

Some Questions on the Way the Cuban Crisis had been Solved

The way the Khrushchev leadership handled the Cuban crisis of 1962, starting from the decision to install rockets to their removal in hot haste without exposing sufficiently the imperialist machinations and putting up any resistance to the US policy of piracy, created confusion in the communist circles and people at large the world over. In examining the issue critically, the article emphasizes the revolutionary significance of peace movement and the correct approach to resolving differences in the international communist movement.

Is the law formulated by Lenin that imperialism inevitably generates wars still valid in the present changed international situation? How far real is the danger of war now? What is the relative strength and weakness of world imperialism? How should the communists approach the question of world peace? Should peace be considered an end in itself or should it be linked up with the task of intensifying the anti-imperialist national liberation movements in the colonies and semi-colonies and the revolutionary struggles in the metropolitan capitalist countries? Is it possible, in the changed situation obtaining at present, to go over to socialism from capitalism peacefully? Is the parliamentary way one of the various forms of peaceful socialist revolution? Can Parliament, an organ of bourgeois democracy, be transformed into a genuine instrument of people's will? On these and on other

allied questions relating to war and peace, policy of peaceful co-existence of the capitalist and socialist systems and transition from capitalism to socialism, serious differences had been brewing for some time past in the world communist camp, and different communist parties had been explaining their respective stands on these questions in their own way, maintaining still an atmosphere of unity and friendship between them. But centring round the *way* the Cuban crisis was solved by Khrushchev, the differences have come out in the open with unprecedented bitterness and mutual recriminations, much to the delight of the imperialists. We cannot deny it.

It goes without saying that every Marxist-Leninist, not excluding those who are in disagreement with Khrushchev on his stand on the Cuban crisis, considers the prevention of world war and preservation of world peace to be of supreme importance in the present international situation. That the duty of saving humanity from the horrors and devastations of war primarily rests on the socialist peace camp cannot also be disputed. It requires no special knowledge to understand that on the ashes of the world ruined by a thermonuclear world war socialism cannot flourish, let alone communism. Still then why cannot a substantial section of the communists, if not the major section of them, agree with Khrushchev on the *way* of solution of the Cuban crisis? It is an affront to this section of communists, some of whom had successfully led their revolutions and are building socialism in their countries, to complain that they have become war-maniacs and want to solve international disputes by means of war. It will be sheer immodesty to think that they are “completely ignorant of the theoretical analyses of Marx, Engels, Lenin about the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary struggle of the working class and the question of war and peace”. Only an incorrigible egotist can think so. There is no valid ground to conclude that they are out to

discredit the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in general and Khrushchev in particular, in their bid to capture the position of the leading communist party in the world communist movement. Everyone would have supported Khrushchev and his supporters in the communist parties of the East European countries, who denounced their opponents openly in their Party Congresses, if they had pinpointed their theoretical differences with their opponents clearly and had established the correctness of their stand. But far from adopting that reasonable course, they thought it fit to put into the mouth of their opponents what the latter had never said or meant to say and made unfounded accusations, some of which have been mentioned above.

Let us, first of all, point out the differences between the two contending groups. It is not the contention of the opponents of Khrushchev that the Soviet Union ought not to have removed the rockets from Cuba and should rather have taught the bellicose imperialist circles of the United States a lesson by strong military actions in the Caribbean. They fully *endorse the Soviet decision to remove the rockets* from Cuba. What they *object to is the way the whole affair was handled*, right from the decision to install rockets in Cuba up to their removal in hot haste without sufficiently exposing the imperialist machination and putting up any resistance to the policy of piracy of the United States. Every peace-loving person would agree with Khrushchev's analysis that "on a closer look, the world now lives, figuratively speaking, on a powder magazine crammed with thermonuclear weapons" and that "the most acute point of international tension was the crisis in the Caribbean". That at such a critical juncture any hot-headed step might have brought the USSR and the USA into actual warfare resulting in huge devastation of Cuba, cannot also be disputed. Judged from that practical consideration as well as in view of the primary responsibility of the socialist peace camp to save mankind from war, one cannot but support the Soviet decision to remove the rockets

from Cuba. But that does not put an end to the controversy; a lot of questions still remain unanswered. We like to put those questions to Khrushchev and his supporters and request them all to answer unambiguously those questions so as to enable the communists all over the world to understand the correctness or otherwise of *the way the Cuban affair, from the decision to install rockets to their removal, was handled.*

Khrushchev, to defend his stand, emphasized the need for mutual concessions and compromise for solving the international problems. It is true that peaceful solution of outstanding issues between different states through negotiation presupposes the adoption of the principle of give-and-take, of mutual concessions and compromise. Concessions, to be really mutual in effect and not mutual in words but unilateral in effect, have to be evenly matched on both sides. In this particular case of solution of the Cuban crisis what is the concession that has been given to the imperialists and, in return thereof, what concession has been gained from them? The Soviet Union has removed the ballistic rockets and withdrawn the IL-28 planes from Cuba whereas the United States has, in return, simply given the pledge that it will not attack Cuba and will restrain its allies from such actions. To all intent and purpose, the terms of compromise are such that they have entailed unilateral concession by the Soviet Union and not mutual concessions; the so-called concession given by the United States is no concession at all. For, it is almost impossible for the United States to launch an attack and continue the aggression on Cuba, a sovereign independent state and a member of the United Nations, openly in utter disregard of world public opinion and the UN Charter. Had such an attack been possible, the United States would have done so long ago instead of adopting the roundabout path of organizing the Cuban counter-revolutionaries on the mainland of USA and sending them to Cuba to overthrow the present regime. The

very fact that socialist Cuba existed in spite of and against the will of the bellicose imperialist circles of the United States much before the latter gave the pledge that it would not attack Cuba, is enough to prove the meaninglessness of the pledge itself. Hence, the pledge given by the United States that it will not attack Cuba, when the reality is that the former cannot in the present international situation launch such an aggression and continue it without sustaining irreparable loss, far outweighing the doubtful gain from the aggression, can by no means be called a concession. Besides, who on earth wanted Khrushchev to secure this pledge from the USA? Moreover, has this pledge any real value? Is there any guarantee that the United States will honestly honour it? Rather, does not history provide us with innumerable instances, where non-aggression pacts made by imperialist powers (mind it, the pledge is not a pact having international recognition and official status; it is at best a gentleman's word, if a hardboiled imperialist can be called a gentleman, having no official sanction, entailing no official obligation on the part of the state whose head makes the pledge to honour it) were most flagrantly violated by the imperialists themselves to further their imperialist designs? If Khrushchev still feels that the pledge given by Kennedy is of much value, may we ask him if he considers the way he followed to be the only way? Was there no better way of handling the Cuban affair? In place of conceding the demands of the imperialists immediately without putting up even a semblance of resistance, could not the Soviet ships be ordered to wait on the line and the rockets be kept intact for some time in order to expose the imperialist game, effectively mobilize the forces of peace and socialism, and wrest from the unwilling hands of the United States some real concession like the removal of the rockets from Turkey or the abolition of the military bases set up by the imperialists around the Soviet Union or at least the withdrawal of the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay as

demanded by Fidel Castro in his speech on October 28 ?

Besides the above questions, there are other questions also. *Pravda*, in an article published on January 7, had asked: "Which Marxist-Leninist would agree that the way to victory of communism lies through a thermonuclear war?" Quite true; no communist can hold brief for the erroneous concept that thermonuclear war is the means of establishing world communist society. But is there any communist party that advocates this theory? So far as our knowledge and information go there is none. Why then had the question been raised by *Pravda* except for the purpose of distorting the views of those who cannot fully agree with Khrushchev on the *way* the Cuban crisis had been solved by him? *Pravda* further stated in the above-mentioned article: "Those who criticize the method by which the Cuban crisis was solved actually reject the policy of peaceful co-existence". There is absolutely no logic in this statement. For, while accepting fully the policy of peaceful co-existence of capitalist and socialist systems as the only correct general line of the foreign policy of a socialist country and even supporting the Soviet decision to remove the rockets from Cuba, one can reasonably disagree with Khrushchev on the *way* of solution of the crisis in the Caribbean. It is a pity that our Soviet comrades are failing to notice the distinction between *opposing the peaceful solution of the Cuban crisis* (no communist party is opposed to peaceful solution) and *opposing the way the Cuban crisis was solved peacefully*. Furthermore, we find Khrushchev making contradictory statements. He, in his report to the Supreme Soviet, said: "But we shipped our weapons to Cuba precisely to prevent an attack on her". Was it necessary to install a few rockets in Cuba so close to the United States to prevent an attack on the former? Khrushchev, in a statement immediately after the solution of the Cuban crisis, admitted that, not to speak of the few rockets installed in Cuba, even ten times that number were not sufficient to forestall an attack by the United States

on Cuba. In his speech on January 19 before the workers of East Germany, he said: "Cuba is not a convenient place to station rockets. When it comes to territory, we have better places than Cuba to put rockets. Today, technique guarantees that any distance can be bridged with rockets". If it is so and, in fact, it is so, why then was Cuba selected as a place to station rockets? The territorial disadvantages of Cuba for the purpose of installing rockets ought to have been taken into account and no rocket shipped there. Did not Khrushchev view beforehand that the US imperialists would, some day or other, come to know of the existence of rockets in Cuba, create a row over it and use it as a plea for intensifying their aggressive moves against Cuba? If he did not, then he is guilty of short-sightedness. If, on the other hand, he had viewed this, what steps did he take at the time of installing rockets or thereafter to circumvent and foil the possible imperialist moves? Was it not hot-headedness to order the Soviet ships to proceed against the embargo imposed by the United States and face any eventuality? And once the rockets were installed and the Soviet ships ordered to move on against the embargo, was it *correct* to remove the rockets and re-order the ships to turn back *immediately after* the first order was given without making any attempt to expose the policy of piracy of the United States? Events proved that the Soviet Union neither envisaged beforehand the possible moves which the US imperialists might make nor planned any definite course of action to counter and foil such moves. It was simply caught napping. In what way do such thoughtless and unplanned acts like installing rockets in Cuba without considering its territorial disadvantages and the possible imperialist counter-moves, ordering the Soviet ships to move on against the embargo imposed by the United States and re-ordering the ships to turn back the moment they came in contact with the US fleet, removing the rockets so hurriedly before the US threat of attack on Cuba, etc., differ from adventurist acts guided not by reason and

foresight but by impulse and carried out not according to well-thought out plans but in the manner forced by circumstances ?

But why did Khrushchev act so clumsily? In our considered view, it is due to his wrong study of the US strategy and approach to the question of war and peace. Khrushchev, due to his thermonuclear war-phobia, wrongly thought that the aim of the US strategy in the Caribbean was to start an all-out thermonuclear world war between the imperialist camp and the socialist camp into which the world social forces are polarized today and, hence, in his characteristic manner, he went the whole hog to avert the war *by any means* and preserve peace *at any cost*. The imperialists know that economically, politically and even militarily the socialist camp is now the superior camp and given the existing balance of force, a third world war between the two camps, if it breaks out at present, would bring about a complete destruction of the world imperialist colonial order and victory of world socialism. So, it is doubtful if the United States, by creating the Cuban crisis, wanted to start an all-out thermonuclear world war between the two camps. But what is certain is that the aim of the US strategy in the Caribbean was to start a partial and localized war with the Soviet Union, make use of logistic advantage, inflict partial and temporary defeat on the USSR and regain the military prestige the United States had lost in the Korean war and in leading the counter-revolution in Cuba and the South-East Asian countries. The United States has been able to regain its lost military prestige to a very large extent even without a fight with the Soviet Union in the Caribbean, because of the impression it has been able to create, due to the *incorrect way of handling the situation* by Khrushchev, that the Soviet Union has been forced to 'retreat in the face of the tough policy and superior military might of the United States'. This impression is responsible partially for the recent shift in the foreign policy of the non-aligned Afro-Asian

countries more towards the United States and for restoring the sinking morale of the bellicose circles of all capitalist countries to the detriment of the growth, development and intensification of the national liberation movements in the colonies and semi-colonies, revolutionary struggles in the metropolitan capitalist countries, and the world peace movement.

We reject the contention that the Soviet Union retreated before imperialist threat in the case of Cuba. Because, no question of retreat can arise as there is no ground for it. But it cannot be denied that the Soviet Union had given the United States more concession than the situation warranted, virtually amounting to unilateral concession by the former with no return-concession by the latter. Khrushchev, of course, does not think so. In his report to the Supreme Soviet he declared: "The most rabid imperialists who stake on starting a thermonuclear war over Cuba have not been able to do so. The Soviet Union, the forces of peace and socialism have demonstrated that they are in a position to impose peace on the exponents of war". It is perfectly true in the present international situation that the socialist countries together with the peace-loving peoples of the world can prevent a *particular* war and impose a *particular* peace on the imperialist war-maniacs. The retreat of the Anglo-Franco-Israeli combine before the united actions of the socialist countries to stop aggression on Egypt is a concrete example of it. But can the *way* the Cuban crisis had been solved be characterized, as Khrushchev has said, as an imposition of peace by the forces of peace and socialism on the exponents of war? We think that it cannot be so characterized. We agree that a war over Cuba was averted. But each and every averting of war is not imposition of peace on the exponents of war. For, war may be temporarily averted by capitulating to imperialism or by giving it concessions. No sane man would ever consider such capitulation or such unilateral concessions as an imposition

of peace by the forces of peace and socialism on the exponents of war. Whether a particular action is imposition of peace on the war-mongers or not is determined by the terms of compromise, the nature of the concession given and of that gained. Had it been possible for Khrushchev to compel the United States to remove its rockets from Turkey or liquidate its military bases around the Soviet Union or at least quit its naval base at Guantanamo Bay in reciprocity of the Soviet action of removing rockets and IL-28 planes from Cuba, the averting of war over Cuba could have been aptly called an imposition of peace by the forces of peace and socialism on the exponents of war. But since the war was averted by unilaterally giving concession to the USA with no return-concession gained from it (we have already discussed it), we can neither call it a concession proper nor an imposition of peace on the forces of war. There is, therefore, an element of appeasing the bellicose imperialist circles of the United States in it for which there was neither necessity nor reason.

It is being repeated by the Soviet comrades that those who are critical of Khrushchev's stand on the Cuban affair forget that imperialism "has nuclear teeth" and consequently underrate the strength of imperialism and the danger of a thermonuclear world war. This is not true. We remind our Soviet comrades that it is not his opponents but Khrushchev himself who, some time back, in order to prove his contention that the law that imperialism inevitably generates wars was no more valid, came out with the thesis that in the present changed international situation, imperialism is incapable of starting war and thereby underestimated the power of imperialism to start war and the danger of war. Those who are critical of his *way* of solving the Cuban crisis never minimized, nor minimize even now the striking power of imperialism to start war and the very real danger of war obtaining at present. It may not be out of place to mention here that modern wars are not so much the result of

individual hot-headedness as they are the outcome of the exploiting capitalist system, and take shape as per the law governing them. Individuals do definitely play important roles, but at no time can they go above the law. One who keeps this tenet of Marxism-Leninism in mind and scientifically studies the development of the law becomes neither panicky about the danger of a thermonuclear world war nor oblivious to its danger.

This brings us to the question of peace. We must not forget that communists are fighters for peace and are not pacifists. A Marxist-Leninist approaches every issue from the standpoint of necessity of revolution and progress and this makes all the difference between the communist understanding of and approach to the question of world peace and pacifist illusion. To a revolutionary, even though he considers the preservation of world peace to be of supreme importance in the present-day international situation, peace is not an end in itself, not a self-sufficient entity. So, he is not in favour of any and every kind of peace, nor is he opposed to all kinds of war. He is against all unjust wars and aggressive wars of annexation but supports and encourages wars of liberation for the emancipation of the masses of the people from the exploiting system. He is, likewise, against pacifism, the *idea and acts to purchase peace at any cost*, but resolutely fights for that peace which helps revolution to grow, develop and intensify. The revolutionary significance of the present-day peace movement and the preservation of world peace lies precisely in the fact that by these is created and, in fact, has been created that favourable condition in the international situation which makes it impossible for the imperialists to interfere into the internal affairs of other states, thereby helping the revolutionary forces in the metropolitan and dependent capitalist countries to conduct revolutionary struggle against their respective enemies, free from foreign intervention. Unlike in the past, when the revolutionary

forces in a country had for the success of the revolution to defeat not only the internal forces of reaction but also foreign imperialist powers, the peace movement, if organized and conducted properly, never losing sight of its revolutionary significance and potentiality, can now stop foreign imperialist intervention and, by that, isolate the main enemy of revolution from its reserve forces. This is no mean achievement, no mean contribution to the cause of revolution. Preservation of world peace and the present-day peace movement, therefore, must not be confused with pacifism, with the idea of *anyhow preserving peace, even sacrificing revolution*. This fight for peace is *one of the very many complex revolutionary means to accelerate the course of socialist revolution in metropolitan capitalist countries and national liberation movement in colonial and dependent countries*. Any Marxist-Leninist who loses sight of the revolutionary significance of the present-day peace movement and the preservation of world peace, considers peace as a self-sufficient objective and, consequently, isolates the question of peace movement and world peace from the task of intensifying anti-imperialist revolutionary movement and struggle, is guilty of preaching pacifism, and objectively appeases imperialism. He even goes to the extent of curbing the advance of revolution and progress in dependent and metropolitan capitalist countries in his craze for so-called peace. Moreover, he fails to notice that by such actions he brings serious damage not only to the cause of revolution and progress but also to the cause of world peace, on the importance of which he so glibly talks. For, the ultimate guarantee of world peace lies not in the pledge of the imperialists not to launch war, far less in appeasing them by giving unnecessary concessions to avert war but *mainly* in the intensification and success of national liberation movements in colonies and semi-colonies and socialist revolution in metropolitan capitalist countries along with the development of world peace movement. Unnecessary and

unilateral concession given to imperialism to avert war which is objectively tantamount to appeasement, has always whetted the appetite of imperialism, resulting in newer and fresh demands being advanced by it, ultimately leading to the outbreak of more brutal wars of annexation here and there on the globe.

The charge of the Soviet comrades that those who do not support the way in which the Cuban crisis was solved, are non-believers in the theory and practice of peaceful co-existence between capitalist and socialist states, is equally incorrect. They definitely believe in the policy of peaceful co-existence between capitalist and socialist states and in fact, are practising it. What they intend to emphasize is that, while practising the policy of peaceful co-existence and trying to develop such co-operation, one should not harbour the illusion that imperialism would change its essential nature and become a genuine advocate of peace, peaceful co-existence and international co-operation. The imperialists are speaking of peace and co-operation with the socialist states not because of any basic change in their essential nature but because of the exigency of the situation, i.e. superior military might of the socialist camp. If this superiority goes, the imperialists would miss no opportunity to start a world war. Reiteration of the essential bellicose nature of imperialism is called for as it appears to us that Khrushchev believes that it is possible to bring the ruling class of the United States to reason and remove the danger of war (we shall be very glad if this reading of ours proves wrong) as otherwise the main aim of the Soviet foreign policy should have been to isolate the United States, the most adventurous imperialist country, from its less adventurous allies, rather than trying to win its goodwill and anyhow reach an understanding with it.

Before we conclude, we appeal to the international communist leaders to forbear from mutual recriminations now being indulged in by both the contending groups. One group is condemning the other as “dogmatists”, “pseudo-

revolutionaries”, “believers in the theory of war”, “followers of the policy of Chinghiz Khan”, etc., etc., only to be equally accused by the other group as “revisionists”, “traitors”, “followers of the policy of capitulation to imperialism”, so on and so forth. What purpose are these invectives serving? Are they, in any way, contributing to clear up the terrible ideological confusion that now confronts the world communist movement? Do they help in better understanding the mutual points of views? True, there are serious differences between the parties. But how are those differences going to be solved — by the use of invectives or by conducting principled criticism and self-criticism? Does the Leninist principle of criticism and self-criticism allow such wild charges to be made and abusive language used against each other? Hard words, so goes the saying, break no bone. This attitude, expected all the more of communist leaders, is conspicuous by its absence. As a result, we are finding hard words are complicating matters by straining relations between the contending parties as well as individual relations between different leaders. We feel that in the interest of solving the present ideological crisis and consolidating and strengthening communist unity, necessary preparation for convening a conference of the representatives of different communist parties should be started without further delay. Because, with the present trend of polemics continuing, further delay in convening such a conference will only widen the differences instead of bridging them. The filthy argument that a conference of the representatives of different communist parties would only precipitate an open split in the communist camp deserves no serious consideration inasmuch as those who apprehend organizational split due to the prevailing ideological differences in the camp of socialism are either incapable of discharging the responsibility in maintaining unity between different communist parties and holding high the banner of proletarian internationalism or are just the advocates of

anyhow maintaining unity. In any case, let not the present leaders of the international communist movement destroy by their reckless unilateral moves the heritage of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and legions of martyrs who laid down their lives for the cause of communism.

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