

War and Peace, Peaceful Co-existence and Peaceful Transition to Socialism

Analysis of the post-Second World War situation when serious ideological differences were developing among the communists in general and between the CPSU and the CPC in particular.

We have been noticing for quite a long time that mainly on questions relating to war and peace, policy of peaceful co-existence of the capitalist and socialist systems and possibility of peaceful realization of socialist revolution in the capitalist countries, a lot of confusion has arisen in the ideological sphere of the communists throughout the world. Even if we leave aside the views of the Communist League of Yugoslavia, it cannot be denied that there exist serious differences between different communist parties on some of the views of the present Communist Party of the Soviet Union led by Comrade Khrushchev¹ as expressed through various speeches and writings of the present leaders of the CPSU on these questions. The line of argument of the CPSU is, more or less, as follows. As a result of some “fundamental changes” that have taken place in the international alignment of social forces since the termination of the Second World War, some of the universally accepted formulations of Lenin about imperialism, war and proletarian revolution, etc., which were perfectly valid before and during the last War, have lost their validity now. To be more precise, this applies, in the opinion of the present leaders of the CPSU, particularly to Lenin’s proposition about the inevitability of wars in the era of imperialism and about the prospect of preserving lasting peace in the world. Besides, though these leaders have not altogether ruled out the law of violent revolution in the capitalist countries, they are emphasizing more the possibility of peaceful realization of socialist revolution as the general law at present. To show the “fundamental difference” in the characteristic features between imperialism at the time of Lenin and that obtaining at present, they are saying that since the present era is the era of disintegration of imperialism, establishment of socialism and of further advancement and development of the socialist countries, it is not possible to realize the exact significance of this epoch by the thesis of Lenin on ‘imperialism, war and proletarian revolution’. Hence, according to these leaders, the formulations of Lenin on questions of war and peace and the general law of development of socialist revolution in the capitalist countries have lost their validity. Those who are still clinging to these formulations in the present changed world situation, therefore, fail to realize the exact significance of the changes in the present international situation and, consequently, are overestimating the strength of imperialism and underestimating the strength of the socialist states, the present-day peace movement and the working class movements going on in all the countries of the globe.

Not only our party, the Socialist Unity Centre of India, but also some other communist parties are finding it difficult to agree with the above observations of the CPSU. The disagreement mainly centres round the understanding of the principal characteristic features of the present ‘changed’ international situation and their significance. There is no divergence of opinion as to the correctness of the policy of peaceful co-existence in so far as the theory is concerned and the possibility of preserving peace in the present international situation. The difference lies precisely in the understanding of the revolutionary significance of the policy of peaceful co-existence, in the objective measures to be adopted to safeguard world peace and in co-

relating these two with revolutionary struggles of the working class in different capitalist countries and the national liberation struggles in colonial and semi-colonial countries. Difference also exists on the question — whether the law of inevitability of wars in the era of imperialism propounded by Lenin still holds good in the ‘changed’ situation of today. There is difference again on the question as to how far it is possible now to accomplish socialist revolution in the capitalist countries peacefully. Over and above these differences, there is the further difference on the idea that socialism can be established by “transforming parliament from an organ of bourgeois democracy into a genuine instrument of the people’s will.” Even if it is assumed for argument’s sake that peaceful realization of socialist revolution in the capitalist countries is possible in the present ‘changed’ international situation, is it Marxian to conclude that the parliamentary way of achieving socialism is one of the various forms of peaceful socialist revolution ?

All these matters are of vital interest to the communists and have posed serious problems to them. Without a correct and scientific understanding of these questions it will be impossible for the communists to carry to success the national liberation movements in colonies and semi-colonies, the struggles for the establishment of socialism in metropolitan capitalist countries and the worldwide anti-war peace movement. So it is of utmost importance to analyse and examine the above matters on the anvil of Marxist-Leninist methodology and outlook, keeping in view the present international situation. For that it is first of all necessary to have a correct idea about the present international situation and its principal features.

Before the Second World War the whole world, with the solitary exception of the USSR, was under either the direct rule or effective political and economic influence of the imperialist-capitalists. The solitary socialist country, too, was then encircled by world imperialism-capitalism. No country other than the Soviet Union at that time fought at the state level seriously and sincerely for the preservation of international peace. But in spite of its sincere efforts to preserve world peace, the USSR had not enough strength to thwart the sinister drives of the mighty imperialist powers for war. On the contrary, since the imperialist-capitalists commanded the decisive force, they had, so to say, the last word on the questions of war and peace. Consequently, wars broke out as and when the expedience of imperialism-capitalism demanded so. After the Second World War, a powerful world socialist system comprising the People’s Democracies of Europe, Mongolia, North Korea and North Vietnam, headed by the USSR and China, has come into being. This has led to the birth of a world socialist market parallel to the world capitalist market. As a result of the dropping out of the vast territory that now constitutes the world socialist market from the chain of capitalist system, the world capitalist market has contracted to a large extent. The existence and development of the world socialist market coupled with the continuously growing strength of the socialist camp have been able to corner the imperialists considerably in the post-War period. *Intensification of the anti-imperialist national liberation movements of the peoples in colonies and semi-colonies and the retreat of the imperialists in the face of mounting surge of these movements are important milestones of the present era.* Guided by pragmatic consideration, the imperialists are changing their old colonial policy — they are handing over power to the national bourgeoisie of the colonies and through agreements and treaties are trying to maintain their economic interests in their former colonies. The bourgeoisie of the newly independent former colonial countries in Asia and Africa are not only reconstructing the national economy of these countries, which is further continuously contracting the market of the powerful capitalist countries, but are also in some cases

coming out as competitors to the major capitalist countries in the already contracted world capitalist market. All these factors — the existence and development of world socialist market coupled with the continuously growing strength of the socialist camp, the growing tide of national liberation struggles in colonies and semi-colonies, the loss of traditional markets in the former colonies, the appearance of the bourgeoisie of the former colonies as new competitors in the arena of international trade — taken together have tremendously intensified the various forms of contradictions within the world imperialist-capitalist system and are thereby hastening the process of complete disintegration of the imperialist colonial system. In this connection it must be borne in mind that though capitalist economy entered the period of general crisis long ago, yet during the period between the First and the Second World Wars, in spite of worldwide depression and tendency of decay and stagnation, capitalism as a whole was developing far more rapidly than before, precisely because of the existence of “relative stability” which the capitalist market then enjoyed. But under the new conditions in which the world capitalist economy is placed today the ‘law of relative stability of capitalist world market’ is no more valid. In expanding their respective economic and political influence, the imperialists, therefore, are finding it still harder to reconcile their conflicting interests, resulting in the contradictions between them taking a naked shape. And the more acute the crisis is becoming, the more frantically the imperialists are militarizing their economy. Of course, these are nothing but attempts, in vain, by the imperialist-capitalist countries to maintain, at least temporarily, the relative stability of the capitalist market through artificial stimulation by constantly increasing military consumption.

In the context of this international situation, the question of war and peace is to be viewed. It goes without saying that at present the united strength of the socialist countries alone² is superior to that of the imperialist powers in some respects. On top of it, the newly independent resurgent bourgeois nationalist states of Asia and Africa have sided with the forces of world peace, of course temporarily, in the very interest of their economic development.³ Besides, the peace loving peoples of the whole world are today against all unjust wars and heartily support all the drives of the socialist camp for safeguarding international peace. On the other hand, the antagonism between the powerful imperialist countries has become more naked and pronounced; the working class movements in the metropolitan capitalist countries are gaining in strength and the national liberation movements in colonies are making tremendous headway — all these factors combined together have weakened the strength of imperialism greatly. In short, the forces of peace, at present, are stronger than the forces of war and now it is possible for the peace loving peoples of the world organized under the leadership of the socialist peace camp to thrust peace upon the bellicose imperialist powers and prevent them from interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries. As a result of these favourable conditions, there exist real possibilities for preserving world peace. But it will be wrong to conclude from the above that Lenin’s thesis that imperialism inevitably generates wars has become obsolete owing to the new conditions in favour of peace. Because, though imperialism today does not exist as an all-embracing world system as in the past and is much weaker than before, yet there is no reasonable ground to think that imperialism will spontaneously die out or that it has lost all its power to strike and start wars. For, imperialism not only exists now as a world system, it still continues in force. Hard-pressed on all sides and rent with mounting crises, imperialism is turning more and more to militarized economy. And the more militarized the economy is becoming, the more rabid imperialism is prone to be in its adventurist acts. In the matter of

armament race and all-out preparations for war, the imperialists have broken all their past records. The military bases which the imperialists have built around the socialist camp are full of lethal weapons of mass destruction kept ready for action at a moment's notice. In West Germany, the imperialists have revived German Revanchism. In Japan, militarism has been fully restored. Though under pressure of circumstances the imperialists have been forced to modify their old colonial policy, yet their aggressive policy has not changed a whit. The antagonism based on competition between the powerful capitalist countries for establishing economic and political supremacy over weak and backward capitalist countries is intensifying day by day. All these facts show beyond doubt that Lenin's thesis about the inevitability of wars in the era of imperialism is still valid as before.

Anyone with correct understanding of the dialectical materialist principle that "quantitative change leads to qualitative change" should have no difficulty to understand that despite whatever quantitative and qualitative changes the other contending forces, moving centring round the basic contradiction within a given phenomenon, may undergo in the process of development of the phenomenon, until and unless the quantitative changes grow to reach a nodal point and the phenomenon itself is qualitatively changed through revolutionary transformation to give rise to a new phenomenon, the principal characteristic feature of the given phenomenon does not disappear and the internal motive forces that determine this principal characteristic feature continue to be in force. So, every Marxist-Leninist should know that every epoch is bound to witness, in the natural process of its development, various vital changes. But notwithstanding these changes, the principal characteristic features of the epoch remain in force till an altogether new epoch emerges on the ashes of the old one.

In the present changed international situation, to speak in general terms that war is no longer inevitable is one thing – and a very good thing too — but to confuse this with the concept that Lenin's thesis about the inevitability of wars in the epoch of imperialism has become obsolete today is an altogether different thing and fraught with so many dangers. In this connection, another point must always be kept in mind. Of course it is true that due to polarization of world social forces, the contradiction between the imperialist war camp, led by the US, and the socialist peace camp, headed by the USSR and China, in the present alignment of world social forces principally determines the course of international events. But, at the same time, it must be remembered that the root cause of wars does not lie in this contradiction. It lies precisely in the antagonistic contradiction between the imperialist-capitalist countries for capture of markets.

It would be possible to banish war for good from human society only when socialist revolution would become victorious throughout the world or when the present capitalist encirclement will be replaced by the encirclement of a few remaining capitalist countries by the world socialist system. The advent of such a situation is now not a thing of distant future. But if any infatuation makes us inclined to ignore the stern reality that the socialist camp is, even today, encircled by the imperialist war camp and that war is still continuing in various forms of local and partial wars which are always fraught with the danger of escalating into large scale war, it will not only create difficulties in taking concrete measures to ensure the victory of peace, but also ideologically disarm the working class movements in different countries and add to the reformist and revisionist tendencies already noticed in the international communist movement. Even if we leave aside the activities of the party moving in our country under the name and title of the Communist Party of

India, we cannot help viewing with concern the reaction which the mistaken notion that Lenin's thesis about the inevitability of wars is now obsolete has produced on the activities of the different communist parties of the world. Consequent upon the formation of wrong ideas, the conspiracy by the imperialists to unleash another world war will be objectively strengthened in spite of desires to the contrary.

So the communists must bear in mind that in the existing changed international situation the possibility of preserving peace and the danger of outbreak of wars are both equally real. It would be an unpardonable mistake to lay unnecessary emphasis on the one and thereby underestimate the other. And because of such faulty approach, some communist leaders, in adopting concrete steps to preserve world peace, are putting the main stress on steps like negotiations with the imperialist-capitalist countries within and without the UNO, disarmament proposal, peace movement and the policy of peaceful co-existence of the capitalist and socialist states (these are very important steps in the matter of maintaining world peace — there is no doubt about it), while undermining the importance of the tasks of actively supporting and intensifying the national liberation movements in colonies and semi-colonies and the struggles for the establishment of socialism in the metropolitan capitalist countries on which itself mainly depends the prospect of overthrowing imperialism-capitalism, thereby guaranteeing lasting peace in the world. It would be possible to effectively preserve lasting peace if the significance of the principal characteristic features of the present-day changed international situation is properly understood and the task of conducting peace movement is grounded solidly in intensifying the national liberation movements in colonies and semi-colonies and the struggles for socialism in capitalist countries.

A Marxist-Leninist always approaches every question, be it on 'war and peace' or on 'peaceful co-existence of capitalist and socialist systems' or on any other matter, with the sole object of accelerating the process of revolution. So in conducting a serious political movement like the present-day peace movement, a communist must always keep it in mind that the purpose of the mighty peace movement is not simply to preserve peace at all costs as bourgeois pacifists hold. If we intend to realize the revolutionary significance of the policy of peaceful co-existence and peace movement, we are to bear some points in mind. At the time of the great Russian Revolution, the workers and other exploited masses of Russia had to fight not only the Czar and the forces of internal reaction but also the powerful imperialist interventionists, defeat them and maintain and consolidate the power captured through the revolution. The Chinese people, too, had to overthrow not only the Chiang regime but also the military might of the USA. But in the existing changed international situation, if the imperialists are compelled to follow the policy of peaceful co-existence and non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries by the force of peace movement, it would be easier for the working class and other exploited masses of the people in the capitalist countries and colonies and semi-colonies to overthrow their respective enemies through revolution. The revolutionary significance of the present-day peace movement and of the policy of peaceful co-existence lies precisely in the creation of that very favourable condition in the international situation which makes it possible for the revolutionary forces in the capitalist and colonial and semi-colonial countries to conduct revolutionary battles against their respective enemies without foreign intervention and interference. Thus the world-wide peace movement or the policy of peaceful co-existence is neither a political manoeuvre nor a subtle device to gain time for war preparations as many pseudo-Marxists think; on the contrary, if correctly understood, each of them is one of the very many complex

revolutionary means to accelerate the course of socialist revolution in metropolitan capitalist countries and national liberation movements in colonies and semi-colonies which in the present situation are part and parcel of world proletarian revolution. As a result of the superiority of the forces of peace in some respects over the forces of war and the relative weakness of imperialism in recent times compared to the socialist countries, conditions for the speedy growth and development of revolutionary movement in capitalist countries and the national liberation struggles in colonies and semi-colonies have become much more favourable now than before. Peace movement and the policy of peaceful co-existence should be conducted in such a way as to accelerate the speed of revolutionary movements. Failure to understand that the real significance of the existing changed international situation lies precisely in the appearance of these favourable conditions is mainly responsible for lack of correct idea about the character, possibility and limitation of the present-day peace movement. Due to failure in realizing the exact nature of internal contradictions within the imperialist camp and those between the newly independent bourgeois states in Asia and Africa, on the one hand, and the Western imperialist countries, on the other, and also infatuation with the question of peace, many harmful acts and activities of the newly independent capitalist countries are being tolerated even in the present changed international situation. In fact, the policy of peaceful co-existence as is being followed in practice by the socialist countries in relation to some of these newly independent capitalist countries is tantamount to appeasement in some respect.

In the present changed international situation, most favourable to the development of revolutionary movements, in spite of securing very many victories through peace movement and policy of peaceful co-existence, how far have the ideological and organizational aspects of the revolutionary movements of the peoples in capitalist and colonial countries gained in strength? On no plea can the answer to this very important question be avoided. If the nature and extent of the struggle for emancipation from the yoke of capitalism and other mass movements by the peoples of India, Burma and other newly independent capitalist countries of Asia and Africa are examined in the light of the above question, it would be perfectly clear that the revolutionary movements in these countries are being rendered ideologically impotent in practice. Only the anti-imperialist and anti-war acts and policies of the ruling bourgeoisie of these countries that are objectively helping to maintain world peace are being eulogized and ostentatiously highlighted and highly commended while no notice is being taken of (1) the fundamental difference between the consistent peace policy of the socialist states and the undependable policy of peace pursued by the newly independent capitalist countries, (2) the increasing tendency of fascization and appearance of fascistic characteristics in diverse forms in the state structure and administrative setup of these countries, (3) the developing trend of imperialism and expansionism which in the case of some of these countries is assuming a naked form at times and, above all, (4) of the fact that *these newly independent capitalist countries are going to play, more and more, the main role virtually as agents of world imperialism in Asia and Africa in the matter of forcible suppression of the growth and development of socialist revolutionary struggles*. And there is no attempt on the part of so-called communist parties whatsoever to educate the people by conducting relentless ideological struggles on these points.

Besides, since the 20th Congress of the CPSU, it is being propagated through the speeches and writings of the leaders of the CPSU that the possibility for peaceful realization of socialist revolution in a number of capitalist countries has become an objective reality in the present favourable international situation. Elucidating this

point, Khrushchev said, "In these circumstances the working class, by rallying round itself the toiling peasantry, the intelligentsia, all patriotic forces and resolutely repulsing the opportunist elements who are incapable of giving up the policy of compromise with the capitalists and landlords, is in a position to defeat the reactionary forces opposed to the popular interest, to capture a stable majority in parliament and transform the latter from an organ of bourgeois democracy into a genuine instrument of people's will". Though up till now these leaders have not altogether discarded the law of violent revolution, yet day by day they are putting more and more emphasis on the possibility of peaceful realization of socialist revolution in the capitalist countries as a general rule in the changed international situation. This view is, no doubt, creating a dangerous confusion in the sphere of ideological struggles by the communists and has already given a fillip to the existing revisionist tendencies.

It has been discussed earlier how the danger of outbreak of wars in various forms is being underestimated by the leaders of the CPSU in discussing the question of the possibility of preserving peace. The confusions are due to two factors : (1) failure to understand that the law of inevitability of wars between imperialist-capitalist countries in the era of imperialism is still valid, and (2) Khrushchev and other leaders have confused the relative weakness of world imperialism in unleashing a world war against the opposition of the tremendously mighty forces of peace with the power of the bourgeoisie and its state to suppress the revolutionary struggle of the working class and other exploited masses of the peoples in a given country. These theorists fail to understand that notwithstanding the superiority of the forces of peace over the forces of war and many spectacular victories to the credit of the former, the world situation has not changed to that stage when the capitalist class, being afraid of the socialist countries, does not dare to forcibly crush the revolutionary struggles in its own country. There is not a single instance in history that can prove our above statement to be incorrect, rather history furnishes us with innumerable instances of ordinary movements by the people based on very modest economic and democratic demands being ruthlessly suppressed in the typically fascistic fashion by the capitalists. *Even in countries with long parliamentary tradition, parliamentary democratic rights and privileges are being gradually curtailed. Even to the bourgeoisie, Parliament is fast losing its utility. Fascism is manifesting itself in diverse forms more markedly than before in the state structure and administrative set-up of all capitalist countries, developed or backward.* In the face of this stern reality, it is impossible for any Marxist-Leninist to advocate the theory of peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism, unless he is thoroughly overwhelmed by bourgeois humanist illusions.

But the bankruptcy in thought has found its most glaring expression in the concept of establishing socialism peacefully "by transforming parliament from an organ serving the class interest of the bourgeoisie into a genuine instrument of people's will." It is true that from the theoretical point of view the possibility of peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism is not absolutely ruled out in Marxism-Leninism. Whether in the changed international situation now, peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism is possible or not, is a debatable question. We do not consider it possible. But even if it is assumed that peaceful realization is possible, the theory of establishing socialism peacefully by "transforming parliament from an organ of bourgeois democracy into a genuine instrument of people's will" is philistine and in no way compatible with Marxism-Leninism. Parliament developed in a particular historical phase in the development of production as the superstructure of a

given economic base to serve the interests of a definite class as its political form of administration; had these theorists taken the trouble of understanding it, they would have surely understood that proletarian democracy, whatever be its form according to the objective conditions obtaining in different countries, is fundamentally different in character from bourgeois democracy (all kinds of bourgeois institutions) and hence, the political institution of the one cannot serve as the political institution of the other. Parliament, which is the superstructure of capitalist economy, the basis of capitalist society, cannot serve as the superstructure of socialist society. It not only cannot serve as the superstructure of socialist economy, the basis of socialist society, but is also bound to obstruct the growth and development of the basis of socialist society. Thus elimination of the superstructure of the old basis is also an important condition for the growth and development of the new basis. *To a Marxist-Leninist, peaceful realization of socialist revolution in a capitalist country, if at all possible, means peaceful capture of power by the working class, the bourgeoisie offering no resistance, and peaceful destruction of the bourgeois state machine and establishment in its place of a new type of state, the proletarian state. It does not mean peaceful transformation of the bourgeois state into a proletarian state through reform, which can never be done. It also means the peaceful dissolution of Parliament and replacing it by the workers' democratic political institution and not peaceful transformation of Parliament into an 'instrument of people's will' which also cannot be done.* Lastly, whatever may be the immediate results of the political discussion, there is no doubt that it will help in raising the very low level of ideological consciousness of the communists so noticeable in recent times. So we welcome it and this should continue.

1 Later turned a renegade

2 When this was written, the mutual relationship between the socialist countries had not reached the later stage of animosity.

3 The Communist Party of India at that time joined in a chorus of eulogizing Pandit Nehru as a champion of peace, but events later proved how wrong they were.

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