

WHO IS A REVOLUTIONARY?

IN INDIA AS ELSEWHERE, THE MAIN charge—and the one with the most appeal—made against the communists by the supporters of the New Left is that the former have ceased to be revolutionary. The accusation is that the communists have become reconciled to the *status quo*, compromised with the establishment and given up the struggle to build a new world. This charge is based on the premise, not always clearly articulated, that the communists (at least the majority of them or the non-Maoists among them) no longer believe in violent revolution and since there can be no revolution without a clash of arms, they have given up believing in revolution.

Before attempting to answer this charge, it would be better to try to achieve some kind of understanding as to what being a revolutionary means. Here we have to get down to fundamentals. Anybody who claims to be a Marxist will agree that a revolution means, above all, a total change, a complete transformation of the production relations or the property-ownership patterns which form the basis of a given socio-economic system. These production relations are themselves only a particular way of organising at any given moment man's eternal encounter and conflict with nature—which creates the productive forces of society, including man himself. For a time these production relations aid and develop the growth of the productive forces, facilitate the engagement of man with nature. But this very success produces its own nemesis—such is the operation of the dialectical law of social motion. The very growth of productive forces under a given set of production relations begins to rebel against and to outgrow those very same production relations which had helped its develop-

ment in the past. A period of crisis opens for that socio-economic formation which has reached that stage.

How is this crisis resolved? Here we have the most outstanding characteristic of social development. That crisis is resolved by the action of men, by the conflict between those groups of men whose interests are bound up with the production relations (or ownership patterns) which are historically outmoded and other groups of men whose interests and very lives are crushed by these production relations. Thus, the rebellion of the productive forces against outmoded production relations takes the form of class struggle—of conflict between groups of men with opposed interests because of their contrasting position *vis-a-vis* the given system of property relations.

And, how, in turn, is this class conflict resolved? Here another element has to be taken into consideration, that is, what is called the superstructure—social institutions, ideas, above all, the state with its coercive apparatus. Every pattern of property-ownership reinforces and protects itself through ideas and institutions which are helpful to it and, in the ultimate analysis, by the power of organised coercion, that is, the state with its prisons, police and army. Production relations cannot be changed unless the forces that protect it are removed from the scene. And apart from ideas and institutions, basic among these elements is the force of state power. Thus, the final resolution of class conflict, itself the manifestation of the rebellion of productive forces against outmoded production relations, takes place through the capture and radical transformation of state power. This precisely is revolution.

Just as production relations, however outmoded and retarding, will not automatically give way to superior and more progressive production relations so also no class or coalition of classes which has state power will gracefully and on its own accord give it up to another class or coalition of classes. State power has to be conquered, has to be seized. How? By organising and uniting a force superior to that of the entrenched

state power and using that superior force to smash that entrenched state power and set up a new one. One class rule has, thus, to be displaced by another class rule. This precisely is revolution.

To help to one's capacity the work of organising and uniting such a force, to fully participate in the most effective manner in the actions of such a force, to join and to lead this force at the most opportune moment in the final assault against the citadel of socially outmoded class power—this precisely is to be a revolutionary. The mettle and worth of a revolutionary will be judged precisely by this exact and accurate criterion, not by the phrases he uses nor by the gestures he makes. Obviously, the building up of revolutionary force cannot be distinguished from, much less counterpoised to, the mobilisation of the masses. A revolutionary is one who is able, along with his colleagues joined in a revolutionary organisation, to set the masses in motion, to lead the masses to learn from the experience of their struggles, to raise their level of understanding, their capacity for struggle and the strength of their organisations, to the point where the masses advance to the capture of state power.

A revolutionary must make a revolution. That is absolutely true. But a revolutionary must know what a revolution is before he can make one. And, as a matter of fact, the revolutionary or even group of revolutionaries do not make a revolution. It is the masses who do it, impelled by social crisis and led by revolutionaries, that is, those with the most knowledge, the clearest perspective, the most courage and the greatest stamina. One cannot be a revolutionary unless one is filled with implacable hatred against the *status quo*, against the ruling class and the hateful system by which it benefits. Without discontent, without hatred of the ruling class and involvement with the destiny of the oppressed there is no starting on the road to becoming a revolutionary. But that is only to start on the road, that is only the first condition for becoming a revolutionary. One cannot be a revolutionary if one stops there,

one cannot be a revolutionary if one builds only on that elemental and primitive sense of anger against injustice. The sincerity of a revolutionary is inseparable from stamina, from study and work to most effectively rouse and organise the masses and bring them to revolutionary positions. This requires much more than romanticism and anger. This requires courage and capacity for sustained and, at times, even heart-breaking work.

This brings us to the first charge: communists (or the majority of them) are not revolutionaries since they do not believe in violent revolution. Let us clear up a misconception here, at least as far as the CPI is concerned.

The CPI has not converted itself into a party that is opposed to violence from the angle of adherence to nonviolence and on grounds of absolute principle. The CPI is fully aware of the hourly and daily violence being perpetrated against the common people by the exploiters and their state. The CPI is fully aware, further, that the ruling class of India is no different from their brethren elsewhere, will never depart from the historical scene voluntarily. It will not hesitate to use all means, including the most violent one, in order to retain its power and privilege. It has already shown its fangs in our country, even while swearing by Gandhian principles.

All these points are only a confirmation of the fundamental tenets of Marxism and their full validity for our country. The CPI, however, goes a step further to ask: is it inevitable that the *form* of revolution in India will have to be the same as in Russia, China or Cuba? Is it inevitable that in India, too, the revolution will have to take the *form* of civil war as in these countries? To this question the answer of the CPI is that civil war is not the inevitable form of revolution in India. There is a possibility that in India the form of the revolution will be that of peaceful transition. The CPI, however, is quite clear that peaceful transition is *not the only* possible form of the Indian revolution. If the CPI does not believe that civil war is inevitable, it also does not believe that peaceful transition is

inevitable. The latter is a possibility and the CPI will do its best to make this possibility a reality. It will not ignore this possibility. At the same time, the CPI will certainly not oblige the ruling class by overlooking the other possibility—that of civil war. It will constantly keep that possibility in mind in its work. It will never drop its revolutionary vigilance.

At the same time, it is essential to be clear about what peaceful transition is as a possible form of the Indian revolution. Peaceful transition is not the obsession with elections, is not parliamentarism or the parliamentary path. Peaceful transition means the combination of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggle, with the major role played by the latter. It is the mass movement, mass struggles and mass organisations, headed by the revolutionary vanguard, that play the decisive role. Without this factor peaceful transition is not possible and cannot even be dreamed of. And let it be added, that without this factor civil war also cannot be dreamed of. The mass movement and mass struggle and mass organisations and revolutionary vanguard—these are essential for both forms of revolution whether peaceful or violent.

About forms of revolutionary struggle it would be as well to take counsel with Lenin than whom no greater revolutionary has ever been born. As early as September 1906 he wrote: 'Let us begin from beginning. What are the fundamental demands which every Marxist should make of an examination of the forms of struggle? In the first place, Marxism differs from all primitive forms of socialism by the fact that it does not bind the movement to one particular form of struggle. It admits the most varied forms of struggle; and it does not "concoct" them, but only generalises, organises, gives conscious expression to those forms of struggle of the revolutionary classes which arise of themselves in the course of the movement. Absolutely hostile to all abstract formulas and to all doctrinaire recipes, Marxism demands an attentive attitude to the mass struggle in progress which as the movement develops, as the class consciousness of the masses grows, as econo-

mic and political crises become acute, continually gives rise to new and more varied methods of defence and offence. Marxism, therefore, positively does not reject any form of struggle. Under no circumstances does Marxism confine itself to the forms of struggle that are possible and exist at the given moment only, recognising as it does that new forms of struggle, unknown to the participants of the given period, inevitably arise as the given social situation changes. In this respect Marxism *learns*, if we may so express it, from mass practice, and makes no claim whatever to *teach* the masses forms of struggle invented by "systematisers" in the seclusion of their studies. We know—said Kautsky, for instance, when examining the forms of social revolution—that the coming crisis will introduce new forms of struggle that we are unable to foresee.

In the second place, Marxism demands an absolutely *historical* examination of the question of forms of struggle. To treat the question apart from the concrete historical situation is to betray ignorance of the very rudiments of dialectical materialism. At different stages of economic evolution, depending on differences in political, national-cultural, living and other conditions, different forms of struggle come to the fore and become the principal forms of struggle and in connection with this, the secondary, auxiliary forms of struggle undergo change in their turn. To attempt to answer yes or no to the question whether any particular means of struggle should be used, without making a detailed examination of the concrete situation of the given movement at the given state of its development, means completely to abandon the Marxist position.

These are the two principal theoretical precepts by which we must be guided. The history of Marxism in western Europe provides an infinite number of examples corroborating what has been said. European social-democracy at the present time regards parliamentarism and the trade-union movement as the principal forms of struggle; it recognised insurrection in the past, is quite prepared to recognise it, should conditions change, in the future—despite the opinion of bourgeois

liberals like the Russian Cadets and the *Bezzaglavsti*. Social-democracy in the seventies rejected the general strike as a social panacea, as a means of overthrowing the bourgeoisie at one stroke by nonpolitical means—but social democracy fully recognises the mass political strike (especially after the experience of Russia in 1905) as *one* of the methods of struggle essential under *certain* conditions. Social-democracy recognised street barricade fighting in the forties, rejected it for definite reasons at the end of the nineteenth century, and expressed complete readiness to revise the latter view and admit the expediency of barricade fighting after the experience of Moscow, which, in the words of K. Kautsky, initiated new tactics of barricade fighting' (*Marx-Engels-Marxism*, Sixth English Edition, Moscow, pp. 194-96; emphasis in original).

This longish quotation from Lenin should prove of immense help to young revolutionaries in our country who have been led away by their youthful enthusiasm to identify revolution and revolutionary struggle with only one type of struggle—armed struggle. They have been led to believe that unless one engages in armed struggle here and now or at least works for inevitable armed struggle in the near future one is not revolutionary. This is precisely to make a fetish of one form of struggle and to refuse to both learn from the masses in this regard and to study the concrete situation before deciding what form of struggle is most appropriate at the present time. Proceeding on this premise we have to come to the conclusion that Lenin himself was no revolutionary.

This above analysis may be agreed upon but a further question may be asked. What about the final struggle? Will that not be armed struggle since 'all power flows from the barrel of a gun?' One has to tackle this question. It is completely non-Marxist to maintain that all power resides in the gun, that only the gun gives power. Not only is this non-Marxist but it is also against the teachings of Mao himself from whose writings it is plucked out.

The correct position is to put it this way. Power issues from

the people. It is the people who, in the final analysis, provide the power to the state, to the ruling class and also its guns. Similarly, the power of the revolutionary forces is based on the people, on their attachment to the cause of the revolution. Without such mass attachment to the revolutionary cause the power of the revolutionary guns would be weak and ineffective.

This basic and most fundamental point must never be overlooked in any discussion about the question of power. Forgetting this point leads to a kind of cult of the gun, a cult of violence, both of which are profoundly alien to the ideology and cause of revolution.

Nor is this a matter of theory or belief. Life itself, historical experience, confirms this point. How else could revolutions have been made at all against the reactionary ruling classes who had far more guns at their command than the revolutionaries? But as the revolutionary crisis developed it became increasingly difficult for them to use these guns against the people. Those who were in the armed forces of reaction began increasingly to switch their loyalties, began even to hand over the guns to the people. It is this change in the consciousness of the people that gives power to the guns of the revolutionaries just as it was the lack of this consciousness or the low level of political consciousness of the people that enabled the reactionary ruling class to maintain its power with the help of guns.

Take, for instance, the examples of the Russian, Chinese and Cuban revolutions. In all these revolutions the starting point was revolutionary consciousness and power growing step by step despite relatively much less firepower than that possessed by the reactionaries. Indeed, even at the time of the revolutionary seizure of power the advantage in sheer quantity of weapons was on the side of the ruling class but still it could not cope with the revolutionary forces. First and foremost it is revolution, the revolutionary masses who give power to

guns or acquire power greater than any amount of guns. It is the revolution that gives power to the gun.

This, of course, does not mean that a revolution is simply a matter of winning a majority of the people, bringing them on the streets and then the armed protectors of the ruling class will simply surrender and abdicate power. Not at all. In the first place, there is a reciprocal action between winning the majority of the people and the attitude of the armed forces. The bulk of the armed forces, including sections of the command, come from homes where others also reside. They come from the very people who are being won for revolution and this does have an impact on them and frees them from the influence of reactionary militarism. And it is this buildup of revolutionary consciousness among all sections of the people, including those in uniform (soldiers are peasants in uniform, it has been said a long time ago), that manifests itself in the spectacular split, neutralisation and coming over of the armed forces, or large sections of them at the appropriate time. This is one of the very important indications of the maturing of the revolutionary crisis. So the picture of revolution and of power is a complex and composite one. It is neither simply one of guns nor one of people without guns. It is one of the guns joining the people or refusing to fire at the people or many guns being overwhelmed by relatively less guns but backed by very many more people and by much greater elan. But this complexity and compositeness is far removed from eclecticism or confusion. It is true that both guns and the people are important but it is the people who are decisive and not the guns.

It can be asked, however, that is it not necessary to have guns to be able to mobilise the people? Is this not how true revolutionaries proceeded? The answer here is only partially in the affirmative. The Russian revolution for example was certainly not the result of mobilising people through the use of guns. It was the mobilised people, especially the workers, who took to the guns, were joined by the armed forces on a

large scale, and went on to conduct a successful armed insurrection. Guns certainly played a most important role, victorious armed power of the revolution went on to triumph at tumultuous speed but quite clearly the bolsheviks won the masses not by gunfire but by revolutionary propaganda, revolutionary slogans and revolutionary mass work.

The Chinese revolution was different from the Russian revolution though both were violent, armed revolutions. It was a prolonged civil war, armed revolution confronting armed counter-revolution, culminating in the powerful sweep of the People's Liberation Army in 1949. Now how did it all begin? Not first by a few people seizing arms. It began with the general strikes of the workers, the militant actions of the students, the uprising of the peasants and the split in the armed forces of reaction. It spread also not by gunfire alone, though this had a very important and special role to play, but the winning of the people, establishing of bases and pushing forward from these bases. As Mao Tse-tung said, the three magic weapons of the Chinese revolution were armed struggle, the united front and the Communist Party.

These three taken together explains, according to Mao, why the previously defenceless and downtrodden Chinese people were able to defeat the seemingly omnipotent dictatorship of Chiang Kai-shek, backed to the hilt by the US imperialists. Power came to (and not from) the barrel of the gun because the people were roused to the point where they took to the gun.

What better example is there of the relationship between the people, the gun and the revolution than the incredible saga of Vietnam? The power of the gun is important but not decisive—what better example of this can there be for the revolutionaries than the triumph of this incredible people over the mightiest military machine in the world. Certainly the Vietnamese people could not win without guns but the US imperialists will not win despite all their guns. Even prior to the present times, the success of the Vietnamese revolution,

despite its armed form, depended decisively on the popular support it was able to receive, the wise policy of its revolutionary vanguard and the skill of its generals who learned the art of war from war itself.

We in India also have our own experience to teach us the same lesson. During our freedom struggle the communists had not only the Gandhians to contend with. The communists had not only to point out that nonviolence could never be accepted as a creed, even if peaceful forms of struggle at given moments might be more expedient than violent ones. They had not only to point out that whatever form of struggle could acquire the most extensive mass backing and could most effectively challenge the forces of imperialism was the form to be adopted. The communists had also to argue with the anarchist trend in the freedom struggle, the so-called terrorists. The various terrorist groups, including those belonging to Bhagat Singh's Hindustan Socialist Republican Army and to the Chittagong Armoury Raid group, had occasion to think over in jails and underground hideouts the arguments of the communists. These arguments and the experience of their own movement taught them that it was wrong to give exclusive or even priority importance to armed action. The first job was not to organise arms dumps, armed training centres or armed squads. The first job was to work patiently among the toiling people, organising them, enlightening them and leading their struggles. Only then could the question of armed action be taken up. It was only after prolonged heart-searching and heated discussions that many of the finest persons among the terrorists came over to communism. Till that time, these very persons used to charge the communists with having illusions, having gone soft, being unwilling for action and, therefore, having betrayed the revolutionary cause. The accusations of the New Left in India are by no means all that new as far as the Indian communists concerned!

It is not only the successful polemics with the terrorist groups that form the revolutionary experience of the communists in India. They have also their own direct experience in the im-

mediate postindependence period. The selfsacrifice and courage of those who called the 'Naxalbari communists' are undoubtedly to be admired. Whether it be in Naxalbari or in the border of Srikakulam or in Pulpally and Tellicherry, the young men and women who undertook these actions and risked their lives are dedicated and idealistic persons. But their actions, whether in area or over time, pale into insignificance when compared to the Telengana armed struggle or the armed struggle in the Andhra districts, Kerala and West Bengal during 1948-50. Then it was not a question of a few police outposts or harassing a few exploiters. Thousands of villages and lakhs of square miles of territory were liberated, lakhs of acres of land were distributed, armed attacks were made and armed attacks of the enemy beaten back. The peasants themselves formed armed squads, protected these squads and when required tore up miles upon miles of railway tracks to prevent the enemy coming to the liberated areas. Thousands of communists gave up their lives. But the time came when this armed action had to be called off as the situation in the country clearly proved them to have been either prematurely undertaken or not withdrawn in time when the objective situation had itself radically changed. And the clearest indication of this was the changed mood of the masses in the very area of the armed struggle themselves. This was most clearly evident in Telengana. Delay in calling off armed action not only resulted in partial alienation from the masses but in the loss of very valuable cadres either through enemy action or through demoralisation.

If this was the experience in the rural areas, the lesson was doubly rubbed home in the towns and in the working-class centres. Completely overestimating the revolutionary potentialities of the objective situation, grossly exaggerating the revolutionary preparedness of the masses, the then leadership of the CPI, seized by 'left'-sectarian moods, gave extravagant orders for the building of barricades and the starting of armed insurrection to coincide with the projected general strike on the railways to start in February 1949. All who doubted the wisdom

of these directives were either expelled or otherwise punished for being 'cowards' or 'reformists'. Even when the general strike failed to materialise, when thousands of cadres were arrested and the mass organisations smashed, the leadership continued to cry out against 'cowards' and 'opportunists' who had supposedly 'sabotaged' the mass revolutionary upsurge. Many brilliant and courageous cadres lost their lives or finding the gulf between reality and the party directives too great to bridge or to bear left the movement, sometimes never to return. The party, the entire progressive movement in India, suffered a most grievous blow from which it has taken more than a decade to recover.

The line that the New Left or ultraleft or Naxalbari communists, call them as you will, are urging the communist movement to accept has a very clear resemblance to the line that the CPI itself once followed in 1948-50 and with disastrous consequences. The methodological approach was also the same. What was that? The beginning and the starting point was not a close study of objective reality but one's subjective desire that some militant or 'revolutionary' action be undertaken. If there was any guide at all it was to borrow examples from other revolutions and mechanically seek to realise them in India. The entire basis of argument used often to be whether one should follow the Russian path or the Chinese path. It seemed to be taken for granted that one of these models would be eminently suitable. There was no effort to study the concrete realities of India, study the Russian and Chinese revolutionary experience and then work out one's own path to revolution in one's own country. This was a subjective and dogmatic error which has cost the Indian communist and revolutionary movement heavily. It is an error that the New Left in India seeks to repeat.

It should be as well to remember that this is exactly the opposite of the approach adopted by Lenin or Mao. Lenin had literally immersed himself in Marx, thoroughly imbibed the Marxist method as none other, and then used this stupendous heritage to study Russia, learn from the actual practice of the

Russian revolution and work out a concrete tactical line of revolutionary action. Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg and others often accused Lenin of 'revising' Marx, of bringing in new-fangled concepts and forms of action as well as organisation. Lenin it was who not only rescued the revolutionary soul of Marxism from the revisionist and chauvinist 'heroes' of the Second International but who also repeatedly quoted the statement of Engels, 'Our theory is not a dogma but a guide to action'. Thus, it was that Lenin insisted that, despite statements of Marx to the contrary, revolution could begin and succeed in a single country and go on to the building of the socialist system. It was Lenin who worked out the concept of working leadership in a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It was Lenin who worked out the basic principles of the party of a new type. It was Lenin who understood and generalised the meaning of the Soviets, as organs of the new socialist power. It was Lenin, further, who boldly discarded some of his own formulations after the dual power situation had arisen in February 1917 and boldly advanced the slogan of immediate preparation for the socialist revolution.

The same was the case with the Mao Tse-tung and the leadership of the Chinese communists in the late 1920s and 1930s. There was a section in the leadership of the Chinese communists who decried the tactical line put forward by Mao on the ground that this was quite different from what had been done in the Russian revolution. There the entire bourgeoisie had correctly to be treated as a counter-revolutionary force including the liberal sections. But in China, Mao was suggesting alliance with the patriotic sections of the Chinese capitalist class, that is, the national bourgeoisie. For this he was condemned by the dogmatic sections of the then Chinese leadership. These sections overlooked the fact that China, unlike tsarist Russia, was a semicolonial country and the stage of the revolution was anti-imperialist and antifeudal. Similarly, when Mao worked out the line of partisan war in the vast Chinese countryside of building up revolutionary bases there and using these

to encircle the cities, he was accused of not following the Russian path of armed insurrection in the cities which then radiated out in the form of peasant armed actions in the countryside. Nor was it left only to accusations, the mechanical copying of the Russian path was implemented in practice with serious adverse consequences, leading to grave setbacks for the Chinese revolution. It was only when the Chinese communists evolved their own revolutionary line that they were able to advance from victory to victory. The creative contribution of Mao Tse-tung to the development of the revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism is undeniable.

The tragedy is that Mao, unlike Lenin, did not follow his own example and his own experience when it came to revolutions in other countries. He and the builders of his personality cult insist that the Chinese revolution must be copied to the last detail by anybody who wishes to be known as a revolutionary. Unless one repeats in India in 1969 what was done in China in 1927 one is betraying the revolution. The Maoists are doing to other parties and revolutionary parties exactly what the majority in the Chinese leadership rightly opposed at the time when they were working out the tactical line and form of struggle for their revolution.

It may be asked as to whether or not there are any fundamental features of the revolutionary process which are applicable to all countries? There are such features and the world communist movement has given plenty of thought to this problem. Here again it is useful to turn to Lenin. This is what he wrote: 'We now possess quite considerable international experience which shows very definitely that certain fundamental features of our revolution have a significance that is not local or peculiarly national or Russian alone, but international. . . It would, of course, be grossly erroneous to exaggerate this truth and to extend it beyond certain fundamental features of our revolution. It would also be erroneous to lose sight of the fact that, soon after the victory of the proletarian revolution in at least one of the advanced countries, a sharp change will

probably come about: Russia will cease to be the model and will once again become a backward country (in the "soviet" and the socialist sense). At the present moment in history, however, it is the Russian model that reveals to all countries something—and something highly significant—of their near and inevitable future" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 21-22).

He added: 'As long as national and state distinctions exist among peoples and countries—and these will continue to exist for a very long time to come, even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world scale—the unity of the international tactics of the communist working-class movement in all countries demands, not the elimination of variety or the suppression of national distinctions (which is a pipe dream at present) but the application of the *fundamental* principles of communism (soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat) which will *correctly modify* these principles in certain particulars, correctly adapt and apply them to national and national-state distinctions. To seek out, investigate, . . . the *concrete manner* in which each country should tackle a *single international* task: victory over opportunism and left doctrinairism within the working-class movement; the overthrow of the bourgeoisie; the establishment of a soviet republic and a proletarian dictatorship—such is the basic task in the historical period that all advanced countries (and not they alone) are going through' (*Ibid.*, p. 92; emphasis in original).

He went to state: 'History as a whole, and the history of revolutions in particular, is always richer in content, more varied, more multiform, more lively and ingenious than is imagined by even the best parties, the most class-conscious vanguards of the most advanced classes. This can be readily understood, because even the finest of vanguards express the class consciousness, will, passion and imagination of tens of thousands, whereas at moments of great upsurge and the exertion of all human capacities, revolutions are made by the class consciousness, will, passion and imagination of tens of millions, spurred on by a most acute struggle of classes. Two very

important practical conclusions follow from this: first, that in order to accomplish its task the revolutionary class must be able to master *all* forms or aspects of social activity without exception (completing after the capture of political power—sometimes at great risk and with very great danger—what it did not complete before the capture of power); second, that the revolutionary class must be prepared for the most rapid and brusque replacement of one form by another. . .

‘Unless we learn to apply all methods of struggle, we may suffer grave and sometimes even decisive defeat, if changes beyond our control in the position of the other classes bring to the forefront a form of activity in which we are especially weak. . . Inexperienced revolutionaries often think that legal methods of struggle are opportunist because, in this field, the bourgeoisie has most frequently deceived and duped the workers (particularly in “peaceful” and nonrevolutionary times), while illegal methods of struggle are revolutionary. That, however, is wrong. . .

‘The principal reason for their (leaders of the Second International—MS) bankruptcy was that they were hypnotised by a definite form of growth of the working-class movement and socialism, forgot all about the one-sidedness of that form, were afraid to see the breakup which objective conditions made inevitable and continued to repeat simple, and at first glance, incontestable axioms that had been learned by rote. . . We must see to it that communists do not make a *similar mistake*, only in the opposite sense, or rather, we must see to it that a *similar mistake* only made in the opposite sense, by the “left” communists, is corrected as soon as possible and eliminated as rapidly, and as painlessly as possible. It is not only right doctrinairism that is erroneous; left doctrinairism is erroneous too’ (*Ibid.*, pp. 95-96 & pp. 102-3; emphasis in original).

These long quotations would certainly help those ultra-‘left’ revolutionaries in our country to realise that making a fetish of a particular form of struggle is contrary to very explicit prescriptions by that greatest of revolutionaries, Lenin.

They would certainly help them to realise that while there are fundamental laws of revolution, the *form* of revolution, the *form* of struggle, depends on a whole host of contingent factors.

This conclusion of Lenin was reiterated by the 1957 meeting of the communist and workers’ parties which was attended by Mao himself. The declaration adopted at that meeting noted that ‘the processes of the socialist revolution and the building of socialism are governed by a number of basic laws applicable in all countries embarking on a socialist course. These laws manifest themselves everywhere, alongside a great variety of historic national peculiarities and traditions which must by all means be taken into account.

‘These laws are: guidance of the working masses by the working class, the core of which is the Marxist-Leninist party in effecting a proletarian revolution in one form or another and establishing one form or other of the dictatorship of the proletariat; the alliance of the working class and the bulk of the peasantry and other sections of the working people; the abolition of capitalist ownership and the establishment of public ownership of basic means of production; gradual socialist reconstruction of agriculture; planned development of the national economy aimed at building socialism and communism, at raising the living standard of the people; the carrying out of the socialist revolution in the sphere of ideology and culture and the creation of a numerous intelligentsia devoted to the working class, the working people and the cause of socialism; the abolition of national oppression and the establishment of equality and fraternal friendship between the peoples; defence of the achievements of socialism against attacks by external and internal enemies; solidarity of the working class of the country in question with the working class of other countries, that is, proletarian internationalism.’

It will not do for the ultra-‘left’ younger revolutionaries to simply pooh-pooh these ideas. They represent the summing up of four decades of revolutionary activity, including the

stupendous achievements of the successful revolutions of the November 1917 and of China in 1949. These basic laws, it will be noticed, do not commit—and wisely so—the revolutionaries in any country to only one form of revolution, one type of struggle. Adherence to these basic laws, a further creative development of what Lenin wrote on the subject some three decades ago, is the landmark of the revolutionary today. They supply clear criteria for distinguishing a revolutionary from a nonrevolutionary. Naturally, as the revolutionary process continues to unfold these criteria will themselves be developed.

The younger revolutionaries certainly deserve to be congratulated for their ardour. They would, however, be doing their cause and themselves an injustice if they believed that ardour alone or fascination with armed struggle alone would suffice. Ardour has to be supplemented with study, modesty, learning from the experience of other revolutions. Otherwise, as has been repeatedly demonstrated in history, ardour gives way to demoralisation, escapism and worse. In the Lenin centenary year let them read and reflect upon the life and activity of this man who embodied revolution as none has in the past or up to now. Let them not be led away by second-hand reports and pseudotheorists who may be able to flatter them but who will lead them to disaster.

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