

## Book Review:

*Sooner or Later: Questions & Answers on War, Peace & the United Front:* New Outlook Press, 120 pp., 1980.

Cuban intervention in Angola in 1975 and in Eritrea in 1978 and years following marked a turning point in the post-Vietnam era. In 1978, Vietnam invaded Kampuchea. With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the international situation gave rise to yet another new political trend in the United States, or did it?

*Sooner or Later* claimed to uphold a Maoist approach.

Now, however, its political trend is dead. Although there were several MIM comrades on hand working in Cambridge from 1980 on, they never encountered *Sooner or Later*. The Revolutionary Communist Party issued polemics against the book in the *Revolutionary Worker*.

The book upheld China and Deng Xiaoping as socialist; however, it went beyond the official Chinese line in condemning the Soviet Union. (p. 44)

Was the book a CIA project abandoned when its objectives were completed? Perhaps MIM Theory readers know the nature of this trend. It would be useful knowledge in order to expose its descendants if any.

In any case, *Sooner or Later* argues that sooner or later fighting "fascist social-imperialism" will be the top priority of all communists and progressive people.

In any case, the analysis that the Soviet Union is on the verge of taking over the world leads to several tactical decisions that include support for US military bases in Puerto Rico and the Philippines (p. 57), support for European deployment of Pershing II (p. 65), an adequate "civil defense against nuclear attack," (p. 73) support for the draft (p. 81) and labor action against Soviet ships and Iran. (p. 100)

While many will dismiss *Sooner or Later* for the above programme alone, it would be an empiricist error in method to do so.

Also, although the book supports the Deng Xiaoping revisionist regime in China, it would not matter too much to the analysis if China were a capitalist Third World country. Built on the Three Worlds theory, the analysis sees the Third World as the main force against Soviet hegemonism. According to *Sooner or Later*, communists in the US would demonstrate their independence in the united front against the Soviets by supporting the Third World against US aggression.

Hence, one can start a proper attack on *Sooner or Later*? with a criticism of the Three Worlds theory. Others have already done this.

To really nail this argument to the wall, however, it is necessary to do one of four things: 1) Show that the Soviet Union is not really a military threat to the imperialists of Europe and America. If the risk of the USSR's overrunning the world is small, one can argue that the international proletariat has other more urgent tasks which are already known. This is to refute the empirical analysis of *Sooner or Later* in order to leave existing Marxist-Leninist theories tact. 2) Argue strategically, that it would be better in terms of the position of the international proletariat to let the Soviet Union overrun Europe and/or the US before starting a military and propaganda offensive against Soviet hegemonism. This is akin to saying "let them invade Afghanistan; they'll suffer the hatred of peoples there and everywhere." 3) Argue theoretically that the USSR is not fascist and not driven to attempt to direct control of other nations. 4) Argue Mao and especially Stalin were wrong about the united front.

On different occasions the RCP has argued all four, especially 2-4. The author would tend to go with 2 and 3 and study 4 much more deeply.

Thoughts on 2-4 may sharpen in one's mind if one imagined a successful Soviet replication of Hitler's conquering of continental Europe. What would a communist do then?

The question in one is the bread and butter of MIM Notes. More needs to be done on how the poles of pacifist wishful thinking on Soviet militarism as in the Price of Defense and chauvinist militarism feed into each other!

This book is not for mass distribution. Those interested in the splintering of the international communist movement, what happened to the descendants of SDS, what happened with anti-revisionism and anti-dogmatism in the US will want this as background research material. It's also a good exercise in demarcation of political lines. Once again, this book is not urgent reading as events in Grenada, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Lebanon and Libya wiped out any genuine force that this trend might have and Reagan withdraw any state resources to even bigger items in the Pentagon agenda.