

Strive to Transform the People's Turbulent Forces into a Revolutionary Movement! Build for Communist Resurgence!

Resolution of the Central Committee, CPRCI(ML), on the Present International Situation and Our Tasks

(September 1996)

I.

The general feature of the present international situation is defined by the fact that the cherished dream of the international bourgeoisie continues to elude them--i.e., the dream of a new period of economic recovery and political stability of the world imperialist order.

In the self-delusion of a reactionary class, the international bourgeoisie have underestimated the potency of two basic factors working against the materialisation of such a dream. One, the decadence of world monopoly capitalism is at an advanced stage. Two, there exists a deepened urge among the people of the world to resist all oppression, after having seen the vulnerability of imperialism and the uplifting actual glimpses of a new world beyond imperialism.

The development of the world situation, during the two decades since Red China changed colour, has underlined the redeeming role of these two factors, in the face of that great blow to the world proletarian revolution. Such a fundamental occurrence as the undoing of the last fortress of the socialist system was bound to disturb and did disturb the momentum of world proletarian revolution. Yet, in the subsequent period, the setting in of a general ebb in the world proletarian revolution has not taken place. Even without the arousing impact of the live socialist system, the world has been in turbulence all these years.

International situation essentially retains earlier character with changed contours

For the first phase of this period, upto the collapse of Soviet social-imperialism and its empire, a striking interplay of two of the fundamental contradictions has been mostly instrumental in fuelling the turbulence: Throughout, the fierce contention for global hegemony between the two imperialist super powers has been raging side by side with the relentlessly unfolding principal contradiction. The collapse of Soviet social-imperialism and its empire has itself come about as a dramatic and peculiar expression of the deepened general crisis of imperialism. At the other end of the multifarious turbulence, the birth of people's war in Peru has taken place, during this period, as an outstanding affirmation of the continuing vitality of the world proletarian revolution. (An international situation marked by general ebb in the world revolution would not be so full of revolutionary dynamism as could throw up a people's war.)

In the current phase of this period--i.e., the phase after the collapse of Soviet social-imperialism and its empire--the international situation essentially retains its earlier character, although significant changes have taken place in the movement and contours of the fundamental contradictions of the imperialist system. (The collapse of Soviet social-imperialism and its empire is the most prominent event of this period, owing to its international scale and global ramifications. It has a bearing, more or less, on all the significant changes that have taken place recently in the movement and contours of the fundamental contradictions. In other words, it has played a major role objectively in shaping the specific features of the current international situation. So, it is quite appropriate to treat it as the demarcating event between the earlier phase and the current phase of this period.)

The relative status of the fundamental contradictions of the present-day world can be stated in the following concise manner. Today, the principal contradiction between imperialism and oppressed

peoples and oppressed nations of the world is further accentuated; and the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the capitalist countries is getting sharpened; whereas, the inter-imperialist contradiction has temporarily acquired a milder expression. (After the reversals in China, Albania, etc. there is no socialist state and social system contending with the imperialist system. Consequently, while the struggle between imperialism and socialism runs throughout the present era, the contradiction between socialist system and the imperialist system has become non-existent for the time being.)

Changed complexion of inter-imperialist contradiction

The most outstanding and obvious change is there in the complexion of the fundamental inter-imperialist contradiction. Earlier, the fierce contention for global hegemony between the two imperialist super powers, U.S. imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism, used to be the most concentrated and acute expression of the fundamental inter-imperialist contradiction. With the crumbling of one of the two opposite aspects, the particular contradiction between the U.S. imperialist superpower and the Soviet social-imperialist superpower has disappeared, thus divesting the fundamental inter-imperialist contradiction of its most acute expression. That is the main reason for the current "milder expression". This does not mean that the fundamental inter-imperialist contradiction is on the wane. On the contrary, it is developing under changed circumstances and is bound to get further intensified due to the persistent crisis of the imperialist system.

(Various imperialist powers and monopoly capitalist groups have no other way of coping with the imperialist crisis than through striving to save themselves at the cost of the world people as well as at the cost of each other. So, contradictions among themselves, too, invariably tend to get intensified because of the persistent imperialist crisis, notwithstanding their efforts to contain this process within safe limits. All the crucial measures they are taking to come out of the crisis--viz., the frenzied global restructuring of capital; the competitive carving out of huge trade-blocs; and the ravenous accessing of third-world markets and productive assets--go towards undoing their efforts to contain the contradiction within safe limits.)

Under the changed circumstances, the contradictions within the out-dated Western imperialist alliance (including the Japanese imperialism) have acquired two contrary tendencies. First, these contradictions have become free of the constraint they were under due to the over-arching contradiction between the Western imperialist alliance and its social imperialist counterpart. Hence, they tend to develop with greater pace and force, and thereby frustrate all the imperialist attempts for maintaining that alliance. Second, the collapse of Soviet social-imperialism's hegemonic empire has provided the Western imperialist powers new space for expanding their spheres of influence and access to markets. So long as, and to the extent, there is scope for all of them to expand into this new space, these contradictions tend to develop with less intensity or within the shell of collusion among them. However, the first of the two tendencies is stronger in the long run. The second tendency is in the forefront only for the short initial period. The two tendencies, of course, are more pronounced in the contradiction between the U.S. imperialist super power and the other Western imperialist powers. Because, of all these contradictions, that one is most prominent.

Transitional phase for inter-imperialist contradiction

Further, the last-mentioned contradiction is undergoing a process of transformation. (In fact, this transformation and the unsettled place of Russian imperialism--as a crucial military power in the incipient polarisation and realignment of imperialist powers--are the two main elements which make the present phase a transitional phase for the inter-imperialist contradiction.) None of the other imperialist powers is in a position yet to contend, on a global scale, with U.S. imperialism. (German imperialism and Japanese imperialism have acquired good enough economic muscle to be serious contenders for markets. But they are lacking in a matching military prowess. It is their imperative imperialist need to bridge this gap through rapid building up of military power. However, owing to historical and diplomatic reasons, they can do so best only under the camouflage of some multilateral imperialist project.) Their contention with U.S. imperialism is mainly focussed on certain specific territorial zones. (Within the broad European zone, the immediate focus is on the East European countries; German

imperialism--in association with other European Union powers, mainly French imperialism--being the chief contender. Within the broad Asia-Pacific zone the immediate focus is on the East Asian countries, Japanese imperialism being the chief contender. Besides, French imperialism is the chief contender in parts of Africa where it has links from the colonial period. Similarly British imperialism is one of the important contenders in the areas of its past empire, West Asia and South Asia in particular. Russian imperialism's contention with U.S. imperialism is mainly focussed, for the time being, on C.I.S. countries, i.e., the past state boundaries of the Soviet Union; while it is cautiously trying to revive the footholds in West Asia and India.)

U.S., the weakened victor of contest with social-imperialism

On the other side, U.S. imperialism has not come out any stronger from its fierce contest with Soviet social-imperialism. (The super power compulsion of over-stretching oneself in the contest for global hegemony took its toll from both of the imperialist super powers. As a result, Soviet social-imperialism, owing to its more brittle economic base, has been fast undone. At the same time U.S. imperialism too is grievously hurt. The U.S. economy stands degraded into a precarious state of financial distortions and general debility. Despite its seemingly uncontested military political predominance in world affairs, it is not in a position to dictate terms as earlier and is taking great care not to tread upon the toes of its imperialist colleagues.)

It cannot do otherwise than strive generally for global hegemony and particularly for filling the hegemony-vacuum generated by the quick exit of Soviet social-imperialism from the world arena. But it is doing so as a weakened imperialist super power. So, it has to seek (and not just command) collaboration of its imperialist colleagues, mainly because of financial and political requirement. The latter have to take the same course, mainly because of military requirement.

The present relative position of both the sides and the direction of its change indicate that a major change has taken place in the relationship between the U.S. imperialist super-power and the other major imperialist powers who used to be its subordinate colleagues. Although the element of U.S. dominance is still there in that relationship, it is no more the main aspect. (In the inter-imperialist context, U.S. imperialism's solid hegemonic gains during the last five years are not as spectacular as would appear from its frenzied power-projections round the globe. And the last five years were the better part of the short period of time for securing optimal hegemonic gains. By now, it has been able just to reassert its dominant position in the American continent which is its traditional stronghold. Beyond that, its only major gain is the increased sway over most of West Asia. Meaningfully, both of these regions are other than the particular zones where the concerns of other major imperialist powers are now focused. In East Asia, U.S. imperialism has not been able, as yet, to make any notable advance which could serve to contain the growing influence of Japanese imperialism. In East Europe, its gains are even more superficial and much dependent on the fate of N.A.T.O. as well as on U.S. imperialism's capacity to determine the decisions of I.M.F.-World Bank concerning the East European countries. Whereas, German imperialism has been able to derive more impressive gains from the East European developments. It is poised to consolidate those gains by using the lever of the European Union.)

General tactical policy flowing from state of inter-imperialist contradiction

Thus, in the current short phase, although collusion is the dominant feature of the fundamental inter-imperialist contradiction it is not of uniform nature worldwide. The specific profile and the limits of this collusion vary regionwise, owing to the uneven pace of development of the low-intensity contention among major imperialist powers in particular zones and other parts of the world.

It follows from the currently dominant feature of inter-imperialist contradiction (i.e., collusion) that our general tactical policy, in the struggle against imperialism and all reaction worldwide, should be: *particularly combatting the major imperialist powers[*], prominently U.S. imperialism* who are acting in collusion to commit aggression, intervention, and interference against the oppressed peoples and weaker countries.

It follows from the non-uniform nature of this collusion that the specific application of this general

tactical policy should correspond to the region-wise variation in the profile of the collusion (as well as contention) among the major imperialist powers. That would involve variation of tactical emphasis either on fighting against particular imperialist power/powers or on particular political issues of struggle against them. The prominent role of U.S. imperialism in this imperialist joint venture has the implication that whatever be the region-specific focus of our tactical emphasis, U.S. imperialism, in all cases, should come under that focus.

New sharpness in contradiction between proletariat vs. bourgeoisie in advanced capitalist countries

Another significant change is the new intensity being acquired by the fundamental contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in advanced capitalist countries. In all the centres of crisis-ridden monopoly-capitalism, the working class has come under the stepped-up attack of the bourgeoisie. In its range and depth the current offensive of the bourgeoisie against the working class goes beyond the usual crisis-time attack on the workers' wages and jobs. Not only is it an all-round attack on the workers' wages and jobs at the present moment but also a far-reaching attack on their non-wage entitlements/claims which are to be met by the capitalist employers or the State.

The capitalist employers seek to curtail or deny the workers' entitlements other than wages by changing the character, hence terms, of the jobs. They are carrying out this attack under the transparent class slogan of "acquiring (or maintaining) the competitive edge" through maximum reduction of their cost of labour. The capitalist State now seeks to whittle down the workers' entitlements pertaining to the social security or welfare provisions. The capitalist State is carrying out this attack under its foggy class-slogan of "deficit-reduction". This combined attack is acting as a spur to impart new dynamism to the working class struggles in the centres of world monopoly capitalism.

It is a clear symptom of the advanced stage of decay of world monopoly capitalism that it has to attack one of the major stays of social peace in its centres--i.e., the notion of a 'Welfare State' hitherto kept alive by some actual State measures for giving a bit of social relief to the working people. The imperialist bourgeoisie has been engaged, since World War II, in promoting this notion as a social prospect of capitalism. The bourgeoisie was prompted to do so by the long-term political need of countering the enhanced appeal of the socialist system and pacifying the revolutionary ferment among the working masses under its rule.

Now, by putting to axe the material basis of the notion of a Welfare State, the bourgeoisie itself is fuelling social disillusionment and turmoil in the imperialist centres. The bourgeoisie is going to face stiff working class resistance to these measures particularly in the European countries where the tradition of social welfare institutions is more established. The recent eruption of massive working class struggles in a number of European countries, especially the spectacular strike-action by the working class in France, gives notice of the extensive resistance to come. No doubt, this process of development of the workers' resistance to the comprehensive attack of the bourgeoisie will reflect the limitations of their existing mass organisations which are dominated by the economist-reformist readerships. However, these limitations are not a new factor. What is new in the developing situation is the enlarged scope for the rise of proletarian revolutionary elements and for overcoming of the limitations of the working class organisations.

Situation in former USSR and E. Europe

Further, in the European arena, the fundamental contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is developing with far greater intensity in the erstwhile social-capitalist countries. Evidently, in none of the capitalist countries are the working masses experiencing more distressful effects of structural reorganisation of capitalism than in Russia and the East European countries. The economic hardships which they used to suffer earlier, under the crisis-ridden social-capitalist economies, are multiplying after the shift to market capitalism. Now, they are deprived even of the elementary social protection of their subsistence and work which the revisionist rulers could not deny them. No wonder that their estrangement from undisguised capitalism is taking place so fast.

Under the unsteady conditions of economy and polity in all of these countries, the bourgeois rulers are not in a position to pacify the growing unrest among the working masses. The old political and trade union structures of revisionist-bureaucratic control have crumbled. The new structures of trade union bureaucracy suitable for undisguised capitalism are still being sought to be established, in these countries. (This transitional situation of weakened institutional control of the ruling classes over the working masses, offers excellent opportunity to the proletarian revolutionary elements for gaining ground among the restive masses of the workers.) Moreover, they are not only the direct inheritors of the revolutionary legacy of socialist revolution and construction and the anti-fascist war of emancipation but they have also gone through the recent political experience of defying the social-capitalist rule. The combination of all these elements in the present situation offers an unusual opportunity for the revolutionary renewal and reorganisation of the working class movement in these countries.

On the negative side, there has been a marked growth of reactionary nationalist tendencies and conflicts in this region since the collapse of the political and economic structures of social-capitalism. This phenomenon is basically a product of the dog-fight among various segments of the reactionary bourgeoisie in each country. That is a dog-fight over their respective lots in the anarchic redivision of political power and economic resources of the country which has been encouraged and influenced by the major imperialist powers to their own advantage. The working class movement in these countries has to challenge and overcome this menace of reactionary nationalism so as to be able to seize the opportunity for its own revolutionary renewal and reorganisation. The recent developments in erstwhile Yugoslavia where the social progress has been thrown back for some years are a grim reminder of the damaging potential of this factor.

Barring this factor, the prevailing situation of discord and conflict among various factions of the bourgeoisie is contributing to the political instability of its rule and the political enlightenment of the working masses in each country of this region.

Principal contradiction intensifying during this phase

There are significant changes also in the movement of the principal contradiction at the international level. One, the recent multi-pronged offensive of imperialism against the underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America is greatly intensifying the fundamental contradiction between imperialism versus the oppressed peoples and oppressed nations of these countries. Two, this principal contradiction is unfolding itself, at present, when there prevails an unprecedented though transient collusion of all the major imperialist powers in their drive for further dominating and fleecing these countries.

The current imperialist offensive against the oppressed underdeveloped countries is escalating the economic and political instability of its whole neo-colonial order. The main burden of the stagnation and recession in the world monopoly capitalist economies is being recklessly imposed on the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America who are already in dire straits due to the worsening conditions of their semi-feudal semi-colonial social existence.

The politico-economic offensive of imperialism is being carried out and legitimised through internal policy measures by the native reactionary rulers of these countries. They are obliged to proclaim themselves as guarantors and protectors of the extortionary imperialist profits. So they are to bear the brunt of political struggles and outbursts of their own people against the imperialist depredations. Moreover, the crude manner in which imperialism is making the native reactionary rulers do its bidding regarding the economic policy changes, further undermines their political credibility as "sovereign" rulers and quickens the process of their alienation from the people concerned.

The imperialist rulers as well as the lackey ruling classes in the oppressed countries are not totally unaware of the political risks they are incurring by causing such large-scale dislocation of the real national economies and unemployment, expropriation, impoverishment and uprooting of huge masses of the toiling people, along with the undermining of political credibility of the native regimes. Yet, such is the imperative imperialist need to bail out its sagging economies and to slow down the momentum of the rising social discontent within its very bases that it cannot avoid taking the political risks in its

neo-colonial periphery. (The development of comprador-bureaucratic capitalism in underdeveloped countries has got so hooked up on the increasing dose of imperialist capital and technology import that the native reactionary rulers are, more or less, reconciled to their reduced say even in policy-decisions concerning the forms, pattern and terms of that inflow. At present, the concerted imperialist pressure and their own economic compulsions are overriding their worries about the prospect of popular political backlash against these drastic economic measures.)

Political credibility of imperialism's lackeys undermined

The political credibility of the domestic rulers of the oppressed underdeveloped countries is being undermined by the current imperialist offensive on the political-military plane too. They are being treated by the dominant imperialist powers in an openly contemptuous manner. While exerting political pressure and military blackmail against various regimes in these countries to make them tailor their political conduct to the imperialist wishes, the imperialist spokespersons are becoming less and less bothered to hide that fact from the public.

The domestic rulers generally try to keep their own people in the dark about the fact that they are being subjected to imperialist pressure on various issues. They are afraid to take into confidence and involve their countrymen in tackling the imperialist pressures because public awareness and involvement would upset their plans for surreptitious compromises or capitulations in those matters. Thus, the revealing utterances of the imperialist spokespersons about what pressures are being applied or have been applied by them put these regimes in politically embarrassing positions quite often these days. (For instance, U.S. imperialists recently announced that they had effectively pressured the Indian government not to carry out its further programme for developing and deploying the Agni-type missiles over the past two years. Indian rulers reaction to that utterance was that of an embarrassed silence: neither officially accepting nor refuting that fact.)

Imperialism's dilemma in political-military dealings with lackey regimes

While the imperialist powers' ham-handed political-military dealings with the lackey third world regimes further damage the latter's credibility, such ham-handed dealings on the other hand highlight the essential weakness of imperialism in its political-military aims with regard to these regimes.

Imperialism needs these regimes even more than before to rule on its behalf, to put down insurgencies and revolutionary movements within their territories under the turbulent conditions of the present period. It also needs to prepare these regimes for fighting local wars as proxies of rival imperialist powers or against other recalcitrant countries of the third world, and to raise mercenaries and local trained armies for the purpose.

It is important to note that the imperialist powers' reliance on third world regimes to play military roles of imperialist design is impelled by their political unwillingness to risk their own troops for operations abroad. This is because of strong opposition to such commitment from wide sections of their populations, the well-fed among whom though see no wrong in treating third world populations as cannon fodder for their country's imperialist aspirations. (When these imperialist countries do commit their troops it is for rapid action and brief periods. This constraint is more pressing now as the popular political pressures mount from within the imperialist countries. A people, angered by the unexpectedly enhanced insecurities and stripping of their economic life by their ruling classes and governments are less willing to fight in strange lands for the supposed honour and power of their country. Indeed, this explains the preponderance of those already marginalised in the imperialist economies among the mercenary fighting forces sent abroad.)

At the same time, for imperialist powers, the arming of the third world regimes to perform their internal and external roles has been fraught with the incipient danger that the well-armed third world regimes can become less amenable to military blackmail by imperialist powers. Although third world regimes can access advanced armaments to a limited extent through commercial purchases or from rival powers, imperialist powers as a whole, particularly in the present phase of collusion, make it a point as far as possible to limit the arming of lackey regimes to traditional weaponry.

Nevertheless, the imperialist powers are caught in the pincer, of having to rely on lackey regimes' militarisation, but knowing that these regimes though basically slavish are not always reliable and may even prove recalcitrant about having also to contain their militarisation within safe limits.

For their part, third world regimes would occasionally get pushed into defiance of imperialist dictates for brief periods if they perceive their very social base being eroded, their class interest being damaged, and their survival being in question. But for any serious and prolonged defiance, these regimes need political material support from their own oppressed populations.

Should their populations rally around in anti-imperialist defiance, such support has its own political consequences for these regimes. Since it is extended out of a strong anti-imperialist sentiment, its material operation initiates a process of democratic mobilisation and organisation which in itself poses a political threat to the lackey regimes. Besides, the more the anti-imperialist defiance or resistance would get prolonged and acquire popular character, the more it tends to expose to the people the essentially collaborative nature of their own rulers. It would thus help the people realise that the success of the anti-imperialist struggle requires demolition of such regimes themselves. In other words, it would tend to make explicit the necessary unity between the national and the democratic tasks of their struggle.

II.

For the revolutionary movement, short-term hurdles, long-term advantage

While the crisis-driven imperialist offensive is sowing greater turbulence in the oppressed countries, the explosive potential of this developing situation has yet to find full vent in the stormy waves of popular struggles against imperialism and against the lackey domestic rulers of these countries. At the present moment, the turbulence in these countries is taking place generally in a more diffused and less spectacular manner. It is so particularly owing to a combination of some factors in the current situation.

Churning and polarisation within national democratic movements

First factor: (Contradictions among the enemies of the people being an indirect reserve *force* of the revolution, as com. Stalin has defined them) the replacement of the fierce inter-imperialist contention by the transient collusion among major imperialist powers is tantamount to coming into being of a momentary deficit in the forces of revolution, in the struggle between imperialism and the oppressed peoples. In the current state of relative political-military disengagement among major imperialist powers, they have got a certain freedom of action to step up counter-revolutionary political and military moves in their neo-colonial backyards and to exert concerted pressure against the rebellious and the revolutionary movements of the oppressed peoples and nations.

On the people's side, this factor has considerably narrowed down the space for tactical manoeuvring by the revolutionary forces vis-a-vis the imperialist powers and their local lackeys. Thus, it is a source of difficulties for these movements to gather momentum or advance to higher levels of their development. But these difficulties are of a fairly short duration because their source, the factor of imperialist collusion, tends to fade out with every passing day while the growing revolutionary situation in these countries opens up new possibilities of overcoming these difficulties and getting at the position to take the leap forward.

Yet, in the immediate context, this unfavourable factor and the resultant difficulties are telling upon the weak-links in these movements, prompting the compromising tendencies to assert themselves against the radical and the revolutionary tendencies. Consequently, these movements in general are experiencing the sharpening of the two-road struggle which is leading, in some cases, to polarisation of forces and in some others only to discarding of the scum, i.e., a handful of intriguing elements and deserters.

Second factor: Certain contingents of the anti-imperialist movements are now suffering from the after-effects of their past dependence on the support and assistance from the Soviet social-imperialism

and the regimes under its influence. That corrupting influence had even earlier corroded the revolutionary vitality of these bourgeois nationalist groups of various hues by inhibiting their progress towards consistent anti-imperialist positions and firm reliance on the toiling masses of the people. Now, when they are left to fend for themselves in the changed international situation, they seem to have lost their political bearings. It has become almost impossible for them now to survive and thrive as contingents of the anti-imperialist movements, in their old political and operational moulds.

Two destinies await them. They may dare to take a resolute stand against the compromising tendencies in the movement; to spurn any kind of minimalist national agenda put forth by these tendencies (for the purpose of striking political deals with the enemies and bartering away the cause of national liberation and genuine democracy); to forge closer ties with the toiling masses as well as communist revolutionary forces; and to get themselves politically remoulded and strengthened in this process. This is the course that their militant ranks and the advanced layers of the struggling masses are pressing for.

Or, they may remain politically indecisive and confined to the old grooves, hence liable to be dragged into essentially capitulationist political settlements pushed by imperialism and its lackeys. This is the course that the vacillating national bourgeoisie and the revisionist elements are pressing for wherever they are in a position to do so.

For instance, the second course has prevailed in the Azanian (South African) liberation movement where the radical nationalist forces outside the African National Congress as well as the elements inside it failed to demarcate themselves from the treacherous act of bartering away the movement by the Mandelaite and the revisionist leadership of the ANC for sharing political power with the white settler-colonialist ruling class. However, in the case of the Palestinian national liberation movement the situation is not as irretrievable in the short term as that of the Azanian liberation movement. There, the secular radical groups still have the chance to pursue the first course. They have refused to be accessories to the contemptible political sell-out enacted by the dominant Al Fatah leadership of the PLO. But they will have to go further than that by thoroughly repudiating it and reaffirming the basic objectives of the movement sooner than later if they do not want to lose political initiative to the Islamist radical groups and let the Palestinian resistance become the latter's preserve.

Thus, under the impact of the above-stated two factors, the national democratic revolutionary stream, on the whole, is undergoing a process of renewal through political churning, polarisation and realignment of forces, and reorganisation or reestablishment of the leadership cores. In this context, those revolutionary movements of the oppressed peoples wherein the leadership of communist revolutionary parties is established stand out as the most steadfast and reliable fighting fronts against imperialism and its lackeys. They are presenting a contrast to the bourgeois-led movements afflicted with political confusion, waverings and betrayals. This fact is highlighting, to the benefit of all the struggling oppressed peoples, the crucial difference made by the class character and ideology of the leadership with regard to the political stamina and perseverance of the concerned movement in keeping the flag flying.

Imperialist onslaught in the main political-economic, in collaboration with native ruling classes.

Third factor: Political-economic invasion is constituting the main string of the current multi-pronged imperialist offensive against the oppressed underdeveloped countries. The nationwide impact of the economic invasion and people's resistance to it do not occur as instantaneously and pervasively as would happen in the case of a military invasion by some imperialist power or powers. It is so because the economic invasion is carried out in collaboration with the native ruling classes without altering the semi-colonial status of these countries (sharpening thus the internal contradictions of the oppressed countries, too). Also because, it unfolds in a process of time and in an uneven manner. So the popular mobilisations and struggles against it also develop in a process of time and in an uneven manner to acquire formidable proportions.

Selective military interventions

Moreover, the recent acts of imperialist aggression and intervention too have been, in the main, selectively aimed at soft targets, with limited and quickly attainable objectives. For instance, U.S.

imperialist aggression on Panama and aggression-like intervention in Haiti were, in both the cases, directed against quite weak and discredited military junta-regimes which had been nurtured by U.S. imperialism itself. Though these military cliques were forcibly dislodged from power by U.S. imperialism, as it found them politically inconvenient or less pliant on certain matters, yet their political alienation from their own peoples was so acute that they could not become the reference-points and rallying-centres for national reaction against the imperialist aggression.

Aggression on Iraq has been the only major case of imperialist aggression wherein the interests of the whole nation, including the ruling classes, are under attack and the country is under a kind of partial imperialist occupation. There, the aggressive imperialist-combine led by U.S. imperialism has come up against such a dogged defiance by the Iraqi people as it never anticipated. Despite the serious class weaknesses, political miscalculations and misdeeds of the Saddam Hussein regime, the Iraqi people have found in this regime's determined fight for survival the immediate focus of their anti-imperialist mobilisation and resistance. (Defying the overwhelming military and economic odds against them, they have been courageously thwarting for the last six years the arrogantly declared objective of the U.S. imperialism and British imperialism to bring about the fall of Saddam's regime. They cannot deal military blows to the imperialist aggressors who continue to operate from a safe distance. They have, nevertheless, dealt significant political blows to the imperialist pillars of the so-called New World Order by dint of their prolonged suffering and defiance. They have certainly exposed the ruthless gangster-face of the imperialist aggressors exposed the role of U.N.O. as the gilded tool of the dominant imperialist powers for legitimising and facilitating their aggression on the oppressed countries, and exposed most of the Arab reactionary rulers as servile accomplices of the imperialist aggressors. As a consequence of this imperialist aggression and defiance shown by the Iraqi people, a new undercurrent of opposition to the imperialist aggressors and their Arab accomplices has been generated in all the Arab countries, particularly those who are under the rule of such Arab accomplices of the imperialist aggressors. The bomb-explosions at the U.S. military facilities in Saudi Arabia which killed 16 U.S. troops and injured many more; the brief rebellion of some villages and clashes with the police in Bahrain; widespread mass demonstrations against the austerity-measures of the Jordanian government which could be suppressed only after massive police operation; rising demand for democratic political reforms in Kuwait despite stringent repressive measures by the government to throttle it and also the growing resentment among the people against the stationing of U.S. troops there; are symptoms of the brewing turbulence even in these countries, hitherto considered politically dormant and safe areas of imperialist influence.)

The recent developments in Somalia have demonstrated that in present times, even a camouflaged imperialist military aggression quickly galvanises the anti-imperialist sentiment and resistance among the concerned oppressed people, provided that any nucleus of resistance is there for them to rally around. (Somalia, like some other extreme victims of imperialist loot, was first reduced to a state of economic ruination, social disintegration, political anarchy and military strife among local war-lords. In the background of the mass starvation and deaths of Somalian population thus brought about by imperialism itself, imperialist armies were sent there under the pretext of safeguarding the supply-lines of United Nations' humanitarian relief provisions meant for direct distribution to the starving Somalians. U.S. imperialism, using the United Nations' so-called relief project as a fig-leaf for covering its aggression, sought to impose a puppet regime on Somalia. In pursuit of this neo-colonial objective, it attempted to disarm the forces of recalcitrant local war-lord general Aideed, and to arrest and humiliate him as it had earlier humiliated general Noriega of Panama. But the use of U.S. ground troops for carrying out raid-and-search operations in those parts of Somalia which were under Aideed's control or influence, antagonised the civilian population. Promptly, there arose a wave of popular opposition to the imperialist military intervention, the U.S. imperialist aggression in particular. As a result of this development, the neo-colonial designs of U.S. imperialism got foiled. More than that, it was forced to swallow its superpower arrogance and pull out its troops unceremoniously from Somalia, after having suffered some casualties at the hands of Aideed's poorly-armed irregular troops and the resultant hue and cry at home.)

It is evident from the experience of these cases of imperialist military intervention and aggression that the military-political consequences of such acts have generally tended to upset or overturn the calculations and plans of the imperialist powers. Such acts have tended to ignite national resistance by the victim peoples even through rallying around the native reactionary forces in the lack of revolutionary

leadership. Consequently, the aggressor imperialist forces have been left with either their shattered designs or a more volatile situation on their hands.

Rwanda and Afghanistan

In view of the political-military pitfalls involved in direct imperialist aggression and intervention to fulfil their hegemonic designs, the imperialist powers have to rely, in a major way, on the proxy wars among or internecine wars within the oppressed countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. For that purpose aggravating the divisive issues and tensions among the oppressed countries and among various social groups within these countries continues to be their tested counter-revolutionary method. They cannot effectively use this methods without the services of native lackey regimes and other reactionary local forces whom they buttress financially and militarily. This method of indirect imperialist military intervention is all the more harmful for the oppressed countries and peoples because, while it causes no less human suffering and ruination than direct imperialist aggression or intervention, it shields the imperialist culprits from the wrath of the wronged peoples. At the moment, such indirect imperialist military interventions are mainly motivated by the requirements of neo-colonial oppression and suppression of the oppressed peoples and nations rather than the requirements of inter-imperialist contention. Those countries where socio-economic and state structures have more or less crumbled due to prolonged imperialist depredations or military invasion are today providing very fertile ground for such indirect imperialist interventions. The heightened social tensions and growing desperation, there, among various sections and communities of the people make it both conducive and necessary for the imperialist powers and their running dogs to deflect the wrath of the people away from their real tormentors and into self-destructive strife. Recent developments in some central African countries (namely Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire) and in Afghanistan present the most bloody spectacles of massive death and misery falling upon the native populations because of the imperialist-induced flare-ups of internal sectarian strife.

[In Rwanda, the human disaster has been shaped essentially by two factors. Economically, the country has been inflicted with disaster owing to the World Bank-imposed Structural Adjustment Programme and the resultant destruction of jobs and small occupations, and owing to the crash in its export earnings as the result of the price-dip in the international market of its main export-item, coffee. Politically, the dominant neo-colonial power, French imperialism, and its lackey regime of Hutu reactionaries have sought to divert and suppress the rising wave of popular unrest by inciting the sectarian strife between the Hutu tribe and the minority Tutsi tribe. The death-squads of the mercenary Hutu soldiers and militia--the "Intrahamwe"--which were propped up financially and militarily by French imperialism, preyed upon innocent civilians and massacred lakhs of Tutsis and also moderate Hutus. Nobody talked then of international intervention to stop that genocide. But, afterwards, when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)--the rebel armed organisation of Tutsis and moderate Hutus--was routing the government forces and advancing on the capital Kigali, French imperialism orchestrated an international diplomatic and media campaign for U.N. intervention. This it did on the ostensible plea of preventing possible large-scale killings of Hutus by the RPF, in the event of its victory, in revenge for the earlier massacre of Tutsis. The real motive, however, was imperialist intervention in Rwanda to avert the impending fall of the lackey regime and the punishment of the notorious mass-murderers at the hands of the RPF in power. As French imperialism's campaign for concerted imperialist intervention under the U.N. umbrella fell through, owing to the lukewarm response of the other major imperialist powers (particularly the U.S. imperialism), France unilaterally proceeded to carry out its plan of military intervention. But the lackey Hutu regime collapsed too soon to benefit from the intervention by its chief patron. Nevertheless, about 2,000 French troops did make a short-term intervention, to provide 'safe havens' to the fleeing Hutu government and military leaders, under the pretext of protecting the large number of Hutu refugees who had also fled due to the fear-psychosis created by the reactionary propaganda. These refugee camps were actually turned into prison-camps for the civilian refugees by the armed gangs of the Hutu militia who received, on behalf of the refugees, all the "humanitarian aid" worth millions of dollars. Thus the refugee camps also became the training camps for multiplying the gangs of armed thugs to be used against the new regime. At last, these camps got exposed for what they really were and the mercenary gangs of "Intrahamwe" were routed from the camps in and around Rwanda by RPF and fraternal Tutsi rebel forces from Burundi and Zaire. Thus the developments in Rwanda and its neighbourhood have both a negative aspect as well as a positive aspect to their outcome. On the negative side, imperialism

succeeded in making use of ethnic divisions and prejudices among the local people to cause a huge man-slaughter and social calamity in Rwanda. The common masses of both the Tutsi and the Hutu tribes have been the victims of this imperialist-imposed death and misery. Moreover, seeds have been sown for a new crop of sectarian strife within these countries and local wars among them. Even now, the real, behind-the-scenes, culprits have not paid the political price commensurate with the enormity of their crime. On the positive side, the imperialist-backed fascistic network of Hutu reactionaries was smashed and a relatively independent regime got established in Rwanda which is conducive to the social rehabilitation of the tormented Rwandan people. The imperialist designs of intervention were foiled. Moreover; the turbulence has spread from Rwanda into the neighbouring countries, notably to the mineral-rich Zaire which is of prime concern to all the imperialist powers active in Africa. The lackey Mobutu-regime of Zaire, considered to be the bulwark of imperialist interests in Central Africa, is presently tottering under the blows of the advancing Tutsi army.]

[In Afghanistan, the indirect imperialist intervention is channelled through the lackey military establishment of Pakistan. The purpose is to install a reactionary regime there as the protegee of imperialism under the overall U.S. imperialist domination. This is being attempted in a situation where the Afghanistan state-system has disintegrated, the economy (particularly agricultural) has got totally ruined, and a large part of the countrymen have been turned into internal and external refugees (almost the whole of the intelligentsia too has departed). Much of that situation was the outcome of the decade-long period of Soviet social-imperialist occupation of Afghanistan and the plucky war of national resistance against it. Yet the national injury caused by the later developments is deeper and more painful. The brave Afghani people have not only been basically denied the fruit of their remarkable feat of humbling the mighty Soviet social-imperialist aggressors but have also been subjected to further devastation and bloodshed owing to the reactionary and narrow outlook of the major leading factions of the resistance movement. The class-political limitations of these leading factions prevented them from consolidating the patriotic and democratic forces for setting up a national united front government. Instead, they sidelined and suppressed the widespread, local-level, popular fighting formations of nationalist forces including the communist elements. Thus their class-political narrowness paved the way for U.S. imperialism and its Pakistani channel to promote and beef up, financially and militarily, various Islamic fundamentalist groups as contenders for the seat of power in Afghanistan. Earlier it was the mercenary Gulbadin Hikmatyar outfit which was their pet war-horse; later, as that was found ineffective it was ditched by them. A far more effective force, raised, trained and equipped in Pakistan, mainly from the Afghan refugee camps there, has been launched under the name of Islamic Taliban Militia. Obviously, the initial sweeping victories of the so-called Taliban militia, the seizure of the capital Kabul, and the dislodging of the Rabbani government by it, have changed the earlier balance of forces in the ongoing bloody contest for power in Afghanistan, to the immediate advantage of the U.S. imperialist's indirect intervention. Still, it is neither a decisive nor a durable gain for the interventionists. It has only made the military strife more intense and protracted. Most of the factors which favoured Taliban's initial victories have been drained of their potential, and some factors have turned, or begun turning, into liabilities. The element of surprise regarding their military offensive and power have been lost. They have made use of common people's disgust and dismay over the unending strife among various warring factions unmindful of people's sufferings and concerns by evoking the prospect of quick termination of that strife and bringing about a single regime. But the act of intensification and spreading of the military conflict subsequent to Taliban's seizure of Kabul have disillusioned such people. Ironically though, the Taliban's initial military victories have brought about the conciliation and coalition of all the other major warring factions against them. One factor which underlies the emergence of the Taliban is a formidable force is still intact. That is the support extended to them by the Sunni Muslim clergy of Afghanistan. That makes them different from being a purely mercenary armed gang and a force instead that has got some native social base. On the other hand, their fascistic pursuit of religious-cultural hegemony over the Afghan people, particularly the non-Pashtun national/ethnic minorities and the Shia Muslim minority, have opened a broad front of opposition to them. It follows from the above-mentioned alignment of social forces, actual and prospective that the Taliban cannot dislodge the troops led by the Tajik general Ahmed Shah Masood and those led by the Uzbek general Abdul Rasheed Dostam from north and north-western Afghanistan--the territories inhabited by the Tajik and the Uzbek national minorities, respectively. And, without getting hold of these territories the U.S. imperialists' indirect intervention in Afghanistan becomes infructuous. Because, those territories provide the geographic link with the Central Asian republics of the earlier USSR and their energy-resources.

Through this link, the U.S. oil corporations operating in the CIS countries can have an alternative supply line upto the Indian Ocean, bypassing Russia. Without that economic incentive, Afghanistan itself would not be economically attractive enough for a sustained intervention. The political-military objective of creating a strong imperialist outpost in Afghanistan for exerting pressure on Iran or other neighbouring countries would not be realised without getting a unified State of Afghanistan under a servile regime. Thus the developments in Afghanistan also have a negative and a positive aspect to them. The indirect imperialist intervention, through the services of its Pakistani lackeys and native reactionaries, is devastating Afghanistan and causing death and misery to its people without extracting serious political cost from U.S. imperialism. However, the imperialist designs behind the intervention have come up against heavy odds. The earlier lost opportunities for the consolidation of patriotic forces and flourishing of the revolutionary elements among them in a drawn-out resistance, have got a new lease of life amidst blood and tears.]

Specific circumstances in favour of communist revolutionaries

In the period ahead, two specific circumstances are working worldwide in favour of communist revolutionary forces.

Turbulence will intensify: First, the turbulence among world peoples suffering and struggling against the political economic onslaught of imperialism transferring the burden of its crisis on to the people primarily of the third world countries. The spontaneous popular rage and unsettlement in the third world has not yet achieved its full potential through being systematically directed against imperialism's lackey regimes in these countries. As the phase of collusion among the major imperialist powers yields to the usual state of overt and intensified inter-imperialist contention, this turbulence gets greater scope to express itself, and the proletarian revolutionary forces scope to manoeuvre among enemy forces.

Moreover, as military contention and aggression by imperialist powers come more and more into play, the turbulence increasingly tends to take an anti-imperialist form, turning into nationalist rallying under military aggression by imperialist powers.

This turbulence would yield its full anti-imperialist potential and acquire revolutionary democratic direction provided it comes under the leadership or general influence of the Communist Party. Proletarian revolutionary forces have to work to guide the people's turbulent forces into a revolutionary democratic movement. They have to grasp the thrusting power of popular turbulence replete with opportunities as well as dangers; anticipate the phase of open inter-imperialist contention in this period of acute systemic crisis for imperialism; and politically consolidate people's struggles into a concentrated planned movement by (i) bringing under their own influence those they can and (ii) projecting others in the public in the proper perspective. In doing so they should take steps to project both kinds across regions and revolutionary classes.

Crumbling of revisionist worldwide network: The second favourable circumstance for communist revolutionaries in the present situation is the crumbling of the worldwide network of revisionism and revisionist parties, following the collapse of Soviet social imperialism, their mainstay. This circumstance removes that treacherous political alternative which pretends to communist heritage and contests with genuine communist forces in each country for the political affiliation of active elements and masses of toiling people.

The toiling people by their class nature need the revolutionary alternative. Instead, in the past four decades, they have been ideologically disarmed and rendered politically ineffective by local revisionist readerships acting as lackeys of social imperialism and State revisionism. The collapse of Soviet social imperialism and its renouncing of communism is thus a deadly blow to the support structure of world revisionism.

It is not a positive blow as was the ideological death blow dealt by the Great Debate in the 1960s. But it does make a major material and psychological impact in favour of Marxist Leninists: it forces the revisionist parties to expose their true class-collaborationist colours. Driven now to seek subsistence and favours from the local ruling classes and their imperialist masters, these parties have to drop their

pretensions to revolution, class rule and scientific socialism. Bereft of their ideological propaganda baggage, they necessarily become social democratic parties and groups.

Of course, revisionism as an inimical ideological trend will continue to exist within the communist revolutionary camp; but denied external support-structure its challenge can henceforth be met more effectively within the communist revolutionary frame. (With the collapse of Soviet social imperialism, Western imperialist powers may have triumphantly rid themselves of an ideological-political threat from within the imperialist camp. But, in the process, they have released the potential association of billions of toiling masses for revolutionary action and made it necessary for healthy political elements misled into the revisionist camp to seek out revolutionary politics and the proletarian revolutionary forces organised around it.)

Imperialism unable to disentangle itself from crisis: resistance at home and abroad

No doubt imperialism remains as a State system worldwide. But it is at this juncture also hopelessly on the decline--not only in that as a system it is incapable of managing the productive forces its mode has unleashed, but in that it has run out of steam even for reform and revisionism. Every attempt imperialism makes to disentangle itself from its crisis, and to manage its inter-imperialist contention in the interests of resolving that crisis, entangles it further still in the negative threads of that attempt.

This is so whether in relation to imperialism's national economies where the State and finance capital are making deep cuts into the established economic claims and social security of the working people, or in relation to the third world economies where via their lackey regimes imperialists are imposing most monstrous terms of exploitation on the vast masses of people. Thus, in the imperialist countries, people have been hitting back with organised resistance, and in the oppressed countries growing popular turbulence is the rule, more organised or less so according to each country's specific history and situation.

It is the revolutionary possibilities and power of the turbulence unleashed by the operation of this principal contradiction (between imperialism and the oppressed peoples), aided by growing unrest in imperialist countries manifesting the other fundamental contradiction (between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in those countries) that the progressive proletarian forces need to grasp.

Communist revolutionaries have stood their ground

Both the general features and specific circumstances in the objective situation thus give communists ample scope for revolutionary activity and revolutionary optimism.

The record of communist forces worldwide, too, in the period following the fall of Red China, offers ground for optimism. Communist revolutionaries have faced major challenges to their basic revolutionary line and organisation. They have struggled hard and not capitulated. And they have defended their organisation in the face of fierce repression and enemy attacks. The turbulence of world people and the exposure of the revisionist forces are in the present situation specific advantages for them.

However, after recognising all this, it is important to realise that the many important problems that the communist revolutionaries have been grappling with all through this period are persisting. In the final analysis, these are of an ideological-political nature--whether pertaining to the arena of the revolutionary movement, or of the party organisation, or of the application of theory to comprehend complexity of the present situation, or of proletarian revolutionary shaping themselves to meet the present challenges. And their concentrated expression lies in the inability of communist revolutionaries in most countries to consummate the process of Party reorganisation in their own country. It is this which has a crucial bearing in bridging the gap that exists today between the demands of the objective revolutionary situation and the state of the subjective forces. This is an unusual gap. And its acuteness is brought to the fore in a world situation that is developing fast and becoming more complex.

Certain specific tasks, vis-a-vis revisionism and within the camp, in the present situation

In fulfilling their tasks flowing from this overall situation, communist revolutionary forces worldwide need to steadfastly uphold their ideological-political heritage (as basically summed up by the Great Debate) which has been further validated by recent developments. They need to press on determinedly with the implementation of the revolutionary line for their respective countries. These will be the basic steps they can take towards fulfilling their responsibilities as leading contingents of the international proletariat. Their specific tasks in the present situation are as follows.

(i) With the collapse and political exposure of revisionist state system and international network, sections of the old parties and activists around them have been seeking the correct revolutionary understanding and organisational contact. It is important to recognise the significance of this phenomenon. Without loosening the ideological frame of the communist revolutionary line, but maintaining flexibility in handling, it is necessary to approach these forces with a view to carrying them in the correct direction. In this conscious process, communists will have to interact with these forces to sort out and win over the genuine cadres and activists, and demarcate from those who show no sign of fundamental rethinking on revolutionary lines.

(ii) Communists need to remember, however, that while the international revisionist network is being dismantled and internationally organised revisionism is a spent force, revisionism as an ideological trend remains a main danger to communism though its form is now different. The basic content of revisionism now appears mainly in the form of opening up settled questions and issues. These are posed as if to give self-critical answers. However, these questions are posed incorrectly, close to the way the imperialists are posing them to confuse and demoralise the world communist following. The fight with revisionism is thus no less tough within the camp. (One such debate concerns the collapse of the Soviet social-imperialist superpower, posed as a problem of socialism; whereas, it is an established fact in the communist revolutionary camp that this superpower was imperialist, that it was among the main enemies of world people, that it developed after the return of capitalism in the Soviet Union, and that its collapse pertains to the problems faced by imperialist powers and the crisis of imperialism in general and social-imperialism in particular.) Combatting this new form of revisionism, through a systematic ideological-political exposure of what is in fact being done under cover of concern for communist rethinking on questions, is an important and continuing task.

(iii) Imperialism has always strained to demoralise the advanced sections in the world revolutionary movement. One way it does this is to falsely project "failures" of socialism, to project socialism as an inhuman and inefficient system. Now it is trying to project the advantage to the U.S. superpower due to the collapse of the other, Soviet, superpower as a victory of the capitalist system over the socialist, as if imperialism is now stronger. Whereas the fact is that social-imperialism's collapse is a positive circumstance for the development of world revolution and a landmark in the progressive crisis of imperialism and its decline. Fighting such false pessimism steadfastly, with correct and truthful projections of world events, is a continuing task for communist forces worldwide. It is part of the fight against imperialism. It is necessary to properly handle such falsely grounded pessimism too when it enters as a wrong understanding within communist organisation.

(iv) Within the communist movement, there normally exists a tendency among some sections towards wrong thinking and wrong practice. If consolidated this exists as a deviation or a wrong line. Educating against wrong thinking and practice, and conducting relentless struggle against a deviation or a wrong line while trying to win over the genuine cadre who can be rectified is the normal practice of communists. Today there is a severe and sustained attack against communists in the international arena. There is a concerted drive by the imperialist powers to marginalise communists in the public mind worldwide. In these circumstances, and especially in view of the concerns of the struggling masses, it is imperative that we take particular care to join forces against the enemy and to deal with other sections of the camp as fraternal forces (barring those sections from whom we wish to make a clear demarcation ideologically-politically, as belonging outside the communist camp). We should make the form of the public debate such that it goes before the masses as concretely posed issues and fraternal exchanges comprehensible as differences among basically like-minded forces who are committed to promote the interests of the broad mass of people and the glorious cause of revolutionaries.

(v) With communist organisations and parties of other countries, similarly, it is necessary when the enemy is attempting to isolate and fragment the world communist movement, to make special efforts to institute suitable forms of contact, communication, and exchanges internationally, so that a basis is laid for a process of proletarian international coming together ideologically and in political solidarity. It is necessary today, more than ever, to identify with struggles of the oppressed people worldwide, particularly struggles led by communists in other countries, to support them, and to project them in the course of revolutionary activity.

(vi) To do all this, communist revolutionaries have to apply themselves with singular zeal to consummate the process of Party reorganisation by developing the basis and creating the conditions for it.

APPENDIX: ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

(January 1996. The following note was prepared as background material for the above Resolution.)

World in recession

The imperialist crisis continues to darken in the nineties even as imperialist countries have been at pains to herald every break in the dark clouds of recession as the start of a sunny future.

Imperialist institutions themselves acknowledge that Africa, after the decades of decline, is doomed in the foreseeable future to further decline. Latin America, which suffered negative growth and brutal cuts in living standards in the 1980s, was promised recovery in the 1990s; instead, fresh crises (Mexico, Argentina, etc) herald further retrogression. Most dramatically, in Russia, a third of the population has sunk below the poverty line, 30 per cent of the work force are unemployed/underemployed, and real incomes plummeted 43 per cent between 1991 and 1993, and continue to fall. Despite West European investments in East Europe, the working people there are not much better off. All the South Asian economies are on IMF medicine with only stagflation, decline in production, rapid unemployment and price-rise, and heightened debt-servicing to show for their efforts.

In the strongholds of finance capital, too, the picture is bleak. The U.S., it was declared, had emerged from a recession in 1994. But the growth rate of 3.1 per cent in 1994 is projected to 2 per cent or lower in 1996. The population below the U.S. poverty line, which rose from 32.4 million (13 per cent) in 1989 to 39.3 million (15.1 per cent) in 1993, continues to rise despite the "recovery". Concentration of wealth and inequality of income are growing even more acute. Germany, thought to be the most vital European economy, is facing declining growth and soaring unemployment (10 per cent officially, much higher unofficially). Japan, once considered the soundest of the industrial economies, has been trapped at near-zero growth for the last few years, and the country's official Economic Planning Agency has stopped using the term "economic recovery" in its official assessments of the economy's prospects.

The only region able to show considerable growth is East Asia. But even here, China is almost exploding with social contradictions, its working population in a miserable condition. As for the other East Asian economies, they are thoroughly dependent on exporting to the recession-hit industrialised world, so their growth is not sustainable in the long-term.

The most profound symptom of the crisis (although imperialist spokesmen deny it that status) is the rate of unemployment. Even though official figures are high--10 per cent in Germany (15 per cent in East Germany; 23 per cent in Spain, 17 per cent in Ireland, 12 per cent in France, 9.7 per cent in Belgium, etc.--they understate the reality. First, they do not include the huge numbers who, finding no jobs, give up hunting for them. Secondly, they include as "employed" all those who have been forced to accept part-time/temporary/below-minimum-wage employment. It is estimated that 40 per cent of the new jobs created in the U.S. in 1994 were temporary/"fake". Most significantly, unlike in the past, even as production picks up in individual countries or firms, employment proper continues to go down (in 1994, when the U.S. was claimed to have emerged from the recession, there were 516,000 lay-offs). The proportion of long-term unemployment has risen steadily. It is now estimated that merely to keep

unemployment from growing, a minimum of 2.5 per cent growth of GDP is required each year.

Attempted solution of 1980s: Debt-expansion

In the 1980s the imperialist countries tried to pump aggregate demand in their economies by fuelling a massive expansion of debt (consumer, corporate and national). However, given the underlying long-term recessionary trends, credit turned to seeking not the uncertain returns from manufacturing activity but instead to speculative activity in shares, bonds, foreign exchange, commodities, and real estate. By the end of the decade a wave of consumer, corporate and bank bankruptcies signalled the crisis of the "bubble economy".

Increased extraction from third world

The nineties thus began with a backlog of such a failed solution to the imperialist crisis. In addition, around that time, when the third world regimes had been unable to service their debts (with the rise in U.S. interest rates sucking the capital away and constricting their scope for borrowing afresh to repay the earlier debt), the imperialist powers used the occasion to impose fresh terms on the crisis-ridden debtors. On the one hand standards of living deteriorated further, and on the other the imperialist countries got further scope to manipulate third world economic structures, policies and regimes to extract huge benefits for themselves.

The collapse of the Soviet social imperialist super power, and its replacement by the (far weaker) Russian imperialism, gave other imperialist countries not only greater elbow room to concentrate on the third world and East European countries but also gave them the hope of further markets and windfall gains in the erstwhile USSR. (However, in the past four years these hopes have been belied as the Russian economy and polity could not stabilise at all.)

Contradictory pulls of solutions attempted

In the nineties, the imperialist economies have been plagued by inexorably rising unemployment, an underlying failure of real net investment to pick up, chronic imbalances in external payments among the major imperialist economies, and consequent speculative volatility of such magnitude as can throw the real economy (of production and employment) out of gear. Each problem calls forth a set of policies that, in a market economy, contradict the policies needed to solve another problem. (For example, when the U.S. tries to reduce unemployment by boosting demand through reduction of interest rates this leads to inflation; and thus, the widening of its external deficits, which in turn exert upward pressure on the interest rates. The attempt to tackle inflation by various methods of wage suppression leads to restricted demand, and in turn to failure of investment--i.e., to recession. Similar contradictory pulls, as operate in its internal measures for tackling the economic problems, accompany its external measures too, as would be seen, for instance, while discussing some consequences of its trade bloc with Canada and Mexico.)

Desperate measures to loot third world

The triple weapon of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), and the new-born World Trade Organisation (WTO), are being used to exact even more acute and sweeping measures from the third world. While these economies are being forced open with the lever of their debt crisis, the ideological gloss being given to such prying open is the "comparative costs advantage" theory of the 19th century vintage. Under that theory, free trade worldwide is supposed to lead to the more efficient international division of labour. (It has long since been established that such "free trade" necessarily works to accentuate the immense structural advantage of the countries with already more advanced modes of production.)

Trade, loans and foreign direct investment on expropriative terms are among the major ways of looting the third world. These have now been joined by fast-moving speculative capital flows. These hot-money flows attempt to avoid tying up capital in uncertain long-term ventures. Even the type of foreign direct investment being made by transnational corporations in the third world today *attempts to eliminate the risks involved in any longer term cycle of realization of surplus value by realising the surplus at the very*

start: For example, by grossly over-valuing machinery exports to the subsidiary and by requiring a guaranteed high rate of return, the investment is recovered right away (such as by Enron). This is also achieved by cannibalising at throw-away terms, the *existing productive base* of the public sector of the third world. Or, by obtaining at similar throw-away rates *already proven or explored natural resources* (minerals, oil, etc).

It is part of the desperation of the imperialist countries that they are prepared to take the political risks of savagely prying open the economies of third world countries. The increasingly predatory, chaos-generating and suppressive role of foreign capital in the third world is thus an indicator of its uncertainty.

Trade blocs

Finance capital has also accelerated resort to two other methods of shoring up its economies. First, despite the much-trumpeted creation of the WTO supposedly to eliminate all barriers to free trade and so boost the world economy, the major imperialist powers are hectically engaged in building trade blocs. The European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) are already on the scene and others are in the offing as in the Asia Pacific region. However, trade blocs are essentially self-protective, restrictive formations, not engines of sustained expansion. Moreover, given the unevenness/inequalities among the partners of these blocs, they have generated their own crises. A large number of production units under NAFTA have shifted out of the U.S. to exploit sweated Mexican labour, reduce the cost of production and thus regain the competitive edge in international trade. But this solution by American transnational corporations is boomeranging on the U.S. economy via its impact on rates of U.S. unemployment and the U.S.'s sluggish domestic demand. The attempt by various countries to fall in line with the Maastricht terms in the EU has sharpened visibly the contradiction between labour and capital throughout Europe.

Technological "revolutions", narrow base

Similarly, a second method resorted to is the boost to investment by the technological "revolution" in electronics. This is a double-edged weapon. Unbacked by consumer demand (consequent to expanded employment and real incomes of the vast majority), the heavy net investments in this industry have had to depend on the rapid dumping of earlier goods, in favour of the next generation of goods, by rich clientele. There is thus a tendency for such investment to peter out as it bases itself on a pinnacle in society. It has moreover led to more labour being rendered surplus.

Ecological devastation by imperialism.

Engels had described the animal kingdom's consumption, unmindful of the needs of regeneration, as the "predatory economy"; but desperate profit-seeking by imperialism has resulted in far worse ecological damage. And the damage to the globe could be irreparable in the coming half century unless it is arrested by the revolution of the world people.

Diversion and suppression

Imperialist culture, blared out through electronic mass media, has been prying open such barriers as remain to its global sweep. Its values of brash consumerism, individualism and competitiveness and its sapping of collective human values, self-expression and self-assertion have a significant impact on middle sections in the third world. However, the basic sections in the third world particularly the vast rural masses, are relatively protected from this onslaught by their very lack of access to such media and by the press of their real conditions.

Unable to warp people's view of their own condition, imperialism requires the thwarting of their aspirations to organise. This is to be accomplished by a variety of means. These include significantly the smashing of whatever organisation exists among the working class (its legal rights, its militant readerships, its genuine/potential forms). From the other end, the same requirement is to be fulfilled by introducing a plethora of foreign-financed "activist" NGOs to give a human mask to imperialism's

monstrous face.

Continuing mess

Still after all the pulling and pushing to redeem itself, and for that to devastate the democratic aspirations of the world people, imperialism is in an economic mess. Conflict among imperialists over the protection of each imperialist power's "own industry" is thus a continuing concern of each. The USA is still the biggest economy in the world (two and a half times bigger than Japan and producing a quarter of the world's goods and services with just 5 per cent of the world's population). It has not been as yet replaced as the crucial market for international exports. It is a military super power, unlike Japan and Germany. Even so, its consistent massive balance of payments deficits (particularly with Japan and East Asia) and the waning sway of the dollar are dramatic symptoms of its economy's underlying long-term weaknesses and decline. These have been the source of considerable friction as each tries to pry open further the other's domestic market.

In a situation of uncertainty in the sphere of production and investment, reduction of political and technological barriers to capital flows throughout the world, and massive capital flows to the deficit-ridden U.S., imperialist countries have been unable to control the volatility of capital movements and stabilise their economies.

Recent evidence of the frenzied state of capital markets includes the collapse of the Mexican peso, collapse of Barings Bank, and the recent 30 per cent collapse and equally dramatic recovery of the U.S. dollar. These, in turn, are symptoms of the present fragility and anxiety of finance capital itself.

NOTES

* U.S. imperialism, German imperialism, French imperialism, Japanese imperialism, British imperialism, and Russian imperialism.