

Maoism vs Mao Thought

Harsh Thakor

There is a debate in the Communist Revolutionary Camp on the question of whether Maoism can replace the term Mao tse Tung Thought. One section states that only the term Maoism can correctly credit his contribution, the other condemns this replacement as it feels that it replaces the era of 'Leninism.'

What nobody can deny is that Mao took Leninism to a higher phase through his development of protracted People's War in semi-colonial countries and with his thesis on continuous Revolution under the dictatorship of the Proletariat. It was Mao who discovered that even a Socialist Society or State can degenerate into a bourgeois order in the economic and political spheres. He introduced the concept of a Revolution within a Socialist Society itself, without which he felt that it would revert to a bourgeois society. In fact historically Mao's teachings are most relevant when analysing the triumph of Khrushchev bourgeois state in 1956. In fact Revisionism had its roots in the Stalinist era as though he led his country to a great victory in the World War against Nazi Germany saving the Socialist State he hardly called for Democratic Struggles from below in a Socialist party and unleashed repression on party members. Mao had earlier applied Lenin's colonial thesis in using a military line for the colonial or semi-colonial countries thus developing the theory of New Democratic Revolution. Without this first stage a Socialist Society could not develop in third World Countries, where a united Front was made with the national bourgeoisie in alliance with the petite bourgeoisie, proletariat and peasantry under the leadership of the proletariat. Even after the triumph of the Revolution in 1949 the CCP called the ideology "Marxism-Leninism and the Thought of Mao tse Tung". In the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution launched in 1966 period the CCP termed it Marxism-Leninism-Mao tse Tung Thought. If hypothetically tomorrow Socialist Revolutions exist in Europe they would have applied Mao's revolutionary theories before and after Revolution without which they would not be true Marxists. To conduct 2-line struggle in a Socialist Society within a Leninist party as Mao did during the Cultural Revolution was an innovation in itself. Mao's military line can be relevant everywhere whether in a third world Country or a European Country. The people's war in Chechnya may be a case in point. True, it would not have the same characteristics in China or Asia but the concept could be adapted in the relevant manner towards accomplishing the goal of a Socialist Revolution. It was Mao who discovered the first military line and it would be wrong to say that his theory was inapplicable to a first World Country. Mao was the first to provide the International Proletariat with a correct Military line. Mao also made philosophical contributions like his discovery of the Law of Contradiction as the fundamental law of dialectics in nature.

The point at issue is whether the term Maoism replaces the era of Leninism with Maoism. Lenin took Marxism to a higher stage by discovering Imperialism as a development of Capitalism in his colonial thesis. He also developed the concept of the Party of the Proletariat, unlike Marx who felt a revolutionary Society would continue with the Parliamentary democratic

System even after the proletarian dictatorship was established. Mao applied Leninism in Party building stressing the concept of democratic centralism, right upto the Cultural Revolution. Mao has not discovered a new era like Lenin but he has made major theoretical innovations. Lenin took Marxism to a higher stage as a development of Imperialism from Capitalism and thus created a new era. Similarly Mao tse Tung Thought does not reject Leninism but just means that Leninism has been taken to a higher stage. The importance is that the contribution of Marx and Lenin are not placed on a lower pedestal. Terming the era as Maoism means rejecting the Leninist era of Imperialism and Proletarian Revolution. Maoism can only be applied as a component of Marxism and Leninism. Mao took Marxism-Leninism to a higher stage, but did not discover a new era. One must assert that Maoism is a thesis and not a law in itself and it would be an un-marxist trend to call the present era the era of Maoism.

To divide the communist revolutionary camp on the question of Maoism against Mao Thought would be harmful. True, revolutionaries in Nepal had led a major armed struggle and a series of People's Wars were fought in the World propagating the terminology of Maoism. It is also true that many organisations still upholding Mao tse Tung Thought represent rightist or revisionist trend. The erstwhile Red Flag Group also has wrong reasoning by clubbing Maoism with the term Lin Biaoism which rejects the leadership of the Party of the Proletariat and terming it as a mere military line.

The Shining Path Movement in Peru (Communist Party of Peru) was on the verge of victory in launching a People's War about 15 years ago while in the Phillipines the CPP is at a progressive stage in its armed struggle. In India the CPI(Maoist) leads a powerful armed struggle. But 3 of the 4 organisations mentioned have either capitulated, had a major setback or vitiated by left sectarian trends. The Revolutionary Internationalist Movement which adopted Maoism as its ideology is also in a stage of collapsing. Some ideologues feel that the term Maoism does true justice to Mao's Contribution. Describing Maoism as an-ism in itself would virtually mean that people are existing in the era of Maoism. As long as one accepts the modern era as that of 'Imperialism and Proletarian Revolution', (as propounded by Lenin in 1918) it is incorrect to replace the term Mao tse Tung thought with Maoism... Maoism cannot exist without Marxism and Leninism and is a component.

It is relevant that even the Chinese Communist Party used the terminology of Mao tse Tung thought even in the Cultural Revolution period. A very important point is whether an-ism can be separated from an era. Despite several proletarian armed struggles taking place worldwide including the Indian Naxalbari version the Chinese communists never replaced the term Mao tse Tung Thought with Maoism. Why the forces like the PCP, NCP(M) and CPI (Maoist) justify this as they describe the era as that of 'total collapse of Imperialism' (and attribute this to the 9th Congress of the CPC in 1969) as different to "Imperialism and Proletarian Revolution" is difficult to understand.

QUESTION OF ERA

In the 1969 Party Congress the CCP had reported that it was the era where "Imperialism was heading for a Collapse and Proletarian revolutions were triumphing". This has been interpreted in different ways by the revolutionary Groups. One section states it meant 'the era of total Collapse of Imperialism'

and promoted Left Adventurism in defining it as a new era and was wrong. Another interprets it as correctly replacing the era of Imperialism and Proletarian Revolution with era of total collapse of imperialism stating that in fact it was a different era—that of Mao tse Tung Thought or Maoism where Imperialism was on the verge of collapse. The latter trend is the view of the CPI (Maoist) like forces. Such Intellectuals assert that it is not the Imperialism of the Lenin's period and the World economy has undergone qualitative changes. In their view it has considerably weakened. And that one can only acknowledge Maoism by calling it the era of total collapse of Imperialism and Victory of Proletarian Revolution. However within this section the Jan Muktikami Group (Interestingly this section terms Maoism Revisionist and Mao tse Tung Thought correct), asserts that it is still a part of the era of Imperialism and Proletarian Revolution. In fact this group referring to Mao tse Tung thought propagates that rejecting total collapse of Imperialism amounts to abandoning Mao tse Tung Thought. This is a trend to be combated. It denies the modern era as that of 'Imperialism and Proletarian Revolution' and replaces it. Whatever may have been the changes in the post World War 2 phase in terms of change of dominance of colonies to that of the Superpowers or 4 decades later the collapse of erstwhile USSR and the change in the World Situation. Even groups who fight tooth and nail against replacing Mao tse Tung Thought with Maoism feel that not accepting the "total collapse of Imperialism" theory amounts rejecting Mao. The Cultural revolution left some invaluable lessons for all activists and students of the Communist Movement. What is most important is to combat the trend of the era of collapse of Imperialism and Victory of Proletarian Revolution. The most important theoretical point is whether the 9th CPC Congress held in 1969, actually propagated this. In fact the 10th Congress of 1973 reverted to the definition of 'Era of Imperialism and Proletarian Revolution'. In the era of globalization there have been important changes but has imperialism weakened? Are proletarian revolutions on the verge of triumphing? True, USA like today has gone through a severe economic crisis in their history and even European Countries have fluctuating economies but that does not prove that Imperialism is collapsing. Just because the Imperialist Countries had resorted to neo-colonialism particularly does not indicate that imperialism was collapsing, even in the era of the Cold War between the two Superpowers, USA and the erstwhile USSR. Stalin even after the end of World War 2 asserted the era as that of Imperialism and Proletarian revolution as advocated by Leninism. Another dangerous trend was that which advocated that war was the main trend and not Revolution. Today there are serious revolutionary Movements but no one which is on the verge of triumphing and no Imperialist economy which is on the verge of collapsing. It is this wrong analysis that rejects Leninism. It promotes Left Adventurism.

There is also an erroneous trend that propagates that Lin Biaoism existed in the CPC (view of CPI-ML—Kanu Sanyal group). True, Lin Biao used Mao's cult to promote the fallacious theory of genius and immortalised the Red Book as works of magic. After becoming successor he opposed Cultural Revolution. However if Lin Biaoism prevailed then the line of the CCP would have been vitiated. Another trend advocates that Mao did not learn from the lessons of the Paris Commune and Lenin and legalised the revolutionary committees which discouraged the revolutionary movement. Such writings undermine the

ardous efforts the CCP made to carry out 2-line struggle and establish proletarian power.

QUESTION OF DICTATORSHIP

Another important point is the one on the dictatorship of the Proletariat. Some forces have gone to the extent of advocating a multi-party system like Nepal or perhaps the RCP USA. One thing has to be accepted. There were important weaknesses in Socialist Society in the Stalinist and Maoist Periods. Dissent was totally suppressed in the Stalin era while in Mao's time intellectuals were wrongly persecuted by Red Guards. Powerful left sectarian trends emerged. One of the most intriguing aspects was the period of Lin Biao and his rise to power. Lin immortalised Mao's Contribution as if his works were books of magic and miracle and greatly promoted a personality Cult of Mao of gigantic proportions. Mao had virtually become a God!

Leaders like Bob Avakian propagate the encouragement of dissidence within a Socialist Society inviting criticism and inviting dissent within the Socialist State. They have gone to the extent of even finding fault with Lenin's policies in the 1920's. The Important theoretical debate is that can such dissent save or promote a Socialist State. Particularly in the Soviet Union intellectuals became victims of repression. Several Innocent party members were also killed. In China criticism of Mao would not have been allowed even in a dictatorship of the working class. However if not structured inviting dissent may defeat the dictatorship of the Proletariat or a Working class State. Would a multi-party system have saved erstwhile Socialist States of Russia and China? In fact they may well have destroyed them. Would USSR have won the Great Patriotic War against the Nazis with a Multi- Party State or China achieve such great Socialist heights (from 1949-1978) in a multi-party structure. CCP's phenomenal achievements from 1949-1976 can hardly be disputed! Without the serious 2-line Struggle the great achievements of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution would not have taken place. Never has the proletariat or peasantry been emancipated to such an extent. True, there was a great personality Cult in the Maoist era but it was the first experiment of its kind. Stalin had to combat phenomenal pressure in the 2nd World War, from the Imperialist Enemy forces. According to Leninism the party was the vanguard organisation of the working class and thus the existence of various parties would contradict the dictatorship of the Proletariat. Socialist Theoreticians need to make a serious study of this aspect, particularly in light of overcoming a personality Cult and preventing suppression of democratic dissent. One of the most important aspects of study is the contradiction between mass organisations and mass movements with the proletarian party. In the Cultural Revolution there were powerful, left sectarian tendencies and what has to be studied is what would have prevented the personality cult of Mao, the victory of the rightist forces and the Socialist base for the Communist Movement. Although there was serious struggle, there could have been tendencies of factional struggle taking place between the factions of Liu Shao Chi and Mao tse Tung instead of pure 2-line struggle of the Working class against the bourgeoisie. A question that needs to be researched is whether further revolutionary democratic structures could be formed or developed within the party and the revolutionary committees. Perhaps scope for factions could be created which ideologically struggled but promoted proletarian Unity and dictatorship. The Cultural Revolution was defeated after 10 years of its launching and the question

remains why the Gang of 4 (Followers of Mao) was defeated in 1976 and the capitalist regime in China was first accepted. Today leaders like Avakian hardly have structured theoretical solutions on Revolution and even propagate wrong trends that have affected the World Revolution. The organisation RIM was prematurely formed, in 1984. Today the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement is affected with fallacious tendencies and may well collapse. Even the CPC opposed the forming of such an International learning lessons from the collapse of the 1943 Comintern. RIM has promoted the capitulation of the CPN (Maoist) in Nepal and the weakening of the armed Struggle of the Shining Path in Peru. It was formed when the development of Communist Parties and the International Proletarian Revolutionary Line was hardly sufficient.

Some forces criticise the Chinese Communist Party, stating that it was Mao who advocated the three World Theory. This is also false as the 3 World theory was advocated by Deng Xiapoing. Some forces go to the extent of stating that Mao and the CCP delayed the Great Debate and that Mao allied with the national bourgeoisie in the Socialist Revolution. They go on to say that Mao was wrong in elevating Liu Shao-Chi and Lin Bao. They forget that this was a case of 2-line struggle within a Socialist Society. In fact Mao demonstrated great humility in resigning as head of State in 1959. Some Intellectuals condemn Mao's foreign policies as pro-US as he visited America and advocated relations with them which is wrong. Mao only recognised the bourgeois states and did not politically support those regimes. It was a political tactic of peaceful-coexistence. Facing it's border problems with USSR it was not able to place as much emphasis on combating US Imperialism but Mao never differentiated Soviet Social Imperialism as being the greater danger. China gave great support to Vietnam agaisnt America even though Vietnam had taken a centrist postion in the Great Debate. It also never dictated policies to the Communist parties of other Countries. It is interesting that the majority of groups in the Communist Revolutionary Camp upheld the 3-World theory which advocated that the 2nd World Countries were allies of the Revolutionary Movements against the 2 Superpowers and led them to term Soviet Social Imperialism as the principal Danger of the World people. (Before 1991) The collapse of the USSR in 1991 was a slap in the face of the 3-world theorists and an abject blow to the followers of that line.

UNITED CAMPAIGN

In India today a United Movement to defend the line of the International Communist Movement is the need of the hour. There have been a series of seminars and conferences but almost all have reflected ideological deviations. Some valiant efforts were made in the period when the pseudo-Socialist East European regimes had collapsed in 1989 or erstwhile Revisionist USSR had collapsed in 1991. The majority of Communist Revolutionary Groups defended the Socialist line, barring the section like the then CRC group led by K Venu which rejected the theory of proletarian dictatorship. Certain revolutionary groups went to the extent of supporting the Student Movement of China in 1989 and the Movements in East European Countries overthrowing East European revisionist regimes. They failed to understand that such movements were not supported by the Proletariat and were backed by the Western Imperialist countries. True the, proletraiat rebelled but their voice or demands were not redressed by the leaderships of such Movements. In this respect this author feels the best effort was the one launched by the CPI(ML) TNOG which

held an All India Seminar in Erode in 1990 to defend Mao Tse Tung Thought. The efforts made by CPI(ML) Red Flag were also commendable through a range of statements carried out all over the country, particularly in Kerala. They however erred in openly holding their programmes under the banner of the party and not a mass platform. Sadly organisations in the early 1990's like having the correct Understanding of the International Communist Line could hardly launch adequate mass -political platforms to defend Leninism, in the last 2 decades were unable to deploy mass platforms to defend Mao tes Tung Thought. Over 13 revolutionary Groups participated representing all the trends within the Revolutionary Camp. The Janashakti Group held a huge rally of Intellectuals commemorating Mao's 100th Birthday in Calcutta but were hardly able to relate Mao's achievements in the language of the masses and virtually organised Intellectuals. Although CPI(ML) Red Flag organised a Conference in 1994, CPI(ML) Janashakti an International Conference in 1995 in Hyderabad and RIM forces organised a seminar in Calcutta in 1999 (commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Chinese Revolution) they were hardly succesful in defending the Socialist ideology. This was principally beacuse such groups had their own theoretical weaknesses. One important point is that such seminars should not have imposed ideolgy on the people but carried out healthy debate. It is also neccesary to explain to the Revolutionary masses in their own simple language and methods with which they could relate to that Socialism is not defeated, expose the Current Revisionsit CPC, and defend the achievements of the erstwhile Socialist Countries. In their propaganda the Communist Revolutionary Groups displayed dogmatism. The errors of the Stalinist era or the Cultural Revolution were not adequately highlighted and very little space given for criticis. The Achievements of the Socialist Period were not explained in a way the broad masses could understand. It was important to connect the achievements of the Socialist Countries with the day to day lives of the broad masses. Although the theory of Proletarian dictatorship was correctly defended the weaknesses of personality Cult were not elaborated or the question of handling dissent in Socialist Society. The author in Mumbai witnessed several joint Front programmes but observed lack of mass revolutionary approach which connected ideology to the broad masses.

A big united Front Platform must be launched at the national level representing groups of all trends in defence of Marxism-Leninism, which should not become a forum for revolutionary groups to project the image of their groups or to debate mutual polemics. Separate types of programmes should be launched for advanced Intellectuals and politically conscious workers to that of the broad masses. Some of the most important points discussed should be on the question of Formation of a New Communist International. In this era of Leninism socialism may have a serious setback but in no way can one say it is defeated. □□□