

The Marxist

Volume: 15, No. 04

Oct.-Dec. 1999

THE INVALUABLE LESSONS OF THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

Harkishan Singh Surjeet

The Chinese revolution was the most significant event of the post world war period. The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia heralded a new era in the history of human society. The unparalleled crisis of capitalism during inter-war years and the inter-imperialist contradictions sparked off the Second World War. Its conclusion weakened imperialism and marked the beginning of a new phase when people's democratic revolutions and socialist revolutions emerged victorious in a number of countries in Europe and Asia. These resulted in the disintegration of colonialism. The Chinese Revolution is the landmark event of this stage. Despite the cold war started by USA, the anti imperialist position of the newly liberated counties as well as the firm position coupled with the defence capability of world socialism prevented imperialist forces from initiating war and ensured world peace. However, with the setback to socialism in recent years the world balance of forces has shifted, for the present, in favour of imperialism. It is in this backdrop of contemporary history that the glorious conduct of the Chinese Revolution and its existence of 50 years is to be celebrated.

In historical terms it can be characterised as the third significant event, after the October revolution and the victory over fascism. After the defeat of fascism, socialist revolutions took place in many East European countries. But they succeeded in the background of the victory over fascism with the Red Army playing an important role in defence of these revolutions. But, as we shall see, the course of the Chinese Revolution was very distinct. That is why the impact of the Chinese revolution was immense on the people fighting for national liberation and social progress. It provided a new impetus to the national liberation struggles around the world generally and particularly the socialist and the communist movements in the third world countries.

China was a semi-colonial country with the largest population in the world. It was a country predominated by semi-feudal and feudal relations coupled with very little industrial development. As a result the working class was numerically small in numbers. Marx and Engels had visualised the socialist revolution to take place in the developed capitalist countries as a natural corollary of the development of capitalism leading to the contradictions between the working class and the bourgeoisie. Explaining the reasons for the setbacks suffered by the West European proletariat, Lenin wrote "In the earlier period of the revolution many entertained the hope that the socialist revolution would begin in Western Europe immediately after the imperialist war ended. At that time when the masses were armed there could have been a successful revolution in some of the Western countries as well. It could have taken place, had it not been for the split within the proletariat of Western Europe being deeper and the treachery of the former socialist leaders greater than had been imagined." It is in this context that the bourgeoisie, with the help of the reformist leaders of socialist democracy succeeded in repelling the first revolutionary onset of the proletariat in the West.

But Lenin, analysing the development of capitalism in the world, had come to the conclusion that it had reached a stage of imperialism, the highest stage in the development of capitalism. He argued that in the imperialist stage the contradictions other than capital and working class such as between the people of colonial and semi-colonial countries and imperialism as well as between imperialist powers could become the focal points. It was on this basis that he was able to organise revolution successfully in Russia, a country, which remained for backward compared to the West. The success of the October Revolution in Russia had a big impact on other countries. It became a source of inspiration for the working class movement around the world as well as the people fighting for national liberation from colonial or semi-colonial domination. It is on the basis of this understanding that Lenin came to the conclusion that in the present stage of development of capitalism, it is not necessary that socialist revolution confines to the advanced capitalist countries. It can emerge in other countries also (including colonial ones) where the imperialist chain remained the weakest.

After the Russian revolution, when Lenin was asked, where he visualised revolution to succeed, he said that it could be in China or it could be in India. There was no Communist Party at that time in both these countries. His inference was based upon the analysis of the objective situation obtaining in these countries and the emerging

trends. In the case of India, in 1908 textile workers of Bombay organised a political strike in protest against the arrest of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. In China the fourth May Movement had begun in Shanghai.

But Lenin also made it clear that every revolution cannot take the same course. Blind imitation of Bolshevik tactics in different countries without regard for specific local conditions is liable to cause serious damage to the cause of developing the world proletarian revolution. According to Lenin, "The unity of the international tactics in the communist-workers movement in all countries called not for the elimination of diversity, not for the effacement of national distinction but of such an application of the basic principles of communism as very correctly modified these principles in certain practices, correctly adopted and applied them to national and national state distinctions." These conclusions were an elaboration of Lenin's thesis formulated back in 1916: "All nations will arrive at socialism - this is inevitable, but all will do so not exactly the same way, each will contribute of its own to some form of democracy to some variety of the dictatorship of the proletariat to the fiery road of socialist transformation in different aspects of socialist life."

Under the impact of the October Revolution, ideas of Communism began to spread in the colonial countries. Communist groups began to emerge. Until then Communist movement was confined mainly to European countries. This aspect becomes very clear when one looks at the representation of various delegations to the conference of the communist international. The first Congress was attended only by the Social Democratic Parties of Europe that had disagreed with the decision of the Basal conference for participating in the war efforts and supporting the bourgeoisie of their own countries. It was only subsequently that the message began to spread to the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY CHINA

China, a country, which had been one of the cradles of human civilisation, had stagnated and degenerated under autocratic feudal monarchies. So it fell an easy prey to the European colonisers. In 1840 Britain launched the aggressive Opium War. From then onwards, imperialist forces made continuous inroads into China. They forced China to cede territories like Hongkong, pay

indemnities, open Chinese ports for foreign trade and forced on them many unequal treaties. United States and then France came in the wake of Britain; both exacting further rights and privileges. After its defeat in the Opium Wars, China began to acquire the characteristics of a semi-colonial country. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 shortened the route for trade and military transport between the Europe and China. By the time of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, world capitalism was advancing rapidly to the stage of imperialism, a phenomenon brilliantly noted by Comrade Lenin. From 1895 onwards the imperialist powers were engaged in a scramble for spheres of influence and bases of operation. As Lenin said, "... the European governments have already started to partition China. However they have not begun this partitioning openly, but stealthily, like thieves. They began to rob China as ghouls rob corpses..."

With the emergence of certain modern industries, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat came into existence in China. But the development of capitalism was severely constrained by the imperialist domination. The persistence of feudal relations and continuation of feudal reactionary forces intact suited the interests of imperialism. As a result, the disintegration of the feudal society did not lead to the establishment of an independent capitalist society, but instead, China got transformed the Chinese society into a semi-colonial and semi-feudal Society.

At the time of the October Revolution in Russia, Communist ideology was unknown in China. Bourgeois ideas of reform, which had gained ground especially in Shanghai and Canton, found concrete expression in the demands for political reform. The bourgeois revolutionary movements began to gradually spread and took the form of a social upheaval in 1911 under the leadership of Dr.Sun Yat-sen. He advocated the equalisation of land ownership. Such a land distribution would emancipate the peasantry from feudal oppression and at the same time prevent the rise of exploitative capitalism. Lenin compared the principles of Dr.Sun with the Narodism in Russia, and showed that his programme, despite its limitations, was linked with the idea of thorough - going democratic revolution. Complete implementation of Dr.Sun's economic programme, Lenin explained, would actually clear the way for capitalism.

Despite its failure, the bourgeois revolution of 1911 was of profound historical significance. In the first place, it overthrew the Qing Dynasty, a rule of nearly three hundred years and made the

restoration of the more than 2,000-year-old feudal monarchical system impossible. This was of great importance in the further awakening of the Chinese people. International powers were upset by the disturbances which followed the China 1911 Revolution. It was only when Yuan Shikai assumed power that they felt reassured.

The 1911 Revolution clearly revealed the weak and compromising character of the Chinese bourgeoisie. The bourgeois revolutionary leaders failed to gauge the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal mood of the people. They were incapable of mobilising the real strength of the democratic revolution - the peasantry. They were unable to defy the imperialists to overcome the counter attack of the feudal forces, and eventually succumbed to the pressure of imperialist influence and brought the revolution to an end.

After the defeat of the 1911 Revolution, a large section of the bourgeoisie were willing to throw their lot with the feudal warlords in order to share the booty. Another section, led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, refused to compromise with the feudal warlords, but were at loss to find a way to advance the revolution, not knowing where they could find the necessary strength for the salvation in China. Workers, peasants and the petty bourgeoisie of the towns and cities continued to suffer and groan under the ruthless oppression of imperialism and feudalism. The intellectuals groped painfully in the dark.

World War I forced the Western imperialist powers to relax their aggressive activities in China to some extent. But the Japanese imperialists took advantage of this opportunity to expand their influence over China. The Peace Treaty signed at Versailles after the First World War decided that Japan should take over all the special "rights" previously seized by Germany. This aroused the indignation of the Chinese people. They proclaimed their determination to fight to the last against Japanese occupation of China's territory and demanded the punishment of three pro-Japanese traitors in the feudal warlord government. The reactionary government was forced on June 28 to refuse to sign the Versailles Peace Treaty. This forthright anti-imperialist and anti-feudal spirit symbolised by May 4th Movement opened a new chapter in the history of the Chinese democratic revolution.

At the same time as this patriotic anti-imperialist movement was developing, the more advanced Chinese intellectuals launched a new

cultural movement which was directed against feudal culture. Prior to the October Socialist Revolution of Russia, the new cultural movement in China had mainly confined itself to the dissemination of bourgeois democratic ideas. With the victory of the October Revolution a flood of socialist ideas flowed into China. A number of Chinese revolutionary intellectuals, represented by Li Dazhao (one of the founders of the Communist Party of China, who was put to death by the warlord Zhang Zuolin in April 1927), Chen Duxiu (one of the founders of the Party who later became a liquidationist), Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai hailed the victory of the October Revolution. They pledged their faith in communism and became the first Chinese intellectuals to arm themselves with the ideas of communism. The new cultural movement in China, after coming under the influence of the October Revolution, was primarily concerned with the dissemination of socialist ideas.

FORMATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA

The Communist International took keen interest in developing the communist movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Following the Second Congress of the Communist International, a political conference of people from colonial countries was held in Baku, Russia in September 1920. This conference was represented by 1891 delegates. A council of 47 members was set up and a broad call to the people of the east was issued. Further the Eastern University of Toilers was established in Moscow to strengthen the movement in the colonial countries in 1921, which trained thousands of political leaders to work with the colonial people. Again in June 1922 the first Congress of the toilers of the east was held in Moscow. This helped the growth of the Communist Party in the colonial countries.

In 1920 a group of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) members, including Visinsky sent by the Communist International, arrived in China, with a task to establish contact with Chinese revolutionary organizations. While combating the reactionary bourgeois trend of thought, the Marxists also combated erroneous ideas that were connected with the workers' movement - revisionism and anarchism. Many revolutionary young people once influenced by anarchism embraced Marxism. It was in this context that in 1921 the First National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party was held in Shanghai. At the time of formation of the part, there were only 57 communists in the whole of China.

Mao Zedong best summed up the class structure of the Chinese society in which the nascent working class party started to function. He also drew attention to the role that each of these social classes could play in revolution. The landlord class and the comprador class are appendages of the international bourgeoisie depending on imperialism for their survival and growth. This class represents the most backward and the most reactionary relations in China and hinders the development of productive forces. Their existence is certainly incompatible with the aims of the Chinese revolution. Big landlords and big comprador class in particular always siding with imperialism constitute an extreme counter-revolutionary group. Their political representatives are the rightwing of the Kuomintang.

Next comes the middle bourgeoisie. This class represents the capitalist relations of production in China in town and country. By middle bourgeoisie is meant chiefly the national bourgeoisie. It is inconsistent in its attitude towards the Chinese revolution. They felt the need for revolution and favour the revolutionary movement against imperialism and the warlords when they are smarting under the blows of foreign capital and the pressure of the warlords. But they become suspicious of revolution when they sensed that with the militant participation of proletariat and the active support of international proletariat the revolution is threatening the hope of their class to obtain the status of the big bourgeoisie. Petty bourgeoisie includes the category of owners, peasant, the most handicraftsmen, lower level of intellectuals, students and primary and secondary school teacher, lower government functionaries, office clerks and small traders. This class deserves very close attention. They are engaged in small-scale production. Overwhelming majority of the semi-owners peasants constitute a very large part of the rural masses. Peasant problem is essentially their problem.

Finally comes the proletariat, modern industrial proletariat whose number at that time was about 2 million. They were mainly employed in five industries – railways, mining, maritime transport, textiles and ship-building. Great numbers were enslaved in enterprises owned by the capitalists. Though not very numerous, industrial proletariat represented China's new productive force. This was the most progressive class in modern China and had become the leading force in the revolutionary movement. Apart from these classes there were fairly large lumpen proletariat made up of peasants who have lost their land and handicraftsmen who cannot

get work. They lead the most precarious existence of all.

It is with this class analysis that the Chinese Communist Party started working out its strategy and tactics. Chinese Communist Party worked out skilfully the tactics for the Chinese revolution in order to fulfil their strategic role. The history of Chinese Revolutionary Struggle may be divided into four stages: the Northern Expedition (1924-27) conducted with the co-operation of the Kuomintang, the Agrarian Revolutionary War (1927-37), the War of Resistance against Japan (1937-45) and the nation wide War for Liberation (1946-49).

CO-OPERATION WITH KUOMINTANG

One important feature of the Chinese revolution that has to be discussed is its success in working out the correct tactics of United Front. From its inception, the Chinese Communist Party correctly stated that its main task was to organise the working-class movement and closely link working-class with peasant movement. Intensification of imperialist oppression, coupled with the internecine warfare between the warlords, made the life of the peasants almost intolerable. The cry for united action against imperialism and feudalism grew among all the revolutionary classes.

The Chinese Communist Party realised that if the revolution was to go forward, a broad-based revolutionary united front was necessary. It aimed to assist Dr. Sun Yat-sen, leader of the bourgeois revolutionary democrats in the reorganisation of the Kuomintang, and to allow members of the Chinese Communist Party and the Socialist Youth League to join the Kuomintang, so that it could become a revolutionary united front. The Kuomintang was formed in 1912; chiefly on the basis of the Tong Meng Hui (Chinese Revolutionary League) led by Sun Yat-sen. He openly advocated the principle of unity with the Communist Party. In the First national congress of the Kuomintang in Canton he laid down the great policies – alliance with Russia, co-operation with the Communist Party and assistance to the peasants and workers. Many Communist leaders attended the conference and played a very important part to help the Kuomintang to take the road of revolution. Some of the Communist leaders were elected members and alternative members of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang.

However, two extreme viewpoints emerged while working out the above line. One was reformism represented by Chen Duxiu, the then first secretary of the Communist Party. He was ignoring the independent role of the Party and emphasised on the work inside the Kuomintang as compared to the correct tactical line of working in unity with the bourgeois and at the same time maintaining the independence of the Communist Party. In his zeal for cooperation with Kuomintang he forgot about the peasants. As against the above line of right capitulationist deviation was Zhang Guotao, who opposed the idea that members of the Communist Party, workers or peasants should join the Kuomintang. This was the "Left" deviation or closed-door policy. He was concerned with the labour movement but ignored the peasants.

In fact the Chinese Communist Party in its application of Marxism-Leninism was a victim of serious deviations both of reformist nature and sectarian. It is after about 10 years of struggle they succeeded in overcoming these deviations and putting the Party on the correct path. It is Mao Zedong who pointed out that the peasantry was the staunchest and numerically the largest ally of the Chinese proletariat. And this solved the problem of who is the chief ally in the Chinese revolution. About Kuomintang also he made it clear that the national bourgeoisie is a vacillation class and with the upsurge of revolution it will get divided. There would be split with rightwing going to the side of imperialism. Subsequent events of 1927 vindicated this position.

The alliance with the bourgeoisie worked well in the initial period when from 1923 to 1927 Sun Yat Sen was the leader. The formation of the revolutionary united front gave a great impetus to the revolutionary mass movement. The labour movement, which had been at a low ebb since the February 7th Massacre of 1923, revived and began to show signs of a new upsurge. The peasant movement in the Guangdong revolutionary base made rapid strides, while secret peasant associations developed in Hunan, Henan, Sichuan, Hubei, Jiangxi and other provinces.

After Dr.Sun's death, the leadership of the Kuomintang was taken over by counter-revolutionary elements. Meanwhile the mass revolutionary movement continued to gain in strength especially in Shanghai. To resist it, the Japanese entrepreneurs began to organise murders of the vanguard workers in their enterprises. In response to this anti-imperialist demonstrations and general strike in which

hundred and thousands of people took part was organised in May 30th 1925. This event is regarded as the beginning of the national liberation, anti-imperialist revolution.

In the period following the May 30th Movement the struggle for the leadership of the revolution became sharper between the members of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The right wing of the national bourgeoisie, feared the growth of the workers and peasants movement and the rise in the class struggle. The Chinese Communist Party had not yet achieved a proper understanding of the need for proletarian leadership of the revolution. It was in March 1926 that Mao Zedong clarified the question when he published his Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society. Because of right opportunist views of Chen Duxiu, the then leader of the party, the leadership of the party failed to note that the national bourgeoisie were terrified by the tremendous advance made by the worker-class and peasant movements. So they ignored the adoption of precautionary measures to combat the danger that was lurking within the revolutionary camp. It was this weakness that facilitated the right-wing leader of the Kuomintang, Chiang Kai-shek to ban Communist Party members from positions of leadership in the various departments of the Central Headquarters of the Kuomintang.

Despite these drawbacks the revolutionary movements continued to march forward. It was at that time that the question of leadership in the revolution and its future development arose. Stalin dealt with the subject in his famous speech- "The Prospects of Revolution in China", at the Chinese Commission of the Seventh Executive Committee of the Communist International. He drew attention to the weaknesses of the Chinese national bourgeoisie and the serious danger of imperialist intervention against the Chinese revolution through the medium of Chinese counter-revolutionary forces. He urged the Chinese Communists to increase their vigilance. Stalin also pointed out that armed struggle was the principal and special feature of the Chinese revolution. He declared that it was extremely important for the Chinese Communists to have genuine revolutionary troops and to study the art of war. Moreover it was necessary to hasten and deepen the revolution in the countryside, so as to satisfy the demands of the peasants and strengthen the united front against imperialism. Stalin also pointed out that the proletariat must rise and control the leadership in the revolution and that the basic task of the Chinese Communist Party was to struggle for the non-capitalist future of the Chinese revolution. Eventhough a number of correct

theoretical expositions on the tasks, motive forces and prospects of the Chinese revolution was made by Stalin, the tendency to overestimate the revolutionary character of the Kuomintang persisted.

Chiang Kai-shek, the right wing leader of the national bourgeoisie launched a counter-revolutionary attack to suppress the revolutionary movement in the interest of imperialism and Chinese feudal and comprador classes. Many Workers, Peasants and communist party members were massacred. Thus, in early 1927 the First Revolutionary Civil War suffered a partial defeat. The national bourgeoisie went over to the side of imperialism and the big landlord and comprador classes, and withdrew from the revolution. A counter-revolutionary government was established in Nanjing. The counter-revolutionary forces - the combined forces of imperialism and the reactionary clique of the Kuomintang - - proved to be stronger than the revolutionary forces of the time. The setback provided the Chinese working class and the Chinese Communist Party with rich practical experience and lessons, fostered and steeled a large number of Party cadres, who continued to lead the revolution forward. The First Revolutionary Civil War can be described as a "dress rehearsal" for the democratic revolution.

In mid - 1928, with the help of the Communist International, the Sixth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party was convened in Moscow. Attending the congress were 142 delegates among whom 84 were full delegates (who had the right to vote), representing 130,000 Party members across the country. The Congress made a reassessment of the situation and set out the new revolutionary task. But the formulations of the Congress did not adequately take into consideration the role of intermediate classes and the contradictions within the reactionary forces, the protracted nature of the Chinese revolution and the importance of the rural revolutionary base areas.

ANTI-JAPANESE UNITED FRONT

Towards the end of 1929, Japan's seizure of north-east China caused a new upsurge in the people's movement for national independence and democracy. The Communist Party and the Workers' and Peasants Red Army were the first to raise the slogan of resistance against Japan. The people took up this call and demanded action

against Japanese aggression. The British, French and American imperialist powers played the role of accomplices in the Japanese aggression against China. This crisis of national subjugation provoked the left wing of the Chinese national bourgeoisie into a more open expression of anti-Japanese sentiments. Divergent views on the question of resisting or surrendering to Japan were also evident within the Kuomintang camp.

The intensification of the struggle between the forces of fascism and democracy demanded that Communist parties that they should work out new tactics. The Comintern took up this task. The swing of the world communist movement towards a united popular front in the struggle against fascism and war was made at the Seventh Comintern Congress in 1935. A special report by Georgi Dimitrov was devoted to the creation of a united proletarian and popular front. The Seventh Congress analysed the class essence of fascism, revealed the reasons for its coming to power in some countries and noted that if the working class employed the right tactics, launched the struggle in time and rallied a round itself allies, it could defeat fascism. The Comintern recommended employing the united front tactics in a new way, achieving the agreements on the joint actions with organisations of workers of different political trends on a factory, local, regional, nation-wide, and international scale. The joint actions of the communists with the social-democratic parties, the reformist trade unions and other organisations should be attained on the basis of short-term or long-term agreements. The workers' united front tactics in all the capitalist countries were meant to defend the direct interests of the working class and protecting it from fascism.

The Chinese Communist Party, taking into consideration the new changes in the class relations in the country in the face of Japanese imperialist aggression, and also acting in accordance with the policy of the Communist International concerning the formation of a united front against fascism and imperialism, endorsed the Party's Anti-Japanese National United Front policy in 1935. Mao Zedong published a report entitled 'On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism', in which he systematically explained this new policy. The Communist Party's call for an anti-Japanese national united front, and the growth of the anti-Japanese national salvation movement, had a great impact on a section of the Kuomintang army.

To sum up, after a period of cooperation with Kuomintang during

1923-1927 period, the communist party fought against Kuomintang as well as imperialism. But again after 1936, when Japanese attacked China, the Communist Party approached Kuomintang for co-operation. But this alliance broke down again after some time. It was again at the time of fight against fascism the world over that the Kuomintang was forced by the nationalist leaders to join hands and fight with the Communist Party. It is to be noted that during the war of resistance, the ruling clique of Kuomintang continued to oppose the communist party and the people and was passive in resisting Japan. As a result, the Kuomintang suffered defeat after defeat in front operation against the Japanese invaders. The Communist Party persevered in the policy of maintaining its independence and initiative weighting the united front, closely relied on the masses of the people, conducted guerrilla warfare behind enemy lines and set up many anti-Japanese base areas. Diverse forms of anti-Japanese struggle were unfolded on a broad scale in areas occupied by Japan or controlled by the Kuomintang.

After the victory over fascism the Kuomintang broke this alliance and tried to lay conditions by which the revolutionary gains were to be surrendered. The communist party could not agree to this. During this fourth stage of Chinese revolution the struggle was against imperialism and Kuomintang. This led to the utter defeat of the Kuomintang and the victory over imperialism in China in October 1949.

MILITARY TACTICS

Other most important part of the Chinese tactics and strategy has been the resort to guerilla warfare, occupying rural areas, setting up governments there and resorting to land distribution. The Chinese Party has written a glorious chapter in the revolutionary history of the world. The Chinese revolution was victorious because they relied on a people's army led by the Party and army of a completely new type enjoying flesh-and-blood ties with the people, to defeat a formidable enemy through protracted people's war.

A few years after the formation of the Party they worked out the tactics of going to the rural areas and mobilising the peasantry for the struggle. China is a mountainous country with very difficult terrain and communications were also not developed. The communist party from the beginning organised forces of the Red Army, sent them to rural dominated areas, and strove them to

distribute the land to the peasants. In these they used both methods of guerrilla warfare as well as regular war with the enemy. This situation lasted for nearly a year to two till the revolution succeeded i.e. almost for 24 years. There is no other example in any other country where such a struggle has taken place in such a vast country as China. The Soviet Union played an important role in the ultimate victory over fascism. This is because in the changed correlation of class forces, the imperialists were not able to directly intervene through the Kuomintang forces in a big way through arms and other sources. This favourable situation undoubtedly helped the Chinese.

It is to be noted that during the Second Revolutionary Civil War "Left" adventurist lines advocated by Li Li Sen, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau and head of the Propaganda Department of the CPC Central Committee, later on by Wang Ming and others resulted in serious losses in varying degrees to the Red Army units and base areas. The Long March of Red Army remains a rare feat in the whole of human history. The "Left" sectarian policy and other consequential mistakes made it impossible for the Red Army to smash the enemy's encirclement, despite its gallant defence which went on for more than a year. The Communist International also made a wrong estimation of the then Chinese situation.

In January 1935, the Chinese Communist Party convened an enlarged conference of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee. Addressing the conference Mao Zedong, who based his arguments on the realistic lesson learned from experiences during the war, convinced and won over many comrades. The conference put an end to the incorrect "Left" line of the Central Committee, endorsed the correct policy advocated by Mao Zedong, elected a military command ground composed of Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and Wang Jiaxiang, and established the leading position of Mao Zedong in the Central Committee.

SOCIALIST CONSTRUCTION

The basic tasks faced by the Chinese Party after the founding of People's Republic were the following: consolidation of the revolution, rehabilitation of the war torn economy and transition from new democracy to socialism. Suppressing the remnants of counter-revolution and unifying the mainland of China, thwarting the US

aggression against Korea and restoring industrial agricultural production capacity was successfully carried out by 1952. But the socialist transition of agriculture, petty production, industry and trade took longer time. In 1952 the Central Committee of the Party laid down the general guidelines during the transition period.

The agrarian reforms liquidated the feudal landlords and turned the land over to the peasants. Eventhough the peasants came to own the land, they needed credit, new technology, water and fertiliser for expanding the production. There was a natural desire for mutual aid and co-operation. It was decided to move towards socialist agrarian forms such as producer's co-operatives through transitional forms of co-operation that were only semi-socialist in nature. Eventhough principle of volutariness, mutual benefit and incentives extended by the state were emphasised, there were also instances of overhastiness and over enthusiasm. Despite this shortcomings, social transformation of agriculture was by and large complete by 1956. It was in the case with the industry, that large-scale trade and commerce was essential for which purpose a number of transitional forms of state capitalism were devised. 1957 marked the successful completion of the first five-year plan. There was rapid and balanced economic growth and stable prices.

The eighth national congress of the party declared that the socialist system was basically established in China. As a result, the basic contradiction was no longer between antagonist classes, but "between the demand of the people for rapid economic and cultural development and the existing state of the economy and culture which felt short of the needs of the people." The main line of action was to develop productive forces and industrialise the country. The slogan was to make steady progress keeping an overall balance.

The line drawn up by the eighth congress of the Chinese Party laid the basis for next ten years of socialist construction. There was alround growth in all spheres despite the pitfall of the Great Leap Forward and the movement to organise communes. The progress was inspiring but the leadership felt that it was not sufficient. So after 1958 they resorted to certain slogans like the Great Leap Forward and developing commune which was meant to decentralise the administration. The attempted leap in development had a high element of voluntarism and did not take into full consideration the ground realities, the level of consciousness of the masses and technological requirements. Material incentives were disregarded.

Some of the leftist excesses that were evident in these movements, though rectified continued to persist and became a leading tendency within the party, finally culminating in the so called "Cultural Revolution."

History has proved that the Cultural Revolution did not reflect the objective needs of China or the principles of Marxism-Leninism. It disrupted the paramount task of advancing the productive forces in agriculture and industry and resulted in severe economic set back. It negated basic principles of organisation of the Communist Party. It promoted personality cult and degenerated into witch-hunting. In fact, it smashed the whole system of party leadership and democratic centralism. Mao's own prestige which he had acquired by carrying out the revolution suffered. In the difficult situation after Mao's death, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping played a major role in countering the disruptive elements and rallying the Party.

The Chinese Party has self-critically analysed why such a grave deviation took place in its history of socialist construction. The victory of the Chinese revolution is due to the success in creatively developing Marxism to suit the specific conditions of semi-feudal / semi-colonial China. We have noted the role that Mao Zedong played in the process. His analysis laid the basis of socialist transformation of the Chinese economy. But instead of creatively applying Marxism / Leninism to the new conditions of the Socialist China he interpreted Marxism and Leninism dogmatically in the new situation. Taking class struggle as the key link even after socialist transformation was a one sided interpretation of Marxist / Leninist understanding of the nature of petty production and the principle of equal right. The international situation with ascendancy of revisionist ideas in Soviet Union was also conducive to the Left deviation in China. The personality cult that came to be built around Mao Zedong also made collective and democratic functioning of the party difficult. The role of semi-feudal cultural traditions provided a fertile soil for personality cult and anti-democratic tendencies. In this respect it is instructive to quote from the Resolution adopted by the sixth plenary session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 1981:

"Our Party fought in the firmest and most thorough going way against it, and particularly against the feudal system of land ownership and the landlords and local tyrants, and fostered a fine tradition of democracy in the anti-feudal struggle. But it remains

difficult to eliminate the evil ideological and political influence of centuries of feudal autocracy. And for various historical reasons, we failed to institutionalise and legalise inner-Party democracy and democracy in the political and social life of the country, or we drew up the relevant laws but they lacked due authority. This meant that conditions were present for the over-concentration of Party power in individuals and for the development of arbitrary individual rule and the personality cult in the Party. This, it was hard for the Party and state to prevent the initiation of the “Cultural Revolution” or check its development.”

It is fortunate that the party in the country as a whole rallied behind the new leadership and started overcoming the shortcomings and weakness. During the Cultural Revolution, China’s relations with foreign countries also got strained, and with the socialist countries they had become non-existent. It was a very serious situation but thanks to the prestige, which the Chinese communist party acquired during the prolonged struggle they were able to save the situation. The leadership of Deng Xiaoping came forward with new suggestions providing a new understanding of how to build a socialist society. First it was clearly stated that the building of socialism is a prolonged process. Earlier it was considered that when power comes into the hands of the working class it is very easy to bring socialism. Even certain countries had falsely started talking about building communism like in the 22nd Congress of the CPSU. That is a big deviation from the science of Marxism. Deng however said that without developing the productive forces, socialism cannot be built. And he stated that it might take another 50 years for building socialism.

Unfortunately, in this period there was a big setback to the socialism world wide with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and restoration of capitalism in east European countries. It changed the correlation of forces the world over. From a bi-polar world, at present America is trying to impose its hegemony the world over. In such a situation how to overcome the lag, which has been created due to the failure of the last two decades, and develop socialism and meet the requirements of the mass of the population is the challenge. Given the nature of the international economy and the level of socialisation of domestic production, it is argued that the market has to play a vital role during the socialist modernisation period. The market functions within the socialist framework and therefore the concept of socialist market economy. And the Chinese party has also constantly emphasised the adherence to four cardinal

principles of upholding the socialist road, the people's democratic dictatorship, the leadership of the Communist Party, and Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.

The facts show that the new policy of China has resulted in tremendous acceleration in economic development. According to the data provided by State Statistical Bureau, China's GDP in 1997 amounts US\$ 9026 billion if calculated by the average exchange rate between RMB yuan and US dollar of the year. This figure ranks No. 7 behind USA (US\$ 7819.3 billion), Japan (US\$ 4223.4 billion), Germany (US\$2115.4 billion), France (US\$1393.8 billion), Britain (US\$1278.4 billion), and Italy (US\$1146.2 billion). From 1979 to 1997, China's average annual growth rate is 9.8 percent, i.e. 6.5 percentage points higher than that of the world. The rank of China in production of main industrial and agricultural products has significantly improved. So have their share in the world production. Steady agricultural development is also noteworthy. The total output value of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery reached 24709 trillion yuan, 2.4-fold increase over 1978. After adjustment for price factors the average annual increase in output of the primary sector is 6.6 percent which is 2.8 times as much as that before the initiation of reforms and opening to the outside world.

At present, the per capita life expectancy of Chinese citizens is about 70 years old, above the average global level (63). In 1997, China with 1.985 million doctors had the largest medical workforce in the world. In the past decades, the income of both urban and rural residents had doubled. In 1997, saving deposits of urban and rural residents reached over 218 times that of 1978 with an average annual increase rate of 32.8 percent. The development and sales of affordable housing for people with low or medium incomes increased by a fairly large margin. There was improvement in infrastructure facilities in-cities and environmental protection. The Chinese leaders have announced that China would be poverty free, alleviating even small pockets that exist today, by the dawn of the new century.

The Chinese leaders also feel that some ideologically adverse impact is bound to occur with the opening up to the outside world. And that is why they have decided to conduct a rectification campaign against certain tendencies. But it has undoubtedly created big confidence in the minds of freedom loving people, people aspiring for socialism, a confidence that China will not only survive as a socialist country but will be able to play a very prominent role in the world arena.

But Chinese socialist experiment had its ups and downs. We must remember that socialism is a new system, which has not had a previous model to follow. Marx and Engels had laid down the broad outline only. But it is important that it should be implemented keeping in mind the consciousness of the masses as well as the material conditions. The objective and the subjective factors have to be considered. Marxism is not a dogma but a guide to action. There cannot be any rigid formula applicable to all countries. Since production relations are different for each country, the position of various classes including their consciousness and historical background are also different. The science of Marxism has to be concretely applied to each country, drawing from the experience of different socialist countries.

Deng Xiaoping summed up the threats and opportunities connected with the new reform, ten years after its introduction, in the following words:

“China's modernisation can be achieved only through socialism, not capitalism.... In our effort to modernise, to introduce reform and to open to the outside world, we may encounter some dangers and difficulties. And we may make fresh mistakes, because China is such a big country and what we are doing is something that has never been done here before. Since China has its own characteristics, we can only run our affairs in accordance with the specific conditions in China. Of course, we can learn from the experience of others, but we must never copy everything. Since reform is a brand-new undertaking, mistakes are inevitable. We must not be afraid of making mistakes, and temporary setbacks must not make us abandon the reform and just make time. We have to be daring, or we will never be able to modernise. But we also have to be cautious about introducing particular reforms and review our experience regularly. Minor errors are inevitable, but we should try to avoid major ones.in such a vast country where the political changes are taking place rapidly many twists and turns have to be faced in the coming period. It is only treating Marxism-Leninism as a science and making use of the collective wisdom of the party organisation that we can provide correct direction. In this respect experience of Chinese revolution is of immense importance.”