

restricted circular

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

occasional internal bulletin of the R.C.L.(B)

This is the first of an occasional internal bulletin designed to circulate correspondence, and record of meetings with international contacts, make available their analysis and comments on international topics possibly unsuitable for publication in "Class Struggle".

There may be unacknowledged disagreements, thus articles contained herein are not official RCL positions.

Often the result of bi-lateral meetings, these notes are for information only. Direct quotation is not advisable. Circulation is restricted to League members unless otherwise advised.

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Any correspondance or reports for inclusion in this bulletin
should be sent to the London branch. Comments welcomed.

PHILIPPINES: A View of the current situation and revolutionary tasks

This article is a reprint from the April 1987 issue of Ang Bayan, journal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

(Sometime in the middle of the peace negotiations between the National Democratic Front and the Aquino government, friends of the NDF sent a letter proposing "An Alternative Approach to the Peace Negotiations." The main contents of the letter have appeared in different forms (eg press release, paid adverts etc.) in the bourgeois media at the time of the negotiations. Pilar Victoria, a comrade in the NDF provided Ang Bayan a copy of the reply she wrote. Full text follows.)

We may sum up the arguments in your letter as follows : With the ouster of the Marcos dictatorship, the Filipino people are confronted with the choice of supporting Cory Aquino and her "liberal-democratic government" as against the resurgence of a US-instigated fascist rule. Implicit in the argument is the position that the "democratic space" under a liberal regime, however limited, is better than the open terrorism of a fascist takeover. The armed struggle, an option justifiable under dictatorial rule, will only destabilize liberal rule, and therefore, should be put aside in favour of the "peaceful form of political struggle" and resorted to only "when dictated by dramatic changes in the political situation."

In the above-stated arguments, we can cite four basic flaws which a revolutionary of obvious political sophistication and experience can ill-afford to make unless there are other reasons for advancing such arguments:

- 1. a failure to grasp the decisive role played by US imperialism in a neo-colony like the Philippines, and its role in shaping the particular form of rule through which the reactionary ruling system operates;
- 2. a misconception of the Aquino regime as "liberal-democratic" (a government which asks to be "given a chance to reconstruct a democratic republic" representative of "the interests of all classes equally" and operating "within the framework of national reconciliation and political pluralism");
- 3. a narrow understanding of the nature and aims of the armed struggle, its basis and role in resolving the fundamental problems of the people; and
- 4. an overestimation of the "popularity", the "high political and moral ground" now occupied by the Aquino government in defining revolutionary strategy and tactics.

US IMPERIALISM MAINTAINS ITS DOMINANCE THROUGH A SEMI COLONIAL STATE WITH A LIBERAL FACADE AND A STRONG MILITARIST COMPONENT

While you cite the fact that the whole nation is enslaved by imperialism and call for the "final exposure of US imperialist intervention", you labour under the assumption that the Aquino government operates outside this framework, if not in contradiction to US policies. By extension, you make references to "the Reganites' move to strengthen the local fascists or take steps to sabotage the Aquino-NDF efforts for peace and pluralism" creating the impression that US imperialism's effort to strengthen the local fascists is designed to undermine the maintenance of "liberal rule".

In effect, you assess the present situation as one in which the choice is between an Aquino regime and a fascist one. This is an illusory choice, given the actual development of events within the past year. Unfortunately, it is the same false choice - a trap - which the US and its psywar experts feverishly attempt to hoodwink the Filipino people to fall into.

The February uprising brought to power a coalition of forces which included remnants of the deposed dictatorship represented by Enrile and Ramos, elements of the old ruling classes who stood against Marcos, and a few progressive liberals. On the basis of class and political background, all but a few represented the dominant comprador and landlord classes in Philippines society. In terms of government positions, I am sure you would agree that the key sectors were firmly in the hands of conservative pro-imperialist elements. One need not elaborate on the unreformed and fascist nature of the military.

Such an analysis, I think, is necessary in order to lay the basis for a realistic appraisal of the character of this government and the general direction it is predisposed to follow.

The fragile coalition obviously could not hold together for long. Two main factions were inevitably locked in intense contention for political supremacy and a larger share of the greatly reduced economic and political bonanza left behind by the deposed dictator. This contention involved a struggle in the form of rule, particularly in the approach to "insurgency" and not in its essential class content.

One faction, the Enrile clique, would join forces with the "abandonados" to try and reimpose a fascist dictatorship under the banner of "saving democracy from the communist scourge". The other faction, led by Mrs. Aquino, riding high on popular anti-fascist sentiments and desire for improved social conditions, would peddle the need for "stability" to pursue liberal reforms and economic recovery and lay the ground for the eradication of "insurgency". Fidel Ramos, the reluctant and fair-haired boy of the US was an important if not key ingredient partly to see to it that the conflict did not break out into open war among elements within the coalition and partly to make sure that the counterinsurgency program remained on course.

It was clear to Enrile and his forces that the longer the Aquino faction held decisive sway over governmental affairs, the more difficult it would be to mount a serious challenge against the former and the less chances for his own doubtful popularity to stand the test. In other words, his political base within some sections of the military, the warlord elements of the Marcos era and the traditional politicians, many of whom had their heyday during the Marcos years, dictated the mode of battle and the political program he could best utilize under the circumstance

It was Ramos' role to make sure that Cory forces, including Cory herself, were kept in line and drawn increasingly into a US-supervised alliance with the "professional" fascist forces. Without denigrating the Cory forces' role nor Cory's personal sincerity, one may ask: Who was orchestrating the scenario? A continuing wartime situation between the two major factions of the ruling classes would only have exacerbated the already serious crisis of the ruling system to the benefit of the revolutionary forces. The biggest losers would not only have been the comprador-landlord classes, but US imperialism itself with its strategic interests.

A comprador-landlord rule with a liberal facade without a strong militarist component would be too weak and inherently unstable to withstand the growing revolutionary movement. An outright military takeover, on the other hand, would rapidly disillusion millions who had flocked to Cory's banner, at a time when reactionary rule was still being consolidated.

Prior to Enrile's official ouster, the post-Marcos form of rule had already taken shape: a US-supported coalition of comprador-landlord elements backed up, not over-ridden by a strong militarist component.

A popular figure like Cory Aquino was a crucial component in the combination. But, at the same time, the fascist component within the "liberal" shell needed to be powerful enough to ensure that the liberal reformists in the civilian government were kept in check. It needed to be loyal enough to US imperialism to faithfully pursue the latter's policies, especially with regard to the revolutionary movement. In brief, it was a necessary part of overall US political maneuver to manage the transition from the Marcos years towards the current form of reactionary rule. Any other combination under the circumstances would have been less workable.

The official ouster of Enrile brought to full flower today's "liberal" version of comprador-landlord rule. It signalled the more or less rapid consolidation of reactionary rule, the better to put in place an integrated political and military strategy against the "insurgency". The easing out of a number of "unpopular" cabinet ministers was a necessary step towards political stability for the ruling system.

In your letter, you attach the term "liberal-democratic" to the Aquino government. By this, you describe the essential character of not only the formal leaders of that government but the government as a whole. Obviously, we have a divergence of opinion as to the meaning of the term "liberal-democratic". In my view, a "liberal-democratic" government should at the minimum have the following characteristics:

- 1. a firm antifascist position in the tradition of bourgeois republicanism with a genuine commitment to formal democratic principles; and
- 2. a clear bias for the economic and sovereign rights of the nation.

While you take pains to distinguish between the local fascists and the "liberal-democratic" government of Mrs Aquino, and warn us about the resurgence of fascism, you fail to point out that fascism thrives even under the aegis of bourgeois parliamentarism. History tells us this. In our particular case, the Aquino government and the local fascists are not two separate entities. They are part of one integral form of state rule whose essential orientation, supported by US imperialism and blessed by Cardinal Sin, is antinational and anti-people.

It came as no surprise that even the democratic, anti-fascist process, which culminated in the February uprising and continued through the early months of Aquino regime, has virtually lost steam. What is promised beyond the 2nd February 1987 is but the venue through which the ruling classes are to manage their conflicts and the channel through which the masses are to be deluded into directing their legitimate demands. It would be illusory, if not foolish, to hope for genuine "pluralism", equal representation of "the interests of all classes" or accommodation of "contending visions of social progress" within such framework. Can a government that has stopped so far short of even dismantling the vestiges of fascism be expected to offer more than what it is? The proffered choice of "liberal democratic" rule with its supposed democratic space, as against fascist rule, is a false one. The balance sheet shows that the choice has already been made.

I do not wish to understate the benefits of "democratic space" even within the reactionary ruling system. But we must appraise it for what it is in order to make better use of it for the advance of the revolution. Needless to say, we have to contend with the structures of antiradicalism laws, decrees and promulgations that takes so long to repeal (not to mention increasing media censorship), even as there seems to be no such delays in the jockeying for positions, graft and looting of the people's money which is but the offshoot of the wider base of political patronage offered by a "liberal" form of comprador-landlord rule.

While there may be true liberal democrats in the Aquino government who unfortunately but not surprisingly became fewer in number and more impotent, I have too much respect for them to cast them within the same mold as Ongpin, Fernandez, Ramos, Ileta and yes, even Cory Aquino.

In the matter of economic policy, the actual record of the Aquino government speaks for itself. Just talk to disillusioned genuine liberal democrats who, early during the term, wished to sincerely contribute to the formulation of a coherent pro-Filipino economic program for the new government with its "sincere" pronouncements to that effect.

The Marcos dictatorship left the already crisis-ridden economy in shambles. As I'm sure you would readily agree, the foreign commercial banks, the transnational as well as the US government profited tremendously from their collaboration with the Marcos regime. A cursory look at what it left behind leads us to conclude that any post-Marcos government would be constrained to follow the agenda of its creditors in exchange for more loans and bilateral assistance, or to opt to decisively break foreign monopoly control over the local economy with the political risks that option entails. The choices are narrowed by the depth of the crisis itself. In other words, the post-Marcos government would have to contend with the blandishments and pressures of international financial capital whose claims on the economy - on the Filipino nation and people - had reached about the yearly productive capacity of the country.

US imperialism was certainly aware of this. Using the WB and IMF, it proceeded to cajole the Aquino government to tread a policy path that would not only facilitate debt repayment but also, and more importantly, to ensure that the debtor government would allow their policies to remain in place.

Despite the initial presence of progressive elements in key cabinet posts, it comes as no surprise to many that the Aquino government would proceed along an economic policy agenda that hewed closely to the export-oriented, debt-dependent strategy of the Marcos years. It is clear that the Aquino government has neither moved decisively to diminish, much less eliminate, US monopoly control over the economy nor break the comprador-landlord classes' stranglehold over it. In fact, it has constitutionalized the colonial pattern of trade and foreign control over strategic sectors of the economy, even as it has liberalized imports and assured foreign creditors full debt repayment.

To say that Mrs Aquino's drift to the right is something dictated by the current balance of forces and so beyond her subjective wishes would in effect be tantamount to exonerating not only this regime but all other previous puppet regimes from Roxas to Marcos.

It is only a matter of time before the deep crisis of the ruling system catches up with the "liberal" masquerade of the Aquino regime which in actuality merely serves as the shield for fascism and outright subservience to US imperialism.

CONDITIONS FOR WAGING THE ARMED STRUGGLE ESSENTIALLY REMAIN UNCHANGED

The question of continuing with the armed struggle may by now be considered moot and academic with the open declaration of war by the Aquino government after plebiscite. However, for the sake of argument, could the revolutionary forces have prevented the Aquino government from "unsheathing the sword of war" had the former shifted to "peaceful form of struggle" ?

We can best reply to this question if we focus our analysis on the concrete actuations of the Aquino regime and not on the subjective estimation of the sincerity of Cory to bring about peace. Events before the ceasefire agreement saw the massive repositioning of the fascist AFP forces and intensification of military operations in Cagayan Valley, Bicol, Negros, Agusan and Davao provinces. Whether the Aquino "liberal-democratic" regime was a reluctant partner in this undertaking or whether these military operations were part of an integrated strategy involving that government, is a question you yourself pose in the letter.

During the ceasefire period, it was clear in the negotiations that the Aquino government would settle for no less than the surrender of the revolutionary forces through its proposed amnesty program. It was clear that capitulation and not a "self-defense" posture would be the price we have to pay for a peaceful settlement with the "liberal-democratic government" of Mrs Aquino. Therefore, if the revolutionary forces would not be willing to pay this price, nothing can prevent this government from resorting to fascist repression. US imperialism would have no need to use the disenfranchised and discredited "local fascist" towards this end. This is what is happening today !

It is in this context, I think, that we must understand the peace overtures of the present regime and not be deluded by sweet-talk and promises of a "popular" and "sincere" lady president.

For decades after the turn of the century, the Filipino masses have risen up in arms against colonial and neocolonial rule, even under the most benevolent regimes. In none of these previous regimes have the roots of the armed struggle been resolved or even seriously addressed. You will agree that our social situation has declined considerably since the American troops massacred Filipinos in Balangiga and elsewhere. Our country has become poorer and more deeply dependent on and under the thumb of foreign capital despite nominal independence and formal democratic processes.

The armed struggle is not an option one can take depending on the form of rule US imperialism and its local allies employ one time or another. It did not arise only upon the declaration of martial law. Neither was it solely directed at restoring formal democratic processes as is the thinking among political soothsayers at the Intercon, Cebu Plaza or Davao Insular, or at the coffeeshops of the rich and famous. It is a form of struggle waged by the people to challenge the monopoly of power by the ruling big comprador and big landlord classes under the aegis of US imperialism. For as long as these classes dominate society, the issue at hand is no less than the seizure of political power by the oppressed masses.

There are very serious reasons for taking up arms -- reasons rooted in the social make-up of society. The actual record of the Aquino government shows a direction that goes in the reverse of transforming this basic make-up. To maintain that the Aquino regime has taken the reactionary path because of failure of the revolutionary forces to pull it towards the opposite direction betrays an incorrect appraisal of the real character and class content of this regime.

OUR REVOLUTIONARY TASK IS TO EXPOSE THE REAL CHARACTER OF THE AQUINO REGIME
AND TO MASTER ALL FORMS OF STRUGGLE UNDER THE NEW SITUATION

Thus far, I have admittedly dealt with strategic questions. But I feel there is a need to restate certain fundamental matters in the light of the strategic implications of the points you raise. Lest I be accused of being totally devoid of any tactical sense, let me clarify that tactics serve strategy, and tactics deal primarily with the methods of struggle and forms of organization designed to bring the people to the forefront of revolutionary struggle. Necessarily, correct tactics proceed from a correct appraisal of the current balance of forces.

In my opinion, the developing main line of contradiction at present is that between the reactionary forces on the one hand and the people on the other. The Aquino government is not only enveloped within the forces of reaction, it has developed as the main expression of contemporary comprador-landlord rule. The splits among the various factions of the ruling classes would be more accurately assessed in relation to the overall conflict between US-comprador-landlord alliance and the broad masses of the people. Both the Aquino faction and the disenfranchised faction of the ruling classes are natural reserves of US imperialism. Thus, under the mediation of US imperialism, factional strifes among them are more likely to be managed generally within the framework of bourgeois parliamentarism. US imperialism and the ruling classes as a whole are acutely aware that the degree to which they are able to get their act together - despite their political differences - is the degree to which they can keep the reactionary ruling system operating and the political and economic pie properly apportioned. The liberal facade after the Marcos trauma is a vital ingredient in preserving the moral basis for a comprehensive political and military offensive against the revolutionary movement.

In this respect, the struggle for democratic rights against resurgent fascism will gain importance in the overall revolutionary mass movement. But I do not think it will be primarily focus on the Marcos loyalists or the Enrile RAM boys as you suggest in the letter. For what does one do with a government that stops short of its anti-fascist commitments and has geared up instead to raise counterinsurgency to the level of a crusade that may even be worse than the previous regime's ?

All that having been said, we go to the matter of the Aquino regime's "popularity" and its alleged "high moral and political ground" as it calls for "peace and pluralism" two questions come to mind :

- Firstly, the risk of possible isolation if the revolutionary movement were to directly oppose the present "popular" regime.
- Secondly, and perhaps the more relevant, the necessity of pursuing the peace process through some kind of alliance with the Aquino regime in its call for "peace and pluralism" against the local fascists and the Reaganites who are out to sabotage the process.

Concerning the first question, revolutionaries must no doubt consider the matter of public perception as an important element in tactics. However, public perception is not static and it is the task of revolutionaries to get their act together in turning public perception towards the truth and away from the myths propagated by the ruling classes. For as an eminent revolutionary would say : " there is no advancing a revolution that has come to a standstill, that has choked itself with phrases, and that keeps 'marking time', because Of the unreasoning trust of the people ... Only by overcoming this unreasoning trust (... by pointing to the lessons of experience), can we set ourselves free from the prevailing orgy of revolutionary phrase-mongering and really stimulate the consciousness of both the proletariat and the masses in general ... "

Regarding the second question, it may be correctly argued that a proposal for a coalition government, even just as a "transitional" step, would not for now be acceptable to the greater majority of the people given the deceptive tactics of the present regime. It is equally true, however, that the issue of "peace and pluralism" is actually being couched in terms favorable to the reactionary government. Any type of compromise with the Aquino regime even just in name of "peace and pluralism" should then be appraised in view of the real character, role and direction of this regime. If it were truly nationalist and committed to democracy, as any genuine "liberal democrat" is, then what is left would be to agree on the methods of defeating a common enemy. But if it were not, and I contend on the basis of actual political record it is not, pursuing the tactics you propose of putting the weapons aside in the name of "peace and pluralism" would only lead to virtual surrender and result in total annihilation of the revolutionary forces. What a way of selling out the fruits of long years of struggle and sacrifice for nothing !

The experience of the 60 day ceasefire agreement amply demonstrates the bad faith of the Aquino government in its avowed aim of achieving peace. Its armed forces have used the ceasefire period to slyly position themselves within NPA guerrilla fronts for an all-out war of annihilation even as the Aquino government has been dangling its program of rebel rehabilitation on the negotiating table. What more convincing proof of a well-orchestrated political and military counter-insurgency plan of the US-Aquino-Ilete-Ramos clique along the lines of the LIC Reagan doctrine !

The NDF has shown its good faith by bending over backwards in its peace negotiations with the Aquino regime. It drew up an adjusted peace proposal in lieu of its comprehensive program to give the reactionary government a chance to prove its sincerity in tackling the most immediate problems of the Filipino people. It agreed to a 60-day ceasefire even at a time when no definite guarantees of safety existed -- with the fresh assassination of Olalia and Alay-ay. What has the Aquino government done in turn to show its good faith ? It not only has coddled the fascist military notwithstanding the Mendiols, Berz and Lupao massacres but also initiated a reconciliation policy with the local fascist war-lords.

Should the revolutionary movement wait for "dramatic changes in the political situation" before "resorting to the non-peaceful form" of struggle ? Practical experience has more than sufficiently answered this question. For even within the brief period of the ceasefire when the revolutionary forces held back on defensive actions inspite of the numerous instances wherein the government armed forces killed or arrested NDF cadres and fighters, the Aquino government, through its fascist military took undue advantages of its military superiority to push back the revolutionary army from previously-held positions setting the ground for a massive attack on the NPA and its mass base. What guarantees for "physical survival" can the "liberal-democratic" Aquino government provide if the NDF were to follow your proposal to "shift to the peaceful form of political struggle" ? Will this not only set the stage for the movement's self-destruction ?

In the final analysis, the question of seizing political initiative and achieving moral ascendancy on the part of the revolutionary forces will indeed be complex for as long as the broad masses of our people have not yet grasped by their own experience the correctness of revolutionary strategy and tactics. But to say that it will be solved by abandoning, albeit temporarily, the armed struggle in the face of a "sincere" and "popular" regime is not only simplistic but suicidal. Our people want peace, but more than peace, our people want freedom. Today, in the guise of freedom, the old tyranny is coming back.

Under present conditions, the key to the advance of the revolution is not to shift from one form of struggle to another form but to master all forms without exception including new forms of struggle made possible by the people's victory over the ousted Marcos regime and by the accumulated strength of the revolutionary forces. The effective combination of these forms of struggle - armed and unarmed - will serve to expose the bankruptcy of the so-called centrist Aquino government, further exacerbate the rifts among the reactionary class forces, cultivate a mass sentiment for revolutionary armed struggle and thereby create the most favourable ground for the final battle for political power. The degree of efficiency with which the revolutionary forces wage these forms of struggle will be determinant in the possible range of maneuverability and strength of bargaining positions in future negotiations with the Aquino regime.

The advance of the revolution, I believe, will not be enhanced by helping a segment of the ruling classes to consolidate its rule against another faction of its own class but in bringing the broad masses, through their own experience, to the conviction of the practicality, efficacy and correctness of revolutionary strategy and tactics.

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See also "Class Struggle" interview with Jose Maria Sison :

" Sugar-coating the killing blade " published May 1987.

Printed below is a brief description from the Parti du Travail de Belgique / Partij van de Arbeid van België (PTB / PVDA), a fraternal party of the League. Some comrades have already met comrades from the PTB, visiting their premises in Brussel. Each summer, a week long international camp is organized by the PTB. Comrades should consider their holiday plans for next year !

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PTB - the Party of Labour of Belgium - is a marxist-leninist party which deploys nationwide political activity in Belgium. Since 1979 the party unites all those forces which base their work on the principles of M-L- Mao Zedong thought.

Belgian political life is dominated by 4 main bourgeois parties: the catholic, liberal and social-democratic party (all 3 are split along linguistic lines into Flemish and Walloon parties) and the Flemish nationalist party.

On the left, the "Communist" party has been steadily declining since 1945.

In the 1974 election this revisionist party still managed to get 169,631

votes. The last election took place in October 1985, votes casted :

The revisionist party 71,683 , The Marxist-Leninist Party 45,685,

the Trotskyite organization 14,003.

On the history of the "Communist" Party of Belgium

* 1943 : 4 members of the political bureau betrayed when arrested by Gestapo.

* 1944 : CP entered the government whose prime task was the disarmament of the partisans: strikes were forbidden in the name of "national reconstruction"

The CP documents mentioned the following principles: "the re-establishment of pre-war democratic institutions"; "loyalty to national unity, our party did not take advantage of the war-situation"; "collaboration between Labour and Capital"; "co-management by labour and business interests".

The C.C. adopted resolutions on the "best way to exploit the wealth of our country".

* 1954 : The principle of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" eliminated from the party-program

* 1956 : Support of Khrushchev's anti-Stalin, anti-communist positions , the "peaceful parliamentary road to socialism".

Since then : open criticism of Lenin's work on the state, of armed proletarian revolution, of the dictatorship of the proletariat; eliminated from the program any reference to marxism-leninism.

* 1985 : The recently elected chairman of the Flemish wing of the CP (the party is split along language lines) joined the social-democratic party.

Origin of the Parti du Travail de Belgique/Partij van de Arbeid van België

*1 : The Communist Party of Belgium split in 1963 on occasion of the Beijing - Moscow ideological confrontation.

Jacques Grippa created a marxist-leninist Communist Party in defence of Leninism, of Stalin , of Mao Zedong. Weaknesses were absence of thorough going criticism of revisionism; activism; absence of marxist-leninist education; police-infiltration. The party collapsed in 1966/67, but influenced the revolutionary tendency in the student movement.

*2 : Student movement, mainly in the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium * 1966/67. From anti-authoritarianism, anti-clericalism, anti-

nationalism and anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism and marxism-leninism. A single, unified student mass-organization dominated the movement; confrontation with the trotskyite organization; no CP presence in the university.

The student mass-organization (SVB) was influenced by :

- C amillo Torres (Columbian priest and guerilla fighter who studied in Louvain); the Vietnamese revolution; the Cultural Revolution in China.

- The study of Lenin's What Is To Be Done ?; State and Revolution and Mao's On Practice; On Contradictions; On the Correct Handling of contradictions amongst the people.

- The Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia.

Groups of students made investigations into workers' strikes.

Positions in 1967: defense of the principles of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao; anti-revisionism; necessity for the intellectuals to link up with the workers; necessity of building a new ML party.

The Struggle for the Party

*1 : Miners' Strike (5.1.70 - 16.2.70) unofficial, not supported by trade union leadership, involved 23,000 miners. 20-30 students MLs joined the miners in organising committees who led the whole struggles. ML students - some belonging to smaller French - speaking organizations - joined various spontaneous workers' strikes all over the country.

*2 : Ideological struggle within the organization. The student mass organization transformed itself into a working class based, ML organization with the name "All Power to the Working Class" and into a ML student organization called "Marxist-Leninist Movement".

Struggle on 3 issues:

- a centralised, unified ML organizations, or: relatively independent ML groups, gaining diversified experience
 - formation of groups of workers on a ML base, or: creation of broad workers' committees
 - political education on issues such as economic struggle, anti-imperialist struggle and racism, or: education on the basis of the direct experience of the workers
- *3 : General orientation, concentration on work inside the biggest businesses of the country.

- intellectuals and students go into factories as ordinary workers
- weekly presence of propaganda-teams selling the party paper and distributing leaflets at the entrance
- members become shop stewards

Intellectuals do political and organizational work in working class areas. First doctor's practice, with 2 doctors, party-members in Antwerp, linked political work to the Cockerill ship-yard.

*4 : Struggle for the unification of the ML movement. In 1970 there was one centralised ML-organization in the Flemish area, and there were 9 French-speaking ML groups. Two main ideological struggles took place between 1971 - 1976.

*4:1 Struggle against economism and revisionism.

Most important representative : the group "Clarte" (PCMLB) originated in the Grippa-party and the only group to have relations with the Chinese and Albanian parties between 1968 - 1978. Its basic political line was not different from that of the revisionist CP, but camouflaged by quotations from Lenin and Mao.

Positions : economism : political consciousness arises from the hard and violent struggle for the day-to-day demands of the workers.

anarcho-syndicalism : creation of new, red trade unions and absence of party building among the workers, against any participation in the electoral struggle, the ML-party has to be created by the vanguard workers not by intellectuals, the introduction of scientific socialism into the working class was necessary in 1902 but nowadays the workers have a high class consciousness.

Completely beaten in the ideological struggle about 1973, Clarte ceased to have any influence and disappeared.

*4:2 Struggle against intellectualism and trotskyism.

The most important French-speaking ML organization was the Union des Communistes ML de Belgique (UCMLB). The struggle was centred on the following issues:

- from theory to practice and back to theory, or: practice-theory-practice
- should communists play an active and leading role in the economic struggle of the workers ?
- should communists bother with the spontaneous mass struggles of the workers ?
- do you need a complete scientific program before engaging in revolutionary practice ?

- the importance of united front-work
 - is the situation in Europe "ripe for revolution" ?
- The idealistic, dogmatic "ultra-left" positions, cut off from reality, pushed the organisation to total degeneracy in 1976: UCMLB ceased to exist.

The foundation of the PTB/PVDA

Founding Congress : 2 November 1979. Comrades from the different French speaking organizations, who have all ceased to exist, joined the organization " All Power to the Working Class".

One year of discussions on a draft party program - 800 amendments discussed. Unification of all MLs of Belgium on the basis of a program that concentrates all important discussions between 1970 - 1979.

Rectification campaign against sectarian and dogmatic errors.

1. More emphasis on concrete analyses of the present economic and political situation in Belgium
2. Drawing-up of tactics for a united front-policy in the trade-union movement, in the democratic movement, in the peace movement
3. Making the weekly party-paper into a popular communist newspaper

Anti-imperialist work

The Anti-Imperialist League is a mass organization of the party.

- Publication of 4 issues a year of International Solidarity, analysing the revolutionary process in one third world country (Azania, Zaire, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Palestine, Philippines, China, Burkina Faso, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru etc.)
- Two nation-wide campaigns to collect money for a ML or revolutionary party in the Third World (about £15,000)
- Support for about 10 development projects in third world countries, each year
- Communist doctors have been sent to help revolutionary organizations in Palestine, El Salvador, Tigray and other countries
- Meetings to explain the revolutionary process in a third world country in 10 cities in Belgium (Burkina Faso, Azania, Philippines)
- "Third World School" 4 times a year; courses on theoretical problems of revolution in the Third World.

Anti-racist work

Racism against Arab and Turkish minorities is the main political problem in Brussels (about 50% of youth comes from migrant-workers families)

A party-unit works on racism. The youth organization of the party has taken up the fight against racism and fascism as its priority.

In January 1987 the party opened a multi-national cultural centre in Brussels (writers speak about their works; musical performances; films; conferences...). Campaign in defense of the rights of political refugees.

Peace-movement

A specialised party-unit publishes studies on peace-problems. Patrick Deboosere, responsible comrade for international relations, has recently published a book: "Star Wars". The party has gained a lot of experience in working at the different levels of the mass peace-movement.

Red Youth - youth organization of the party, main activity in secondary schools

Trade Union Movement

Two big, national trade-unions : CSC-ACV (Christian) and FGTB-ABVV (social democrat).

The christian-democratic trade unions played an important international role since the last world war in defending US-imperialism and european colonialism and neo-colonialism. Gust Cool, the president of this union, played an active role in splitting the world trade-union movement in 1946 -1948, in maintaining belgian colonialism and defending noe-colonialism in Congo/Zaire, in defending the Saigon regime during the american war of agression, in organising subversive actions against the Nicaraguan revolutionary government . (see analysis in: "The money of the christian-Democratic Party" by Ludo Martens and Peter Franssen, in dutch & French).

Repression against revolutionary and progressive shop stewards in both trade unions.

The Christian trade-union expelled its leading shop steward at the Boel shipyard; confronted with the protest of the other shopstewards, the whole trade union section of this enterprise was expelled. The social-democratic trade union recently tried to expell 4 shop stewards in the Union of Miners.

The PTB was the main political force among the workers of the shipyards and the coal mines in the country. (see material : Jan Cap's "The Life of A Worker" on his 40 years at the Boel Shipyard - Dutch; video tapes on the strikes at the shipyard and in the Belgian mines)

The trade union section of the party has made the first draft of a book on the history and the ideological and political positions of both trade unions.

Publications

Two weekly newspapers : Solidair (dutch) and Solidaire (french) . Circulation around 4,500.

The PTB/ PVDA has its own professional publishing house.

The party supports an independant, progressive publishing house (EPO) that publishes about 25 books a year. Party cadres are publishing their books in this house.

Karin Lievens - In El Salvador: the experiences of 4 years in the guerrilla zone of El Salvador (Dutch)

Dirk Van Duppen - Lieve Seuntjes: In the Palestinian camps of Beyrouth. One year working as doctors in Chatila and Bour j El Barajneh (Dutch)

Ludo Martens - Pierre Mulele or the second life of Patrice Lumumba. The history of the revolution in Congo/Zaire (French)

For further information, write to:

PTB/PVDA

Boulevard Lemonnier 171

Brussels 1000

Belgium

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What follows are the verbatim notes of a private meeting with Comrade Peter Jones late last year. It offers an assessment of the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania on the complexities of the struggle in Azania. Peter Jones, political organizer and Azanian People's Organization activist, is well placed to provide information: involved in the movement since a student in the late 1960s, arrested with Steve Biko in August 1977, freed in 1979, he remains active as a BCM leader in the Cape region of S.A.

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The Background of the 1960s.

Many exiles forced into exile.

Announcement of armed struggle contained lots of correct rhetoric, but not able to live up to promises. Many years passed before actual military engagement. Then very unprofessional, easily detected: unable to develop infrastructure inside SA to propagate consistent armed struggle.

Internally, Black Consciousness emerged with non-hostile attitude towards the historic organizations African National Congress (ANC) and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). It did not act as a third force. There was an absence of conflict that now emerging amongst the liberation organizations.

The state offensive isolated, then observed militants. Whole decade of 1960s the political mood was that of paralysis. The tradition developed whereby the plight of Black people became the object of liberal structures: the "on behalf of" politics.

Developments in 1970s.

BCM succeeded in breaking down "fear syndrome", to project a vision of the future for self-determination of Azanian people, propagated open struggle. Good relationship inside the country existed among senior personnel of different liberation organizations.

Feeling that reassessment building up in PAC/ANC towards greater unity. Steve Biko arrested in 1977 in the midst of trying to arrange coalition between student militants and exiled military groups. Internally, BCM proposed minimum programme of principles, which could have formed basis of initial meetings towards unity; in belief that then less divided them than united them.

Exiled commands, lacking internal relationship to struggle, needed to show presence (to justify own existence) led to disastrous adventurism and arrests. Tried to impose program of action rather than any reflection of ability to understand what was going on.

June 16th 1976 - the Soweto Uprising smashed line of collaboration. It was principled, directed against symbols of oppression. It was historic landmark in reassertance of our own rights. Angry youth fled to exile following repression: no organization had ability to absorb/direct their energies. Led to disillusionment of returnees. Wasted opportunity.

The conditions for unity were interrupted by bannings and murder of Biko in police custody. There was no new initiative for unity as increased repression destroyed the conditions and set in process of competition. ANC offered unity under its hegemony as an alternative to BCM initiative. Unacceptable given ideological roots of Black internal divisions.

Today the struggle is unfinished, an unfolding process but there are two growing poles :

*1 : National Convention

Opposed by BCM, little more than progressive democrats known as "Chartists" for support of ANC Freedom Charter. Supported by UDF/ANC. Represents attempts to intervene/ to abort revolutionary process. It is a collaborationist trend. Inherent position is "sell out" option for transfer of power. Contains no visible concern for historic land question - the crucial factor above all others. It presents the conflict as that of the ANC vs. the SA state. No acknowledgement of political development, no acknowledgement of mistakes or contradictions since adopting Charter in 1955.

Under guise of political activity in townships generates confrontation whereby any incident can act as a spark -- creating a revolutionary mood without the revolutionary preparations to sustain action. There is no network/organization to meet such a mood. In this context of symbols there are guns but no army, kangaroo courts and street committees but no organisation. Internalizing struggle within oppressed communities, not against structures of oppression. consensus of tactics needed from the community rather than shows of activity - the violent intimidation to achieve opportunist publicity.

*2 : National Forum

Led by BCM in form of AZAPO : TU movement allies, Cape Action League, Unity movement. Basically a constituent assembly containing agencies authenticated by people themselves. Publication : Frank Talk. Objective: struggle for national self determination. Characterised by land question: reconquest of nation ; Black working class leadership ; scientific socialism.

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COMMENT : In consideration of cde. Jones assessment of the armed struggle in Azania, the following observation by a League member was made.

Umkhonto We Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), the A.N.C.'s military wing remains the largest and best equipped of the military forces opposed to Pretoria. It has concentrated on getting weapons into the townships, trying to challenge the police for control. Until such secure bases near the centre of apartheid's power establishment are operational, random military attacks by the P.A.C. and A.N.C. forces will remain sporadic hit and run attacks. To ensure an armed opposition, the priority is establishment of an internal military infrastructure.

The fear of "a well co-ordinated revolutionary onslaught" is exaggerated. SA is not an easy target for exiled guerrillas. Its border areas difficult to cross and far from the important industrial and political targets. The armed strength of SA, and ability and willingness to use it against its neighbours mean that the guerrilla has no safe border to withdraw to.

The main internal pre-occupation of SA regime is to cripple the alternative seats of people power that have tried to establish an alternative civic and legal authority in the townships. The state has exploited rivalries, and run disinformation campaigns in an attempt to discredit the various liberation organizations, while the draconian measures and whole arsenal of internal detentions failed to smother the rebellious township. Here the civil disobedience is far from a military threat to the regime -- and no organization can meet the demand for guns in the township.

This commentary is a personal contribution by a League member, its analysis is not an endorsed public pronouncement.

Comment

Liquidationism was a political spectre that stalked the international Maoist movement in the early 1980s. It was one that the League has not surmounted too. In re-emphasising the importance of a multi-national communist party it confirms its political horizon as a party building organization. Liquidationism fed off of the political errors and miscalculations in other ML organizations throughout the northern hemisphere. The collapse of seemingly strong parties in Canada, the United States, Federal Republic of Germany and degeneration of ML organizations in Europe did weaken the international movement. There was nothing inherent in their politics which led to this state of affairs: subjective factors, the failure to utilize marxism-leninism-mao tsetung thought to combat liquidationism, were dominant. This cannot be said of the demise of Eurocommunism.

Eurocommunism was once hawked as the revisionist road to power. The PCI, the Italian communist party, the biggest in the West, was its pioneer with its criticism of Moscow, its support for NATO and promotion of a "historic compromise". With 34% of the popular vote, just ten years ago the PCI seemed on the threshold of power. Likewise the PCF in France; supported by over a fifth of the population, in alliance with the socialists in the Union of the Left, it seemed destined for office. The PCE in post-Franco Spain seemed on the path to influence and power with its acceptance of the monarchy and liberal democratic procedures.

But Eurocommunism has proved a fading dream.

In this year's summer elections the PCI continued its slow slide into the political sidelines; down to 26% of the popular vote. The revisionist parties in France and Spain have long been relegated to the margins of political relevance. The PCF down to a mere 5% of the vote after its disastrous period in government, wracked by internal dissention and expulsions. The PCE torn apart by splits with at least three competing organizations claiming the title of communist.

The fate of these eurocommunist experiments have proved the ideological criticism that western maoists made a decade ago. The inherent flaws of the revisionist project were crystal clear to any marxist revolutionary. Liquidationism was in-built in such a course of action.

The ideological sclerosis that accompanied the acceptance of the bourgeoisie political framework and absorption of their political categories and concerns led to a liquidationist position which curtailed political ambition -- no longer the vanguard party of the working class, more the radical conscience of social democracy.

The collapse of any revolutionary political perspective has not only affected European revisionists; the Australian revisionist party plans to liquidate itself and join with the trotskyists SWP to form "a new mass party and electorally relevant party to the left of the Australian Labour Party."

What unites them all is evolutionary parliamentary politics, the attempt to remain part of the Moscow dominated movement but voice fraternal criticism, and the abandonment of revolutionary marxism. The result has been the same: capitulation before the bourgeoisie and the disillusionment of militants and fragmentation into opposing trends. That is the liquidationist consequence of revisionism.

The liquidationist crisis that has hit the European revisionist Parties has had its toll in Britain.

Increasingly, pro-Soviet forces are suffering fragmentation and political disintegration. This inspite of the addition in recent years to their ranks of (ex) Trotskyists groupings like the RCG, the Workers' Party (ILWP), off-shoots from the WRP's splits like M.Banda's Socialist Forum and renegades from Maoism like Mosquito Press and the CPB(ML).

Whilst the CPGB maintains Kremlin franchise, it is easily outdone in its pro-Sovietism by oppositional tendencies that exist in and outside of the CPGB's structure. But like in the rest of the revisionist movement in Europe, the CPGB is wracked by bureaucratic manoeuvring, explosions and polemics.

"The key question today," proclaims one grouping within the CPGB, "is the survival of the CPGB and the struggle to reforge it back into a principled, revolutionary, marxist-leninist organization."

Unfortunately such a call is too late : it was the call voiced by the anti-revisionists like McCreery before their break from the CPGB in the early 1960s. Since then time has passed. The CPGB has succeeded in dismantling its communist heritage. As the inner-party opposition 'The Leninist' acknowledges:

"Certainly the adoption of the first 'British Road to Socialism' in 1950, with its commitment to achieve socialism via the Labour Party and the bourgeois parliament, made the present liquidationist crisis inevitable. After all, why have a communist party at all if socialism will be obtained through Labour Party governments ?" (The Leninist #26)

The need is to break from both the 'British Road to Socialism' and the Party that spawned it in order to build a genuine revolutionary party in Britain. That was the conclusion of the anti-revisionists, and despite the failure to achieve that objective to date, it is a conclusion that stands the test of time. One cannot honestly describe the CPGB as having even a pretence of being an instrument of revolution.

Corrupted by revisionism and riddled with opportunism, the CPGB inexorably faces political extinction - although the organizational legacy may endure. Its political role little more than a source of advice to social democracy. Indeed, the tendency towards liquidationism has greatly accelerated the influence of left-wing reformism, reinforced by ex-CPers. Afterall, why not vote, and join, the more realistic prospects of the genuine article in the Labour Party; at least it might win office to implement an increasingly irrelevant reformist programme.

The danger of theoretical poverty, of underplaying the nature of imperialism, of isolation from working class struggles, of factionalism can be seen in the sorry state of the CPGB as it maintains itself leech-like on past achievements and associations.

The pursuit of sectional interests inside the ranks of the CPGB has paralysed it as an interventionist POLITICAL force. No longer are its members at the forefront of struggles that challenge the state it seeks to influence. The chauvinism on the struggle in Ireland is legendary. Other examples too numerous to list.

Officially, CPGGB membership stands at 10,350, a drop from 18,458 in 1981. The membership continues to dwindle, but that is the least damaging problem facing the CPGGB as the number of ACTIVE members is much lower than card carrying numbers suggest. Indeed given the collapse in morale and activity, to the extent that the Young Communist League, the most obvious recruiting arena, has effectively be disbanded as a national organization. It is down to 3 functioning branches.

The state of the party leads more than one tendency to conclude that what is needed is a "paper of the advanced workers" á la Iskra, implying that the period is a party building one.

What afflicts the CPGGB is basically an ideological crisis -- the accumulation of political errors since adopting the "peaceful" road to socialism. This led to denying the leading role of the communist party and accompanying that the entire arsenal of marxism-leninism has been stripped away.

Today the CPGGB consists of a mass of different, and ultimately, contradictory strands, declining into a set of factions divided amongst themselves. In many ways resembling the bad old days of the anti-revisionist movement in its early years.

There exists at least 8 tendencies in and around the CPGGB as the 40th Congress of the Party approaches in November 1987.

- * EUROCOMMUNISM dominates the party organization but it is not a unified strand. There is the grouping around the totally misnamed Marxism Today and those around the semi inner party News & Views. Having vanquished the multitude of "tankies" they have only each other to turn on.
- * THE MORNING STAR the opportunist character, since the declaration of autonomy by editor Tony Charter in 1983, has been fully exposed as the paper lurches from decline to decline. The selling of William Rust House, home of MS, to the semi-porn rag Sunday Sport, and the wasted investment of £100,000 of shareholders money on an Urbanate Mark 2' printing press compounded the insult to the sacrifice of generations of communists. The Morning Star crisis is organically tied to the crisis of the CPGGB. The liquidationist course hastened when the paper's management committee violated the right of the party to control what was, except in formal terms, one of its publications.
- * COMMUNIST CAMPAIGN GROUP associated in an alliance of convenience with the Morning Star, wants to defeat Eurocommunism, to "re-establish" the party. However, you cannot defeat this year's revisionism with last year's revisionism: the CCG opposed the reformist BRS in 1977; now they support it. The publication of uncirculated discussion papers from a day school organized by the South Wales CCG starkly exposed the irreconcilable differences that exist within that opportunist gathering.
- * Other tendencies within the CPGGB but of less influence includes STRAIGHT LEFT and the theoretically more coherent The LENINISTS. Both fighting a losing battle when simply censored or ignored within the CPGGB. Each a lone participant in a much sought ideological clear-out.
- * The NEW COMMUNIST PARTY the legacy of a failed breakaway attempt in 1977 by the CPGGB Surrey District hangs around in hope of gaining party disillusioned but still Moscow faithfuls.
- * PROLETARIAN given birth in 1981 by expulsions from the NCP has a style and politics hard to believe. This sect is perhaps symbolically described by its use of the USSR State symbol as its own.

The following information is from correspondence received earlier this year. The League has an exchange of papers with S.K.A. but have had no bi-lateral meetings to date.

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Sveriges Kommunistiska Arbetarpartiet (Communist Workers Party of Sweden) SKA was founded in 1980 after a long inner party struggle. The opposition within Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti / SKP fought against the rightist opportunist line of the C.C. The majority of the C.C. considered the Soviet Union as the chief enemy to the people of the world and thought that the USA & NATO might be an ally, even in peace-time. As a consequence the majority gradually changed party attitudes towards social democracy, which is the best support of the Swedish monopoly bourgeoisie. The majority regarded it as the duty of the SKP to share responsibility of the capitalist economy. The majority proposed the party members to vote for the social democrats in the elections, to join the social democrat 1st May demonstration and step by step the party majority put through this political line in practice.

But to succeed in turning the party's line to the right, it was necessary for the majority in the C.C. to establish bureaucratic centralism, to establish inner party censorship and to expel the foremost critics as well as the party committees which were most critical, in order to win majority at the congress of SKP in 1980.

Today SKP (now the Party of Solidarity/Solidaritets-Partiet) has degenerated into a left social democrat sect, stating openly in its program of 1986 "a revolutionary change to socialism must take place within the parliament". This development proves that SKA was right from the beginning.

The political line of SKA can be summarised as follows:

- * SKA carries on the political tradition of SKP before its degeneration by working within the mass organizations, using the tactics of the united front and trying to combine the struggle for the daily demands with the long term struggle for socialism.
- * SKA take no responsibility for the capitalist economy, only for the welfare of the working classes. SKA consider the struggle against the reformist and revisionist influence within the proletariat very important. SKA is not prepared to support a social democrat government as a lesser evil than open bourgeois parties.
- * SKA does not believe that the ruling class in Sweden voluntarily will abstain from state power. Therefore a socialist revolution is necessary to overthrow the monopoly bourgeoisie & its government. The best guarantee for a peaceful revolution is a fully armed working class.
- * SKA fights the two superpowers, The USSR & USA and the danger of a new world war. It defends the national independence of Sweden. It supports every people who fights for revolution, all nations who fight for independence and all states who oppose the two superpowers.
- * SKA fights for socialism. On the other hand we do not believe that there exist any real socialist country today. Even if we have a moaist past, we do not regard the present society in China (or Albania) as socialist. The discussion about socialism is nevertheless very important to analyze the socialist experiments up to now and to learn by the mistakes, and finally to elaborate a new socialist model and vision.
- * SKA is eager to keep in touch with any ML or revolutionary party in the world, but we are not interested in the building of a new Comintern. We think that SKA has a lot to learn from other parties. Furthermore, we accept contradictions and differences of opinions between ourselves and other parties to a higher degree than before.
- * SKA's newspaper Kommunistiska Arbetartidningen appears 7 times a year.

Contact: Sveriges Kommunistiska Arbetarparti, Box 4101
S-163 04 Spanga, Sweden