



MARXISM AND VIOLENCE

1. Different Kinds of Violence

Our enemies try hard to paint communists as violent people. They spread the lie that communists prefer to use the gun rather than peaceful means to achieve their aims. But history has shown us that, of all political theories, it is Marxism which has the deepest respect for human life, its protection and its liberation from violence, exploitation and oppression.

It would be completely un-Marxist to follow theories which glorify violence for its own sake. Yet, communists are not pacifists. There are examples where communists have supported or led armed struggles for national and social liberation. What then is the real attitude of communists to violence? When and under what conditions do communists support the strategy of armed struggle or violent revolution? Before we can answer these questions we must take a brief look at the variety of forms in which violence appears.

The school-teacher who relies on the stick to make his students pass their exams is not solving a problem. The drunken bully who, dagger in hand, terrorises ordinary people is rightly regarded as a criminal who deserves punishment. If a policeman were to use violence to stop this bully, he would certainly be applauded by the people. But if the same policeman shoots a worker who is on strike for higher wages, the action of the policeman is completely different. And if the people who are on the scene hit back by stoning the policeman, their violence is understandable.

These are just a few examples to show that violence comes in different forms. It is of course violence in every case, but some acts of violence are unjust and some are just. Revolutionaries support the just forms of violence more especially in situations where the ruling class relies on brute force to conquer a people and to remain in power. There are other situations in which the political system makes it impossible for the people to bring about social change without armed struggle and violent revolution. It is for the revolutionary movement

in each country to decide what strategy is best for its own struggle.

Just and Unjust Wars

European capitalism has been responsible for the most murderous wars in the history of humanity. In 1914 the imperialists went to war with one another, like a group of robbers who fight over their stolen goods. Led by Lenin, true revolutionaries the world over refused to support this unjust imperialist war and called upon the workers in both camps to overthrow their capitalist rulers.

Africa has also experienced the brute force of capitalism and imperialism. Every inch of our continent's soil was colonised by foreign military expeditions which seized the land and forcibly subjugated the people.

In South Africa it began with the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck. Our capitalist ruling class conquered us by force and relies on force to remain in power. Whatever the people have tried to do in the past in order to bring about real change has been met by the naked terror of the regime's police and army. And at this very moment the killing goes on in almost every area where black people live.

It is clear that in a case such as ours the people have every moral and political right to take up arms against those who know only force as an instrument of rule. It is in this kind of situation that we communists are committed to revolutionary wars waged by a majority in the interest of the majority. That is why in 1961 our Party helped to bring Umkhonto we Sizwe into existence. Our racist enemy is engaged in an unjust war on the people. And the people must be prepared to wage a just war to win back their birthright. There is no other way forward at the moment.

It has been said that war is a continuation of politics by other means. In our next issue we will deal with the way we communists see the connection between political and military struggle.

DEFEAT RACIST TERROR!