

## “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism”

# New Document from RCP, USA

The Second Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, a participating party in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, held its Eighth Plenum meeting earlier in 1988. This meeting finalised and approved the following document, first drafted by the RCP, USA leadership in the autumn of 1987 and subsequently circulated throughout the party for a period of internal discussion and debate. It also passed the accompanying resolution. They appeared in the *Revolutionary Worker*, August 29 1988 — AWTW.

### Introduction

The science of revolution of our class, the international proletariat, has been strengthened and developed as it has been wielded as a weapon in the class struggle. Specifically we have pointed to the necessity of upholding Mao's qualitative contributions to that science as a basic touchstone and dividing line in the international communist movement, in opposition to revisionists of various kinds who have betrayed Marxism and revised its basic tenets. In the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* it is stated: “The principle involved is nothing less than whether or not to uphold and build upon the decisive contributions to the proletarian revolution and the science of Marxism-Leninism made by Mao Tsetung. It is therefore nothing less than a question of whether or not to uphold Marxism-Leninism itself.... Without upholding and building on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought it

is not possible to defeat revisionism, imperialism and reaction in general.”<sup>1</sup>

At the time of the formation of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, our party changed our formulation of the science from Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought to Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. We did this to be in conformity with the *Declaration*, but more importantly because we thought this more correctly described the science. While this may have seemed a mere technical punctuation point (putting a hyphen instead of a comma), it was in fact making certain that the contributions of Mao Tsetung were not being relegated to a lesser role, as an appendage to Leninism. At the time we discussed the reasons for this change within our party. Today we feel it is even more correct to name the science Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

In making this change we believe we are bringing the name in correct relationship to the science as it has been developed by its practitioners and theoreticians since the time of Marx. The theoretical basis for this change is the fact that there have been three milestones in the development of this theory. Marx founded the science and laid out the basic precepts; Lenin developed it to another level; and Mao took it again to another level. Previously, in opposition to a Lin Piaoist conception that we had entered a new era, which Mao Tsetung Thought was equated with, we were careful to point out that there is not a new era. It remains the case that this is the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution. However, we tended to

confuse the notion of *new era* with *new stage* in the development of the science. While there is no new era — we are not in a new historical epoch — there have been qualitative developments in the science made by Mao Tsetung of such importance that we can say there is a new and higher stage in the science. Thus we call our science Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

By this formulation we mean the same thing as Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. Why, then, make the change? Because, whatever the intentions, to use Mao Tsetung Thought does not give proper weight to the contributions of Mao; it can suggest that these contributions are less important than the contributions of Marx and Lenin. We want to make clear that the contributions of Mao are on the level, of the same magnitude, as those of the other great revolutionary leaders and theoreticians, Marx and Lenin. Secondly, and as an expression of the principal reason, it is easier and better to popularise the science as Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. It is important, however, to stress that in making this change we do not have differences with the characterisation of the meaning of the revolutionary science and its development by Marx, Lenin, and Mao which is found in the *Declaration*.

### Marxism-Leninism-Maoism

In *For a Harvest of Dragons* Chairman Avakian explains the process of the development of this science:

“This does not mean, however, that Mao Tsetung Thought is some

RCP, USA

# Resolution Hailing the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

On the occasion of our 8th Plenum meeting, the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, warmly hails the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement and the parties and organisations in its

ranks. We express our firm support for the RIM, its *Declaration*, and for the advances achieved by its parties and organisations in our common cause. In this same spirit, our Central Committee sends its

greetings and firm political support to the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement for its important ongoing work and for the fundamentally correct direction it has persevered in, on the basis of the *Declaration*.

The Central Committee resolves anew that the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, will carry out our own revolutionary tasks in the U.S., guided by the spirit of doing our part for the world revolution.

Long Live Proletarian Internationalism!

Strengthen the Ranks of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement!

Workers and Oppressed People of the World Unite!

addition to Marxism-Leninism that is relevant (only) to the 'third world,' nor still less that it is 'Chinese Marxism-Leninism' as at least some of the Chinese revisionists have been known to allege. As pointed out earlier, the greatest of all Mao's contributions is the theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, whose basic analysis of the transition to communism, as well as the basic methodology guiding this analysis, has universal application, despite the reversal of the revolution in China — and indeed in order to understand and act upon the profound lessons of this setback. And overall Mao Tsetung Thought represents a qualitative development of Marxism-Leninism. Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, then, is an integral philosophy and political theory at the same time as it is a living, critical and continuously developing science. It is not the quantitative addition of the ideas of Marx, Lenin and Mao (nor is it the case that every particular idea or policy or tactic adopted or advocated by them has been without error); Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought is

a synthesis of the development, and especially the qualitative breakthroughs, that communist theory has achieved since its founding by Marx up to the present time. It is for this reason and in this sense that, as Lenin said about Marxism, it is omnipotent because it is true."<sup>2</sup>

Understanding our revolutionary science as a synthesis, and using Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to give the most correct expression to this synthesis, we can identify the following as its main, essential features.

## 1.

The philosophical foundation of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is dialectical materialism. Dialectical materialism recognises that all reality is material reality, that all reality consists of matter in motion, and ideas have their origin in this material reality. Further, all reality exists as the unity of opposites: The basic law of nature, society, and thought and their development is the law of contradiction, of the unity and struggle of opposites. The unity and identity of all things is temporary and relative; struggle be-

tween opposites is ceaseless and absolute, and this gives rise to radical ruptures and revolutionary leaps. All ideas of permanent equilibrium, permanent stability, and permanent order, of preordained or everlasting things — all such ideas are wrong and ultimately reactionary. This applies to human society and its development as well as to the rest of material reality. Dialectical materialism also recognises that practice is both the ultimate source and the final criterion of truth, and it places most emphasis on revolutionary practice. As Marx so powerfully expressed this, "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it."<sup>3</sup>

As applied specifically to human society and its development, dialectical materialism stresses both the fundamental role of production and the contradictory and dynamic character of production itself and of its interrelationship with the political and ideological superstructure of society. Social life begins with and is sustained by the process of social production. And, as Marx put it, "The mode of production of material life conditions the social,

political and intellectual life process in general.”<sup>4</sup> But the productive forces of society can only be developed by people entering into certain production relations. Within these production relations new productive forces develop. At a certain stage of their development, the productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production. A radical rupture, a revolutionary transformation, must take place in society. This revolutionary transformation is carried out in the political and ideological superstructure, and it centres on the struggle for political power. Politics and ideology cannot create a revolution in the absence of the necessary material conditions, but once the necessary material conditions have developed — out of the basic contradictions of society — the superstructure becomes the decisive arena in which the future direction of society is battled out between the major contending forces, or classes.

## 2.

Every revolution of the past, since the emergence of class society, has seen the replacement of one system of exploitation by another and the rule of one exploiting class by another. But the proletarian revolution is different. The very process of capitalist production has created the material conditions such that society can be organised on a whole new nonexploitative foundation, and this mode of production has forged a class, the proletariat, in whose interests it is to carry out this historic task. Herein lies the greatest significance of the motion of capitalism’s fundamental contradiction, the contradiction between socialised production and private appropriation, and of its resolution by means of proletarian revolution.

In summing up some of his decisive contributions to the materialist conception of history, Marx pointed out:

“What I did that was new was to prove: (1) that the *existence of classes* is only bound up with *particular historical phases in the development of production*; (2) that the class

struggle necessarily leads to the *dictatorship of the proletariat*; (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the *abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society*.”<sup>5</sup>

This is a basic principle and foundation of the analysis of the contradictions in present day society and the road of resolving them in the interests of humanity, moving human society to a new and qualitatively more advanced stage: communism.

Marx gave concentrated expression to what is involved in the achievement of communism:

“This Socialism is the *declaration of the permanence of the revolution*, the *class dictatorship* of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the *abolition of class distinctions generally*, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionising of all the ideas that result from these social relations.”<sup>6</sup>

## 3.

Today we live in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution. Lenin analysed this as an era in which all the contradictions of capitalism are intensified. By its very nature, imperialism, the highest and final stage of capitalism, engenders violent upheavals and war. Imperialism is the economic and political system that is dominant in the world, which sets the basic framework for society on a world scale. And proletarian revolution is the only means of eradicating imperialism and all systems of exploitation from the face of the earth. This is a process which is, despite twists and turns, and very real setbacks, already underway.

The proletarian movement is an international movement. “The proletariat in advancing the struggle can *only* advance it by approaching it, and seeking to advance it, on a world level first of all. This doesn’t mean of course that you try to make revolution irrespective of the conditions in different parts of the world or the

conditions within particular countries, but it means that even in approaching that you proceed from the point of view of the world arena as most decisive and the overall interests of the world proletariat as paramount. And that is not merely a good idea. It has a very material foundation, which has been laid by the system of imperialism.”<sup>7</sup>

“Proletarian internationalism really is founded on a concrete material reality. There really is a world imperialist system that is the common enemy of people whether they reside in the citadels, the homelands, where the imperialist monster is centred and has its foundations so to speak, or whether they live in the vast areas of what’s referred to commonly as the Third World, the colonial and dependent countries.”<sup>8</sup>

## 4.

In the world today we can speak in general terms of two types of countries: on the one hand the imperialist countries, which control and dominate the major levers of the world economy, means of production, and products of the labour of the proletariat and oppressed classes all around the world; and on the other the oppressed countries which are overall dominated by and subordinate to the imperialists of different countries. It is from the proletariat and the oppressed in all of these countries that revolution has and will burst forward. However, there are two main streams of the proletarian revolution: In the different kinds of countries, the objective conditions — the actual contradictions — pose different basic roads for the accomplishment of the seizure of political power. In the imperialist countries, the road is what is generally called the October Road — political work and struggle leading to armed insurrection in the cities, launching a generalised civil war. In the oppressed countries, the road is generally that forged by Mao Tsetung in China, that of a protracted war based in the countryside, and accumulating strength to encircle and eventually seize the cities.

As Mao Tsetung has stressed,

these two different roads to the seizure of power correspond to the two general types of countries, but in both types of countries the armed struggle for political power is the highest and most decisive form of struggle. It is the duty of communists everywhere to prepare for and wage a people's war — a war that actively involves and fundamentally relies on the masses of the oppressed — in accordance with the particular situation and the correct strategic road for revolution.

In the two different types of countries the proletarian revolution takes place through different processes and class alliances — though the leadership of the proletariat and the ultimate goal is common to both. In the imperialist countries, the revolution is of a directly proletarian socialist character. In the oppressed countries the revolution takes place through two stages, with a new-democratic stage (targeting imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat/comprador capitalism) clearing the path for the socialist stage. In both cases, depending on the character and stage of the revolutionary struggle, it is crucial to correctly analyse who are friends and who are enemies — which are the main and leading forces of the revolutionary struggle, which social forces must be won as allies (or politically neutralised), and which must be overthrown.

## 5.

The means of achieving the goal of communism is proletarian revolution. The basic features of this were developed by Marx, together with Engels, including the decisive lesson they drew from the experience of the Paris Commune and its defeat, in 1871: "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes."<sup>9</sup> The October Revolution in Russia, which was led by Lenin and Stalin and was the first successful proletarian revolution, further established in practice the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it has been clearly demonstrated and summed up through the experience of the Soviet Union and the Chinese

Revolution that the revolution must continue under the dictatorship of the proletariat. In other words, the struggle to transform all of society has proven to be a protracted and complicated process that is not "settled" once the proletariat has overthrown the bourgeoisie and established the proletarian dictatorship, nor even once the decisive means of production have been socialised. Classes, class contradiction, and class struggle — most decisively the contradiction and struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie — continue all throughout the transition to communism. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, led by Mao Tsetung, represents the highest pinnacle yet achieved by the international proletariat in the advance toward communism: This Cultural Revolution indicates a powerful means and method for mobilising and relying on the masses to fight against capitalist restoration in socialist society and for making new breakthroughs in carrying forward the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and advancing toward communism.

## 6.

The party of the revolutionary proletariat plays a crucial role in the struggle to seize power and wield it. The party leads the masses in revolutionary struggle through the application of the mass line in accordance with the fundamental principle that the masses are the makers of history and must liberate themselves. The party must play the vanguard role — before, during, and after the seizure of power — in leading the proletariat in the historic struggle for communism. But at the same time, once power has been seized by the proletariat and the party has become the leading force within the new proletarian state, the contradiction between the party and the masses becomes a concentrated expression of the contradictions marking socialist society as a transition between capitalism and communism. Those in the party, particularly its leading ranks, who take the capitalist road and try to restore capitalism in the name of

"socialism" and "communism," become the main target of the continuing revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the process of identifying and struggling to defeat these capitalist-roaders, the party itself, on all levels, must be further revolutionised and thus strengthened in its role as the revolutionary vanguard as a crucial part of deepening and carrying forward the revolutionisation of society overall toward the goal of communism.

## Conclusion

Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is our outlook and methodology; it is our weapon for understanding and changing the world, in visualising the goal, and in forging the path to achieve it.

In today's world especially, with the heightening of all the basic contradictions, the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism have great importance and power in bringing about revolutionary victories.

## Footnotes

1. *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement*, pp. 14-15.
2. Bob Avakian, *For a Harvest of Dragons* (Chicago: RCP Publications, 1983), p. 114.
3. Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," original version, in Marx and Frederick Engels, *Feuerbach. Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlooks* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), p. 98 (also cited in *For a Harvest of Dragons*, p. 25).
4. Marx, "Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*" in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973) Vol. 1, p. 503.
5. Marx, "Marx to J. Weydemeyer" (March 5 1852), in Marx and Engels, *Selected Letters* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1977) p. 18 (also cited in *For a Harvest of Dragons*, p. 30).
6. Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 282 (also cited in *For a Harvest of Dragons*, p. 40).
7. Bob Avakian, "Advancing the World Revolutionary Movement: Questions of Strategic Orientation," *Revolution*, No. 51, Spring 1984, p. 4 (also cited in *Bulletins*, p. 44).
8. Bob Avakian, "The Imperialist System and Proletarian Internationalism," from 1982 interview with WFRG Atlanta, *RW* No. 187, January 7 1983, p. 4 (also cited in *Bulletins*, pp. 44-45).
9. Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party, Preface to the German Edition of 1872*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 99.