

## LENIN AND OUR TIME

Cheddi Jagan

"MARXISM-LENINISM is outdated; it is a foreign ideology, it has no relevance to present-day realities or to Guyana; we must develop our own ideology."

This is the theme song of the puppets and defenders of imperialism, and unfortunately of quite a few who call themselves revolutionary.

Because of deliberate distortion and genuine confusion, the need in this Lenin Centenary Year for propagating the principles of Marxism and the ideas of Lenin cannot be overemphasized.

Those who prattle about "Russian foreign ideology," should know that Marxism is not a lifeless dogma, not a completed, ready-made, immutable doctrine, but a living guide to action. It is a science; it requires a concrete analysis of a concrete situation. Like all sciences, it grows and develops in accordance with changing conditions and times. Its guiding principles are the instruments which permit a correct interpretation of objective reality, and an evaluation and understanding of historical development.

Lenin said:

We do not regard Marx's theory as something completed and inviolable; on the contrary, we are convinced that it has only laid the foundation stone of the science which socialists **must** develop in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life (Vol. 4, pp. 211-12).

DR. CHEDDI JAGAN, leader of the People's Progressive Party and Leader of the Opposition in Guyana, was Premier in the PPP government (1961-1964).

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To those who talk about "one directing centre," about "taking orders from Moscow," Lenin made it quite clear that each Marxist-Leninist Party must determine its policies and forms of activities in accordance with national conditions. He said that fundamental Marxist principles should be applied in a way "that will *correctly modify* these principles in certain *particulars*, correctly adapt and apply them to national and national-state distinctions" (Vol. 31, p. 92). In another context, he advised "to apply the general and basic principles of communism to the *specific relations* between classes and parties, to the *specific features* in the objective development towards communism, which are different in each country and which we must be able to discover, study, and predict" (*Ibid.*, p. 89).

But some reactionary elements will distort the feeling of national identity and pride, turning it to nationalism and chauvinism. They deny the Marxist principle of proletarian solidarity and internationalism. They contrapose patriotism, independence and sovereignty to internationalism. They do not want to admit that it is possible and necessary to harmonize national interests with international duties. They exploit nationalism and chauvinism to sow strife and divisions not only inside the socialist camp, but also between the socialist camp and the working-class movements in the imperialist states and the national liberation movement of the so-called Third World.

A Marxist-Leninist, revolutionary party is accountable not only to its own working class and people but also to the international working class and to mankind as a whole.

Lenin made it clear that "capital is an international force. To vanquish it, an international workers' alliance, an international workers' brotherhood, is needed" (Vol. 30, p. 293).

Those who take a narrow nationalistic position accen-

tuate "definite peculiar features" — economics, politics, culture, ethnic and religious divisions — and talk about national and cultural identity and the necessity to develop, "relying on one's own forces." By refusing to make any real distinction between the imperialist and the socialist world systems, by equating Western imperialism with what they refer to as "Soviet imperialism," they help to prop up the main ideological pillar of US imperialism, namely, anti-Sovietism, the modern garb of anti-communism, and at the same time to create disunity in the struggle against imperialism.

Charges of Soviet "imperialism" are closely related to the specious idea that imperialism and socialism have some "common features." One hears in response to the specific charge of conditional, "tied" aid from the Western imperialist states that all nations have egoistic objectives, and are motivated primarily by self-interest.

This observation does not take into consideration that the policies of the socialist countries are influenced by the trenchant dictum of Marxism that "no nation can be free if oppresses other nations." And this sets them apart from the policies of imperialism.

As regards motivation for socialist aid and assistance to the national liberation movements and Third-World countries, Lenin set out the position clearly when he pointed out in 1917:

Now, as always, we stand and shall continue to stand for the closest association and merging of the class-conscious workers of the advanced countries with the workers, peasants and slaves of all the oppressed countries . . . We shall exert every effort to foster association and merger with the Mongolians, Persians, Indians, Egyptians. We believe it our duty and in our interest to do this, for otherwise socialism in Europe will not be secure (Vol. 23, p. 67).

One has only to compare the relations between the socialist countries with those between the US and Latin

America to recognize that the phrase "Soviet imperialism" is merely a weapon in the armoury of anti-communism.

Prior to the Second World War, the Eastern European countries were neocolonial satellites of imperialist Germany in the same way the Latin American countries were and are today, with the exception of Cuba, neocolonial satellites of imperialist USA. Liberation of Eastern Europe from Hitler's troops by the Soviet armed forces and close economic and political cooperation with the Soviet Union have been a key factor that led to the establishment of socialist relations, to planned proportional development of the national economies of those countries, and to a rate of growth of industrial production higher than that for most of the industrialized, developed capitalist states.

Between 1950 and 1968 industrial output in the CMEA (Council for Mutual Economic Aid) socialist countries increased by 585% as compared with 251% in the developed capitalist states. Annual growth rates averaged 10.5% and 5.5% respectively.

Through Soviet aid, the Eastern European socialist states have broken away from the traditional imbalanced non-industrial raw-material (one-crop and/or one-mineral) economic structure.

Now, these countries supply over 70% of the import requirements of machinery and equipment of the Soviet Union, and their industries get the bulk of their raw materials from the Soviet Union. This is a distinct advantage to these countries considering that the world prices of industrial goods have been rising more rapidly than raw materials and agricultural goods.

Compare the situation in Latin America. In February 1969, Mr. Dante D. Fascall, Chairman of the US House of Representatives Sub-Committee on Inter-American Affairs declared:

I would be less than frank if I would not admit that the initial record of the Alliance for Progress inspires more gloom than satisfaction.

Mr. Fascell said the per capita gross national product in Latin America had increased by little more than one-half of the expected rate.

Writing on US aid and trade policies and the failure of the Alliance for Progress, former President of Brazil, Juscelino Kubitschek said in 1962:

Let's be frank, the prices for Latin America's basic food and raw material exports have depreciated so much that this area's income has declined more than \$500,000,000 this year in terms of the price paid for the same commodities when I took office in 1956. That \$500,000,000 is just about the amount that the Alliance for Progress has put into Latin America since the programme began. Latin America is therefore in the peculiar state of a man who is receiving blood transfusion in one arm and donating blood through the other.

Between 1957 and 1969, Brazil lost \$2,600 million because of a fall in prices of raw materials exported to the USA. However, over the same period, she received US aid amounting to only \$1,700 million.

The glossy US magazine, *Life*, in an editorial on July 18, 1969, "Why the Latins don't love us?" stated that the USA was taking more out of Latin America than she was putting in; every year since 1962, US investors made more profits than was invested; in 1967, repatriated profits exceeded private investments by more than \$1 billion. This does not include huge interest payments on US loans.

Soviet aid and trade are qualitatively different from that of the imperialist states. They help Third World countries to become industrialized, to break from the neo-colonial economic, political and cultural straitjacket.

In respect of assistance to developing countries, up to January 1, 1963, 70 percent of Soviet aid was allocated to

investment in industry compared with 10 percent of US "aid" and less than 14 percent of the credit by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

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Marxism-Leninism has become more pertinent in this era, when the balance of forces has shifted in favour of socialism. Socialism has emerged from the confines of a single country into a world system. The past fifty years have witnessed the breakup of the colonial system. Imperialism has been shaken and weakened, but while it has declined in strength, it has become more cunning, vicious and ruthless.

Soon after the Second World War, Anglo-American imperialism began its preparations for turning back the clock of history. Under the Truman Doctrine of 1947, the USA whipped up a war atmosphere to strike against the forces of democracy, national liberation and socialism; arrogated to itself the right to "liberate" the so-called "captive states" of Eastern Europe, which had been liberated by Soviet armed forces. It sought to ensure by a world system of treaties and 3,400 military bases not only "the containment of communism," but also the adoption by the whole world of the US capitalist system, which was equated with freedom and democracy.

In 1948, the Truman administration created the vast apparatus, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), for subversive work in a wide spectrum of organizations — political, industrial, research, mass media, youth, women, cultural, religious — fanned and inflamed racial and linguistic emotions and financed and fomented disturbances and riots as in Guyana and Ceylon, and organized military intervention as in Guatemala, Vietnam, Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

US military intervention assumed its most ruthless character in Vietnam in a genocidal war.

The United States of America, under the Johnson Doctrine, assumed the "right" to use its armed forces in any country of the Western Hemisphere to prevent "subversive" activity and the emergence of another Cuba.

Mass outcry in the USA against high sacrifice in men and money in the Vietnam war, has resulted in a strategic change. Instead of direct involvement of American soldiers, the US administration proposes to use Asians to fight Asians, Africans to fight Africans and Latin Americans to fight Latin Americans. The client states in Latin America are urged to set up a joint military force, euphemistically called Peace Forces. For the Commonwealth Caribbean territories, steps have been taken to coordinate security forces. Guyana's economy and politics are being militarized by the US puppet regime on the excuse that the US client state, Venezuela, is threatening aggression.

On Governor Nelson Rockefeller's recommendation that more military aid should be given to the US client states in Latin America, President Nixon has decided openly to embrace the neo-fascist dictators. With respect to Latin America, Mr. Rockefeller wrote:

North American industries every day depend more and more on the raw materials of the Western Hemisphere. These sources are indispensable for the United States to maintain industrial production.

Those who, in the face of imperialism's heightened aggressiveness and guile, talk about "cultural nationalism" and "relying on our own forces" are living in a fool's paradise and sowing illusions for their supporters. Ultimate victory, that is, independence — political and economic — will never be achieved in isolation. As long ago as 1919, Lenin stressed the necessity of developing the closest links

among the Soviet Union, the international working class and the national liberation movements. In his address to the Second All-Russian Congress of Communist Organizations of the Peoples of the East, he said:

It is self-evident that this revolutionary movement of the peoples of the East can now develop effectively, can reach a successful issue only in direct association with the revolutionary struggle of our Soviet Republic against international imperialism. (Vol. 30, p. 151).

This same theme was emphasized by the Meeting of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow in June 1969; namely, the necessity of uniting the three great streams of the world revolutionary movement — the socialist world, the working class movements in the capitalist countries, and the national liberation movement — in the fight against imperialism. The Document specifically stated:

The present situation demands greater militant solidarity of the peoples of the socialist countries, of all contingents of the international working-class movement and national liberation in the struggle against imperialism.

Lenin's greatest achievement was in his contribution about the necessity for building a Marxist vanguard-type of party, a party based on democratic centralism and operating in both the theoretico-ideological and politico-practical spheres.

At the politico-practical level, Lenin urged the forging of close links with the masses. He advocated the necessity of working patiently and persistently; of mastering the various forms of struggle; of combining parliamentary with extra-parliamentary, legal with illegal, work; of being flexible and prepared to make the most rapid changeover from one form of struggle to another; of working in reactionary trade unions and even of working for reforms that may help improve the position of the masses.

"It would be absolutely wrong," he wrote, "to believe

that immediate struggle for socialist revolution implies that we can, or should, abandon the fight for reforms. Not at all. We cannot know beforehand how soon we shall achieve success, how soon the objective conditions will make the rise of this revolution possible. We should support every improvement, every real economic and political improvement in the position of the masses" (Vol. 23, pp. 158-59).

Since in any given situation, the thinking of the masses is influenced, in the final analysis, by their economic state and what they see, hear and read, which in turn influence their behaviour and action, the necessity for educational work is emphasized. Such work based on Marxist-Leninist ideology makes the people conscious of the necessity for change. Once they are so armed, they consciously work and struggle for it.

In the Third-World countries the society is torn asunder by race, tribe, language, religion and cultural and economic backwardness or underdevelopment. Consequently, it is easy for the imperialists, their puppets and their agents to play on emotions, to bribe and corrupt, to divide and rule, and to subvert and overthrow. Through the imperialist-owned and -controlled mass media, lies, half-truths, and false ideas, embellished as everlasting truths, are deliberately used to confound and confuse, to manipulate and influence.

Unity in such a situation can be achieved only on the basis of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of the class struggle. It is this scientific outlook which must be contraposed against ignorance, superstition and prejudice.

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In British Guiana, between 1957-64, with the PPP in office but not in power, the imperialists, through CIA subversion and corruption and mass-media incitement, caused

sections of the working people to strike and riot against their own interests.

Now that a puppet regime is installed under pseudo-independence, a big campaign has been mounted to shift blame on the people, to sow illusions and to build false hopes.

Blame for failure and deteriorating social and economic conditions is projected away from the government's pro-imperialist domestic and foreign policies to the people. The masses are dubbed lazy, unskilled, inefficient, and too prolific. Slogans and gimmicks — "Eat less, sleep less and work harder," "Efficiency Year," "Planned Parenthood" (birth control) — become the substitutes for positive action and correct economic policies.

And, in the face of growing contradictions between the leadership and the rank-and-file of the ruling party, resort is being made increasingly to racial (black) symbolism — dress, change of name — the so-called "cultural revolution."

At one time, CARIFTA (Caribbean Free Trade Area) was to be the panacea. Now, through the Cooperative Republic, "the small man will become a real man." The Prime Minister on August 26, 1969, on a motion to declare Guyana a Republic said:

The Party to which I belong is a socialist party. The Party which I have the honour to lead believes that the instrument which can, and ought to be in the context of Guyana, used for bringing in socialism is the cooperative.

All this is demagoguery and utopianism combined. The US puppet regime hopes to perpetuate a hoax, using popular "leftist" words and phrases like "cooperative," "socialist" and "cultural revolution," to cover up rightist opportunism and a capitalist-imperialist economic structure.

Lenin warned not only about Right opportunism but

also about Left dogmatism and sectarianism. In this regard, his teachings are even more than ever pertinent, especially since so many new contingents are entering the revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle.

In Guyana, our liberation movement had its own experience with Right opportunism and Left deviationism. L.F.S. Burnham, the present Prime Minister, headed a Right-wing opportunistic split in our People's Progressive Party in 1955. Of Burnham, after his visit to, and deal with Washington in May 1962, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., in his book *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* says:

Thus far, our policy had been based on the assumption that Forbes Burnham was, as the British described him, an opportunist, racist and demagogue, intent only on personal power.

Of the ultra-leftists who then called for "instant revolution" and dubbed Burnham "a traitor," one is now his Minister of Information, and another is the head of the government-owned Guyana Marketing Corporation! Thus the Right opportunists and Left dogmatists eventually came together on the basis of anti-communism.

In this period, we have similar "rightist" and "ultra-leftist" tendencies. The Right deviationists, not having a Marxist-Leninist class approach, but a racialist one, not recognizing that the economic structure forms the basis, the foundation upon which the political and ideological superstructures are built, see compromise with US imperialism as the only way out.

The Left dogmatists since 1964 advocated the abandonment of the parliamentary struggle for armed struggle when the country had just emerged from the most serious racial clashes. Even as late as 1968, it was apparent that the objective and subjective factors were not conducive to the abandonment of the parliamentary struggle. About 18

months before the general election of December 1968, at a specially summoned meeting of activists of the People's Progressive Party in one of the three counties of Guyana, it was the almost unanimous view that we should contest the election as "we have a good chance to win."

The PPP leadership was, on the other hand, convinced that electoral victory could not be attained because of political trends in Latin America and the fraudulent electoral arrangements. Had it succumbed to the wishes of the minority to boycott the election, the supporters of the party would have blamed the leadership for "throwing away the elections," and would have entertained illusions about future electoral victories. Besides, had the PPP boycotted the election, the government would not have had to resort to extensive fraud, and would not have had to fling off the veils and show its true face.

In *Left-Wing Communism — An Infantile Disorder*, Lenin advised:

Victory cannot be won with a vanguard alone. To throw only the vanguard into the decisive battle, before the entire class, the broad masses, have taken up a position either of direct support for the vanguard, or at least of sympathetic neutrality towards it and of precluded support for the enemy, would be, not merely foolish but criminal. (Vol 31, pp. 92-93).

Lenin did not only warn against rightist opportunism and ultra-leftist dogmatism. He also attacked the procrastination of the "perpetual talkers," the "armchair socialists," who neither acted nor knew when to act.

In Guyana, the people, those who support us and those who had opposed us, have learnt valuable lessons from their own experience. At the same time, our party is transforming itself from a loose mass party into a disciplined, Marxist-Leninist party. By the improvement of its work on the organizational and ideological fronts, it is hoped to enrich the people's experience and thus to unite them for the suc-

successful confrontation with the imperialists and their puppets.

Vietnam and Cuba are both examples which prove that national liberation and socialism can succeed where there is no national isolationism. They both demonstrate that success — the attainment of political power and the holding of political power — depends largely on the correct application of Marxist-Leninist principles, notably the class approach and internationalism — a world outlook, — the establishment of a vanguard Leninist type of party and the development of internal unity, international solidarity and the closest links with the socialist states.

The Cuban Revolution survived 10 years of US subversion and aggression precisely because it secured for the Communist Party the leading and organizing role, destroyed the old bureaucratic and military apparatus, carried out extensive Marxist-Leninist educational work, and established diplomatic, cultural and trade relations with the socialist states.

At the June 1969 Moscow Conference, Carlos Rafael Rodrigues, the head of the Cuban delegation, declared :

The Communist Party of Cuba is of the opinion that, in the process of the people's struggle against imperialism, the Soviet Union is a fundamental bulwark and that that historic role has been expressed in its support for Cuba's Socialist Revolution, to the Arab peoples in the Middle East and in its aid to the Vietnamese cause. We will never forget the tremendous sacrifices and efforts the Soviet people have made for mankind . . . We declare from this rostrum that in any decisive confrontation . . . Cuba will unyieldingly be on the side of the USSR.

The Vietnamese people's courageous struggles against colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism have also been successful mainly because of the correct application of Marxist-Leninist principles and methods.

Moral and political support and aid from the socialist

countries, particularly the Soviet Union — food, medicine, arms, ammunition — have proved to be of inestimable importance to the Communists of North Vietnam.

The realities of today demonstrate that Marxism-Leninism is an invincible force. To those particularly in the front lines of imperialist fire, it inspires hope, creates optimism and builds confidence that colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism can and will be defeated; that a new day is dawning for all oppressed and exploited humanity.

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