

**LECTURE AT THE CENTER FOR INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT
AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS (CIMIC)**

19:00 – 22:00 H 22 November 2001,
Lange Ridderstraat 36-38, 2800 Mechelen, Belgium

Subject : Basic Principles and Historical Development of Marxism

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OUTLINE OF SUBJECT

Introduction: Marx and Engels laid down the basic principles of Marxism in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848. Since then, the theory and practice of Marxism has gone through three stages.

1. Stage of Marxism: laying the theoretical foundation of scientific socialism

1.1 Socio-historical condition: era of free competition capitalism, the rise of industrial capital and labor and the class struggle between the two.

1.2 Sources and components of Marxism

1.2.1 German philosophy: Hegel and Feuerbach. Proceeded to dialectical materialism. Marx and Engels put dialectics on material basis and presented the law of contradiction in objective reality and in consciousness.

1.2.2 British political economy: Adam Smith and David Ricardo. Proceeded to critique of capitalist political economy through the theory of surplus value in the study of the commodity. Marx and Engels elaborated on the labor theory of value and presented surplus value or unpaid labor as the source of profits, the accumulation of capital and the crisis of overproduction.

1.2.3 French social science: revolutionary democrats and utopian socialists. Proceeded to theory of scientific socialism. Material conditions created by industrial capitalism provide the objective basis for socialism and generate the class struggle for the proletariat to establish the class dictatorship of the proletariat and replace private ownership with the public ownership of the means of production.

1.3 Practical achievements of Marx and Engels

1.3.1 International Workingmen's League. Marx and Engels inspired and guided this as the First International of the proletariat and promoted scientific socialism among several other trends in the working class movement.

1.3.2 Learning lessons from the Paris Commune of 1871. Marx analyzed the Paris Commune and hailed it as a prototype of proletarian dictatorship. He identified positive and negative lessons.

1.3.3 Second International from 1889 onwards and Marxism as the main trend in the European working class movement from the last decade of the 19th century. When Bernstein became revisionist, Kautsky opposed him. When Kautsky also became revisionist, Lenin would oppose him in the Second International.

2. Stage of Marxism-Leninism: theory and practice of proletarian revolution

2.1 Socio-historical condition: free competition capitalism had evolved into monopoly capitalism or imperialism at the beginning of the 20th century and thus ushered the era of imperialism and proletarian internationalism.

2.2 Lenin's development of the theory of Marxism

2.2.1 In philosophy, materialism versus empirio-criticism. Lenin further developed materialist dialectics as he opposed subjectivist and empiricist trends among bourgeois thinkers who presented themselves as Marxist or scientific.

2.2.2 In political economy, critique of monopoly capitalism or imperialism as the highest and final stage of capitalist development. Lenin presented the five features of imperialism. He criticized it as moribund capitalism, prone to economic crisis, political repression and wars of aggression. He put forward the theory of uneven development to assert that proletarian revolution is more likely to occur in the weakest links in the chain of imperialist domination.

2.2.3 In social science, the critique of classical revisionism, building the revolutionary party of the proletariat and upholding proletarian dictatorship, socialist construction and socialist culture. Lenin upheld the Marxist theory of state and revolution and the principles of class struggle and class dictatorship of the proletariat.

2.3 Practical achievements of Lenin and Stalin

2.3.1 First socialist country in one-sixth of the world after World War I. Lenin defined the general line of socialist revolution and construction. But it would be Stalin who would carry it out vigorously. From the transitional measures of the New Economic Policy, Stalin would carry out socialist industrialization, collectivization and mechanization of agriculture, the education of great numbers of scientists and technologists and raising the standard of living.

2.3.2 Defeat of fascism and war as the most brutal weapon of monopoly capitalism. The Soviet Union made the greatest sacrifices and broke the backbone of fascism in World War II.

2.3.3 Emergence of several socialist countries and national liberation movements after World War II. One third of humanity came under the governments of people's democracies or socialism. Countries won their national independence through armed revolution or else the imperialist countries were compelled to "grant" independence.

3. Stage of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism: posing and confronting the problem of modern revisionism.

3.1 Socio-historical conditions: The U.S. became the No. 1 imperialist power and No. 1 enemy of the people of the world. It was possible for the combination of the socialist and national liberation movements to isolate weaken and defeat US imperialism. But the emergence of revisionists in power in socialist countries and the common adoption of neocolonialism by the two superpowers undermined the socialist and national liberation movements.

3.2 Mao's development of the theory of Marxism-Leninism

3.2.1 In philosophy, the unity of opposites as the single basic law of contradictions. To this day, after Lenin, Mao's contributions to Marxist philosophy stand out as the latest, most original and most significant. They take issue with some philosophical views of Stalin.

3.2.2 In political economy, measures to improve on and surpass the Soviet model. Mao pursued the line of developing heavy and basic industries as the leading factor in the economy, agriculture as the basis and light industry as the bridging factor. He emphasized the primacy of the socialist relations of production in the course of socialist revolution against the theory of productive forces and in turn the primacy of the socialist superstructure over the mode of production.

3.2.3 In social science, the theory of continuing revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat to combat revisionism, prevent the restoration of capitalism and consolidate socialism. Principles, policies and measures were laid down to stress that socialism would take a whole historical epoch, to grasp the class struggle as the key link in every social endeavor, to ensure the leading role of the proletariat in every aspect of society, to put revolutionary politics in command of production, to put the superstructure in basic correspondence with the socialist base, to maintain close links among the cadres, the masses and experts and to train the youth as revolutionary successors.

3.3 Practical achievements of Mao

3.3.1 Liberation of a quarter of humanity in China (in effect bringing one-third of humanity under socialism). Mao elaborated on the new democratic and socialist stages of revolution in semicolonial and semifeudal countries. He proved that protracted people's war is feasible in said countries because these, together with imperialism, are in chronic crisis.

3.3.2 Building socialism and seeking to improve on the Soviet model. Mao successfully carried socialist revolution and construction. He criticized and repudiated modern revisionism centered in the Soviet Union. He studied and exposed such causes in Soviet history and current circumstances as the premature declaration in the Soviet Constitution of 1936 that there was no more class struggle in the Soviet Union, except the one between the Soviet people and the imperialists, and the rise of bourgeoisified bureaucrats in the ruling party, state, economic enterprises and cultural organizations.

3.3.3 Successful repudiation of modern revisionism up to 1976 in China. The greatest achievement of Mao is in putting forward the theory and practice of continuing revolution under proletarian dictatorship. The cultural revolution succeeded only until 1976. But important lessons can be learned from the positive and negative experiences.

4. The Current Situation: bankruptcy of "free market" globalization and the new world disorder

4.1. Revisionist rulers opted in 1989-91 for the full and undisguised restoration of capitalism. The revisionist regimes collapsed and Soviet Union no less disintegrated. It came out as the big loser in the Cold War. Since then, the US has stood as the sole superpower and has further pushed "free market" globalization and wars of aggression.

4.2 Under "free market" globalization and "new world order", rapidly worsening economic and political conditions: crisis of overproduction, financial crisis, reactionary trends and wars.

4.2.1 In the third world and the NIC's. The vast majority that produces raw materials for export are the most devastated. Also devastated are the few NIC producing some basic manufactures.

4.2.2 In the former Soviet-bloc countries. Continuing are de-industrialization and compradorization, the unbridled plunder by the imperialists and the new bourgeoisie.

- 4.2.3 In the imperialist countries. The US benefited from funds flowing from Japan and Western Europe. Now, the US itself is in dire crisis after the bursting of the "new economy" bubble. The crisis of overproduction has extended to high tech goods.

5. Prospects for the resurgence of the anti-imperialist and socialist movements

- 5.1 The anti-imperialist and socialist movements is bound to surge forward again as a result of the worsening of basic contradictions between the imperialist powers and oppressed peoples, among the imperialist powers and between capital and labor. Imperialist crisis and war are inciting the people to wage revolution, nations to fight for liberation and countries for independence.
- 5.2 The resurgent revolutionary movements can become stronger than their predecessors could in the 20th century if they learn how to counter opportunism and revisionism as well as imperialism neocolonialism and all reaction.
- 5.3 The resurgent revolutionary movements can make advances by taking advantage of new conditions, including the unprecedented worsening of the basic contradictions of the world and the exceedingly high level of technology for production, distribution, communication and warfare.