

A Critical Appraisal of the Chinese Communist Party's "Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement" (1963)

"Hoist the Red Flag!" said Mao Tsetung in his concluding remarks to the Second Session of the Eighth Party Congress in May of 1958. "...If you do not hoist the flag, others will. On a big mountain or small hill, on the field, hoist it wherever there is no flag, and uproot the white flag wherever it is found. The grey ones must also be uprooted... The grey ones are no good; they must be uprooted... On any big mountain, any small hill, the red flag must be hoisted after debates!"¹

Five years later, amidst the smoke and ashes of the most violent and protracted life-and-death struggle in the history of the communist movement, the Communist Party of China led by Mao Tsetung "hoisted the red flag" on an international scale with the publication of the historic *Proposal Concerning The General Line of the International Communist Movement*.²

The *Proposal Concerning the General Line*, issued on June 14, 1963 in the form of a "Letter of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in Reply to the Letter of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union of March 30, 1963," represented at that time the most developed and systematic Marxist-Leninist line on all the fundamental questions facing the world revolutionary movement. It was both a thorough critique of the theories of Khrushchevite revisionism and a strategic analysis of the revolutionary tasks confronting the people of the world.

The "Proposal," together with the series of major articles which followed and elucidated it in depth, did not simply constitute a "fixed defense" of Marxism-Leninism, "holding the line" where things stood prior to the opening salvo of the revisionist offensive at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956. Nikita Khrushchev's speech to the Twentieth Congress is most infamous for its slanderous attack on Joseph Stalin. But Khrushchev's objective was not limited to attempting to destroy the prestige and bury the contributions of Stalin. In striking at Stalin, Khrushchev was striking at Marxism-Leninism as a whole, which Stalin, despite his serious errors, represented.

Khrushchev represented the interests, not of the proletariat in the Soviet Union and worldwide, but of the new Soviet bourgeoisie. The program he put forward at the Twentieth Congress was a program for the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union and capitulation to imperialism worldwide.

Under the guise of attacking the Stalin "cult of the personality," Khrushchev launched an attack on the Leninist theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat. His aim (soon realized) was to destroy the dictatorship of the proletariat and replace it with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

Claiming that the existence of nuclear weapons marked a "fundamentally new epoch," an epoch in which war had become unthinkable because it would mean the "destruction of mankind," Khrushchev sought to condemn revolutionary war as "reckless adventurism," the irresponsible acts of madmen who were bent on provoking a thermonuclear holocaust. Claiming that the Leninist theses on the necessity for violent revolution were "out of date," Khrushchev advanced a "new" theory of "peaceful transition to socialism" via the parliamentary process—simply a refurbished version of the trash left behind by the opportunists of the Second International.

Khrushchev claimed that since it was no longer possible or permissible for the oppressed to take up arms against their oppressor, the struggle between capitalism and socialism would be decided by "peaceful competition" between the Soviet Union and the United States in the economic field—and that, at the same time, all the problems of the world would be solved by consultations between the Soviet Union and what Khrushchev termed the "more reasonable" imperialists.

Khrushchev intended not only to drive the genuine revolutionaries out of the CPSU and turn it into an instrument of bourgeois rule in the Soviet Union; he wished to subordinate the interests of the world working class to Soviet great-power aspirations and impose his counter-revolutionary line of capitulation to imperialism on the entire international communist movement. Khrushchev and his

counter-revolutionary followers all over the world sought to hurl Marxism into the darkest dungeon, and perhaps for a time actually imagined that they could extinguish the flame of revolution from the earth forever.

It is not only not surprising, but inevitable, that Marxism-Leninism emerged from this bitter struggle more brilliant and vigorous than ever before. The *Proposal* represented not a step backward to a "happier time," the time of Stalin, but a step forward. In essence, the hoisting of this red flag was a call to arms, a call which genuine communists all over the world answered; it was a strategic battle plan for waging the revolutionary struggle against imperialism; it laid the foundations for a new international communist movement united around the "general line... of resolute revolutionary struggle by the people of all countries and of carrying the proletarian world revolution forward to the end."³

The *Proposal Concerning the General Line* not only defended, but deepened, the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism in the face of Khrushchevite revisionism. It hailed and upheld the storm of national liberation struggles that was sweeping Asia, Africa and Latin America, at the same time pointing to the necessity for the revolutionary proletariat to lead these struggles to victory and to forge ahead into the socialist revolution. It affirmed the Leninist line on war and revolution, upholding the right and duty of the oppressed classes to use violence against their oppressors, and refuting the view that the masses should simply cower and grovel before the nuclear arsenals of the great powers.

It called for the re-establishment of genuine Marxist-Leninist revolutionary parties in those countries where revisionism had rotted out the heart of the party of the working class. It exposed and condemned the widespread reformism, tailism and great-nation chauvinism of the revisionist parties in the capitalist countries, and stressed that the communists in the capitalist countries should "educate the masses in a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary spirit, ceaselessly raise their

political consciousness and undertake the task of the proletarian revolution.”⁴ It took great strides in summing up the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the lessons of the capitalist restoration which at that time was consolidating itself in the Soviet Union, thus helping to lay the theoretical basis for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that was to sweep China in a few short years. The *Proposal Concerning the General Line* represented, in short, a scientific summation of the line struggle then raging in the international communist movement and pointed out the revolutionary road that the revisionists were trying to block.

The 16 years since the publication of the *Proposal* have been eventful, and both the international situation as a whole and the situation within the international communist movement are qualitatively different today. But the revolutionary communists of today share this, at least, with the communists of 1963: We are in the midst of a grave crisis in the world revolutionary movement (due, this time, to the revisionist *coup d'état* which has temporarily seated counter-revolution on the throne in China); we are at a critical juncture in the international situation (due, this time, to the rapid intensification of the imperialist crisis and the looming prospect of a third world war as well as developments toward revolution, most strikingly in Iran over the past two years); and, learning from Mao Tsetung and the genuine communists all over the world of 16 years ago, communists are determined to defeat revisionism, unite our ranks, hoist high the red flag, rally the masses around that flag, rise up, make revolution, and carry forward the revolution until the final burial of imperialism and all exploiting systems and the final victory of communism usher in a new world for mankind.

Both the similarities and the differences between the situations of 1963 and 1979 argue for a study and analysis of the theoretical contributions of the *Proposal*, as well as of its limitations, in the light of the accumulated experience since that time. It is the purpose of this article to touch on these questions. In order to place the *Proposal* in its historical context, an appendix is included at the end of the article, which reviews (through 1963) the struggle within the international communist movement that began with the 20th Congress of the CPSU.

The Question of the Socialist Camp and World Revolution

The starting point of the *Proposal Concerning the General Line* is “the concrete analysis of world politics and economics as a whole and of actual world conditions, that is to say, of the fundamental contradictions in the contemporary world.”⁵

Combatting the revisionist line of Khrushchev, which tended to liquidate all contradictions except the contradiction between the socialist camp and the imperialist camp (and in actuality to liquidate that contradiction as well, through the theory of

“peaceful coexistence”) the *Proposal* advances four “fundamental contradictions”:

- the contradiction between the socialist camp and the imperialist camp;
- the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the capitalist countries;
- the contradiction between the oppressed nations and imperialism; and
- the contradiction among imperialist countries and among monopoly capitalist groups.⁶

The question of how to evaluate the “socialist camp” and its significance and historical role is treated at some length in the proposal. The “view which blots out the class content of the contradiction between the socialist and the imperialist camps and fails to see this contradiction as one between states under the dictatorship of the proletariat and states under the dictatorship of the monopoly capitalists”⁷ is sharply opposed. And this serves as a foundation for attacking the line which liquidates class contradictions and class struggle all down the line. The *Proposal* condemns:

the view which recognizes only the contradiction between the socialist and imperialist camps, while neglecting or underestimating [the other three contradictions] and the struggles to which these contradictions give rise;

the view which maintains... that the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie can be resolved without a proletarian revolution in each country and that the contradiction between the oppressed nations and imperialism can be resolved without revolution by the oppressed nations;

the view which denies that the development of the inherent contradictions in the contemporary capitalist world inevitably lead to a new situation in which the imperialist countries are locked in an intense struggle...

the view which maintains that the contradiction between the two world systems of socialism and capitalism will automatically disappear in the course of “economic competition,” that the other fundamental world contradictions will automatically do so with the disappearance of the contradiction between the two systems, and that a “world without wars” and “new world of all-round cooperation,” will appear.⁸

Essentially, the *Proposal* not only refuted the view that the *only* contradiction in the world is that between imperialism and the socialist camp; it also denied that the contradiction between the two camps is the *sharpest*, or principal, contradiction in the world. In assessing the fundamental change in the balance of forces since World War II, the *Proposal* states that:

The main indication of this change is that the world now has not just one socialist country but a number of socialist countries forming the mighty socialist camp, and that the people who have taken the socialist road now number not two hundred million but a thousand million, or a third of the world’s population.⁹

It is then stressed that “The Socialist camp is the outcome of the struggles of the international proletariat and working people. It belongs to the international proletariat and working people as well as to the people of the socialist countries.”¹⁰ This is significant, because the point is that the socialist countries, created by the revolutionary struggle of the international working class, must fundamentally rely on the working class, and not, fundamentally, the other way around (that is, not the international working class relying on the socialist countries). This is why the tasks of the socialist camp are presented as “demands” on the part of the workers and oppressed people of the world:

The main common demands of the people in the socialist camp and the international proletariat and working people are that all the Communist and Workers’ Parties in the socialist camp should:

- adhere to the Marxist-Leninist line and pursue correct Marxist-Leninist domestic and foreign policies;

- consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat...;

- promote the initiative and creativeness of the broad masses...;

- strengthen the unity of the socialist camp on the basis of Marxism-Leninism...;

- and help the revolutionary struggles of the oppressed classes and nations of the world.

“By fulfilling these demands,” the *Proposal* concludes, “the socialist camp will exert a decisive influence on the course of human history.”¹¹

The question of the role of the “socialist camp” is a significant one today—precisely because the events since 1963 have in fact brought about the liquidation of the socialist camp, due basically to the complete transformation of the Soviet Union into a social-imperialist power ringed by a series of satellite states. And following this, China itself has come under the rule of reactionaries through a revisionist coup in October 1976. Nor is it correct or useful to try to redefine the “socialist camp” to include within it not only socialist countries but also the strivings of the working class of every country for socialism. Such an argument, which holds that the “socialist camp” exists even if it is reduced to one small country (or even, according to this logic, to no country at all), makes the “socialist camp” an ideal conception rather than an expression of a material, world-political reality.

National Liberation Struggles

What does the lack of a socialist camp mean for the world struggle? It is obvious that the loss of these powerful bastions of proletarian rule is a severe blow to the cause of the world revolution; the loss in China was especially painful, since Mao Tsetung had led the Chinese people through many heroic battles to prevent just such a restoration of capitalism. However, can it be said that these defeats, important though they are, mean that now the "balance of forces" in the world is overwhelmingly in favor of imperialism, that there is no reliable bulwark to prevent wholesale imperialist depredation and exploitation, that the cause of revolution has suffered such a staggering setback that the question of its recovery is one for the distant future?

Absolutely not. It is clear that the temporary loss of proletarian rule in a series of countries has not abated the deepening world imperialist crisis; in fact that crisis is now approaching a breaking point. Neither have these temporary setbacks served to quench the thirst of the masses for revolution; in the very wake of the revisionist coup in China, a major revolution of historic significance occurred in Iran, and U.S. imperialism suffered another stunning setback.

Nor can it be said that the ranks of communists around the world have disintegrated in chaos due to these setbacks; on the contrary, the counter-revolutionary coup in China has served to intensify the struggle against opportunism and subject all opportunist trends to a glaring spotlight. Despite the great turmoil within the international communist movement, the ranks of the genuine Marxist-Leninists are becoming steeled and tempered in the face of these difficulties, and at the same time they are determinedly preparing for the coming revolutionary storms with unshakeable optimism.

Finally, though the proletariat has temporarily lost state power in a number of countries, class conscious revolutionaries have not lost the incredibly rich lessons and experience of the revolutions in those countries, and the understanding of the meaning of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat has grown immeasurably deeper, due particularly to the contributions of Mao Tsetung, who not only comprehensively summed up the experience of the class struggle in the Soviet Union, but led the masses of the Chinese people to scale new heights in the Cultural Revolution.

What, then, remains following the liquidation of the socialist camp? Principally, the same irresistible force that brought the socialist camp into being: the international proletariat, together with its reliable allies, the oppressed peoples of the world, only now better prepared to seize even more breathtaking victories in the future—and in the not too distant future, either. And in this great struggle, the basic principles of the 1963 *Proposal on the General Line* remain a brilliant standard and overall guiding line.

One of the most significant contributions of the *Proposal* was on the question of how to assess the national liberation struggles in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It not only upheld their significance for the world revolutionary movement in the face of Khrushchev's downgrading and betrayal, but it also gave the correct orientation for leading them through the democratic revolution into the socialist revolution.

Emphasizing the necessity for proletarian leadership throughout the revolutionary struggle in these countries, the *Proposal* stated that:

History has entrusted to the proletarian parties in these areas the glorious mission of holding high the banner of struggle against imperialism, against old and new colonialism and for national independence and people's democracy, of standing in the forefront of the national democratic revolutionary movement and striving for a socialist future. . .

The proletariat and its party must have confidence in the strength of the masses and, above all, must unite with the peasants and establish a solid worker-peasant alliance. It is of primary importance for advanced members of the proletariat to work in the rural areas. . .

On the basis of the worker-peasant alliance the proletariat and its party must unite all the strata that can be united and organize a broad united front against imperialism and its lackeys. In order to consolidate and expand this united front it is necessary that the proletarian party should maintain its ideological, political and organizational independence and insist on the leadership of the revolution. . .¹²

Responding to the Khrushchevite lie that the simple achievement of national independence represented a thorough defeat of imperialism, the *Proposal* pointed out that

The nationalist countries which have recently won political independence are still confronted with the arduous task of consolidating it, liquidating the forces of imperialism and domestic reaction, carrying out agrarian and other social reforms and developing their national economy and culture. It is of practical and vital importance for these countries to guard and fight against the neo-colonialist policies which the old colonialists adopt to preserve their interests, and especially against the neo-colonialism of U.S. imperialism.¹³

While stressing proletarian leadership of the national-democratic revolution, the *Proposal* also dialectically analyzed the contradictory role of the national bourgeoisie in these countries, pointing out both the necessity to unite with all patriotic bourgeois

forces in the struggle against imperialism and the increasing tendency for the bourgeoisie, especially the big bourgeoisie, to array itself against the revolution as the class struggle advanced and grew sharper:

In some of these countries, the patriotic national bourgeoisie continue to stand with the masses in the struggle against imperialism and colonialism and introduce certain measures of social progress. This requires the proletarian party to make a full appraisal of the progressive role of the patriotic national bourgeoisie and strengthen unity with them.

As the internal social contradictions and the international class struggle sharpen, the bourgeoisie, and particularly the big bourgeoisie, increasingly tend to become retainers of imperialism and to pursue anti-popular, anti-Communist and counter-revolutionary policies. It is necessary for the proletarian party resolutely to oppose these reactionary policies.

Generally speaking, the bourgeoisie in these countries have a dual character. When a united front is formed with the bourgeoisie, the policy of the proletarian party should be one of both unity and struggle. The policy should be to unite with the bourgeoisie, in so far as they tend to be progressive, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal, but to struggle against their reactionary tendencies to compromise and collaborate with imperialism and the forces of feudalism. . .

If the proletariat becomes the tail of the landlords and the bourgeoisie in the revolution, no real or thorough victory in the national democratic revolution is possible, and even if victory of a kind is gained, it will be impossible to consolidate it.¹⁴

These questions, as the *Proposal* pointed out, were not merely of concern for communists in the countries of the oppressed nations:

...the anti-imperialist revolutionary struggle of the people in Asia, Africa, and Latin America is definitely not merely a matter of regional significance but one of overall importance for the whole cause of proletarian revolution. . .

Certain persons in the international communist movement are now taking a passive or scornful or negative attitude towards the struggles of the oppressed nations for liberation. They are in fact protecting the interests of monopoly capital, betraying those of the proletariat, and degenerating into social democrats. . .¹⁵

The *Proposal* said that "The attitude taken towards the revolutionary struggles of the people in the Asian, African and Latin American countries is an important criterion for differentiating those who want revolution



Mao Tsetung meeting with friends from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

from those who do not..."¹⁶ At that time, not only the Soviet Union but the pro-Soviet Communist Parties in the capitalist countries had thoroughly degenerated into the most shameless great-nation chauvinism. But this was, of course, not unconnected to their thorough degeneration into servants of the bourgeoisie, often in the form of petty pleaders for the special interests of the labor aristocracy. It was necessary for the *Proposal* to both expound the revolutionary line for leading the national-democratic, anti-imperialist revolution to victory, and to expose the revisionist line which wanted to ignore and in fact to liquidate these struggles.

In its analysis of the revolutionary tasks in the capitalist countries, to which we now turn, the revisionist line of downgrading the struggles for national liberation is shown to be connected to a line of all-around capitulation to the bourgeoisie.

"Even in Ordinary Times..."

The *Proposal* polemicized against the ridiculous theories of the "peaceful transition to socialism" and the trend towards social-democracy among many of the Communist Parties in the advanced countries, emphasizing that:

In the imperialist and the capitalist

countries, the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat are essential for the thorough resolution of the contradictions of capitalist society....

While actively leading immediate struggles, Communists in the capitalist countries should link them with the struggle for long-range and general interests, educate the masses in a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary spirit, ceaselessly raise their political consciousness and undertake the historical task of proletarian revolution. If they fail to do so, if they regard the immediate movement as everything, determine their conduct from case to case, adapt themselves to the events of the day and sacrifice the basic interests of the proletariat, that is out-and-out social democracy...

Even in ordinary times, when it is leading the masses in the day-to-day struggle, the proletarian party should ideologically, politically and organizationally prepare its own ranks and the masses for revolution and promote revolutionary struggles, so that it will not miss the opportunity to overthrow the reactionary regime and establish a new state power when the conditions for revolution are ripe. Otherwise, when the objective conditions are ripe, the proletarian party will simply throw away the opportunity of seizing victory.¹⁷

It is no exaggeration to say that these were not only profound truths in 1963, hurled as they were into the teeth of "all-mighty" international revisionism; they remain profound and extremely instructive today, and serve in a way as a benchmark by which a party in the advanced capitalist countries can scrupulously examine its own work.

The *Proposal* warns against the tendency to fall into despondency and reformist capitulation because of the temporary strength of the bourgeoisie:

However difficult the conditions and whatever sacrifices and defeats the revolution may suffer, proletarian revolutionaries should educate the masses in the spirit of revolution and hold aloft the banner of revolution and not abandon it.¹⁸

It also condemns the abandonment of "principled policies and the goal of revolution on the pretext of flexibility and of necessary compromises,"¹⁹ and on the subject of making use of contradictions among the enemy, it specifically states that "the purpose of using these contradictions is to make it easier to attain the goal of the people's revolutionary struggles and not to liquidate those struggles."²⁰

The *Proposal* cuts deeply against the ingrained tendency towards reformism and stagism that affected (and has continued to affect) not only out-and-out revisionist parties, but even basically Marxist-Leninist par-

ties and organizations. Especially in the advanced countries, such as the United States, there has been a powerful trend towards walling off the relatively peaceful, non-revolutionary situation of today from the revolutionary situation of tomorrow. There has been a habit of consigning "the revolution" to some misty, indefinite future, losing sight of revolutionary elements within a non-revolutionary situation, and thus a push to concentrate essentially the whole strength of the working class on the "immediate" struggle, or on something promising "palpable" results. The importance of doing bold, widespread revolutionary agitation and propaganda ("educating the masses in a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary spirit") has been grossly underestimated. This was true in our own Party prior to the split with the Jarvis-Bergman headquarters; and even today, the full meaning of "ideologically, politically and organizationally preparing" our own ranks and the masses for revolution cannot be said to have been entirely grasped, despite the tremendous advances of the last period.

The importance of such preparations is emphasized not merely once, but repeatedly in the space of a few pages of the *Proposal*, like an insistent battle drum:

The proletarian party...should concentrate on the painstaking work of accumulating revolutionary strength, so that it will be ready to seize victory when the conditions for revolution are ripe or to strike powerful blows at the imperialists and the reactionaries when they launch surprise attacks and armed assaults.

If it fails to make such preparations, the proletarian party will paralyze the revolutionary will of the proletariat, disarm itself ideologically and sink into a totally passive state of unpreparedness both politically and organizationally, and the result will be to bury the proletarian revolutionary cause.²¹

The blunt truth of the consequences of failure on the part of the Party to carry out this all-round revolutionary preparation had not been stated so eloquently since the time of Lenin.

In his *The Tasks of the Third International*, (1919) Lenin was also faced with summing up a great struggle against opportunism and re-affirming the revolutionary principles which must guide the revolutionary party. His words are worth quoting at some length here, because the parallels are striking:

In order to defeat opportunism, which caused the shameful death of the Second International, in order to really assist the revolution, the approach of which *even* Ramsay MacDonald is obliged to admit, it is necessary:

Firstly, to conduct all propaganda and agitation from the viewpoint of revolution as opposed to reforms, systematically explaining to the masses...that they are

diametrically opposed. Under no circumstances to refrain...from utilizing the parliamentary system and all the "liberties" of bourgeois democracy; not to reject reforms, but to regard them *only* as a *by-product* of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat. Not a single party affiliated to the Berne [i.e., Second] International meets these requirements. Not a single one of them shows that it has any idea of how to conduct its propaganda and agitation *as a whole*, explaining how reform *differs* from revolution; nor do they know how to train both the Party and the masses *unswervingly for revolution*.

Secondly legal work must be combined with *illegal* work. The Bolsheviks have always taught this, and did so with particular insistence during the war of 1918. The heroes of despicable opportunism ridiculed this and smugly extolled the "legality," "democracy," "liberty" of the West-European countries, republics, etc. Now, however, only out-and-out swindlers, who deceive the workers with phrases, can deny that the Bolsheviks proved to be right. In every single country in the world, even the most advanced and "freest" of the bourgeois republics, bourgeois terror reigns, and there is no such thing as freedom to carry on agitation for the socialist revolution, to carry on propaganda and organisational work precisely in this sense. The party which to this day has not admitted this under the rule of the bourgeoisie and does not carry on systematic, all-sided *illegal* work in spite of the laws of the bourgeoisie...is a party of traitors and scoundrels who deceive the people by their verbal recognition of revolution. The place for such parties is in the yellow, Berne International. There is no room for them in the Communist International.²²

Lenin exposes the

...extreme hypocrisy of the parties of the Berne International...in their typical recognition of revolution in words...but as far as deeds are concerned [they] go no farther than adopting a purely reformist attitude to those beginnings...of the growth of revolution in all mass actions which break bourgeois laws and go beyond the bounds of all legality, as for example, mass strikes, street demonstrations, soliders' protests, meetings among the troops, leaflet distribution in barracks, camps, etc.

If you ask any hero of the Berne International whether his Party does such systematic work, he will answer you either with evasive phrases to conceal that such work is not being done—his party lacks the organisations and the machinery for doing it, is incapable of doing it—or with declamatory speeches against "putschism" (pyrotechnics), "anarchism," etc.

And it is that which constitutes the betrayal of the working class by the Berne International, its actual desertion to the camp of the bourgeoisie.²³

It can be seen that both Lenin and the CPC under Mao's leadership in its *Proposal* make the point that the broadest, most powerful, most uncompromising revolutionary agitation and propaganda is dialectically linked to the question of *all-around* preparation for the revolutionary situation. If one preaches only (or essentially) reformism to the masses, and is content with the narrow limits of legality, no matter how constricted those limits become during a great crisis, then one has no need to organizationally prepare for illegal work. On the other hand, such preparations are indispensable to the genuine revolutionaries if they are to continue to carry out such agitation and propaganda during a war or other crisis—precisely when the need for such revolutionary work is most urgent.

"In order to lead the proletariat and working people in revolution," the *Proposal* states,

Marxist-Leninist Parties must master all forms of struggle and be able to substitute one form for another quickly as the conditions of struggle change. The vanguard of the proletariat will remain unconquerable in all circumstances only if it masters all forms of struggle—peaceful and armed, open and secret, legal and illegal, parliamentary struggle and mass struggle, etc.²⁴

On the question of the peaceful transition to socialism, the *Proposal*, while admitting its theoretical possibility for certain tactical reasons (see the appendix to this article), emphatically pointed out that "there is no historical precedent for peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism,"²⁵ and that the prospects for such an eventuality were as good as nil.

Overall, the analysis of the revolutionary tasks confronting the workers of the advanced capitalist countries contained in the *Proposal* is now, as it was in 1963, a powerful affirmation of Leninism and a death-blow to international opportunism. The last paragraph of this section of the *Proposal*, so rich in material worthy of close study today, shares with much of the document an uncanny ring of aptness:

In the last few years the international communist movement and the national liberation movement have had many experiences and many lessons. There are experiences which people should praise and there are experiences which make people grieve. Communists and revolutionaries in all countries should ponder and seriously study these experiences of success and failure, so as to draw correct conclusions and useful lessons from them.²⁶

U.S. Imperialism, the "Intermediate Zone," and the National Liberation Struggles

The *Proposal*, written of course before the full emergence of the Soviet Union as a social-imperialist superpower, targeted U.S. imperialism as the main enemy of the people of the world, and analyzed its strategic objectives in the following terms:

Taking advantage of the situation after World War II, the U.S. imperialists stepped into the shoes of the German, Italian, and Japanese fascists, and have been trying to erect a huge world empire such as has never been known before. The strategic objectives of U.S. imperialism have been to grab and dominate the intermediate zone lying between the United States and the socialist camp, put down the revolutions of the oppressed peoples and nations, proceed to destroy the socialist countries, and thus to subject all the peoples and countries of the world, including its allies, to domination and enslavement by U.S. monopoly capital.²⁷

In the face of this the *Proposal* advanced the call for the international proletariat to "unite all the forces that can be united, make use of the internal contradictions in the enemy camp and establish the broadest united front against the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys."²⁸

At the same time, the *Proposal* placed great emphasis on the national liberation struggles in Asia, Africa, and Latin America:

The various types of contradictions in the contemporary world are concentrated in the vast areas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America; these are the most vulnerable areas under imperialist rule and the storm-centres of world revolution dealing direct blows at imperialism.

The national democratic revolutionary movement in these areas and the international socialist revolutionary movement are the two great historical currents of our time. . .

In a sense, therefore, the whole cause of the international proletarian revolution hinges on the outcome of the revolutionary struggles of the people of these areas, who constitute the overwhelming majority of the world's population.²⁹

The *Proposal*, which sharply attacked the Soviet revisionists for denying the significance of the national liberation struggles and adopting a great-nation chauvinist attitude towards them, called for firm support for these revolutionary struggles, and correctly pointed to the effect they had in "pounding and undermining the foundations of the rule of imperialism."³⁰

It also attacked those (that is, the Soviets) who "are trying their best to efface the line of demarcation between oppressed and oppressor nations and between oppressed and

oppressor countries and to hold down the revolutionary struggles of the peoples in these areas."³¹

These positions represented a sharp blow to revisionism and were accompanied by the battle-cry, "Workers and oppressed nations of the world, unite!" at a time when the national-liberation struggles were on the verge of an important new upsurge. Today, the attacks on Mao Tsetung for "narrow nationalism" and even "racism" are in response to the correct line embodied in the *Proposal* upholding the central role of the struggles in Asia, Africa and Latin America to the world revolution and refusing to consider the advanced countries of Europe and North America the center of the world proletarian socialist revolution during a period when it was not.

The thesis of the "world-wide united front against U.S. imperialism and its lackeys" outlined in the *Proposal*, however, does deserve closer study. The analysis of U.S. imperialism's objectives quoted above, for example, correctly noted that the U.S. was seeking to "subject all the peoples and countries of the world, including its allies, to domination and enslavement." (Emphasis added.) One of the conclusions drawn from this is that

In the capitalist countries which U.S. imperialism controls or is trying to control, the working class and the people should direct their attacks mainly against U.S. imperialism, but also against their own monopoly capitalists and other reactionary forces who are betraying the national interests. (Emphasis added.)³²

This formulation raises a number of questions. One, why should the working class in the capitalist countries "controlled" by the U.S. direct their attacks mainly against U.S. imperialism, rather than against their own ruling class? Two, what is the class content, from the standpoint of the working class in these countries, of the "betrayal of the national interests" by the monopoly capitalists and reactionary forces of those countries?

The *Proposal* certainly does not deny that there are other imperialist powers than the United States; indeed, it poses the "contradictions among imperialist countries" as one of the four fundamental contradictions in the world. And in the polemic *More on the Differences Between Comrade Togliatti and Us*, which elucidated many of the themes later contained in the *Proposal*, the contradictions within this camp are analyzed in more detail:

The uneven development of the capitalist countries has become more pronounced. There have been certain new developments in the capitalist forces of France, which are beginning to be bold enough to stand up to the United States. The contradiction between Britain and the United States had been further aggravated. Nurtured by the United States,

the nations defeated in World War II, namely, West Germany, Italy and Japan, have risen to their feet again and are striving, in varying degrees, to shake off U.S. domination. Militarism is resurgent in West Germany and Japan, which are again becoming hotbeds of war. Before World War II, Germany and Japan were the chief rivals of U.S. imperialism. Today West Germany is again colliding with U.S. imperialism as its chief rival in the world capitalist market. The competition between Japan and the United States is also becoming increasingly acute. . . .³³

And further on,

...In terms of the actual interests of the imperialist powers, these contradictions and clashes are more pressing, more direct, more immediate than their contradictions with the socialist countries.³⁴

It is certainly correct to note the contradictions within the imperialist camp on the one hand; and on the other, it is correct to note that, while there were sharp contradictions, at the same time these countries did still mainly form a bloc led by the United States.

However, there appears to be a tendency in the *Proposal* and in the related writings of that time to see the intensifying contradictions within the imperialist camp one-sidedly in terms of "making use of the internal contradictions in the enemy camp"³⁵ to establish "the broadest united front against the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys."³⁶ The use of such imprecise terminology as "lackeys," while it could refer to forces like Marcos in the Philippines, or the Diem regime in Vietnam, (comprador elements in countries where the stage of struggle is for national liberation), could also be taken to refer to elements within the ruling class of a specific smaller imperialist power who favor closer ties with the U.S., as opposed to other forces who want to "stand up" to U.S. domination (for example, De Gaulle in France at that time.) And this, in turn, could lead to the idea that the "broadest United Front" should include such imperialist elements as De Gaulle.

The statement in *More on the Differences* which speaks of "the struggles between U.S. imperialism with its policy of control and the other imperialist powers which are resisting this control,"³⁷ tends to strengthen this interpretation. In addition, the concept of an "intermediate zone lying between the United States and the socialist camp,"³⁸ a zone "which includes the entire capitalist world, the United States excepted,"³⁹ could tend to do precisely what the *Proposal* itself correctly criticizes: "efface the line of demarcation between oppressed and oppressor nations and between oppressed and oppressor countries."

The concept of the "intermediate zone" may imply that there is something in common between the imperialists of France, for example, and the people of Vietnam—namely,

common resistance to U.S. domination. But in fact, this very example calls to mind the fact that it is the French imperialists and the U.S. imperialists who shared a common fate: both tried to enslave the people of Vietnam, and both failed.

The analysis contained in the proposal is based on a correct assessment of the historic significance of the national liberation struggles. The proposal calls on the proletariat itself "of every socialist country and every capitalist country" to "study the revolutionary experience of the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, firmly support their revolutionary actions and regard the cause of their liberation as a most dependable support for itself and as directly in accord with its own interests..."⁴⁰ And it further states: that "It is impossible for the working class in the European and American capitalist countries to liberate itself unless it unites with the oppressed nations and unless those nations are liberated..."⁴¹

It was absolutely correct to stress this, and to fight narrow national-chauvinist tendencies among the workers and parties in the advanced countries. The proposal quotes Lenin, who said that

The revolutionary movement in the advanced countries would actually be a sheer fraud if, in their struggle against capital, the workers of Europe and America were not closely and completely united with the hundreds upon hundreds of millions of "colonial" slaves who are oppressed by capital.⁴²

These correct formulations overwhelmingly constitute the main aspect of the line of the *Proposal* on this question. It is certainly correct to identify the struggles of Asia, Africa and Latin America as the "storm center," and to point out that, among the imperialist countries, the United States was the most powerful and leading imperialist power; but it is just as certainly true that the main task of the proletariat in every imperialist country is, first and foremost, to overthrow its own ruling class.

This shows from a different angle a potential danger in such formulations as "The international proletariat must and can unite all the forces that can be united, make use of the internal contradictions in the enemy camp and establish the broadest united front against the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys." Proceeding from the desire to aid the national liberation struggles and to isolate U.S. imperialism to the maximum extent, a party in another capitalist or imperialist country might conclude that its task was to make use of the contradictions between its own ruling class and U.S. imperialism, to "unite" them, or a section of them, against U.S. imperialism.

This could cause such a party, for example, to raise a demand for the evacuation of NATO troops, but to do so under the "national flag," to unite with West German

revanchism or Gaullist twaddle about "the grandeur of France."

The worldwide "united front" concept also laid out in the *Proposal* could lead to confusing tasks of the *socialist countries*, which indeed do and must make use of contradictions in the enemy camp in their state-to-state relations (while at the same time adhering to the fundamental principles of proletarian internationalism) and the tasks of the proletariat and the oppressed people in the various countries.

While we have examined some of the weaknesses inherent in the concept of an "intermediate zone" lying between the socialist countries and U.S. imperialism, it must also be said that it did reflect a certain reality, especially when Mao first put it forward in his famous interview with Anna Louise Strong in 1946. At that time, U.S. imperialism had just emerged triumphant from World War 2 and was, as Mao pointed out, using its anti-Soviet campaign partly to prepare a possible war against the Soviet Union, but more immediately to establish its position as chieftain in the imperialist world and its domination over the colonial and semi-colonial countries which previously "belonged" to its rivals. Since U.S. imperialism was seeking to reign supreme over the vast intermediate zone it was inevitable, as Mao pointed out, that the peoples of the world would come to oppose them. The fact that U.S. imperialism was going on the offensive against the other imperialist states and their dependencies was at the heart of Mao's analogy between the U.S. and the defeated fascist powers, which is reflected in the *Proposal*.

However, concentrating one-sidedly on the fact that the U.S. was "stepping into the shoes of the fascist powers" overlooks that the U.S. had also stepped into the shoes of its wartime allies, particularly Britain, which virtually forfeited its fabled empire to the U.S. Further, the analogy to the fascist powers has the danger of posing the question of imperialism simply in terms of "aggression" or the expansion of the interests of one imperialism at the expense of another. This view was long embedded in the international communist movement, as clearly shown by the 7th World Congress of the Communist International in 1935, which singled out the fascist powers as the most aggressive and called for international efforts to isolate and defeat them—and, unfortunately, the *Proposal* did not make a clean break with this kind of view. By way of contrast it is important to note Lenin's stand on World War 1 in which he stressed the importance of training the workers to see that it was *not* a question of who fired the first shot, or even of who was overall on the offensive, nor, for that matter, of the particular form of bourgeois rule in the different countries—but rather of the equally imperialist nature of all the major contending powers.

As a general rule, the proletariat's interest in the conflicts between various capitalist and

imperialist powers is based fundamentally on how these conflicts may aid the working class in overthrowing *its own* ruling class. This, of course, is not at all in conflict with proletarian internationalism, and certainly not with rendering all-out support to the national liberation struggles, which the proposal correctly stresses as a necessity.

Within the oppressed nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America themselves, as the *Proposal* correctly notes, the revolution often takes the form of a "two-stage" revolution. In the first stage, the Communist Party must lead a broad united front which generally includes within its ranks sections of the national bourgeoisie, all forces and classes that can be united in the struggle against the imperialists and the feudal and comprador-capitalist allies. Through this united front strategy the Communist Party leads the masses of people in waging an armed struggle to defeat these imperialists and domestic reactionary forces, and to win victory in this way in the national-democratic revolution.

Only in the second stage, then, does the revolution assume the character of a struggle for socialism. Naturally, the revolutionary struggle in each colonial (or neo-colonial) country exhibits its own particular course of development within this model, the classic example of which is the Chinese revolution headed by Mao Tsetung. But these national particularities do not negate the general correctness and decisive importance of such a basic strategic approach to revolution in countries of this general type.

But can such a model apply to imperialist countries such as France, Britain, and West Germany, however much they are temporarily under the "domination" of the U.S. imperialists? No, it cannot. To adopt such a position could lead one, for example, to unite with the German ruling class during the period between World War 1 and World War 2, when, groaning under the reparations burden forced on them following their defeat, and with their "national integrity" violated in a thousand different ways, they also "struggled back to their feet" and "challenged the domination of their country" by the Entente.

It is obvious that, in general, there can be no separate "stage of struggle" within an imperialist power during which the proletariat directs its "main blow" against another imperialist power. The only exceptions to this could and did arise in World War 2, when the entry of the Soviet Union into the war changed its character (and, in a few other countries, military occupation meant that state power was effectively exercised by another imperialist power.) Even there, however, the proletariat in many countries made very serious errors because they tended to "forget" about their own imperialist oppressors and the necessity to prepare the masses to seize the opportunity to overthrow them when the time was ripe or, in the case of the occupied countries, fought for a restora-

tion of the rule of their own ruling class.

The *Proposal* emphatically does *not* advocate the renunciation of revolutionary struggle by the workers in the advanced capitalist countries—just the opposite, as we have seen. But there are, as have been pointed out, certain tendencies within the generally correct analysis put forward which are at best confusing, and which definitely require critical study today, when the Hua-Teng clique is trumpeting the “Soviet main danger” line and the “Three Worlds Theory” to call on the workers of *all* the imperialist countries (except, perhaps, the Soviet Union) and *all* the toiling masses of the oppressed nations to forget about revolution and form a political and military alliance with U.S. imperialism against the social-imperialist Soviet Union. In propagating these lines, the Chinese revisionists have been able to make use of certain misconceptions within the ranks of the revolutionaries, based to a large extent on a one-sided analysis of the experience connected with World War 2.

In the period immediately following World War 2, many communist parties in the capitalist countries of Europe fell into the trap of attempting to cement an alliance with the “anti-fascist” or “national-patriot” wing of their bourgeoisie, rather than making use of the favorable conditions that existed in the immediate post-war period to wage revolutionary struggle.

And even in 1952, in his address to the Nineteenth Party Congress of the CPSU (at which delegations from the communist parties of the world were in attendance) Stalin remarked that the bourgeoisie of the capitalist countries under the heel of the United States had “dropped the national flag,” and stated that it fell to the communists to “pick it up.” What Stalin is implying here is that there is some progressive aspect to the national flag of these imperialist countries. It is clear from Stalin’s *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, written shortly before the Nineteenth Party Congress, that he recognized full well that these imperialist countries would rise against the United States eventually, not on some “progressive” basis, but in order to challenge the U.S. for imperialist world domination. But at the same time, he apparently found it useful to promote certain “nationalist” struggles in these countries in order to weaken U.S. imperialism in the short run. And more importantly, his statement identifies communists with the interests of an (imperialist) nation. In this, Stalin was mistaken—and his errors, while they ran counter to his generally correct line on the nature of imperialism, had disastrous effects when they were (as we pointed out in *The Communist*, Vol. 2, No. 2) “mechanically repeated, actually magnified, by communists in the capitalist countries...” mainly on the basis of the growth of revisionism in their own ranks.⁴³

There also seems to have been a secondary tendency on the part of Mao Tsetung to give a little ground to some of these misconcep-

tions, based on his own experience in the Chinese revolution. As Comrade Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Central Committee of the RCP, pointed out,

...no one, no matter how great his or her contribution, can be free of mistakes. This, of course, applies to great leaders as well, including Mao. And, while upholding and learning from their tremendous contributions, and defending these, as well as the overall role of such leaders, from attacks, it is also necessary to understand and learn from their errors.

Specifically with regard to Mao, there seems to have been a tendency to project too much of the experience of the Chinese revolution onto a world scale. In particular, this took the form of giving a national character or aspect to the struggle in (at least some) capitalist, or even imperialist countries in the conditions where such could not play a progressive role.⁴⁴

Again, however, the presence of certain confusing and one-sided formulations in the *Proposal Concerning the General Line*, while they must be pointed out in the light of present-day knowledge and experience, do not alter the historic contribution that the *Proposal* made to clarifying and deepening the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary line on *all* the fundamental questions facing the international working class.

War and Peace

It is a pity [the *Proposal* points out] that although certain persons in the international communist movement talk about how much they love peace and hate war, they are unwilling to acquire even a faint understanding of the simple truth on war pointed out by Lenin...

As Marxist-Leninists see it, war is the continuation of politics by other means, and every war is inseparable from the political system and the political struggles which give rise to it.⁴⁶

The *Proposal* ridiculed the idea of opposing “war in general,” which means “lumping just wars and unjust wars together.”⁴⁷ Every type of war has its own class content, and every war must be analyzed dialectically. Imperialist war is the continuation of imperialist politics by other means; revolutionary war is the continuation of revolutionary politics by other means. A war such as that involving the U.S. in Vietnam was, on the side of the U.S. imperialists, an imperialist war of subjugation for the purpose of the exploitation and enslavement of the Vietnamese people and to fortify U.S. imperialism’s overall enslavement, exploitation and plundering throughout the world; on the side of the Vietnamese people it was a revolutionary war of national liberation. Genuine Marxist-Leninists opposed the U.S. imperialist war and supported the revolutionary national

liberation war. It was not a question of “opposing the war as a whole”—that is the standpoint of bourgeois pacifism.

An imperialist war to redivide the world, such as World War I, is a different matter. Here both “sides” in the conflict are imperialists—or part of an imperialist alliance (though there may be particular instances of just wars even within this overall context)—and Marxist-Leninists certainly would not support one or another side.

But this does not mean that the standpoint of Marxist-Leninists towards an imperialist war is simply to excoriate the imperialists and shout “a plague on both your houses!” Viewing such wars dialectically and in class terms, communists raise in all the imperialist countries the slogan of revolutionary defeatism and struggle to lead the working class and the masses of people in “turning the imperialist war into a civil war,” with the aim of overthrowing the ruling classes in the imperialist countries.

Khrushchev’s thesis that the new world situation arising out of World War 2 meant that it was possible to “usher in a world without war” with the imperialist system still intact was not new, even when he presented it at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956. Joseph Stalin, in his important work written shortly before his death, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, had polemicized against precisely this trend. In *Economic Problems*, Stalin defended Lenin’s theses and explained the limited role that the “struggle for peace,” which the revisionists wanted to blow up into a “strategy for revolution,” could actually play:

Some comrades hold that, owing to the development of new international conditions since the Second World War, wars between capitalist countries have ceased to be inevitable... They consider... that the foremost capitalist minds have been sufficiently taught by the two world wars and the severe damage they caused to the whole capitalist world not to venture to involve the capitalist countries in war with one another again—and that, because of all this, wars between capitalist countries are no longer inevitable.

“These comrades are mistaken,” Stalin pointed out. Mistaken, because the laws governing imperialism, the struggle for areas of capital export and markets, the desire and necessity on the part of imperialist powers to crush their competitors, the unwillingness of any imperialist power to remain forever in a secondary position to another, the inevitable challenge to the supremacy of the “top dog”—all these features of imperialism remained fully intact following World War 2, despite the temporary appearance of “stability” under the leadership of U.S. imperialism and the temporary submissiveness which the vanquished powers were forced to show towards the U.S.

“What guarantee is there, then,” Stalin asks,

that Germany and Japan will not rise to their feet again, will not attempt to break out of American bondage and live their own independent lives? I think there is no such guarantee.

But it follows from this that the inevitability of wars between capitalist countries remains in force.

It is said that Lenin’s thesis that imperialism inevitably generates war must now be regarded as obsolete, since powerful popular forces have come forward today in defence of peace and against another world war. That is not true. . .

What is most likely is that the present day peace movement, as a movement for the preservation of peace, will, if it succeeds, result in preventing a *particular* war, in its temporary postponement, in the temporary preservation of a *particular* peace. . . That, of course, will be good. Even very good. But all the same, it will not be enough to eliminate the inevitability of wars between capitalist countries generally. It will not be enough, because, for all the successes of the peace movement, imperialism will remain, continue in force—and, consequently, the inevitability of wars will also continue in force.

To eliminate the inevitability of war, it is necessary to abolish imperialism.⁴⁸

Stalin was speaking of general principles and long-term trends. The *Proposal*, however, does not focus on inter-imperialist war. There was virtually no immediate prospect of war between the different imperialist powers in 1963. When the *Proposal* speaks of world war, what is usually being referred to is a war launched by the U.S. imperialist bloc against the socialist countries. This had been a very real possibility since the end of World War 2; it had been addressed by Mao in his “Talk With Anna Louise Strong” and by many others within the socialist camp in the postwar period. Of course when inter-imperialist war did once again become a very real prospect, it would be the once-socialist USSR which would head one imperialist bloc. But this cannot be said to have been clear to anyone in 1963. Thus the way in which the questions concerning war and peace pose themselves at this time is not in terms of, “What should be the stand of communists toward and in an inter-imperialist war?”, but in terms of what stand to take in the face of the imperialists’ threat of launching a war upon the socialist camp. And here a crucial task of revolutionaries was to combat the bourgeois pacifism pushed by Khrushchevite revisionism, which tried to use the struggle against world war as an excuse to liquidate all wars, including national liberation struggles and revolutionary civil war, and which preached (and practiced) a policy of conciliation toward imperialism as the supposed path to peace.

In this context the *Proposal* addresses the Khrushchevite line that “revolutions are entirely possible without war,” asking:

Now which type of war are they referring to—a war of national liberation or a revolutionary civil war, or a world war?

If they are referring to a war of national liberation or a revolutionary civil war, then this formulation is, in effect, opposed to revolutionary wars and to revolution.

If they are referring to a world war, then they are shooting at a non-existent target. Although Marxist-Leninists have pointed out, on the basis of the history of the two world wars, that world wars inevitably lead to revolution, no Marxist-Leninist ever has held or ever will hold that revolution must be made through world war.⁴⁹

Here the CPC was defending itself against Khrushchev’s slander that the Chinese were pushing for a new world war. Although the *Proposal* does say “world wars inevitably lead to revolution,” for the reasons mentioned, it does not focus on the prospect of inter-imperialist war. The relationship of revolution to such wars is a profound one, and it is worth a brief digression to review Lenin’s line on this question in relationship to World War—a line which developed in opposition to the social-chauvinism of the opportunists of the Second International.

As the *Proposal* points out, the thesis that revolution can only be made during or after a major imperialist war is incorrect; such a thesis would lead to an opportunist strategy of “marking time” and then attempting to “step in” once a major conflict breaks out—a sure-fire formula for impotence both in time of peace and war.

But even before the outbreak of World War 1, the Basle Manifesto of 1912 foresaw the conversion of a war between countries into a civil war between classes, referring, for example, to the Paris Commune. In 1915, in the course of summing up the betrayal of the principles set forth in the Basle Manifesto by the Kautskyite opportunists, Lenin analyzed the relationship of imperialist war to revolution in the following terms:

Let us consider the substance of the argument that the authors of the Basle Manifesto sincerely expected the advent of a revolution, but were rebutted by the events. The Basle Manifesto says: (1) that war will create an economic and political crisis; (2) that the workers will regard their participation in the war as a crime. . . and that war evokes “indignation and revolt” in the workers; (3) that it is the duty of socialists to take advantage of this crisis and of the workers temper so as to “rouse the people and hasten the downfall of capitalism”; (4) that all “governments” without exception can start a war only at “their own peril”; (5) that governments

“are afraid of a proletarian revolution”; (6) that governments “should remember” the Paris Commune (i.e., civil war), the 1905 Revolution in Russia, etc. All these are perfectly clear ideas; they do not *guarantee* that revolution will take place, but lay stress on a precise characterization of *facts* and *trends*.⁵⁰

Lenin then points out that the war *has*, in fact, given rise to a revolutionary situation:

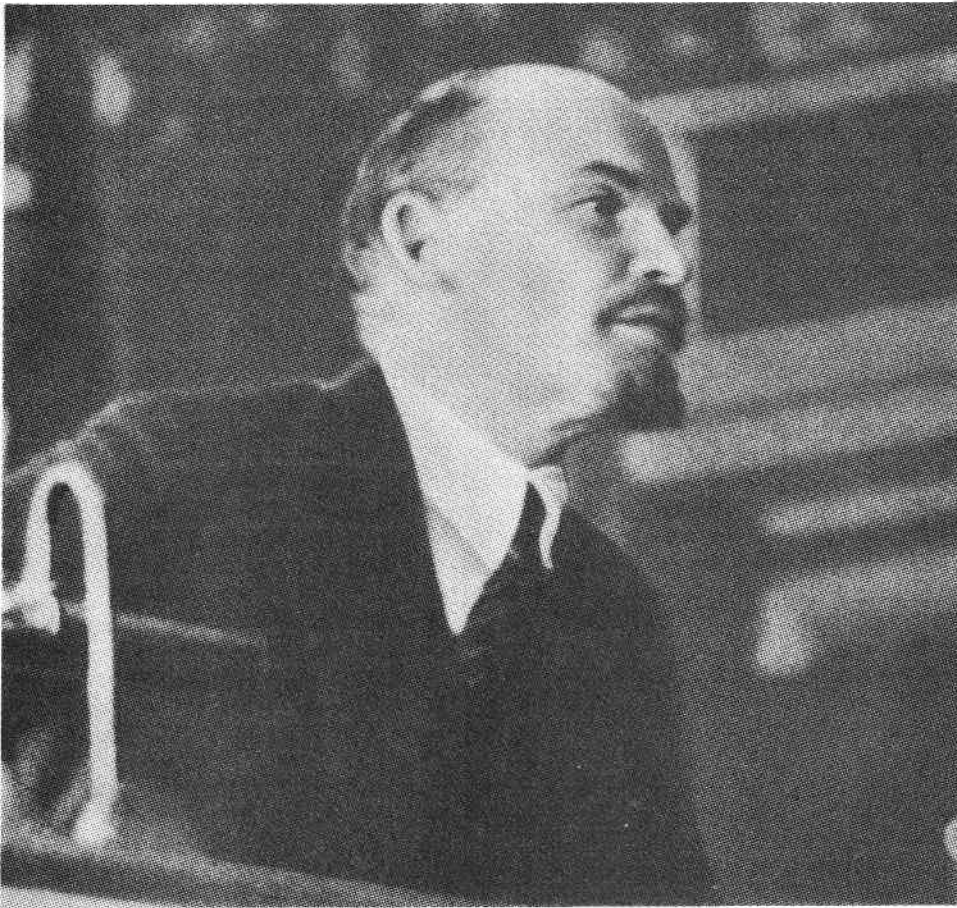
. . . A political crisis exists; no government is sure of the morrow. . . All governments are sleeping on a volcano. . . The entire political regime of Europe has been shaken, and hardly anybody will deny that we have entered. . . a period of immense political upheavals. When, two months after the declaration of war, Kautsky wrote. . . that “never is government so strong, never are parties so weak as at the outbreak of a war,” this was a sample of the falsification of historical science which Kautsky has perpetrated to please the. . . opportunists. In the first place, never do governments stand in such need of agreement with all the parties of the ruling classes, or of the “peaceful” submission of the oppressed classes to that rule, as in the time of war. Secondly, even though “at the beginning of a war,” and especially in a country that expects a speedy victory, the government *seems* all-powerful, nobody in the world has ever linked expectations of a revolutionary situation exclusively with the “beginning” of a war, and still less has anybody ever identified the “seeming” with the *actual*.⁵¹

Moreover, said Lenin,

The longer the war drags on and the more acute it becomes, the more the governments themselves foster—and must foster—the activity of the masses. . . The experience of the war, like the experience of any crisis in history. . . stuns and breaks some people, but *enlightens and tempers others*. Taken by and large. . . the number and strength of the second kind of people have. . . proved greater than those of the former kind.⁵²

“Will this [revolutionary] situation last long?” is the question Lenin poses next.

How much more acute will it become? Will it lead to revolution? This is something we do not know, and nobody can know. The answer can be provided only by the *experience* gained during the development of revolutionary sentiment and the transition to revolutionary action by the advanced class, the proletariat. . . no socialist has ever guaranteed that this war (and not the next one), that today’s revolutionary situation (and not tomorrow’s) will produce a revolution.



What we are discussing is the indisputable and fundamental duty of all socialists—that of revealing to the masses the existence of a revolutionary situation, explaining its scope and depth, arousing the proletariat's revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary determination, helping it to go over to revolutionary action, and forming, for that purpose, organizations suited to the revolutionary situation.⁵³

This was the revolutionary program which Lenin advanced in opposition to the putrid social-chauvinist capitulation of the "heroes" of the Second International, and as the basis for coordination and joint action of the parties in different countries during the war. Such coordinated activity was essential, but Lenin insisted that it could come into being only on the basis of a thorough break with opportunism:

In spite of everything, there are revolutionary Social-Democratic elements in many countries. They are to be found in Germany, and in Russia, and in Scandinavia...in the Balkans, in Italy, in England and in France...To rally these Marxist elements—however small their numbers may be at the beginning—to recall in their name the now forgotten words of genuine Socialism, to call upon the workers of all countries to break with the chauvinists and to come under the old

banner of Marxism—such is the task of the day...

In our opinion, the Third International should be built on precisely such a revolutionary basis. For our Party, the question as to whether it is expedient to break with the social-chauvinists does not exist. For it, this question has been irrevocably settled. The only question that exists for our Party is whether this can be achieved in the nearest future on an international scale...⁵⁴

Historical experience has shown conclusively that imperialist war not only brings tremendous worldwide suffering and destruction to the masses of the people, but precisely because of this, because the nature of imperialism is so nakedly exposed, because such crises "make manifest what has been hidden...sweep away the political litter and reveal the real mainsprings of the *class struggle*..."⁵⁵ these wars also present the proletariat with the opportunity to deal the death blow to imperialism itself. As the *Proposal* points out, it is the international duty of communists to explain to the masses that it is impossible to bring about "a world without wars" while the system of imperialism still exists. It is, the *Proposal* affirms, precisely imperialism which is the source of wars. The communists of all countries must arm the masses with a correct, Marxist-Leninist

understanding of the nature and source of imperialist war, and that only revolution can bring an end to war.

The *Proposal* also attacked the theory propagated by the revisionists that "general and complete disarmament" would be the fundamental road to world peace, saying: "...this is deliberately to deceive the people of the world and help the imperialists in their policies of aggression and war."⁵⁶ Lenin, in *Socialism and War*, pointed out that "the demand for disarmament, or more correctly, the dream of disarmament, is objectively, nothing but an expression of despair."

"Our slogan must be," Lenin wrote, "the arming of the proletariat for the purpose of vanquishing, expropriating and disarming the bourgeoisie."⁵⁷

The *Proposal* also denied the imperialist-revisionist absurdity that nuclear weapons could invalidate the Leninist theses on war and revolution:

In the view of Marxist-Leninists, the people are the makers of history. In the present, as in the past, man is the decisive factor. Marxist-Leninists attach importance to the role of technological change, but it is wrong to belittle the role of man and exaggerate the role of technology.

The emergence of nuclear weapons can neither arrest the progress of human history nor save the imperialist system from its doom...

It cannot, therefore, be said that with the emergence of nuclear weapons the possibility and the necessity of social and national revolutions have disappeared, or the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism, and especially the theories of proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat and of war and peace, have become outmoded and changed into stale "dogmas."⁵⁸

In sum, the *Proposal Concerning the General Line* resolutely upheld and developed the Marxist-Leninist line on war and revolution at a time when this line was in danger of being buried under an avalanche of Khrushchevite revisionist cowardice and hysteria. What was true in Lenin's time and the point the Chinese Communist Party made in 1960 in their major, if indirectly addressed, salvo against Khrushchev ("Long Live Leninism!") remains profoundly true today:

We consistently oppose the launching of criminal wars by imperialism, because imperialist war would impose enormous sacrifices upon the people of various countries (including the people of the United States and other imperialist countries). But should the imperialists impose such sacrifices on the peoples of various countries, we believe that, just as the experience of the Russian revolution and the Chinese revolution shows, those sacrifices would be repaid. On the debris of a dead

imperialism, the victorious people would create very swiftly a civilization thousands of times higher than the capitalist system and a truly beautiful future for themselves.⁵⁹

The Class Struggle Under Socialism

The theses in the *Proposal* on the question of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat represent both an unprecedented leap forward in grasping this complex and cardinal question, and, on the other hand, an intermediate stage in the development of Mao's line. The analysis put forward in the *Proposal* and other writings of that period (notably, *On Khrushchev's Phoney Communism and Its Historical Lessons for the World*, the finale to the series of open polemics which the *Proposal* began), helped to blaze the trail leading to the Cultural Revolution.

"For a very long historical period after the proletariat takes power," the *Proposal* states,

class struggle continues as an objective law independent of man's will, differing only in form from what it was before the taking of power. . .

For decades or even longer periods after socialist industrialization and agricultural collectivization, it will be impossible to say that any socialist country will be free from those elements which Lenin repeatedly denounced, such as bourgeois hangers-on, parasites, speculators, swindlers, idlers, hooligans and embezzlers of state funds; or to say that a socialist country will no longer need to perform or be able to relinquish the task laid down by Lenin of conquering "this contagion, this plague, this ulcer that socialism has inherited from capitalism."⁶⁰

Paraphrasing the "Basic Line" of the CCP, which Mao Tsetung formulated in 1962, the *Proposal* emphasizes that "it takes a very long historical period to settle the question of who will win—socialism or capitalism,"⁶¹ and that throughout this entire period the class struggle would rage: "This struggle rises and falls in a wave-like manner, at times becoming very fierce, and the forms of the struggle are many and varied."⁶²

Because of this, the *Proposal* emphatically insists, the dictatorship of the proletariat is essential throughout the entire historical period of socialism. Exposing Khrushchev's theory that the Soviet state was no longer a dictatorship of the proletariat but in fact a "state of the whole people," the *Proposal* poses the question:

What will happen if it is announced, halfway through, that the dictatorship of the proletariat is no longer necessary? . . .

Does this not license the development of "this contagion, this plague, this ulcer that socialism has inherited from capitalism"? . . .

Anyone with an elementary knowledge of Marxism-Leninism can understand that the so-called "state of the whole people" is nothing new. Representative bourgeois figures have always called the bourgeois state a "state of all the people" . . .⁶³

In refuting Khrushchev's thesis that classes no longer existed in the Soviet Union, the *Proposal* relied primarily on the wealth of perceptual phenomena that made such an assertion ridiculous:

Since remnants of the old exploiting classes who are trying to stage a comeback still exist there, since new capitalist elements are constantly being generated there, and since there are still parasites, speculators, idlers, hooligans, embezzlers of state funds, etc., how can it be said that classes or class struggles no longer exist? How can it be said that the dictatorship of the proletariat is no longer necessary?⁶⁴

In addition, the *Proposal* points to the existence of two kinds of ownership—collective ownership and ownership by the whole people—as well as individual ownership in all socialist countries. These differences, the contradiction between worker and peasant, and the fact that the communist principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need" was still far from realization (due to the existence of commodity exchange, a wage system, etc.) were all pointed to in the *Proposal* to convincingly demonstrate that the existence of classes was an objective fact; that this dictated the continuation of the class struggle, which would sometimes become very fierce; and that therefore the dictatorship of the proletariat was indispensable in order to avoid a reversion to capitalism.

These theses represented at that time the most developed theory of class struggle under socialism ever advanced. They represented not only a repudiation of Khrushchev, but a negation of the errors of Stalin, who as early as the 1930s argued that antagonistic classes had been eliminated in the USSR.

In *On Khrushchev's Phoney Communism*, which went more thoroughly into these questions with specific reference to the Soviet Union, the analysis is deepened further. There it is pointed out that:

In the Soviet Union at present, not only have the new bourgeois elements increased in number . . . but their social status has fundamentally changed. Before Khrushchev came to power, they did not occupy the ruling positions in Soviet society. Their activities were restricted in many ways and they were subject to attack. But since Khrushchev took over, usurping the leadership of the Party and the state . . . the new bourgeois elements have gradually risen to the ruling position in the Party and government and in the economic, cultural, and other depart-

ments, and formed a privileged stratum in Soviet society.⁶⁵

But, advanced as such an understanding was at that time, it was still insufficient to fully explain the process of capitalist restoration. And though the *Proposal* and *On Khrushchev's Phoney Communism* served as powerful weapons for combatting revisionism, further leaps needed to be made to reach a fully scientific understanding of the means for preventing that restoration. As Bob Avakian points out in *Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions*:

. . . In documenting the existence of bourgeois elements in the Soviet Union it [*On Khrushchev's Phoney Communism*] lays stress on illegal activities, such as profiteering, black marketing, illegal appropriation of collective property, etc. And in enumerating the sources of new bourgeois elements . . . it mentions (in addition to the overthrown exploiters and international capitalism) "political degenerates" that emerge among the working class and government functionaries and "new bourgeois intellectuals in the cultural and educational institutions . . ." as well as "new elements of capitalism" that are "constantly and spontaneously generated in the petty-bourgeois atmosphere." . . . But it does not identify the revisionists (capitalist roaders) in top leadership of the Party and state—including economic ministries and institutions—as a social stratum constituting a bourgeois class within socialist society itself and with its core right in the Communist Party.⁶⁶

The leap in understanding Comrade Avakian refers to here was to take place in the flames of the Cultural Revolution and through the continuation of the long, bitter battle that raged in China up to and following Mao's death. The discovery that the class struggle is not merely one to defeat the "remnants of the broken classes" and their "agents" within the Communist Party, or to counter the intrigues and spy rings of international reaction, but to expose, defeat and uproot the new bourgeoisie which is concentrated at the top levels of the Party and state apparatus, is of world-historic significance to the cause of communism. It was only in early 1976, when the struggle against Teng Hsiao-ping and his bloc was approaching a showdown, that Mao was first quoted as saying, "You are making the socialist revolution, and yet don't know where the bourgeoisie is. It is right in the Communist Party—those in power taking the capitalist road. The capitalist roaders are still on the capitalist road."⁶⁷

The eventual defeat the proletariat suffered in China cannot efface the tremendous contributions Mao and the revolutionaries under his leadership made to the Marxist-Leninist line on continuing the revolution

under the dictatorship of the proletariat. One might quote the *Proposal* in this regard:

Whoever considers a revolution can be made only if everything is plain sailing, only if there is an advance guarantee against sacrifices and failure, is certainly no revolutionary. ⁶⁸

"Some might argue," wrote Bob Avakian on this point,

that if capitalist restoration occurs in China then this would show that Mao's theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat—as well as the Cultural Revolution which was the transformation of this theory into a tremendous material force on a mass scale—was basically flawed. This kind of thinking is nothing but empiricism and relativism. The correctness of this theory does not depend on the immediate results in any particular situation; it has been verified in practice, in the mass struggle of hundreds of millions of Chinese people, and will be further verified in the future in the revolutionary struggle not only in China but in every country. ⁶⁹

Revisionism the Main Danger

Summing up the lessons of the "revisionist trend flooding the international working-class movement," the *Proposal* forcefully refuted the Khrushchev-Tito refrain that "dogmatism is the main danger in the revolutionary ranks":

Firm Marxist-Leninists and genuine Marxist-Leninist Parties must put principles first. They must not barter away principles, approving one thing today and another tomorrow, advocating one thing today and another tomorrow.

Together with all Marxist-Leninists, the Chinese Communists will continue to wage an uncompromising struggle against modern revisionism in order to defend the purity of Marxism-Leninism. . . ⁷⁰

The *Proposal* laid heavy stress on the necessity of a genuine proletarian party in waging the revolutionary struggle. It threw down the gauntlet to the horde of revisionist vultures perched in the leadership of many communist parties, warning that "if the leading group in any Party adopt a non-revolutionary line and convert it into a reformist party, then Marxist-Leninists inside and outside the Party will replace them and lead the people in making revolution." ⁷¹

Defence of Marxist-Leninist principle, for the revolutionary party, does not mean adherence to "dogmatic" recipes, but, as the *Proposal* put it, means being "able to integrate the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the revolution in its own country." ⁷² In fact, the *Proposal* exposed the actual links between dogmatism and the revisionist influence of

the Khrushchevites.

The *Proposal* ridiculed those parties "that parrot the words of others, copy foreign experience without analysis, run hither and thither in response to the baton of certain persons abroad, and have become a hodgepodge of revisionism, dogmatism, and everything but Marxist-Leninist principle. . ." ⁷³

The revisionist hullabaloo about "the struggle against dogmatism" was condemned as a pretext, an excuse for casting aside the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism under the banner of "creatively developing Marxism-Leninism."

The *Proposal* laid great stress on the principle that "the development and victory of a revolution depend on the existence of a revolutionary proletarian party. . . built according to the revolutionary theory and revolutionary style of Marxism-Leninism." ⁷⁴ It condemned those parties which wallowed in the mire of bourgeois reformism, tailing and capitulating to their own bourgeoisie.

The essential purpose of this section of the *Proposal* was to call on all genuine Marxist-Leninists to break away from and condemn the revisionist parties and to rally the revolutionary forces around the banner of Marxism-Leninism. The struggle which had begun in 1956 had reached the breaking point; the revisionist parties were termed "absolutely incapable of leading the proletariat and the masses in revolutionary struggle, absolutely incapable of winning the revolution and absolutely incapable of fulfilling the great historical mission of the proletariat."

"This is a question," the *Proposal* summarizes, "all Marxist-Leninists, all class conscious workers and all progressive people everywhere need to ponder deeply." ⁷⁵

Conclusion

"The Red Flag Must Be Hoisted After Debates!"

The course of the past 16 years has not only brilliantly confirmed but considerably deepened and enriched the conclusions of the *Proposal Concerning the General Line*. The years since 1963 have not been years of peaceful coexistence, peaceful submission and peaceful capitulation, the peace of the graveyard the revisionists wished to impose upon the international communist movement. They have been years of revolutionary struggle, which has rocked every corner of the globe. Following the publication of the *Proposal*, the struggle within the international communist movement entered a new stage. This, however, did not mean an ebb, but a further intensification of the struggle. The 1960s saw the advent of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, in which the working class scaled heights it had never reached before. The Cultural Revolution, too, is a part, and a very significant part, of the heritage of the international

working class in its struggle for communism. We must seriously study our defeats as well as our victories, but the triumphs of our class worldwide, and not the temporary setbacks, are the main mileposts that stake out the course of our historic mission.

Mao Tsetung, the greatest revolutionary of our time, was a true internationalist who never ceased to uphold and propagate revolution and Marxism-Leninism, not only in China but throughout the world. The revival of the international communist movement on a genuinely revolutionary basis was due in large measure to his leadership, and to the living, breathing revolutionary example provided by People's China. Here was a socialism that did not reek of formaldehyde, here was a proletarian dictatorship where the cardinal task of the working class was revolution, class struggle, the overthrow of everything old and reactionary and mummified, and the ushering in of a new world.

The road ahead for the workers and oppressed people of the world today, and for the revolutionary communists who stand in the vanguard of the proletarian struggle, can only be a road leading still higher. To stand still or turn back is to perish, to be ground under the wheel of history, which must and will advance and won't stand still for anybody, no matter what "theoretical" justifications are advanced "proving" that it should.

We study this great struggle that shook the international communist movement, the struggle against Khrushchevite revisionism, as we study the whole legacy of Marxism-Leninism: to steel and unite our ranks today, to prepare for the even greater challenges of tomorrow.

"I have long aspired to reach for the clouds," Mao Tsetung wrote on the eve of the Cultural Revolution. He, too, as he prepared for this great battle, surveyed the past to draw strength for the future:

... Again I come from afar
To climb Ching Kangshan, our old haunt.
Past scenes are transformed,
Orioles sing, swallows swirl,
Streams purl everywhere
And the road mounts skyward.
Once Huangyangshieh is passed
No other perilous place calls for a
glance.

Wind and thunder are stirring,
Flags and banners are flying
Wherever men live.
Thirty-eight years are fled
With a mere snap of the fingers.
We can clasp the moon in the Ninth
Heaven
And seize turtles deep down in the
Five Seas:
We'll return amid triumphant song and
laughter.
Nothing is hard in this world
If you dare to scale the heights.

Appendix

CPC's Struggle Against Khrushchev: 1956-1963

In February of 1956, Nikita Khrushchev launched his all-out attack on Stalin in a frothing "secret" speech at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. As pointed out in the main body of this article, this attack, of course, was not on Stalin alone, but on Marxism-Leninism, of which Stalin, despite his errors, was still a powerful symbol. Through Khrushchev's revisionist attack on Stalin, he sought to negate the dictatorship of the proletariat and to clear the way for the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. In addition, Khrushchev put forward a host of other revisionist theories, such as the theory of the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism through the parliamentary road, resurrecting Bernstein and Kautsky. He also proposed that, due to new radical changes in the world situation (principally the growing might of the socialist camp on the one hand, and the advent of nuclear weapons on the other, which Khrushchev held made war both unnecessary—for the imperialists and the revolutionary masses alike—and too dreadful to contemplate), it was possible to eliminate war prior to eliminating imperialism. Twisting the meaning of Lenin's principle of peaceful coexistence, Khrushchev transformed it from a principle of foreign relations between states with different social systems to a strategic orientation for capitulation to and collaboration with imperialism in carving up the world.

Khrushchev was counting on several factors to force the fraternal parties to accept a *fait accompli*, including the tremendous prestige of the Soviet Union as the first and most powerful socialist country, and the tendency that had developed over a long period of time for the Soviet Union to play the role of the "father party," which often meant that other parties (with some exceptions) blindly followed Soviet direction on fundamental questions. The fact that Stalin had made errors was misused to lend plausibility to the Khrushchevite theses. But most importantly, Khrushchev was relying on a social base, both within the CPSU and the parties around the world, which had already degenerated politically and was already pursuing a revisionist line on many questions.

It is a serious misconception to think that, before the Twentieth Congress, all was well in the Soviet Union or elsewhere. Even while Stalin was alive, a powerful developing stratum of new bourgeois elements had emerged within the party and state apparatus. And though Stalin waged struggle against these forces and the revisionist theories they advocated right up to his death, he also made serious mistakes which actually

tended to foster these elements and give them openings.

Among the People's Democracies in Eastern Europe the rot of revisionism was widespread. Well before the Twentieth Congress, Khrushchev had set about consolidating his bourgeois social base in these countries. In 1954, he decided to "rehabilitate" Tito and the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) which had been booted out as renegades from the socialist camp since 1948 and had been closely collaborating with U.S. imperialism and pursuing the path of all-out capitalist development for some time even before that. Khrushchev pictured Tito not as a counter-revolutionary but as a "victim of injustice," claiming that "under the influence of the agent Beria" wild charges had been fabricated.¹ In 1955, Khrushchev went to Belgrade and embraced Tito, announcing that Yugoslavia was a socialist country after all and that the LCY was a Marxist-Leninist party (with some "minor" vacillations).

Following the "Welcome Back Tito" movement ordered by Khrushchev, campaigns were conducted within other European parties to rehabilitate large numbers of similar renegades and oust large numbers of revolutionaries. Through these and other measures, as well as reliance on coercion and even the threat of military intervention, the Soviet revisionists were confident that they could pull the People's Democracies with them.

In the non-ruling Communist Parties, especially those of the West, a number of factors had combined to produce significant decay in the revolutionary will of some, and out-right revisionism in others (with the Togliatti-led Communist Party of Italy perhaps the most extreme case, but with several other parties, including the CPUSA, hot on Togliatti's heels).

This degeneration was by no means universal, however. Especially among the parties, both in and out of power, in those areas of the world where the national liberation struggles were raging, the revolutionary line was much stronger. The Indonesian Communist Party, the Vietnam Workers Party, the Korean and Japanese Parties, as well as other smaller parties around the world, did not leap to embrace Khrushchev's revisionism.

The Communist Party of China led by Mao Tsetung had, by 1956, already accumulated ample experience in acquiring a critical mind towards the "Soviet model" and the line of the CPSU on many questions. Stalin had been dead wrong on a number of key questions regarding the Chinese revolution, as he himself was to admit, and fierce

two-line struggles had raged in the CPC against opportunists who in fact parroted errors in the Soviet line. During Khrushchev's 1954 visit to Peking, the Chinese side made clear to him that they took seriously the "principles of equality and mutual benefit" phrase in the Joint Communiqué describing relations between the two countries. The speeches of Chinese leaders later that year, while mentioning Soviet aid as a "favorable factor," stressed that "to bring about the socialist industrialisation of China and develop the national economy is clearly the proper duty of the Chinese people themselves."² Talk such as this was in sharp contrast to the view more prevalent in the socialist camp, as expressed, for example, in the following 1957 statement by none other than Enver Hoxha:

The leading role of the Soviet Union in the international communist movement has become a historical reality due to the universal character of the Soviet experience itself. The fact that the Soviet Union has been transformed from the backward country it was before the revolution into a powerful industrial country with a highly developed culture ... prove[s] that the experience of the Soviet Union and the course it has followed are correct and of universal importance for all. The experience of the Soviet Union is not only the first but also the most brilliant example of the application of Marxism-Leninism.³

Aftermath of Twentieth Congress

Following the Twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU, the Chinese press, while formally hailing the successes of the Congress, contained nothing on the Stalin question. Then, on March 30th, *People's Daily* ran a translation of a *Pravda* editorial, "Why is the Cult of the Individual Alien to Marxism-Leninism?", which contained most of Khrushchev's slanders on Stalin. A week later, *People's Daily* ran a major editorial, "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," which, while again in form upholding the Twentieth Congress, actually constituted a polemic against the *Pravda* piece and the attack on Stalin.

While not as full or correct as later writings of the Chinese Party on the subject, the article stressed Stalin's role as a continuator of Leninism, pointing out that "Stalin's works, as before, should still be seriously studied" and that "we should accept, as an important historical legacy, all that is of value in them, especially those many works in which he defended Leninism..."

“On the Historical Experience” constituted not only a polemic against the Khrushchev attack on Stalin (though necessarily couched in language formally upholding the congress), but obviously was also a polemic against elements within the CPC who sought to use the 20th Congress as a wedge to pry China itself off the socialist road. This point was raised obliquely by Mao at an expanded meeting of the CPC Political Bureau in April of 1956:

“The Soviet Union has already initiated a mass criticism campaign. Some of it is not suitable for our country nor the Soviet Union. . . . We should not follow blindly, but should subject everything to analysis. There is good and bad in everything. We cannot say that everything the Soviet Union does is good. Now, people are saying that we have been following even what is bad. We should learn whatever is suitable for our use. . . .”⁴

Meanwhile, events were moving rapidly in Eastern Europe. In June 1956, Tito was received with all honors in Moscow and signed an agreement with Khrushchev restoring diplomatic relations and pledging “mutual cooperation and exchange of views in the field of socialist scientific thought.”⁵

This was the signal for a revisionist offensive throughout Eastern Europe, which was especially pronounced in Poland and Hungary. In Poland, Wladislaw Gomulka, who had been purged as a Titoite in the late '40s, was readmitted to the Party on August 4 and immediately assumed the leading role. In Hungary, Party First Secretary Rakosi, who had been under pressure from Moscow since 1955 for his refusal to endorse Tito, had issued the most lukewarm endorsement of the 20th Congress possible, and suggested that “only with the passage of time would it be possible to form a complete judgment.” In July, he was removed from his post at the Plenum of the CC of the Hungarian Party. His successor was a compromise choice, but the strong pro-Tito faction in Hungary, which was allied with such proletarian leaders as Cardinal Midzenty, was already engaged in broad mass agitation demanding the return to power of Imre Nagy, a thoroughgoing counter-revolutionary revisionist who had been purged from the Hungarian Party in the late '40s and who had been organizing against the socialist state (for example, he was implicated in the plots of the infamous Petofi Club, an organization of intellectuals demanding a return to capitalism under the guise of “democracy”).

In Poland, Gomulka's aim upon his accession to power was to secure Tito-like autonomy for Poland. Analysis of the Polish situation was complicated, however, because many forces were at work, and the mass rebellions which swept Poland in the summer and fall of 1956 (in which the Polish working class took a considerable part) were a result, not only of reactionary agitation by the Polish Catholic Church and other counter-revolutionaries, but also of the disastrous errors of the Polish Communist Party over a

long period.

By October, the situations in both Poland and Hungary were showing signs of sweeping out of control. The possibility of both countries defecting to the Western bloc appeared real. Khrushchev panicked, massing troops on the border of Poland (Soviet troops were already stationed in Hungary). But Gomulka, through a sweeping series of economic concessions to the working class and political moves such as the release of the reactionary Cardinal Wysinski, was able to calm the disorders while pledging loyalty to the Warsaw Pact and a policy of continued friendship with the Soviet Union. (While Gomulka at the same time posed to the Polish people as a patriotic national hero, he turned out to be one of the most slavish bootlickers in the developing Soviet satellite galaxy.)

The situation in Hungary, however, continued to intensify. By October 23, the Hungarian secret police were shooting students in the streets. That evening, Imre Nagy was appointed Prime Minister and re-elected to the Politburo of the Party. On November 1st, Nagy openly raised the flag of Western imperialism, renounced the Warsaw Pact, declared Hungarian neutrality, and asked for guarantees from the United Nations.

Khrushchev, who had nearly adopted the stance of simply crushing the Polish revolt by force of arms, lost his nerve and swung the other way. Fearing a showdown with the West, which was vigorously supporting the Hungarian counter-revolution, Khrushchev “intended to adopt a policy of capitulation and abandon socialist Hungary to counter-revolution,” according to a Chinese article written in 1963.⁶ The article, one of a series of polemics following the publication of *Proposal Concerning the General Line*, continues:

In the face of this situation, the Chinese Communist Party and other fraternal Parties, persevering in Marxism-Leninism, firmly demanded repulsing the assaults of imperialism and reaction and safeguarding the socialist camp and the international communist movement. We insisted on the taking of all necessary measures to smash the counter-revolutionary rebellion in Hungary and firmly opposed the abandonment of socialist Hungary.⁷

Following the suppression of the Hungarian counter-revolution, the Chinese Communist Party issued a statement which noted that a large part of the disorders in Hungary and Poland was rooted in the great-nation chauvinist policies the Soviets had pursued towards the People's Democracies, and pointed out that “some of these socialist countries have been unable to build socialism better in accordance with their historical experience because of these mistakes.”⁸ The statement also distinguished between the just demands of the masses in Poland and

Hungary and the intrigues of the counter-revolutionaries:

. . . the people of Poland and Hungary in the recent happenings have raised demands that democracy, independence, and equality be strengthened and the material well-being of the people be raised on the basis of developing production. These demands are completely proper. We consider it absolutely necessary to take note of this and to differentiate between the just demands of the broadest mass of the people and the conspiratorial activities of an extremely small number of reactionary elements. The question of uniting the broadest mass of the people in the struggle against an extremely small number of reactionary elements is not only a question for an individual socialist country, but one deserving attention by many socialist countries, including our country.⁹

Mao's Speech to Eighth CC

Two weeks after the suppression of the Hungarian counter-revolution, Mao addressed the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. In his speech, Mao summed up the recent struggles, broadened the attack on the line of the Twentieth Congress, and initiated a struggle against the powerful right-wing within the Chinese Communist Party headed by Liu Shao-chi.

Liu had given the Main Political Report at the Eighth Congress of the CPC in September. There, utilizing the revisionist theses of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, Liu had launched an attack on Mao's policy of unleashing the masses to collectivize agriculture and carry through socialist transformation, terming this a “left” deviation of “demanding that socialism be achieved overnight. . . not believing that we could attain the goal of socialist revolution by peaceful means,” and failing to be based on “achieving socialism by means of state capitalism.” On the international situation, Liu again echoed Khrushchev, babbling about “lasting world peace as a real possibility,” and alleging that “Even inside the ruling circles of the United States, there is a section of more sober-minded people who are becoming more and more aware that the policy of war may not, after all, be to America's advantage. . . . Facts prove that the iron curtain is not on our side; our doors are open to all.”

In his conclusion, Liu attempted to promote slavish dependence on the Soviet Union without even mentioning self-reliance, warning that “without their support our socialist cause cannot advance to victory. . . . We must continue to learn from the experience of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist Parties of all other countries in regard to revolution and construction.”¹⁰

So it was in the context of a revisionist offensive at home as well as abroad that Mao

spoke before the Second Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee in 1956. Mao took up four subjects: the economy, the international situation, Sino-Soviet relations, and "the question of great and small democracy."

Mao defended the mass movements for the collectivization of agriculture and ridiculed those attempting to pour cold water on the enthusiasm of the cadre and the masses, likening them to "committees for promoting retrogression." Mao laid stress on the task of suppression of counter-revolutionaries, pointing out sarcastically,

If we did not suppress counter-revolutionaries, the working people would be unhappy. So would the oxen and the hoes, and even the land would feel uncomfortable, because the peasants who put the oxen, the hoes, and the land to use would be unhappy. Therefore, some counter-revolutionaries must be executed, others arrested, and still others put under public supervision.¹¹

On the uprisings in Poland and Hungary, Mao pointed out that:

The fundamental problem with some East European countries is that they have not done a good job of waging class struggle and have left so many counter-revolutionaries at large; nor have they trained their proletariat in class struggle to help them learn how to draw a clear distinction between the people and the enemy, between right and wrong and between materialism and idealism. And now they have to reap what they have sown, they have brought the fire upon their own heads.¹²

At the same time, Mao said,

I think these bad things are good things too... Since there is fire in Poland and Hungary, it will blaze up sooner or later. Which is better, to let the fire blaze, or not to let it? Fire cannot be wrapped up in paper. Now that fires have blazed up, that's just fine. In this way, numerous counter-revolutionaries have exposed themselves.¹³

It was in this speech that Mao, who at that time was pondering and rethinking the whole theory of class struggle under socialism in the light of the recent shocks and upheavals, raised the question, "Will there still be revolutions in the future when all the imperialists in the world are overthrown and classes eliminated?"¹⁴ Could, as he put it, a Gomulka still come to power or a Jao Shu-shih (a counter-revolutionary exposed in China around the time of Mao's speech) be propped up? Mao's conclusion was in the affirmative, but his reckoning had more to do with the situation at that moment than with the distant future.

In the next breath, Mao turned to the question of the Soviet Union. He accused the Soviets, at their Twentieth Congress, of not only having thrown down "the sword of Stalin," but also of discarding "the sword of Lenin" to a considerable extent.¹⁵ He went on to say:

In both our democratic revolution and our socialist revolution, we have mobilized the masses to wage class struggle in the course of which we have educated the people. It is from the October Revolution that we have learned to wage class struggle...

How much capital do you have? Just Lenin and Stalin. Now you have abandoned Stalin and practically all of Lenin as well, with Lenin's feet gone, or perhaps with only his head left, or with one of his hands cut off. We, on our part, stick to studying Marxism-Leninism and learning from the October revolution... Not to rely on the masses in waging class struggle and not to make a clear distinction between the people and the enemy—that would be very dangerous.¹⁶

Mao directly referred to "cadres of higher and middle rank" within the CPC who were collaborating more or less directly with the CPSU, what Mao termed "maintaining illicit relations with foreign countries":

This is not good... this kind of business must stop. We don't approve of some of the things done in the Soviet Union, and the Central Committee has already said this to the Soviet leaders several times; some questions on which we have not touched will be taken up later. If they are to be taken up, it should be done by the Central Committee. As for information, don't try to pass it on... those engaged in such activities put themselves in an awkward position...¹⁷

Then, while attacking those who put up the slogan of "great democracy" as a means of establishing a bourgeois dictatorship, Mao began to lay the basis for the Hundred Flowers Movement and the anti-rightist campaign of the following year, saying in his characteristic style,

We are in favor of great democracy. And what we favor is great democracy under the leadership of the proletariat... there are people who seem to think that, as state power has been won, they can sleep soundly without any worry and play the tyrant at will. The masses will oppose such persons, throw stones at them and strike at them with their hoes, which will, I think, serve them right and will please me immensely. Moreover, sometimes to fight is the only way to solve the problem. The Communist Party needs to learn a lesson. Whenever students and workers take to the streets, you comrades should regard it

as a good thing.¹⁸

"More on the Historical Experience..."

At the Second Plenary Session, the revisionist group within the Central Committee of the CPC was forced to retreat, and Mao and his followers gained the upper hand. As a result, *More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* appeared in the Chinese press on December 29, 1956, sending shock waves not only throughout China but throughout the international communist movement.

Though designed to avoid the appearance of a direct attack on the Soviet Union, and despite taking some positions that are questionable or wrong, the line of argument the article took flew in the face of everything Khrushchev had done at the Twentieth Congress, and this was not lost on its readers. "We must never forget the stern struggle with the enemy, i.e., the class struggle on a world scale," it said, and it pointed out that the contradictions with the imperialist camp, far from lessening, were sharpening and becoming "a still more pronounced feature of world politics."¹⁹

The article for the first time put forward the thesis that the contradictions among the people in socialist society could be transformed into contradictions between the enemy and the people, a theme Mao was shortly to develop as part of his full theory of the class struggle under socialism. Significantly, *More on the Historical Experience* analyzed and summed up the universal validity of the Leninist road of the October revolution, emphasizing the leading role of the Party, revolutionary armed struggle to seize power, the dictatorship of the proletariat to crush the resistance of the exploiting classes and lead the masses forward to communism, and the importance of proletarian internationalism, in which the socialist state "strives to win the help of the laboring people of all countries, and at the same time strives to help them and all oppressed nations."²⁰

Posing the universal significance of the October road in this way was an important advance, because it made possible the dialectical analysis which differentiated what is universal in the Soviet experience from what is particular to it. After defending the universal significance of the October revolution, the article points out that "all nations pass through the class struggle, and will eventually arrive at communism, by roads that are the same in essence but different in specific form... indiscriminate and mechanical copying of experience that has been successful in the Soviet Union—let alone that which was unsuccessful there—may lead to failure in another country."²¹

Although showing some unclarity on the Tito question, *More on the Historical Experience* also initiated a tradition of using Yugoslavia as a "stand-in" for Khrushchev and the Soviet Union that would continue through 1962:

...Comrade Tito made assertions about "those hard-bitten Stalinist elements who in various Parties have managed still to maintain themselves in their posts and who would again wish to consolidate their rule and impose those Stalinist tendencies upon their people, and even others." We feel it necessary to say in connection with these views of Comrade Tito's that he took up a wrong attitude when he set up the so-called "Stalinists" as objects of attack and maintained that the question now was whether the course "begun in Yugoslavia" or the so-called "Stalinist course" would win out. This can only lead to a split in the communist movement. . . .²²

The article also contained an explosive paragraph in defense of Stalin, with the famous assertion that

even if people must speak of "Stalinism," this can only mean, in the first place, communism and Marxism-Leninism, which is the main aspect; and secondarily it contains certain extremely serious mistakes which go against Marxism-Leninism and must be thoroughly corrected. . . . In our opinion Stalin's mistakes take second place to his achievements.²³

So by the end of 1956 the great battle was already taking form; the two sides were marshalling their forces and sharpening their weapons for a protracted, life-and-death conflict. The possible consequences, and what was at stake, were clearer to nobody than to Mao Tsetung, and he was preparing the Party and the people already, arming them ideologically for the struggles ahead.

"We wish a peaceful world," he said at a meeting of Provincial Secretaries in January 1957,

but we must put ourselves in the worst position and be prepared for major disasters. We came from Yen-an and must be prepared to return there. . . . we should be prepared to return to Yen-an because of the atomic bomb, a possible world war, blunders committed and the Hungarian incident. If in our thinking we are prepared for the worst, we need not have fear. If we are unprepared, we are bound to regret it."²⁴

The Moscow Conference

In October, 1957, Mao Tsetung led the Chinese delegation to Moscow for talks with Soviet leaders. The purpose of the talks was to hammer out a draft declaration on the major questions facing the international communist movement, to be presented to the Meeting of Representatives of Communist and Workers' Parties scheduled for the following month.

There were sharp and protracted struggles between the Chinese and Soviet sides on a number of questions of principle during these

preparatory talks. Mao was faced with the complicated task of ensuring that the Declaration finally submitted for adoption by the fraternal parties was fundamentally a revolutionary document, while at the same time avoiding a breakdown in the talks and a split in the communist movement, which would have been incorrect at that time.

Waging sharp struggle on fundamental questions while being acutely conscious of the necessity to struggle for and protect unity was Mao's consistent policy during the entire period leading up to the final, inevitable rupture with the Soviet Union, and this necessitated the use of considerable diplomacy as well as staunchness of principle. Mao foresaw the possibility of a split, and undertook the task of preparing for such an eventuality years before the open break in 1963. At the same time, he was well aware that the struggle to overcome serious differences and attain unity is itself an important principle. The agenda of the advance meeting in Moscow included discussions of economic development of the socialist bloc, the "struggle for peace and socialism," relations between the fraternal parties, and the international situation. But the focal point of controversy was the question of the transition from capitalism to socialism. After a long period of stormy debate in which, apparently, many drafts were submitted and rejected on both sides, the Soviets were forced to concede some changes in their original proposal, which "said not a word about non-peaceful transition, mentioning only peaceful transition," and "described peaceful transition as 'securing a majority in parliament. . . .'"²⁵

Despite the changes, however, the formulation remained feeble. Conceding the point "only out of consideration for the repeatedly expressed wish of the leaders of the CPSU that the formulation should show some connection with that of the 20th Congress of the CPSU,"²⁶ the Chinese side nevertheless submitted a separate memorandum to the CPSU Central Committee, the *Outline of Views on the Question of Peaceful Transition*.²⁷ The *Outline*, while itself, out of considerations of tact, not entirely dismissing the possibility of peaceful transition, reduced all talk of it merely to a tactical ploy designed to "enable the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries to sidestep attacks on them on this issue." (A lame argument indeed, but again, one introduced solely as a formality. Sometimes the circumlocutions the Chinese were forced to resort to in order to avoid openly ridiculing the Soviet position reached the edge of hilarity and themselves became a form of ridicule.)

What follows is the meat of the *Outline*:

. . . The bourgeoisie will not step down from the stage of history voluntarily. This is a universal law of class struggle. In no country should the proletariat and the Communist Party slacken their preparations for the revolution in any way. . . .

To the best of our knowledge, there is

still not a single country where this possibility [peaceful transition] is of any practical significance. . . .²⁸

Although the final formulation in the Declaration was unsatisfactory, the struggle around the question of "peaceful transition" made it unambiguously clear to the Soviets that the CPC, while prepared to uphold the unity of the communist movement, also had its own, sharply conflicting line and was also prepared to adhere to principle. In addition, a number of other significant changes were made in the revisionist CPSU draft declaration:

The main additions were the thesis that U.S. imperialism is the center of world reaction and the sworn enemy of the people, the thesis that if imperialism should unleash a world war it would doom itself to destruction. . . . the thesis that the seizure of political power by the working class is the beginning of the revolution and not its end; the thesis that it will take a fairly long time to solve the question of who will win—capitalism or socialism, the thesis that the existence of bourgeois influence is an internal source of revisionism, while surrender to imperialist pressure is its external force; and so on.²⁹

The Declaration also proclaimed that "revisionism is the main danger" within the revolutionary ranks, while qualifying that statement, at the insistence of the CPSU, by stating also that dogmatism could become the main danger in any specific country at any time.

The upshot of the struggle at the Moscow meeting was a Declaration in which many of Khrushchev's theses appeared, but in a considerably attenuated form, while other sections contradicted them and provided a substantial ground for the revolutionaries to both support the Declaration and continue to wage the struggle against revisionism, using the Declaration as a weapon. The section on war and the international situation in particular reflected the impact of this struggle. But more significantly, Mao Tsetung himself addressed the full session of the conference on November 18, and there laid out, in his historic "East Wind, West Wind" speech, a strategic assessment of the international situation and the tasks of the communists.

Analyzing the changes in international relations since World War 2, Mao said:

It is my opinion that the international situation has now reached a new turning point. There are two winds in the world today, the East wind and the West wind. There is a Chinese saying, "Either the East wind prevails over the West wind or the West wind prevails over the East wind." It is characteristic of the situation today, I believe, that the East wind is prevailing over the West wind. That is to say, the forces of socialism are over-

whelmingly superior to the forces of imperialism.³⁰

Mao adduced a number of recent international events to support this assessment, ranging from the victory of the Soviet Union in World War 2 and the qualitative weakening of the imperialist camp that occurred as a result of that war, to the victories of the Chinese revolution and the Vietnamese and Korean revolutions, and to the high tide of national-liberation struggles that had forced the collapse of the British and French colonial empires. Mao's analogy represented in one sense a summation of the actual balance of forces then prevailing in the world (the combined might of the socialist camp and the anti-imperialist forces of the world versus imperialism), but more profoundly, Mao was referring to the dialectical course of historical development, to the fact that the era of imperialism is the era of proletarian revolution on a world scale, in which the proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries together with the oppressed peoples of the world will shatter and defeat imperialism completely—a course of development which cannot be shaken by any temporary setback.

From this general assessment, Mao forcefully drew the conclusion that the strategy of the world revolutionary struggle should not be to pull back and make compromises with imperialism, fearing to confront it, and in fact attempting to stamp out revolutionary struggle under the signboard of peaceful coexistence, peaceful competition, and the "struggle for peace," as the revisionist camp was stressing. This, Mao pointed out explicitly, was nothing but a strategy of capitulation and groveling before the imperialists. Mao specifically addressed the question of thermonuclear war, which Khrushchev alleged to have invalidated Marxist-Leninist theory on the question of war and revolution:

The question has to be considered for the worst. The political bureau of our Party has held several sessions to discuss this question. . . . Let us imagine how many people will die if war should break out? Out of the world's population of 2700 million, one third—or, if more, half—may be lost. . . . the other half would remain while imperialism would be razed to the ground and the whole world would become socialist; in a number of years there would be 2700 million people again and definitely more. . . . if imperialism insists on fighting a war we will have no alternative but to make up our minds and fight to the finish before going ahead with our construction. If every day you are afraid of war and war eventually comes, what will you do then?³¹

Mao then recalled his famous interview with Anna Louise Strong in 1946, resurrecting and deepening his thesis that "imperialism and all reactionaries are paper

tigers." The essence of Mao's talk boiled down to two points: One, it was possible to avoid a world war in the foreseeable future, due to the actual situation in the world and the balance of forces then prevailing, without tying the hands of the revolutionaries and moderating the all-out revolutionary struggle against imperialism; two, even if a world war should break out, though such an event would entail tremendous suffering and sacrifice, the result "will be to hasten the complete destruction of the world capitalist system."³²

The theses in Mao's speech made a considerable impact on the Moscow Declaration. The Moscow Declaration, while necessarily a compromise document, ended up considerably more Leninist than the Soviet leaders would have liked.

From the Moscow Conference to "Long Live Leninism!"

The two-line struggle in the international communist movement entered a new stage in May of 1958 when, on the 140th anniversary of Marx's birth, China's *People's Daily* uncorked an incendiary polemical assault against Titoite revisionism. The League of Communists of Yugoslavia had circulated a Draft Programme earlier that year which not only "creatively developed" Khrushchev's theses, but advanced the notion of capitalism spontaneously growing into socialism, and posed the task of the working class as that of competing with the monopolists to gain the predominant position in the state bureaucracy.

The Chinese polemic against Tito, which was undertaken without Moscow's approval, forced Khrushchev into the position of either backing Tito or the CPC; for the time being, he chose the latter course out of necessity. Within a month, the verdict imposed by Stalin against Tito in 1948 (which the Chinese held up as "basically correct" in their May 5th editorial) was back in place.

The new chill in relations between Belgrade and Moscow had the effect of dramatically improving the state of things between Moscow and Tirana. Ever since 1948, when the Cominform resolution condemning Yugoslavia "saved Albania from enslavement,"³³ Enver Hoxha had viewed Albania's relationship to the Soviet Union as a means to parry Tito's various designs to turn Albania into the "seventh Yugoslav Republic." Hoxha's disenchantment with Khrushchev began when Khrushchev started to curry favor with Belgrade; the denunciation of Stalin at the 20th Congress came as a bitter blow, particularly because Hoxha feared that Khrushchev's new policy would seal the doom that Stalin had so unexpectedly averted in 1948.

In late 1956, following the turmoil in Hungary and Poland, Hoxha led a delegation to Moscow. The talks there concerned Albania's fears and reservations regarding Tito, whose role as "Pied Piper" of the

Hungarian counter-revolution filled the Albanians with apprehension. The talks "were not to our liking," Hoxha reported to a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the PLA, but they were forced to swallow their pride and endure various slights at the hands of the Russians.

In May 1959, when tension between the CPSU and the CPC was already approaching the breaking point, Khrushchev paid a nine-day visit to Albania. Foreign observers at that time speculated on what could have kept the Soviet leader so long in Tirana. As it turned out, Khrushchev had arranged a separate, secret meeting in Tirana with Marshal Peng Teh-huai, the Minister of Defense of the People's Republic of China.

Peng, an ally of Liu Shao-chi, had long been one of the most vociferous and unalloyed advocates of the pro-Soviet wing of the Chinese leadership. A champion of strict adherence to the Soviet model of army-building and the theory that "weapons decide everything," Peng pinned his hopes on massive Soviet technical and military assistance. Bitterly opposed to the anti-rightist campaign of 1957, and the Great Leap Forward and people's commune movement launched in 1958, Peng saw eye-to-eye with Khrushchev on many things.

Khrushchev had criticized the People's Commune movement directly on a number of occasions, in unison with Marshal Tito. On November 23, 1958, four days following the CPC resolution formally approving and spurring forward the great mass movement begun earlier that year, Tito registered the opinion that the Communes "had nothing in common with Marxism." On December 1, Khrushchev told no less a Marxist than U.S. Senator Hubert H. Humphrey that the Communes were "old fashioned" and "reactionary." At the 21st Congress of the CPSU, held at the beginning of 1959, Khrushchev made several implied attacks on the communes, which, as one author put it, referred to "his concern about 'economic maladjustment,' 'over-arrogance,' 'equalitarian communism,' and other such euphemisms for the Chinese experiment."³⁴ At the same time, while delivering a standard criticism of Yugoslav revisionism, Khrushchev left the door open to Tito while in the next breath tossing him a piece of meat:

. . . The Soviet Communists and the whole Soviet people have friendly feelings for the fraternal peoples of Yugoslavia and for the Yugoslav Communists. The Soviet Union will continue to work for cooperation with Yugoslavia in all questions of the struggle against imperialism for peace in which our positions will coincide. . . .

While continuing to expose revisionism as the main threat within the Communist movement, the struggle against dogmatism and sectarianism must go on unabated, for they impede the creative application of Marxist-Leninist theory and

lead away from the masses...³⁵

A Soviet government statement of 1963 summarizes the Khrushchev position on the Great Leap Forward:

...Precisely because the interests of the Chinese people are dear to us, we were upset by the turn which became apparent in the development of the Chinese national economy in 1958, when the leaders of the People's Republic of China proclaimed their line of the "Three Red Banners," announced the "Great Leap" and began setting up People's Communes. Our party saw that this was a road of dangerous experiments, a road of disregard for economic laws and for the experience of other socialist states... We could not fail to feel alarmed when, with every step they took, the leaders of the People's Republic of China began to pour abuse on the Leninist principle of material incentive, abandoned the principle of remunerating labour, and went over to equalitarian distribution in Peoples Communes...³⁶

Mao's policies represented not only a "Great Leap" in the class struggle within China but a clear sign that the Chinese had no intention of becoming a dependency of the Soviet Union. This Khrushchev found intolerable. The CPC was also going out of its way to botch Khrushchev's foreign policy of "peaceful collaboration" with U.S. imperialism, the key link of which was the hoped-for summit conference with Eisenhower which Khrushchev had been angling for since 1958.

In the summer of 1958, British and American troops invaded Lebanon, and it appeared for a time that the intention of the Western powers was to mount also an invasion of Iraq, where an anti-imperialist struggle was in progress. Khrushchev, in the heat of the crisis, played a groveling role, appealing to President Eisenhower in the following terms:

... We address you not from a position of intimidation but from a position of reason. We believe at this momentous hour that it would be more reasonable not to bring the heated atmosphere to the boiling point; it is sufficiently inflammable as it is.³⁷

At the same time, a quite different message issued from Peking:

There cannot be the slightest indulgence towards American imperialism's act of aggression... Therefore let the people of the whole world take emergency action...

"Nothing can be saved by yielding to evil, and coddling wrong only helps the devil."... if the U.S.-British aggressors refuse to withdraw from Lebanon and Jordan, and insist on expanding their ag-

gression, then the only course left to the people of the world is to hit the aggressors on the head!³⁸

On the heels of the Middle East crisis came the confrontation in the Taiwan Straits. On August 23, the Chinese began an all-out heavy bombardment of Quemoy and Matsu, two offshore islands held by the Chiang Kai-shek regime. American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles adopted a highly belligerent tone, including threatening nuclear war against the People's Republic of China, and it became clear that the U.S. was preparing to give military support to Chiang.

For an entire week, the only sound emanating from Moscow was that of frightened heavy breathing—odd behavior for a "close socialist ally" bound by a military alliance with China. Finally, on August 31, Khrushchev timidly offered that "anyone who tried to threaten an attack on the Chinese People's Republic must not forget that he is also threatening the Soviet Union." Only a week later, when the crisis had finally ebbed, did Khrushchev issue a tougher statement, to the effect that an attack on China was an attack on the Soviet Union. As the crisis continued to fade, Khrushchev issued more and ever tougher statements—the behavior of a blustering fool vainly seeking to cover the traces of his cowardice.

By the end of 1958, it was clear to Khrushchev that Mao had no intention of cooperating, and in fact was becoming a formidable threat to his whole revisionist strategy, both within the communist movement and the arena of global power relations. And within China, Khrushchevites such as Peng Teh-huai were simultaneously coming to the conclusion that Mao had to be stopped, if not overthrown completely.

Such is the background to the charming tete-a-tete in Tirana between Nikita Khrushchev and Peng Teh-huai in May of 1959.

Peng came to the Tirana meeting prepared, with a long paper that amounted to a manifesto against Mao and his whole line, focusing on the Great Leap Forward and the People's Communes. Peng presented this to Khrushchev, without the knowledge of Mao, and sought Khrushchev's support. Khrushchev enthusiastically backed Peng in a bid to overthrow the revolutionary leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.³⁹

Shortly after his return to China, Peng openly raised the flag of revisionism at the famous Lushan Plenum of the CPC Central Committee in August of 1959. Rallying his powerful social base, especially in the military, and striking an alliance with rightist elements in the economic ministries, Peng sought not only to overthrow the revolutionary line, but, apparently, Mao and the other revolutionary leaders on the Central Committee. His defeat, after a long and bitter struggle at Lushan, came at a critical time not only in the class struggle in China, but in

the intensifying struggle between Marxism and revisionism within the international communist movement.

The Lushan Plenum served to consolidate the revolutionary line throughout the Chinese Party, and the Right was forced to temporarily retreat. In the anti-rightist campaign which followed, the masses of Party members and the broad masses of people were further steeled and tempered in anticipation of the even more stormy battles that were fast approaching; and the fundamental line questions were enunciated with more clarity than ever before.

That the revolutionary combatants of the proletariat are not afraid of difficulties [a *Red Flag* editorial of September 1 said] is because they believe in and rely upon the strength of the masses. Like all other revolutionary undertakings of the people, the socialist undertaking belongs to the millions of the masses of the people themselves. The Marxist-Leninists have always attacked the view which has regarded the revolution as a proposal first thought of by a small number of persons behind closed doors and then followed by the masses acting on orders. In essence, such a viewpoint is bourgeois. Lenin once said, "History generally, and the history of revolutions in particular, is always richer in content, more varied, more many-sided, more lively and 'subtle' than even the best parties and the most class-conscious vanguards of the most advanced classes can imagine... Revolutions are made, at moments of particular upsurge and the exertion of all human capacities, by the class consciousness, will, passion and imagination of tens of millions, spurred on by a most acute struggle of classes."⁴⁰

In a sense, this passage and the stirring quote from Lenin can be taken to concentrate the essence of the many volumes of polemics which were to follow. Marxism-Leninism derives its force and being from the tidal strength of the masses, draws on the deepest currents of the movement, and, at the peak of the upsurge, rears up a great wave of revolution sweeping everything before it.

Nevertheless, there inevitably appears on the battered coast some gesticulating Canute like Khrushchev, convinced that this rushing shore-bound torrent must retreat before his command. In April of 1960, on the anniversary of Lenin's birth, the gathering storm sounded with the force of a typhoon with the publication of *Long Live Leninism!*

From *Long Live Leninism!* to *Proposal Concerning the General Line*

Long Live Leninism!, which appeared in the theoretical journal *Red Flag* in April of 1960, served essentially as a formal declara-

tion of war on the entire revisionist trend headed by Khrushchev. Running more than fifteen thousand words, and written in a militant, slashing style, the polemic dealt with all the fundamental questions of the two-line struggle more sharply and openly than ever before. While still using Tito as the whipping boy and not attacking Khrushchev or the CPSU by name, Khrushchev's theses were all attacked by name.

A thorough review of *Long Live Leninism!* would be a lengthy task. But the greatest immediate impact of the polemic was around the question of war and peace. The article poured ridicule on those "communists" who advocated cowardly capitulation in the face of imperialist missile-rattling; it thunderingly reaffirmed the doctrine of proletarian revolution:

The U.S. imperialists and their partners use weapons like atom bombs to threaten war and blackmail the whole world. They declare that anyone who does not submit to the domination of U.S. imperialism will be destroyed... The Tito clique echoes this line, it takes up the U.S. imperialist refrain to spread terror of atomic warfare among the masses...

Of course, whether or not the imperialists will unleash a war is not determined by us; we are, after all, not chiefs-of-staff to the imperialists... if the U.S. or other imperialists... should dare to fly in the face of the will of all humanity by launching a war using atomic and nuclear weapons, the result will be the very speedy destruction of these monsters encircled by the peoples of the world, and the result will certainly not be the annihilation of mankind...

We believe in the absolute correctness of Lenin's thinking: War is an inevitable outcome of systems of exploitation and the source of modern wars is the imperialist system. Until the imperialist system and the exploiting classes come to an end, wars of one kind or another will always occur. They may be wars among the imperialists for redivision of the world... or wars between the imperialists and the oppressed nations, or civil wars of revolution and counter-revolution between the exploited and exploiting classes in the imperialist countries, or, of course, wars in which the imperialists attack the socialist countries and the socialist countries are forced to defend themselves. All these kinds of war represent the continuation of the policies of definite classes...⁴¹

Long Live Leninism! bitterly condemned the attempt to twist the principle of "peaceful coexistence" between countries with different social systems into a ban on revolution:

Peaceful coexistence of nations and people's revolutions in various countries are in themselves two different things, not

one and the same thing; two different concepts, not one; two different kinds of question, and not one and the same kind of question.

Peaceful coexistence refers to relations between states, revolution means the overthrow of the oppressors as a class by the oppressed people within each country, while in the case of the colonial and semi-colonial countries, it is first and foremost a question of overthrowing alien oppressors, namely the imperialists.

... It was that old revisionist Bernstein who made this shameful and notorious statement: "The movement is everything, the final aim is nothing." The modern revisionists have a similar statement: The peace movement is everything, the aim is nothing. Therefore, the "peace" they talk about is in practice limited to the "peace" which may be acceptable to the imperialists under certain historical conditions. It attempts to lower the revolutionary standards of the peoples of various countries and destroy their revolutionary will.⁴²

From the time of the publication of *Long Live Leninism!* the struggle in the international communist movement grew increasingly open and intense. A number of international gatherings, including the General Council of the World Federation of Trade Unions two months after *Long Live Leninism!* was published (that is, in June 1960) became arenas where the line struggle was waged without let-up. Khrushchev addressed the Third Congress of the Rumanian Communist Party in late June, and in his speech blubbered that "millions of people might burn in the conflagration of hydrogen explosions." Defending himself against *Long Live Leninism!* he was reduced to muttering that "it should not be forgotten that Lenin's propositions on imperialism were advanced and developed decades ago... Besides, comrades, one cannot repeat mechanically now on this question what Vladimir Ilyich Lenin said many decades ago about imperialism, and go on asserting that imperialist wars are inevitable until socialism triumphs throughout the world..."⁴³

In August a *Pravda* article opposed the "left sectarian" views expressed in the Chinese polemic with the brilliant argument: "Why construct, build, create, if one knows in advance that all the fruits of one's labor will be destroyed by the tornado of war?"⁴⁴

On August 13 the Soviets began withdrawing their technicians from the People's Republic of China. *Long Live Leninism!* had hit the revisionists where it hurt. They were forced on the defensive and had to resort to ludicrous "replies" like those given above, at the same time as they futilely attempted to use great-nation bullying and economic coercion to force Mao and the CPC to "toe the line." A smug *Pravda* piece, which appeared even as the Soviet technicians were boarding planes back to Moscow, gloated: "Could one

imagine the successful construction of socialism going on in present day conditions even in so great a country as, let us say, China, if that country were in a state of isolation and could not rely on the collaboration and aid of all other socialist countries?"⁴⁵

In November 1960 the Conference of 81 Communist Parties met in Moscow. There the battle raged ferociously for almost a month. The majority of the parties supported the CPSU positions; by 1960, the rotting disease of revisionism had already consigned most parties around the world to the same opportunist graveyard as the Second International. But Albania and several of the Asian parties either supported the correct line or, at least, refused to endorse the revisionist line, and a number of other parties wavered. The final product of the conference was a statement which amounted to a grab-bag; each trend could pick out of it what was useful to it.

The Moscow Conference solved nothing. In 1961 the CPSU hit at China by opening polemics against Albania, employing the same polemical ploy against the CPC that Mao had introduced by using Tito as a stand-in for Khrushchev. The 22nd Congress of the CPSU, held in October of 1961, was a grotesque circus. V.M. Molotov, a genuine Soviet revolutionary who had led an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow Khrushchev in June of 1957, wrote a letter to the Congress denouncing the new CPSU Draft Programme slated for adoption there as a "counter-revolutionary, pacifist programme." For this courageous act, through which he struck a blow for the entire Soviet people and the working class of the world, it was his honor to be the target of about 70 diatribes from the floor which were also veiled attacks on the CPC.⁴⁶

Khrushchev's "New Programme" introduced the theory that the dictatorship of the proletariat no longer existed in the Soviet Union (one true statement!) and had been replaced by the "state of the whole people," since classes and class struggle had been eliminated entirely in the Soviet Union. He also unveiled an "ambitious new program" promising the complete construction of communism in the USSR by 1980!⁴⁷

The 22nd Congress closed with the decision to remove Stalin's body from its tomb next to Lenin's, and to efface his name from the mausoleum "forever."

Throughout 1962, despite several initiatives from various parties to call a halt to the polemics and convene another conference, the implacable struggle between Marxism and revisionism which had begun in 1956 was clearly approaching a climax. Khrushchev picked up where he had left off in his love affair with Tito, and now stressed the "proximity of identity" of their views on "foreign affairs." As tension mounted between China and India, the Soviet Union began supplying jet fighters to India; when war broke out in October, Khrushchev sided with India. Khrushchev's capitulation to the

U.S. in the Cuban missile crisis of the same month was condemned by China as a cowardly submission to nuclear blackmail.

On January 5, 1963, *Red Flag* published an article "Leninism and Modern Revisionism." "Revisionism is an opium to anaesthetise the people; it is a beguiling music for the consolation of slaves," the concluding paragraph ran.

As a political grouping, revisionism constitutes a detachment of the bourgeoisie within the working-class movement, an important social prop for the bourgeoisie and for imperialism. As a trend of thought, revisionism will never fail to appear in varying guises at different times so long as capitalism and imperialism exist in the world. . . Today the dark clouds of revisionism hang over the international working class movement. The modern revisionists are openly engaged in splitting activities. The emergence of modern revisionism is, of course, a bad thing. But as its emergence was inevitable and as its existence is an objective reality, its public appearance enables people to see, discern, and understand the harm it does. Thus the bad thing will be turned to good account. . . .⁴⁸

On March 30, the Central Committee of the CPSU sent a letter to the Central Committee of the CPC which reiterated their revisionist line and at the same time piously proposed "a halt to polemics" and called for joint talks to solve differences.

The letter they received in return was the *Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement*.

The *Proposal* was not just another

polemic; it was, as an article commemorating the second anniversary of its publication said,

a programmatic document. It drew a clear line between Marxism-Leninism and Khrushchev revisionism on a number of major problems of the contemporary world revolution and made a great theoretical contribution to the struggle against Khrushchev revisionism. . .

The *Proposal* was a major turning point in the struggle between Marxism-Leninism and modern revisionism. It was a turning point in the transition from the emergence and growth of Khrushchev revisionism, and indeed of the entire modern revisionist trend after World War 2, to its complete bankruptcy.⁴⁹

The *Proposal* was a letter only in the formal sense; more accurately, it was a call to revolutionaries the world over to join the battle against revisionism. The Soviet Union itself attempted to suppress its contents, but through various ways it was circulated in the USSR. For example, Chinese citizens throughout the Soviet Union organized illegal distribution of a Russian edition of the *Proposal*. The *Proposal* was passed out in train stations, stacks were left where workers might get to them, Chinese delegates to the Congress of the International Federation of Women in Moscow disrupted the Congress and read out long extracts from the *Proposal*, braving beatings and arrests.

A complaint sent by the Soviet Foreign Ministry to the Chinese government on July 4 moaned that

the text of the letter was at the same time taken by members of the [Chinese] em-

bassy staff to various institutions in Moscow in a number of cars, mailed to Soviet citizens and delivered to their homes, and taken by officials, specially sent from Moscow, to other towns, including Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa, Dubna, etc. . . .

This not only astonished Soviet people but also aroused a feeling of justified protest. . .

But. . . the distribution of the materials continued and assumed an even wider scale. It went so far that the Chinese crews of the Moscow-Peking trains scattered the text of the letter in the Russian language from the windows of coaches at railway stations. The text of the letter was transmitted through the public address system of trains during their stops. When Soviet people politely told the Chinese citizens that their actions were impermissible, the latter in many cases behaved in a defiant way. For instance, the above mentioned Yao impudently told Soviet people that the Chinese workers "will not ask anybody's permission" to disseminate materials of this kind. . . .⁵⁰

It has never been stated who in the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party inspired and gave direction to this "activity unheard of in diplomatic practice," which certainly should be condemned as a violation of the Leninist principle of peaceful coexistence between states with different social systems. But, whoever instigated this outrage, he wasn't a stodgy old bureaucrat or comfortable veteran resting on his laurels—that's for sure. ■

Footnotes

1. *Miscellany of Mao Tsetung Thought (1949-1968)*, (Joint Publications Research Service, Arlington, Va., 1974), p. 118.
2. *A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement*, (Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1963).
3. "Proposal," section 3.
4. "Proposal," sec. 10.
5. "Proposal," sec. 4.
6. *Ibid.*
7. "Proposal," sec. 5.
8. *Ibid.*
9. "Proposal," sec. 6.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. "Proposal," sec. 9.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. "Proposal," sec. 8.
16. *Ibid.*
17. "Proposal," secs. 10, 12.
18. "Proposal," sec. 12.
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Appendix Footnotes

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