

To All Ldn cdes
From DC

WHAT IS THE THEORY OF THE THREE WORLDS?

The DC was asked to give a lead in the effort to better understand Mao Zedong's Theory of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds (TTW). This paper is the first of 3 or 4 to be distributed before we hold a London meeting on the subject in late November. The National conference on the international situation is due to be held next June and our study on a district level will be well directed in preparation for it.

In the 4 years since the Editorial Dept of the People's Daily of China brought out the booklet expounding the theory very clearly and precisely (Foreign Languages Press 1977) it has come to occupy a most important position in Marxist-Leninist circles everywhere. Acceptance of the theory as a strategic concept has become the touchstone for Marxist-Leninists, in the same way that the realisation that the Soviet Union had become an M-L basic principle in the previous 10 years. It is the TTW which proved to be the tombstone for the social-chauvinist Birchites of the CPB(M-L) and revealed the hollowness of the adulation of the Bainesites of the then CPE(M-L). They categorically rejected it. At the same time, sycophants of the new theory appeared who embraced it so tightly that the pips squeaked.

Today it has become a line of demarcation which marks us out among all the 'left' forces in Britain. This in itself is no reason to accept it out of hand. Rather, it imposes a heavy burden on us to understand and apply it. We have long accepted the TTW in words (and the way we have applied it in the last 3 years will be the subject of the next paper) but our understanding of it needs to be deepened. Understanding concrete reality and applying the TTW to it is crucial to our development of a solid body of theory on which the proletarian party must be built.

Is it Mao Zedong's Theory?

This question still gets asked, even by adherents of the TTW. The clearest indication that he formulated it was in Feb. 1974 when he categorised the Three Worlds. The significance of it may have been overlooked outside of China because we had long been used to hearing of 'The Third World' which in the 50's and 60's meant (1) the Western imperialist world (2) the socialist world - including the Soviet Union and (3) the under-developed world. Mao's statement was in his later declining years when ultra-leftism was rife in the CPC, and its implications may also have been deliberately ignored by the Gang of Four.

But the TTW does not only define three worlds. It also stresses that of the 2 First World countries, it is the Soviet Union that is the most dangerous threat to world peace. This conclusion had also been made by Mao in another context when he categorised it as a state of the fascist type. As is well-known there is a trend which today regards the Soviet Union as the main enemy of the people of the world and thus extends the above conclusion.

Besides these 2 major features there are numerous other features which are completely in accord with Mao Zedong Thought - the broad united front, linking national and class struggles, defining the principal aspect of a contradiction etc. There should not be the slightest doubt in any comrades' minds that this indeed is Mao Zedong's theory.

The Era of the Deline of Imperialism

The present-day fans of the Gang of Four (Nottingham Communist Group et al) vehemently denounce the TTW as an anti-Marxist theory and label those who accept it as revisionists indistinguishable from Eurocommunists. These super-revolutionaries regard the TTW as reactionary and as calling for capitulation to imperialism.

The reason for this view is that the NCG, like Trotskyist groups in general, reject Lenin's thesis about the unevenness of the development of imperialism. This leads them to regard all imperialisms as equally dangerous and equally hostile to the progressive world forces. The TTW not only points

out that uneven development is a feature of imperialism, but that the two biggest imperialist powers have become qualitatively different to the others. Hence they are labelled superpowers because they are so much more powerful than the others that only they can entertain the notion of world hegemony. They constitute the First World. It would be extremely difficult to deny this reality, or that the contradiction between these 2 superpowers is very powerful indeed, despite all their attempts at collusion.

This point about the uneven development of imperialism is extremely important today, just as it was in Lenin's day. Kautsky denied this thesis and held that a single world imperialist system - ultraimperialism - now existed and was beneficial to the workers and oppressed peoples of the world! We cannot deny the contradictions amongst the imperialists and denounce them all as a single entity. We must denounce imperialism as a system without forgetting about its inner contradictions. These inter-imperialist contradictions have already dragged the world into two wars. The Theory of the Three Worlds has kept that fact firmly in its sights.

Lenin pointed out that in the era of imperialism, the national liberation struggles of oppressed peoples and nations formed a component part - an essential component - of the revolutionary forces in the world. Since that time most colonies have achieved political independence and the Soviet Union has entered the ranks of the imperialists. In the last 30 years it is quite undeniable that the sharpest struggles against imperialism (and hegemonism) have been in the Third World, and that the imperialist powers as a whole have been weakened.

The decline of the West European imperialists was accompanied by the rise of the US imperialists in the immediate post-war period. In recent years we have in turn seen US imperialism decline and Soviet hegemonism on the rise. At the same time during this whole post-war period there has been a growing development of the unity, independence and non-alignment of the countries of the Third World. In particular the victory of the new-democratic revolution in China led by the CPC struck a mortal blow to the old-style imperialists. The Korean and Vietnamese peoples also won great victories which changed the balance of forces. In Africa, Latin America and others parts of Asia too, defeat on defeat has been the lot of the imperialists and they have been irrevocably weakened.

The Main Revolutionary Force

In this same period the working class struggles in the imperialist countries have not been so successful and we have not seen the overthrow of a single imperialist state by its proletariat. So the validity of the TTW's conclusion that it is the Third World that constitutes the main forces against imperialism, colonialism, and hegemonism, is very forceful. To understand better how it is possible for such national contradictions to be the principal ones in the world we must remember Marx's self-criticism over Ireland. Marx admitted he was wrong in thinking Ireland would be free only after the English revolution was won, and said that further study

had shown him that the Irish connection had to be broken before there could be any prospect of revolution in Britain. In the era of ~~xxxxx~~ imperialism the struggle against national oppression is in the last analysis a matter of class struggle. Again the TTW carefully dissects out the forces which further the interests of the international class struggle and carefully evaluates them.

Of course the superrevolutionaries deny the importance of the Third World ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ and see the main contradiction in the world as being between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

The Second World

This is where the complexity of the forces at work in shaping the future is most evident, and it is the most relevant part of the TTW for Britain. The Second World constitutes the lesser imperialist countries of Western Europe, Canada and Japan. (The position of Ireland, Greece, Australasia and Eastern Europe is not quite clear since they have some features of both Second and Third World countries. This difficulty does not invalidate TTW. In general we would regard them also as Second World countries).

The Second World has a dual nature. On the one hand it continues to exploit and enrich itself at the expense of the Third World countries and peoples. On the other hand the Second World faces the problem of being dominated by one or other superpower.

This has led them to find they have common interests on many issues despite the contradictions that exist between them. In addition, because of the superpower threat and their own dependence on the Third World for raw materials and markets, there is a growing community of interest between them. On the questions of Israel and the PLO, Iran, El Salvador, Kampuchea, Afghanistan, non-alignment, the new international economic order, nuclear free zones, the Second World as a whole takes a far more progressive stand than the two superpowers. The reason for their stand may not be much more than self-interest but the truth of the matter is that in their strategy for survival these second rate imperialists have to make concessions to the Third World undreamt of in their heyday. To some extent they too are tasting the bitterness of being overshadowed by the superpowers who make regular offers that apparently cannot be refused. But they are oppressor nations and imperialists after all and in any ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ anti-super-power alliance they cannot be trusted very far by the oppressed and exploited. Still, the present crisis of imperialism is going to be protracted and with the superpowers' persistent presence the Second World is going to need the Third World's friendship for a long while yet.

The Proletariat

One other aspect must not be forgotten in understanding the TTW. In all countries there is a working class and there are class antagonisms within each country. In the First and Second Worlds, this contradiction is a major one and is getting sharper as the economic crisis deepens. The class struggle is mounting on a world scale between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie but it is only here and there (eg Poland) that it becomes the principal contradiction and then only for short periods. In every country - even in Poland - the class struggle is conditioned by the might of the superpowers who are

constantly interfering and subverting through the threat of their military might or the operations of their intelligence services or fifth columns.

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The Theory of Three Worlds must not be seen as just something that applies to foreign relations. It is a theory of far greater scope and it will help us to understand British concrete reality in participating in the class struggle and the national struggle in Britain. It will help us to determine who are our friends and who are our enemies. If we apply it correctly we will be able to determine our priorities better.

The DC recommends a short reading list to complement study of the TTW and to prepare for the conference on the international situation.

Lenin - Imperialism the Highest State of Capitalism.
 Stalin - Marxism and the National Question.
 Mao - On New Democracy.

Finally, comrades should study the TTW in relation to the following questions in order to make the whole discussion of it more relevant and lively.

- I. Who is the main enemy of the British people today? Is it
 - (a) British imperialism
 - (b) The two superpowers
 - (c) Soviet hegemonism.

What are the implications of the answer for our anti-imperialist solidarity work and the lesser enemies listed?

2. How do we further the class struggle in the face of a threat to Britain's independence?

3. How do we guide the socialist revolution when national defence may become a reality.

4. How imminent is a world war and how can we try to avert it?

Addendum to WHAT IS THE THEORY OF THE THREE WORLDS?

The paragraphs below were inadvertently omitted from the study guide document with the above title. Some errata (not spelling mistakes) are also listed.

Page 3 (just before section on 'The Second World')

There is one aspect of the Third World that needs emphasising. We are not just concerned to support the Marxist-Leninist or proletarian forces in every Third World country. The problem is that it is very difficult indeed for us to understand in anything but the most general terms what class forces are at work and their inter-relationship. We have to support the Third World governments in general whatever their nature - even those which are Soviet-dominated. We especially support them when they take a big step towards building up their independence and non-alignment. We especially condemn them when they behave as Soviet surrogates because it is the Soviet Union which poses the main danger of world war. The pro-US regimes are also very unpopular but not quite as ruthless these days.

So we support the governments and peoples of the Third World in their anti-imperialist struggles. We must be also careful about denouncing those who accept US aid or have US investments. Today the US superpower is in decline and tries to maintain its control by financial means and indirect military pressure. The Soviet superpower is not so financially powerful and is more prepared to use military means to achieve its ends. We should keep in mind that there are Third World countries where collusion between the superpowers is dominant (Angola, Guyana) and others where contention is dominant (Middle East). It does not automatically follow that because the U.S. has greater investments in a particular country that it poses a greater threat than the Soviet Union. The expansionism of the Soviet Union is now becoming mainly expressed through its arms, and this again makes it the more dangerous superpower.

Page 3 (just before section on 'The Proletariat')

This means that in countries like Britain we will find our bourgeoisie taking a progressive stand on many issues. British imperialism has a dual strategy for survival - repression and concession - taken up by different sections at different times. The TTW would call for us to support those sections of the bourgeoisie who want to trade with black Africa and condemn those sections perpetuating the South African Connection.

ERRATA

p. 1 second para., 6th line, read:

the realisation that the Soviet Union had become an imperialist power was a basic M L principle in the previous 10 years.

For imperialism read imperialism.

For also (Japanese) read also

For countries (Chinese) read countries.

For ~~superpowers~~ read

DC Sept 1981.

London DC Document on "What is the Theory of the Three Worlds?"

As is clear from its introduction, this document was prepared by the London DC to help London cdes in their study. We thought it would be useful to circulate it throughout the organization, as a helpful contribution to our collective study on the international situation.

We thought some additional remarks were needed on a few points in the London document in order to clarify things further. That is what these comments are aimed at; we are not here trying to go into an exhaustive assessment of it, but to make extra points for comrades to consider.

1. The document says (p.1, para 2.) that acceptance of the Three Worlds Theory as a strategic concept "has become the touchstone for Marxist-Leninists." Has it? Or would it be more accurate to say "a touchstone?" Does the London DC document elevate the Three Worlds Theory too much above the rest of Marxism-Leninism or not?
 2. Is the statement about the CPB(M-L) and the Bainzites (same paragraph) true? Weren't factors such as its economism, its atrocious stand on Ireland and the absence of any real internal democracy far more important in discrediting the CPB(M-L)-which, in any case, is down but not yet out? As to the Bainsites, they were shunned by genuine communists before the Three Worlds Theory was put forward, chiefly because of their role as agents-provocateurs, and their sabotage and disruption of genuine progressive and revolutionary movements.
 3. Concerning the old idea of "Three Worlds" China took part in the first meeting of the non-aligned movement in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955, where Zhou En Lai put forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. It sought good relations with the Asian, African and Latin American countries from the establishment of the PRC. Nevertheless, it did not use the term "Third World" then or during the '60's, as it was not used simply to refer to "underdeveloped" countries, but to imply that these countries were neither socialist nor capitalist, but something different again. What Mao did when he talked about the "Three Worlds" was to give this twenty year old concept a new content.
- As the London document indicates, Mao is said to have enunciated the Three Worlds Theory in February, 1974. He was speaking to a foreign visitor then. In April, 1974, Deng Xiao-ping, speaking to the UN General Assembly, put forward a lot of the ideas contained in the theory. Pro-Gang of Four elements try to suggest this was his own initiative, but this claim simply doesn't hold up-the speech was never repudiated, even during the 1976 "movement to criticise Teng Hsiao-ping."
4. When Mao referred to the Soviet Union as a state of the fascist type (Page 1, para 5.), it was in the mid-'60's. At that time, in fact, he held that the US was the main enemy of the world's peoples (See his statement of May, 1970, when he still held that view); he was not saying that the Soviet Union was the most dangerous threat to peace.
 5. Two more general points-nither taken up in the introduction, but both of which need some consideration-a). What is it correct to give most emphasis to today about the danger from the Soviet Union-that it threatens world peace or that it poses the greater threat of war? (The first gives a more optimistic view on the possibilities of preserving peace)
b). Big question; does the Three Worlds Theory represent (in its analysis) the working out of the four main contradictions in the world at the present time, or is it something that is in contradiction to analysing the present world in those terms?

S.S. 9/10/182.