

# LONG LIVE THE VICTORY OF PEOPLE'S WAR!

synopsized by DONALD McKELVEY

## LIN PIAO ON PEOPLE'S WAR

The victory of the Chinese over the Japanese imperialist invaders, very important to China as the first victory of the Chinese people over imperialism, highlights a crucial question: How could a weak, semi-colonial, semi-feudal country (China) defeat a strong imperialist power (Japan)? The factors underlying ultimate victory were three: support by the people, the leadership of a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party (the Chinese Communist Party) following the correct political and military lines, and the development of a genuine people's army following correct tactics and strategy.

Victory over Japan paved the way for victory over the Kuomintang (KMT) in 1949, as a result of which the international balance of forces was greatly changed, and national liberation movements entered a new historical period.

U S imperialism is repeating today on a worldwide scale the acts of Japanese imperialism in China. Thus all oppressed peoples should study well the lessons of the Chinese War of Resistance Against Japan.

### Imperialism is a Greater Enemy than Feudalism

The invasion of China by Japan changed priorities for the revolutionary forces and forced a re-evaluation of class relationships within China by the Communist Party. Japan (imperialism) became a greater enemy than the KMT (feudalism). (Likewise, U S and British imperialism became secondary enemies compared with Japanese imperialism). It was necessary now to seek a broad-based coalition of anti-Japanese forces.

The basic strategy of the war was determined by the fact that, initially, Japan was stronger than China; but in the long run China was stronger than Japan. This meant an initial strategic retreat and a defensive strategy on the part of the Chinese, during which time strength could be built up and the entire people mobilized for a United Front. Later, periods of strategic stalemate and, finally, strategic advance would ensue.

Though Japan at first seemed much stronger than China, in reality the fundamental and long-range conditions were ones of Chinese strength and Japanese weakness: China's cause was just, she was fighting against aggression and had

international support and sympathy, and she had ample supplies of men and physical resources which could eventually be mobilized. Japan, however, had unleashed a retrogressive and barbarous war of aggression; Thus her unjust cause had little international support; furthermore, she was deficient in manpower and material resources. Thus, Japan's advantages were temporary, her disadvantages fundamental. China's disadvantages were temporary, her advantages fundamental. Though China would have to retreat at first, her fundamental advantages assured her final victory.

The War of Resistance was also important as a stage of the new democratic revolution, which in turn was a step on the road to socialist revolution.

### The United Front

The central aspect of the strategy of the Communist Party in the United Front was to combine unity with class enemies (national bourgeoisie, feudal elements willing to resist Japan, anti-Japanese imperialist countries) with struggle against those same groups. One must beware of both the Right deviation (all unity, no struggle) and the 'Left' deviation (all struggle, no unity). Or, as Mao put it: 'If unity is sought through struggle, it will live; if unity is sought through yielding, it will perish.'

The 'centre of gravity of our work' was the arousal of the masses. It was vitally important that the Communist Party, the Red Army, and the liberated areas (areas where the Communist Party had organized a revolutionary government) retain their independence and initiative of action within the United Front. Only a coalition of proletariat, peasants, and petit bourgeoisie -- led by the proletariat -- could be the effective centre of the Front; only the proletariat could lead the people to victory.

Nonetheless, the preservation of the United Front was very important. Thus, adjustments had to be made in the class relationships and a whole range of policies modified -- e.g. renaming the Red Army and liberated areas to make them part of the national government, espousal of rent reduction rather than land confiscation, and bringing class enemies into the governments of the liberated areas. Furthermore, care must be taken not to alienate potential Front allies;

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Donald McKelvey is on the staff of the New England Free Press. This synopsis is written in the hope that the reader will read the entire work, and to dispel some of the misconceptions and downright lies perpetrated by the western press (cf. NY Times of 3 & 4 September 1965).



each case of possible collaboration with the Japanese must be treated individually and with restraint. Anti-communist diehards, led by Chiang himself, posed a special problem: it was necessary to seek ways of uniting with them so far as possible, but to isolate and destroy them when necessary, though always on the basis of a fair and just case.

The KMT had to be impelled to institute democratic reforms within the areas they held; in those areas, as in Japanese-held areas, the Communist Party combined the United Front policy with one of underground work by selected cadres who carried on democratic struggle and waited until the time was ripe for more open and decisive action.

### The Peasantry and the Rural Areas

The peasantry were the foundation of the army and of the entire strategy of protracted war; thus, the Party had to rely mainly on them. Indeed, the war against Japan was a peasant revolutionary war led by the Communist Party. A serious 'Left' deviation in an earlier period had been the failure to recognize the importance of the peasant question.

Japan's initial strength, compared with China's, enabled her to control the cities and the main lines of communication. Though the Japanese drove into the hinterland of China, they were unable to control the vast rural areas, and the Red Armies moved into the area behind their lines and set up 19 base areas, where reforms were carried out and the peasants mobilized and organized. The reforms deeply aroused the enthusiasm of the peasants, while at the same time 'due consideration' was given to other anti-Japanese strata. These rural base areas were constantly attacked by the Japanese, and sometimes by the KMT; their fortunes rose and fell and rose again as the war progressed. The losses were halted by a series of correct policies and measures by the Communist Party.

The base areas not only provided the springboard for attacking the Japanese forces when the time came for the strategic offensive, but served also as a base of operations from which to launch the War of Liberation against the KMT. In addition, they served as a giant laboratory in the art of governing, where the Communist Party gained invaluable experience; by 1945 a total of 160,000,000 people resided in the liberated areas.

### The People's Army

'Without a people's army the people have nothing.' (Mao) The special feature of the Chinese Revolution was armed revolutionary struggle against armed counterrevolution. The main form of struggle was war, the main form of organization the people's army under the 'absolute leadership' of the Communist Party.

The people's army has three main tasks: fighting, political agitation, and economic production. It was the duty of the people's army in China to organize and arm the masses and to help them set up revolutionary political power in the liberated areas. The army was under the strictest discipline to do good deeds for the people and to be polite, considerate, and fair toward them. (one of the Three Main Rules of Discipline was 'Do not take a single needle or piece of thread from the masses.') For all these reasons, the peo-

ple's army was a new kind of army -- one that wholeheartedly served the interests of the people, 'who called them "our own boys".'

The leadership of the Communist Party was vital, as was a high level of discipline and morale. Without internal unity (between cadres and fighters, higher and lower ranks, various units and departments) and unity with the people and the local government, the people's army could never have fought so effectively. Soldiers were admonished to fight not for personal military power but for the party and the people. Leniency of treatment was an important rule; thereby, enemy prisoners, even Japanese, could be won over.

The essence of Mao's theory of army-building is to give predominance to politics -- that is, the army is built on a political basis. Politics is commander, politics is 'the soul of everything.' The army must rely on politics, on revolutionary consciousness, on courage, on the support of the masses, rather than on techniques and weapons.

### Strategy and Tactics of People's War

At first in the War of Resistance, guerrilla warfare was the basic form, though mobile warfare was to be engaged in whenever possible. The guerrilla war form allowed time for the full development and mobilization of the strength of the Chinese people, and for the gradual shifting of the balance of strength between Japan and the Chinese people. Guerrilla warfare allows for many victories and few losses -- important for the morale of the troops -- and for the capture of badly needed equipment and other material.

The main idea of guerrilla warfare is not to harass the enemy, but to annihilate his units one by one; this is more effective in hurting his morale. At first, we lured the enemy far into our territory, by planned abandonment of certain cities and areas, so that he would overextend his forces and supply lines. The people's army must not attempt to defend every position, but to concentrate its relatively weak forces so that it has an absolute superiority over a particular enemy unit to be attacked. Initiative must be kept in the hands of the people's army, which should fight only when sure of victory. All this depends on the support of the masses, who must perform many tasks to support the people's army.

### The Policy of Self-Reliance

Japan was defeated by the combined efforts of many peoples. The Soviet Union played a 'significant' part, the peoples of Asia made 'great contributions'. The peoples of the Americas, Oceania, Europe, and Africa 'also made their contributions'. The Communist Party of Japan 'played their part' under extremely difficult conditions. Yet each country liberated itself, by its own people's efforts: the Chinese War of Resistance Against Japan was won fundamentally by the Chinese people, not by foreign aid.

This is a basic Marxist-Leninist principle: the masses must liberate themselves. The KMT wanted to rely exclusively on foreign aid, believing nothing in China to be any good



for purposes of resistance. But while the conflict between US/British and Japanese imperialisms could be exploited, the former could not be relied upon. In fact, the imperialist powers were constantly seeking to find ways to divide up or otherwise to exploit China, and up to a certain point sought deals with each other.

The principle of self-reliance was especially important for the people's army and in liberated areas; when the KMT cut off all supplies to the people's army and liberated areas, it was necessary to produce more grain and find ways of economizing.

The problem of equipment was solved mostly by capturing material from the KMT and Japan.

No victory can be won if a revolutionary people depend wholly on foreign aid -- not even aid from 'socialist countries which persist in revolutions' -- or, if won, it cannot be consolidated.

### The International Significance of the Theory of People's War

The Soviet and Chinese revolutions had both differences and similarities. Both were worker-led worker-peasant coalitions with a Marxist-Leninist party as its nucleus; in both, power was seized violently and a dictatorship of the proletariat established; in both, socialism was established after the armed victory; both were part of the proletarian world revolution. However: Russia was an imperialist country, China a semi-colonial, semi-feudal one; the Russian Revolution was a proletarian socialist revolution, the Chinese a new-democratic revolution which developed into a socialist revolution; in Russia, power was gained first in the cities and spread to the countryside, in China power was gained first in the countryside after which the cities were conquered. Mao's merit has been to apply the universally valid laws of Marxism-Leninism to the specific conditions in China; his thought is a great contribution to the struggles of all oppressed peoples and nations throughout the world.

The seizure of state power by revolutionary violence is a core concept of Marxism-Leninism. Oppressed peoples must arise and fight for their liberation. War against the people must be countered by people's war: force will have to be used if the people are to seize power. This is what Mao meant by saying, 'Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.'

Lenin said, 'War is always and everywhere begun by the exploiters themselves.' So long as imperialism and exploitation exist, imperialists and exploiters will have to rely on the use of armed force against the people. US imperialism and its puppets are doing this today increasingly throughout the world. Daring to resist this violence of imperialists is the most effective touchstone for distinguishing real from fake revolutionaries and Marxist-Leninists.

Because some people feared imperialism, which seems so strong, Mao put forward the thesis that all imperialists and reactionaries are paper tigers, and must be despised strategically but taken full account of tactically.

That is, from a long-range perspective, the people's forces will surely gain strength and eventually triumph. As Mao said: 'From a long-term point of view, it is not the reactionaries but the people who are really powerful.'

Despising the enemy strategically means having the courage to fight and to be sure of final victory. At the same time, one must take full account of the enemy tactically: that is, be prudent, be aware that he has much strength in the short run, and choose battle sites carefully. Dialectical and historical materialism teaches us that what is important is what is arising and developing, not what seems strong now but is losing strength. The seemingly weak can triumph because they have truth on their side, because the masses are on their side. Imperialism greatly fears the paper tiger thesis, while revisionists are very hostile to it -- both oppose and attack it because the theory of people's war solves the problems of daring to fight against imperialism and of how to fight.

The theory of rural bases has universal practical importance for oppressed nations and peoples, especially in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as they struggle against imperialism and its puppets. There, as in China, the peasant question is very important, and the people are being attacked by imperialism; also, basic economic and political conditions in many of those countries are similar to those in old China. The imperialists can seize the cities and main communications lines, but cannot bring under control the vast countryside.

'In a sense,' the contemporary world situation presents a picture of encirclement of North America and Western Europe ('the cities of the world') by Asia, Africa, and Latin America ('the countryside of the world'). With the proletarian revolution temporarily held back in the advanced capitalist countries, the struggle against imperialism in Asia, Africa, and Latin America is presently the most important front in the worldwide fight against imperialism, and the socialist countries should wholeheartedly support those struggles.

The Russian Revolution opened a new era for the oppressed of the world, and built a bridge between the socialist proletarian revolution of the West and the national-democratic revolution of the colonial countries. The Chinese revolution solved the problem of how to link the national-democratic and socialist revolutions in the colonial and semi-colonial nations. Now anti-imperialist revolutions in colonial and semi-colonial countries is part of the new socialist world revolution, not the old bourgeois capitalist world revolution.

The theory of the new-democratic (or national-democratic) revolution is important: this is a revolution by the broad masses of people against imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic-capitalism. It must be led by the proletariat and a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party, and by no other class or party; it leads to socialism, not capitalism. The new-democratic and socialist revolutions are closely linked, but must be seen as separate; the former is primarily against imperialism and its puppets. To try to combine the



two revolutions results in handing over the entire revolution to the reactionaries; the result is neither a continuation of the fight against imperialism nor the attainment of socialism. The Khrushchev revisionists presently preach socialism without any Communist Party, which is preposterous; this diverts the people from the struggle against imperialism and sabotages the national-democratic revolution -- all in the service of imperialism.

### Defeat U S Imperialism with People's War

U S imperialism -- using the former fascist countries, Japan and West Germany, as its major allies -- is the greatest aggressive force in the world, and seeks to build world domination by enslaving peoples. Those who want revolution, independence, and peace should direct their efforts against the U S. At present, the main battlefield of anti-imperialist struggle is Asia, Africa, and Latin America: here is where people suffer most, and where U S imperialism is most vulnerable. In this area, people's war has been increasingly victorious since World War II. The peoples of China, Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cuba, Indonesia, Algeria, and other countries have won great victories against imperialism. The classes leading the people's war, the depth of mass mobilization, and the degree of victory -- all these may vary, but every victory has pinned down and weakened U S imperialism, and thus has contributed to the defense of world peace. Today conditions are more favorable than ever for people's war.

U S imperialism is stronger, but more vulnerable, than any imperialism in the past. It sets itself against the people of the whole world, including the U S people, but its resources are inadequate to the task of dominating the world; and it has overreached itself. U S forces have to fight aggressive, unjust wars, and consequently have low morale. The people fighting for their own country, though seemingly weak, are in reality stronger than U S imperialism. Worldwide cooperation in an anti-U S struggle will weaken and divide the forces of U S imperialism; this is why the U S so greatly fears people's war.

U S imperialism relies solely on nuclear weapons for intimidation of the peoples. But these weapons cannot be used lightly: the U S has already isolated itself by using them on Japan, and to use them now would isolate the U S in the extreme; besides, 'others have them too'. However, even the use of nuclear weapons would not result in conquering the people of a country.

In the final analysis, wars are decided by the fighting men on the battlefield, by their political consciousness, their morale, their courage. Here U S imperialism's weakest points are laid bare: her cause is unjust, her forces divided and spread throughout the world. 'The spiritual atom bomb which the revolutionary people possess is a far more powerful and useful weapon than the physical atom bomb.'

### The Khrushchev Revisionists

Just as U S imperialism is becoming most panic-stricken

about people's wars, Khrushchev revisionism has come to its rescue. Khrushchev revisionism has no faith in the masses and fears U S imperialism, war and revolution. They believe nuclear weapons are decisive, and that people mean nothing. They want to rule the world in conjunction with the U S imperialists. Though they claim that people's wars will spark a nuclear war, there have been numerous people's wars since the end of World War II, and none has started a nuclear war; rather they have contributed to peace by weakening imperialism, while those opposing people's wars have encouraged U S aggression. Peaceful coexistence and peaceful competition are not possible while imperialism is preparing for the conducting of wars against the peoples. The Khrushchev revisionists really want the oppressed peoples to lay down their weapons and place themselves at the mercy of the U S.

Revolutionary war means suffering, to be sure, but there will be much more suffering if imperialist aggression goes unresisted and the people become imperialism's willing slaves. The small amount of suffering in revolutionary wars brings security and peace in the future to whole nations and even all mankind. War can temper the people and move history forward; 'in this sense, war is a great school.'

Even though China has won her people's war and is building socialism and increasing the quality of her people's lives, she will not turn against people's war in the future, but will support them as much as possible. Still, however, peoples must rely mainly on themselves.

Revisionism is losing its audience. People's wars will inevitably triumph, and imperialism and revisionism will be swept from the stage of history.

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We are confident about people's wars, though each country's people must work hard to apply the general theory to their particular situation. Vietnam is the present focus of the struggle of the world's peoples against U S imperialism; China will support and aid the Vietnamese people to the utmost, and will not be blackmailed by U S threats of escalation. If the U S chooses to follow the Japanese by invading China, the U S troops will be annihilated and China 'will gain freedom of action.'

China's methods are well known; the most important is: 'mobilization of the people, reliance on the people, making every one a soldier, and waging a people's war.' U S naval and air strength cannot intimidate the Chinese people, nor can the atom bomb.

A third world war would mean that many more hundreds of millions of people would turn to socialism; and 'it is possible' that the whole structure of imperialism would collapse.

We are optimistic about the future, and confident that the peoples will 'bring an end to . . . war, this monster'. But only by waging revolutionary war can counterrevolutionary war be finally and ultimately defeated.

