AFRICA AND MARXISM-LENINISM-MAO ZEDONG THOUGHT

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We do not need any expert to confirm the deterioration of the material conditions of the people of Africa, particularly south of the Sahara. Social collapse and genocide have become the keywords to describe the situation in Africa. At the same time we do not see any stirring of social forces aimed at bringing down the neocolonial order which is responsible for the disaster of our times, despite the existence of the working masses. The ideologues of imperialism speak of the recolonization of the continent as a solution to its problem. American “scientists” even undertake research on the blacks’ genes to prove the source of their incapacity. The African revolutionary movement seems to be on the ebb. Therefore, we understand that the ripening of the objective conditions alone cannot generate revolution as long as the subjective conditions fail to ripen.

The role of revolutionary theory in all social movements for the overthrow of the oppressive order cannot be denied. The most important merit of Marx and Engels, says Lenin, is that they gave a theoretical foundation to the historical role of the proletariat as an imposing revolutionary force capable of destroying the capitalist regime and establishing a new society, a communist society. They showed the proletariat and the working masses the way to emancipation, proved the necessity of the communist party as a leading force in the workers’ movement, and elaborated the scientific foundations of its strategy and tactics.

Today the necessity of Marxism-Leninism for the national liberation movement in Africa is unquestionable. The existing poverty of the African revolutionary movement shows that the essential elements of the classics pointed out by Lenin are still relevant. Correct analysis of the neocolonial system and the confidence that the revolutionary way is the only means to liberate subjected peoples cannot be the result of a simple report of local daily deterioration. Use of the theory is indispensable in
order to understand and assimilate one's own experiences and those of other struggles all over the world—the struggle of the proletariat against capitalism, and the struggle of the peoples against imperialism. So, Marxism-Leninism is in fact important for the national liberation struggle and social emancipation in Africa.

The reduction of Marxist influence in Africa has made the introduction of all kinds of neo-colonial, petty-bourgeois and confusing theses possible. Instead of the establishment of parties representing the working class interest, the establishment of non-governmental organizations were recommended as the solution to the fundamental problems of the masses of the people. The international community, we mean the IMF and the World Bank, have suppressed all local collective initiatives. In such confusion, it was difficult for the people to realize the alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry, which is a necessary condition to form a striking force of the African revolution. Marxist-Leninist parties are, in the present conditions, the only effective instruments to prevent the extermination of the African people. The extent of the genocide in Rwanda is partly due to the absence of such a party. On the national level, we know now that the military superiority of the neocolonial regime was not enough to eliminate one million people in three or four weeks. The agents of neocolonialism has spread the ideology of the extreme right.

This has been decisive in reducing the resistance of the Rwandese people to nothing, leading a part of the population to collaborate with the fascists. On the international level, the propaganda line of the imperialist-controlled mass media has hindered the solidarity of democrats and revolutionaries of the world with the people to denounce the Western powers who supported the slaughterers. The political conflicts related to the neocolonial crisis are presented as conflicts caused by ethnic hatred among the blacks and are explained away by the line that they are used to killing each other. Only a Marxist party capable of making a correct analysis of African societies and educating the working masses could, on the one hand, protect them from the influence of the ideology of the extreme right and, on the other hand, furnish on an international scale the necessary means to refute imperialist propaganda.

The October Revolution and the Chinese revolution, fruits of Marxist thought, did not leave the African people unconcerned. They were the best examples of liberation and produced reliable allies. The national liberation movement became more radical. We had unquestionable victories over imperialism, even if some of them ended in an impasse. In the fifties and the sixties, nobody could call himself revolutionary without having had any contact with Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, even if only sporadically. Several mass and guerrilla movements called themselves Marxist. These included the insurrections of Congo-Kinshasa, Congo-Brazzaville, Cameroon, the guerrillas of Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and many others. We do not know of any large progressive mass movement that did not come in contact with Marxism-Leninism: some closely and others distantly.

Although the contact between Marxism-Leninism and African revolutionary movements is a reality, it remains nevertheless small and superficial. Marxism-Leninism penetrated Africa more through revisionist misrepresentation which robbed it of its revolutionary essence. “Marxist” works did not go beyond the petty-bourgeois sphere. Marxist thought are practically not translated into African languages south of the Sahara. So the theory is not accessible to the broad masses. The immediate consequence is that African Marxists do not care to make profound studies in order to understand the specific problems of Africa. For example, in many regions, the issue of peasant demand for land is not a big problem. What specific slogans should be used in order to mobilize the peasants so that they join the revolutionary movement? In Zaire and Cameroon, the rural guerrillas did not have a long-lasting impact. Among other reasons, the revolutionary leaders of these movements simply plagiarized Mao’s texts about working among the
peasants. The work of revisionism has been disastrous: putschism replaced people’s war, the petty-bourgeois party replaced the proletarian party.

Among those who were presented as great Maoists who recommended popular struggle, we saw that they only retained its rebellious spirit, its tactic of surrounding the city from the countryside. But they did not retain much of the ideas of Marxism-Leninism directed at the necessity of concrete analysis of concrete conditions and of the existence of the party. This practice is not the exclusive right of African revolutionaries; many parties and Marxist-Leninist currents throughout the world have regularly committed the same mistakes.

Many “Marxist-Leninists” have abandoned the positions of the great thinkers of Marxism-Leninism. Marx, Lenin and Mao, throughout their practice, were not simply content with the conclusions of their predecessors. They systematically developed theory at all times, which led them back regularly to dialectical and historical materialism. They knew that the best way to understand the conclusions of others was to be certain of the method used. They could thus correctly relate the conclusions to the context of the period when the thinker made his studies. For example, Lenin complemented Marx when he designated the poor peasantry as the proletariat’s ally in the revolution in a backward country. Mao complemented Lenin when he elaborated the strategy of protracted people’s war.

All this means that even if we have a high opinion of a Marxist thinker, we should never dwell only on his practical conclusions. Without belittling the practical victory of socialism as a means of stimulating the revolutionaries to draw their inspiration from Marxist classics, we should, in the Marxist spirit, further make profound studies of all big problems that we encounter in organizing society, in waging class struggle, and in building the party.

The African revolutionaries have the urgent task of making Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought penetrate deeply into the working masses by translating them into the people’s languages, making specific studies, and founding proletarian parties. That is a vital necessity because the salvation of Africa will come only with the mobilization of the people against imperialist domination and the building of a new society, a socialist society.