

Mao's theory of revolution

Mao was born into a peasant family at Shaoshan village in Hunan Province on 26 December 1893. He devoted his heart and soul only to the tales of rebelling peasants fighting against the exploitative and corrupt bureaucracy. At the age of seventeen, he left home to pursue further study in Changsha, Hunan's provincial capital, where he was further exposed to the rebellion-oriented cultural environment of Hunan province. All of this helped shape Mao's belief that "rebellion is by nature legitimate."

When Mao encountered the world beyond his home village, he saw a China that had been sinking into an ever-deepening national crisis in the face of incursions by the Western powers and Japan. Like many of his contemporaries, Mao was eager to find ways to save China and make the country strong. Mao did not view wholesale Westernization as China's salvation. Unlike those of his contemporaries who travelled to Europe and Japan in order to "seek truth," Mao believed firmly that the key to solving the problems facing China must be sought in China itself.

The chief contribution of Mao in the field of political thought is his idea about revolution. In his book 'On Contradiction,' he observed that a revolution is generally caused by the internal contradictions that exist in a society.

In a bourgeois society there are contradictions or conflicts among the classes particularly between the two main class's bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The contradictions assume such nature that these cannot be reconciled by adopting the normal procedures. The result is that the contradictions continue to plague the society. Mao stated that the ills of the society can be removed by a revolution. He has said that the conflict between working class assumes such nature and dimension that it cannot be resolved by normal procedures. The conflicts can be settled by countrywide agitation which is revolution.

A revolution hence is an act of violence by which one class overthrows another. This constitutes the central idea of Mao's theory of revolution. According to Mao a revolution must be violent because the capitalists and reactionary elements will not accept the reasonable demands of the proletariat. Into his concept of revolution Mao included another technique and it is guerrilla warfare or to launch a sudden attack against the enemy. His theory of revolution also includes all sorts of conspiratorial practices. The chief objective of Mao's revolution is to defeat the enemy from behind.

Maoism also represents a series of strategies and tactics concerning how to make, enhance, and sustain the revolution. Mao certainly was a theorist and a man of ideas; but he also viewed himself as a practitioner and a man of action. The central mission of Maoist revolutionary strategies

concerned mass mobilization. In particular, Mao emphasized the importance of taking the peasants as the main force of the Chinese revolution.

In war he did not allow ethics, principles etc. to intervene because he knew that all these would hinder the success of a revolution. The guerrilla warfare and conspiratorial practice do not mean that he lost faith on the use of arms. His belief was that the use of technique depended upon the situation. According to Mao the chief objective in war is to defeat the enemy and naturally the selection of technique depends upon the situation and also the strength of the enemy.

Class struggle is also another technique of revolution. But Mao differed from Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin on the concept of class. All of them have spoken about class in the background of capitalist society. But Mao viewed the idea in the light of China whose main class was peasantry. Hence in Mao's class struggle the peasants must play the leading role. According to Mao the peasants, the proletariat and industrial workers must together launch a revolution against the bourgeoisie and all the reactionary forces and all these must be well-prepared to attack the bourgeoisie.

Repeating Marx's idea of revolution Mao says that in every bourgeois society there are various types of contradictions and only revolution can remove contradiction. Mao also emphasized the importance of party in a revolution. The success of revolution primarily depends upon a well-organized party structure. He once said to lead the revolution to success or victory a political party is necessary. But a party must follow its own line and must be dependent on the general mass. Mao also said that the party must not detach itself from the common people.

In 'On Contradiction' Mao said that the contradictions or conflicts prepare the ground for a revolution and it is the duty of the leaders to inspire the people for revolution, because mere existence of contradiction can never be a cause of revolution. At the right moment people will utilize the contradictions in their own favour. Mao has said that the antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is the main cause of hostility and this hostility will finally lead to revolution. Hence like Lenin, Mao believed that antagonism between the hostile classes could not be settled without war, that is, revolution. The exploited class must be prepared to take arms.

The Cultural Revolution:

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is an innovation which Mao made to cleanse the Chinese society particularly the superstructure from the bourgeois ills. Towards the middle of the sixties of the twentieth century Mao saw that the superstructure of the Chinese society was in the grip of bourgeois influences and ills.

In order to stop this process Mao called a new type of revolution which is called Cultural Revolution. Its sole aim was to free the Chinese society from all the undesirable elements and to set up a pure communist society in China. According to Mao and his followers, the revolution of 1949 freed China politically. But cultural freedom was badly needed. In order to guide the Cultural Revolution a

Central Committee of China's Communist Party was formed on 8 August 1966. The Central Committee stated that Cultural Revolution touches people to their very souls and constitutes a new stage in the development of socialist revolution in our country:

- The bourgeoisie is not completely overthrown and its remnants are still there and it is continuously trying to stage a comeback and gather forces. It is also trying to impose its ideas, principles, customs, culture and habits upon the people. If this at all happens that will pose a great danger to the Chinese society. Hence that attempt must be destroyed and Cultural Revolution will do that task.
- Mao was firm that since it is a revolution it will meet resistance from several corners, particularly from the bourgeoisie, and it is the duty of the people to scuttle that mischievous attempt.
- It is the conscious behaviour and education of the people that can foil the mischievous attempt and therefore it is the duty of the party to educate the people about the ill-designs and motives of the bourgeoisie. People must adopt ruthless and strong measures.
- It is the purpose of the Cultural Revolution to reform, transform, and, if necessary, remove the old methods and system of teaching. It is necessary to overhaul the whole educational system to the tune of socialism.

In summation Mao's own summary of his revolutionary strategies, he highlighted armed struggle, united front, and the Party's leadership role as the three keys that led the Chinese revolution toward victory. A firm believer in the idea that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun," Mao invested in developing strategies and tactics for waging revolutionary wars with both domestic and international aims. Hence Mao's theory of revolution remains a central concept in Marxist thought.