

# Marxism-Leninism in a Changing World (Part II)\*

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The science of Marxism-Leninism, in recent years, has definitely lagged behind the swiftly changing world situation. This has been generally the case since the death of Lenin in 1924. Lenin was a great path-blazer in Marxist theory; but his successor, Stalin, although doing considerable notable theoretical work, did not keep the movement abreast of world developments, as Marx and Lenin had done; nor did he stimulate basic theoretical pioneering on the part of others, either at home or abroad. The theoretical lag has been particularly noticeable since the dissolution of the Communist International in 1943.

The historic 20th Congress, besides adopting the Sixth Five-Year Plan, which will enormously strengthen the USSR economically, also took several vital steps forward in the theoretical development of Marxism-Leninism. This was a quite in line, first, with the constructive problems created by the enormous advance of world Socialism, and second, with the need for progress and flexibility in theory and practice on the part of Communists in the USSR and everywhere else. Altogether, the Congress marked a considerable

stride ahead in the progressive evolution of Marxism-Leninism.

Among the various significant contributions made by this important gathering was the assurance it gave to the world that world war is not inevitable—that the forces of world democracy—the Socialist countries, the vast peace bloc of colonial and erstwhile colonial peoples, the world labor movement, and other democratic strata—are now strong enough to halt the imperialist warmongers and to make peaceful co-existence a reality, as they have so recently demonstrated in their successful fight against the atomic war plans of the would-be world conquerors of Wall Street. Prior to World War II, as well as during the cold war, the Communist parties of the world, realizing the growing strength of the world peace forces and the increasing weakness of international capitalism, definitely worked upon the perspective that the peoples of the world, if united in their opposition to the projected war, could block it and preserve world peace. But the 20th Congress gave this trend far greater theoretical clarity and authority by specifically declaring obsolete the former position stressing the inevitability of imperialist war as

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long as capitalism lasts. This was a very important development of Marxism-Leninism.

At the same time, while indicating the power of the peoples to halt and eventually abolish war, the Congress pointed out there is a continuing danger of war, particularly as ruthless American imperialism is still prosecuting its futile drive for world mastery. Mikoyan thus put this general question: "Is there a danger of imperialist states attacking Socialist countries? Undoubtedly, there is, and this danger will continue until Socialism gains overwhelming superiority over capitalism. . . . But war is no longer a fatal inevitability." The Congress stressed the basic importance of continuing the struggle against war and for the maintenance of a powerful mass peace movement. The British-French attack upon Egypt served to emphasize all this.

A second big theoretical-practical achievement of the 20th Congress was the sharp clarification it gave of the road to Socialism in the remaining capitalist and colonial countries. On the eve of the Russian Revolution of 1917, Lenin said that, "All nations will arrive at Socialism—this is inevitable, but not all will do so in exactly the same way, each will contribute something of its own in one or another form of democracy, one or another form of the dictatorship, one or another rate at which Socialist transformation will be effected in the various aspects of social life. . . ." In line with this general

principle, with the great growth of the strength of the Socialist forces on a world scale and in the respective countries, as well as with the progressive decay of world capitalism, the possibility has arisen for the workers, by restraining the violence of the capitalists, to achieve Socialism in a parliamentary and relatively peaceful manner. This was something which, at the time and in the situation of the Russian Revolution, for example, proved impossible, although Lenin tried it.

A third strengthening of the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism which took place at the 20th Congress was the strong attack directed against the "cult of the individual." Lenin, in the spirit of Marx, developed elaborately in his writings and practical leadership, the fundamental importance in the Party and other proletarian bodies, of Socialist democracy, of collective leadership, and of criticism and self-criticism. He also warned emphatically against the dangers of leader adulation and the overplaying of the role of the individual in the struggle and in the political life generally of the proletariat. But in the long, hard, highly disciplined, almost semi-military struggle of the Soviet people, to strengthen and save the Revolution in the face of a hostile capitalist encirclement, these healthy proletarian principles had been largely forgotten and superseded by Stalin, as we have seen, by his harmful undemocratic practices. The 20th Congress, however, dealt a powerful

blow to all this malpractice, and it gave a tremendous spur not only to Communist Party democracy, but to world democracy generally. The eased international political situation helped to make possible this great step ahead. The development has generated a whole series of new problems of expanding democracy, and the Communist parties everywhere, including ours in the United States, in the true spirit of Marxist flexibility, are throbbing with the consideration of them.

A fourth important advance made by the fruitful 20th Congress was in respect to the development of a more flexible internationalism among the many countries of Socialism, although not without tragedy in Hungary. The advance of these countries to the status of a world Socialist system was one of the most vital developments of the post-war period. During the long and bitter struggle of Marxism-Leninism to prevent world war, to free the colonial peoples, and to establish Socialism in the world, there has been the necessity for these countries faced by the keen fighting need, to draw together in strong international solidarity. This has led to excesses of overcentralization in ideology, as well as in organization and discipline of the various Communist parties, and even in many of the several Socialist states. The 20th Congress, however, with its reevaluation of Stalin and its war against the cult of the individual, delivered strong blows against all this exaggeration. Facilitated by the

eased international situation and by the rapidly growing strength of the forces of world democracy and Socialism, Communists everywhere are now better able to adopt more flexible methods of international cooperation.

#### SOME FURTHER THEORETICAL PROBLEMS

This is a general period when rapidly advancing Socialism is successfully challenging capitalism in every sphere on a world scale. A high point in this struggle between world capitalism and world Socialism was reached and passed, to the advantage of Socialism, in the great struggle to prevent an atomic world war, which climaxed at Geneva in July 1955. Such a world war was the only possible hope (but a futile one) for the monopoly capitalists to restore their erstwhile world domination, and it was flatly blocked. But the struggles ahead will be very difficult and they will present many new problems for Marxist-Leninists to master. Concretely, these will turn around the central questions of maintaining world peace—the peaceful co-existence of all nations—as world democracy and Socialism grow in extent and strength.

Within the above general framework, there are many problems regarding the state that have to be reviewed:

a) In this respect, one thing, already noted by Stalin, is that the "withering away of the State" is

far more prolonged process than was foreseen by Engels. This whole question should be probed much further.

b) Time-honored Marxist formulations—that the workers cannot simply seize hold of the ready-made bourgeois state and use it as it is for the building of Socialism—while still fundamentally true, need to be re-developed in the light of the new perspective of achieving Socialism in many, if not most, capitalist countries by parliamentary means. With this policy, what the workers are aiming at, providing that they can forestall fascism and other forms of reaction, is to secure control of the state by an elected majority and then to remodel or re-organize it fundamentally to suit their Socialist objectives.

c) Still another question requiring clarification regarding the bourgeois state is to indicate more clearly the effects upon that state of the wide parliamentary penetration and the heavy pressure upon it by the powerfully organized working class of today. The Right Social Democrats hold that these forces have transformed the old state into a new type, the so-called welfare state, in which the interests of the workers are given equal, if not paramount consideration. H. E. Kroos, *American Economic Development*, p. 521, speaking typically of the "welfare state" in the United States, says, "Rather paradoxically it was capitalistic society that was giving practical application to the Marxian dictum, 'From each according to his

ability, to each according to his need."

This theory of a people's state, in automatic transition from capitalism to Socialism, is an illusion. What advances the workers have won in improved living standards in some capitalist countries—and these *are* very substantial in the United States—are due to two major factors: the great new strength of their democratic organizations and the deepening general crisis of world capitalism, with its weakening effects upon all capitalist regimes. The workers and their allies cannot have a state that protects their interests until, by a definite political act, they have won control of the government and have begun to adapt it to their specific class needs. Here is a prolific sphere for further Marxist-Leninist theoretical analysis and interpretation.

In the field of economics also there is much room for analytical study on the part of Marxist-Leninists. Karl Marx, with his monumental work, *Capital*, revolutionized economics, particularly with the key doctrine of surplus value. But Marxist-Leninists of our time seem to have fallen into the smug position that there is nothing further of importance theoretically to be said in this field—that Marx, on capitalism in general, and Lenin, on imperialism, have written all that is vital on economic theory; but this is not true. Among various questions, there must be further studies on the matter of absolute impoverishment

and real wages, especially more serious attention must be paid to J. M. Keynes and his conception of the "managed economy." There is much new still to be said in economics.

Keynesism cannot liquidate the cyclical crisis of capitalism, but it can delay and distort such crises, and especially it can befuddle the workers and other democratic strata. Therefore, it has to be exposed and fought. As yet, this work has been done only sketchily by Communists. There is a wrong tendency among Marxist-Leninist economists to brush it off lightly as unimportant. It is high time, it would seem, for Communists to cross swords in earnest with this most cunning and dangerous variety of bourgeois economics, which has as its central purpose to defeat Socialism and to save capitalism.

Even in the field of imperialism, where Marxist-Leninists, ever since the great work of Lenin, have been theoretically preeminent, there is a strong need for further analytical work on our part. This necessity is provoked especially by the breakdown of the colonial system, by the disintegration of the world markets of capitalism, by the growth of the Socialist lands into a world system, and by the acute cutting down of most of the traditional capitalist empires. This narrowing process is in sharp contradiction to the period of imperialist expansion, particularly during the years 1875-1900, when most of the big empires were built, and when Lenin wrote.

Particularly important during the present great crisis of imperialism is the "American" imperialist system, in which the oppressed countries, as in Latin America, retain a semblance of national independence, but actually are dominated economically and politically by the United States. Very much in order would be a Marxist-Leninist book on imperialism in these days of the sharp decline of the colonial system.

With the rapid shift in the relationship of capitalist and Socialist world forces, this is also a period of the development of new forms of proletarian internationalism. Above, we have seen how deeply the new internationalism in general is affecting the relations among the many Socialist states of the world. It is also expressing itself among the three-score Communist and workers parties of both the Socialist and capitalist spheres of the globe. Originally, the Communist International set out in the widely revolutionary situation of 1919 with the conception of a world party, highly disciplined, and with the national parties organized closely as so many "sections" of the International. This was in the general tradition of the First International. But the tendency in latter years has been definitely away from this highly centralized type of organization as too limiting to the functioning of the national parties, as the Comintern indicated in its statement upon its dissolution in 1943. The Cominform when it dissolved itself early in 1956, took

much the same position. The present situation in Eastern Europe greatly emphasizes this point.

During the cold war, with humanity facing the menace of atomic war and with a sharp need for close and united peace action by the world democratic forces, the Communist parties generally developed a very high degree of voluntary international unity and discipline. But now, with the easing of the international situation after the defeat of the warmongers at Geneva, there is an accelerated tendency towards more flexibility in international Communist party relations. This trend has been greatly speeded up by the current liquidation of Stalin's cult of the individual, which through its super-centralization, also had adversely affected the Communist parties of the world, as well as that of the Soviet Union. In the period ahead, there will be far more comradely criticism and theoretical discussion among the Communist parties generally than has ever before been the case. This situation will make acute the need for at least one good Communist journal of international discussion. Obviously, this whole international development also requires thorough-going theoretical clarification and guidance.

As indicated at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, another important aspect of the shift in strength between world capitalism and world Socialism is the bettering relationship between Social Democrats and Communists. The dissolution of the

Stalin cult of the individual has a strong constructive bearing upon this matter. With the enormous growth of Socialist nations on a world scale and with many Communist parties definitely counting upon winning power through parliamentary action, the prospect is rapidly tending to heal, first in action and eventually in organization, the 40-year old breach between the Communist and Socialist movements internationally. This disastrous conflict has resulted not only in creating separate national political parties all over the capitalist world, but also in a worldwide division of the trade-union movement. To heal this schism would enormously strengthen labor's forces on a world scale.

#### LESSONS FOR AMERICAN COMMUNISTS

The foregoing analysis of a developing Marxism-Leninism in a rapidly changing world, applies to the United States, as well as to other capitalist countries.

Among the important applications of Marxism-Leninism that the Party must achieve in our policy-making is that closer attention than before has to be paid to specific American national characteristics. Such background conditioning factors include, among others, the two American revolutions of 1776 and 1861; the 300 years of general American democratic tradition and the 150 years of active labor struggle; the 250 years of Negro chattel slavery; the pre-

Civil War abolition movement; the generations-long struggle for free land; the tremendous variety of nationalities which go to make up the American nation, including 16,000,000 Negroes; the fact that American living standards are two to three times as high as those in other major capitalist lands; that the working class of this country has not yet developed a broad political party nor a Marxist ideology; that imperialist corruption of the skilled workers and labor bureaucracy has penetrated to a far broader and deeper extent in the United States than ever before in any country; that the United States, strategically located, has never been seriously ravaged by imperialist war, etc., etc. All these peculiarly American facts, and many others, which deeply affect the thought and action of our working class, are fundamentally important in developing American labor theory and policy.

"American exceptionalism," which was first singled out for refutation by Marx and Engels, also continues today in aggravated forms and it requires vigorous combat from Marxist-Leninists. This is the specifically American "theory" which holds, in short, that American capitalism is cut from a quite different cloth than that of the rest of world capitalism. Concretely, it argues that capitalism in this country is not really capitalism at all, but a sort of people's regime; that American workers are becoming capitalists while the capitalists are turning into workers; that there are no classes, no class

consciousness, and no class struggle in the United States; that the economic system here is becoming immune to cyclical crises, and consequently, that Marxism-Leninism and Socialism are completely alien to the United States. In its present-day aspects, American exceptionalism puts forth claims of its "right" to rule the world on the basis of its "know-how" and "innate superiority." All this, of course, is imperialist propaganda, and as such it is dangerous ideologically. In reality, American capitalism, despite its national peculiarities, is of a piece with the rest of world capitalism, and it is subject to all of the latter's general laws of growth and decay.

Another major American specific, not to be lost sight of, is the fact that the United States is far and away the richest and strongest capitalist country in the world. Its imperialist ambitions are correspondingly of a grandiose character. It aims at dominating not only the capitalist world, but the Socialist world as well. During the years following World War II it has tried to realize these impossible objectives on the basis of an atomic world war.

This war spirit is contrary to the will of the American people, who in their vast majority want world peace. The 20th Congress warned that although the war danger has been greatly lessened since the Geneva "summit" conference of July, 1955, it has by no means disappeared. The resolution goes on to say that

"In the interests of consolidating peace it is extremely important that all the forces acting against war should form a united front and not weaken the efforts in the fight for preserving peace." Marxist-Leninist theoreticians must not overlook the belligerency of Wall Street imperialism, which will remain until monopoly capital in the United States is curbed or defeated by the common people.

Our theoreticians must also deal more basically with the present-day composition of the working class—relatively more Negro workers, more women, more white collar elements, and particularly, less production workers—and all the implications of these facts; with the diminishing wage gap between skilled and unskilled workers; and with the precise status of the Negro national question in the United States.

The question of analyzing the specific American types of Social Democracy should also receive far more attention than it has yet been given. Traditionally, the Left forces in the United States have looked for typical European forms of Social Democracy—as expressed by the SP and SLP—and they have largely overlooked what today and always has expressed the main Social Democratic trend in this country; namely, the conservative trade union leadership, which, with its pro-capitalist stand, represents a specific American brand of Social Democracy.

Socialism in the United States should likewise receive much closer

attention analytically than has been the case up till now. This theoretical work should embrace a realistic estimate of the winning of political power by the workers and their allies; the process of transition from a people's front to a people's democracy; the structure of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the rule of the workers in a Socialist United States; the reorganization of industry and agriculture; the status of civil rights for oppositional elements under Socialism; the relationship of a Socialist America to the rest of the Socialist world, and especially what the American workers have to gain, economically, politically and culturally by the establishment of Socialism in this country.

The Communist Party of the United States is at present in a highly self-critical examination of its policies, internal and external. This examination has grown out of the heavy losses suffered by the Party during the eight long years of severe persecution by the government—losses which were accentuated by a number of serious Left-sectarian errors. A big stimulus was also given to the present discussion by the impact of the general struggle against the Stalin cult of the individual, and especially by the serious struggles in the European People's democracies. It also reflects, in a general way, the tendency of Communists the world over to meet the demands of the new international situation by a critical survey of their previous activities.



Together with the Party's general political work, the current discussion deals with many structural and procedural questions in a relatively new way. These questions include: the status and methods of internal Party democracy, Party discipline, the role of Party leadership, proletarian internationalism, the attitude towards the Socialist countries of the world, the relationship towards other Left trends and groups in the United States, and related questions.

The general answer to such problems, especially those of the newer type, is that our Party should continue on with and strengthen its basic Marxism-Leninism, developing it in line with the needs of specific American conditions and the changing world situation. All over the world there is at present a strong re-stress upon Marxism-Leninism, with particular emphasis upon collective leadership and Party democracy, of which Lenin was such a persistent exponent. The American Party can be no exception to this elementary trend. Marxism-Leninism is flexible enough to meet every demand of the American situation, and it alone can do this.

Our Party must be based upon democratic centralism; but it must be a democratic centralism such as Lenin conceived and taught. This is the road, at once, to the greatest solidarity and the most complete democracy. Our Party thus can and must be fundamentally an American party. The Party should strictly practice criticism and self-criticism; it

should be alert to cultivate a real democracy in its ranks, and no longer consider unanimous votes on policy as imperative; it must have strong and well-known leaders, but these must not be allowed to drift into arbitrary practices. A continuous fight against bureaucracy is indispensable. On the other hand, we must be on guard against Leftist anti-leadership tendencies, and also against Rightist efforts to have us throw aside correct Leninist principles of organization in the name of a mess of Social-Democratic political and organizational pottage.

Good Party discipline has been at the very heart of all the victories won by individual Communist parties in their successful march to political victory in various parts of the world. Nothing is more dreaded by the capitalist enemy than the strong solidarity of Communists under the severest stresses. Communists in the United States should continue to set the example to the working class of a solid fighting front. But this indispensable and invaluable solidarity should henceforth be achieved much more basically on a voluntary basis and not by "command," as so often in the past. We must be on our guard, however, in the effort to cure the evils of the Stalin cult, not to swing to the other extreme of loose bourgeois liberal practices which would make all fighting solidarity impossible.

International solidarity among Communists is also a practice of proven supreme value to the work-

ing class, as the warmongers have once more learned to their cost in the great struggle of the peoples to prevent the outbreak of atomic war. This, too, is a weapon that must be carefully preserved. But the international solidarity of the Communist parties, based on voluntary cooperation, will have in it far more of comradely criticism than formerly. Political criticism, properly formulated, can be of great value internationally, as the CPUSA learned quite well from the famous Duclos article. In this sphere, also, in combatting wrong international habits and practices of the Stalin period, we must be careful not to fall into nationalist methods and policies, which could be the death of all international solidarity. The tasks of our times call

for more proletarian internationalism, not less.

With the war-fascist hysteria of recent years now much abated, the time is increasingly opportune for repairing the losses inflicted upon our Party during the cold war by the combined forces of reaction. This rebuilding must be carried out in a spirit corresponding to the needs and in solidarity with the world forces of peace, democracy and Socialism. This is a time when, with a rapidly developing theory and practice, the Communist movement everywhere is moving on to higher levels of struggle and accomplishment. The Communist Party of the United States should also march forward in the same progressive spirit to its re-strengthening on the basis of Marxism-Leninism.