A Study Guide
for Mao Zedong's
Theory of the Three Worlds

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The theory of the three worlds developed by Mao Zedong in the early 1970's provides invaluable direction in understanding the international situation today. The following study guide first appeared in Fall 1978, in the pages of UNITY, the newspaper of the League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-Leninist). We are publishing the guide here in a slightly abridged form.
Chapter 1

The Three World’s Theory: A Guide for Marxist-Leninists of All Countries

Revolutionaries in every country always have placed great attention to international developments. This is because the revolution in any particular country takes place in the context of world politics. The communist parties which led two of the great revolutions of the twentieth century, the Russian October Socialist Revolution and the Chinese Revolution of 1949, succeeded because their strategy and tactics took into full account international developments and forces.

As Stalin pointed out, with the rise of imperialism, revolution cannot be seen exclusively as “the result of the internal development of a given country,” but rather “the proletarian revolution must be regarded primarily as the result of the development of the contradictions within the world system of imperialism.”

In light of a concrete assessment of the international situation, communists evaluate the conditions facing the revolution in their own countries and determine their particular tasks. Referring to the evaluations Marx and Engels made of the revolutions in some countries in the 19th century, the Communist Party of China pointed out that “the sum total of the international proletariat’s interests was always the starting point from which they examined specific national movements and political forces.”

A modern example of a Marxist-Leninist analysis of the international situation and the relationship of world forces to the proletarian revolution was the 1963 Proposal for a General Line of the International Communist Movement, published by the Communist Party of China (CPC) under Mao Zedong’s guidance. It is worthwhile to review some of the important points of this docu-
ment to understand the method of the CPC in developing the line on the international situation. It is also helpful to understand the conditions at that time so that we may contrast them with the world today.

As the CPC stated, their Proposal proceeded ""from the actual world situation taken as a whole and from a class analysis of the fundamental contradictions in the contemporary world." The CPC presented four fundamental contradictions in the world: the contradiction between the socialist camp and the imperialist camp; the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the capitalist countries; the contradiction between the oppressed nations and imperialism; and the contradictions among imperialist countries and among monopoly capitalist groups.

The CPC pointed out that these four fundamental contradictions are interrelated and will inevitably give rise to revolution. At the same time, the CPC did not simply present these four contradictions, but analyzed how these contradictions manifested themselves in a particular way at that time in history.

The CPC analyzed that the main contradiction at that time was the one between U.S. imperialism and the people and countries of the world. U.S. imperialism had stepped into the shoes of the weakened or defeated imperialist powers like Britain and Germany and was trying to build the largest imperialist empire in history. Because the U.S. imperialists had set themselves up against the people of the world, the CPC stated that at that time, ""the international proletariat must and can unite all the forces that can be united, make use of the internal contradictions in the enemy camp and establish the broadest united front against the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys."" This analysis and line did not blur or cover over the four fundamental contradictions, but rather was a scientific presentation of how the contradictions actually were aligned and expressed.

The Proposal indicated that the international proletariat and the socialist countries were the leading force in the united front. It also indicated the revolutionary importance of the struggles of the people in Asia, Africa and Latin America. ""In a sense,"" the Proposal stated, ""the whole cause of the international proletarian revolution hinges on the outcome of the revolutionary struggles of
the people of these areas, who constitute the overwhelming ma-
Jority of the world’s population.”

The Proposal pointed out that the workers and peasant masses in the oppressed countries were the most vigorous in fighting im-
perialism in these countries, but also that a broad united front could be formed including workers, peasants, intellectuals, petty bourgeoisie, as well as “the patriotic national bourgeoisie, and even certain kings, princes and aristocrats who are patriotic.”

Regarding the capitalist countries, the Proposal maintained that the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the pro-
letariat were required to resolve the contradictions of these societies. At the same time it stated that “in the capitalist coun-
tries which U.S. imperialism controls or is trying to control, the working class and the people should direct their attacks mainly against U.S. imperialism, but also against their own monopoly capitalists and other reactionary forces who are betraying the national interests.”

In sum then, the approach the CPC adopted was one of identi-
fying the main enemy on a world scale, the main revolutionary forces and the intermediate forces that could be united with against the enemy. It proceeded from an understanding of the contradictions in the world and how to use them in the interests of the proletarian revolution. The CPC line was the application of the principle of uniting all who could be united.

Since the writing of the Proposal in 1963 the world situation has altered considerably. The most significant factor that has developed is the rise of Soviet social-imperialism. The Soviet Union was once a great socialist country, but in the 1950’s it degenerated into capitalism. It has since developed into an imperialist superpower vying with the U.S. for world domination.

Unlike the 1950’s and 1960’s, when U.S. imperialism was the main enemy in the world, today there are two imperialist super-
powers who are the enemies of the people of the world. The socialist camp, too, no longer is in existence, due to the rise of Soviet social-imperialism — although there continue to be individual socialist countries like China and Korea.

Mao Zedong took into account the rise of Soviet social-
imperialism and other developments in his theory of the three worlds. He developed this theory in the early 1970’s to help clarify
the complex world situation. His theory employs the method used in developing the 1963 Proposal and one can see clearly that his theory is a direct continuation of his thinking on the international situation as applied to contemporary conditions.

Mao's theory of the three worlds determines the main enemies of the people of the world as being the two imperialist superpowers, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. The two superpowers are the strongholds of world reaction today and are the biggest exploiters and oppressors. Their drive for world domination has brought them into conflict with the rest of the countries and peoples of the world as well as with each other. The competition between the two is leading them to unleash a new world war. The Soviet Union in particular is the more aggressive of the two superpowers as it is on the rise relative to the U.S.

Mao pointed out that a broad united front could be forged against the aggression, interference and warmongering of the two superpowers. The leading force in this united front is the international proletariat, while the main force is the third world. The third world is composed of the developing countries and people of Asia, Africa and Latin America as well as the socialist countries. The third world is an important feature of Mao's theory. As in the 1963 Proposal, the theory of three worlds fully appreciates the revolutionary strength and activity of the oppressed nations and peoples. Since World War II, the third world has delivered the strongest blows against imperialism and made great contributions to the world revolution.

The three worlds theory views the second world, the lesser capitalist countries such as those in Europe, Japan, Canada, Australia and others, as intermediate forces. These countries are ruled by the bourgeoisie who exploit and oppress the working class, and in different instances oppress other countries as well. At the same time these lesser capitalist countries themselves suffer bullying and domination in various forms by the two superpowers. The second world countries are a force that can be united with insofar as they oppose the two superpowers.

Mao Zedong's theory of the three worlds therefore advocates forming the broadest possible united front against the two superpowers. The theory is concerned with the struggle in the international arena as a whole, but also provides a guide for the people of
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every country to conduct their own struggle in light of world developments. This is because it helps us to sort out the complex world situation and understand the basic world forces at work: "ourselves" (the international proletariat and the socialist countries), and "our friends and enemies."®

Mao's theory of the three worlds arms the revolutionary people with the power of a correct orientation. It analyzes not only the forces opposing the two superpowers but also the dynamics between the two superpowers. The two superpowers due to their fundamental clash of imperialist interests are moving toward war. Such a war will not be in the interests of the people of the world and this is a factor which the international proletariat must take into account.

The danger of imperialist war is definitely more of a threat today as compared to the time of the 1963 Proposal. The people of the world must take steps to prepare to deal with such a war and to forestall the outbreak of world war. As the Chinese view it, "the current fight of the people of the world against the hegemonism of the two superpowers and the fight against their war policies are two aspects of one and the same struggle. Hegemonism is their aim in war as well as their means of preparing for it."®

The theory of the three worlds fully proceeds from the interests of the proletariat and revolutionary people of the world for it clearly shows that whatever helps to weaken or isolate the two superpowers helps the people of all countries. The three worlds theory therefore gives the people of the world confidence, for it shows how all the anti-superpower actions and stands of different forces can be used in the interest of the masses.

For the revolutionary people in the U.S., the three worlds theory helps us to understand the importance of uniting with all the anti-U.S. imperialist and anti-superpower stands of the people and countries of the world as part of our revolution to overthrow the U.S. monopoly capitalists. The three worlds theory also helps us to understand the growing danger of war and impresses upon us the need to intensify our revolutionary work and make preparations to deal with war.

In sum then, the three worlds theory is correct because it proceeds from reality. It is a concrete analysis of concrete conditions. It combats looking at the world through abstractions and for-
mulas. Because it tells the truth, the superpowers hate the theory of the three worlds. They send out opportunists and slanderers of every type to attack Mao Zedong and his theory. However, this is only testimony to the accuracy of the theory.

Suggested readings:

Proposal for a General Line of the International Communist Movement, (Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, 1963.)
Chairman Mao's Theory of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds is a Major Contribution to Marxism-Leninism, (Beijing, Foreign Languages Press).

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important for revolutionaries to understand the international situation?
2. What was the situation like in the world during the 1950's and 1960's as summarized by the CPC Proposal in 1963?
3. What have been the major changes in the world since 1963?
4. What are the "three worlds" and their interrelationship?
5. Why is it important to understand the forces opposed to the two superpowers as well as the dynamics between the two superpowers?

Footnotes

8. Differentiation, p. 76.
9. Differentiation, p. 64.
A fundamental question communists must answer is who are our friends and enemies. This question must be answered on an international scale, for the revolutionary struggle of any country is actually closely connected to the international class struggle. This study column focuses on explaining why Mao Zedong's theory of the three worlds places the two superpowers, the U.S. and U.S.S.R., as the main enemies of the people of the world.

The theory of the three worlds maintains that the two superpowers are the strongholds of world reaction today. The two of them are frantically contending with each other to achieve world domination. The contention of the two is leading them inevitably towards unleashing a new world war, the Soviet Union in particular being the more dangerous source of war.

Superpowers distinct from lesser capitalist countries

The three worlds theory makes a clear distinction between the two superpowers and the lesser capitalist countries, the second world. This is because the two superpowers are in a far more dominant position economically and militarily than the second world countries. The two superpowers exploit and oppress the masses in their "own" countries and the nations and peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America. But the two superpowers also dominate and threaten, to different degrees, the lesser capitalist
countries such as Britain, France and West Germany.

The U.S. was the first superpower to appear on the world scene. Following World War II it emerged as the most powerful imperialism on earth. It strived to take over the former empires of the weakened or defeated capitalist countries. The U.S. went out to build the most extensive imperialist empire in history, oppressing the peoples and countries everywhere and dominating even the other capitalist countries. The U.S. built a vast economic network to exploit others and set up a worldwide military network to enforce its hegemony. It openly practiced aggression as in Korea, Lebanon, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Indochina, and others.

It was clear that U.S. imperialism was the number one enemy of the people of the world during the 1950's and 1960's. Communists designated U.S. imperialism as the main target internationally and made a distinction between U.S. imperialism and the second-rate imperialist countries.

But the situation today is not the same as it was during the 1950's and 1960's. The Soviet Union, once a socialist country, degenerated back to capitalism in the 1950's and has since become an imperialist superpower itself. The Soviet Union is seeking to dominate and oppress other countries. It is social-imperialist — socialist in words, imperialist in deeds. This became evident with its outright invasion and continued occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Today the U.S. and U.S.S.R. have become the two biggest imperialist powers in the world and have relegated the other imperialist countries to an inferior position. The Communist Party of China defines what is a superpower:

The distinctive features of a superpower are as follows: its state apparatus is controlled by monopoly capital in its most concentrated form, and it relies on its economic and military power, which is far greater than that of other countries, to carry on economic exploitation and political oppression and to strive for military control on a global scale; each superpower sets exclusive world hegemony as its goal and to this end makes frantic preparations for a new world war.¹

In economic terms the U.S. and U.S.S.R. are definitely in a
THE TWO SUPERPOWERS

dominant position in the capitalist world. The gross national product of both countries is far above that of any other country. A look at some economic comparisons of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. with other capitalist countries shows this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Crude Steel</th>
<th>Electric Energy</th>
<th>Meat Production</th>
<th>Coal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Production (1000's of metric tons - 1974)</td>
<td>(millions of KWH)</td>
<td>(1000's of metric tons)</td>
<td>(millions of metric tons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>136,229</td>
<td>1,967,289</td>
<td>17,189</td>
<td>530.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R.</td>
<td>132,196</td>
<td>975,754</td>
<td>12,950</td>
<td>473.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Germany</td>
<td>53,231</td>
<td>311,655</td>
<td>3,629</td>
<td>100.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>27,023</td>
<td>180,402</td>
<td>3,472</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U. Kingdom</td>
<td>22,426</td>
<td>273,316</td>
<td>2,348</td>
<td>110.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In military terms too the U.S. and U.S.S.R. are in a supreme position in the capitalist world. Both have the greatest nuclear arsenals the world has ever seen. They have thousands of nuclear missiles, bombs and tactical weapons. They both, by far, also have the largest conventional militaries. They both have 100,000's of troops in other countries: the U.S. has 400,000 and the Soviets have some 700,000 men outside their borders.

Military Expenditures 1973

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular armed forces (1000's)</th>
<th>Spent (mil. of U.S. $)</th>
<th>Spent per capita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>2,087</td>
<td>88,893</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R.</td>
<td>3,650</td>
<td>124,000</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Germany</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>16,142</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>13,984</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U. Kingdom</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>11,118</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Lenin pointed out, the imperialists divide the world "'in proportion to capital,' 'in proportion to strength,' because there cannot be any other method of division under commodity production and capitalism," and "strength varies with the degree of economic and political development." The two superpowers are way above in "strength" as compared to the lesser capitalist countries and are the centers of imperialist reaction today. Therefore it is entirely correct to place the two superpowers in a distinct category, the first world. And it is entirely correct to point out that the second world countries, even though they have not changed their capitalist social systems, have themselves become targets of superpower interference and domination. Second world countries
such as Japan, Germany, Czechoslovakia and others actually have much of their territory occupied by armed forces of the two superpowers.

There are some people today who wish to lump all the imperialist countries into one undifferentiated reactionary mass. This would simply not be in accordance with the facts of the current world situation. If one does not distinguish between the lesser capitalist countries and the two superpowers, it actually helps to mask and underestimates the predatory policies of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. The two superpowers today are the only imperialist powers in a position to seek world hegemony and therefore must be targeted as the main international enemies.

Superpowers in contradiction with each other

The two superpowers are in contradiction with the rest of the world, but also they are in serious contradiction with one another. Both seek world domination, which means that each must try to defeat the other. Inevitably this means war. As Lenin has pointed out: "... an essential feature of imperialism is the rivalry between several Great Powers in striving for hegemony, i.e. for the conquest of territory . . . to weaken the adversary and undermine his hegemony." The intense rivalry of the two superpowers results in their conflict everywhere as each hopes to gain advantages over the other.

The U.S. is economically the more powerful of the two superpowers. The U.S. still has more extensive holdings and military bases around the world than the U.S.S.R. It is doing all it can to maintain its supremacy and also erode Soviet influence. This is evident in the U.S.'s continued support for the racist south African regimes and its stepped up meddling in the affairs of the Middle East. But the U.S. position is weaker and less stable than in previous years.

The Soviet Union on the other hand is a newer imperialist power which is seeking to replace the U.S. as world overlord. Because of its weaker economic position, the Soviet Union relies more on military and political interference to further its imperialist interests and challenge the U.S. This is the path which rising imperialist powers have taken in the past. History gives us fascist Germany, Italy and Japan as examples.
THE TWO SUPERPOWERS

The Soviet Union is more aggressive and ambitious and represents an offensive force in today's world. It is moving to take over areas formerly under the domination of the U.S. or others, such as in Africa and Southeast Asia today. The arms developments of the social-imperialists are also developing at a more rapid rate than the U.S.

At home the Soviet Union has imposed a fascist dictatorship over the masses. The bureaucrat capitalists there have highly centralized state and economic power to advance their war preparations, and they try to do all this by maintaining a "socialist" label.

On a world scale, then, the Soviet Union is the more dangerous of the two superpowers in instigating a new world war. This is manifested in events such as the Soviet-backed invasion of Zaire, the Soviet military involvement in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, and the support the Soviets are giving to Vietnam in its war against Kampuchea. The Soviets hope to expand their influence in the third world to control sources of raw materials and markets. Their aim is to isolate their main strategic objective which is Europe with its highly developed economy. The Soviet interest in Europe is shown in its continuing massive buildup of social-imperialist forces in Eastern Europe.

In any particular instance, one or the other of the two superpowers or any other force may be the principal enemy, but in analyzing the world as a whole it is necessary to pinpoint the two superpowers as the main enemies and the Soviet Union in particular as the more aggressive of the two.

Uneven development and making use of contradictions

The theory of the three worlds incorporates Lenin's important lesson on the uneven development of capitalism. In opposition to some who did not recognize the sharp contradictions among the imperialists, Lenin pointed out that there is intense competition among them. Some capitalist forces are on the decline while others are on the rise. Spain and Portugal were once the pre-eminent capitalist powers in the world, but they fell behind and were surpassed by Britain, France and others. U.S. imperialism thought it could be the world's policeman for eternity, but this is obviously not going to be the case. As Lenin pointed out, imperialism in-
increases "the unevenness and contradictions in world economy," including the contractions among the imperialist powers.

This lesson is validated by today's situation — the uneven development of capitalism has resulted in the relegation of the former top imperialist countries (Britain, Japan, France, etc.) to an inferior position and the development of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. as the top imperialist powers. The law of uneven development is also reflected in the sharpening contradiction between the rising imperialism of the Soviet Union and the declining position of the U.S. imperialists.

Communists have always made use of the contradictions among the imperialists in making revolution. Just before the outbreak of World War II, Stalin made a distinction between the aggressor and non-aggressor countries to build an anti-aggression united front. Later he also made use of the contradictions among the imperialist countries to help build an anti-fascist front and defeat the Axis powers. In China, Mao Tsetung and the Communist Party utilized the contradiction between U.S. imperialism and Japanese imperialism to defeat the main enemy and push forward the struggle for national liberation.

Lenin too, never belittled the necessity of utilizing inter-imperialist contradictions. In 1920 Lenin drew some lessons on the importance of using the differences among the enemy forces. Referring to the situation of the new-born Soviet Union and the dangers of Japanese and American imperialism, he stated:

... we must take advantage of the antagonisms and the contradictions that exist between the two imperialisms, the two groups of capitalist states, and play them off against each other. Until we (communists) have conquered the whole world, and as long as we are economically and militarily weaker than the capitalist world, we must stick to the rule that we must be able to take advantage of the antagonisms and contradictions existing among the imperialists. Had we not adhered to this rule, every one of us would have long ago been strung up by the neck, to the glee of the capitalists... At present we stand between two foes. If we are unable to defeat both of them, we must be able to dispose our forces in
such a way as to make them fall out among themselves; whenever thieves fall out, honest men come into their own. However, as soon as we are strong enough to overcome capitalism as a whole, we shall immediately seize it by the scruff of the neck . . . .

Lenin also stated quite clearly:

... to support one of these countries (Japan and the U.S.) against the other would be a crime against communism; we communists have to play one off against the other. Are we not committing a crime against communism? No, because we are doing that as a socialist state which is carrying on communist propaganda and is obliged to take advantage of every hour granted it by circumstances in order to gain strength as rapidly as possible. 7

Today we should learn from the history of the international communist movement and make full use of the contradictions
among the imperialists in the interest of communism. Marxist-Leninists cannot adopt a simplistic formula of making no distinction among enemy forces or believing that the revolution proceeds in a straight path without twists and turns. We should learn from Lenin's observation:

_The more powerful enemy can be vanquished only by exerting the utmost effort, and without fail, most thoroughly, carefully, attentively and skillfully using every, even the smallest "rift" among the enemies, of every antagonism of interest among the bourgeoisie of the various countries and among the various groups or types of bourgeoisie within the various countries, and also by taking advantage of every, even the smallest, opportunity of gaining a mass ally, even though this ally be temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional. Those who fail to understand this, fail to understand even a particle of Marxism, or of scientific, modern Socialism in general._

As communists we oppose all imperialism and reaction. Our objective is socialism and world communism. We work to thoroughly eliminate exploitation and oppression from the face of the earth and without a doubt this will be achieved one day. Some may think it "easier," "simpler" or more "revolutionary" not to make distinctions among the enemy forces. But this is of no help. The value of the theory of the three worlds is that it shows that we should take advantage of all the various contradictions in the world in the interest of the proletariat to defeat the bulwarks of reaction, the two superpowers. The worldwide defeat of the two superpowers will mean an unprecedented defeat for imperialism and reaction and advance for the world revolution.

Suggested readings:


*Lenin, Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism,* (Beijing, Foreign Languages Press), Chapter 7.
Study Guide for Chairman Mao’s Theory of the
Three Worlds, Yenan Books Reprints, pp 4–16.

Discussion Questions:

1. In Imperialism, Lenin criticizes the opportunist thesis of “ultra-imperialism.” What is “ultra-imperialism” and what are some views today which are similar to this deviation?

2. What is the significance today of Lenin’s observation that imperialism “strives to annex not only agrarian territories, but even most highly industrialized regions”?

3. Discuss the importance of not characterizing all the capitalist and imperialist countries as “just an undifferentiated reactionary mass.”

4. Mao Zedong once stated that it is necessary to “concentrate a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one.” How can we learn from this?

Footnotes


2. Information from United Nations sources.

3. Information from the Institute of Strategic Studies, London.

4. Lenin, Imperialism; The Highest Stage of Capitalism, (Beijing, Foreign Languages Press).

5. Lenin, ibid.


7. Lenin, “Speech Delivered At A Meeting of Activists of the Moscow Organization of the RCP(B)”, (1920).

8. Lenin, Left-wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder, (Beijing, Foreign Languages Press).
Chapter 3

The Third World:
The Main Force
Opposing Imperialism

Mao Zedong stated in 1974, "In my view, the United States and the Soviet Union form the first world. Japan, Europe and Canada, the middle section, belong to the second world. We are the third world. The third world has a huge population. With the exception of Japan, Asia belongs to the third world. The whole of Africa belongs to the third world and Latin America too."

The third world is a key aspect of the three world's theory, as it is the main force in the worldwide anti-imperialist struggle, particularly against the two superpowers.

The third world is playing such a role because the people of this area have been subjected to the most ruthless colonial and imperialist oppression. The people of the third world have been enslaved and brutalized, their riches plundered and their countries subjugated by imperialism. Their desire for genuine independence, democracy and economic well-being is a deep one, and in the final analysis these can be achieved only with the entire overthrow of imperialism.

The population of the third world, over 3 billion in number, constitutes 70% of the people of the world. The third world too, has a huge territory and possesses a tremendous wealth of natural
resources. The imperialists have tried to deny the importance of the third world, but as events have shown, it is the third world which is more and more shaping history.

Since World War II the struggles of the third world have changed the face of the earth. There were among others, the Chinese revolution of 1949, the Korean revolution and later the victorious war of resistance against U.S. aggression in the 1950's, the Cuban revolution in 1959, the Algerian revolution in 1962 and the victories of the Vietnamese, Laotian and Kampuchean people over U.S. imperialism in the 1970's. In Africa, before World War II, almost the entire continent was colonized, but with heroic determination the African people in all but a handful of countries, have thrown off the yoke of colonialism. Throughout the world over 80 countries have won independence from old-style colonialism.

While most of the third world has achieved liberation from colonialism, the majority of them still have not attained complete political and economic independence. They are still oppressed by imperialism, especially by the superpowers. Overthrowing colonialism has not exhausted the revolutionary potential of the third world, but rather the third world will become an even more important force in the coming years as it raises its political consciousness, sharpens its struggles, and strengthens its unity.

Today events such as in southern Africa and Nicaragua; the increased political awareness and the growing cooperation and unity of third world countries such as at the UN or in OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries); and the non-aligned movement all confirm that the third world is a mighty force. The third world will continue to play a decisive anti-imperialist role due to its historical experiences and position in the world.

The struggles of the third world profoundly weaken imperialism. The superpowers are dependent upon the resources, markets and labor of the third world. The struggles of the third world are basically aimed at overturning the oppression imposed by imperialism; therefore, the third world has objectively become part of the world front opposing the imperialist bourgeoisie. As Mao Zedong wrote: "In this era, any revolution in a colony or semi-colony that is directed against imperialism...is part of the new world revolution, the proletarian-socialist revolution."
THE THIRD WORLD

Different forces in the third world

The third world is composed of countries with different social systems and different forces in state power. What they have in common, though, is a basic contradiction with imperialism, especially the two superpowers.

The socialist countries are a part of the third world, even though they are no longer oppressed by imperialism. This is because the socialist countries all have a common historical experience in fighting imperialism, and still have a fundamental contradiction with imperialism. In this sense, the socialist and oppressed countries have an identity of interests and are allies in the fight against imperialism. The Communist Party of China has stated, "Common experience, common tasks in struggle and community of interests past, present and future, determine that China belongs to the third world."^2

The international proletariat and the socialist countries are the leading force in the world anti-superpower front. The proletariat is the most revolutionary and far-sighted class. The proletariat represented by its Marxist-Leninist parties has the broadest understanding of the world and is in the most profound contradiction with imperialism.

Placing the socialist countries in the third world does not negate or belittle these truths; but rather, this helps to identify the socialist countries as the closest allies of the oppressed countries and nations.

Among the non-socialist third world countries, there are also differences in governmental systems and interests. There are some serious conflicts among the third world countries and there are also class contradictions within the oppressed nations and countries. But these differences do not detract from the basic fact that they are all oppressed. Their struggles for complete independence and democracy, when seen as a whole, weaken, isolate and oppose imperialism.

These struggles are of a wide variety today. There are armed struggles for national liberation, such as in Zimbabwe, Namibia and Azania; struggles to gain control over natural resources and consolidate independence as in Latin America. There are struggles to defend national independence, like the efforts of Zaire to defeat
two Soviet-backed invasions. There are struggles against imperialist supported repression, as in Nicaragua or the Philippines, and other struggles to win the new democratic revolution, as in Thailand. Some of these struggles are led by communist parties, and other are led by the bourgeoisie; still others are led by feudalists or even reactionary governments. But whoever leads such struggles, if they objectively strike a blow at imperialism and the superpowers, they are a positive factor in the world today and should be supported.

The international proletariat, of course, does not support every action or national movement in the third world. Each struggle is assessed in relationship to the struggle against imperialism and the superpowers. Stalin drew an important lesson on this matter in 1924:

*The revolutionary character of a national movement under the conditions of imperialist oppression does not necessarily presuppose the existence of proletarian elements in the movement, the existence of a revolutionary or a republican programme of the movement, the existence of a democratic basis of the movement. The struggle that the Emir of Afghanistan is waging for the independence of Afghanistan is objectively a revolutionary struggle, despite the monarchist views of the Emir and his associates, for it weakens, disintegrates and undermines imperialism . . . .

Lenin was right in saying that the national movement of the oppressed countries should be appraised not from the point of view of formal democracy, but from the point of view of the actual results, as shown by the general balance sheet of the struggle against imperialism, that is to say, "not in isolation, but on a world scale."*3

We should keep Lenin’s and Stalin’s lessons in mind whenever we assess different events and movements in the third world. Whatever helps objectively to weaken or isolate imperialism we should support, and whatever strengthens imperialism we should oppose. In the world today we should particularly take note of the effect of the struggles in relation to the two superpowers.
THE THIRD WORLD

Some specific questions

With these perspectives in mind, it would be worthwhile to examine a couple of specific questions to make these lessons more concrete.

Were the Zairean people correct in building a united front to oppose the Soviet-backed invasions of their country and to defend national sovereignty? From this example, what can we learn in general about the dangers of targeting only U.S. imperialism as an enemy of the third world?

Zaire is extremely rich in natural resources, is a large country and is strategically located in the center of Africa. For these reasons the imperialists have long coveted the area. Belgian, French and U.S. imperialism have extensive holdings in the country, and there is widespread sentiment among the people against Mobuto, the head of the Zaire's government. As newcomers to the imperialist plunder of Zaire, the social-imperialists in 1977 and 1978, tried to take advantage of this situation by backing two armed invasions of the country. The objective of these invasions was to dismember or completely subjugate Zaire. These were grave threats to the sovereignty of Zaire.

Under these circumstances it was correct for the Zairean people to forge a united front to oppose the Soviet-backed invasions. This united front included workers, peasants, intellectuals, capitalists as well as the Mobuto government itself. In the 1978 invasion, Belgian and French government forces intervened in Zaire to protect their own property against the Soviet forces and these forces, too, could be used against the invaders. Even contradictions among the imperialists can be utilized to defeat the principal enemy.

To have simultaneously fought against the Soviet aggressors, British, French and U.S. imperialism, as well as the corrupt Mobuto regime, would have actually meant sacrificing the country to the Soviet forces, the greatest danger at the time. To oppose only the U.S. superpower while the country is being invaded by the Soviet superpower would only undermine Zairean independence and help to bring a new form of social-imperialist domination upon the Zairean people. The complete subjugation of the country would have been a great setback to the Zairean people's cause.
of winning complete political and economic independence since this struggle would be more difficult to wage under Soviet colonial rule.

In Zaire it was therefore correct for Zairean Marxist-Leninists to set an example for all Zairean patriots by resolutely striving to unite all who could be united to fight the invasion and to defend the country as a step toward ending all imperialist domination and reactionary rule in Zaire.

Employing all possible forces against the principal enemy was utilized by Mao Zedong and the Communist Party of China to defeat Japanese imperialism when it was out to conquer China in the 1930's and 1940's. Regarding the use of inter-imperialist contradictions, Mao wrote in 1937:

"The contradiction between China and imperialism in general has given way to the particularly salient and sharp contradiction between China and Japanese imperialism. Japanese imperialism is carrying out a policy of total conquest of China. Consequently, the contradictions between China and certain other imperialist powers have been relegated to a secondary position, while the rift between these powers and Japan has been widened . . . China should not only unite with the Soviet Union . . . but as far as possible should work for joint opposition to Japanese imperialism with those imperialist countries which, at the present time, are willing to maintain peace and are against new wars of aggression. The aim of our united front must be resistance to Japan, and not simultaneous opposition to all the imperialist powers."  

Of course, the world has greatly changed since 1937; Japan was defeated in the war and has been reduced to a second world country. The Soviet Union on the other hand has restored capitalism and become an imperialist superpower and the more aggressive of the two superpowers. Nevertheless, Mao's experiences hold valuable lessons for us in combating metaphysical views which advocate fighting all enemies at once and not making use of every possible force and contradiction (even contradictions among the imperialist and reactionary forces) to defeat the main enemy at every point of the revolution.
THE THIRD WORLD

*How should we view the reactionary governments in the third world, such as that of the Shah of Iran?*

The Shah of Iran has perpetrated many crimes against the Iranian people. He has carried out a policy of brutal suppression of workers, peasants, intellectuals, students and others in Iran. He has allowed the U.S. imperialists to penetrate much of the economy and policies of the country. For these reasons the Iranian people are conducting a just struggle against imperialist interference and reactionary rule in their country. As the events of the recent weeks have shown, the Shah’s government is on the brink of collapse.

Genuine communists of all countries support the revolutionary struggles of the Iranian people and recognize that it is only a matter of time that the Iranian people will win their new democratic revolution and ultimately go on to build socialism.

At the same time, with regard to the international arena, it is important to recognize that the Iranian government has performed some acts which are beneficial to the struggle against the superpowers.

Acting from its own class interests, the Iranian regime has done such things as participate in OPEC to help win back control over natural resources. It called for making the Indian Ocean a nuclear weapon free zone, an act pointed against the two superpowers who have massive fleets in the area. And it has taken some steps to help People’s China regain her position in various international bodies.

These acts were contributions to the international united front against the two superpowers. The Shah took these steps, not because he had the interests of the broad masses of Iranian people in mind, but because of his interest in strengthening his own position in the world, especially against the Soviet Union. Keeping in mind “the general balance sheet of the struggle against imperialism” one can see that it was correct to support the anti-superpower moves of the Iranian government. And this in no way contradicted support for the movement to overthrow reactionary rule in Iran.

* (This column was written before the fall of the Shah.)
The issue of Iran brings up the general matter of the governments and peoples of the third world. It is the broad masses of people who are most genuinely and staunchly progressive. Therefore, communists support the struggles of the people of the third world to overthrow reactionary regimes and initiate democratic governments which can even more firmly oppose imperialism and the two superpowers. But when third world governments, even very reactionary ones, take steps to strengthen third world unity and combat the superpowers, such steps should be encouraged since objectively these acts hurt the superpowers. Whether or not these governments like it, actions against the superpowers actually contribute to improving the conditions for the people’s own forces within these countries. These anti-superpower actions help to break the country away from the main international reactionary strongholds.

It is the internationalist responsibility of the proletariat in an oppressor country like the U.S. to support every action and movement which objectively weakens imperialism and the superpowers, and which strengthens the independence and unity of the third world.

At the same time, we always must maintain our basic stand with the masses of people of Iran and other countries and firmly support their revolutionary struggles. We give overall support to the struggles of the third world as “a component part of the world socialist revolution.”

Suggested readings:


THE THIRD WORLD

Discussion Questions:

1. Why should we consider the third world as the main force against imperialism?

2. What are some examples of the various types of struggles of the third world that we should support?

3. Why is Stalin's and Lenin's lesson about analyzing struggles on a "balance sheet against imperialism" correct? Why is it incorrect to look at these struggles in isolation of the world situation?

Footnotes:


2. Chairman Mao's Differentiation of the Three Worlds is a Major Contribution to Marxism-Leninism.


Chapter 4

The Second World: A Force That Can Be United With Against the Superpowers

The second world is composed of the lesser capitalist countries such as those in Europe, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and others. In the world arena today, the second world countries play a dual role. On the one hand, many of them oppress third world countries to varying degrees. On the other hand, the superpowers threaten and interfere in the affairs of the second world countries.

The second world countries therefore, are an intermediate force between the superpowers and the third world. Insofar as the second world countries oppose the superpowers, they form a part of the international united front against the U.S. and U.S.S.R. When they oppress the third world, they should be opposed.

The position of the second world countries today is quite different than 40 years ago. Before World War II, England, France, Germany and Japan were all world powers. They contended with each other for the reddivision of the world. But due to their defeats during the war and their weakening by the war, and the subsequent rise of the two superpowers, these former "big" powers were relegated to a second-rate status relative to the two superpowers. In some cases, the superpowers have military forces occupying second world countries.

At the end of World War II comrade Mao Zedong and other communists differentiated the dominant U.S. imperialism from
the other capitalist countries. In the famous interview with Anna Louise Strong, Comrade Mao pointed out that U.S. imperialism "controls Japan" and "sought to control the whole of the British Empire and Western Europe." He described the "many capitalist, colonial and semi-colonial countries in Europe, Asia and Africa," as a "vast zone" in between U.S. imperialism and the then socialist Soviet Union. He advocated a united front against U.S. imperialism.¹

Again, in 1963 the Communist Party of China's Proposal for the General Line of the International Communist Movement, written under Mao's leadership, distinguished U.S. imperialism from the lesser capitalist countries and encouraged the proletariat to take advantage of the contradiction with U.S. imperialism to form a broad united front.

From these examples it is clear that Mao paid close attention to the differences among the capitalist countries and that the big imperialist countries can oppress even lesser capitalist powers. As Lenin pointed out, imperialism "strives to annex not only agrarian territories, but even most highly industrialized regions."²

Today the U.S. interferes with the western capitalist countries, while the Soviet superpower dominates the second world countries of Eastern Europe. In fact, it is more accurate to say that many of the Eastern European countries have been made dependencies of the Soviets and have little actual independence. The invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviets in 1968 shows to what lengths the Soviets will go to maintain their domination.

The large number of troops and military bases of the superpowers in second world territory indicates the degree of interference in the lives of the second world countries.

Europe, in particular, is the focus of attention of the two superpowers. They covet the area because of the concentration of industry and markets. This is why they have centered so much of their military forces in Europe. Whoever can dominate Europe can achieve world hegemony.

The relationship between the lesser capitalist countries and the two superpowers today is, therefore, not characterized by competition to redivide the world; rather, the second world countries are faced with the grave problem of safeguarding their independence and security from the threats of the superpowers.
Soviet threat

The Eastern European capitalist countries are struggling to free themselves from Soviet domination and win some independence. The Western European countries, on the other hand, are struggling to get rid of U.S. interference in their affairs. But, at the same time, the Western European countries are concerned about the threat of Soviet aggression.

Of the two superpowers, though, the Soviet Union is the more dangerous threat to Europe as it is on the offensive. Especially during the last ten years, the social-imperialists have rapidly built up their military forces in the areas bordering Western Europe. The subjugation of the European countries by Soviet social-imperialism would be a serious setback for the European proletariat and peoples, as well as for the people of the entire world.

Experiences from the period right before World War II hold lessons on the issue of defending national independence in Europe today. During the 1930's the fascist powers of Germany, Italy and Japan conducted wars of aggression and annexed territories one after the other. They sought to annex not only colonial and semi-colonial areas such as China and Ethiopia, but capitalist countries like Spain, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland as well. The people in the subjugated areas suffered brutal suppression.

In response to the fascists, communists throughout the world correctly called for building a front against fascism and war. The Soviet Union, under the leadership of Stalin, promoted a policy of collective resistance to fascist aggression. In 1935 the Soviet Union and France signed a treaty of mutual assistance against aggression. A similar treaty was concluded with Czechoslovakia and other countries. These, of course, were agreements between a socialist government and capitalist governments, but they were a part of an international policy of encouraging united opposition to fascism. The proletariat, in countries threatened with fascist aggression, had important tasks of leading the fight against threats to national sovereignty, democracy and exposing national betrayal.

An important lesson one should draw from this history is that the struggle of the proletariat for socialism and the conditions of the class struggle in any country are influenced by international
factors. Under certain circumstances, such as with the threat of aggression and annexation, the struggle to protect national sovereignty is the responsibility of the working class and a condition for the success of the socialist revolution.

**Struggles of the second world**

In the second world countries there are a number of mass struggles taking place today. The working people are fighting to improve their working and living conditions. There are struggles opposing reactionary government policies, such as in West Germany where the people are demanding an end to the anti-communist laws. In some countries there are fierce struggles against national oppression, such as for the right to self-determination of the Quebec nation in Canada. We should support these struggles. Marxist-Leninist organizations and anti-revisionist communist parties are also forming in many second world countries, and we should give them our firm support.

At the same time, the people of the second world are opposing the two superpowers. In Eastern Europe there have been a number of heroic rebellions and protests against the new tsars. The Polish and Czech people have been very active in resisting Soviet occupation of their countries. In Japan people are demanding the recovery of several northern Japanese islands now occupied by the Soviets. The people are also conducting just struggles to expel U.S. military forces from their country and end U.S. control over their defenses. The Scandinavian people, too, are becoming alerted to the danger of Soviet invasion. The social-imperialists have conducted numerous military exercises right off the shores of Norway and have violated its territory on several occasions.

The second world is also helping to weaken the superpowers in other ways. More and more second world countries, threatened by the two superpowers, are seeing the growing strength and unity of the third world countries. They are, therefore, taking certain steps to assist the third world, such as in the economic sphere. Several European countries in recent years have canceled debts owed by third world countries.

A number of second world countries have supplied third world countries with exports that have lessened their dependence on the superpowers. France, for example, has supplied enriched
uranium to Brazil which has helped the country produce electricity more efficiently. The sale had been opposed by the U.S. imperialists, who want to restrict the development of Brazil’s nuclear power industry.

The Western European countries are also taking steps to strengthen their national economies and to promote economic cooperation among themselves, to lessen the impact of the falling U.S. dollar and the domination of European postwar economies by U.S. imperialism.

Overall, the Western European countries are concerned also about strengthening their defense capabilities. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization forms a part of the military forces of Western Europe. It was once mainly an aggressive alliance under the domination of the U.S., but has now taken on somewhat of a defensive aspect in the face of threats from the Warsaw Pact, the Soviets’ military alliance. On principle, both NATO and the Warsaw Pact should be opposed; however, it would be wrong to call for the unilateral dismemberment of NATO so long as the Warsaw Pact remains an aggressive military bloc for the social-imperialists.

The U.S., which is included in NATO, is trying to use it to further U.S. imperialism’s own war plans. Therefore, the Western European countries more and more see that they must develop their own independent defense capabilities and strengthen their unity to counter the threats of aggression.

* * *

The proletariat in the second world countries today face a complex task. They are faced with the task of making revolution to overthrow the bourgeoisie and to combat the growing danger of war and threats against their country. A victorious socialist revolution, with the proletariat achieving state power, would be the greatest bulwark in opposing any aggressor, but in order to reach that goal, the proletariat must unite with the just sentiments of the masses of people who are concerned with the safeguarding of national independence.

If a second world country is invaded and occupied by a superpower, especially the Soviet Union, the conditions for the proletariat and the masses of people are made very difficult. It is
therefore, a good thing whenever the second world countries oppose the superpowers and take steps to lessen superpower influence in their affairs. The proletariat seizes upon every opportunity that will postpone the outbreak of war, and give it time to develop and advance its work for the eventual and final triumph of socialism.

Suggested readings:

Chairman Mao's Theory of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds Is A Major Contribution to Marxism-Leninism, esp. pp. 54-64


Mao Zedong, "The Identity of Interest Between the Soviet Union and All Mankind," Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Vol. II.


Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important to recognize that the relationship between the second world countries and the superpowers is not characterized primarily by rivalry for the redivision of the world, but by superpower threats against the sovereignty of the second world countries?

2. What would be the situation for the Western European countries if they were invaded by the Soviet social-imperialists? Why should the proletariat be concerned about protecting national sovereignty in the second world?
THE SECOND WORLD

3. While opposing the threat of Soviet aggression, why must U.S. imperialism also be opposed?

4. Why is it important for the proletariat in the second world countries to struggle to defend national independence? How does this struggle relate to the struggle for socialism?

Footnotes:


2. Lenin, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism (Beijing, Foreign Languages Press), p. 109.
Chapter 5

The Superpowers Threaten
A New World War

The danger of a new world war breaking out between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. is becoming greater with each passing day. The growing arms buildup and the conflicts between the two in Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean and Europe all reflect this trend.

Many people are raising questions about this growing war danger. What is the source of war? What kind of war will it be? What should our attitude be towards war?

An important part of Comrade Mao Zedong's theory of the three worlds concerns the question of war and addresses these questions.

Mao pointed out that the two imperialist superpowers, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., are in fierce contention with each other to achieve world hegemony. While the two may on occasion reach some temporary agreements and compromises, conflict is the main aspect of their relationship. Eventually the drive to achieve world domination will lead the two to go to war with each other.

Such a war is inevitable, for it develops independent of man's will or intentions — it develops as a product of the imperialist system itself. As Stalin once pointed out, "To eliminate the inevitability of war it is necessary to abolish imperialism."

Today the two superpowers are the main imperialist strongholds in the world, and due to their superior economic and military strength, only they are in a position to launch a new world war.
The Soviet Union in particular is the more dangerous of the two and the more likely source of a new war. It is a superpower on the rise. The U.S. is still dominant in the world, but is losing its influence. The Soviet social-imperialists want to take over from the U.S. imperialists and are therefore more aggressive, relying more on military might to expand their control. In this way, the Soviet Union is similar to the fascist powers of the 1930's which relied on military strength and aggression to compete with the economically stronger Western powers.

The focus of the rivalry between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. is Europe, with its highly trained working class and developed economic base. Whoever dominates Europe can use this to try to achieve world hegemony. The stationing of so large a number of troops in Europe is an indication of the sharpness of the contradiction there.

At the same time, the rivalry of the two superpowers extends to every region of the globe. Each superpower wants to dominate the many countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America — to control their economies, to establish a military presence in key geographical areas, and to dominate trade routes, among other reasons. The more countries and regions a superpower can dominate, the stronger position it is in to wage war.

The attempts by the two superpowers to spread their influence over other countries, and their competition with each other, has generated or fanned up many local wars — such as the two Soviet-backed invasions of Zaire and the 1978 Ethiopian offensive against Eritrea. In many other parts of the world, the superpowers are threatening aggression, and war could break out at any time.

Thus it can be seen that the two superpowers are the main source of war in the world today. They are headed on a course which will sooner or later lead to a world war, into which they will try to drag other countries.

The Marxist view towards war

A basic Marxist principle is that war is a continuation of politics, and thus the proletariat determines its attitude towards a particular war by examining what politics the war continues. In the past, the proletariat has opposed certain wars — wars which were a continuation of reactionary predatory politics, such as the
A NEW WORLD WAR

Spanish-American War of 1898, or World War I. Regardless of the rhetoric used by the imperialists to justify them, both these wars were between robbers fighting over booty. Both were imperialist wars fought for the redivision of the world.

Then there have been progressive or revolutionary wars, such as wars for national liberation and wars against imperialist aggression, which the proletariat has supported. The war for national independence in Algeria during the 1960’s and the Korean people’s war of resistance against U.S. aggression are examples of revolutionary wars.

In other words, the proletariat differentiates between just and unjust wars.

In examining the world political situation today, it is clear the imperialist countries, and particularly the two superpowers, are preparing for war to continue their politics. As we pointed out above, the two superpowers are preparing for world war to redivide the world. In the event of such a war, the people of the world would condemn both sides, for such a war would be fought for reactionary aims. In the U.S., the proletariat would strive to turn the imperialist war into a civil war against the bourgeoisie to win socialism.

The superpowers and the other imperialist countries also may launch other wars, such as against the oppressed or socialist countries. It is possible, for instance, that the Soviet Union may attack China or the U.S. invade Korea. The Soviet Union could invade Iran or the U.S. may send in troops to Nicaragua. In these instances, the wars would be unjust on the side of the superpowers, and the people of the world would condemn them and support the victims of aggression in their fight for national sovereignty.

What, though, would be our attitude towards a war launched by one or the other superpower against the second world countries of Europe? Most of the second world countries are imperialist countries. Would such a war also be reactionary on both sides?

In our view, condemning both sides would be wrong. Such a position would not be based on a concrete analysis of the politics of this war. The aim of the superpowers, especially the Soviet superpower which is most threatening Europe, would be to subjugate the European countries and seize their rich industrial base. For the European people however, the war to defend national in-
dependence would be a just war and a war the proletariat would strive to lead. For the European people this war would be one for national survival and against enslavement. It would be a just war of national defense deserving of the support of the people of the world.

**Lessons from the previous world wars**

Two world wars have been fought already on European soil and important lessons can be learned from studying them to help understand what our stance should be, especially towards a war in Europe today.

As was mentioned earlier, the first world war was an unjust war on both sides. Lenin denounced the bourgeoisie of both sides of the war, since their aims were to take control over each other’s colonies. Lenin called for the workers to rise up and turn the imperialist war into a civil war to overthrow the bourgeoisie.

While Lenin laid stress on combating the opportunists of the Second International who sided with their own bourgeoisie in the war, he also opposed certain “left” views which denied the possibility of progressive, national wars in the era of imperialism. These “left” views maintained that the proletariat, either in the capitalist countries or in the oppressed countries, could never join with other classes to fight a national war as this would lead to class collaboration.

Lenin exposed these views as incorrectly denying the oppressed peoples the ability to unite with the broadest possible sectors to defeat the aggressors. Such incorrect views are a form of social-chauvinism, that is, siding with the imperialist bourgeoisie against the efforts of the oppressed to free themselves.

Lenin, on the other hand, maintained that wars of national liberation were inevitable, progressive, and revolutionary. Furthermore, Lenin pointed out that a revolutionary national war could even be fought in Europe in the future.²

Lenin made it clear on many occasions he did not oppose all national wars:

*The fatherland, the nation are historical categories. I am not at all opposed to wars waged in defense of democracy or against national oppression, nor do I fear such words*
U.S.-U.S.S.R. Military Capacity
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as "defense of the fatherland" in reference to these wars or to insurrections. Socialists always side with the oppressed and, consequently, cannot be opposed to wars whose purpose is democratic or socialist struggle against oppression. . . .

Every fair-sized war is prepared beforehand. When a revolutionary war is being prepared, democrats and socialists are not afraid to state in advance that they favor "defense of the fatherland" in this war. (Emphasis in original).

Later during the 1930's, it was becoming evident that another world war was in the making. Stalin and other Marxist-Leninists based themselves on a concrete analysis of the world conditions and concluded that the new world war that was brewing was not a typical imperialist war like World War I. They saw that the fascist powers were threatening the independence of all countries and aimed to replace democracy with fascist dictatorship. Stalin wrote: "The Second World War against the Axis powers, unlike the First World War, assumed from the very outset the character of an anti-fascist war, a war of liberation, one of the tasks of which was to restore democratic liberties."4

By 1941 when the war became fully anti-fascist in character after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, Mao Zedong clearly stated the Communist Party of China's support for all the anti-fascist forces:

For Communists throughout the world the task now is to mobilize the people of all countries and organize an international united front to fight against fascism and defend the Soviet Union, defend China, and defend the freedom and independence of all nations. In the present period, every effort must be concentrated on combatting fascist enslavement.5

These experiences from the past show that Marxist-Leninists cannot adopt a simplistic approach to the question of war. Each war must be evaluated concretely. War is a complex event; it precipitates many other developments. Wars often go through twists and turns, and consequently the nature of a war may also change.
A NEW WORLD WAR

There may also be different types of wars which simultaneously take place. Thus the proletariat can keep its bearings only if it clearly focuses on reality and does not become muddled with preconceptions.

Today some may find it difficult to conceive that the European proletariat may have to come to the forefront to defend the national independence of their countries. There were similar doubts among some during the 1930's, but it became evident that those who did not rally in "defense of the fatherland" against fascist invasion, actually found themselves in the same camp as the Nazi aggressors.

Mao Zedong well described the proletariat's view towards the reactionaries' threat of war. He stated, "First, we are against it; second, we are not afraid of it." The proletariat would like peace, which is one reason why the proletariat is striving to overthrow imperialism once and for all. But at the same time, he pointed out it does no good to be afraid of war. One must make preparations to deal with it, and in the eventuality of war, turn a bad thing into a good thing:

_The First World War was followed by the birth of the Soviet Union with a population of 200 million. The Second World War was followed by the emergence of the socialist camp with a combined population of 900 million. If the imperialists insist on launching a third world war, it is certain that several hundred million more will turn to socialism, and then there will not be much room left on earth for the imperialists; it is also likely that the whole structure of imperialism will utterly collapse._

Suggested readings:

_Chairman Mao's Theory of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds Is A Major Contribution to Marxism-Leninism, pp. 64-79._

_Study Guide for Chairman Mao's Theory of the Three Worlds, Yenan Book Reprints, pp. 8-11._
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Discussion Questions:

1. Why does war arise “out of the very nature of imperialism”?

2. Why are the two superpowers the only imperialist powers now in a position to launch a new world war?

3. Under what circumstances did Lenin oppose the slogan “defense of the fatherland;” under what circumstances did he support its use?

4. Why did Stalin note that World War II from the outset was different than the First World War and had an anti-fascist character?

Footnotes:


Chapter 6

Combat the Danger of World War; Oppose the Superpowers

The situation in the world at this time is very favorable for the masses and the revolution. At the same time, the danger of war between the two superpowers is escalating.

The danger of war between big imperialist countries is not something new in the world, as this threat has existed since imperialism first emerged, in the latter part of the 19th century. But it has not been a central problem in the world revolutionary movement for most of the post-World War II period. During the 1950's and 1960's, most attention in the international arena was given to the wars of aggression which the imperialist countries, especially the U.S., launched or threatened to launch against the oppressed and socialist countries.

Consequently, in the U.S., there are some in the revolutionary movement who are unfamiliar with the question of inter-imperialist war and what our tasks should be toward this threat. Some underestimate or even altogether ignore the danger, believing that the proletariat need not be concerned with the war danger. There are others who even believe that war will be advantageous to the masses as it will weaken the bourgeoisie.

In our view, these are seriously mistaken ideas. While the masses of people have no stake in supporting either of the two superpowers in their war preparations, it would be entirely wrong to conclude that we should not pay attention to the war danger. In fact, the proletariat must give close attention to the danger of war.
In the event of war between the two superpowers, the masses of people will suffer most terribly. A third world war will cause tremendous destruction and loss of lives. World war brings out most sharply the irrational and criminal nature of monopoly capital. This is one reason why the proletariat is striving to destroy imperialism once and for all. Only the destruction of imperialism can eliminate the danger of war. In particular there must be victorious socialist revolution, overthrowing the bourgeoisies in the two superpowers, to end the threat of world war.

To accomplish this task, though, the working class must fight to postpone as long as possible the actual outbreak of war. This way, the masses of people throughout the world will have more time to become alerted to the danger of war, make preparations and develop their revolutionary work. The longer war can be put off, the more the masses can develop their organized strength and therefore, be better able to deal with the tasks war would bring. This goes for the socialist countries as well. These preparations will be decisive factors in case of world war.

If there is imperialist war with the Soviet Union, the U.S. proletariat would strive to turn that war into a civil war to overthrow the bourgeoisie and win socialism. A war with the Soviet Union most likely would greatly weaken the superpowers. But it is a slander of communism to therefore say that world war is advantageous to the masses. This slander is being used against socialist China by some today, to cover up the actual war danger posed by the two superpowers.

The attention that China and communists give to the danger of war is not a sign of encouragement, but rather a sign of the efforts to oppose such a war. Such a war is in the making, so one must take steps to deal with it. The Communist Party of China and all genuine communists oppose imperialist war. As Comrade Mao Zedong pointed out in 1939 about the then-socialist Soviet Union:

*The foreign policy of the Soviet Union over a very long period of time has consistently been one of peace. For its own socialist construction the Soviet Union has always needed peace, has always needed to strengthen its peaceful relations with other countries and prevent an anti-Soviet war; for the sake of peace on a world scale, it also*
(1) The Soviets continue to fan up divisions within the Arab camp in the Middle East.

(2) The Soviets staged an assassination and a bloody coup d'etat in North and South Yemen during late June 1978.

(3) The Soviets are trying to infiltrate the Iranian popular movement and have deployed massive troops on the Soviet-Iranian border.


(5) Moscow provided weapons for Baluchistan insurrectionists in Pakistan.

(6) Viet Nam is the Soviet "outpost" in Asia. The Kremlin uses Viet Nam to do its dirty work in Asia, stationing 50,000 troops in Laos (7) and invading Kampuchea (8). The Viet Nam authorities have also given Moscow the go-ahead to establish a naval base at Cam Ranh Bay. Viet Nam is also being used by the Soviets to do their bidding in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), which includes Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines. The Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister toured the ASEAN countries in October, trying to revive Moscow's idea for a "collective security pact."

(7) Philippines. Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Nikolai Fiyubin recently visited Manila to try to woo the Philippine government.

(10) The Soviets, who occupy four of Japan's northern islands, have stepped up military exercises there; they forced Japan into signing an unequal fishing agreement in April 1978, reducing Japan's limit from 62,000 tons to 42,500 tons of fish in the open seas. The Soviets also tried desperately to undermine the China-Japan friendship treaty.

(11) Last May 9, the Soviets staged an armed attack into China's Heilongjiang (Hilungkiang) Province and increased its militarization along the Soviet-China border.

(12) The Soviets made overtures toward the illegal Chiang regime on Taiwan and the Pak clique in south Korea (13).

(14) The Soviets have also upgraded their Pacific fleet, and on several occasions sent warships and planes into Japan's territorial waters.
needed to check the aggression of the fascist countries and delay the outbreak of an imperialist war for as long as possible.\(^1\)

The policy of communists toward war is to oppose it, but at the same time to make preparations to deal with it in case of its outbreak.

**Postponing the outbreak of war**

Today, the work of communists throughout the world must include postponing the outbreak of war. This is not in contradiction to developing our revolutionary work, since our efforts to overthrow the superpowers must include combating their reactionary measures, including preparing for war.

On an international scale, communists must alert the masses to the growing danger of war. Communists must point out all the various economic, ideological, political and military ways the two superpowers are preparing for war, and lead the masses to stand against the two superpowers. Communists need to expose the hypocrisy of Carter's "human rights" campaign and the Soviets' "anti-imperialism" as policies designed to win people to their intervention and aggression. The two superpowers also make a lot of noise about "detente" and "disarmament," but these too are smokescreens for their actual war preparations, which go on unabated.

Each superpower strives to gain an advantage over the other to be in a better position to launch a war. Consequently, the people of the world must expose and combat every step the two superpowers take in their drives for hegemony, whether by political, economic or military means. Actions taken by the people of a certain country or group of countries against the superpowers help the people of those countries, but also help to frustrate the superpowers' worldwide plans.

In recent years, there have been a number of actions that have weakened or isolated the superpowers. Last year, Somalia kicked out thousands of Soviet advisors and closed down Soviet military bases on its territory; the Zairian people defeated two Soviet-backed invasions of their country; the Panamanian people achieved sovereignty over their canal from the U.S.; the
Nicaraguan people are fighting to overthrow the U.S.-supported Somoza dictatorship. All these and many others have objectively frustrated the plans of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. They have restricted the superpowers’ ability to use these countries’ resources and land for their own military and economic purposes. They have curbed the superpowers’ ability to use their strategic waterways, ports, and location as a stepping stone to gain world hegemony. Thus these and many other actions around the world have contributed to delaying the outbreak of war.

What, though, does the threat of war mean for the proletariat in the U.S. — one of the two superpowers?

Overall, it means that we must take advantage of the relatively favorable conditions at present to intensify our revolutionary work. The growing danger of war requires that we see more urgent the task of forging a single, unified communist party in this country. Such a party will enable communists to more widely expand our influence among the masses and become more of a force affecting events of the day.

The U.S. proletariat can contribute to the task of postponing war by building support for all the anti-superpower actions of other countries and peoples internationally. Because these actions are directed at a common enemy, they are in the direct interest of the international working class. It is important that the masses of people in the U.S. also fight the war preparations of the imperialists and expose the schemes and maneuvers of the government’s foreign policy.

The vast majority of American people want peace. The bourgeoisie plays on this just desire with false promises of “detente” or by promoting bourgeois pacifism. Communists need to educate the masses of people about these deceptions and about the growing war danger. We need to show that the war danger comes from the imperialist system itself.

Part of postponing the outbreak of war is combating the developing political and economic attacks on the masses. To wage war, the bourgeoisie needs to secure its homefront in the U.S. Among other things, this means that the U.S. imperialists are out to weaken the trade unions and tighten control over the workers. They are beefing up their police forces and repressive apparatus. They are attacking the masses’ living standards to squeeze more
and more out of the laboring people. Communists must, therefore, strive to lead mass struggles against the bourgeoisie's measures to tighten their own rule. This includes the bourgeoisie's attacks on living standards, political rights, and its intensification of national oppression and the exploitation of the working class.

At the same time that we fight against superpower arms build-ups, we also need to expose the tendency of appeasement among the bourgeoisie.

**What is appeasement?**

As a response to Soviet social-imperialism — the more aggressive of the two superpowers — there is a certain tendency among the U.S. and European ruling circles towards appeasement. Appeasement is a policy of conniving with the Soviets in hopes of at least temporarily diverting or profiting from Soviet aggression. The policy of appeasement favors giving concessions to the Soviets and increasing economic ties, such as through huge loans, investments, and trade in advanced technology and industrial equipment. Some appeasers even advocate giving up parts of Europe or other areas of the world to the Soviets, in the mistaken belief that this will satisfy social-imperialism's appetite. Some believe that appeasement will lessen the danger of war, buy more time for U.S. war preparations to take place, or even turn Soviet war aims toward the East.

But nothing could be further from the truth. By way of example, the U.S.S.R.'s victory in Angola only encouraged its aggression in Ethiopia, Zaire and other parts of Africa.

Appeasement is an imperialist policy which disarms the people in the face of the war danger and objectively helps the Soviets grow stronger. Appeasement makes the Soviets want even more, and better equips them to launch a war — thus bringing the outbreak of war even closer. This is why the appeasement policy is particularly dangerous and must be exposed.

The world has seen the results of an appeasement policy in the past. During Hitler's rise to power, ruling circles in the U.S., France and Britain pursued an appeasement policy toward Hitler. The result was that they actually helped fascism to grow. With each new concession, Hitler grew in strength, which brought World War II closer.
Stalin, Mao and communists during the 1930's condemned the appeasement policy as a reactionary policy. The Soviet Union tried to utilize the contradictions between the western capitalist democracies and the fascist countries by encouraging "collective security" and cooperation with the Soviet Union. This was entirely in keeping with the Soviet Union's aim of delaying the outbreak of war for as long as possible.

Today, as part of opposing the danger of war, we should expose the modern appeasers who wish to connive with or assist the Soviet social-imperialists. We should also oppose attempts by the U.S. bourgeoisie to incite the Soviet Union against the socialist countries, especially China. And we should support the efforts of the socialist countries and all countries threatened with aggression to strengthen themselves and their national defense.

In the U.S., opposing appeasement does not mean we support U.S. war preparations and war mongering. We oppose all the imperialist policies of the U.S. bourgeoisie and show how they are leading toward war. The appeasement policy at this time, though, is particularly dangerous because of the illusions it fosters that war is not on the horizon, and because of the actual assistance it gives to the social-imperialists.

Build an international united front

While imperialist war is inevitable, the international proletariat must do everything possible under the current conditions to build up its strength, develop its work and help delay the outbreak of this war. It should unite with all the various anti-hegemony actions of the countries, nations and peoples of the world as they are all in each other's interests. The developing international united front is helping to weaken the two superpowers, thereby helping to delay the outbreak of war, isolate the main enemies of the people, and advance the interests of the overwhelming majority of the world's people.

History has shown that war and revolution are very closely connected. War is a result of the aggravation of the fundamental contradictions in the world, and in turn war itself further aggravates the contradictions. Under these circumstances, the proletariat faces many challenges as well as potential difficulties. As long as the proletariat squarely confronts reality, it will be able to deal
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with developing circumstances to advance its cause and win ultimate victory.

Suggested readings:

Chairman Mao Tsetung’s Differentiation of the Three Worlds Is A Major Contribution to Marxism-Leninism, especially pp. 64-79.


Discussion Questions

1. Why does the proletariat oppose imperialist war?
2. Why should the proletariat work to postpone imperialist war?
3. What are some ways the danger of war is being combated?
4. How is combating the danger of war connected to our other revolutionary tasks?

Footnotes:

We have devoted seven study columns to Mao Zedong's theory of the three worlds because of the guidance it gives for the international revolutionary movement. The three worlds theory is significant basically because it tells the truth — it is a concrete analysis of concrete conditions. The theory points out what we believe to be undeniable truths: the U.S. and U.S.S.R. are the two reactionary strongholds in the world today; there is a distinction between the lesser capitalist countries and the two superpowers; the oppressed countries and nations of the world constitute a great revolutionary force; of the two superpowers, the social-imperialists are the more dangerous as they are on the rise; and the contention of the superpowers is leading towards war.

The three worlds theory is correct, in other words, because it is in accordance with objective reality.

Comrade Mao’s analysis of the world is a masterful application of Marxist dialectical materialism. It indicates the principal target in the world struggle and assesses how all the various contradictions in the world should be utilized to help defeat the main enemy. The theory makes use of the contradictions among the capitalist countries, between the two superpowers themselves, between the superpowers and the oppressed countries, among others. The theory helps the international proletariat build the broadest possible united front against the main enemy.

The three worlds theory is a living application of Comrade
Mao's policy of "uniting all who can be united."

The three worlds theory understands the world in motion, and not as static concepts. Mao pointed out the motion of the second world countries — once imperialist overlords who are now themselves threatened. The two superpowers, too, are in motion — the U.S. was once the world’s policeman but now is declining in power, while the Soviet Union is on the rise. The third world also is in motion — it is increasingly playing an independent role in the international arena.

Because the theory of the three worlds helps us to understand things in the process of development, it provides us great insight, helping us to anticipate the future. We can sort out the complex events in the world.

Most importantly, the theory of the three worlds is a guide to action. It illuminates the path for struggle; it provides the international proletariat with the power of a correct orientation for its struggle; and it provides the international proletariat with tremendous confidence, for it shows how to forge the broadest possible united front to isolate and defeat the main enemies at this stage in the world revolution.

Because the theory of the three worlds provides a correct view of the international arena, the two superpowers and their agents work overtime to slander and distort the theory. The revisionists in the U.S. connected to the Soviet social-imperialists constantly attack this theory. Their reaction shows that the theory of the three worlds hits home, for what the revisionists hate most is the clear stand the theory takes against the Soviet social-imperialists.

The revisionist press produces all sorts of attacks on the Marxist-Leninists, and particularly China, for upholding the theory of the three worlds. The revisionists try to cast doubts or spread confusions about events in the world in order to cover up or even promote social-imperialism. Some people do become misled by the revisionists’ propaganda, but what they are most unclear about generally is the social-imperialist nature of the Soviet Union itself.

But the revisionists are not the only ones who have slandered the theory of the three worlds. Other forces with a more “left” veil also attack the theory as “class collaborationist.”

But are not these slanders similar to those which Lenin’s critics
threw at him when he supported the right of oppressed nations to self-determination? Were not similar slanders hurled at Stalin when he encouraged united resistance to fascism in the 1930's and the Second World War? And were not similar charges raised by the Trotskyites in China when Mao Zedong advocated forging a united front to defeat imperialism in China?

But life itself proved Lenin correct, and not his critics. Lenin’s revolutionary practice successfully helped unleash the revolutionary potential of the oppressed nations. Life itself proved Stalin correct, and not his critics who eventually wound up on the same side as the fascists. And life itself proved Mao Zedong correct, and not his critics, as Mao successfully led the united front to win victory.

The three worlds theory opposes metaphysics — of not seeing the world as composed of contradictions and in motion. It opposes phrase-mongering, of just talking about “class struggle” but not making a scientific analysis of the actual forces in the world today.

For the U.S. proletariat

The theory of the three worlds should guide the work of communists of all lands, including those of the U.S., one of the two superpowers. It is not a theory just for the third world or the second world or the socialist countries, but for the international proletariat. This is because it correctly defines who are our friends and enemies on a world scale.

Here in the U.S., the theory shows how the U.S. proletariat has allies all around the world. It shows that the objective of our struggle, the overthrow of the imperialist bourgeoisie, is assisted by the struggles of people, nations and countries all over the globe. Although we live right in the land of a superpower, the three worlds theory shows how it is the enemy who is isolated, not ourselves.

At the same time the theory brings out clearly the dangers that lie on the horizon. One cannot deny the growing signs of war. The theory therefore impresses upon us the need to do more and better communist work. We need to expand our influence among the masses and strive to forge communist unity.
Comrade Mao has passed away, but his legacy is immortal. The theory of the three worlds is one of his great contributions to Marxism-Leninism. The struggles of the world’s people and the daily development of world events are the greatest testimony confirming the correctness of his theory.

Discussion questions:

1. In what way is the theory of the three worlds an application of dialectical materialism?

2. How do the revisionists attack the theory and how should we win people away from the influence of the revisionists?

3. How do the “left” critics attack the theory and how should we win people away from their influence?

Readings:
Mao Zedong, *On Contradiction*. 