contributions and attacked him.

Now, as we have shown, a new step is needed to advance the process of unification initiated by the First International Conference, and we must prepare for a new Conference. Firstly, new changes have taken place in the international situation. Secondly, many organisations, due to practical reasons or lack of knowledge of the process in gestation, were not present at the First Conference. Their voices must be heard at the next meeting. The active participation of all is necessary for the success of the Second Conference. The necessity to restrict the number of delegates from each organisation must be compensated for by a thoroughgoing debate carried out beforehand: within each organisation, in bilateral meetings and, eventually, in preparatory regional meetings. The Coordinating Committee invites all interested organisations to send written results of their investigations and views on the pending questions as well as on others they consider important. These may be documents for the Committee to distribute or articles for the third issue of the journal, which we will make every effort to publish before the Second Conference. We emphasise once again, as does the Joint Communiqué, the importance of debating the document presented to the First Conference by the RCP, USA and the RCP of Chile.*

In order to assist in the preparatory debate, we include here again the list of questions left by the First International Conference for debate and future resolution.

* *Basic Principles for the Unity of Marxist-Leninists and for the Line of the International Communist Movement* is available in English, French and Spanish editions from: RCP Publications, P.O. Box 3486, Merchandise Mart, Chicago, IL 60654, USA.

1. The current objective situation: the historic conjuncture. What are the main contradictions in the world situation today? How are these different contradictions developing and how should they be considered in terms of the fundamental and principal contradictions?

1.1 Characterisation of the current crisis—how are the two tendencies toward world war and revolution developing? What is the relation between these two tendencies and which is dominant?

1.2 What analysis can be made of the development of the world revolution, taking into account the revolutionary struggles at the end of the 1960s and the ebb that followed in the middle of the 1970s?

1.3 How should the two superpowers be characterised?

1.4 What is the current validity of the thesis of an international united front against the two superpowers; what are the relations between such a strategy and proletarian internationalism and the revolution in each country?

1.5 How to link, on the one hand, the orientation of the revolutionary movement—in view of strategy based on a class analysis, on the most important contradictions and on the principal contradiction at each stage—with, on the other hand, the political conjunctures thrown forward by causes independent of our will: crisis, war, change in the strategy of reaction?

2. Path of the Revolution. The communiqué states that “As Lenin analysed, the world proletarian revolution, in the era of imperialism, consists of two great currents allied against the imperialist system . . . There are many features in common between the revolution in these two types of countries; above all that in both instances the revolution must be led by the working class and its Marxist-Leninist party, through whatever stages, and to the dictatorship of the proletariat, socialism. But there are also some important distinctions in the path of the revolution in the two types of countries.”

2.1 The Dominated Countries.

—What criteria are necessary for characterising the dominated countries? In particular, to what point have capitalist relations developed in the dominated countries and is this process growing today? What conclusions should be drawn from this? The role of the bourgeoisie? The question of the revolution in two stages, etc.?

—What forms of accumulation of forces should be put in practice in these countries, especially regarding the armed struggle?

—What summary can we make of the different experiences of national liberation struggles since the Second World War?

—What are the tasks of communists, in the course of a revolution which passes through two stages, in order to create the conditions for the socialist revolution upon completion of the first stage? What are the essential differences between a “new-democratic revolution” and a bourgeois revolution, and how do these differences manifest themselves on the organisational, military, and political-ideological planes?

2.2 The Imperialist Countries.

—What are the essential criteria for characterising the imperialist countries?

—We say in the communiqué that “the October Revolution remains the basic point of reference for Marxist-Leninist strategy and tactics” in the imperialist countries. How should the teachings of Lenin be applied concerning the path of the revolution in these countries, taking into account the experiences and lessons acquired since the death of Lenin? What is the role of different forms of struggle in the process of accumulating forces? What is the role of the press (agitation and propaganda), of work in the trade unions, of electoral and parliamentary struggle, etc.?

—What are the most dangerous deviations and how should they be characterised: economism, dogmatism, tailing spontaneity? How do we consider/apply the teachings of Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?* and *Left-Wing Communism*?

—What are the forms of struggle for achieving the seizure of power? What is the validity of the insurrection, the role of the organs of revolutionary power?

—Are there conditions in which communists should wage a struggle for national defence or national liberation in the imperialist countries?

3. Summation of the International Communist Movement.

3.1 What is the correct summation of the Third International, in particular concerning the line developed before the Second World War (7th Congress of the Comintern), during the war (Anti-Fascist United Front, dissolution of the Comintern) and the period after the war?

3.2 What are the objective and subjective conditions which led to the restoration of capitalism in the socialist countries?

3.3 What summation can be made of the international Marxist-Leninist movement following the Sino-Soviet split? The “25 Point Letter” should be critically examined.

3.4 The necessity for a general line of the International Communist Movement.

4. Revisionism.

—The revisionist parties which exist as forces of opposition, that is, in those countries where the bourgeoisie dominates in a traditional fashion. Are these parties a political force which has new and different characteristics in relation to the social-democratic revisionism denounced by Lenin?

—What is the nature of the relations of these parties with the bourgeoisie in their respective countries and with the Soviet Union? Their political role, their relations with the Soviet Union and their own bourgeoisie—do these vary according to the type of countries (imperialist countries, dominated countries, etc.)? Do these political forces have a specific plan of a bourgeois-bureaucratic nature based on the control of the means of production by the State?

5. The Party—Strategy and Tactics.

5.1 Party-building. Struggle between two lines within the party. Position with regard to tendencies and factions. The functioning of democratic centralism. Lessons of the Cultural Revolution regarding the question of the party.

5.2 Relation between the party and the masses. How to actually play a vanguard role without falling into a voluntarist position, not taking into account the real level of consciousness of the masses? How to unite with the masses and their struggles without falling into spontaneous and economist tendencies?

—How to link the mass line with the principle underlined by Lenin of the need to divert the spontaneous struggle of the masses?

5.3 How to use agitation and propaganda (in accordance with the Marxist-Leninist theory of knowledge), taking into account that agitation and propaganda alone are not sufficient for developing a revolutionary consciousness, which requires that the masses must have practical experience. In other words, without forgetting the strategic objectives and their broad propagation, what tactic must be established (in relation to agitation, propaganda and action) to develop the political consciousness of the masses?

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