

On The Principal Contradiction in India

A correct definition of the principal contradiction in our country at the present phase of the New Democratic Revolution of our country helps the Party to correctly identify the main enemies and the main allies of the Indian revolution.

Basic contradictions and the Principal contradiction

With the transfer of power in 1947 from the British imperialism to Congress representing the big bourgeois, big landlord classes, our country has changed from being colonial and semi-feudal country to being semi-colonial and semi-feudal country.

In our semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, four basic contradictions are at work. They are :

- The contradiction between the Nation and the imperialism.
- The contradiction between feudalism and the broad masses of the people.
- The contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.
- The contradictions between different sections of the ruling classes.

These four are the basic contradictions influencing the course of the Indian revolution. But during the whole course of our New Democratic Revolution, all these basic contradictions will not have equal importance. Depending on various factors and changes in the political situation, one of the four basic contradictions, stated above, matures more than others and occupies the principal position. The solution of that matured contradiction paves the way for the solution of the secondary contradictions. Comrade Mao says :

There are many contradictions in the process of development of a complex thing and one of them is necessarily the principal contradiction whose existence and development determines or influences the existence and development of the other contradictions. (Mao: On Contradictions)

So we have to closely study the basic contradictions in our country at this particular phase of our semi-colonial and semi-feudal country. We

should correctly identify the principal contradiction. Such a determination helps to locate the principal enemies and the principal allies of the Indian revolution, at the present phase.

Past Struggles

In the past, after the transfer of power from British imperialism to the big bourgeois, big landlord Congress in 1947, the leadership of the communist movement in the country thoroughly failed to understand the nature of this transfer of power, our country changing from being a colony to being semi-colonial and semi-feudal country; the subservient role of the new ruling classes towards imperialism; the comprador nature of our ruling classes; the change from the direct rule of British imperialism to the indirect rule of imperialism.

It failed to properly study the basic contradictions of our semi-colonial and semi-feudal country and their inter-relations. In short, it failed to correctly identify the principal contradiction i. e. to correctly identify the main enemies and the main allies of the Indian revolution and the main form of struggle to accomplish the Indian revolution. Consequently the leadership committed many right and left deviations on these questions, revisionism being the long standing.

Even after the communist revolutionaries broke away ideologically and organisationally with revisionism and neo-revisionism, the controversy among them on the question of the principal contradiction in India did not end.

The CPI (ML) leadership, under the influence of Charu's line, subsequently decided that the principal contradiction in India is between the landlords and peasants and since the peasants in India were in majority, they said that the principal contradiction can be said to be between the landlords and the majority of the people. Later this was upheld by the Party Congress also. Charu's line did not even recognize the existence of national bourgeoisie and rich peasants and the necessity of winning them over in the struggle against imperialism and the big bourgeois, big landlord classes and since its strategic programme itself was wrong, it brought immense damage to the Indian revolution. Later the old C C identified the principal contradiction as one between feudalism and the broad masses of the people.

But the Andhra Committee, which was then outside the CPI (ML) at that time did not agree that the principal contradiction was between the landlords and the peasants.

At that time there were two distinct trends in the Andhra Committee on this question. While the DV group held that the principal contradiction is between feudalism and the broad masses of the people, some of the present leaders of the Andhra Committee held that the principal

contradiction is between the big bourgeois, big landlord classes on the one hand and the broad masses of the people. Though they noted the subservient role of the ruling classes towards imperialism, they did not specify the alliance of imperialism with the ruling classes in India. Consequently in their separate Provincial Party Conference in 1973, they declared that the principal contradiction in India is between feudalism and the broad masses of the Indian people.

This conception on the principal contradiction prevailed among majority of the communist revolutionaries in the country. But discussions have continued among them on this question. After the merger of the old C C and the Unity Committee, some of the leaders of Unity Committee proposed that the principal contradiction is between the alliance of imperialism, and feudalism on one hand and the broad masses of the people on the other. After discussions, the P C C, in its Draft Amended Programme (published in June 1978 issue of New Democracy) declared that the principal contradiction in India at this phase is between "Feudalism and the broad masses of the people". It has also explained that "feudalism is an ally and social basis of imperialism". It has further explained that "at certain stage of development of Indian revolution, the contradiction between the imperialism and the nation may become the principal contradiction, particularly when the revolutionary movement advances to a higher stage or when a single imperialist power becomes the principal enemy."

New definition of the principal contradiction by the PCC.

After further studying this question, and our own experiences in the country, the PCC (Provisional Central Committee) had declared that the principal contradiction is one between the alliance of imperialism, feudalism and comprador bureaucrat capitalism on one hand and the broad masses of the people on the other. It has further declared that.

"It is imperialism that sustains feudalism and comprador bureaucrat capitalism in order to carry out its economic, political and military objectives and is therefore predominant in the alliance. In the present conditions of world capitalism where two super powers are contending for world hegemony and hegemony over India, only one them will be the principal target of the Indian people in a particular period according to its economic, political and military predominance in our country. However, it must be borne in mind that at a certain state of development of Indian revolution, the contradiction between imperialism and the nation may become the principal contradiction, particularly when the revolutionary movement advances to a higher stage".

The amended programme (draft) while defining the principal contradiction is between feudalism and the broad masses of the people, has also correctly defined that the principal enemies of the revolution being imperi-

alism (including social imperialism), feudalism and comprador bureaucrat capitalism. It has defined that the principal allies of the revolution being the workers, peasants, urban middle classes, and the national bourgeoisie, to be united in a People's Democratic Front, under the leadership of the working class. It has defined that worker-peasant alliance as the core of this People's Democratic Front. It has also declared that the "Path of the Indian revolution will be essentially the Chinese Path to defeat the enemies of the Indian revolution i.e. the Path of Protracted People's War, with Agrarian Revolution as its axis since the peasantry is the main force of our democratic revolution led by the working class".

Now, the new amendment has declared that the principal contradiction is the between the alliance of imperialism, feudalism and comprador bureaucrat capitalism and the broad masses of the people. But it has not changed either the main enemies or the main allies of the revolution or the main form of struggle to achieve the Indian revolution.

If the new definition of the principal contradiction does not change the main enemies and the main allies of the Indian revolution or the path of the Indian revolution, why then this change in the definition of the principal contradiction.

It is to bring about (1) more correctly the role of imperialism in maintaining the present semi-colonial, semi-feudal society in our country, (2) its alliance with our big bourgeois, big landlord classes to maintain the present social set up and suppression of the revolutionary forces, and (3) to focus more clearly the necessity of utilising the contradictions of the various imperialist countries exploiting our country so that chief enemy among them could be identified for greater concentration.

The Role of imperialism

The amended Programme (draft) had correctly defined that of the four basic contradictions operating in our present society, the contradiction between imperialism and the nation and the contradiction between feudalism and the broad masses of the people are the two basic contradictions decisively influencing the course of the Indian revolution.

During the period of the direct rule, British imperialism used its military force to suppress the national liberation struggle. Even when forced to transfer power to the big bourgeois, big landlord classes, it divided the country into India and Pakistan; it incited communal riots between the Hindus and Muslims on a big scale to weaken both the countries and keep them under its control. It tried to create many independent states inside India and thus keep India weak and preserve its control and exploitation in our country.

Even with the transfer of power in 1947 to our big bourgeois, big landlord classes, India did not become a fully sovereign and independent

country. Our country got only formal political independence, but continued to be subjected to indirect control and exploitation of imperialism.

Our country being a semi-colonial, semi-feudal country, the comprador big bourgeois, big landlord classes have opened the gates of our country to further inflow of foreign capital from various imperialist powers like USA, Soviet social imperialism, Japan, West Germany etc. in the form of direct investments, loans, joint ventures etc. Thus we see that while, before 1947, it was British imperialism that dominated our country, today our country is being subjected to the exploitation of various other imperialist powers, particularly US imperialism and Soviet social imperialism.

Foreign exploitation and domination has actually grown in our country with the transfer of power in 1947. Our big bourgeois, big landlord classes in India are comprador in character, subservient to imperialism, have only 'freedom' to change their masters in the international market. In the beginning they mainly followed the British imperialists, later they submitted themselves to US imperialism and later still, they agreed to submit themselves to Soviet social imperialism also.

All this clearly shows how imperialism plays a dominant role in the exploitation and suppression of our country whether in the period of direct rule British imperialism before 1947, or in the period of indirect rule i. e. the present semi-colonial, semi-feudal status of our country.

Thus we see imperialism and social imperialism play a predominant role in maintaining the present semi-colonial semi-feudal status of our country and in the suppression of our New Democratic Revolution. Comrade Stalin says :

Imperialism, with all its financial and military might, is the force in China that supports, inspires, fosters and preserves the feudal survivals, together with their entire bureaucratic militarist super structure. (Stalin : On China)

Comrade Mao says :

"What are the chief targets or enemies at this stage of the Chinese Revolution ? They are imperialism and feudalism, the bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries and the landlord class of our country. For it is these two that are the chief oppressors, the chief obstacles to the progress of Chinese society at the present stage. The two collude with each other in oppressing the Chinese people, and imperialism is the foremost and most ferocious enemy of the Chinese people, because national oppression by imperialism is the more onerous".

(p 315, Vol II, Mao Zedong) (underline mine)

So this clearly shows that the main edge of our New Democratic Revolution should be aimed against imperialism and social imperialism.

Imperialism in alliance with our ruling classes

Imperialism and social imperialism not only dominate the economic, political and military situation of our country, it is in alliance with our big bourgeois, big landlord classes for joint exploitation and suppression of our people and their revolutionary struggles.

The amended Programme (draft) itself has declared that imperialism (including social imperialism), feudalism and comprador bureaucrat capitalism are the main enemies of the Indian revolution.

But these elements are not separate elements. These main enemies are in an alliance for joint oppression and suppression of our country and the people have to fight against this alliance to achieve their New Democratic Revolution.

Imperialism is dependant on the comprador big bourgeoisie in India for its trade in India, its investments and joint ventures. The big bourgeoisie in India is dependant on imperialism for capital, machinery, and technical knowledge. This is the economic basis for an alliance between imperialism and big bourgeois class.

Imperialism is dependant on the landlords to keep the vast rural areas safe for selling its finished products and to get its necessary industrial raw materials. On the other hand, landlords, particularly the capitalist landlords, need the help of imperialism for the export of their surplus raw materials and for the supply of various inputs necessary for more agricultural production. This is the economic basis for an alliance between landlords and the imperialism. This is the reason why, of late, imperialism, particularly Soviet Union, is making greater efforts to penetrate Indian agriculture.

Similarly we can see a similar economic dependance between the big bourgeois and big landlord classes.

Politically imperialism needs the help of the big bourgeois, big landlord classes to keep the Indian people, particularly the workers and peasants, suppressed and thus make the country safe for its exploitation. Similarly the big bourgeois, big landlord classes need the help of imperialism—economic, political and military—in their suppression of the Indian people's struggles.

Thus we see that there is clear economic and political basis for an alliance between imperialism, feudalism and comprador bureaucrat capitalism.

Speaking about the direct and indirect intervention of imperialism in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, comrade Stalin says :

Intervention is by no means confined to the incursion of troops, and the incursion of troops by no means constitutes the principal feature of intervention. In the present day conditions of the revolutionary movement in the capitalist countries, when the direct incursion of foreign troops may give rise to protests and conflicts, intervention assumes more flexible and more camouflaged form. In the conditions prevailing today, imperialism prefers to intervene in a dependant country by organising civil war there, by financing counter revolutionary forces against the revolution, by giving moral and financial support to its Chinese agents against the revolution. (p. 7. Stalin: On Chinese Revolution)

There is another aspect to their alliance. The Indian ruling classes have expansionist ambitions towards their neighbours. They can achieve these expansionist ambitions only with the help of one imperialist power or the another. The imperialist powers also, particularly the Soviet Union, wants to make our country its base for its expansionist aims in Asia and the world. This is another basis for an alliance between imperialism and our own ruling classes.

This should not mean that there are no contradictions between the various constituents of this alliance. There are bound to be contradictions among them as to the share of each in their joint exploitation of our people, but they are not antagonistic contradictions, but contradictions which will be settled through discussions.

Thus we see clearly that in the present phase, principal contradiction is between the alliance of imperialism, feudalism and comprador bureaucrat capitalism on one hand, and the broad masses of our people on the other hand. Naturally because of its superior economic and military strength, imperialism is the leader of this alliance.

This means that at the present phase of the Indian revolution, when our country is semi-colonial, semi-feudal, the anti-imperialist tasks and the democratic tasks are inter-linked i. e., the struggle against imperialism and the struggle against our big bourgeois, big landlord classes are inter-linked.

Seeing the economic, political and military domination of imperialism and social imperialism in India, one thing is clear. We cannot defeat imperialism (including social imperialism) without defeating our own big bourgeois, big landlord classes, because they are the main props of imperialist oppression and suppression in India. Similarly we cannot defeat the big bourgeois, big landlord classes, without at the same time defeating imperialism (including Soviet social imperialism) because it is imperialism

that "supports, inspires, fosters and preserves the feudal survivals together with their entire bureaucratic militarist superstructure".

Comrade Mao says :

Unquestionably, the main tasks are to strike at these two enemies, to carry out a national revolution to overthrow foreign imperialist oppression and a democratic revolution to overthrow feudal landlord oppression, the primary and foremost task being national revolution to overthrow imperialism. These two great tasks are inter-related; unless imperialist rule is overthrown the rule of the feudal landlord class cannot be terminated, because imperialism is its main support. Conversely, unless help is given to the peasants in their struggle to overthrow the feudal landlord class, it will be impossible to build powerful revolutionary contingents to overthrow imperialist rule, because the feudal landlord class is the main social base of imperialist rule in China and peasantry is the main force in the Chinese revolution. Therefore, the two fundamental tasks, the national revolution and the democratic revolution are at once distinct and united.

(p. 318, Mao Zedong, Vol II)

Comrade Stalin says :

Thus, the present revolution in China is a continuation of two streams of the revolutionary movement, the movement against feudal survivals and the movement against imperialism. The bourgeois democratic revolution in China is a combination of the struggle against feudal survivals and the struggle against imperialism. (Stalin: On Chinese Revolution, p. 69.)

Differentiation of the Imperialist Powers

Since the leader of the alliance of imperialism, feudalism and comprador bureaucrat capitalism is imperialism, we should carefully consider the contradictions of the various imperialist powers and their supporters in the country, in order to utilise these contradictions in the struggle for People's Democratic Revolution, to identify the main enemy among them for concentrated attack.

Ours is a semi-colonial, semi-feudal country. So many imperialist powers—Soviet social imperialism, US imperialism, Britain, West Germany, Japan etc.—are investing their capital in India and are contending for their supremacy in India. But the main contention for the domination of our country is between Soviet social imperialism and US imperialism.

Soviet Union dominates our public sector which is the commanding heights of our economy; it monopolises the supply of military hardware

to our Army ; it has already got a military pact with our government in the name of the 'Friendship Treaty'. Because of these three factors, it is clear that Soviet Union has an edge over the other imperialist powers including US imperialism in exploiting and dominating our country. That is why the recent P. C. C. resolution "People's Democratic Revolution and our immediate tasks", has clearly said that Soviet Union is a greater enemy of the Indian people, both nationally and internationally. That means while exposing US imperialism, we should make still greater efforts to expose the predominant position of the Soviet Union in India

The recent visit of Kosygin to India, and the spate of new agreements between the Soviet Union and the present govt. still further increase the grip of the Soviet Union over India. This also proves that the pro-US Janata government is not in a position to prevent the growing predominant position of the Soviet Union in India, because of its general position in the country.

The communist revolutionaries in India should make use of the contradictions between the various imperialist powers, particularly those between Soviet social imperialism and US imperialism and the ruling section groups supporting them, to advance the revolutionary movement in the country. At present this should not lead to any general political alignment with any section of the ruling classes against the other section, but these contradictions should be utilised from issue to issue affecting the economic and political life of our people and our country. The possibility of a political united front between the working class and any section of the ruling class does exist when our country is directly invaded by a particular imperialist power or when one superpower imposes its exclusive hegemony over our country or when our country is converted into a neo-colony of any superpower.

Comrade Mao says :

The comprador bourgeoisie is always a running dog of imperialism and a target of the revolution. Different groups of the comprador bourgeoisie belong to the monopoly capitalist groups of different imperialist countries such as the United States, Britain, and France. In the struggle against the various comprador groups it is necessary to exploit the contradictions between imperialist countries, first coping with one of them and striking at the chief immediate enemy. (p. 327, Mao Zedong Vol. V)

Agrarian Revolution - the main form of struggle

Some critics express the fear that the acceptance of the principal contradiction (the one between the alliance of imperialism, feudalism and the comprador bureaucrat capitalism on the one hand and the broad

masses of the people on the other) will reduce the importance of Protracted People's War, with Agrarian Revolution as its axis.

The necessity of Protracted People's War, as the main form of struggle to achieve our New Democratic Revolution does not arise out of the principal contradiction, but by the semi-feudal status of our country, the uneven development of our country, by the fact that in our country the peasants are the main force of struggle against the present system to be organised under the leadership of the working class, and the necessity to gather necessary revolutionary forces to capture final power in the cities. That is why the Amended Programme itself says that "the main force of the democratic revolution led by the working class is the peasantry".

It has also declared that the path of Indian revolution will be essentially the Chinese path in order to defeat the enemies of the Indian revolution and to achieve this it has given the following three tasks to be fulfilled.

—A Party armed with Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought.

—A People's Army under the leadership of the Party.

—A United Front of all revolutionary classes, with worker-peasant alliance as its core under the leadership of the proletariat.

It is only by doggedly pursuing the Path of Protracted People's War with Agrarian Revolution as its axis, that the Indian people can achieve success in their New Democratic Revolution. All other struggles help in advancing the Agrarian Revolution as its central task.

Comrade Mao says :

Unless help is given to the peasants in their struggle to overthrow the feudal landlord class, it will be impossible to build powerful revolutionary contingents to overthrow imperialist rule, because the feudal landlord class is the main social base of imperialist rule in China and the peasantry is the main force in the Chinese Revolution" (p. 318, Mao Zedong Vol. II.)

Comrade Stalin says :

What is agrarian revolution? It is indeed the basis and content of bourgeois democratic revolution.

He further said :

The opposition has forgotten that the revolutionary struggle of the Chinese people against imperialism is due first and foremost to the fact that imperialism in China is the

force that supports and inspires the immediate exploiters of the Chinese people—the feudal lords, militarists, capitalists, bureaucrats etc, and that Chinese workers and peasants cannot defeat their exploiters without at the same time waging a revolutionary struggle against imperialism.

(P. 96 Stalin: On Chinese Revolution)

He further says :

While the distinguishing feature of the first stage was that the spearhead of the revolution was turned mainly against foreign imperialism, the characteristic feature of the second stage is that the spearhead of the revolution is now turned mainly against the internal enemies, primarily against the feudal landlords, against the feudal regime. (same book, p. 137)

Thus it is clear that Protracted People's War with Agrarian Revolution as its axis is the main form of struggle to accomplish our New Democratic Revolution.

Lessons of the Chinese Revolution

This is borne out by the experience of the Chinese revolution itself. In all the phases of the Chinese revolution—the National Liberation struggle against imperialism and warlordism, the First Civil War against Chiang Kai-shek and his allies, the struggle against Japanese aggression, and the Second Civil War against Chiang Kai-shek and his allies—Agrarian Revolution was the main form of struggle adopted by the CPC in their struggle for New Democratic Revolution.

In all the writings and explanations of the Chinese comrades, including the writings of comrade Mao, it is clear that the CPC, while taking the Protracted People's War with Agrarian Revolution as its axis, as the main form of struggle, adopted the tactics of destruction of imperialism and weakening of feudalism during the period of anti-Japanese struggle, and adopted the tactics of complete destruction of imperialism and feudalism as a whole in all other phases of their revolution.

Explaining how the principal contradiction in China changed during the different phases of the Chinese Revolution, comrade Mao says :

In a semi-colonial country such as China, the relationship between the principal contradiction and the non-principal contradiction presents a complicated picture. When imperialism launches a war of aggression against such a country, all its various classes, except for some traitors, can temporarily unite in a National War against imperialism. At such a time the contradiction between imperialism and the country concerned becomes the principal contradiction (including what

was the principal contradiction between the feudal system and the great masses of the people) are temporarily relegated to a secondary and subordinate position.

(p. 331, Mao Zedong Vol. I)

Merely taking the words in brackets in the above sentence, some critics argue that comrade Mao held that before the aggression of Japanese imperialism in China, i.e., between 1927 to 1937, the principal contradiction in China was between feudalism and the broad masses of the Chinese people. Taking Mao's writings in isolation from his other writings leads one to wrong conclusions.

We must take this writing of Comrade Mao combined with the subsequent paragraphs in that very article (On Contradiction) wherein he says :

But in another situation, the contradictions change position. When imperialism carries on its oppression not by war, but by milder means—political, economic and cultural—the ruling classes in semi-colonial countries capitulate to imperialism and the two form an alliance for the joint oppression of the masses of the people. At such a time, the masses resort to civil war against the alliance of imperialism and the feudal classes, while imperialism often employs indirect methods rather than direct action in helping the reactionaries in semi-colonial countries to oppress the people and thus make the internal contradictions particularly sharp.

He further says :

When a revolutionary civil war develops to the point of threatening the very existence of imperialism and its running dogs, the domestic reactionaries, imperialism often adopts other methods in order to maintain its rule; it either tries to split the revolutionary front from within or sends armed forces to help the domestic reactionaries directly. At such a time, foreign imperialism and domestic reaction stand quite openly at one pole while the masses of the people stand at the other pole, thus forming the principal contradiction which determines or influences the development of the other contradictions.

(pp. 331-332, Mao Zedong Vol. I)

Thus it is clear that comrade Mao held that in the period of indirect rule, the period between 1927 to 1937, that the principal contradiction in China at that time was between the alliance of imperialism and the big bourgeois, big landlord classes on one side and the broad masses of China on the other side.

Describing the period between 1927 to 1937 in China, comrade Mao says:

As for China's big bourgeoisie, which is represented by the Kuomintang, all through the long period from 1927 to 1937, it nestled in the arms of imperialists and formed an alliance with the feudal forces against the revolutionary people. In 1927 and for some time afterwards, the Chinese national bourgeoisie also followed the counter-revolution.

(p. 349, Mao Zedong Vol. II)

Conclusions

From what has been described above, the following conclusions should be kept in mind :

1. Ours is a semi-colonial, semi-feudal country ; the stage of our revolution is People's Democratic Revolution under the leadership of the working class.
2. The main enemies of the revolution are imperialism, particularly Soviet social imperialism and US imperialism and the big bourgeois, landlord classes in the country. The main allies of the Revolution are workers, peasants, urban middle classes and the national bourgeoisie to be united in People's Democratic Front under the leadership of the working class. Worker-peasant alliance is the main base of this united front.
3. The principal contradiction is between the alliance of imperialism, feudalism and comprador bureaucrat capitalism and the broad masses of the people. Imperialism is the leader of this alliance.
4. The contradictions of various imperialist powers, particularly those between Soviet social imperialism and US imperialism contending for domination over India and the contradictions between the various sections of the ruling classes in India supporting these super powers should be utilised to advance the revolutionary struggle.

Taking the present situation in India, of all the imperialist powers including USA, Soviet social imperialism is the greater enemy of the Indian people both nationally and internationally.

Today these contradictions should be utilised from issue to issue, economic and political, affecting the life of our people and country to isolate and defeat the chief enemy on that particular issue and thus advance the revolutionary struggle.

5. The peasantry is the main force in our revolution and the working class is the leader of the revolution. Protracted People's War with Agrarian Revolution as its axis is the main path of Indian revolution and all other tasks must help in accomplishing this central task,