

PEACE  
OR VIOLENCE

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS  
PEKING



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### PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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**T**HE fundamental question of any revolution is the question of state power. How to get state power into the hands of the working class and how to build the state power of the proletariat are the questions of primary concern to every true revolutionary fighter of the working class. That is why the method of seizing state power is one of the most important questions Communists must study and solve. This question has often been the subject of hot debate among them. The flunkys of the bourgeoisie who have wormed their way into the ranks of the working class have always advanced erroneous and reactionary arguments on this question in an attempt to sidetrack the revolution. For they are well aware that once the working class and its political party accept their arguments and the method of seizing state power recommended by them, the objective of seizing state power can never be attained and therefore the revolution can never succeed.

**The modern revisionists represented by the Tito group and their followers — Right opportunists in the international communist movement and the working-class movement — are spreading a smokescreen about the question of the method of seizing state power and are doing all they can to distort the Marxist-Leninist principle on this matter. Modern revisionists and Right opportunists are doing their utmost to peddle pacifism and misrepresent the Marxist-Leninist theory on the role of violence in history.**

## VIOLENCE — MIDWIFE OF NEW SOCIAL SYSTEM

From the time society was divided into classes the ruling classes set up their state machinery to oppress and exploit the classes they ruled. The state is the instrument of violence used by the ruling classes to crush all resistance put up by the classes ruled by them. The rulers use troops, policemen, spies, law courts and prisons against the ruled. The exploiting classes in power, on the one hand, are always employing violence to keep down the exploited classes. On the other hand, they use their "thinkers" to spread pacifism and the theory of "non-violence" in an effort to cause the exploited to be resigned to their destiny without resorting to violence to resist the exploiting classes in power.

Those who constantly resort to violence for the suppression of the working people are, however, clamouring against the use of violence. What they oppose and attack is the violence with which the oppressed and the exploited use to resist them, while the violence which they frequently use to suppress the working people is publicized as a favour bestowed upon the working people.

**Those who have swallowed the poison of bourgeois pacifism and humanitarianism oppose all kinds of violence. They make no distinction in the class character of the various kinds of violence.** To them the violence used by the bourgeoisie to suppress the proletariat and the violence used by the proletariat to resist the bourgeoisie for its own emancipation are one and the same. Lenin once said: "To talk about 'violence' in general, without examining the conditions which distinguish reactionary from revolutionary violence, means being a petty bourgeois who renounces revolution, or else it means

simply deceiving oneself and others by sophistry.”<sup>1</sup> To the pacifists, every kind of violence is evil. They can do nothing but moan and lament over the death caused by violence. They know nothing about the law of social development. They only see the ugly side of violence and do not understand that despite its ugliness it plays a revolutionary role in history. Marx once said that violence “is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one”.<sup>2</sup>

Today, modern revisionists and Right opportunists in the communist movement and the working-class movement keep wagging their tongues about “peace”, and “humanitarianism”; they dare not mention the word “violence”. For them violence is taboo. They fear the word “violence” just as a leech fears lime. The fact is that they have negated Marxist-Leninist theory on the role of violence in history. More than 80 years ago, criticizing the reactionary philosophy of Dühring, Engels wrote: “To Herr Dühring force is the absolute evil; the first act of force is to him the original sin; his whole exposition is a jeremiad on the contamination of all subsequent history consummated by this original sin; a jeremiad on the shameful perversion of all natural and social laws by this diabolical power, force. That force, however, plays also another role in history, a revolutionary role; that, in the words of Marx, it is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one, that it is the instrument with the aid of which social movement forces

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Selected Works*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1937, Vol. 7, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, F.L.P.H., Moscow, 1959, p. 254,

its way through and shatters the dead, fossilized political forms — of this there is not a word in Herr Dühring.”<sup>1</sup>

Communists are not Tolstoyists or the disciples of Gandhi preaching “non-violence”. Nor do they spread the idea of “violence for violence sake”. They are not “bellicose” and “bloodthirsty” as the reactionaries always slander them. They simply set forth a fact, that is, violence is a social phenomenon, a result of the exploitation of man by man, and a means used by the ruling, exploiting classes to maintain and extend their domination. Communists hold that the working class and other working people — victims of exploitation and domination — must resort to revolutionary violence to crush counter-revolutionary violence, so that they can win their own emancipation and society can advance according to the law of historical development. More than one hundred years ago Marx and Engels clearly stated in the *Communist Manifesto*: “The violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat.”<sup>2</sup> They also said: “The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions.”<sup>3</sup> Communists set forth the historical role played by violence not because they are “cretins” of violence, but because it is a law governing the social development of mankind. No revolution can be successfully carried out and no development of human society is possible without grasping this law.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 253-54.

<sup>2</sup> Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, F.L.P.H., Moscow, 1958, Vol. I, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.



The revolutionary cause of the proletariat does not mean ordinary reshuffle of government personnel or a mere cabinet change while the old political and economic order remains intact. The proletarian revolution must not preserve the state machinery (the existing police, gendarmes, armed forces and bureaucratic structure), mainly used to oppress the people, but must crush it and replace it with an entirely new one. This is one of the conditions marking the difference between the proletarian revolution and the bourgeois revolution. **The bourgeois revolution does not smash the existing feudal state machinery but takes it over, preserves and perfects it. On the contrary, the proletarian revolution smashes the existing state machinery of the capitalist system.** The proletarian revolution is a process of bitter struggle in which the bourgeoisie is overthrown, the bourgeois order is destroyed, the properties of the capitalists and landlords are confiscated and the public ownership of the various chief means of production is realized. The working class does not simply lay hold of the existing state machinery, or transfer the militarist-bureaucratic state machinery from the hands of the bourgeoisie to its own. It must smash the bourgeois state machinery and establish a new state machinery of its own, that is, the proletarian dictatorship. Smashing the existing state machinery is "the preliminary condition for every real people's revolution".<sup>1</sup> In a letter to L. Kugelmann in 1871, Marx considered such an action was essential for all the countries in continental Europe. In the years between 1870 and 1880, in those countries which lay outside the Euro-

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<sup>1</sup> Marx and Engels, "Marx to L. Kugelmann", *Selected Works*, F.L.P.H., Moscow, 1955, Vol. II, p. 463.

pean continent, such as Britain and the United States, it was possible for the working class in those countries to seize state power by peaceful means, because at that time capitalism had not yet grown into monopoly capitalism and militarism and bureaucracy in Britain and the United States had not yet been developed. This was the state of affairs before the emergence of imperialism. But at the beginning of the 20th century when capitalism prevailed in all countries and developed to its highest stage, that is, imperialism, and when militarism and bureaucracy began to appear in Britain and the United States, the possibility of seizing state power by peaceful means no longer existed in these two countries. In 1917 Lenin wrote in *The State and Revolution* that what Marx said about this thesis being limited to the continent could no longer be applied and that whether it was in Britain or the United States the smashing of the existing state machinery had become the primary condition for any genuine revolution of the people. In 1918, in his "Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky", Lenin regarded this question as a universal law. "The proletarian revolution," he said, "is impossible without the forcible destruction of the bourgeois state machine and the substitution for it of a **new one**. . . ."<sup>1</sup> When Lenin criticized Kautsky's so-called thesis that "the transition could take place peacefully, i.e., in a democratic way," he clearly pointed out that this was an attempt to hide from the readers the fact that revolutionary violence is the fundamental sign of the concept of proletarian dictatorship, and that it was a fraud aimed at substituting

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Selected Works*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1937, Vol. 7, p. 124.

peaceful revolution for violent revolution. He said: "Kautsky had to resort to all these evasions, sophisms and fraudulent falsifications in order to dissociate himself from violent revolution, and to conceal his renunciation of it, his desertion to the side of liberal labour politics, i.e., to the side of the bourgeoisie. That is the whole point."<sup>1</sup>

**To renounce revolution by violence so as to reduce the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat to empty words — this is the main feature characteristic of the reformists ranging from Kautsky to the modern revisionists.** The reformists call for a gradual reform of the capitalist system and the bourgeois state without overthrowing this system and smashing its state apparatus. To the reformists, reform is everything while the revolutionary struggle for seizing state power is meaningless. Subscription to reformism means the renunciation of revolution. Revolution is a change; it destroys what is most important and essential in the old order; it does not mean reconstruction of the old order cautiously, slowly and gradually, and involving the least possible damage to the old order in the process.

As the reformists see it, there is no difference between the nature of bourgeois democracy and proletarian democracy, and there is no swift advance from the capitalist system to the socialist system, and capitalism can evolve gradually into socialism in accordance with the theory of evolution. The Tito group has also preached the fallacy of the "peaceful growth of capitalism into socialism". Reformists dare not disturb capitalism in the faintest degree; they simply seek the aid of piece-

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

meal reforms and wash their hands of every type of illegal work in an attempt to frustrate the revolutionary preparations made by the masses for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

**Modern revisionism, like the revisionism of the early 20th century, is reformism in essence. Revisionists, in the past, as at present, have made great efforts to sing the praises of the bourgeois parliamentary system. They have made a big fanfare about the entry into socialism through "parliamentary road".** As a matter of fact democratic rights under the bourgeois parliamentary system are, as Marx put it, nothing more than the rights to decide once every three or six years who of the ruling classes should "represent" the people in parliament and oppress them. Lenin said: "Take any parliamentary country, from America to Switzerland, from France to England, Norway and so forth — in these countries the real business of 'state' is performed behind the scenes and is carried on by the departments, chancelleries and General Staffs. Parliament itself is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the 'common people'."<sup>1</sup> Lenin described bourgeois democracy as narrow, emasculated, false and deceptive democracy, the paradise of the rich, but a trap and a deceptive fraud for the exploited and the poor. In order to publicize the "parliamentary road", the modern revisionists are peddling this bourgeois "deceptive fraud" which already has been completely exposed by Lenin.

The bourgeoisie in power has never voluntarily relinquished state power to the working class. In "Theses on

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Selected Works*, F.L.P.H., Moscow, 1951, Vol. II, Part 1, pp. 246-47.

the Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Communist International”, Lenin pointed out that under the conditions of militarism and imperialism, “the very thought of peacefully subordinating the capitalists to the will of the majority of the exploited, of the peaceful, reformist transition to socialism is not only extreme philistine stupidity, but also downright deception of the workers, the embellishment of capitalist wage slavery, concealment of the truth”. “Only the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the confiscation of its property, the destruction of the whole of the bourgeois state apparatus from top to bottom — parliamentary, judicial, military, bureaucratic, administrative, municipal, etc., right up to the very wholesale deportation or internment of the most dangerous and stubborn exploiters — putting them under strict surveillance in order to combat inevitable attempts to resist and to restore capitalist slavery — only such measures can ensure the real subordination of the whole class of exploiters.”<sup>1</sup>

**The basic principle for all Communist Parties is to recognize the dictatorship of the proletariat and struggle for its realization. The process of the proletarian revolutionary movement is, in the final analysis, one of making preparations for the dictatorship of the proletariat (before the seizure of state power) and putting such dictatorship into effect (after seizing state power). The proletariat must adopt all forms of struggle, legal and illegal, inside and outside parliament, ranging from strikes, demonstrations, political general strikes up to armed uprisings, the highest form of struggle, so as to overthrow the bourgeois**

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Selected Works*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1946, Vol. 10, p. 164.

rule and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. The more the revolutionary movement surges forward, the more frenzied will be the repressions by the ruling bourgeoisie and the more sharp and bitter will be the class struggle. "Revolution progresses by giving rise to a strong and united counter-revolution, i.e., it compels the enemy to resort to more and more extreme measures of defence and in this way devises ever more powerful means of attack."<sup>1</sup>

In the relentless class struggle against the exploiting classes in power, the working class and other working people cannot but use arms. Marx said that "the weapon of criticism cannot, of course, take the place of criticism with weapons" and that material forces must be overthrown by material forces. Lenin pointed out that in the working-class struggle against the bourgeoisie, it was possible "at any time to substitute the criticism with weapons for the weapon of criticism". Lenin, therefore, pointed out the necessity of building up arms for the proletariat and disarming the bourgeoisie, for otherwise it would be impossible for socialism to win. In "The 'Disarmament' Slogan", Lenin wrote: "Our slogan must be: the arming of the proletariat for the purpose of vanquishing, expropriating and disarming the bourgeoisie." "An oppressed class which does not strive to learn to use arms, to acquire arms, deserves to be treated like slaves."<sup>2</sup> Because in every class society the ruling classes possess arms, and **it is a fact that the bourgeoisie in power uses them to suppress the working class. Consequently,**

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Collected Works*, F.L.P.H., Moscow, 1962, Vol. II, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, *Collected Works*, International Publishers, New York, Vol. XIX, p. 354.

**the working class has no alternative but to take up arms to overthrow its rulers and achieve its own liberation.** Lenin also said: "Only after the proletariat has disarmed the bourgeoisie will it be able, without betraying its world-historical mission, to throw all armaments on the scrap-heap; the proletariat will undoubtedly do this, but only when this condition has been fulfilled, certainly not before."<sup>1</sup>

Lenin clearly pointed out that the proletariat should "really study military science for itself and not for its slave owners" because "the interests of the proletariat undoubtedly demands such a study". When speaking about the role of the proletarian women in the revolutionary struggle of their own class, Lenin held that the women should not just curse the war and demand arms reduction; they should make more positive contributions. He wrote: "The women of an oppressed class that is really revolutionary will never agree to play such a shameful role. They will say to their sons: 'You will soon be big. You will be given a gun. Take it and learn to use it. The proletarians need this knowledge not to shoot your brothers, the workers of other countries, as they are doing in the present war, and as you are being advised to do by the traitors to socialism, but to fight the bourgeoisie of your own country, to put an end to exploitation, poverty and war, not by means of good intentions, but by a victory over the bourgeoisie and by disarming them.'"<sup>2</sup>

When criticizing "the advocates of disarmament", Lenin asked: "Do the advocates of disarmament stand

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 366.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 367-68.

for a perfectly new species of unarmed revolution?"<sup>1</sup> Lenin also criticized Plekhanov's view that "they should not have taken to arms". In "Lessons of the Moscow Uprising" he said: "Nothing could be more short-sighted than Plekhanov's view, seized upon by all the opportunists, that the strike was untimely and should not have been started, and that 'they should not have taken to arms.' On the contrary, we should have taken to arms more resolutely, energetically and aggressively; we should have explained to the masses that it was impossible to confine things to a peaceful strike and that a fearless and relentless armed fight was necessary."<sup>2</sup>

**Lenin taught us the need to spread the idea of armed uprising to the broad masses, and he described armed uprising as a great mass struggle.** He regarded recognition of armed uprising as a question of principle for the revolutionaries. "It is not enough to take sides on the question of political slogans; it is also necessary to take sides on the question of an armed uprising. Those who are opposed to it, those who do not prepare for it, must be ruthlessly dismissed from the ranks of the supporters of the revolution, sent packing to its enemies, to the traitors or cowards; for the day is approaching when the force of events and the conditions of the struggle will compel us to distinguish between enemies and friends according to this principle."<sup>3</sup>

Of course, Communists are very cautious about armed uprising. They regard it as an art and have never treated

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, *Collected Works*, F.L.P.H., Moscow, 1962, Vol. II, p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.



it lightly. It is a peculiar form of political struggle with its own specific laws. Communists start an armed uprising only when the opportunity is ripe and when subjective and objective conditions are completely ready, and once it has started they intend to carry it through to the finish.

## THE POSSIBILITY OF REVOLUTION DEVELOPING PEACEFULLY

The revolutionary class must take up arms against the ruling classes precisely because the latter use arms to protect their properties and privileges. **Armed struggle and armed uprising are not the ultimate aim of the proletariat, nor are they an aim in themselves; they are the means of achieving emancipation and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat.** Communists do not propose that arms be used at all times and under all circumstances. If there was a road which would involve less casualties and bloodshed, but which could lead to socialism, they would unhesitatingly take that road. When drafting the *Communist Manifesto* Engels raised the question whether it was possible to abolish the system of private ownership by peaceful means. He wrote: "It would be desirable if this could happen, and the Communists would certainly be the last to oppose it. . . . But they also see that the development of the proletariat in nearly all civilized countries has been violently suppressed, and that in this way the opponents of communism have been working toward a revolution with all their strength. If the oppressed proletariat is finally driven to revolution, then

we Communists will defend the interests of the proletarians with deeds as we now defend them with words.”<sup>1</sup>

**Whether the working class adopts the form of armed struggle or the form of peaceful political struggle does not depend on the subjective desire of the working class but on the extent of resistance by the exploiting classes which first resort to arms to maintain their rule. Since the ruling classes will not surrender state power of their own accord, the working class must use arms to overthrow them. Nevertheless, classic Marxist-Leninist writers do not rule out the possibility of the working class in certain countries seizing state power by peaceful means.** The working class must decide on the appropriate form of struggle for the seizure of state power in accordance with the different systems, customs and traditions of a particular country. In 1872 Marx said at a mass rally held in Amsterdam that Communists had never affirmed that the working class in all countries must use the same methods to seize power. He held that at that time it was possible for the working class of the United States and Britain to seize power by peaceful means.

In Russia, from February to July of 1917, there appeared the possibility of seizing state power by peaceful means. This was because the tsarist autocracy had been overthrown by violence in the February revolution, there appeared the situation in which two regimes existed side by side, and the rebellion of Kornilov had been crushed by the working-class armed forces. At that time, Lenin said: “There could now be no question of resistance being offered to the Soviets if they themselves did

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, “Principles of Communism”, *Monthly Review Pamphlet Series*, New York, 1952, pp. 13-14.

not vacillate. No class would dare to raise a rebellion against the Soviets, and the landlords and capitalists, chastened by the experience of the Kornilov affair, would peacefully surrender power upon the ultimatum of the Soviets."<sup>1</sup> This was possible because power was still unstable and arms were in the hands of the people. "The essence of the situation was that the arms were in the hands of the people, and that no coercion was exercised over the people from without. That is what opened up and ensured a peaceful path for the development of the revolution."<sup>2</sup> Lenin believed that only when the Soviet possessed all state power could the peaceful development of the revolution be ensured. He also said that if such an opportunity was lost, then there would occur "the inevitability of a bitter civil war between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat". Such a civil war would be extremely "arduous and bloody". Lenin emphasized: "The proletariat will stop at no sacrifice in order to save the revolution." Lenin believed that the road of revolution developing peacefully was a road most beneficial to the people, a road involving the least sufferings, and that Communists should make the greatest efforts to strive for it. But when the peaceful road could not be realized he unhesitatingly called on the masses to take the non-peaceful road. In mid-July 1917 Lenin said in his "On Slogans": "The peaceful course of development has been rendered impossible. A non-peaceful and most painful course has begun."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Selected Works*, F.L.P.H., Moscow, 1951, Vol. II, Part 1, p. 184.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, *Selected Works*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1936, Vol. 6, pp. 167-68.

<sup>3</sup> Lenin, *Selected Works*, F.L.P.H., Moscow, 1951, Vol. II, Part 1, p. 89.

Thus, while mentioning the possibility of revolution developing peacefully Lenin never forgot to mention the possibility of a cruel and bloody civil war breaking out. On October 8, 1917, confronted with the new situation, he affirmed that "the passing of power to the Soviets now means in practice armed insurrection".<sup>1</sup> The incident that happened at that time, he said, "places the armed uprising on the order of the day".<sup>2</sup>

In 1919, after German imperialism was defeated and the Austria-Hungary Empire collapsed, there was in Hungary the possibility of seizing state power by peaceful means. At that time, the bourgeoisie, confronted by the grave crisis, could do nothing about it. Karolyi, head of the bourgeois government, resigned; the Left-wing socialists went to see Bela Kun, leader of the Hungarian Communist Party, in the prison and invited him to try at forming a new government. In the "Information Concerning Conversations by Radio with Bela Kun" Lenin said: "The bourgeoisie itself gave up power to the Hungarian Communists. The bourgeoisie showed the whole world that when a grave crisis arises, when the nation is in danger, the bourgeoisie is not able to rule." In the article "Greetings to the Hungarian Workers" which he wrote on May 27, 1919, when mentioning the Soviet government then established in Hungary, Lenin said that Hungary's transition to the Soviet system, that is, proletarian dictatorship, was much easier and much more peaceful than in Russia. Lenin wrote: "The form of transition to the dictatorship of the proletariat in Hungary is altogether different from that in Russia: the

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

voluntary resignation of the bourgeois government, and the instantaneous restoration of the unity of the working class, the unification of the socialist movement on a communist programme." While speaking of the seizure of state power by the Hungarian working class by peaceful means Lenin did not forget to warn the Hungarian workers that the task confronting the dictatorship of the proletariat was to use violence to crush counter-revolution. He said: "Dictatorship presupposes the ruthlessly severe, swift and resolute use of force to crush the resistance of the exploiters, of the capitalists, landlords and their underlings. Whoever does not understand this is not a revolutionary, and must be removed from the post of leader or adviser of the proletariat." It is clear to everybody that after attaining state power by peaceful means, the Hungarian working class still had to use force to safeguard it, and the Hungarian reactionaries, with the aid of the international reactionaries, used force to drown the Hungarian Soviet in blood. Speaking of the lessons to be drawn from the experience of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, Lenin said: "The Hungarian proletariat had to pay dearly for the amalgamation of the Hungarian Communists with the reformists."<sup>1</sup> The 1919 Hungarian Soviet was stamped out before the working class had time to embark on socialist construction. It is therefore sheer nonsense to talk about Hungary "peacefully passing on to socialism in 1919".

In the final stage of World War II and for a time in the postwar years, because the Soviet Red Army had wiped out the Hitlerite fascists and smashed the fascist

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, "The Conditions of Affiliation to the Communist International", *Selected Works*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1946, Vol. 10, p. 201.

state machinery set up by Hitler in the various East European countries, the people's regimes led by the working class were established in those countries. With the help of the Soviet Red Army they switched to the tasks of the socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat after carrying out the work of the bourgeois democratic revolution, and so there was no need for an armed uprising. What happened in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 also belongs to this category of revolutionary change. By adopting administrative measures and combining these with mass demonstrations, the Czechoslovak people's regime smashed the plot of the bourgeoisie to foment a cabinet crisis and attempt to restore capitalism, and in this way led the country directly to the road of socialism. Some people are attempting to use the February 1948 event in Czechoslovakia as an example to support their argument for "peaceful transition". But this is falsifying history because they separate the February happenings from the liquidation of German fascism by the Soviet Red Army, from the armed uprising and guerrilla warfare of the people in Slovakia in 1944 and the people's general armed uprising in Prague in May 1945. Moreover, in the February 1948 event in Czechoslovakia, the role of revolutionary violence was also embodied in the determined suppression of the bourgeois rebellion by the people's regime, which was in essence a dictatorship of the proletariat, and in the armed demonstration of the Czechoslovak people supporting the administrative measures of the communist-led government.

Since the end of World War II, the colonial system of imperialism has been in the process of disintegration. Many nations under the yoke of imperialist enslavement have today achieved national independence. In their fight

for national independence, some nations have adopted the form of armed struggle, others have gone through alternate periods of armed struggle and peaceful political struggle or have combined these two forms of struggle in the same period, while still others have attained political independence without armed struggle. Some nations have been able to achieve national independence peacefully because imperialism is steadily declining and a world socialist system has come into existence and is vigorously developing, thus bringing about a change in the balance of forces on a worldwide scale, and socialism has become a strong magnet drawing the people of all nations. The national-liberation movement is gathering force like a raging storm and all the nations have awakened and are resolutely fighting for self-determination. Confronted with this situation, imperialism is forced to make its choice between two alternatives:

1. To stubbornly resist to the end and eventually be driven out of the colonies, with the result that the colonial nations which have gained complete independence will embark on the path of socialism;

2. To hand over political independence to the native bourgeoisie and in this way to retain its economic interests in the colonies and keep the former colonial nations within the orbit of capitalism.

Many imperialist countries "wisely" chose the second alternative, and this explains why some former colonial nations have been able to achieve political independence by peaceful means. However, the various nations have a long way to go from arriving at political independence to achieving complete independence and thence going over to socialism. **There are those who are trying to support their argument for the "theory" of "peaceful transi-**

tion" by citing the fact that certain nations have achieved independence by peaceful means. But this is utterly wrong, because these nations remain within the orbit of capitalism after independence has been achieved, and so it cannot be said that they have realized the "peaceful transition to socialism".

So far, there is not yet a single "precedent" of peaceful transition to socialism in the world working-class history of revolutionary struggle. This "precedent" cannot be found even if one lights a torch in search of it. However, Communists have never denied the possibility of revolution developing peacefully, which might occur at certain stages or in certain countries. It would be very good if there were such a possibility but it is extremely rare. Speaking about this possibility, Stalin, in "The Foundations of Leninism", said: "Of course, in the remote future, if the proletariat is victorious in the principal capitalist countries, and if the present capitalist encirclement is replaced by a socialist encirclement, a 'peaceful' path of development is quite possible for certain capitalist countries, whose capitalists, in view of the 'unfavourable' international situation, will consider it expedient 'voluntarily' to make substantial concessions to the proletariat. But this supposition applies only to a remote and possible future."<sup>1</sup> It has been forty years since Stalin said this. Is that "remote future" as stated by Stalin any closer after forty years?

Today socialism has gained a great victory. The balance of world forces has changed in its favour. It has won the hearts of millions upon millions of people. The working class and other working people have acquired a

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *Works*, F.L.P.H., Moscow, 1953, Vol. 6, p. 121.



high degree of political consciousness and a sharp sense of organization and discipline. The dictatorship of the proletariat has been established in many countries, capable of effectively combating imperialist intervention in the revolutions of different countries. This makes for favourable conditions for the working class to seize power by various forms of struggle. On the other hand, **two-thirds of the world population still live under capitalism. Imperialism is in the process of an advanced development of militarism and bureaucracy. Every capitalist country possesses an enormous state machinery, ever ready to suppress the people's revolutionary movement with violence. In these circumstances, the possibility for the proletariat to seize power by peaceful means without launching an armed uprising remains extremely rare. Asserting that the seizure of state power by peaceful means has now become a universal possibility for the working class in most countries in the world and unduly emphasizing this possibility, adds up to leaving the working class completely without adequate preparation for overcoming difficulties, defeating the exploiting classes and establishing its own dictatorship. It means disarming, intentionally or unintentionally, the working class ideologically and lulling it into a state of total unpreparedness when the exploiting classes resort to violence at the critical moment to crush the revolution.**

There are people who believe that the emergence of nuclear weapons is the characteristic of our time and that this has brought about changes in the strategy and tactics of the world working class. This, they aver, makes it necessary to give "new consideration" to the Marxist-Leninist theory on the method of seizing state power. They claim that as a result of the emergence of nuclear

weapons the working class must not seize power by violence but by peaceful means, for revolution by violence will lead to civil war. Because one spark may spread into a conflagration, civil war may lead to a world war which in the present era is bound to develop into a destructive nuclear war. In the circumstances, the only way left for the working class in various countries is to attain state power by peaceful means. And the peaceful means they recommend is the theory of "structural reform".

**For all their destructive power, nuclear weapons cannot change the law of development of human society. They can only cause certain changes in military strategy and tactics, but never in the strategy and tactics of the working class. Not at all times will a spark develop into a conflagration. This has been proved by the Chinese civil war, by the Korean war, and by the Algerian war. The revolutions of China, Viet Nam and Cuba were all revolutions by violence and were all won after the presence of nuclear weapons. It is therefore utterly groundless to assert that the working class should not seize state power by violence following the existence of nuclear weapons.**

In the face of enemies who are armed to the teeth and are prepared to stamp out revolution at any time by violence, the only way to seize state power is to resort to violence. The possibility of revolution developing peacefully can be realized only when the exploiting classes do not possess a dependable militarist-bureaucratic state machine or at a time when they have lost the will to use this machinery to suppress the revolution although it may still be in their hands. To translate the possibility of the peaceful development of revolution into reality,

the working class must possess a mighty force which is equipped with a closely knit organization and leadership. That force may be a political force (mass political force), or an armed force, or a combination of political and armed forces. Therefore, in striving to make revolution through a peaceful road — the road which involves the least suffering, the working class and its party must vigorously prepare for the seizure of state power by violence. In order to be able to take the initiative against all possibilities, the working class must, on the one hand, get its forces ready to seize power by violence and, on the other hand, be prepared to strive to bring about peaceful revolution whenever and wherever the possibility arises. It is only when the working class has organized into a mighty force and firmly taken up arms that it is possible to strive for the peaceful development of the revolution.

## **VIET NAM'S EXPERIENCE**

Ever since our Party was formed it has educated its cadres, members and the masses in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism. It has also educated them in Marxist-Leninist teachings on the role of violence in history. Thus, it has ideologically armed the entire Party and all the people sufficiently so that they can put up a good fight in bitter battle, wipe out the enemy and win independence and freedom for the country.

In order to spread Marxist-Leninist revolutionary ideas, our Party waged a determined struggle against ideas of capitulationism and defeatism. The traitorous feudal forces and the imperialist aggressors had long dis-

seminated ideas of capitulationism and defeatism among our people. When the French colonialists first occupied our country, the feudal traitor Phan Thanh Gian spread the idea of defeatism among the people, calling upon them to "refrain from using arms against the enemy". In a letter to the officials and the people just before he died, he wrote: "Looking up to the sky I was listening to the ways of heaven. I said to myself: 'It would be most foolish of you if you wanted to beat down the enemy with arms. . . .'" He also ordered officials and generals to smash their guns and spears, surrender the cities and refrain from fighting. . . .

The capitulationist and defeatist ideas disseminated by imperialism and the feudal forces influenced some patriots. Phan Chu Trinh, a patriotic scholar, also called on the people to refrain from revolting, because "to revolt is to perish".

In contrast with Phan Chu Trinh's "no revolt" proposition, other patriots headed by Phan Boi Chau had come to understand the importance of using violence to drive out the aggressors in order to gain national liberation. However, he and his colleagues could not see the power of the people and so they took to rebellion through conspiracy, relying on only a handful of heroes without knowing how to organize the people to carry out the revolution.

**Our Party has applied Marxist-Leninist principles on the strategy and tactics of revolution to the reality of our country. On the one hand, it has stood against the defeatist and capitulationist ideas and against the "theories" advocating no-rebellion and denouncing the use of arms. On the other hand, it has opposed the idea of organizing "secret societies" for conspiracies as well as such terrorist activities as assassination of individuals. At the same**

time, it has waged an uncompromising struggle against reformist ideas prevailing in the working class, especially against the idea of "peaceful revolution" preached by the "Vung Hong [Red Sun] faction".<sup>1</sup> Our Party mobilized

<sup>1</sup>"Vung Hong Dang" (Red Sun Party), also known as the "Peaceful Revolution Communist Party" or "Viet Nam Nhi Cac Dang", was an organization of some Communists in Nghi-an Province from 1929 to 1937. It advocated peaceful revolution and also held that following the victory of the revolution there had to be a period of the development of capitalism before going over to communism.

This party was founded by Hoang-the-Thien, a provocateur in Do-luong Township, Anh-son County, Nghi-an Province. He had been a member of the League of Young Revolutionary Comrades and had been active in China for some time. In 1926 he returned and presented himself to the prefect of Anh-son. The governor of Nghi-an Province soon summoned him and told him to establish a pseudo-revolutionary organization to carry out subversive activities against the revolution and find out the routes the revolutionary cadres took to foreign countries. He organized the "Vung Hong Dang" in 1929, taking in some members of the former League of the Young Revolutionary Comrades and the "Tan Viet Dang", who were opposed to the Communist Party of Indo-China. In 1930 Hoang-the-Thien was exposed as a spy and expelled from the "Vung Hong Dang". The following year, the Nghi-an provincial organization of the Communist Party [of Indo-China] issued leaflets condemning the "Vung Hong Dang" as a lackey of the imperialists. In 1934 Comrade Ba Doc, special representative of the Aid Department of the Communist Party of Indo-China stationed in Siam, came back to contact the "Vung Hong Dang" for the distribution of leaflets in commemoration of the Nghi-an Soviet anniversary on September 12, 1934. Following the distribution of the leaflets, some members of the "Vung Hong Dang" were arrested and its organ *Van lang* soon ceased publication. After this incident, the Nghi-an provincial organization of the Communist Party of Indo-China sent some members to work in the "Vung Hong Dang". They repulsed the vacillators and recruited the activists into the Communist Party. "Vung Hong Dang" was declared merged into the Nghi-an provincial organization of the Communist Party of Indo-China at a congress held by the latter from March 27 to 28, 1937. From then on, it ceased to exist.

and organized the masses and led them in waging both the lower and the higher forms of struggle in accordance with the laws of class struggle. It has educated the people in this way: Imperialism and the feudal forces dominated the people of our country by iron and blood and by counter-revolutionary violence, and if our people failed to use revolutionary violence to overthrow them there would be no hope of emancipating themselves. At the same time it has taught them that revolutionary struggle is both a science and an art, that there must be closely knit organization and leadership and that neither adventurism nor laissez-faire is allowed. It has armed the whole Party and all the people with Marxist-Leninist ideas of class struggle, the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat as well as the conceptions of armed uprising. As soon as the Party was founded, the tasks of overthrowing the enemy's government and seizing state power for the workers and peasants were written into its programme. In its 1930 political programme, the Party pointed out: "The task of the Party is to solve initially the question of daily needs so as to lead the proletariat and the peasants to the revolutionary battlefield. When the revolutionary forces grow stronger, the ruling classes are tottering, the different middle social strata are inclined towards revolution, and the workers and peasants display a great upsurge of revolutionary enthusiasm, and are determined to make sacrifices in the struggle, the Party must lose no time in leading the masses in overthrowing the enemy's government and seizing state power for the workers and peasants." The Party's 1930 political programme also pointed out that the method of seizing state power was armed uprising. "Armed rebellion is not an ordinary thing. Therefore,

attention must be paid to the fact that not only the immediate revolutionary situation must be taken into account but actions must be taken on the basis of military rules. Even when the immediate revolutionary situation has not yet appeared there is also the need for fierce struggle. Such struggle, however, does not mean organizing aimless revolt or premature armed rebellion, it means mobilizing the masses for demonstrations, strikes, etc., so as to pave the way for later participation in armed rebellion."

During World War II, the Party particularly stressed the question of seizing state power by armed uprising. The resolution adopted at the seventh session of the Party's Central Committee (November 1940) provided: "The Party must be prepared to undertake the sacred missions of leading the oppressed nations in Indo-China to launch armed rebellion and achieve independence and freedom." The eighth session of the Party's Central Committee (May 1941) also pointed out that the central task for the whole Party and all the people then was making preparations for armed uprising. The resolution passed at this session declared: "The revolution in Indo-China will end with an armed uprising." It also put forward the task for "preparing forces at all times", so that "when the favourable moment arrives, we can, by employing the power already at our disposal, victoriously lead area uprisings one by one in order to pave the way for a large-scale general uprising."

In August 1945, when Japanese fascism collapsed, our Party led the people throughout the country in starting a timely general armed uprising and seized state power. **The August revolution in Viet Nam was a revolution by violence, by means of which the state apparatus of the**

**colonialists and feudal forces was destroyed and a new people's state apparatus was established. In the August revolution, the expression of violence was found in the closely co-ordinated use of political and armed forces.** The August revolution was the result of the prolonged revolutionary struggle in which peaceful political struggle was combined with armed struggle, and in which the peaceful political struggle of the masses was combined with the launching of local guerrilla war and the work of building bases in the rural areas. The August revolution was the direct result of the armed struggle waged by all the people, mainly the result of combining the activities of professional armed forces with semi-professional armed forces (Liberation Army, guerrilla forces, militia, and self-defence corps, etc.).

The August revolution in Viet Nam is different from the Russian October Revolution in that the latter was a general armed uprising, state power was first built in the cities and then in the countryside. The difference between Viet Nam's August revolution and the Chinese revolution is that the Chinese revolution was a prolonged armed struggle, state power was first seized in the countryside, which was used to encircle the cities and finally the cities were liberated.

**The magnificent victory of the August revolution in our country was won because our Party has creatively applied Marxism-Leninism to the reality of our country and because our Party understands how to educate its members and the people in the revolutionary spirit of Marxism-Leninism and inspire them with Marxist-Leninist ideas of the role of violence in history.**

In the course of decades of protracted and arduous revolutionary movement, our Party has skilfully com-



bined the various kinds of struggles, economic and political, legal and illegal, struggle in the streets and in parliament, armed struggle and peaceful political struggle. During the period of the upsurge of the revolution (1930-31), the Party led the masses in waging blow-for-blow struggles against the enemy. In places where the enemy's power had collapsed (Nghì-an and Hà-tinh) the Party led the people in setting up the state power of the Soviets and training them in administering their own affairs. During the period of the ebbing of the revolution (1932-35), the Party led the people in making a planned withdrawal, establishing secret organizations, and prepared for a new revolutionary upsurge. From 1936 to 1939, by taking advantage of the legitimate conditions brought on by the victory of the French People's Front, the Party launched a movement of open struggle, formed the Democratic Front, led the people in fighting for better living conditions and for democracy and freedom, and for participation in the election campaign and in carrying on a struggle inside parliament. At the end of 1939, the Party again went underground. Utilizing the latent and manifest contradictions existing between the two imperialist countries which then ruled our country, the Party launched guerrilla warfare and set up revolutionary bases. Simultaneously with peaceful political struggle, the form of armed struggle began to appear. This period ended with the general uprising in the August revolution which was the peak of the movement and represented a skilful combination of the two forms of struggle, armed and political. In the more than one year following the August revolution, our Party put emphasis on political struggle so as to consolidate the people's state power and build forces in various spheres, particularly

the armed forces. At the same time it carried on armed struggle against the French colonialists staging a comeback and carrying out aggression against the southern part of our country, as well as against the Kuomintang-organized and directed bandits harassing some provinces in the north. From the end of 1946, our Party led the people in waging a nationwide armed struggle against colonialist aggression.

Between 1930, when our Party was founded, and 1954, when the war of resistance was won, liberation was achieved in the north and a national-democratic revolution was completed over half the nation's territory, our Party underwent 24 years of revolutionary struggle. There were:

Ten years of political struggle (1930-40);

Six years of political struggle combined with armed struggle (1940-46);

Eight years of armed struggle (from the end of 1946 to the middle of 1954).

Since 1954, revolution has gone over to the stage of socialism in the northern part of our country. Because state power already was in the hands of the working class during the stage of national-democratic revolution, "peaceful transition to socialism" has been realized in the north in the past few years. This does not mean that during the stage of the socialist revolution in the north, the role of revolutionary violence has ceased to exist. The role of revolutionary violence was expressed in the administrative measures promulgated by the people's democratic state led by the working class for the transformation of the bourgeoisie and in the struggle waged by the masses of the workers. During the stage of the socialist

revolution, the people's democratic state has carried out the task of the dictatorship of the proletariat which means using violence to crush counter-revolution.

**Because we have the machinery of violence in the form of the people's democratic state, led by the working class, we have been able to carry out the peaceful transformation of the bourgeoisie and the rich peasants and effect a "peaceful transition to socialism".**

Since 1954 the southern part of our country has become a colony of a new type for U.S. imperialism. The U.S.-Ngo Dinh Diem clique rules that part of our country by counter-revolutionary violence. For more than nine years our compatriots in the south have been waging an unceasing struggle against the U.S.-Diem group. **The struggle being waged by our compatriots in the south at present still falls into the category of the national-democratic revolution. They are using revolutionary violence against the counter-revolutionary violence of the U.S.-Diem clique and to smash the semi-feudal and colonialist state machinery it established in the south, so that a new state machinery can be set up which truly serves the people's interests.**

In the first few years, our compatriots in the south waged a peaceful political struggle, demanding better living conditions, democratic rights and the unification of the country on the basis of the Geneva agreements. But the U.S.-Diem clique perpetrated large-scale repressions and killed them at will. **Since 1962, the U.S.-Diem gang has been openly conducting an undeclared war against the people in the south. Our compatriots there have been compelled to take up arms against the U.S.-Diem clique. They are now fighting that clique by armed as well as political struggles so as to win independence**

and peace and proceed to establish a unified country on a democratic basis.

The process of the long and hard struggle waged by the Vietnamese people under the leadership of our Party has proved that the only road that can be taken by the working class and other working people against the exploiting classes — who rule the people by violence — is to resort to violence to overthrow them. Of course, to make revolution by violence imposes the necessity of enduring hardship and sacrifices on the part of the broad masses of the people. But this can help shake off at an early date the long suffering and death caused by the brutal oppression and exploitation inflicted by the rulers on a countless number of people. During the general armed uprising in August 1945, only a few score of people were killed throughout the country. On the contrary, as a result of the rule of the Japanese and French fascists, some 2 million people starved to death in the north from the end of 1944 to the first few months of 1945. History has proved that the extremely heavy losses suffered by the working people from the brutal rule of the exploiting classes cannot be matched by the losses of a revolution, however relentless it may be. **The road involving the least suffering for the people is to go in for revolution to overthrow the enemy and win emancipation.**

\* \* \*

Society develops in accordance with its own laws. No one can point out the road of development of society according to his subjective desire. The Communists armed with Marxism-Leninism must grasp the laws governing the development of society, work out their correct strategy and tactics in accordance with objective law, lead the

working class and other working people to make revolution and win victory, thereby promoting the development of society. The working class of a country and its Party must map out the proper form of struggle in accordance with the concrete conditions of that country so as to seize state power. Whether to carry out a revolution by violence or a peaceful revolution can be decided only by the working class and its vanguard in a given country. **No matter what form of struggle is adopted to seize state power, the essential conditions for the victory of a revolution are: a very powerful mass movement, and full determination of the vanguard of the working class — and it should inspire the masses of the people with the same determination — to overthrow the enemy, to defy sacrifice and hardship, to be prepared at all times to smash the state machinery of the exploiting classes so as to set up the dictatorship of the proletariat. Only by so doing, can the proletariat defeat its class enemies and liberate itself.**

和平还是暴力？

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