

It was more than half a century ago that Lenin, analysing the growth and development of free capitalism into monopoly capitalism, observed that "Imperialism is the eve of the social revolution of the proletariat". Since then mighty changes have taken place, and a totally altered correlation of class forces has come to exist now. Two world wars, socialist revolutions in a number of countries comprising more than a third of the world's population and the formation of a formidable socialist camp, the rapid disintegration of the old colonial system and attainment of political independence by the overwhelming majority of the former colonial countries, the growth of powerful Communist and Workers' Parties in several countries, etc., have taken place. All this took place after Lenin's thesis that "the era of socialist revolution is beginning". The present epoch certainly needs to be reassessed and redefined in the light of the tremendous changes that have taken place and will, of course, have to be redefined in strict conformity with Marxist-Leninist analysis.

Ours is certainly a new epoch, an epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism, an epoch when the international socialist system is becoming the decisive factor determining the course of world development, an epoch of national liberation and socialist revolutions, an epoch of rapid decay and disintegration of colonialism, an epoch of titanic class battles between the forces of moribund capitalism and of socialism and national liberation revolutions, and an epoch of the collapse of imperialism and the final victory of socialism and communism on a world scale.

Modern revisionism while pretending fidelity to this new definition of the epoch conveniently and deliberately underplays certain salient features of the epoch while exaggerating and laying lopsided emphasis on certain other aspects of the same. It paints a picture as though colonialism is more or less dead, that imperialism, more or less, is rendered ineffective and a period of more or less peaceful transition to socialism has set in. The fact that imperialism, despite its immense weakening on a world scale, remains a formidable force to be reckoned with, that monopoly capitalist rule continues to exist in almost all traditionally developed capitalist states of the world such as the USA, Britain, France, West Germany, Japan, Italy and the like, that colossal and unheard-of militarisation of social life is taking place, and the fact that imperialism is waging its desperate, last-ditch battles to escape its destined doom, is deliberately underplayed by them. It is this erroneous outlook that emboldened people like Khrushchov, the father of modern revisionism, to go into demagogic descriptions of imperialism as "a button fastened on a coat" and "a wolf to encounter and render harmless easier". It is the same outlook, again, that emboldens the modern revisionists to discard some vital aspects of Lenin's thesis on imperialism and wars as obsolete and distort several other propositions of Lenin—of course, all in the name of the new epoch and the 'creative application' of Marxism-Leninism to new conditions.

The correct Marxist-Leninist definition of the epoch should be based on the sum total of the concrete class relations existing at the time, a definition that guides the proletarian revolutionaries in the struggle against world capitalism, but should never be one of oversimplified formulas, subjectively drawn, presenting utopian and false perspectives. Such an erroneous definition of the new epoch or its lopsided and distorted interpretation immensely harms the cause of the proletariat rather than assisting it in its struggle for emancipation.

No Marxist would dispute the fact that imperialism, today, has been tremendously weakened on a world scale. Forces of revolution—the countries that have already come

under the socialist system, the proletarian revolutionary movements in the advanced capitalist countries, the national liberation movements and forces in the newly-liberated and colonial countries, the widespread popular movements against war and in defence of world peace—are today so powerful that they can unitedly inflict defeat after defeat on imperialism and its allies.

However, the process of mobilising and uniting these revolutionary forces is no simple task. It involves a *revolutionary combination of socialist diplomacy*, calculated to isolate the most reactionary imperialist groups, *with the use of the armed might of the socialist camp* against such reactionary powers as resort to aggression on peace-loving countries, or try to drown the national liberation movements in blood. This requires *the ever-growing unity of the international Communist movement*—a unity in which the ruling parties of the socialist countries render all forms of practical aid, including direct military intervention against imperialist aggression and intervention, to the revolutionary proletarian movements in the capitalist countries as well as the national liberation movements in underdeveloped countries. This struggle for unity against imperialism is inseparable from the struggle against modern revisionism.

Instead of making such a militant use of the new possibilities in the new epoch that opened out in the post-second world war years, modern revisionism builds a new dream-world in which imperialism has ceased to be the monster which has to be annihilated to achieve freedom and lasting world peace; instead, it is disrupting the unity of the world socialist system, and the unity of the international Communist movement, is undermining the national liberation struggle and the revolutionary working class.

ON THE ISSUE OF CONTRADICTIONS

All Communists who are guided by the theory of scientific socialism and Marxism-Leninism accept that in the present era there exist four fundamental social contradictions. They are the contradiction between the camps of