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This is the ninth edition of an occasional internal bulletin of the R.C.L. (B) designed to circulate information on the international communist movement, and the analysis and developments within fraternal organizations.

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INDIA.

Communist Party of India (ML)
- Provisional Central Committee.

"SOCIALISM TODAY"

source: For A New Democracy

[This paper was prepared for discussion. It was circulated before the Tien-An-Men massacres]

For many decades since the October Revolution, communists throughout the world looked towards, first, Russia and, then, China as well, as models of socialism, models that were so persuasive that most communists conceived of the future of their own countries as more or less exact copies of the historical course followed by those countries. There were ripples over the calm surface of that consensus during 1) Yugoslavia's expulsion from the communist fraternity, (2) the Hungarian workers' uprising in 1956 and other such uprisings in East Germany, Poland, etc., and 3) the rise and consolidation of Eurocommunism. But those did not, in the main, shatter the consensus. That consensus vanished when the Great Debate of the 1960's and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China (GPCR) divided the communists the world over into those who viewed the Soviet Union as a country where a new capitalist class had taken power and turned a socialist country into a social-imperialist one and those who continued with the old certitudes. The former group believed that the Chinese communists, purged of such "capitalist roaders" as Liu Shao Chi and passionately following Mao Zedong Thought, were firmly on the socialist road by initiating and deepening a profoundly revolutionary mass movement against bourgeois practices and the bourgeoisie. The latter group, while adhering to the correctness of the Soviet practices and denouncing the GPCR, continued nonetheless to accept China as socialist, even though opportunistic and adventurist.

Almost immediately after the death of Mao Zedong, in China there was what, to outside observers, still appears to be a sudden and mysterious reversal of power relations by which local garrison in Beijing arrested the majority of the Politbureau of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC),

including four persons closest to Mao Zedong and who undoubtedly upheld Mao's line on building socialism in China. The CPC proclaims this mysterious event as the "smashing of the gang of four". We refer to this event because it marks the beginning of a convergence of views on the building of socialism between the CPC and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Such a convergence would have stood a good chance of reestablishing a lot of people in the revisionist parties, the old, world-wide unanimity on the model for building socialism existing before the Great Debate. But things have not turned out that way because, first, China and, then, the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev have initiated some new sets of economic, political, social, and ideological practices which diverge a great deal from the old model bequeathed by Stalin and the CPSU of his days. Now, it appears that any policy that any "socialist" country may wish to follow is a socialist policy, whether it involves the total or partial privatisation of agricultural land and/or industry and the full integration into the world capitalist market as dependents or semi-colonies with all the attendant evils such as high unemployment, inflation, moral degeneration, etc.

They are all socialists now, especially the US, European and the Japanese capitalists. Their propaganda machines blare out, echoing every word out of the mouths of Gorbachev and Deng. Their famous concern over human rights in Russia and China seems to have vanished without trace when there are disturbing reports that indicate that lakhs of CPC members of Mao's days who continued to uphold Mao's line on opposing the "capitalist roaders" and "continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat" have been sent to jails or labour camps over the last decade or when it is clearly revealed that Gorbachev's restructuring has meant, among other things, an unprecedented concentration of power in the hands of the party bureaucracy unimaginable even during the worst days of Stalin's "personality cult", by making it constitutionally compulsory for all incumbents of top government posts, from the lowest tier to the highest, to be party nominees. What, after all, is

freedom as long as there is the freedom of the market place, the prospects are good for big orders for technology transfers and the full reintegration of the huge Russian and Chinese economies into the world capitalist market ?

When extreme conservatives such as Reagan and Thatcher are so full of praise for the new brand of socialism in Russia and China and the old enmity between these countries has given way to socialist comradeship (some lingering differences over narrow national interests notwithstanding), many genuine communists have become confused about the ideological, political and economic parameters of socialism. The confusion is understandable when leaders of the "socialist camp" can dismiss Marx as someone so out dated that he managed to live his life through without seeing an automobile or an airplane, reject Lenin as someone who died too early to be in the reckoning and depict Mao, in his most fecund and insightful old age, as a hateful, feudal megalomaniac. Indeed, the new leaders of Russia and China have, while maintaining the Marxist-Leninist signboard, rejected the whole discourse of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao on the building of socialism. This in itself is not to be looked upon in horror if experience and scientific analysis of it shows that such rejection fits the facts. But do experience and its scientific analysis show the necessity of such a rejection ? Indeed, the question of experience is itself problematic if one considers the fact that what "perestroika", "glasnost" and the "four modernisations" are immediately replacing is basically the post-NEP model of Russia which the followers of Mao were already attacking from the left and which cannot in any way be said to have been successful in developing socialist relations.

So, in order to clarify confusions and to establish the correct socialist vision as the driving ideological motor of our communist work, we must examine the theoretical outlook on socialism and develop a scientific critique on the path followed in the "socialist" countries previous to the present convergent model practised by the Soviet Union and China and the new model itself.

are dying and communist relations

Socialism is not a new mode of production that follows capitalism. It is the long transition between capitalism and communism, when capitalist relations of production are rising. This decay of the old and the appearance of the new depends on continuing the class struggle throughout the period of socialism when the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat undergoes a "withering away", that is, becoming an apparatus of self-administration of associated labourers, without a political content detached from them. This class struggle is of immense complexity and it is extremely protracted. Lenin pointed this out when he said that "classes still remain and will remain in the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat" (Economics and Politics in the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat). He went on to show that in this era of the proletarian dictatorship, "every class has undergone a change" and that the ongoing class struggle "merely assumes different forms".

This is a crucial point in understanding the socialist transition and it requires much serious thought on account of the fact that it is on this point that the major theoretical divergence between Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao on one side and Stalin, Gorbachev and Deng on the other has taken place, although Stalin's intentions differed from those of the last two persons.

In 1936, in his report to the Seventh Congress of the Soviets, Stalin was clear: "The capitalist class in the sphere of industry has ceased to exist. The kulak class in the sphere of agriculture has ceased to exist, and the merchants and the profiteurs in the sphere of trade have ceased to exist. Thus all the exploiting classes have now been eliminated." If exploiting classes have been eliminated, then class struggle has also been eliminated. The CPSU has continued with this thesis till today, and they have now been strongly reinforced by the post-Mao leadership in China.

The basic argument advanced on behalf of this view, from Stalin's day to now, is that once private ownership of the means of production has been done away with by confiscation and the assump-

tion of state or collective ownership, then exploitation ceases. A very simple argument with an even simpler corollary to the effect that once exploitation has thus ceased, every one is remunerated automatically on the principle of "to each according to his work"!! "To each according to his need", the principle of distribution under communism, is then conceived of as something that depends on the development of the productive forces (translated in practice as higher technology) and the, consequent, plenitude of goods and services.

This whole conception rests on the notion that conditions for the existence of classes are juridical forms of ownership of the means of production. But Lenin was very clear that the conditions for the existence of classes need not necessarily be confined to juridical relations: "Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated by law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and, consequently, by the dimension of the share of the social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another one owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy." ("A Great Beginning", *Collected Works*, Volume 29) As Charles Bettelheim, the French Marxist to whom we are much indebted for his clear, historical materialist studies of socialism in various countries, has pointed out about this definition of Lenin's: "It will be observed that though Lenin observes that the places occupied by different social classes may be 'fixed and formulated by law', he mentions this only as a possibility. The existence of a 'legal relation' to the means of production does not come into the actual definition of classes." (*Class Struggles in the USSR*, Vol. 1, p. 50)

Indeed, in various examples of the tributary mode of production dominated by state classes, we can see the absence of any juridical ownership relation. In most cases, however, ownership of the

means of production is a part of the conditions of existence of social classes. Other such conditions of existence of social classes are, however, more fundamental. They are those relations of production that arise out of the social division of labour, such as the division between mental and manual work, the gender division of labour, the division between skilled and unskilled labour (i.e. between management and execution), and the fundamental differences between the town and country or between peasants and workers. The dictatorship of the proletariat can, in one fell swoop, remove the legal form of ownership, but cannot, without a protracted and profound mass movement, what Mao called "continuing the class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat", dissolve these more fundamental conditions of existence of social classes. To be sure, removal of the legal form of private ownership does help in creating favourable conditions for the continuance of the class struggle, but to elevate such a removal to something like the accomplishment of a great irreversible change is either the pretension of the state capitalist knave or the tragic mistake of revolutionaries without a correct understanding of history. The whole history of capitalism shows that the fundamental relations we have mentioned above reveal their economic form as money, commodity, market and the law of value. These economic forms will continue to exist unless these conditions for the existence of classes are not dissolved by protracted revolution in production and the whole superstructure. That is why, during the so-called war communism in Russia when extreme forms of a command economy were correctly instituted to save the country's economy from collapsing due to war and famine, and some people began to suffer from the illusions of doing away with money, commodities, the law of value, etc. and leaping into communism without a protracted series of class struggles, reality intervened to show them what was what, but not before inflicting greater damage than even, as Lenin put it, the depredations of Kolchak, Denikin and Pilsudski put together.

The formal expressions of the conditions of the existence of classes, such as the law of value, were

at first deemed to have disappeared after the "success" of the planned economy. For example, Stalin held such a view till 1951 when, faced with a serious economic crisis occasioned by the disregard of these very *material* conditions, he had to almost grudgingly concede that the law of value was still operative, albeit in a very limited sphere, in the exchange between those spheres producing the means of production and those which produce the consumer items. In fact, the commodity relation and the law of value was not just a restricted phenomenon but ranged over the whole question of wage labour, the relation between enterprises and the relation between the enterprises and the economically and politically centralised state apparatus. With an a priori postulation of the disappearance of classes, the theory of the productive forces and a voluntarist faith in state planning, it was indeed very difficult to perceive these forms of existence and reproduction of classes.

A whole series of historical changes in the Soviet Union accounted for not the decay of these class forms, but their strengthening. Financial autonomy of the enterprises (practised since the NEP) which by itself is quite necessary to incalculable correct economic calculations became a fetter on the changing of the relations of production when it went with the concentration of all power in the enterprises (hiring and firing, allocation of the means of production, reserve funds, etc.) in the hands of the managers who were responsible only to the higher level managers concentrated in the banks, planning authorities and other centralised state institutions. The workers in the factories and the peasants in the so-called collective farms were subjected to the same system of management by a state class of technicians, managers and planners, both inside and outside the party. All initiative and power was drained out of the collective producers. But the objective reality of the conditions for the production and reproduction of class relations showed through in blind and furious ways and the CPSU "managed" it by creating and developing a repressive state apparatus that, first of all destroyed the worker-peasant alliance by alienating the peasantry as a whole (during the forced collecti-

visation) and later the workers themselves by subjecting them to an *external* labour discipline and other bourgeois practices.

During the forced collectivisation of agriculture, the issue was a greater tribute from agriculture to industry. On the one hand, it was wrongly supposed that mechanisation, not as a result of the movement of the peasants, specially the poor peasants, to change the relations of production, but as a move from above, would create a greater surplus in agriculture. The whole subsequent history of Soviet agriculture has belied such a supposition. There was another assumption involved in this process that heavy industry was all-important, to the exclusion of a balance growth on the basis of a developing agriculture and maintaining correct proportions between light and heavy industry. This question of balanced growth is not just an "economic" question, it is directly related to the differences between town and country and workers and peasants, differences that continuously reproduce class relations. Both of these assumptions on mechanisation of agriculture and one-sided emphasis on heavy industry flowed from the theory of the productive forces. Finally, forced collectivisation necessitated such a huge repressive apparatus that, at the end of it, all democratic norms in Soviet life, including life inside the party, had been drained out. No word, such as "repression", can describe the indescribable violence of the Soviet state apparatus on party members and the masses.

The necessity of this violent, lawless and extremely ramified state apparatus presented Stalin with some theoretical problems. It was claimed that class struggle had ended in the Soviet Union, then what was the need for this "excrescence" above society which arose from class rule? Stalin tried to explain it as a result of the *external* class struggle of the Soviet Union, facing imperialist encirclement, spies, saboteurs, etc. This is so undialectical a view that it requires little comment. The main point is that the repression was on millions of people *inside* the country while an external enemy was supposed to have been combatted. Why could not the supposedly classless society

of the Soviet Union mobilise the millions into their own militias and other forms of people's power to combat this external danger? Stalin did not even raise that question. While Marx, Engels and Lenin had raised the question of the state of dictatorship of the proletariat as not being a proper state as hitherto known but rather one that was *from the beginning* subject to withering away, taking the form of the "commune", Stalin was justifying a movement in the opposite direction. But that is not surprising when the *concept* of the withering way of the state was precisely synchronised with the development of a *mass movement* for social appropriation by the workers and peasants which necessitates decentralisation and coordination, while the Soviet practice was moving in the opposite direction.

The result of this practice (based on the theory of the productive forces, the non-existence of classes and the voluntarist faith in the omnipotence of the state) was a state class which produced and reproduced itself as a new bourgeoisie. Given the antagonistic bias of Marxism-Leninism towards any and all bourgeoisies, the class origin of the members of this new class, the majority of whom arose from the labouring masses, and the personal power of Stalin with his basic allegiance to the working class in spite of his economism, statism and authoritarianism, the process of self-identification of this bourgeoisie took some time, although some shrewd members of the old bourgeoisie, sitting in Parisian exile, were far-sighted enough to praise the CPSU's policies in the twenties as conducive to their long-term class interests. As bourgeois practices continued to reinforce class relations, the occasion of Stalin's death provided the conditions for the strong institution of a bourgeois dictatorship by this class. The journey from Khrushchev to Gorbachev has seen a series of measures to strengthen the bourgeois dictatorship by increasingly open private appropriation by members of this class through privatisation and economic decentralisation on the sole basis of the market while keeping the repressive state apparatus intact, etc.

Throughout the period since the death of Lenin,

or even from while he lay dying. the non-Russian nationalities have come under increasing repression and exploitation, as the CPSU came more and more under the sway of the theory of the productive forces. If the masses were not required or allowed to engage in mass class struggles, any diversities in their self-identities was just a hindrance to the development of the productive forces. Moreover, all national tendencies towards greater autonomy was a direct threat to the over-centralised state. These national contradictions are already coming to the boil.

In China, the practices of the CPC was, from the beginning torn between the Soviet model, internalised as ideology, as economic practices imported through fraternal aid, and as a deeply centralised repressive state apparatus, and the questioning of it by Mao. This struggle between the two lines went through many zig zags, but, in the end, the state bourgeoisie seems to have consolidated its position immensely after the "smashing of the Gang of Four" and the purging of millions of followers of Mao. Two things need to be said now about this turn of events in the GPCR, it is clear that inspite of its correct orientation on the basic issues, its practices perhaps overstepped the material conditions in certain respects. For example, the restriction on and the transcendence of state bourgeois forms of social appropriation requires a careful, protracted period of self-management by workers and peasants spreading out through various forms of cooperation, collectivisation and the organisation of production on a country-wide basis. Throughout this protracted period, technical and managerial experts are needed, state planning from above is needed, although these must be restricted and subordinated to a mass movement by which the workers and peasants appropriate their functions. The rate of this appropriation is the material basis of transformation and revolutionisation. It would appear that something went wrong in the assessment of this rate. Furthermore, there is some doubt whether the huge standing army, the most potent instrument of the state bourgeoisie, although it became a part of the GPCR processes, was not, by acting from above as a supposedly revolutionising

force, reinforcing its statist characteristics. Whatever the real causes (it would require much further study and analysis) of the ultimate failure of the Cultural Revolution, it ended in a great reversal by which the state bourgeoisie has returned to power in triumph.

Secondly, the consolidation of the state bourgeoisie in China has meant that they have been *leading* the process of full capitalist restoration and consolidation on a world scale, with the Russians following them. For example, the dismantling of the cooperatives and collectives in agriculture through the so-called "responsibility system" and, later, by a strong process of privatisation, achieved in China nearly seven or eight years ago is only now being followed by Gorbachev. Perestroika is way behind the "four modernisations". And the Chinese "liberated their minds of blind faith", i.e. liberated themselves from all proletarian politics, long before glasnost appeared on the scene.

The bourgeoisie, throughout the world have been trumpeting the "new, democratic wind" in China and Russia, especially Russia. While we are in favour of any and all openings towards democracy, it should be noted that what is on offer in both the Soviet Union and China is greater self-expression—cultural, political and social—for the bourgeoisie and no one else and a routinisation of legal and administrative practices of the bourgeoisie necessitated by the rapid growth of private interest and property.

Some illusions about "Glasnost" and "Perestroika" have been generated by the fact that along with them there is a lot of talk about peace and some real lessening of tensions around the world, especially between the two super-powers. Coincidence of these two "reforms" and a relaxation in international tensions has led some people to imagine a *necessary* connection between these "reforms" and peace. The nature of the relaxation, however, belies any such necessary connection.

The arms race has not been wished away by some token "disarmament" of already obsolete missiles. The two super-powers have enough of

assorted missiles, warheads and other weapons to decimate each other and the world many times over. They will and *are* continuing to develop newer weapons systems. But there is a difference from the period immediately preceding in that the race is being kept within certain mutually agreed limits through a dialogue. The offer of Soviet reduction of conventional forces in Europe may appear like a peace initiative until one realises that if the offer were agreed to and implemented, then such Soviet forces would still be more than double those of the West. But the most remarkable evidence of relaxation is the fact that the two super-powers have definitely marked out a relatively stable division of the world on the basis of gains and losses in the fierce struggle of the last decade and half. We are not entering into the exact parameters of that division in this document, but we should note that such a division will be temporary, threatened by the destabilising influence of the third world conflicts and people's risings, the activities and rivalries of the second world, and the basic antagonism in the relation between the two super-powers themselves.

This temporary division is necessary for both the super-powers. They are both threatened by the fact that Japan and Europe have become serious threats, mostly economic, to the world hegemony the two super-powers seek. The US, therefore, needs the restructuring of its economy as much as the USSR to introduce its advance technology into producing consumer items. Gorbachev needs it to revive the USSR economy from a severe crisis. Without restructuring, both the super-powers are likely to have faced a situation in which they could fight for world hegemony but, as in World War II, the beneficiaries might be others, especially Japan and the imminent federation of Western Europe. Restructuring in the Soviet Union does not, therefore, mean a pacification of that country's imperialist intentions. On the contrary, a relaxation now is precisely in preparation of great wars in the future. It is therefore wrong to confuse the "restructuring" in the Soviet Union with any change in its imperialist character.

In both China and Russia, restoration of

capitalism meant the rule of state monopoly capitalism. Privatisation, if taken to extremes, might mean the formation of several powerful cartels in each country. Their monopoly character will ensure a continuity of expansionism, leading to the desire of world hegemony. But the Chinese rulers, it would appear, are yet far from such world-wide ambitions on account of a weak, third world economy that is getting increasingly integrated into the world capitalist economy as a dependent.

We began this discussion with the fact that the communists the world over had at one time accepted the Soviet and Chinese model as representing the correct socialist path. Now that such models have come under wide criticism and parties such as ours have decided on the capitalist character of the Soviet and Chinese systems, there is a crisis, among other things, in the programmes of the Communist parties and; in particular, among the ML parties in India which broadly share our view of Soviet and Chinese society. Seeing the undemocratic, violently repressive, and anti-worker-peasant character of Soviet and Chinese states, some parties, particularly of Europe, and individuals have abandoned the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. If we are to uphold the dictatorship of the proletariat in its true sense, and if we are to abandon the policies and programmes that lead to capitalist restoration, then it is upto us to formulate programmatic themes which will restore the confidence of the masses in socialism and release their creative energies towards building a new democratic and, following it in a continuous movement, a socialist India.

We are not here trying to formulate the details of the new democratic or socialist programme, but rather the main points of the *general* line which ought to be followed by us in the building of socialism.

In economic terms, the Communist Party (CP) must recognise the material basis on which money, law of value, etc. rest and which provides the conditions of existence of classes. The party will therefore not attempt voluntarist and illusory methods of trying to get rid of these forms. Instead, it will recognise and use their operation and attack

their content in the relations of production by preparing the masses for a long term struggle against them and the whole superstructure. This will mean that for a long time enterprises will be financially autonomous, but without a continuous strengthening of one-man management and the hegemony of the technical-managerial class. The orientation of the party will be to arouse the masses of workers and peasants to learn economic calculations and other processes of management, first on an enterprise level and then, in wider circles of co-operation and coordination, reaching a national scale. It is a long-term struggle with many zig-zags, wrong turning and mistakes, because the breakdown of the division of labour on the basis of mental and manual work and on the basis of gender and the other difference, such as between town and country, is difficult in itself, but it becomes even more difficult when the process, viewed as a learning process by the masses, has dire need of educating and socialising the educators, that is the whole CP itself. During this process, state planning will be necessary and so will there be the need of experts, technicians and managers. But they will have to be subordinated to the movement of the masses, guided by the CP. Planning must not be of the statist, administrative sort but one which will institute economic measures to maintain, basically, the correct proportions between heavy industry, light industry and agriculture for a balanced all-round growth. This will open up wider and wider fields of economic cooperation between the direct producers. Such a process of class struggle in the sphere of production and distribution under the dictatorship of the proletariat will also lead to greater productive forces ultimately generating a plenitude that is defined by and is synchronised with the end of classes.

The primary Jacobin task of the people's democratic dictatorship will be to forcibly remove the comprador big bourgeoisie and the big landlords from state power and ownership of the means of production. With all other classes, including the national bourgeoisie, the process of socialisation will have to pass through, *voluntarily*, various stages of co-operation, collectivisation and owner-

ship by the whole people. The unity and struggle with the exploiting classes who are our allies at this stage will be an exact measure of the development of the mass struggle. Even when the class struggle has ousted these exploiting classes from the disposing of the means of production directly, the state of the proletarian dictatorship will continue to pay interest on their displaced capital. The presence for a long time of state ownership should not lead anyone to confuse it with ownership by the whole people. Ownership of the whole people can only come with the highest degree of association of direct producers on a national scale.

In terms of politics the general line of the CP ought to begin with the "multi-layered autonomy" that we are committed to. This autonomy will be a part of the process by which the state, from the beginning, starts assuming the form of the commune. Fundamentally, this process should truly (not in terms of cynical profession) be democratic centralist, with democracy, the principle system of organisation. At each territorial segment of the multi-layered polity, there will, however, be the need for centralisation. But that centralisation, which, due to the material constraints of ignorance, poverty, etc. of the masses, will be dominated at first by the vanguard and intellectuals of bourgeois petty-bourgeois origin. It is precisely this combination of the vanguard and these remnants of the old exploiting classes which, through their ingrained class practices, form into a state class with such bourgeois ideologies as statism, economism and the theory of the productive forces. There must be a process of control from below through the mass movement and a political structure which does not compromise on universal franchise on the basis of parties, with various view points, even those of the old exploiting classes. Indeed, if universal franchise develops and consolidates the parties of the enemy classes, that will merely show that the education of the proletariat and the peasants is not advanced enough to see through them and point out where and how the class struggle should proceed under the leadership of the CP. The CP's monopoly of power which is nothing but the illusory and bureaucratic identity of the CP with the class will defi-

nitely hinder the class struggle by not allowing the reality of mass perceptions to materialise themselves and being subjected to the mass line process of transformation. Of course, once the CP's monopoly of power is done away with, the CP should be prepared, if it makes mistakes, to be voted out of control of the state machinery. That may mean a very protracted, zig-zag struggle, but it will certainly educate the CP. Under certain very adverse circumstances, the CP may even face a situation when the enemy classes may utilise their wrong handling of the masses to institute an open, bourgeois dictatorship, necessitating another round of armed revolution by the masses. The CP should not be afraid of it, but see it as an historical necessity which needed to be worked through in order to educate itself and the masses.

Whenever the state bourgeoisie has come to power, it has concentrated in its hands the most repressive state apparatuses known to man, with the exception of the Hitlerite state. The killing, the jailing or the exiling of the associates of Mao and Stalin shows that the armed apparatus of the state is a very powerful instrument of this class. That apparatus must be smashed by doing away with the standing army or the para-military. The repressive arm of the new dictatorship must be genuinely in the hands of the people through a system of people's militias that are coordinated by sophisticated democratic methods on a national scale. The CP in power must not forget its origins and forget about the omnipotence of people's war in defeating any and all aggressors.

The people's democratic dictatorship will thus basically begin without a standing army and with a decentralised political and economic apparatus that is constituted to wither away in the exact measure of the growth of workers and peasants power in production and politics. This decentralised power of the people will, in a movement in the reverse direction of the withering away of the state, grow in ever wider spheres of cooperation and coordination to finally reach a national scale in which the state vanishes and a communist society rises.

COMMENTARY : PERU - The Shining Path of armed struggle ?

The landslide victory of Alberto Fujimori in the Peruvian Presidential elections in June 1990 came as a surprise to many commentators. He came from no-where, supported by the burgeoning Protestant evangelical sects (which have been working among the urban and rural poor) and business interest in the nastily-normed *Change 90* movement. He campaigned against the cuts in public spending, privatisation of the public companies and massive lay-off of workers prescribed by the fancied contender, Mario Vargas Llosa.

Llosa, the arrogant darling of big business and the 'white' upper class, novelist-turned-politican, had been the figurehead for a successful middle-class revolt against the 1987 plans to nationalise the banks. With the popularity of the ruling President Alan Garcia of the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance [APRA] measuring a mere nine per cent, any candidate of the APRA would offer little opposition to Llosa.

But perceived as a friend of the dispossessed, Fujimori's victory drew support from the aspirations of the poorer classes with his populist rhetoric, independent status (he was an agronomist, former rector of the National Agrarian University of La Motrna) as well as his Japanese ancestry. He was bolstered by the support of the governing APRA in the second round voting against Llosa.

Fujimori had campaigned with promises not to apply a "shock" package to deal with hype-inflation of 397% and the economic recession in which at least 25% of the small business sector is believed to be near broke and production levels expected to fall by at least 15% in the second half of 1990. The Presidential campaign had taken place within a social vortex of serve unemployment and hunger where livestock is being slaughtered to curtail production while fights break out as people in communal kitchens in Lima's shanty towns tussle over bowls of boiled water and wheat grains.

The government acknowledges that 12 million of the country's 22 million people are living in extreme poverty. Yet one of Fujimori's first acts was to announce that debt interest payments to the World Bank would resume in November 1990. He was "rewarded" with the ending of four years of isolation from sources of international finance with an agreement for a \$1.06 billion bridging loan. The loan will enable Peru to clear the repayment arrears it owes to the World Bank, IMF and Inter-American Development Bank. Peru's total external debt is about \$21 billion, of which more than half is private debt, and about \$4.26 billion is owed in principal debt to international financial institutions - the rest is owed in interest payments !

In a U-turn in policies that took less than a month, Fujimori had imposed the IMF-type perscription for economic stability. On August 13th, 35,000 members of the Union of Bank Employees held a 24 hour strike in protest against the austerity measures imposed by Fujimori's government. These included a 3,000% rise in the price of fuel and almost 300% rise on milk and bread. A few days later police and army tanks were used to break up a "National Day of Protest Against Hunger" against the measures. Three people had been killed in a similar protest that ended in riots in the capital, Lima, earlier in the month.

Throughout the Presidential elections there was the disruptive 'participation' of a guerrilla movent, known as *Sendero Luminoso*, which killed Congressional

candidates, and dynamited municipal buildings and bus depots, oversaw a series of car bomb explosions in Lima and Huancayo, and targeted an election rally for Alfonso Barrantes, the candidate of the United Left.

In late September 1990, Sendero assassinated Orestes Rodriguez, labour minister in the Garcia government. The targets of Sendero's political violence range far and wide as they reject any 'participation' other than that that will destroy the infrastructure of the Peruvian state.

With about 65% of the economically active population either unemployed or under-employed (the buying power of the minimum wage half of that in 1988) with 40% of the 20 million population under the age of 15, and when each Peruvian baby is born with a debt of \$742 when the minimum monthly salary is \$30, and with 93% of highlands and 85% of jungle inhabitants living in extreme poverty according to a 1989 report by the National Statistics Institute, the conditions for recruitment to a radical solution are every present.

PERU: A DECADE OF THE SENDERO LUMINOSO

May 17 1980, the destruction of ballot boxes in the Andean village of Chuschi signalled the start of the armed struggle launched by forces commonly known as *Sendero Luminoso* (*Shining Path*). The forces called Sendero call themselves the COMMUNIST PARTY OF PERU. The armed action began in the impoverished Quechua-speaking Indian communities around Ayacucho. These communities long neglected by successive governments of Peru, which have their base in the mestizo (Spanish-speaking) culture of the coast.

From its mountain bases, Sendero has spread along the Peruvian Andes in sporadic hit-and-run guerrilla attacks putting down their influence in areas where civil government was either weak or non-existence, where the state, festering in its own corrupt capital, had long ago abandoned people to poverty and under-development. Today, as a report in the 'Daily Telegraph' graphically put it: "*Once confined to the remote Andean highlands, the movement is spreading like a red stain to the heavily guarded doors of the Lima rich and the capital's sprawling shanties.*" [1]

Sendero's position on the Peruvian revolution is that:

the class struggle is polarized and will continue to be polarised around: reconciliation vs. support for the armed struggle. Reconciliation is the black flag of the reaction; support for the armed struggle is the red flag of the people ... Support for the armed struggle is the red flag of the people and must be their necessary perspective since, for the people, reconciliation is capitulation .. supporting and building the armed struggle is the only historic road that corresponds to the path of the people - there is no other." [2]

It is in the countryside, working among the "peasant masses who constitute the principal force of the revolution", that the popular army will be forged. The Sendero have about 3,000 political cadres and more than 4,000 armed milita spread about the countryside in small village "support bases" that represent a much wider pool of sympathizers.

Popular committees consisting of political, military and logistics 'commissars' are present in several hundred villages and towns along a 720 mile Andean corridor from Cajamarca in the north to the highlands of Puno in the south. Sendero's recruits are typically frustrated migrants who have returned to the rural home after a spell in the shanty-towns of urban Peru.

A statement of February 1985 from Sendero stated: *Peru today is a semifeudal and semicolonial society in which a bureaucratic capitalism is developing, a belated capitalism linked to the landlords' interests and which, consequently, in no way seeks the destruction of semifeudal conditions but at most its evolution. More importantly, it is a capitalism completely subjugated to imperialism - in our case principally Yankee imperialism - and therefore does not develop the potentially great productive forces of our country.*" [3]

What the strategic objective of Sendero's armed struggle is to achieve is "a democratic revolution - according to Chairman Mao's New Democracy - with the aim of doing away with imperialist domination, the subsisting feudal landlord property, and confiscating the resources of bureaucratic capitalism" [4]

Following the Chinese experience, the Sendero foresee the formation of a united front that would include the working class and peasants, especially the poor peasants, as well as the rural and urban petty bourgeoisie and, to a certain degree and under certain conditions, the small scale national bourgeoisie [5]. However despite Sendero's claims to be building a united front of forces, it attacks the legal left as the "most blatant expression of the old road of electoral opportunism and parliamentary cretinism in the country" regarding the politics of the legal left as defending the existing order. This reflects the less than comradely attitude Senderistas have towards the Peruvian Left who are equally the targets for Sendero armed actions as the forces of the state.

The *Izquierda Unida* (United Left) - alliance of left-wing groups ranging from the revisionist party, trotskysts, and the marxist-leninist *Partido Comunista del Peru, Patria Roja* - won 25% of the popular vote in 1985, but a student sympathiser at Huancayo University (a Sendero stronghold) said "anyone who is not with it [Sendero] is against it. Nobody can be impartial in the revolutionary war - whose heart is Peru, and which will spread across the world." [6]

THE RURAL BATTLEFIELD

An area the size of Italy, containing almost half the population, are under a state of emergency.. What is most worrying for the Peruvian state is Sendero's activities in and around JUNIN. It plays a vital role in Lima's food supply (producing a third of the capital's vegetables and most of Peru's staple food, potatoes). It is standard Sendero practice to order the peasants - under threat of execution - to produce only for themselves. The idea is to starve the towns of food. Eventually the urban poor will not be able to stand it anymore and will revolt.

A quarter of Peru's export earnings are derived from metals such as zinc, lead, silver and copper which are mined in Junin and the neighbouring department of Pasco. Sendero "armed strikes" in the departments of Junin, Pasco and Huanaco have hit state revenue, and seen private security and the army militarised

mining camps. The mines are the source for much of Sendero's dynamite and the leadership are determined to make links with this important section of the Peruvian proletariat.

The secretary-general of the miner's federation, Jorge Quesada, says that under the counter-insurgency campaign the military are being used to break the militant Peruvian mining unions : *"The mining bourgeoisie is heir to almost 500 years of mining exploitation at the service of foreign interests, based on the slave labour of Peruvians. They want a direct conflict in order to destroy our union organisation."* [7]

Ayacucho, the Quechua heartland, remains the strongest place of Sendero support. In December 1982, then President Belaunde declared Ayacucho an emergency zone and send in the armed forces; military rule prevailed. A visiting journalist observed : *The children's songs, far from being traditional nursery rhymes are a Shining Path rallying song, describing the "rich perfume of the blood of the people, a smell of jasmine, violets and dynamite."* [8] There has been a trickle of rank-and-file deserters but nothing indicates a fall in Sendero's dedication to a protracted armed struggle. Peru's poorest region will continue to sustain Sendero although recent reports indicate a weakening of peasant support, partly due to peasant self-defence groups being weary after a decade of armed struggle and partly because of Sendero's failure to defend them from the security forces.

An estimated 20,000 people have died since the Sendero Luminoso took up arms in 1980; official figures show 1,952 deaths in the first 7 months of 1990, compared with 1,956 for the whole of last year. But government forces have done most of the killings: *The military rob our homes and rape our women. They are the ones that do most of the killings around here* was the story told to a 'Daily Telegraph' correspondent by local peasants [9]. In trying to root out the Sendero, the army has treated all civilians in the highlands as potential Sendero sympathisers. In the province of Ayacucho alone 3,200 people have disappeared after having been arrested by the security forces [10].

Whether this indicates a weakness in the strategic line of building "red bases" in the countryside that are vulnerable to military incursion is too early to tell. However Sendero do face the problem of rural depopulation and the failure to *enlarge upon and consolidate its original social base*. Chairman Gonzalo spoke of the importance of developing urban-based mass work : *We think that our action in the cities is indispensable and it has to be impelled more and more each time, because there the proletariat is centred, and we cannot leave them in the hands of revisionism or opportunism.* [11]

THE LIMA FRONT

While the red hammer-and-sickle motif of the Sendero adorns many of the village walls in the vast tracts of the Peruvian Andes, Lima itself is slowly coming under seige. Fifteen of the surrounding department's districts are without government authorities and Sendero slogans abound in the city. The houses of the wealthy have sprouted fortifications, factories and hotels employ armed guards.

The drift to the cities has been such that 69% of the Peruvian population is now urban and 31% rural [Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Lima May 1988].



A poster for Peru's most wanted man - Abimael Guzmán, founder and leader of Sendero Luminoso.

Sendero-style government

Sendero always follows the same procedure when it enters a new area. All landlords, medium-scale farmers, important merchants and State representatives, like district governors or justices of the peace, are either killed or ordered to leave or resign their posts. Criminals are hauled up before 'people's' courts - including rustlers, traders who cheat the peasants, and rapists. Many are summarily executed in bloody fashion.

The guerillas also try to reorganize agricultural production, distributing livestock between rich and poor peasants. And they instruct farmers to cut back food production

to the level needed to sustain the family and feed the guerilla army. The aim is to starve the towns and heighten urban dissatisfaction.

Sendero then appoints its own supporters to positions of authority, selecting cadres to direct production and distribution, organize party cells and choose recruits for the guerilla army. Their objective is to create what they call a 'People's Republic of New Democracy' - the name given by Mao to liberated areas of China between 1935 and 1949. But democracy is limited; in practice orders come from the party hierarchy and open opposition is not tolerated.

What affect on Sendero would occur if the Lima shanty-town activists gained prominence within the movement is a future ponderable. There has been evidence of internal dissent and a purge of Sendero's Lima committee accused of "Cubanist tendencies", described as "class struggle inside the party" in government captured internal documents, occurred in 1986. The appearance in May 1990 of contradictory communiques signed by different Sendero factions (if not a dirty tricks operation) has been taken as evidence of an internal policy feud.

In June 1990, raids on five houses including one in the smart Lima suburb of Monterrico, close to the Ministry of Defence, led to the arrest of 35 people and the capture of codes, newspaper archives, plans and maps going back ten years along with hammer-and-sickle flags and stolen blank identity cards and official rubber stamps. The Interior Minister claimed "We have found the terrorist's Central archives, propaganda and leaflets, about four tons in all."

Sendero guerrilla attacks can be spectacular (with bombings of the American, Chinese and Soviet embassays) but most commonly parts of the capital are plunged into darkness by Sendero attacks upon mine-guarded electricity pylons. At least a million people of the shanty towns of the Peruvian capital scarcely notice the power failures since they hardly have electricity anyway. Conditions are so bad that fresh water being given away in a Lima shanty town is a common electioneering ploy. Sendero can get its message across to the literate as Lima's pro-Sendero newspaper, El Diaro, operates legally in the capital.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SENDERO LUMINOSO

The bourgeois media presents the politics of Sendero as a brand of "maoist fundamentalism" based on a leadership drawn from a provincial intelligentsia centred on the San Cristobal de Huamanga university in Ayacucho in the late 1960s and first half of the 1970s. Inspired by the Sino-Soviet Polemic, within the Ayacucho Regional Committee a faction was formed to defeat revisionism of Del Prado and reconstitute the Party. According to Sendero own history this took a fifteen year struggle.

The decision to prepare for armed struggle involved internal struggle in the mid-70s that resulted in the purging of oppositional elements. The decision to initiate the armed struggle was taken in 1979. There was a militarisation of the Sendero organisation as "the Party in arms". A criticism of Sendero has been that they have distorted Mao's maxim that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun". Sendero in practice have imposed their power through possession of the gun and neglect other forms of mass struggle by promoting the armed struggle as the only revolutionary means of waging the class struggle. There is the development of a leadership cult with an emphasis on "President Gonzalo" - the *nom de guerre* of former philosophy lecturer Abimael GUZMAN. At Ayacucho he was the university's director of personnel and secretary of the local communist party. He is regarded by Senderistas as the "fourth sword of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism".

GONZALO'S GUIDING THOUGHT

In a statement of August 1986, Sendero explained "...the question of Marxism since its foundation by Marx, passing through Lenin up to Chairman Mao Tsetung, is the application of the Marxist science to the conditions of each revolution; therefore, the problem is to put Marxism-Leninism-Maoism into practice to the

concrete conditions of the Peruvian revolution, and specifically with regard to the universal law of violence, from the People's war to the revolutionary war in the country. From this fusion of marxism with our reality the Guiding Thought emerges and develops itself, which is the application of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to the concrete conditions of the Peruvian revolution. In synthesis, our starting point is the outlook of the international proletariat, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and Chairman Gonzalo's Guiding Thought, which are the basis that sustains all our political actions, theoretical and practical, without which it is not possible to serve the class firmly and consistently. " [12].

SENDERO LUMINOSO JOSE CARLOS MARIATEGUI

The strategy of revolution from the countryside encircling the towns and the ideological emphasis on the conscious role in the class struggle are maoist in inspiration, but Sendero owe as much to their interpretations of the writings of indigenous Peruvian marxist thought and proudly claim to be following the shining path of Jose Carlos Mariategui.

The Peruvian marxist, Jose Carlos Mariategui (1894-1930) elucidated the ways in which marxism and national conditions can interact creatively to produce an independent revolutionary analysis that were stifled by the eurocentrism of Comintern orthodoxy. Mariategui can be seen as Latin America's first major marxist thinker. He looked at Quechua peasant tradition, appreciated national conditions, and reinterpreted the communalism of Indian heritage through a Leninist understanding of the need for revolutionary transformation of Peruvian society.

Mariategui, who founded the marxist Peruvian Socialist Party on October 7 1928, concluded that marxism represented the "shining path" to emancipation. One author of a study entitled National Marxism in Latin America [13] judges that "Mariategui's thought and political action were, then, revolutionary and within the evolving marxism that is now termed Marxism-Leninism. They were dynamic, revolutionary, and fitted to the concrete (Third World) conditions of Peru in the 1920s. He, like Che Guevara, thought the chief test of the Marxist revolutionary was to "make revolution". Nor was he uncritical of lethargic party bureaucracies that were unrevolutionary in character."

Harry Vanden considers this Peruvian to be "unique in the early history of Latin American Marxism. Thirty years before the Cuban Revolution, he realised the revolutionary potential of peasants and Indians and even started to organize them. He was familiar with Antonio Gramsci's ideas forty years before most Latin (and North) Americans knew of Gramsci's existence. Many of his formulations were similar to those of well-known Third World Marxist thinkers like Mao Zedong and Amilcar Cabral." By the early 1970s he had become an inspiration for all of the Peruvian left: all claim Mariategui as their own. In his long interview with 'El Diario', Chairman Gonzalo spoke of the 1975 Sendero document "Retake Mariategui and reconstitute his Party" and "we have fought to retake and to develop Mariategui's road."

NARCOTERRORISTS ?

Part of the ideological offensive against Sendero is to call them 'polpotian', the local equivalent of the Khmer Rouge with portent of the killing fields, and Hugh O'Shaughnessy, writing in 'The Observer', described Sendero as:

a dogmatic sectarian organisation, xenophobic in the extreme. It is committed to a strategy of peasant self-sufficiency. It wants a return to the pre-Colombian roots of Peruvian history, here on the site of the Inca Empire, with every peasant village feeding and looking after itself exclusively in a new collectivist utopia. [14]

There is the attempt to draw upon American support by moves to erroneously classify the movement as *narcoterrorist*. According to Peruvian military intelligence, not a reliable source, Sendero is supposed to be earning at least \$18 million a year through an alliance with cocaine traffickers. The Peruvian state promotes the idea of "*the lethal union of drug money and revolutionary terrorist groups... Sendero Luminoso cooperates with drug interests, protecting the cocaine-production network for a fee. It then uses narco-dollars to finance its own operations.*" [15]

This scenario arises because Sendero operates in and controls most of the Upper Huallaga Valley, the world's biggest source of coca leaf, a traditional crop in the area. In the Huallaga valley, the security forces are universally accused of extortion and accepting bribes for the release of drug traffickers as well as demanding pay-offs to allow Colombian planes to fly-out cocaine. The military are trying to terrorise the peasants into co-operating in the campaign against Sendero. The army were widely believed to be responsible for the killing of at least forty men, whose headless and armless bodies were seen floating down the river which runs past the 100-acre Santa Lucia base (the main army "anti-drug" base near the town of Uchiza). [16]

A Sendero attack on Santa Lucia in April 1990 involved the forty American 'advisors' and pilots flying Huey gunships strafing the surrounding jungle to repulse the two-hour guerrilla attack. U.S. Special Services officers train 'anti-drug units' at Mazamari, the police base in Junin department. These bases are important components of US-sponsored counter-insurgency involving the State Department, the Drug Enforcement Administration, ostensibly aimed at securing the area to facilitate anti-drug operations but increasingly involved in operations against Sendero rather than the drug traffickers. Chairman Gonzalo told 'El Diario': *A long time ago we decided in the Central Committee that whoever the enemy is that comes to trample on these lands, we will confront them and defeat them. In those circumstances the contradiction would change, the contradiction nation-imperialism would start to develop itself as principal, and that would give us more ample margins to rally our people.* [17]

Sendero offers protection against crop eradication and repression by the police and army. It ensures that the peasants are paid a good price for the harvested coca leaf. Sendero are sustained by the bitter social resentment provoked by coca eradication in the absence of substantial economic aid. As long as anti-drug efforts ignore the realities underlying the drug trade that coca cultivation is the sole livelihood of the inhabitants of the Upper Huallaga valley. Any attempt to destroy it, such as the American suggestion to use chemical agents, without offering a feasible alternative ensures support for Sendero.

In September 1990, Peruvian President Fujimori turned down a US military aid package worth \$19.5 million to fight cocaine trafficking. He said that any such package needed to be accompanied by substantial economic aid. The Peruvian ambassador in London wrote to 'The Independent' explaining: "the only possible way to eradicate the coca plant is through the implementation of 'crop substitution programmes'. Twenty years ago, in Peru, which is the producer of 60 per cent of the world's coca leaves, 10,000 people were coca growers and its

production was tradition. Now we have 100,000 growers and half a million people and families dependent on the production."

THE DIRTY WAR SOLUTION

Counter-insurgency strategies suggested for Peru have focused on two options drawing upon the colonial experience of the 'French solution' and the 'British solution'.

The 'French solution' is essentially one of terror applied successfully in Argentina. There has been a dirty war conducted by the military and police forces with the acquiescence of President Alan Garcia, leader of APRA party:

* in June 1986, the military were given a free hand to put down a prison uprising by Senderistas. In the ensuing massacre more than 300 prisoners were killed, many of them after they had surrendered;

* when the army massacred at least thirty peasants in the village of Cayara, the Garcia government took the opportunity to prove to the military that, however blatant an army massacre with bodies as well as witnesses disappearing, the army could count on government support;

* the Human Rights organization, Amnesty International, [18] reports that young people tend to be regarded, *ipso facto*, as potential supporters of Sendero in the Andean 'emergency zones' where local military commanders are the sole political authority. Amnesty International have condemned the number of "disappearances" and summary executions that have taken place in Peru;

* in March 1989, a leaked military document revealed the planning for an Argentina solution that stated that at least half a million people would have to be eliminated after a military coup in order to 'stabilise' the country, including known Senderistas and all the Left, labour and grassroots activists. The military estimate that they would then have to stay in power 12-15 years in order to consolidate their position;

There has been the emergence of a right-wing death squad, the Comando Rodrigo Franco, named after a member of the APRA party killed by Sendero. Its targets are on those sectors considered subservive (trade unions, peasants unions, the legal left) with attacks on Lima's pro-Sendero newspaper, El Diario, on a lawyer who defended captured Sendero guerrilla leader and assassination of Miner's leader Saul Cantoral. In March 1990, Carlos Escobar, investigator of human rights abuses by the armed forces since they were put in charge of operations in Ayacucho in 1982, applied for political asylum in the USA after receiving death threats from the death squad.

The 'British solution', the hearts-and-minds campaigns of Malaysia and Kenya, requires the military repression of "rebels", like Sendero rooted in the countryside, but with investment and reforms to neutralise guerrilla support. The Peruvian military understands that effective counter-insurgency requires development but development is impossible, so they believe that the only way to win is to make the population fear the military more than they fear Sendero.

Escalating repression of the popular movements and their demands for social justice, and as Amnesty International reports, increases in the abuse of human rights "against a background of social upheaval, guerrilla bombings and killings, a high incidence of drug-related criminality and a severe economic crisis" means the possibility of a coup d'etat remains ever present.

There is no prospect for the immediate victory of the Sendero's armed struggle but it is in the military's interest to argue that Sendero is in a

stronger position than it is: Peruvian military intelligence informed 'The Independent's Lima correspondent that "With the millions of dollars flowing in from the rebel's alliance with the drug smugglers, it is not implausible that at a given moment - they may wait years - Sendero could launch a 'Tet Offensive' and take Lima in a few days." [19]

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