

TO WIN 1992/17

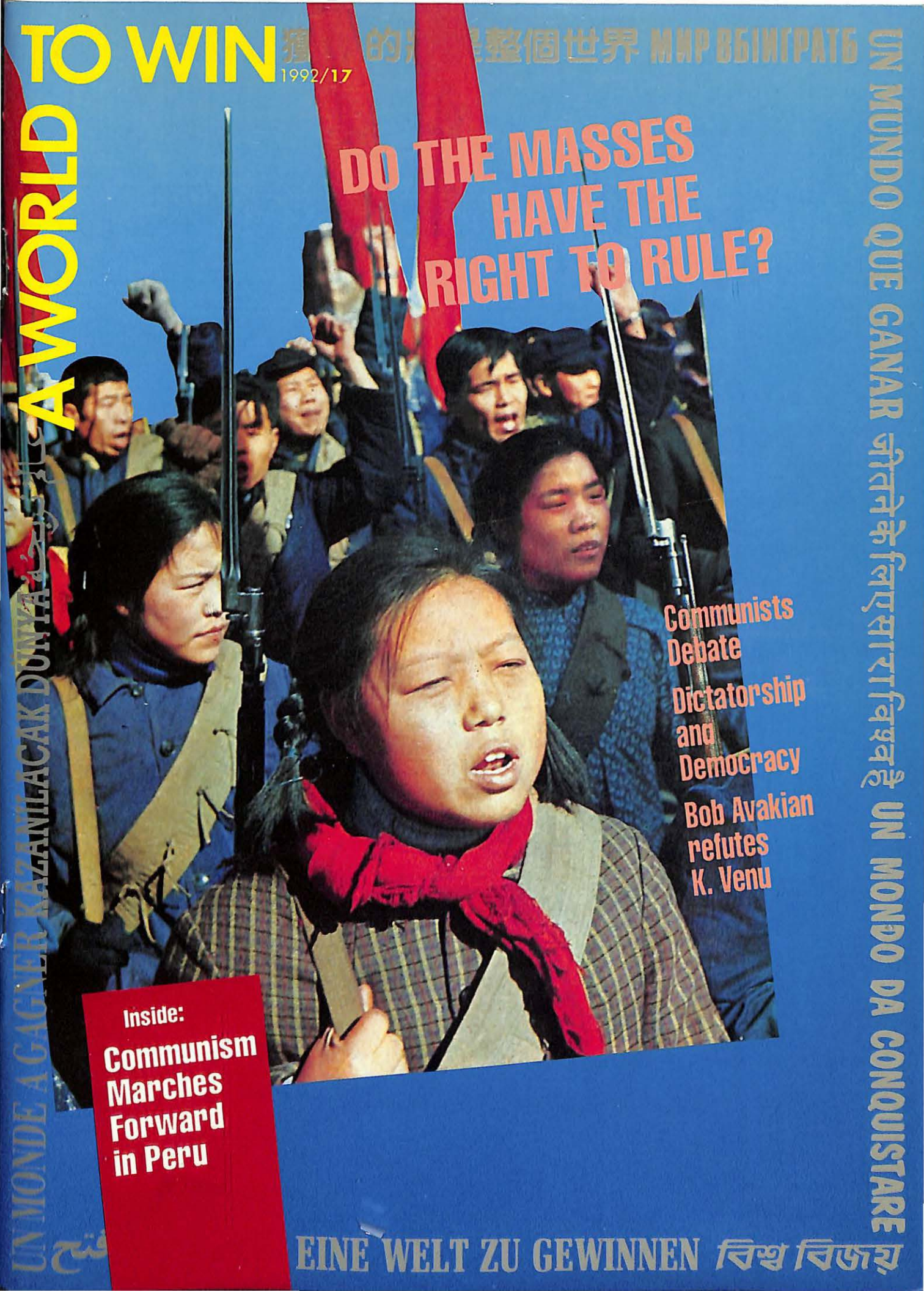
獲的：整個世界 **МИР ВБИГРАТЬ**

A WORLD

**DO THE MASSES
HAVE THE
RIGHT TO RULE?**

UN MONDE A GAGNER KAZANILACAK DUNYA

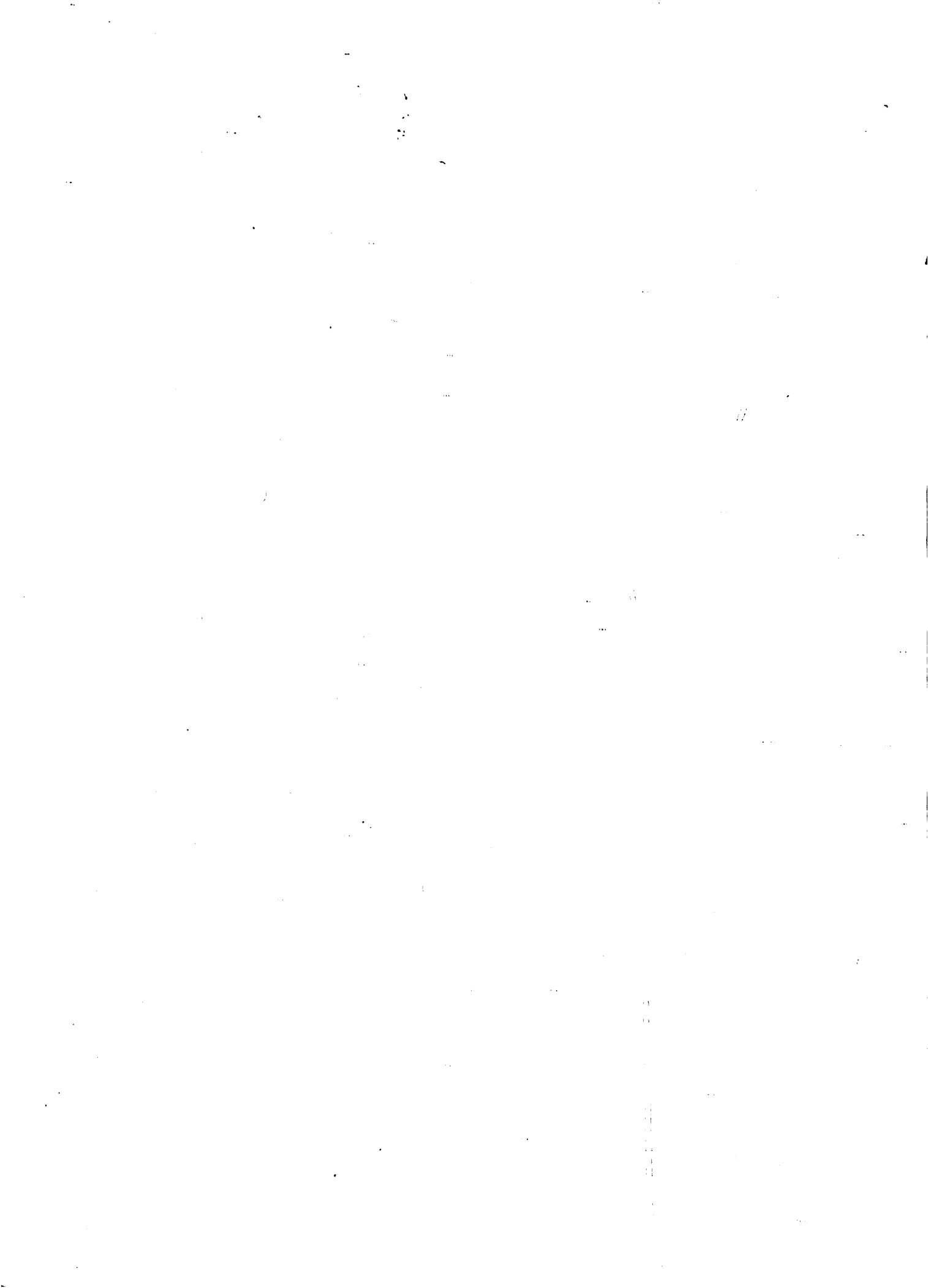
UN MUNDO QUE GANAR जीतने के लिए सार्वविश्व है UN MONDO DA CONQUISTARE

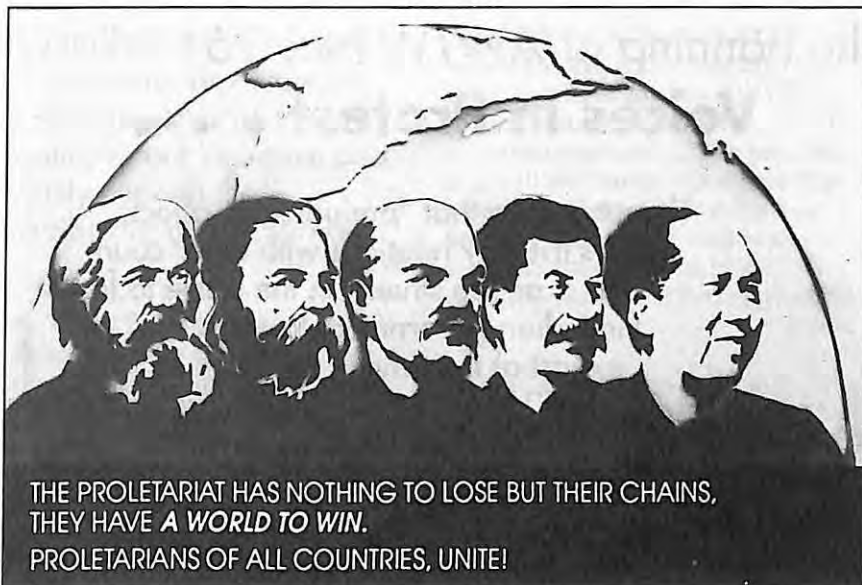


**Communists
Debate
Dictatorship
and
Democracy
Bob Avakian
refutes
K. Venu**

**Inside:
Communism
Marches
Forward
in Peru**

EINE WELT ZU GEWINNEN বিশ্ব বিজয়





1992/17

Do the Masses Have the Right to Rule?

Once again, life-and-death questions for the revolution are the focus of sharp debate throughout the world. The Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party is being decried as a tool of oppression rather than a weapon for liberation. At stake is nothing less than the "right" of the proletariat and the oppressed masses to rise up in revolution and establish their own rule, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and carry through the long revolutionary transformation of society until the abolition of classes, communism, is achieved.

The AWTW Editorial Board calls for a vigorous counter-offensive to hold high the teachings of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, offers a stinging rebuke to the article "On Proletarian Democracy", a draft document of the Central Reorganising Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) prepared under the leadership of its Secretary, K. Venu.

Communism Marches Forward in Peru

The People's War led by the Communist Party of Peru (PCP) has advanced to a new stage: strategic equilibrium. The revolutionary army has become strong enough to win relative stability for the revolutionary base areas, where the poor peasants and other masses in the countryside hold political power. The political power of the masses is the guerrillas' "secret weapon", driving forward the development of the whole war. Today, Yankee analysts and politicians are considering the prospects for a country-wide PCP victory — and planning out a whole new level of aggression to try to prevent it.

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On the Banning of AWTW No. 16

Voices in Protest . . .

The magazine that "prejudicially affects India's friendly relations with other countries" is on the streets. In the battle to force the Indian government to allow the export of the June 1991 issue of AWTW, many people from all walks of life rallied to the magazine's defence.

Who are these people who stood for the existence of a communist magazine in a world where capitalists trumpet communism's death? The following are brief excerpts from the hundreds of letters received in this confrontation. Their vigour and tenacity speak clearly.



The staff of AWTW extend to all our warm revolutionary greetings and urge you to continue your vigilance and widely expand the distribution of the journal.

— AWTW

● ● ● For me, there is only one reason why AWTW has been seized by the authorities of your government. And it is this: because AWTW exposes the aggression of imperialism and capitalism. And this is not well received by your state which is a part of the imperialist-capitalist system. These type of attacks are not the first and won't be the last. No matter what, it will be the world's proletariat and oppressed masses who will win."

Weli Bernal, Kurdistan

● ● ● By looking at the contents of AWTW one can hardly say the journal 'prejudicially affects friendly relations' of one country with others. We believe AWTW constantly bridges the anti-imperialist struggle of people of one country with others. ..."

Propaganda Agitation Committee of
Marxism-Leninism-Maoism for the
Formation of Communist Party of
Afghanistan

● ● ● We workers from Turkey living in France strongly

condemn the outrageous attack which has taken place against the internationalist journal AWTW ... We understand how useful AWTW is to the oppressed. ... We promise to do all we can to expose the real nature of what you have done as we know our Indian Sisters and Brothers are doing the same."

E.T.I.F. (Federation of Turkish Workers)
France

● ● ● Your democracy slaughtered our people. Your independence sold us to overseas sahibs. And now your freedom dreams of cutting our voice. Frightful nightmares will follow that dream. HATE US! WE DESERVE IT!"

Farhad, Germany

● ● ● On behalf of the more than 2,500 writers who are members of the PEN American Center, we write to express concern at reports of an export ban imposed on the English edition of the June 1991 issue of the international journal AWTW. ...As an international organization committed to protecting the right of individuals to 'hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers', as guaranteed in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations, we consider the recent export ban against

AWTW a violation of this internationally recognized right..."

PEN American Center

● ● ● The leading article of the blocked magazine entitled 'The US-led aggression will not go unpunished' has provoked the government in stating the reason that it could 'prejudicially affect India's friendly relations with other countries. The 'other countries' are no more than their imperialist masters of the east and the west... More than anything else the paper is being published with the purpose of helping in bringing forth and nursing the new generation of the communists in all corners of the globe, including in India. "

Revolutionary Communist
Centre, India (ML)

● ● ● I write to express my outrage at the seizure and suppression of the political journal AWTW. This extraordinary publication invariably contains unique and fascinating insights into political events from a Maoist point of view. It published material on the war in Peru unavailable anywhere else. I have come to rely upon it for incisive criticism, thought-provoking analysis, and broad coverage of liberation struggles throughout the world..."

An Ass't Professor,
Tufts University, USA

A World to Win

Air mail, institution and trade rates available upon request. Please send your name, postal address, cheque and the issue number with which to begin your subscription, to one of the following addresses:

For South Asian subscriptions — Rs. 40 for 4 issues.

Write to: Janet Chenambilly
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Kochi 682 025, INDIA

For North American subscriptions — US \$20 for 4 issues.

Write to: Revolution Books
13 East 16th St.
New York, N.Y. 10003 U.S.A

For United Kingdom, Europe and elsewhere — £4.5 for 4 issues.

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Spanish edition:

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For details contact:

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Col. Santa Cruz
Atoyac, 03311
Mexico, D.F. Mexico.

Long Live the Revolutionary



Spirit of Chiang Ching!

— Statement by the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement
8th June 1991

*Wind and rain escorted Spring's departure,
Flying snow welcomes Spring's return.
On the ice-clad rock rising high and sheer
A flower blooms sweet and fair.*

*Sweet and fair, she craves not Spring for herself alone,
To be the harbinger of Spring she is content.
When the mountain flowers are in full bloom
She will smile mingling in their midst.*

— "Ode to the Plum Blossom", by Mao Tsetung, December 1961

On 5th June 1991, the authorities of China announced the death of Chiang Ching. Her death comes after fifteen years in captivity by the reactionary regime in highly suspicious circumstances. Chiang Ching was the living symbol of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the historic movement of hundreds of millions of workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals that Mao Tsetung unleashed in China in 1966. In that outstanding movement, Chiang Ching, together with other prominent followers of Mao, dared to lead the people against those big shots and high party officials who were trying to transform socialist China into a reactionary capitalist state. During this epic battle of ten years, citadels long declared off-limits to the masses were stormed and the proletariat nurtured the sprouts of a wholly different type of society. Chiang Ching was in the forefront of these great advances and is particularly associated with the transformation of Peking Opera and ballet which went from glorifying the old society to a thoroughly new art portraying revolutionary workers and peasants.

With the leadership and support of Mao Tsetung, Chiang Ching and her comrades were successful for ten years in preventing capitalist restoration in China. But only one month after the death of Mao Tsetung the rightists in China overthrew Mao's followers and imprisoned Chiang Ching, Chang Chun-chiao and other prominent Maoists. At her trial in 1981, Chiang Ching courageously turned the prisoners' dock into a tribunal to defend the accomplishments of worker and peasant rule in China and to denounce the revisionist usurpers who were trampling on Mao's legacy. In so doing, Chiang Ching spoke for and gave heart to the genuine Maoists the world over who opposed the reactionary coup in China and who had begun the process of regrouping which led to the formation of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement. RIM have considered Chiang Ching one of our own during her long years of imprisonment, and today we commemorate the life and memory of this revolutionary heroine.

Throughout her life, Chiang Ching was the implacable opponent of all injustices and inequalities of the old society. More importantly, she dedicated her life to bringing the new society, with new relations between people, into being. Chiang Ching earned the lasting hatred of all apologists of exploitation, for whom the greatest "crime" is putting political power in the hands of the formerly downtrodden and for whom the greatest "loss of reason" is the vision of a communist society without classes. Nor could the new barons of China ever forgive a woman for having challenged their cozy nests, and they were determined to apply the feudal notion of making a widow pay for the "crimes" of her husband, Mao Tsetung. But the quali-

ties reactionaries and the narrow-minded loathed in Chiang Ching and never stopped attacking her for are the very qualities that the communists and the class-conscious proletarians will always cherish.

Chiang Ching died in captivity without living to see the day when the bloody bandits such as Deng Xiaoping who run China today are dethroned. But when the proletariat and the masses in China finally succeed in re-establishing their rule, the memory of Chiang Ching and her lifetime of struggle for the cause of communism will surely hold a special place in their hearts and minds. In the meantime, may the fierce defiance of the chains of tradition and the uncompromising and bold revolutionary spirit of Comrade Chiang Ching continue to serve as the harbingers of Spring.

Press Release

Suicide or Murder of the Maoist Leader, Chiang Ching?

By the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

8th June 1991

It is astonishing that not a single question has been raised in the international press about the highly suspicious "suicide" of Chiang Ching, China's foremost political prisoner, which has been announced by her lifelong political enemies who have been running China since the coup d'etat in 1976 that overthrew proletarian socialist rule in China. What shred of evidence has been presented that her tormentors who have kept her behind bars for fifteen years, that these butchers who just two years ago gunned down thousands of protesters opposing their repressive rule, did not themselves choose to physically eliminate her? Why did these cowards whose hands are covered with the blood of rebellious workers and students wait three weeks, till the eve of the dreaded anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, to announce her death?

Hand in hand with the obituary writers of the international press, China's capitalist rulers have worked long and hard to reverse the achievements of socialism and smear, distort and bury the legacy of the leading living symbol of China's revolutionary past — Chiang Ching and her revolutionary comrades. In fact, they want to seize their last major chance to bury the revolutionary line of Mao Tsetung and the tremendous movement and sweeping changes of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution which he represents. It was Mao himself who said, "To be attacked by the enemy is a good thing, not a bad thing". True to his words, Chiang Ching has been painted without a single virtue in order to discourage the millions worldwide inspired by this chapter of revolutionary history from picking up the science of Mao Tsetung Thought and overthrowing the old order.

Chiang Ching stubbornly refused to repent or to admit guilt for any crime except making revolution. That is why she was tried and sentenced to death by the capitalist roaders who usurped power in 1976, led by Mao Tsetung's arch enemy, Deng Xiaoping. That is also why she is being retried and judged by the international establishment press today, upon her death.

The Deng regime was unable to simply execute her and the revolutionary comrades of Mao tried with her, because these revolutionaries have widespread and deep support among the masses in China. So the regime locked her up in their prisons for 15 long years, where she has remained firm and defiant, all the while suffering from health problems and severe imprisonment conditions.... Yet where has been the international outcry of human rights violations?

The cruel truth is that the press and the governments it speaks for, who have just established their own record as modern-day barbarians by slaughtering more than 100,000 Iraqis in a completely unjustified war of aggression, have much more in common with the likes of Deng Xiaoping. They are much happier that China is once again under the boot of foreign capital and domination and that they have been invited back to plunder and exploit China as in the days before the revolution, even if it means putting up with nakedly "undemocratic" tyrants who commit Tiananmen massacres.

The media have unanimously and viciously slandered Chiang Ching both in life and in death. But thousands and thousands of others will remember and cherish her as an unrepentant woman leader of the proletariat whose life continues to inspire them to rip apart tradition's chains and make revolution.

COMING IN AWTW 18

A new major biographical portrait of the life and contributions of Comrade Chiang Ching from a MAOIST viewpoint!

CHIANG CHING: The Revolutionary Ambitions of a Communist Leader

“She threw the political grenade back in their faces — seizing the occasion not to ‘clear her name’ but to expose even more what stuff these revisionists are made of. She became a very dangerous woman — for them and for the bourgeoisie in general. The whole world saw an unrepentant Communist confess only to the ‘crime’ of following Mao Tsetung to make revolution. ‘You have power now so you can easily accuse people of crimes and fabricate false evidence to support your charges. But if you think you can fool the people of China and worldwide, you are completely mistaken. It is not I but your small gang who is on trial in the court of history.’”

— from the article

From Rebel to Communist — her early political life in Yanan as the Red Army prepares its final 10-year onslaught

Land Reform and Cracking the Ice of the Old Superstructure — investigation in the countryside and beginning to tread on the sacred values of the “authorities” in culture

Revolution in the Peking Opera — the fierce struggle to chase “ghosts” and “demons” off the stage and develop new proletarian art

Cultural Revolution Leader — Chiang Ching steps forward to play an all-round leadership role; includes excerpts of her speeches

Inside the CCP — the fierce two-line struggle and the Showdown of 1976

The historic trial of 1980 — the significance of Chiang Ching’s heroic stand

Going against the tide — as a woman Communist and the wife of Mao Tsetung

People's War Reaches Strategic Equilibrium

Communism

"Peru: Guerrillas Gain the High Ground" shrieks the usually sober *New York Times*. American officials warn that the Peruvian government is drifting towards defeat. They are raising a shrill cry of alarm because the situation in Peru has shifted. As the Communist Party of Peru (PCP, called "Sendero Luminoso" or "Shining Path" by the press) has proudly announced, the people's war has left behind the stage of strategic defensive and reached the stage of strategic equilibrium.

The key to the new stage is that the Party-led People's Guerrilla Army (PGA) has won relative stability for the base areas in the countryside, where the poor peasants and their allies have set up their own revolutionary political power under Party leadership. These base areas are the bone marrow of the people's war.

In describing the general path for revolution in oppressed countries, protracted people's war, Mao Tsetung described strategic equilibrium as the second of three necessary stages, following after a stage of strategic defensive. Now the PCP is hastening and awaiting the conditions that will allow the final stage, the launching of a strategic offensive to wipe out the enemy's regime completely and establish the People's Republic of Peru.

Strategic equilibrium does not imply that the main forces of the PGA (in addition to its local forces and militia) have already achieved equality with the government's larger and much better-equipped military. But this stage has been made possible by the PGA's success in going over from guerrilla warfare to more regular warfare. Now it is able to mount bigger-scale, better-coordinated and more effective operations against the enemy. They have become politically and ideologically

seasoned, increasingly skilled at fighting day and night, and somewhat better-armed (with automatic rifles, mortars, sometimes machine guns and grenade-launchers and occasionally rocket-launchers). Their numbers have multiplied.

A key "secret" to the PGA's strength is the revolutionary base areas. The PGA uses them as powerful bastions from which to launch counter-offensives, luring the enemy in deep and then surrounding and wiping out enemy units, even though the enemy may have surrounded the base area overall. They are bastions because of the organized support of the masses, which enables the revolutionary army to be light and mobile, with simple logistics, reliable lines of communications and excellent intelligence. They allow the PGA to create favourable conditions to attack the enemy or avoid combat when conditions are not favourable, applying Mao's dictum of "in strategy one against ten, in tactics ten against one" to wipe out the enemy piece by piece while building up armed strength until the enemy can be wiped out thoroughly and completely.

These bases are not invulnerable. Though the enemy cannot possibly occupy the whole length and breadth of the countryside that has risen in armed revolution, it continues to launch encirclement and suppression campaigns against these revolutionary strongholds. The PCP rejects the revisionist conception of liberated zones, such as the pro-Soviet (and ultimately not very anti-U.S.) guerrillas sought to build in El Salvador, where the idea was that strength comes from relying on guns plus impenetrable mountains. What makes the people's war in Peru invincible is that its military

strength has created the conditions in which a whole new society – a whole new regime and revolutionary way of life – is flourishing in vast areas of the countryside. The poor peasants and their allies have overthrown the landlords and local tyrants, the representatives of the big capitalists and the U.S.-dominated system. They are creating their own new politics, economy and culture. All forms of oppression – of Peru as a nation, of the peasants by the landlords and other exploiters – are beginning to come to an end. This New Democratic society they are building will open the door to socialism and even more profound revolution after power is seized country-wide.

What is propelling the PGA forward is that the communist vision of a revolutionary society is becoming a concrete reality in the base areas. This reality is also making itself felt far and wide. In all matters of life big and small, it offers vigorous proof that there is an enormously better alternative for the overwhelming majority of Peru's people. The enemy, huddled against the coast and in fortresses in the country's biggest cities, cannot offer any way out of misery for the immense majority of people and finds it increasingly difficult to keep its own system going. Even if the enemy unleashed far more forceful blows against the revolutionary base areas, through U.S. assistance or even an outright U.S. invasion, while that would make the situation more difficult for the PGA tactically it could not reverse this fundamental advance. In fact, as PCP Chairman Gonzalo has said (AWTW No. 15), a U.S. invasion would create even more favourable political conditions for the PCP to unite the vast majority of the

Marches Forward in Peru

Peruvian people.

The PCP has analysed that, for the people, the immediate military tasks are to further develop mobile warfare to the higher level required to bring about the conditions for the final stage of the people's war and to prepare the urban insurrections that will mark the war's victorious conclusion. In the organizational sphere, the task is to "Organize the Seizure of Power Amidst People's War" by building the Party that guides this whole process, the PGA that is its cutting edge and the new state that is at the heart of people's war. It has called for a "great leap in the organizing of the people for the people's war", in the mass organizations in the countryside that make up the new state, in various kinds of organizations in the cities laying the groundwork for the future armed urban insurrections, and in the PGA itself. For the enemy, the government currently headed by Alberto Fujimori, the most unashamedly pro-imperialist president in recent Peruvian history, the most pressing tasks are to revive the economy, reorganize the state and regain lost ground on the battlefield to stop the people's war.

It is in terms of these two antagonistic sets of tasks that the news from Peru should be assessed.

UNFOLDING MOBILE WARFARE

The government has seen its military situation worsen drastically, even from the point of view of its own decrees and statistics. It has been compelled to declare a state of emergency in most of the mountain highlands (except the northwest and southwest corners), the long, fertile river valleys of the eastern foothills and the more populated part of the

eastern jungle lowlands, many of the short, steep valleys leading west to the Pacific coast (except for the southern coastal desert, and the bigger cities and large-scale cotton and sugar cane farms of the northern coastal plains), and the entire area around Lima.

Ayacucho and the South-Central Mountains

The south-central mountain departments of Ayacucho, Huancavelica and Apurimac, where the armed struggle first arose in 1980, continue to be the country's most bitterly contested region. In June 1991 the reactionary Armed Forces launched an offensive against the revolutionary base areas in the western part of this region. The PGA counterattacked, marching out of the base areas to hit the Armed Forces rear guard set up in the town of San Miguel, to the east, near the Apurimac river where Ayacucho adjoins Apurimac and Cuzco. Guerrilla columns seized the

town, besieging and destroying Army and police barracks and local government offices. Armed Forces bulletins reported several dozen casualties. This town was especially important as a headquarters for *ronderos*, paramilitary units used by the Army to pit civilians against the revolutionaries. Several days later, a military patrol venturing out to try and reorganize the *rondero* units was ambushed and wiped out, again with several dozen government casualties.

In the province of Lucanas, in the south-central part of the department, the PGA unleashed a series of major assaults in August, apparently in conjunction with an overall guerrilla counter-offensive. It attacked the town of Laramate August 11th, eradicating an anti-guerrilla base manned by several dozen soldiers. The guerrillas called people to a mass meeting in the central plaza. Two banks that had long fattened off the peasants were burned to the ground and peasants sacked stores belonging to big landowners. Many

COMING NEXT ISSUE

PCP CHAIRMAN GONZALO SPEAKS ON PARTY RECTIFICATION CAMPAIGN

"On the Rectification Campaign Using the Document
Elections No, People's War, Yes!" — August 1991

- I. How to Study. Pay Attention to Analysis & Synthesis
- II. 25th Anniversary of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution
- III. Current Political Situation
- IV. Rectification Campaign
- V. Conclusions

local peasants were reported to leave with the withdrawing guerrilla troops. On the same day, the relatively large town of Puquio about 80 kilometres to the southeast was also attacked. In addition to razing the local Army and police bases the guerrillas confiscated a large quantity of weapons.

September saw intensive fighting continue throughout Ayacucho. In the northern corner of the department, near where it meets Junin, in an area 80 kilometres north of the major garrison city of Huanta, a series of ambushes eliminated one Army patrol after another within a few days. In each case guerrillas killed the officer in charge. Of his dozen soldiers, those who were not dead or wounded often went "missing" — deserting or joining the guerrillas. On September 24th, an ambush annihilated a larger unit composed of four Army patrols sent to repair the sabotaged power lines that supply Huanta. To the east, near the village of Tapuna towards the Cuzco border, on September 26th the PGA successfully ambushed a convoy of ronderos carrying an arms shipment. Several hours later these arms were used to attack an Army patrol.

On October 7th, the anniversary of the PCP's founding, an armed shut-down paralysed transport and commerce across the whole department. The PGA swept like a raging torrent cutting a 100-kilometre swath from northeast Huanta to the southeastern part of Huamanga province (south of the city of Ayacucho), the most militarized area in Peru. In a series of five engagements against the Armed Forces in rapid succession, they destroyed Army posts, rondero bases and strategic hamlets (where the Armed Forces had imprisoned peasants, seeking to "drain the ocean to kill the fish"). An article in *El Diario*, the clandestine Lima newspaper that supports the people's war, reported that in the battle to destroy a rondero base, PGA units firing rockets drove back a helicopter attack. Twenty-five soldiers and 62 ronderos were killed. This offensive, according to

El Diario, led to the establishment of several new Open People's Committees, where revolutionary political power can now be fully exercised.

The fighting in Ayacucho shows very clearly how this war is developing, not in a straight line of expansion or passive defence of the base areas, but through interlinked and repeated offensives and counter-offensives, in which the enemy deploys its comparatively stronger forces and sets up bases to launch "encirclement and suppression campaigns" seeking to strangle the red areas, while the revolutionary forces strive to retain the initiative despite being under attack, by launching

From El Diario

"The downing of a DEA helicopter is further evidence of the PGA's advance in quality and quantity. The surface-to-air missile (SAM) that brought down the helicopter being used by Bush's troops is part of the PGA's increasing ability to wage mobile warfare. This occurred 11 January between Progreso and Tocache in the Upper Huallaga Valley." (*El Diario*, 21 January 1992) The foreign press reported three Americans and a Peruvian killed in the crash — the first publicly acknowledged U.S. military casualties in the people's war.

counter-offensives when and where conditions are favourable. In his military writings, Mao called this "the main pattern of China's civil war" as well.

South

Cuzco's La Convencion valley, east of Ayacucho, has been declared an emergency zone, along with a few other parts of Cuzco. For a long time this area was not believed to be under strong PCP influence. All of central and northern Puno has also only recently been officially put under a state of emergency, though in this case the PCP has been leading a peasant upsurge there since 1986. Peruvian press dispatches reveal several victorious ambushes

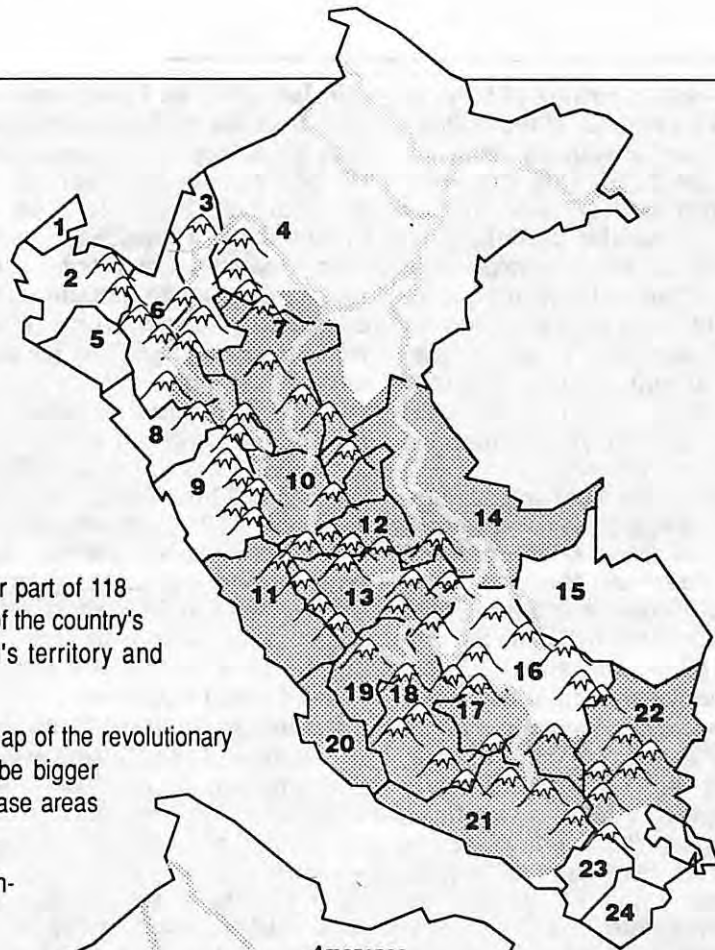
in Puno during September, during the People's Guerrilla Army counter-offensive.

Centre

The PGA has taken enormous, rapid strides along the Ene and Tambo river valleys, in the corner of the department of Junin adjoining Ayacucho and Cuzco, a forested foothills region home to the Ashaninka tribal people. On September 30th 1991, "a column hundreds of guerrillas strong", according to the European press, rained automatic weapons fire and rocket-propelled grenades for two hours on a locally pivotal Armed Forces base. An Armed Forces offensive the previous May and June had established ten such bases in the region; by October six of them lay in ruins. A series of ambushes annihilated several Army patrols. The remaining bases are now completely dependent on helicopters for their resupply. The government is said to have only two helicopters in the area.

This is exactly the kind of weakness that the U.S. is currently seeking to resolve by applying its own ample resources. For several years now there have been reports that the U.S. is planning to set up an American-run fire-base in this zone. Such a base would be used as a rear area from which to launch attacks along the Ene River and the Apurimac that leads into it, hammering into the long-established revolutionary base areas of northern rural Ayacucho and seeking to crush them against the anvil of troops based in the big garrisons in the cities of Ayacucho and Huanta. With the revolution's victories in Satipo province in eastern Junin, it seems that it is the reaction that is being outflanked, for the moment at least.

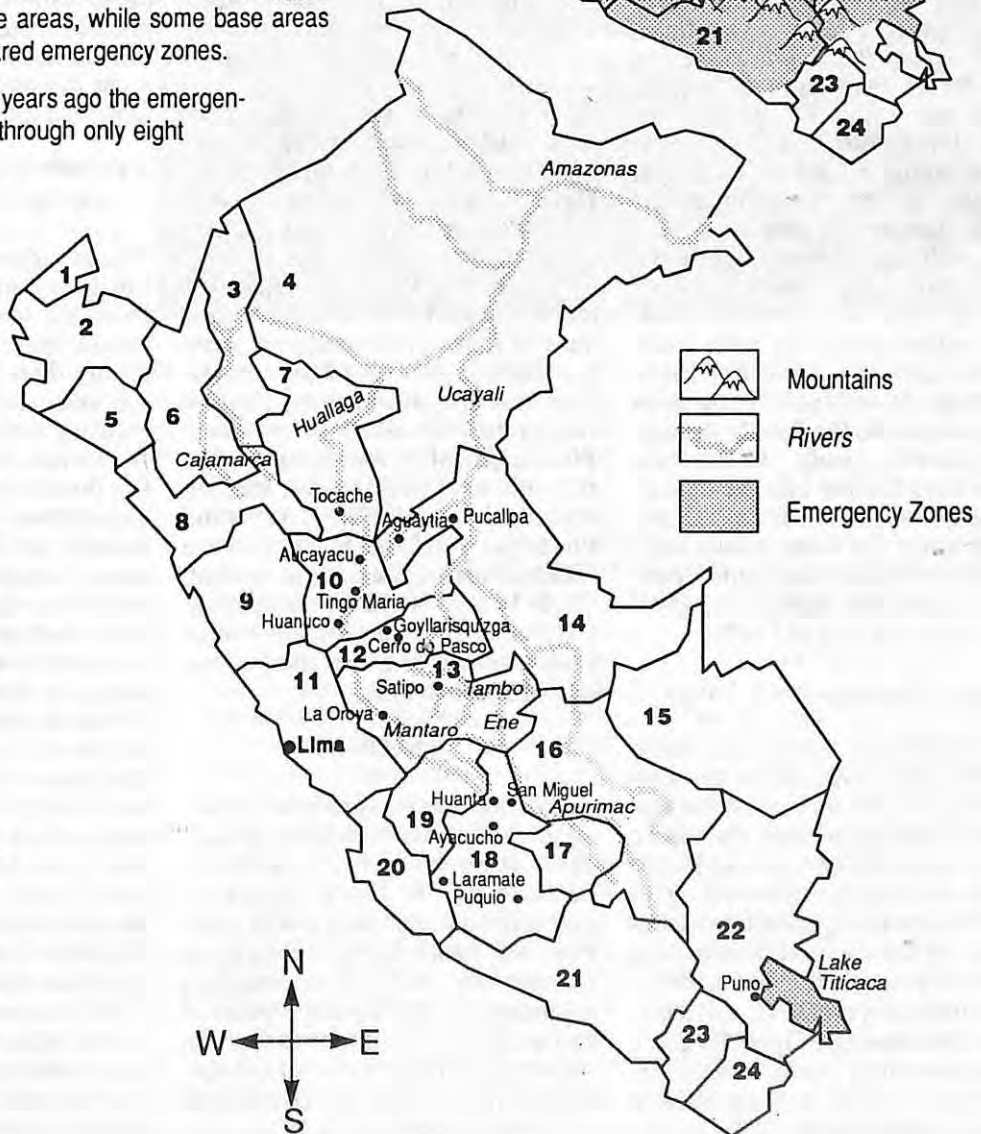
In the Mantaro River valley, which runs south between two Andes ranges from the department of Pasco down into western Junin and Huancavelica before cutting east to join the Ene, the government faces disaster. The Army's 31st Division, in charge of "pacifying" this valley and the adjacent area in



The state of emergency zones cover all or part of 118 provinces (out of a total of 148), in 18 out of the country's 24 departments, including 40% of Peru's territory and almost half of its population.

These zones do not add up to an exact map of the revolutionary base areas, because the zones tend to be bigger than the actual base areas, while some base areas have not been declared emergency zones.

By comparison, two years ago the emergency zones extended through only eight departments.



1. Tumbes
2. Piura
3. Amazonas
4. Loreto
5. Lambayeque
6. Cajamarca
7. San Martin
8. La Libertad
9. Ancash
10. Huanuco
11. Lima
12. Pasco
13. Junin
14. Ucallali
15. Madre de Dios
16. Cuzco
17. Apurimac
18. Ayacucho
19. Huancavelica
20. Ica
21. Arequipa
22. Puno
23. Moquegua
24. Tacna

Huanuco, set up a string of bases in early 1991. One was at the railhead town of Goyllarisquizga. Within a few months, 70% of the division's nearly 900 soldiers were out of action – casualties or deserters. Newspaper accounts reported that in April soldiers at Goyllarisquizga staged “48 hours of total disobedience”. Though they eventually surrendered to hordes of officers sent in from the city of Cerro de Pasco, the Army had to shut down the base and transfer them elsewhere.

In August and September, comparatively large-scale PGA attacks smashed into towns in eastern Junin, Cerro de Pasco and Huanuco. Three towns were temporarily seized, their police units wiped out. With the execution of a few local tyrants, particularly hated government officials and informers, the representatives of the old order were driven out. *El Diario* speaks of the new political power based on miners and peasants flourishing in a line stretching across three departments from the city of Huanuco to La Oroya, a region of zinc, lead and silver mines, foundries and hydroelectric plants that produce much of the tribute imperialism extracts from Peru.

All of Ica, a coastal department south of Lima and west of Huancavelica and Ayacucho, has come under emergency rule, along with the entire department of Lima, including the valleys leading from the mountains to the Pacific through which flow the roads, rail lines and power lines feeding into the capital, and the two coastal provinces immediately north and south of the capital. Of course the emergency zone also includes the capital city itself and its adjacent port of Callao.

Upper Huallaga River Valley

The Huallaga River runs north through jungle foothills on the eastern edge of the Andes for several hundred kilometres, from the department of Huanuco through San Martin before eventually descending to Peru's vast eastern jungle lowlands drained by the Amazon. It is an area where the people's war has achieved great strength, permitting the emergence of extensive Open People's Committees. It is also where, so far, the PGA has most directly clashed with U.S. imperialism.

In June 1991 the PGA temporarily took over the medium-sized Huallaga River city of Aucayacu, near the border between Huanuco and San Martin. They attacked and pinned down a joint Army-police base from which two Army battalions (a commando battalion and a construction battalion) had terrorized the townspeople and the peasants of the region. Here too *El Diario's* dispatches report that the revolutionaries called a mass rally, destroyed government installations and recruited fresh fighters. In August authorities in Tingo Maria, about 50 kilometres downriver, warned – falsely, it turned out – that guerrilla columns were on the verge of seizing this major city, already paralysed several times in the last few years by PCP-led armed shutdowns.

But the enemy is not on the verge of surrender. The U.S. base at Santa Lucia, hit hard by the PGA in April 1990, is still spewing death out into the surrounding countryside. President Fujimori made a point of giving a speech there in October 1991. The Peruvian Armed Forces' Madre Mia base, destroyed by the PGA in July 1989, has since been rebuilt, attacked and mauled, and rebuilt again.

The people's war is also expanding into the jungle lowlands of the department of Loreto, particularly the more populated edge west of the Ucayali river, now also an emergency zone. In August the PGA ambushed a 40-man Marine patrol at Aguaytia, on the region's only major road, leading between the cities of Tingo Maria and Pucallpa. Half the Marines were killed before reinforcements arrived. The PGA units withdrew and successfully eluded the large-scale Armed Forces operations that combed the area in search of them.

North

Guerrilla actions have been reported all across northern Peru, though there are no emergency zones in the far north yet. *El Diario* mentions a guerrilla zone (an area where guerrillas can count on mass support to manoeuvre and hit the enemy) extending through the department of Piura to the Ecuador border. In August, guerrillas blew up the foreign-owned oil pipeline near Olmos, a city in Lambayeque.

A major emergency zone has been declared along the Cajamarca river valley between the eastern and central ranges of the Andes mountains at the southern edge of the department of Cajamarca. In the area around the Marañon River toward the eastern end of the department of La Libertad and the adjoining area in the department of Ancash, in August PGA ambushes reportedly forced the Army to call off its rural patrols in the region and withdraw to its barracks at Tayabamba. A 50-man mixed Army-antisubversive police patrol had been trapped and torn apart in a narrow ravine near Tayabamba in the Ancash mountains in July. In August, a police outpost was assaulted and destroyed in the town of Pariacoto. The local authorities, infamous for their abuses, were put on trial by the masses in the main square and executed. Also executed were two Polish missionary priests accused of supplying military intelligence to the American government in preparation for more direct U.S. intervention.

STEPPING UP PREPARATIONS FOR INSURRECTION

The departmental capital cities are not now being contested by the PGA, but the revolution is certainly measuring its strength against the enemy there, especially in the central mountain regions and the Upper Huallaga. Starting on July 28th, Peru's national day, all the cities in the department of Ayacucho were closed down tight for three days. This includes the important – and heavily enemy-occupied – cities of Ayacucho and Huamanga, where markets, stores and all transportation halted in conjunction with the PGA offensive sweeping through the countryside. Armed shut-downs also paralysed the cities of Huancavelica, Puno and Huancayo. Work and commerce halted throughout the department of Pasco, city and countryside alike. The few lorries to be found on the main motorways were attacked and burned. Smaller towns in Apurimac, Cajamarca and the Upper Huallaga were also shut down.

In Lima, as the political and economic situation continues to wind inexorably tighter both the capacities of the revolution and the enemy's repression have taken big

Yankee Go Home! Year of International Solidarity with the People's War in Peru

Militant actions took place around the world as part of this international campaign called by the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement.

Nepal: (Top, right). Protestors confront guards at American Embassy in Kathmandu, September 27th, before joining 10,000 people in open-air meeting in support of people's war, called by Nepal Communist Party (Mashal). Marches also took place in small towns, like Butwal.

Berlin: (Bottom, right). March and street clashes in mainly proletarian and immigrant Kreuzberg district. Banner above tube entrance proclaims in Turkish and German, "Kreuzberg revolutionary sister city of Ayacucho, cradle of Peruvian revolution". Mass protection kept the banner up for 45 days. Demonstrations were also held in India and the U.S.



leaps. Lima was rocked by an armed strike on May 29th. In scores of violent actions combining the power of crowds of shantytown youth with the leadership and abilities of the People's Guerrilla Army, the results of the PCP's political and organizational work in the city were partially and briefly revealed. Resounding lightning raids struck police outposts placed to hold back the endless tangle of shacks on the dry hills that surround the city on three sides. Breaking through this containment, armed demonstrators and guerrilla units hit banks, government buildings and other targets all over Lima.

At midnight June 19th, following attacks on power lines that brought total blackness to 11 departments, bright red fireworks lit up the four cardinal points of the Lima skyline in homage to the fifth anniversary of the Day of Heroism in which almost 300 revolutionary prisoners of war fought to the death against govern-

ment forces sent to murder them and break the morale of the revolution. The Naval base at Callao, home to the units that attacked the Fronton island prison in 1986, came under mortar attack; nearby a military transport bus full of Marines was blown up by a car bomb. Mortar fire also smashed into the lower floors of the Ministry of the Economy. A police force major was shot near the city's main military compound. In three shantytowns along main roadways descending from the mountains, PGA units seized supply lorries destined for big stores and warehouses and distributed their contents.

Similar scenes were repeated on October 7th, on the anniversary of the PCP's founding, when "gigantic crowds", according to *El Diario*, sacked food lorries and stores in Villa El Salvador, San Juan de Miraflores, Canto Grande, Comas and other shantytowns. In the city centre, throngs chanting slogans in favour of the PCP and the people's

war took over many major intersections, while guerrillas attacked police and Army units. Especially worrisome to the enemy was the extensive and well-received revolutionary agitation in the central wholesale markets, upon which the capital and even the Armed Forces depend for food supplies.

The Universities

The military have occupied the campuses of San Marcos, La Cantuta and Lima's other main universities, as well as a few provincial schools. President Fujimori tried to enter La Cantuta along with his invading soldiers at 1 am May 21st but was pushed back by massed students. Later that morning at San Marcos he was met with a hail of stones. What the government describes as "depoliticizing the universities" and "classes as usual" amounts to a reign of terror. The troops paint and repaint olive drab

over the red slogans that cover the walls – slogans that appear afresh afterwards. They conduct incursions into dormitories and dining halls searching for “subversive” books and papers and grabbing students who resist them.

On June 19th, as red flags and posters sprouted up all over the city and lightning marches under the protection of PGA units rallied people in many shantytowns, students left San Marcos to stage a march in the proletarian district of San Gabriel in homage to the San Marcos students and the workers, peasants and others killed in the 1986 prison massacres. The police and Army surrounded the demonstration and then searched house to house for students, killing 14 and arresting 120. Two days later a San Marcos student and his two younger brothers were found shot dead; a storm of protest broke out when a TV news programme showed footage of the three being grabbed and stuffed still unhurt into police cars in front of their house a few hours earlier. The police, who at first tried to portray their deaths as a mystery, later were forced to admit the three had been arrested for painting “Yankee Go Home” on a wall.

Canto Grande Prison

About 600 people are being held on subversion or other charges linked to the people’s war. Some are in a handful of provincial jails, but most have been transferred to the new Canto Grande prison near Lima. There they are kept segregated from the common prisoners, in two separate pavilions (one for men and one for women) behind high walls and gun towers, where they have organized communal living, eating, studying, sports, culture and handicrafts in order to survive, keep their revolutionary morale high and continue to serve the revolution in whatever way possible.

In June, provocateurs tried to stir up fighting that could be used as an excuse “to eliminate the 396 men and women prisoners of war, but their resistance and the solidarity of the 1733 common prisoners foiled this plot”, as a statement smuggled out of the prison described it. Then in August, a thousand police armed with machine guns, grenade-launchers and armour-piercing weapons

surrounded and stormed the two pavilions. The prisoners fought back with whatever was at hand, to keep them out, as if their prison were a fortress. By morning workers and shantytown residents from nearby San Juan de Lurigancho blocked all access roads between central Lima and the prison. Even with parts of the prison destroyed and a constant massive police presence inside, the prisoners were able to repaint their revolutionary slogans on walls the police had painted over and prevent the authorities from re-establishing full control. Fujimori put the prisons in the hands of the Armed Forces in September, ostensibly to “prevent the smuggling into prison of alcohol and drugs”.

Raucana

The traditional power structure erected by the reformist left and the churches based on charity schemes is crumbling in the few shantytowns where it was once strong. Villa El Salvador, blessed by the visiting Pope a few years ago as a “model of love” in contrast to the PCP’s “preaching of hatred”, is now suffering helicopter-borne police raiding parties searching out “subversives”. But by far the most spectacular developments have been in the shantytowns along the Carretera Central, the traffic artery leading eastward into the mountains from the outskirts of Lima.

In mid-1990, taking advantage of the interregnum between the outgoing and incoming presidents, thousands of homeless families invaded a large, walled-in pasture in the hills above the slums of Ate-Vitarte. Most of them were peasants recently driven out of the mountains by hunger and repression. For a short period of time they called their settlement “New Hope”, then they renamed it “Jorge Felix Raucana” after a resident killed by police in an attempt to dislodge them. About a quarter of the men found work in the small factories and workshops of the area. The rest, along with women and children, try to make a living on the city’s streets as sidewalk vendors.

Suddenly in mid-1991, prompted by the authorities, the Lima press and television began to froth at the mouth in unison about the danger to the public surfacing “only nine kilo-

metres [five miles] from the Plaza de Armas”, the centre of Lima. The 1500 families were accused of having organized a communal way of life, with collective gardens, livestock (rabbits and chickens) and a dining hall, in addition to individual plots. They had their own law and order, at least on local matters, and eradicated wife-beating, prostitution, stealing, drugs and habitual drunkenness. The media took it as evidence of the dark presence of “fanaticism” and “terrorism” that in a district once considered one of the capital’s most dangerous, women could walk home unworried late at night and doors could be left unlocked. People from other shantytowns were reported to be coming to Raucana for help dealing with their own problems.

A judge hearing the case against Raucana ordered the squatters evicted on August 9th. Two days before police were scheduled to sweep over the walls protecting the neat rows of shacks, thousands of residents seized the initiative themselves by taking over several kilometres of the Carretera Central. Agitators and leafletters fanned out in the surrounding shantytowns and elsewhere in Lima calling on people to come to Raucana, under the slogan “We Have A Right to a Roof! Not One More Eviction Against Lima’s Poor!”

The authorities were kept at a standoff for a month. The daunting terrain of mud and tank-trap trenches dug into the ground between the shantytown and the nearest road made it difficult for the police to stage the kind of massed, sudden strike they favour. Residents on watchtowers set on stilts kept a constant watch, as did their friends throughout the area. Thousands of people remained mobilized. Finally, on September 6th, several thousand soldiers came in, with automatic weapons and armoured vehicles, backed by a thousand police. The residents resisted with heaps of burning tyres, slings and Molotov cocktails, but eventually retreated from a confrontation they could not win.

House-to-house searches failed to come up with any of the arms caches the invaders claimed to be seeking. They set up a permanent military camp, imposed a curfew and began implementing the doctrine of “winning hearts and minds” made infamous by the U.S. in Vietnam and now

being widely implemented by the Fujimori government: after destroying the communal gardens and bakery and looting the clinic, they began dispensing food, medical care and liquor, announcing that anybody who refused their charity would be considered a "Senderista". A file card system was set up to categorize everyone according to such things as whether they had a voter's card or could be suspected of having heeded the PCP's calls to boycott the elections.

But this story is far from over. Three weeks after the troops came in, hundreds of residents organized into resistance groups and armed with rocks and dynamite once again blocked the Carretera Central. Soon they were joined by thousands of workers, students and housewives drawn out of the nearby factories and slums. They stoned the occupation forces, defying the helicopters whirling overhead that doused them with teargas.

The enemy would like to brag that it has "taken back" Raucana, and the universities, and so on, and perhaps even, ironically, the prisons. But in Lima and other main reactionary bastions there was never any question of being able to build the same kind of revolutionary political power as in the countryside. Right up until the very end the enemy will continue to enjoy certain strongholds where, when it comes to a show-down, until the final showdown, their brutality rules. That brutality will not save them; in fact, it will be part of their undoing.

Under today's conditions, the Party's work and the war it is leading must still be centred in the rural areas. But the Party and the people's war are becoming increasingly linked to the daily struggles of millions of people in the shantytowns, in the markets, in the factories, hospitals, schools, and in confrontations with the enemy on all kinds of issues in Lima and other cities. These developments are part of getting ready politically, organizationally and militarily for new conditions.

TASKS FACED BY THE ENEMY

Stopping the People's War

To give an idea of the level of fighting, in August 1991 during the PGA counter-offensive, the govern-

ment reported 80 soldiers and police killed, said to be the highest one-month total of the war up to that date. With 220,000 men armed with modern weapons, the Peruvian Armed Forces is still far more powerful than the PGA. It could afford this rate of casualties for a long time if that were all there were to it. But while the PGA is becoming more united, better trained, more effective and larger, the reactionary Armed Forces are deteriorating.

Their soldiers are a big problem: they are losing and starving and sick of fighting an unjust war for a starvation-producing system. Rations have always been short for Peruvian soldiers; now, with supply lines overextended and many units isolated for long periods, the Armed Forces lack the means to resupply field units. Even rice is often wanting. During the first three months of 1991, 40% of new Army conscripts deserted and 550 Army officers resigned, leading the Armed Forces command to "suspend" the right of officers to retire.

With the police, the situation is worse. The ascendancy of the Armed Forces generals amid the sharpening struggles within the ruling classes does not sit well with police officials. As for the average cop, they are paid so little and show so little zeal in their duty that the ruling classes are losing confidence in them. A Peruvian senator complained that one in seven robberies and holdups are committed by policemen. A bourgeois publication advises businessmen to "cross the street" when they see a cop. More importantly, government authorities are worried about the effect of flyers directed at policemen and revolutionary agitation now broadcast over captured police radios, urging them to take their guns and uniforms and go over to the side of the people.

The Fujimori government has proved to be even more bloodthirsty than its predecessors. The "democratic" veil that cloaks this U.S.-dominated dictatorship of the big exploiters is being torn even further asunder by murders and massacres in Lima neighbourhoods on a scale until recently reserved for the countryside and prisons. Lawyers have documented over 250 "disappearances" during Fujimori's first year in office. These are largely people who

"disappeared" in prison or in custody, and do not include the estimated three thousand people killed since July 1990 by the Armed Forces and police in the countryside, where they follow a strict policy of "no prisoners or wounded" (according to a Lima TV show that was immediately canceled).

But the Fujimori regime has learnt the lesson that firepower alone is not enough in this war. Peruvian civilian experts and officers trained in the U.S., and the U.S. government itself, are working to implement the "low intensity warfare" approach developed by the imperialist powers in other counterrevolutionary wars, especially Vietnam. This includes:

- An emphasis on decapitating the Party using sophisticated intelligence work. The government has boasted of hurting the Party apparatus in Lima. It has tried very hard to capture PCP Chairman Gonzalo.

- More systematic use of civilian paramilitary forces to tie up the PGA, especially in intensely contested areas. The government is endeavouring to rebuild these gangs the PCP had eliminated or neutralized in many places. Fujimori personally officiated over military parades to mark the handing over of semi-automatic shotguns and automatic rifles to rondero bands in the countryside (including among the Ashaninka tribal people) and Lima itself.

- Social projects of various sorts, in order to separate off the middle forces in society from the revolution, especially in the countryside, bribe a few people in the lower classes to become government stooges and generally relegate government authority in practice (for instance, by having the Army carry out a vaccination campaign).

The Economy

Peru's economic crisis would be a catastrophe for any country. In the context of the people's war it is a major political obstacle to rallying Peru's propertied classes to save the system. In an effort whose magnitude reflects its desperation, like a gambler attempting to reverse his sinking fortunes by doubling his bets, Fujimori has tried to impose one of the most sweeping economic reforms ever seen in Latin America.

Fujimori asserts that these mea-

sures would allow Peru to follow the South Korean example by attracting direct foreign investment on a monumental scale. They include auctioning off all state-owned enterprises and public services right down to the disease-ridden sewage system, eliminating most protective labour legislation (such as restrictions on overtime and holiday work, and on firings and redundancies), and abolishing import tariffs and currency restrictions. They also feature proposals to promote the development in the countryside of a better-off strata of peasants financially tied to Peruvian monopoly capitalism and imperialism, at the expense of poorer peasants and without uprooting existing semi-feudal relations. A key part of this would be breaking up the SAIS (nationalized traditional estates) and granting titles to land now formally owned collectively or farmed without title, so that the land could be bought, sold and mortgaged.

It is not clear how much of this Fujimori will be able to implement. But a few things are already clear. Although Fujimori's initial draconian measures brought inflation to "only" 2000% during his first year, and down to about 5% a month in September and October 1991, this is still high enough to poison any revival in an economy where production has plummeted for three years straight – giving Peru simultaneously both the worst inflation and the worst recession in Latin America. In view of the situation in the world as a whole, where there can hardly be said to be a rush to invest in any oppressed country, and given the political situation that has led a business journal to award Peru the title of "the world's most dangerous country for investment", not even the most capitalist-minded commentators are very hopeful that Fujimori or anyone else can magically unlock this situation. So far, he has gotten high grades but little else from international lending agencies and banks, while Peru continues to pay out \$90 million a month in interest alone for previous loans it still has no hope of retiring.

Fujimori's measures have already had unintended consequences. For instance, government budget cut-backs have provoked a radical mood among Peru's several hundred thousand public sector workers, especially

the teachers and health workers who make up a key part of the middle classes he must win over to succeed. The crushing of small and medium-sized businesses is also cutting against Fujimori's political efforts.

Reports from the ruling classes' own institutes say that only 25% of Peru's work force is now fully employed, that 83% of the population is underfed, and that the percentage on the brink of starvation – over half the population – has doubled in the past three years. The government's schemes to win "hearts and minds" through a foul mixture of charity, reforms and trinkets do not seem very formidable when it is helpless in the face of the cholera epidemic that has killed thousands of Peruvians in the last year, many times more than in neighbouring countries.

The State

The problem Fujimori faces with reorganizing the state is that it rests on a battered Armed Forces and a society in crisis. Increasingly bitter clashes between different branches of the state, three new prime ministers in little more than a year and constant cabinet reshuffling, the unprecedented – and unsuccessful – corruption charges brought against former President Alan Garcia – all this is testimony to rising quarrels among the ruling classes. So too is a series of murderous letter bombs sent to journalists and politicians who have made powerful enemies. Even key materiel for the war, such as imported advanced telephone monitoring equipment, is often diverted for use in inter-ruling class contests.

The reforms with which Fujimori proposes to salvage the system cannot succeed without disrupting the interests of some forces at the heart of the class alliances represented by the state.

In order to put a lid on the Lima press where the boil of divergent interests has been bringing too many ugly facts to the surface, Fujimori has issued a decree authorizing himself to jail reporters and confiscate media that reveal anything but officially released information about the war.

As for the legitimizing drapes of elections which are supposed to hide the class dictatorship behind them, that is not going very well. After the

PCP counter-offensive began in August 1991, the government was forced to cancel local elections scheduled in 20 provinces and almost 500 districts where there are no longer any local authorities even in name. Almost a million people were supposed to vote in these areas located in 19 of the country's 24 departments. The biggest problem the Peruvian reaction faces in restructuring its state is that another, rising, revolutionary state based on the interests of the vast majority of the people is now beginning to prove itself in practice.

U.S. Intervention

The U.S. government set out to openly move into the war in Peru in 1990, as part of Bush's "war on drugs". That intervention has developed in some expected ways, partly because of the unfolding of other events in the world, and partly because of growing disagreements within the U.S. ruling class about how to handle Peru. When Fujimori took office, the American Ambassador handed him a proposal to break the generation-long freeze on U.S. "aid" to Peru with a \$90 million package, including \$35 million in military equipment. Fujimori labelled this amount insufficient and stalled for a year before approving the pact. Then when he finally came to Washington to sign it in September 1991, the U.S. Congress refused to release funds for the military portions of the plan and the whole thing remains at an impasse. The Congressman in charge of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Robert Torricelli, announced, "There is a total policy gridlock with regard to Peru."

This is not quite true: there is consensus that the U.S. must intervene; the question is what to do. As Torricelli himself said earlier, "[I]n the final analysis, the United States has to get involved in Peru."

Long before this pact came up, the U.S. government was *already* intervening, not only covertly, as it did in the early and mid-1980s, through phony "civilian advisors" and CIA "mercenaries", but overtly as well. An article criticizing Bush in *Foreign Affairs* (V.69 No.1, 1990), a quasi-official theoretical journal of the U.S. ruling class, emphasizes this, noting that the U.S. base at

Santa Lucia is the biggest and most expensive U.S. military installation south of the Panama Canal. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which has run this base since 1987 with the official mission of training the Peruvian counter-insurgency police, operates in Peru under the direction of the Pentagon, which in turn directly coordinates communications and technical intelligence for Peru out of the U.S. Southern Command in Panama. Since 1989, U.S. Army Special Forces (Green Berets) on "loan" to the DEA have trained 800 men in Peru.

All the while Fujimori was strutting around and combining high arrogance with unashamedly pro-U.S. servility, bellowing what had already been whispered into his Washington-based advisors' ears, that the Bush plan did not go far enough, U.S. Ambassador Anthony Quainton (a counter-insurgency specialist) and U.S. Army General George Jowland (on the spot in Peru) were playing a major role in the war. During this period before the two governments reached a formal agreement, the Peruvian Armed Forces signed several accords directly with the U.S. Army.

The Bush-Fujimori pact calls for increasing the number of Green Berets and other U.S. personnel; training and equipping two battalions of the Peruvian Army, as well as Navy (riverboat) and Air Force (helicopter and attack plane) units; and revamping the Peruvian military's communications system. Though the amount of money in question is not much for the U.S., it is substantial for a country where the entire military budget is only a few hundred million dollars. The Pentagon has focused on critical military spheres where the money can have the greatest multiplier effect on the efficiency of a conscript-rich but technology-poor Army. At the same time, far more money is being injected into Peru in the guise of "economic aid". One of the very few loans Peru has been granted is \$425 million from the International Development Bank to rebuild Peru's roads. The repair of roads regularly dug up by PGA-led peasants would be a basic step towards stabilizing the reactionary regime economically. But its military importance would be even greater. Where there are no

roads the government cannot impose its system.

No serious inner-circle imperialist political analyst is still trying to claim that the PCP is in league with the drug dealers. That thesis, invented for U.S. public consumption, has been discredited. "Sendero has not attempted to enter into some sort of alliance with the Colombian traffickers" who control the drug trade; on the contrary, it is the Peruvian Armed Forces "who have reached some sort of accommodation with the traffickers." (*Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, Summer 1990). Lately, some of this has been said to a less restricted audience, including in mass-circulation media such as *The New York Times* (November 10th) and *Newsweek* (August 26th), which refute the claim that the PCP is using drug money to buy arms and go so far as to report that the Peruvian Army frequently directs its fire at its U.S. advisers in order to protect the drug trade.

The *New York Times* quotes a leading American Congressman complaining that the Bush plan is hopeless because the Peruvian Army and police are "totally and completely corrupted" by the drug trade. Why say this now, and fight about it in Congress, when it was no less true when Congress approved the "war on drugs", or even a decade ago? A major reason is, as *Foreign Affairs* says, "the ultimate success of the... Peruvian Army's efforts remains in doubt." In short, the urgent problem with the Peruvian Armed Forces is that they're losing.

This is why the corruption and short-sightedness (from the point of view of imperialism's interests) of the Peruvian Armed Forces has become a major question. By putting the personal enrichment of its own officers ahead of the general counter-revolutionary cause, the Peruvian Armed Forces itself has become a major obstacle to implementing the policies that many imperialists think are the only chance they have in Peru.

One problem is how to try and win over the coca-leaf growing peasants to the government side. The Peruvian Army, by working with the drug traffickers in enslaving and plundering the peasants, is said to be creating favourable conditions for

the success of the PCP in the Upper Huallaga and other coca-leaf producing regions. (The PCP's policy is to protect the peasants' lives, land and crops while persuading them to at least partially replace coca with food crops that can sustain revolutionary base areas, and to build up the revolutionary political power and armed strength to squash all these parasites.) With the aim of tipping the equation the other way, reactionary schemes have been proposed ranging from subsidizing peasants to grow other crops, to, far more practically, trying to bring the drug trade more under the state's official aegis. Whether the calls to broaden Peru's already legal coca leaf industry to include the whole Upper Huallaga Valley are officially implemented or not, they show an increasing determination not to let the "war on drugs" flag of convenience get in the way of fully subordinating everything to the war against the people's war.

This debate about drug policy is only a piece of the larger question of how to develop and implement an overall approach to the war along the lines of the "low intensity warfare" concept integrating, on the one hand, well-focused military might (building up the specific abilities needed by the reactionary armed forces to fight a highly mobile and illusive enemy), torture (to root out the revolutionary infrastructure and leadership) and terror (massacring entire villages or herding the peasants into strategic hamlets to isolate the masses from the guerrillas), and on the other, economic and social policies designed to rally a broader social base for the government from among middle forces who have currently turned their back on it. Fujimori seems to want to carry out these sorts of policies, but he may not be able to.

If the Peruvian Armed Forces, at least in their present form, are incapable of carrying out such a programme, then one very possible conclusion according to imperialist logic is that the U.S. military itself must play a far more extensive and direct role in the war. It might not necessarily start out by replacing Peruvian foot soldiers but by training them and leading them both at the highest command echelons and in "the field". This would not pre-

clude a massive U.S. invasion. After all, the U.S. government justified its initial involvement in Vietnam by explaining that sending in a few Green Beret teams would keep the U.S. from having to wage a wider-scale war.

So far, Bush's critics have been far more forthright in criticizing him than in spelling out their own proposals in detail, at least in public, but one thing must be said: what is "low intensity warfare" for the U.S. means high-intensity savagery aimed at the Peruvian people and their vanguard, the PCP.

The question of "human rights" is making an increasingly sinister appearance in the reactionary debate around Peru. Like the "war on drugs", it should be analysed in terms of what it is being used to achieve and not just in the abstract. Especially since the Allied armies ganged up on Iraq in the name of "human rights", this concept has become an excuse for big powers to do what they want in oppressed countries. In the specific context of the debate around Peru, the question of "human rights" is being raised now (11 years after the Peruvian government began responding to the people's war with indiscriminate slaughter in the countryside, five years after the prison massacres, etc.) as a codeword for more U.S. involvement.

Amnesty International is playing a dangerous role in this matter. Its report ranking the Fujimori government the world's worst "human rights" violator today, released on the occasion of Fujimori's September 1991 state visit to Washington, did not deter Bush, who responded by specifically congratulating the Peruvian president on his human rights record. But rather than turning to the people and exposing U.S. complicity, AI took up a crusade against the PCP and its supporters abroad, spreading lies about alleged PCP atrocities that even Peruvian bourgeois newspapers, for their own reasons, have exposed as the work of the government and its paramilitary forces.

When Fujimori came to San Francisco in November, Amnesty International picketed both his appearance and a revolutionary bookstore AI considered associated

with the "Yankee Go Home" campaign. The press that had been blacking out the news of the campaign gave full prominence to *this* tiny protest. No matter what the intention behind the "even-handed" principle of blaming rich and poor alike for social violence, in practice this is an attempt to drive a wedge between the people's war and some progressive figures and forces who contributed to arousing opposition to other imperialist wars waged by the U.S. Fujimori might not be completely comfortable with AI's policy, but it suits the U.S. imperialists.

It is important for those who oppose U.S. intervention to expose today's U.S. involvement in Peru, and also to expose and fight the disguised attempts to create public opinion for escalating the war in the near future. Whether it be by killing students in Lima or by political counter-insurgency in the U.S., all of the forces in this imperialist debate want to silence the cry "Yankee Go Home" — because none of them intend to stand by and "lose" Peru to the masses of Peruvians.

But people's war is unbeatable. It is not a question of a few military techniques the imperialists could adopt or adapt for their counterinsurgency. It comes from the communist outlook, based on the interests of those who have nothing to lose, the international proletariat, and developed to its highest level by Mao Tsetung. In the hands of a genuine Communist Party like the PCP, this outlook and the general military doctrine Mao also developed can give rise to concrete policies that for the first time in history fully unleash the masses of people and their inexhaustible potential.

A spectre is haunting the world this is how Marx and Engels described the inevitable outbreak of communist revolution. Today, when communism is supposed to be dead and the corpse of Soviet-style phony communism is at last being buried, the armed advances of Peru's formerly downtrodden masses thrusting skyward the red banner are more than a spectre — they are a reality, a reality that dictates that the imperialist oppressors attack and that the world's oppressed stop them. □

Excerpts

Letter from the Communist Party of Afghanistan

The following are excerpts of a letter to the Committee of the RIM from the Founding Congress of the Communist Party of Afghanistan — AWTW

Comrades,

Before the Congress four documents were prepared by the provisional leadership of the Organization of Revolutionary Communists of Afghanistan (ORCA), circulated and debated within the ranks; these included three programmatic position papers (concerning the ideological and political foundations, the programme for New Democratic Revolution, and strategy of People's War) and the constitution of the Party. During four months of discussions around these documents, the final draft of the Programme and the Constitution of the Communist Party of Afghanistan were prepared to be submitted to the Congress for approval.

Although during this period the readiness of the organisation to take the responsibility of forming the Party had increased to a great degree, we decided to hold a final discussion around the degree of this capability in the Congress itself. Active and vigorous participation of the comrades in the Congress and discussions around the documents indicated that the organisation has acquired the capability to take the responsibility of

forming and announcing the Party. When the Congress reached the point of discussing this issue, other issues had already been resolved and the congress unanimously called itself the Founding Congress of the CPA.

Then the comrades stood up and put their hands on the Programme and Constitution of the Communist Party of Afghanistan. They recalled the past, the martyred comrades, and felt the heavy weight of the painful memories of the preceding period and of the great task that had fallen on their shoulders, and at the same time imagined beautiful dreams and the fulfillment of longings and aspirations. These feelings pressed their hearts, made their shoulders tremble, twisted their throats and made their eyes overflow with tears. And in this atmosphere vows were made in a sober and deep tone to fight thoroughly and to the end for communism.

Joy and pain, love and hatred, memories and longings were intertwined and for hours kept the comrades in an exuberant mood. Thus the vanguard proletarian party was born in Afghanistan, rich with the science of revolution, the rock-hard conviction of the communist revolutionaries and the beautiful colours of the highest aspirations of the new human beings. We congratulate all.

Comrades, the CPA is a new product of the struggles of the international communist movement and is in the service of its advance. The ideological and organisational beliefs and convictions of the CPA have made it a detachment of the world army of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement. We firmly believe that you will assist this new-born detachment and will try to arm it further.

**Long live Proletarian
Internationalism!
Long live the Revolutionary
Internationalist Movement!
Victory or Death!**

**The Founding Congress of the
Communist Party Afghanistan
May 1st 1991**

To the Communist Party of Afghanistan

Comrades,

It is with great joy that we have received news of the formation of the Communist Party of Afghanistan on May 1st 1991.

At a time when the imperialists, both East and West, are loudly trumpeting the so-called death of communism it is of great significance that revolutionary forces of Afghanistan, who have been fighting over a decade against the Soviet sponsored Kabul regime, have boldly proclaimed Communist ideology and their intention to fight together with their sisters and brothers in every continent for the communist goal of a world without exploitation and oppression.

The history of Afghanistan, in particular in the past twelve years since the Soviet invasion of that country, has shown that the masses of people will never stop struggling against injustice, oppression and exploitation. But this same history has also shown that without correct leadership there is no liberation and the sacrifices of the people are inevitably manipulated by class forces who seek only to replace one form of exploitation by another.

The struggle in Afghanistan is vivid proof that only the proletariat, the class with no interest in any form of oppression or exploitation, can unite the people based upon the alliance between the workers and the peasantry, only the proletariat can help the people see clearly the shape and features of the enemy – both open and disguised, only the prole-

ariat can direct blows squarely against the reactionary target and lead the people in waging a real people's war to victory.

In Afghanistan, as elsewhere, the leadership of the proletariat means the leadership of a vanguard party based upon the ideology of the proletariat – Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought.

Although the Party is newborn, its very foundation results from long years of armed revolutionary struggle against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism and an equally fierce struggle to master and apply Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought and to defeat the bourgeois and opportunist lines within the revolutionary ranks.

The formation of the Communist Party of Afghanistan opens a new page in the revolutionary struggle in that country. It means that, in the battles to come, the proletariat and the people will be fighting under their own flag and for their own interests, and will be doing so as part of a worldwide army of gravediggers of imperialism and reaction.

For these reasons we are proud to count the Communist Party of Afghanistan among the participating parties and organisations of Revolutionary Internationalist Movement.

**Committee of the Revolutionary
Internationalist Movement
August 1, 1991**

People's War Will Defeat the Madrid Conspiracy

— Statement by the Committee of the
Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

28th October 1991

On 30th October the enemies of the Palestinian people, large and small, will be gathered in Madrid in hopes of burying the cause of Palestine once and for all. But even before the conference has been convened, the Palestinian people have responded by a new wave of struggle against the Zionist occupiers and capitulation and surrender.

The conference is orchestrated by the U.S. whose main preparation for the conference has been the massacre and starvation of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi people in the vicious Gulf War. The Soviet Union has been given a supporting role in this deadly spectacle. Arab lackey regimes have been ordered to attend. A gloating Shamir will be present to rub salt in the wounds. A handful of Palestinian capitulators have been hired to bow and scrape at the imperialist table, while Yassir Arafat applauds this ultimate humiliation.

The U.S. imperialists have made the starting point for the talks acceptance of the legitimacy of Zionist Israel, which means accepting as legitimate the whole history of crimes and conspiracies against the Palestinian people including the bloody uprooting of the Palestinian people, the forceful deprivation of their right of statehood, the creation of a vicious prison-state known as Israel, and a series of wars and aggressions carried out by this Zionist-imperialist fortress against the neighbouring Arab states. The only role for the Palestinian "leaders" in this process is to accept their subjugation to the U.S. imperialists and their watchdog Israeli state, and to serve as policemen over the Palestinian masses who are sure to reject this capitulation.

The capitulation of Arafat to the Madrid Conspiracy is a logical continuation, under today's international conditions, of a long-standing line upheld by the principal components of the PLO. For years the Palestinian people have been told that "realism" dictated that their liberation could only come about by relying on imperialist regimes (and especially the Soviet social-imperialists), reactionary Arab states (not only the likes of Iraq, Syria or Libya but also Saudi Arabia or the Emir of Kuwait) and "world public opinion", by which they meant the opinions of the reactionary ruling classes. Long ago, the principle of an imperialist-sponsored "settlement" of the Palestinian question, which would leave Israel intact (the so-called mini-state



*Madrid, Spain,
31 October 1991.
RIM supporters
expose Middle
East Peace con-
ference. Here the
Israeli flag as well
as the US flag
burn well.*

solution), was accepted by the PLO. But each compromise, each retreat, only whetted the appetites of the imperialists for even greater disgraces. What was sold to the people as the “first step” in the complete liberation of Palestine is now revealed as the first step on the road to Madrid.

In the past, the Soviet Union pursued its imperialist interests by masquerading as supporters of the Palestinian people. They sought to use the struggle of the Arab masses as a weapon in their contention with the U.S. imperialists. But the Soviet social-imperialists always supported Israel’s so-called right to exist and always opposed unleashing the masses in Palestine and the Arab world in real revolutionary struggle against Zionism and imperialism.

Today the USSR is pursuing its imperialist interests not mainly through open conflict with the U.S., but through collaboration with them. After all, the whole idea of an International Conference on the Middle East has always been a Soviet proposal, only now they are forced to accept a secondary role.

The Soviet Union’s new posture also has meant that some of the reactionary Arab regimes previously tied to it, and in the first place the Assad regime in Syria, must now dance to the music of Baker and Shamir. Those who have preached reliance on the Soviet Union and its clients also share responsibility for the Madrid Conspiracy.

New World Order

The Palestinian people are being told to put aside their “dreams” of the reconquest of their homeland. The U.S. has declared its intention to create a “New World Order” which will last one hundred years. The capitulators claim there is

no realistic alternative other than begging for a job as gendarme in this reactionary set-up.

But what is most "unrealistic" is to assume that the masses of the Palestinian people will remain silent as the Madrid conspirators tighten the screws of oppression and exploitation. Already rebellions have broken out. And just as all previous efforts to sell out the national rights of the Palestinian people have been rebuffed by the people, so too will the Madrid conspirators find themselves isolated and under attack from the masses.

It is true that extremely powerful reactionary forces are united against the Palestinian people. But history has shown again and again that as the Palestinian masses have struggled against their enemies they have found a reservoir of strength and support — not from the imperialists, emirs, generals or so-called left-wing Zionists, but from their true allies — the proletariat and the masses of oppressed peoples worldwide. The struggle against the Madrid Conspiracy can transform Palestine from a victim of the "New World Order" into a vital spearhead of armed struggle against this reactionary order and a clarion call to the workers and peasants and revolutionary intellectuals the world over. The struggle to liberate all of Palestine cannot help but be bitter, protracted and full of sacrifice. But there is no alternative. Hoping that the imperialists, Zionists and reactionaries will ever consent to any genuine liberation is worse than an unrealistic dream, it is pure deception aimed at fooling people into abandoning their struggle.

Protracted People's War is the only real method of liberating Palestine. This is the path that is being victoriously followed today by the Communist Party of Peru which has waged ten years of revolutionary warfare against the U.S.-backed Peruvian state, and has done so by relying on its own efforts without a drop of aid from the enemies of the revolution.

The heroic Palestinian people have shown time and again that they yearn to wage this kind of warfare. But history has shown that for such a war to be successfully waged the proletariat must lead it through its genuine Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party. The lack of such a party in Palestine is sorely felt.

The Revolutionary Internationalist Movement links together the genuine Maoist parties and organisations the world over. It stands for resolute and uncompromising struggle against imperialism and reaction, for carrying the struggle all the way forward to build a communist world without class distinctions, and for proletarian internationalism which links the struggles of the workers and oppressed all over the world.

The time is long overdue for Palestinian revolutionaries to cast aside the illusions and the false paths that have led to Madrid. The long and glorious tradition of struggle of the Palestinian people, right down to today's struggle against the Madrid Conspiracy, create excellent conditions for the emergence of genuine revolutionary leadership based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought.

For the Complete Liberation of Palestine!

People's War Will Defeat the Madrid Conspiracy!

On the Coup and the Counter-coups in the USSR

— Statement by the Committee of the
Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

29th August 1991

The events in late August in the USSR are a dramatic turning point in the crisis gripping the USSR for the last few years. As Mao Tsetung pointed out, in the 1950s Khrushchev led the Soviet rulers to betray the proletariat and restore capitalism. The New Tsars, as Mao called them, turned the world's first socialist state into a bulwark of reaction, rigged up an empire and set out to challenge the U.S. imperialists for world domination, all under the banner of socialism. Now these New Tsars are reaping what they have sown; the workings of their state capitalist system have plunged the USSR into unprecedented crisis, interpenetrating with the crisis of the whole world imperialist system. The Soviet imperialist rulers are being battered from all sides, and in their desperation to resolve the crisis they are cutting each other's, and their own, throats. Their empire is disintegrating and they have even been forced to abandon their last tattered pretences to be communists.

Western spokesmen describe all this as the "collapse of communism" — but genuine communists, the revolutionary Maoists united in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM), rejoice at the growing disintegration of one of the two strongest pillars of world reaction, which certainly is weakening the ability of world imperialism to enforce its rule around the world.

The Western rulers hailed the victory of the "reformists" while decrying the coup plotters. Yazov, Kryuchkov & Co. are certainly criminals. Yet every one of the reformers — Yeltsin, Gorbachev, Shevardnadze and the rest — clawed their way to the top of the ruling reactionary CPSU and *for decades* have been top managers of the criminal Soviet state capitalist system. All these coups and counter-coups are in-fighting *within* a Soviet ruling class desperate and divided by the deepening crisis in the USSR.

What will the reformers' programme of Western-style democracy and economic reform and cooperation with the West bring? Already the U.S. and Soviet rulers have shown the world the fruit of their first "joint venture": the corpses of 100-200,000 Iraqis in the U.S.-led colonial Gulf war. As for people in the USSR, the future for many is already visible in the unemployment lines in Poland and the

homeless shelters in Budapest, where the "miracle" of "free market reform" enables a handful to drive Mercedes while ever broader numbers are driven to live in the streets.

The reactionary poisons which have dominated life in the USSR since the restoration of capitalism there were given socialist labels, and Marxism-Leninism itself was turned into a state religion, with the CPSU boss its Pope. Now the socialist mask has been dropped. Gone is the flowery fraudulent talk of, for example, "socialist equality between nations": long-standing Russian domination is now displayed in all its ugliness. Yeltsin supporters hurrah "Russia" — the battlecry of the Tsarist troops who carved the Russian empire out of the steppes, wading through rivers of the blood of the so-called savage Eastern peoples. Lenin long struggled against the drive for a "Great Russia". Genuine revolutionaries are happy that the new rulers have had to drop their pretence to uphold the red flag of communism and have reverted to their traditional reactionary flags to stand for their reactionary policies.

In smaller nations demagogues like Lithuanian President Lansbergis exploit the nationalist resentment against this Russian chauvinism. Their "every-nation-for-itself" mentality has led to the disgusting spectacle of small nations trampling on even smaller ones — while the Soviet rulers manoeuvre behind the scenes.

The unravelling of the Soviet state has renewed the reactionaries' cry that "communism is dead". False communism, that hollow shell held up by the likes of Brezhnev and Deng Xiaoping to cover their crimes, is indeed collapsing with inner rot. But the reactionaries' attempt to bury communism intends to smother any hope of the oppressed that there is an alternative to this world of capitalism with all its horrors, and thus to stifle all resistance to their rule. They will never succeed. As Mao Tsetung analyzed, wherever there is oppression there is resistance. And wherever there are exploited and oppressed on this earth, then the vision of ending all oppression and exploitation, of classless society, communism, will burst forth again and again until the flames of revolution obliterate the old world and forge a new one. RIM calls on the rebellious masses of the far-flung Soviet empire to, as was said in the RIM's Call to the Peoples of Eastern Europe, which was translated and distributed widely in many of those countries: "attack the old order more thoroughly, more radically and with more determination, to take up the revolutionary weapon of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought which your rulers have hidden from you, and to establish contact with the RIM so as to strengthen the ties of those from all parts of the world who are resolved to struggle until all oppression and exploitation under any name are done away with forever".

With the fall of the Berlin wall, the imperialists promised an end to great power rivalry and an era of peace and democracy. Instead, war has burst out in the Gulf, Ethiopia and Yugoslavia, and now fratricidal strife stalks the USSR itself. So long as the world is divided into exploiters and exploited and some nations dominate others, so long as this rapacious social order is held together by violence, there will be no peace, and democracy will only be a disguise to cover the rule of the exploiters. In fact, the disorder sweeping the USSR heralds an unparalleled epoch of upheaval in the world: RIM believe now is the time to march forward boldly and fearlessly amidst the turmoil and struggle, to seize on the weakening of the imperialists in order to prepare and launch revolutionary wars of liberation.

To the People of Bangladesh

— Statement by the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

13th May 1991

On behalf of the entire Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, we send our heart-felt sympathy to the masses of people in Bangladesh in this hour of untold human suffering.

Cyclones are a massive natural force which mankind has not yet been able to harness. But the massive death toll and destruction from this cyclone is not mainly a result of the natural forces but from the fact that a reactionary social system is in place in Bangladesh and that the world is dominated by the ruling classes of a handful of imperialist states.

In the imperialist countries, also, natural disasters strike. But these countries have grown wealthy, largely through squeezing the life out of the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and the casualties in such disasters are usually low.

First these imperialist powers who were so quick to dispatch hundreds of thousands of soldiers, thousands of airplanes and helicopters and billions of dollars of weaponry to massacre the Iraqi people found their pockets empty in the face of the Bangladeshi disaster. Then the U.S. imperialists decided to divert thousands of troops from the Gulf, blood still dripping from their hands, to Bangladesh. This was done to reinforce their self-proclaimed "right" to intervene anywhere at will and to give a "human face" to their man-eating "new world order". This shows once again that imperialist "aid" is just one more weapon they use against the oppressed peoples, to turn on or off according to cold-blooded imperialist self-interest.

In order for the people to use their collective energy, wisdom and heroism to conquer the power of cyclones and floods, it is first necessary for the people to conquer political power. This was proven in practice when the workers and peasants held power in revolutionary China and, under the leadership of Mao Tsetung and relying on their own efforts, were able to combat natural disasters and tame rivers which earlier had periodically wreaked havoc on the country. The hundred million people of Bangladesh are its greatest treasure, an inexhaustible source of strength that, once unleashed, will vanquish the armies of reactionaries and the imperialists and even the terrible force of cyclones. The Revolutionary Internationalist Movement stands with you, not only in the painful days of today, but in the revolutionary struggle that will surely pave the way for the bright red Bangladesh of tomorrow.

Down with the Imperialist World Order, Old and "New"!

Fight for the Communist Future!

— Statement by the Committee of the
Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

1st May 1991

In the six week rape of Iraq, the system which rules the world has again revealed its dreadful nature. All the rulers' talk of international law and democracy shows itself to be but the make-up behind which are found the most hideous features. Their civilisation is founded on the robbery of the many by the few and it is enforced through violence. Their professed concern for "peace" is seen to be nothing but a selfish desire to suffer no consequences while raining terror and devastation down upon others.

The rulers of the world, the imperialist ruling classes of a handful of advanced capitalist states, believe that they can impose their will anywhere on the earth — by their economic mastery of the world's wealth or, when necessary, by their massive machinery of death and destruction. The rulers of the U.S. believe that they can sit on top of this pyramid of oppression and exploitation for "one hundred years". But this assumes that the people will cower before their might, that the slaves of this earth will give up their struggle against the conditions of slavery. Furthermore, the enemy hopes that the masses will forget that the imperialists *have* been defeated in the past and that the proletariat has shown that it can lead the people in constructing a wholly different society. The imperialists of the West are seizing upon the collapse of the phoney-socialist but real-capitalist East bloc as "proof" of the impossibility of communism. However, it is the communist future of a world no longer divided into classes and in which some nations no longer feed on others which will prevail over the imperialist dream of "a new world order".

By sucking the blood of the labouring people the world over and by enforcing this set-up with the sword, the imperialists compel the people to resist. And

In the past several years, and with a crescendo, the imperialists, reactionaries and their apologists the world over have been engaging in an orgy of self-congratulation over the so-called death of communism. Not only have they boasted of the defeat of their Cold War rivals of the USSR and East Europe (falsely portrayed as communists), they have even raised the claim that the *ideology* of communism (Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought) has been "defeated" by the ideology of liberalism and (bourgeois) democracy as it has emerged in the West, along with the development and growth of capitalism.

This preposterous claim has been lent great credence by the fact that the former revisionist chieftains of the East Bloc (Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and others) have joined the yelping dogs of the West in denouncing the "entire experience" of the proletarian revolution in the former socialist world. The focus of the bourgeois ideological offensive has been on the very idea of the proletarian revolution, the idea that the working class must violently overthrow the existing state power and establish its own rule, its *dictatorship of the proletariat*, and wield this weapon of state power to bring into being a whole new type of society, socialist society, which is itself a transition to the final abolition of classes altogether, communism.

This question of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" lies at the very heart of the teachings of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. And the most important ideological struggles through which this revolutionary science has developed have been focused *precisely* on this question of the proletarian dictatorship. Marx first put forward the slogan of "dictatorship of the proletariat" on the basis of summing up the experience of the short-lived Paris Commune of 1871, the first revolution in history led by the working class. He did so in sharp opposition to different types of false socialists, anarchists and reformers of his day who could not see, or who opposed, the necessity of the working class to impose its own rule through force.

Of Lenin's many great contributions in his development of Marxism, the central one was his defence and theoretical advance of the Marxist understanding of the

"The development of the proletariat proceeds everywhere amidst internal struggles. And when, like Marx and myself, one has fought harder all one's life against the alleged socialists than against anyone else (for we only regarded the bourgeoisie as a class and hardly ever involved ourselves in conflicts with individual bourgeois), one cannot greatly grieve that the inevitable struggle has broken out."

Frederick Engels, "Letter to August Bebel",

28 October 1882

dictatorship of the proletariat and the translation of this understanding into practice through his leadership of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. He had to fight tooth and nail against those who argued that the proletariat of Russia had no "right" to make revolution. It should be remembered that at the time of the Russian Revolution Lenin was in a small minority in the international socialist movement, and he was opposed by the most "learned Marxists" of his day (the German Karl Kautsky, most notably) who attacked his thesis on the dictatorship of the proletariat and accused him of deviating from Marx's actual teachings on the subject.

This great struggle of Lenin was no mere scholastic quarrel. It was the reflection in the battle of ideas (or theory) of the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie that was taking place on the streets of St. Petersburg and Moscow, on the battlefield of the Civil War in

Russia and then in the fight to transform society. It was largely through this struggle that Leninism developed as the new stage of Marxism.

The essential kernel of Mao Tsetung's development of Marxism-Leninism also concerned the proletarian dictatorship. He led the revolutionaries in the international communist movement in defeating the theses of Khrushchev who had attacked the dictatorship of the proletariat and declared it outmoded. Mao also summed up the many decades of experience of proletarian dictatorship, positive and negative, in the USSR under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin, as well as the experience of socialist revolution in China itself, and developed the theory of "continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat".

Mao's defence and development of the communist understanding of the dictatorship of the proletariat was thoroughly connected with his ability to carry the revolution in

Let the Inevitable Struggle Begin!

China to new heights. It provided the theoretical underpinning of the historic Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in which he led millions in overthrowing those portions of the state power which had fallen into the hands of the capitalist roaders. The Cultural Revolution reached a whole new peak in the struggle of the revolutionary masses in their hundreds of millions, led by the proletariat and its communist vanguard, to exercise political power (their dictatorship) and use this power to carry forward breathtaking transformations of society.

It is not surprising that today, given the great changes taking place in world politics and with the strong anti-communist wind blowing, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is once again a subject of fierce debate in the ranks of revolutionaries. The Revolutionary Internationalist Movement has a clear and firm position upholding the need for such a proletarian dic-

tatorship, as expressed in the *Declaration of the RIM*, and this understanding is a basic cornerstone of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. Nevertheless, in the ranks of RIM itself an important struggle has developed around the fundamental question of the proletarian dictatorship.

Specifically, a participating party of RIM, the Central Reorganising Committee, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), referred to hereafter as CRC, issued a draft document prepared under the leadership of its Secretary K. Venu entitled "On Proletarian Democracy" which represents a serious attack on the basic teachings of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought on the dictatorship of the proletariat. While the document claims to uphold Marx's teachings of the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat, it goes on to claim that the entire experience of the international communist movement from Lenin

onwards has been one in which the "dictatorship of the party" has been established over the masses.

This charge of "dictatorship of the party" becomes a battle cry to attack the "entire experience" of hundreds of millions of workers and peasants in building a socialist society and carrying forward socialist revolution first in the Soviet Union and then in China. In place of the Marxist understanding of the class nature of every state as a dictatorship of one class over another, K. Venu develops a thesis of the "non-class aspect" of bourgeois democracy which allegedly addresses in a positive way "the contradiction between the individual [regardless of his or her class position] and society".

Of course, readers familiar with the diatribes of the imperialists, Trotskyites, social democrats and so forth will recognize that this "new thinking" on the part of K. Venu is not original in the least. Still, these very old and threadbare ideas have gotten a new lease on life recently as a result of the anti-communist storm and, furthermore, such ideas also have material roots in bourgeois society. For these reasons, the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement had announced its decision to unfold a sharp struggle against the line expressed in "On Proletarian Democracy".

As an initial step, a response to the CRC was solicited from Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA. The response was written as part of a book *Phony Communism is Dead, Long Live Real Communism!* After consultation between the RIM Committee and the RCP, USA, this article, entitled "Democracy: More Than Ever We Can and Must Do Better Than That", was submitted to AWTW for publication (page 32).

AWTW has also published the K. Venu document, "On Proletarian Democracy", in order to assist the reader in understanding the debate, and in keeping with the long-standing tradition within the international communist movement of publishing the polemics of one's opponents - a policy, we should point out, rarely followed by the advocates of (bourgeois) "democracy".

As we were preparing this issue, we received notification that the All-India Leading Committee of the

CRC had taken a decision to dissolve the CRC at the all-India level (see p. 75). This decision took place without any prior discussion in the ranks of the CRC.

This organisational liquidationism is, unfortunately, the logical outcome of the political and ideological liquidationism expressed in "On Proletarian Democracy". It underscores the life-and-death nature of the questions under discussion and the urgent necessity of thoroughly and deeply criticising and repudiating the line of K. Venu. We are happy to note that this liquidationism has met opposition on the part of comrades within the CRC (see p. 72).

The struggle against K. Venu's liquidationism is part of the worldwide struggle which must go on to defend and carry forward the ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. This struggle, like other great battles on the ideological and theoretical front, grows out of and, in turn, reflects back on the class struggle on other fronts as well. It is nothing less than the

struggle to establish in theory what the proletariat must accomplish in practice – its "right" to violently overthrow the existing social conditions, establish its own rule, and proceed to revolutionize the world until the future communist society is eventually achieved. This ideological struggle of today is the precursor of great battles of tomorrow.

The questions involved in the debate are at once both simple and complex. "Simple" in the sense that they are focused on basic, long-established principles of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, but complex in that these questions are integrally connected with summing up the rich and varied experience of the proletarian revolution in the Soviet Union and in China, the tremendous achievements but also the difficulties, weaknesses and, in the case of the Soviet Union under the leadership of Joseph Stalin, even serious errors, in carrying out this revolution.

We are sure that the publication of Bob Avakian's article will, in addition to furthering the struggle

against K. Venu's liquidationism, help enrich the ongoing discussion in the international movement on these vital questions, and we hope to publish other contributions on these subjects in coming issues of our journal. This process will illustrate once again that Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought is a living and vibrant science, which welcomes every opportunity to defend its basic principles and which constantly responds to new questions posed by the development of the class struggle in every arena.

In this way, as Mao Tsetung pointed out, "a bad thing can be turned into a good thing". The "bad thing" – the liquidationism of the leadership of the CRC, and more generally the multi-directional attack on revolutionary communism—can be transformed into a great school of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. So we say with enthusiasm, let the inevitable struggle begin!

Editorial Board, AWTW

একনায়কত্ব এবং গণতন্ত্র

Dictatorship and Democracy?

IN PREPARATION

Bengali, Hindi, Malayalam and Nepali

ARTICLES FROM *A WORLD TO WIN* NO. 17:

- **Let the Inevitable Struggle Begin!**
- **Democracy: More Than Ever We Can and Must Do Better Than That**
- **On Proletarian Democracy**

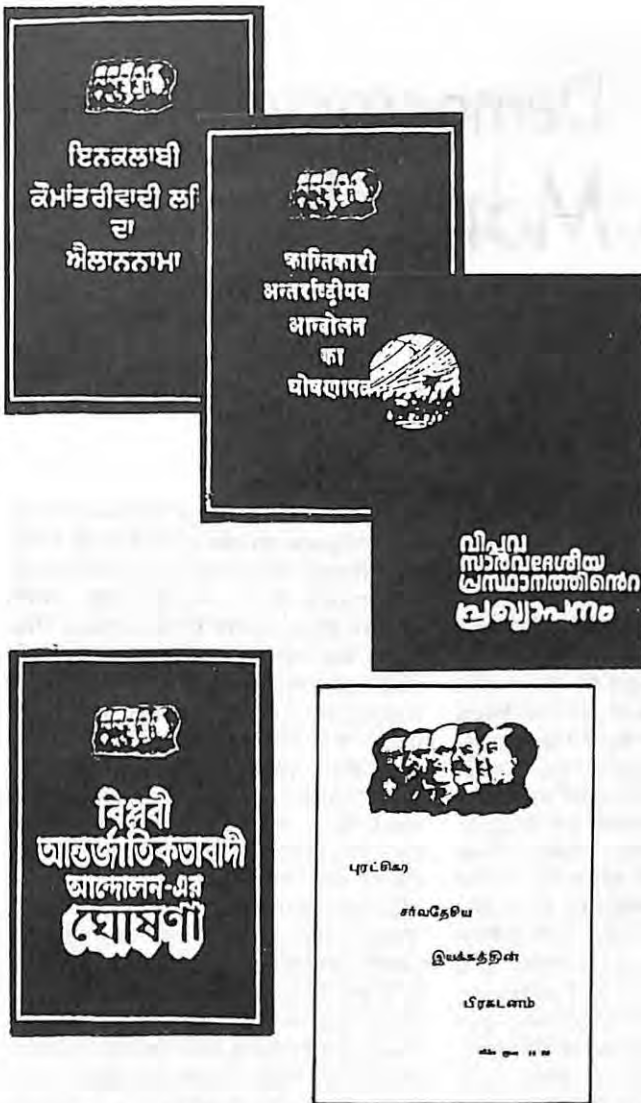
SIGNATORIES OF THE DECLARATION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY INTERNATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS IN RIM

Central Reorganisation Committee,
Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)
Ceylon Communist Party (Maoist)*
Communist Party of Afghanistan**
Communist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist-Leninist) [BSD(ML)]
Communist Party of Peru
Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist [TKP/ML]
Haitian Revolutionary Internationalist Group
Marxist-Leninist Communist Organisation of Tunisia
Nepal Communist Party (Mashal)
New Zealand Red Flag Group
Proletarian Party of Purba Bangla (PBSP) [Bangladesh]
Red Worker Communist Organisation [Italy]
Revolutionary Communist Group of Colombia
Revolutionary Communist Party, USA
Revolutionary Communist Union [Dominican Republic]
Union of Iran Communists (Sarbedaran)

* At the 1991 Congress, the Ceylon Communist Party decided to add (Maoist) to its name.

** With the formation of the Communist Party of Afghanistan in May 1991, the Organization of Revolutionary Communists of Afghanistan went out of existence.

In addition to the above list of those whose participation in the Movement has been publicly announced by the Committee, a number of other organisations work closely with the Movement to advance its cause and build and strengthen vanguard communist organisation.



In Punjabi, Hindi, Malayalam, Bengali, Tamil

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Author's Note

This critique of the document "On Proletarian Democracy" was written in the fall of 1991, as part of a book, *Phony Communism Is Dead...Long Live Real Communism!* As final preparations were being made for the publication of this book, the news was received that, according to a statement by the Central Reorganisation Committee, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), the decision had been made to "dissolve the all-India structure" of the CRC. As is also clear from this statement, this decision was taken on the initiative of K. Venu, the (former) Secretary of the CRC, who was also the principal author of "On Proletarian Democracy".

This move to liquidate the CRC organizationally is clearly a further leap, backwards, and also is an extension of the political and ideological line that runs through "On Proletarian Democracy". The attempt at liquidation of the CRC as an all-India organization and the rationalization given for this underline the importance of deepening the all-around criticism of the opportunist line and outlook that has increasingly characterized the leadership of the CRC, with K. Venu at the head.

In light of all this, it was decided, in consultation with the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, in which the CRC has been a participating party, to submit this article to *A World To Win*, to be published there along with the CRC document, "On Proletarian Democracy". As stated in this critique, it was the hope in writing it that it would make a contribution to a struggle, on the part of comrades inside and outside the CRC, through which the CRC would reverse its course, repudiate "On Proletarian Democracy", reclaim the great revolutionary heritage of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist movement in India, and both reaffirm and contribute to further developing the revolutionary principles on which the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) was founded. Although the CRC leadership has, unfortunately, taken

Quotations from the CRC document are referenced according to the paragraph number of the document, which is reprinted beginning on page 74. — AWTW

Democracy: More Than Ever Do Better

By Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Central Committee
of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

the opposite course and taken an even further leap into opportunism, this has brought forth open struggle from within the ranks of the CRC.

For many reasons, not the least of which is the immense importance of the revolution in India to the world proletarian revolution, it has been very encouraging to hear that struggle has broken out against the opportunist line that had brought the CRC to such a crisis. No doubt the struggle will be complex. This makes even clearer the decisive importance of carrying out deep-going and all-around criticism of the revisionist political line that is expressed in a concentrated way in "On Proletarian Democracy" and of searching out more fully the links between this line, with its underlying outlook and methodology, and the other lines put forward by its authors.

Once again, it is the hope that this critique of "On Proletarian Democracy" can make a contribution to that process. And, at the same time, as also stated at the beginning of this critique, it is aimed as well at contributing to the process whereby "the RIM overall will be further strengthened in its resolve to unite on the basis of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and to firmly uphold the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat while summing up deeply the errors of the international communist movement, as well as its great achievements, and advancing on that basis".

— Bob Avakian
December 1991

Introduction

This heading deliberately recalls the title of the book I wrote on the question of democracy — its social

and class content, its historical role and relation to the proletarian revolution and the goal of communism. The momentous events in the world in the few short years since that book was written — in particular the radical changes in the nature of bourgeois rule in the Soviet Union and what has been its bloc, along with the events focused in Tiananmen Square in China — have indeed made what was said in that book, on the possibility and necessity of doing much better than that, more relevant and important than ever. They have underscored the significance of the conclusion that, "Where it is possible to speak of democracy, of whatever kind, that is a sign that class distinctions and, in one form or another, social antagonisms — and with them dictatorship — are still to be found, indeed still characterize society. And when this is no longer the case, it will no longer be possible, or necessary, to speak of democracy." (Bob Avakian, *Democracy: Can't We Do Better Than That?*, Chicago: Banner Press, 1986, p. 261)

As we know, these earth-shaking events in countries commonly conceived of as "communist" have had major repercussions not only among the masses of people broadly but also among the conscious revolutionary forces, including within the ranks of those who have considered themselves revolutionary communists and have based themselves on the revolutionary line of Mao Tsetung and the whole history of the international communist movement identified with Marx, Lenin, and Mao. One of the sharpest examples of this is a document recently published by the Central Reorganisation Committee, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (hereafter

We Can and Must Than That

referred to as CRC), an organization that has been affiliated with the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM). This CRC document, "On Proletarian Democracy", represents a fundamental repudiation not only of the *Declaration* of the RIM itself but of the fundamental principles on which that document is founded and even more a repudiation of the entire experience of the international proletariat and the international communist movement in exercising the dictatorship of the proletariat and carrying out the socialist transformation of society.¹

To be more precise, this document upholds only the Paris Commune of 1871 as a legitimate exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat: it sets the very brief and limited experience of the Commune against the entire historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat in socialist society beginning with the October 1917 Soviet Revolution.²

The following is the basic argument of this CRC document: Although before the October Revolution Lenin upheld the Paris Commune as the model for the dictator-

ship of the proletariat (as can be seen in *The State and Revolution*, written by Lenin only a few months before the October Revolution), nevertheless, soon after the Bolshevik revolution seized power, Lenin put into practice a line of imposing a dictatorship of the communist party in place of the exercise of political power by the masses of working people themselves. And, as the saying goes, the rest is history. Stalin carried out and carried to further extreme this dictatorship of the party and even Mao and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution did not break with this political system of party dictatorship. Thus, this whole historical experience, with its "monopoly of political power" by the party, must be repudiated and future socialist revolutions must revert back to a strict application of the Paris Commune model.

It is not hard to recognize that the line of this CRC document shares much in common with long-standing attacks on Leninism and with present-day assaults on communism in general.

For these reasons it is necessary to

reply, publicly and in clear and forceful terms, to this document. There is no way to avoid it – this document constitutes a complete degeneration into rather classical social-democratic opposition to communism and the proletarian revolution. That may sound extreme, but it is no more extreme than the open assertion in this document that the entire experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat, beginning with the Soviet Union, and the basic orientation guiding this experience – not only in the Soviet Union under the leadership of Lenin as well as Stalin but also of China under the leadership of Mao Tsetung – that all this is fundamentally flawed and must be rejected and utilized as teaching material by *negative* example.

It is especially painful to see such a development because the CRC had set itself the task of defending and further developing a very positive and important revolutionary history – identified with the most advanced revolutionary experience and leadership within the international communist movement (from Marx, through Lenin, to Mao) and also with the whole experience of the armed struggle of peasant masses led by communist revolutionaries in the late 1960s-early 1970s in India (this was marked by the outbreak of this struggle in the village of Naxalbari in India's state of West Bengal in the spring of 1967, which has been known as the "spring thunder"). This "spring thunder" and the revolutionary road associated with it was hailed at the time as a major development by the revolutionary leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, and it remains true that, whatever mistakes and shortcomings may have been involved, this was a

1. This CRC document was actually published in December 1990, before the coup/countercoup events in the Soviet Union in the summer of 1991, which gave rise to the even further abandonment of any pretence of "communism" by those in power there as well as instances of mass demonstrations of an openly anti-communist character. Since,

as we shall see, this document itself abandons the whole legacy of the proletarian revolution and the building of socialism, from the 1917 October Soviet Revolution up through the Chinese Revolution and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution; and since it is clear that the events of the past few years in the Soviet Union and China, even

before this coup/countercoup episode and its aftermath, were the immediate prod that provoked this radical retreat on the part of those responsible for this CRC document; it is, unfortunately, reasonable to assume that these most recent events will serve to further rationalize this retreat in the minds of those who continue to accept its assumptions.

2. Throughout this critique of the CRC document, where I speak of how it repudiates "the entire historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat", I am referring specifically to the experience beginning with the October 1917 Soviet Revolution. While the CRC document claims to

recognize certain achievements of this historical experience, it is clear in examining this document that – even on its own terms and without considering the logical implications of its position – it regards this entire experience as fundamentally flawed and insists that a whole different orientation should be adopted. And it should also be said that, in pitting the limited experience of the Paris Commune against the experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat since then, rather than recognizing and emphasizing the essential unity between them, this CRC document in reality rejects the fundamental spirit and lessons of the Paris Commune itself.

tremendously powerful and significant revolutionary development not only in that part of the world but for the world as a whole.

For these reasons the approach that must be taken in answering this document is what Mao described as "cure the sickness to save the patient". But, as part of this, Mao insisted that sometimes it is necessary to administer a shock to someone in order to make them realize the seriousness of the "sickness" and to help them seek a cure. The CRC document is labeled a "draft": hopefully, as a result of sharp struggle, on the part of comrades inside and outside the CRC, against the line contained in this draft, it will be thoroughly repudiated and the comrades of the CRC will once again retake the revolutionary road, and the RIM overall will be further strengthened in its resolve to unite on the basis of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and to firmly uphold the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat while summing up deeply the errors of the international communist movement, as well as its great achievements, and advancing on that basis. It is in that spirit, and with that goal in mind, that this critique of the CRC document is made.

To begin, and to give an overview, the following are some general conclusions that must be drawn from a critical reading of this document:

1. There is a stunning lack of materialism in this document. There is an absence of understanding of the fundamental contradictions, particularly in the economic base but also between the economic base and the superstructure, that mark socialist society as a transition. These are questions that Mao and his revolutionary headquarters identified as decisive for the struggle to not only uphold the dictatorship of the proletariat but to carry forward the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and combat revisionism and the rise to power of the bourgeoisie. But, in this CRC document, all this is rejected as off the mark, or not dealing with the essential questions!

More specifically, there is a lack of a sense of the existence of *different classes* (as well as advanced, intermediate, and backward) among the broad category of "the people" in socialist society. Or, more accurately, there is a refusal to recognize the crucial role of Marxist class analysis –

such analysis is rejected in the name of opposing "class reductionism"!

Along with this, there is no serious attention paid – and apparently no real importance attached – to the very difficult problems that have confronted the socialist states as a consequence of their being in a position of being "encircled" by imperialism – existing in a world still dominated overall by imperialism. To attempt to discuss the questions of democracy and dictatorship apart from a serious examination of this problem betrays a lack of seriousness – and more specifically it betrays the classical bias and "blind-spot" of social-democratic types who, with a typical bourgeois idealist outlook, purport to treat the question of democracy in some "pure" and "classless" way, in abstraction from its actual content and from the actual historical and social context.

2. The arguments made in this CRC document on the role of the party – or, as they would have it, the lack of an institutionalized vanguard role for the party in socialist society – lead toward a line of "peaceful transition". The very logic of these arguments leads toward the conclusion that violent overthrow is itself "coercive" and "elitist" toward the masses (or at least toward sections of them who do not take part in this armed struggle) and is therefore fundamentally wrong.

This document does not draw this conclusion – in fact it says that the violent overthrow of bourgeois rule is necessary – but that is only because this document does not pursue its own logic to its "logical conclusion". In this sense, this document lags behind those social-democrats, anarchist-pacifists, et al., who have historically made such arguments in insisting that waging war, even a revolutionary war, itself fosters elitism and concentrates power in the hands of an apparatus – the party, at the core of the revolutionary armed force – that leads the revolutionary war and already, in so doing, forms the core of the new regime of power. Quite often this is linked by such people with a condemnation of Lenin's basic orientation – particularly as concentrated in *What Is To Be Done?* – concerning the role of vanguard leadership in relation to the masses. It is here, such people often claim, that the origins of the "dictatorship of the party" lie. The CRC docu-

ment picks up this "dictatorship of the party" distortion, but it does not include the "discovery" of its "origins" in *What Is To Be Done?* (here, again, this document is "lagging").

This cry of "the dictatorship of the party" is inescapably linked with "they should not have taken to arms" – the refrain raised by counterrevolutionaries in condemnation of the Paris Commune as well as the Russian Revolution, as Lenin pointed out, and the common refrain of such people in opposition to all genuine revolutions, especially proletarian revolutions. Here it is important to recognize that all revolutionary armed struggles that have led to the seizure of power by the proletariat have so far started – and in the future are likely to start as well – with a *minority*. This is true whether these armed struggles have been protracted people's war in a Third World country or urban insurrection in an imperialist country. Such armed struggles are begun before the majority of the people (even in the immediate areas where the armed struggle is started) have been won to support for them. And such armed struggles, however much they may fundamentally rely on the masses, do after all exert an element of coercion, not only against the enemy but also, in a qualitatively different but real way, even on the masses affected by them – in a real sense they force the masses, in particular those not already involved, to take a stand in relation to them.

This was certainly the case with the Bolshevik-led October Revolution in 1917. It is quite probably a fact that not even a majority of the workers in the Soviets, considering the country as whole, were yet won to the idea of launching the armed insurrection at that time. Certainly this was true of the peasants throughout the countryside. And even in the main cities where the armed insurrections were first carried out (in particular Petrograd and Moscow), the majority of the non-industrial workers among the people were certainly not consciously supporting the Bolshevik banner when the Bolsheviks launched these armed insurrections, yet these non-industrial workers must be considered among the broad category of "the people". So, according to the logic of this CRC document, there is nothing left to conclude but "they

should not have taken to arms". You cannot "logically" argue that the vanguard must not impose its will on the people when it is in power but it *may* do so in coming to power in the first place. The contradictions involved here can be resolved through the application of materialist dialectics, but this cannot be done by applying the (bourgeois) logic that has been adopted in this CRC document.

Of course, it is true – and a profound truth – that the actions of the Bolsheviks in launching and leading these armed insurrections were in the interests of the majority of the masses – not only in some general and long-term historical sense but in terms of corresponding to the immediately and urgently felt needs of the masses and to their "political will". But that is just the point: criteria like this are precisely what the CRC document is now rejecting and replacing with the logic and demands of formal (bourgeois) democracy, that is, the insistence on the forms of democracy without regard to the social and class content, or the raising of the form above the content.

3. The same logic will also lead to the abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat itself as an "undemocratic" system of government. The dictatorship of the proletariat also involves an element of coercion, by the state, in relation not only to antagonistic classes but also to individuals among the (broad category of) the people. Basic policies – including everything from differential wage scales to such things as the sending of millions of educated youth to the countryside to integrate with the masses of peasants – all such things include an element of coercion.

Of course, coercion cannot be relied on in relation to the masses of people – education and struggle on the basis of a communist ideological and political line must be *relied on* – but this cannot eliminate altogether the element of coercion involved here. This is related to the underlying existence of inequalities left over from the old society – such as the differences between the city and the countryside, between the workers and the peasants, and between mental and manual labour. Lenin spoke of how the state was still necessary in socialist society (and he meant even after ownership of the means of production was completely socialized) because of the existence of

such contradictions. This state is necessary, he said, in order to ensure that such contradictions were handled in a way consistent with the advance to communism, but at the same time the exercise of this state power – the dictatorship of the proletariat – includes the enforcement of "bourgeois right" (the expression in law and policy of relations that contain the elements of inequality left over from the old society). To drive his point home, in a somewhat provocative way, Lenin referred to this state as "the bourgeois state, without the bourgeoisie" (see Lenin, *The State and Revolution, Collected Works [LCW]*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, vol. 25, p. 476).

The logic guiding this CRC document cannot provide an answer to the question posed, according to the *same* (bourgeois) logic: If socialism is really in the interests of the majority of the people, if it relies on the masses of people and corresponds with their interests, while the interests of only a small minority of exploiters lie in opposing socialism and restoring capitalism, then why is it necessary to have a dictatorship at all?

I spoke to this question at great length in *Democracy: Can't We Do Better Than That?* (particularly chapter 7). There I quoted extensively from Lenin's work "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky", which deals with this question in a very trenchant way. Lenin speaks to both the internal basis and the international connections of the bourgeoisie which give it real advantages over the proletariat which is newly risen to power and does not have historical experience of exercising power. He shows why, for all these reasons, the dictatorship of the proletariat will be necessary for a long period of time.

This same question was returned to repeatedly by Lenin during the early years of the Soviet Republic, and his works during that period give a very rich, if still beginning, analysis of why the dictatorship of the proletariat will be necessary for an entire period of transition from capitalism to a higher stage of society. And, as we know, Mao developed this analysis further and systematized it into the basic line that socialism constitutes a long historical period of transition from capitalism to communism, that all through-

out this period there are classes and class struggle, and that it is necessary to combat capitalist restoration and continue the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. But the CRC document has lost sight of all this: with its logic, it cannot give a materialist explanation of why the dictatorship of the proletariat is absolutely necessary throughout the stage of socialism and how this dictatorship is not in conflict with but *consistent with* the fact that socialism and the advance to communism conform to the fundamental interests of the proletariat and broad masses in opposition to a handful of exploiters.

Rather than continue with the discussion of general conclusions drawn from this CRC document, it would be better to turn now to an examination of some of the particular arguments made in this document. This will help to "flesh out" and to extend and deepen these basic conclusions.

On Recent Events in the Former Soviet Bloc and China

From the very start, the way things are formulated in this document reveals a tailing after petit-bourgeois democratic illusions – and a bourgeois-democratic conceptualization in general. In the first sentence, the events of the last few years "in former socialist countries such as China, the Soviet Union, and those in East Europe" are referred to simply as "democratic upsurges". (paragraph 1.1 – see CRC document starting p. 74))

First of all, these events, including the mass upheavals in such countries, have involved many different class forces, mobilized around a number of different programs, but the essential fact is that *bourgeois ideology and politics have been in the lead*. To describe these simply as "democratic upsurges" is to fail to make any serious class analysis – and to present democracy as it is presented by the bourgeoisie: as a "universal", "classless" phenomenon. It is to tail petit-bourgeois spontaneity, and more to promote, indirectly at least, the bourgeois forces, outlooks and programs in the lead of these "democratic upsurges".

And this is true, despite the fact that this document goes on to make general statements about how "M-L forces have cautioned them [the people] that bourgeois democracy or an

unconcealed capitalism is not the solution". (par. 1.2) For, once again, to simply characterize these upsurges as "democratic" is to cover over their *bourgeois*-democratic essence: the essence of a thing, as Mao made clear, is determined by its principal aspect, which in this case is the domination of bourgeois forces and outlooks within these "democratic upsurges".

Further, it is important to take note of what might, at first, seem like a minor matter of formulation. At the beginning of the second paragraph we find the characterization of the regimes in "the former socialist countries" as "social fascist" (par. 1.2, emphasis added). This is a formulation that was used by Mao, and has been used by Maoists following him (including at times our Party, although we have more come to characterize the form of bourgeois rule in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and the like, as "revisionist democracy"). But the important point is that Maoists have always stressed the *class content* – the *bourgeois essence* – of this revisionist rule. Both in spontaneous popular consciousness and in the history of the international communist movement, fascism has tended to be treated as something virtually "above classes", something which is "worse" than "normal" bourgeois dictatorship, something which justifies reducing the terms of struggle to fascism vs. *bourgeois democracy*. This is what is suggested in this CRC document as well: the use of "social fascist" to refer to revisionist regimes is repeated and consistent throughout this document, and when to this is contrasted "democratic upsurges" then there is the clear implication that democracy – what is in essence bourgeois democracy – is preferable to "social fascism" and to open dictatorship in general – including, as we shall see, the dictatorship of the *proletariat*.

But we do not have to rely on drawing inferences from seemingly subtle nuances. Soon enough this document openly repudiates the entire historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat beginning with the Soviet Revolution, and in opposition to this comes out with a call for what is barely disguised bourgeois democracy. When the document says, from the very first paragraph, that in response to the

"repercussions of these developments" ("the recent wave of democratic upsurges in former socialist countries") communists "have to grasp the depth of these problems and find out appropriate answers", it is already becoming evident that this document regards the basic answers that have been given by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to be insufficient or incorrect and that what it intends is a fundamental re-evaluation – and rejection – of what is soon referred to as "the traditional Marxist-Leninist interpretation of capitalist restoration in the former socialist countries". (par. 1.3)

This is made more explicit and further elaborated before long:

"In this situation, it is the duty of the genuine communists to look back and identify the root cause for the problem faced by the communist movement. Without answering the basic issues raised in front of us no communist organisation can advance in its own practice. Such basic questions if left unanswered for long, will demoralize the cadres and weaken the organisation. Therefore, the resolution of these problems, or at least attempts at resolution, must be taken up as an urgent political task. It is in this spirit that we call upon all genuine communists to re-examine the whole history of the communist movement and the basic concepts we had held aloft so far, so as to get a clear picture of the dictatorship of the proletariat as practised until now". (par. 1.9)

So, let's look at this "re-examination".

First let's begin with another quote from this document. Referring to "the traditional Marxist-Leninist interpretation of capitalist restoration", the document says, "This explanation is basically correct in relation to the economic aspect of capitalist restoration. But it is not sufficient to answer the principal political issue raised by the masses in these countries. Their major demand is the dismantling of the existing political system which ensures the monopoly of the communist party." (par. 1.3)

To begin with, this is a metaphysical separation of politics and economics – there cannot be an explanation that is correct in regard to the economic aspect but incorrect, or "insufficient" in fundamental terms, in regard to the political aspect.

Further, referring, as the CRC document does, to "the masses" and "their major demand" obscures the fact that this "dismantling of the existing political system", while it may have considerable mass support and express considerable mass sentiment, is above all the demand of certain *bourgeois* forces, both in the sense that they are the ones who have been the motive force in promoting it and, more fundamentally, in the sense that it corresponds to their particular interests and meets real needs of theirs in the present situation.

Then the document goes on: "But so far as the masses of these countries are concerned, there is no difference between the essential structures of this social fascist political system and those which existed earlier when they were socialist." (par. 1.3) And the document makes clear it agrees with this view: "Even in China, where the Cultural Revolution gave rise to a new political situation, the state structure under Deng is not essentially different from the one which existed previously." (ibid)

What an astounding statement! No difference?! This amounts to tailing after the most backward among the masses and after the bourgeoisie, which has long run this line. This is ridiculous when applied to the Soviet Union – not only in the early years, in the time of Lenin's leadership, but even as an assessment of the decades during which Stalin was the leader of the Soviet Union. Let's look at a few examples: the waging of the war against counterrevolutionary forces and imperialist invaders in the first years of the Soviet Republic; the lively struggles within the party throughout the '20s (notwithstanding the fact that organized factions were outlawed in the party); the mobilization of class-conscious contingents and the mass upheavals that brought into being the collective farms in the early 1930s; the mobilizations of the masses to carry out socialist industrialization, despite certain definite erroneous tendencies involved with this – all this and countless other examples are clear evidence that there was a radical difference between the Soviet Union when it was socialist and then when the revisionists seized power and restored capitalism.

It is true that, especially after major transformations had been carried out in the economy of the

Soviet Union (by the mid-1930s), there was a real tendency for the Soviet Party and Stalin as its leader to rely more on administrative measures, experts, and so on. Criticism of this can and must be made – and has been made by Maoists – and an understanding of the basis for these erroneous tendencies must be deepened. But this can only be done, correctly, on the basis of MLM principles and not those of bourgeois democracy. As a guideline in this, not the howls of Trotskyites, Mensheviks, Kautskyites and bourgeois democrats generally about the horrors of bureaucracy under Stalin (and Lenin) but the following from Mao Tsetung sets the correct orientation: “At that time Stalin had nothing else to rely on except the masses, so he demanded all-out mobilization of the party and the masses [Mao is referring to the period of the late 1920s and early ’30s]. Afterward, when they had realized some gains this way, they became less reliant on the masses.” (Mao Tsetung, *A Critique of Soviet Economics*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977, p. 119) But it must be kept in mind, as Mao consistently did, that there is a world of difference between Marxists who err – even seriously err – in the direction of becoming less reliant on the masses and revisionists whose rule is based on the exploitation and oppression of the masses.

It is sheer idealism and metaphysics to argue that this radical difference was not reflected throughout the institutions of society – in what actually took place there and on what basis – and in the relation of the masses to all this and their attitude toward it.

This argument is shallow formalism. What it amounts to is saying that, because there was the institutionalized role of the communist party as the leader of all facets of political and economic life, therefore it made no essential difference whether this leadership represented the socialist or the capitalist road. And to justify this argument in the name of “classless” masses who see “no difference” between the “essential structures” of socialism and capitalism is, at best, to tail after those strata and ideas among the masses that are most in thrall to the outlook of the bourgeoisie.

And this is all the more patently

ridiculous when applied to China. Have the authors of this CRC document “forgotten” the tremendous transformations that were carried out on all levels of Chinese society, first of all with the nationwide seizure of power and even more so through the Cultural Revolution? Apparently they have “forgotten” how the revisionists, having seized power after Mao’s death in 1976, set about systematically attacking and reversing all this, dismantling these “socialist new things” – things such as the revolutionary committees, from the basic levels on up, which combined the masses and leaders in actual forms of government and administration; the various 3-in-1 combinations, combining the masses, cadres and experts, and so on, on all levels of society; the participation of the workers in management and of managers as well as leading officials in productive labour as an official policy; the May 7 cadre schools where cadres of the party and state went to the countryside and took part in productive labour as well as study and ideological and political struggle; “open-door” education and science, mobilizing and relying on the masses and combining experts with the masses and practical experience with theoretical study; health care oriented toward the masses, and in particular toward the masses in the rural areas, and relying not simply on professional medical personnel but “barefoot doctors” throughout the countryside and so on.

Also, very decisively, the revisionists have made fundamental changes in the People’s Liberation Army, abolishing its character as a revolutionary army that relies on the conscious dynamic role of its soldiers and the support of the broad masses. The revisionists have replaced this with a “professionalized” bourgeois armed force. It is this “new” PLA that carried out the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. Along with this, the revisionists have reversed the earlier efforts, under revolutionary leadership, to build up the militia precisely as an expression of the broad masses themselves in arms, guided by a proletarian line (even while it remained the case that the standing army could not be abolished for some time, for all the reasons that will be discussed here).³

Do the authors of this CRC docu-

ment really expect anyone who is familiar with all this to believe that this constitutes no real difference in the essential structures of society or that the masses – particularly the masses of workers and peasants – are unaware of these differences or consider them insignificant?! When, in accordance with the “essential structures” and the prevailing proletarian ideology in socialist China, the workers on the Shanghai docks raised the slogan “Be masters of the wharves, not slaves to tonnage”; when the workers in an enterprise marched into the management office, demanding of the management personnel, “Where are your hammers” – where is your participation, together with the workers, in productive labour? – was that not a radical difference from the situation in China today, and don’t the masses of workers know the difference? When the people’s communes in the countryside were broken up and rich-peasant farming promoted, while the policy of giving priority to agriculture in the national economy was undermined; when “serve the people” was replaced by “to get rich is glorious” as a guiding principle – did not all this represent a radical reversal which the masses of working people could not help but recognize? Once again, when this CRC document speaks of “the masses”, it apparently has in mind the most backward and above all those among the intellectuals and other privileged strata who are most influenced by “classical” bourgeois-democratic ideas and bourgeois ideology in general.

The Paris Commune in Perspective: The Bolshevik and Chinese Revolutions as its Continuation and Deepening

Next, let’s turn to the review in this CRC document of what Marx summed up from the Paris Commune, in his monumental work *The Civil War in France*, particularly regarding the abolition of the standing army and its replacement by the armed people themselves and the

3. It is not the case that militias have been altogether eliminated under revisionist rule; rather, they too have been transformed into a part of the bourgeois apparatus of repression, an adjunct to the regular, standing army serving the rule of the revisionists over the masses.

fact that all officials in the Commune were elected and could be recalled by the votes of the people, through universal suffrage. These sections of the CRC document also recall how Lenin upheld these essential lessons in *The State and Revolution* (and some other writings in the period just before and for a period after the October Revolution), but then, even under Lenin, the CRC document argues, there began a basic departure from this path (see paragraphs 2.1-6.6).

First, some "historical overview" is required. Here we have to call attention once more to the fact that in the experience of the Soviet Union (and of socialism generally so far), it has not proved possible to fully implement the policies adopted in the Paris Commune – and, to a large degree, in the very beginning of the Soviet Republic – policies to which Marx had attached decisive importance. To focus on a key aspect of this, it has not been possible to *abolish* the standing army as an institution and to *replace it* with the armed masses themselves. This is largely owing to what has been spoken to before: the fact that revolutions leading to socialism have taken place not in industrially developed capitalist countries where the proletariat is the majority of the population (or at least is the largest class), as Marx and Engels had foreseen, but in technologically backward countries with large peasant populations where the proletariat is a small minority; these revolutions have occurred not in a number of countries all at once, but more or less in one country at a time (leaving aside the experience of the Eastern European countries in the aftermath of World War 2, where there was some transformation in aspects of social relations but there was never a real socialist transformation of society); and socialist states have existed in a world still dominated by imperialism.

As for why it has not been possible so far – and is very unlikely to be possible for some time into the future – for socialist countries to abolish the standing army and replace it with the armed masses as a whole, it can be summarized this way: To do this will require an advancement in the transformation of production relations (and social relations generally), as well as in the development of the productive

forces, to the point where the masses as a whole, and not just a small part of them, 'can be organized and trained in military affairs on a level that is really sufficient to deal not only with "domestic" counter-revolutionaries but beyond that the armed forces of the remaining imperialist powers and other reactionary states. When that point is reached, there will in fact no longer be a need for a section of the masses – a special body of armed people – who specialize in and devote their main activity to military affairs: the standing army can then be abolished and replaced with the armed masses. But, again, no socialist state that has so far existed has achieved or even come anywhere near that point.

Marx, in his writings on the Paris Commune (and Lenin when he wrote *The State and Revolution* before the October Revolution), did not have this experience to sum up. To a significant degree, while the fundamental orientation in these works concerning the dictatorship of the proletariat must be upheld, many particular aspects of their analysis reflect an insufficient understanding of the intensity, complexity, and duration of the struggle to carry out the communist transformation of society – and the world – after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established in one or a number of countries. After all, the Paris Commune only lasted two months and only in parts – though very important parts – of France, and not in the country as a whole.

To highlight, in a somewhat provocative way, the historical limitations of the Paris Commune, it is useful to repeat what I wrote in *Democracy: Can't We Do Better Than That?*:

"In this regard, the following argument by James Miller concerning Marx's view of the Paris Commune of 1871 is worth citing:

"the insurgents of 1871 were remarkably like the Parisian insurgents of 1792, 1830, and 1848: artisans, journeymen, apprentices, independent producers, professionals, and only a few labourers in the new factory industries. Though the Commune of 1871 may be regarded as the last efflorescence of the French popular culture of politics Rousseau helped to define three generations before, it is far more difficult, particularly in the light of modern historiography, to

find in it a harbinger of an international proletarian revolution.' (Miller, *Rousseau*, pp. 260-61)

"While Miller's observations are one-sided and his last sentence in particular is wrong – it is Miller's bourgeois bias that makes it hard for him to find in the 1871 Paris Commune 'a harbinger of an international proletarian revolution' – nevertheless, his comments are not without any validity. They do reflect the fact that even this Paris Commune embodied both elements of the old, bourgeois revolution as well as of the new, proletarian revolution and that it could not, as such, serve as a fully developed model of a proletarian state (especially one in the early stages of the international proletarian revolution and surrounded by powerful bourgeois states)." (Avakian, *Democracy*, pp. 38-39, footnote 63)

We cannot take an idealist and metaphysical approach of insisting that reality must be bent to conform to what was projected by Marx (and Lenin, before the October Revolution in particular) on the basis of this very significant but also very limited experience of the Paris Commune. If we are going to do that, we might as well insist that the proletariat leap immediately from capitalism to full-blown communism and thereby avoid all the contradictions involved in the socialist transition and the dictatorship of the proletariat! What we *should* insist on is evaluating the line and practice guiding the states where such revolutions have occurred to see whether in fact they are consistent with the fundamental orientation set forth by Marx through his summation on the Paris Commune – whether the lines, policies, institutions, and ideas that have characterized those societies have overall led in the direction of transforming society toward the abolition of classes and, with them, the state (and the party). On the basis of these criteria, we must once again reaffirm "the traditional Marxist-Leninist[-Maoist] interpretation" that the Soviet Union under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin, and China under the leadership of Mao, represented the continuation of the Paris Commune.

One other point must be addressed here – another way in which the expectations of Lenin with regard to the character of the proletarian revo-

lution have not been fully borne out. In the first year after the October Revolution, Lenin wrote that:

"The misfortune of previous revolutions was that the revolutionary enthusiasm of the people, which sustained them in their state of tension and gave them the strength to suppress ruthlessly the elements of disintegration, did not last long. The social, i.e., the class, reason for this instability of the revolutionary enthusiasm of the people was the weakness of the proletariat, which *alone* is able (if it is sufficiently numerous, class-conscious and disciplined) to win over to its side the majority of the working and exploited people (the majority of the poor, to speak more simply and popularly) and retain power sufficiently long to suppress completely all the exploiters as well as all the elements of disintegration.

"It was this historical experience of all revolutions, it was this world-historic – economic and political – lesson that Marx summed up when he gave his short, sharp, concise and expressive formula: dictatorship of the proletariat." ("The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government", *LCW*, vol. 27, pp. 264-65, emphasis in original)

Here Lenin was contrasting a revolution led by the proletariat with earlier revolutions in which the proletariat was not able to win leadership and carry the struggle as far as the overthrow of capitalism. But, in certain significant aspects, what Lenin says here – concerning the difficulty of maintaining the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses – has also proven to apply to the proletarian revolution itself.

This is linked to what has been the actual process of the proletarian revolution so far in the world (discussed above) and the related fact that the transition from capitalism to communism has proven to be a much more long-term, complex, and tortuous process than had been previously envisioned, not only by Marx and Engels but also by Lenin himself before the October Revolution and in the period immediately afterward (it was in the early 1920s, in the last few years of his life, that Lenin more fully confronted the fact that the Soviet Revolution would very probably have to "go it alone" for a period of time).

All this, in turn, is bound up with

the fact that there is a wave-like character to the class struggle under socialism and in particular a wave-like character to mass upsurges to defend the dictatorship of the proletariat and carry the revolution forward under this dictatorship. To return to Lenin's statement about maintaining the revolutionary energy and enthusiasm of the masses, the point can be put this way: as it has turned out, with the socialist transition period and the dictatorship of the proletariat lasting much longer than expected, and with the initial socialist revolutions not being closely followed by other revolutions in more technologically advanced societies; with the socialist states continuing to exist in a situation of being encircled by imperialism – with all of these factors that have been discussed, it is not realistic to expect nor has it been the case that the masses have been able to maintain a high pitch and intensity of revolutionary enthusiasm and energy on a continual basis. In fact, the expectation that they could is contradicted not only by experience but also by the principles of dialectics.

It is because of, and as part of, this contradictory nature of the whole process of transition from capitalism to communism, worldwide, that the role of the masses as rulers of society and owners of the means of production under socialism is real but is not absolute – it is relative and sharply contradictory – and is both expressed directly through their own involvement in all spheres of society and is mediated through a number of instrumentalities, above all the state and the vanguard party.

Once again, no formalistic approach – no insistence on formal democracy as the essence of the matter – can even seriously address, let alone resolve, this contradiction. And to insist on such an approach is in fact to act in accordance with the principles of *bourgeois* democracy and with the interests of the bourgeoisie in attacking and undermining the dictatorship of the proletariat precisely on the basis that, because it does not conform in every important respect to the principles of formal democracy, it therefore represents a negation of democracy, even for those in whose name it is exercised.

Let's turn to more particular points on this.

The document says: "This overall

programme for seizure of power was implemented by the second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies held on October 25-26, 1917." (par. 5.2)

But, it is important to note, the Bolsheviks *did not wait* for this Congress to seize power – they initiated the armed insurrection *before* this Congress. As is recounted in the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)*, this All-Russia Congress of Soviets opened "when the uprising in Petrograd was already in the full flush of victory and the power in the capital [Petrograd] had actually passed into the hands of the Petrograd Soviet". (*HCPUSU*, Moscow, 1939, Chapter Seven, part 6) Trotsky, among others, opposed this, standing on the formality that the armed insurrection should be declared by this All-Russia Congress of Soviets. All this is linked with the point made earlier (in the summary of general conclusions) about how the insistence on formal democracy that marks the CRC document would lead logically to declaring the Bolshevik-led armed insurrection to be a violation of democracy and a failure to rely on the masses, through their representative institutions, to carry out the seizure of power. This is very much in line with the arguments Trotsky made at the time; and if such arguments had been listened to, that would very probably have killed the armed insurrection, and then there never would have been an October Revolution to argue about.

The CRC document allows that the Bolshevik decision to withdraw from the Constituent Assembly "was justifiable in the sense that the power of the Soviets which had emerged through revolution was really representing the political will of the vast majority of the people". And the document seems to say it was justified for the Constituent Assembly to then be dissolved, through an act of the Central Committee of the All-Russia Soviet – an act taken on the initiative of the Bolsheviks (see par. 5.4).

Note well: "was really representing the political will of the vast majority of the people". This is correct – and, as stressed before, this also applied to the carrying out of the armed insurrection, even though that was not strictly done through

the decision of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets or with the formal approval of the majority of the masses, through their elected organs. In fact this criterion – whether or not something conforms to the basic interests but also to the “political will” of the masses of people – is the essence of the matter and far more decisive than questions of formal democracy. But it is precisely this criterion that this document “forgets” – abandons and replaces with criteria of formal democracy – in its “re-examination” of the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat – no, more, of “the whole history of the communist movement and the basic concepts we had held aloft so far”.

Then the document says: “But, what was developing...[was that] the new political system was gradually coming under the control of the communist party.” (par. 5.7) Here is where the argument about “the dictatorship of the party” begins to become more full-blown. The document goes on to assert that:

“Lenin categorically declared the role of the communist party thus: ‘After two and a half years of the Soviet power we came out in the Communist International and told the world that the dictatorship of the proletariat would not work except through the Communist Party.’ (p. 199, vol. 32, *Collected Works*) Now the circle is complete. The practical programme for establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat which started with the attractive slogan, ‘All power to the Soviets’ ended with the reality that the dictatorship of the proletariat was exercised through the Communist Party, where the Soviets became mere cogwheels in the machine. Even though Kautsky’s criticism was coming from the angle of bourgeois parliamentarism, the fact remains that in the present day world situation, when a qualitatively new political system as envisaged in a genuine dictatorship of the proletariat has not emerged as a historical reality, it is not the class, but its party that actually governs.” (par. 5.8)

Quite a few assertions, and distortions, are made here, touching on fundamental questions, so it is necessary to go into them in some depth. First, we cannot let pass the seemingly innocent clause “Even though Kautsky’s criticism was

coming from the angle of bourgeois parliamentarism”. In fact the “even though” here is just the point – Kautsky’s objection to the dictatorship of the proletariat as practised under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, from the time of Lenin on, was completely bound up with “bourgeois parliamentarism” – it was precisely the standpoint of such “parliamentarism” that caused Kautsky to distort what this dictatorship of the proletariat was and to oppose it. And it is fundamentally the same standpoint that informs (or misinforms) the distortion and repudiation of the whole historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat in this document. In fact, this document is marked by Kautskyite logic throughout, “even though” it does not openly, fully, embrace Kautsky.

This is reflected in the distorted and tortured use of the quotes from Lenin and Stalin in this section of the CRC document. First, let’s look at this document’s treatment of the statements by Lenin on the essential point that, as Lenin plainly puts it, the dictatorship of the proletariat will not work without the leading role of the communist party.

In the very same work of Lenin’s (and on the very same page) from which the CRC document quotes, Lenin makes clear that this does not mean that the party exercises dictatorship instead of the proletariat, or that the party is somehow separated from the proletariat in the exercise of this dictatorship. He makes clear that it is the proletariat that exercises dictatorship, but that it cannot do this without the leadership of the party. Again, on the very page cited, and throughout this work (Lenin’s speeches at the 10th Party Congress in March 1921), Lenin stresses that it is an anarchist and syndicalist tendency which cannot see the unity between the leadership of the party and the exercise of dictatorship by the masses of proletarians; and that accusations about party dictatorship are arising in the context of and to a considerable degree because of the influence of the atmosphere of petit-bourgeois disintegration that then existed in the Soviet Republic as a result of the long civil war and the massive dislocations and economic ruin that resulted from that war and in its wake (the class position and outlook of many workers was being

undermined in these conditions; masses of peasants were being ruined; and the economic links between workers and peasants, city and countryside, had not yet been firmly re-established and recast along new lines). This reply of Lenin to his critics at that time stands very well as the answer to the authors of this CRC document, some 70 years later.

As for the statement that “the Soviets became mere cogwheels in the machine”, apparently the authors of this document think they have made a profound point by adding the word “mere” here. But, as Lenin explains it, there is nothing “mere” about it. He makes clear that while, on the one hand, “the Party, shall we say, absorbs the vanguard of the proletariat, and this vanguard exercises the dictatorship of the proletariat”, at the same time, the functions of government “have to be performed through the medium of special institutions which are also of a new type, namely, the Soviets”. (“The Trade Unions, the Present Situation and Trotsky’s Mistakes”, *LCW*, vol. 32, p. 20) The authors of this document actually quote this statement from Lenin, but they do not grasp its significance – apparently they are so put off by the use of the metaphor “cogwheels” that to them it is of little importance that Lenin says that the Soviets perform the functions of government and that these Soviets are “special institutions” and are “of a new type” (note: they are not the same old institutions of bourgeois society but represent a radically new form of state power and are performing the functions of government). How, and with what outlook, is it possible to miss the historic significance of this?

Yes, Lenin does frankly discuss the fact that “in all capitalist countries (and not only over here, in one of the most backward) the proletariat is still so divided, so degraded, and so corrupted in parts (by imperialism in some countries) that an organisation taking in the whole proletariat [here Lenin is referring to the trade unions in particular] cannot directly exercise proletarian dictatorship. It can be exercised only by a vanguard that has absorbed the revolutionary energy of the class.” (ibid, p. 21) And then Lenin goes on to make the infamous statement that, “The whole is like an arrangement of cogwheels”, and, “It cannot work without a number of ‘transmission belts’

running from the vanguard to the mass of the advanced class, and from the latter to the mass of the working people." (ibid)

One can only ask here: what is wrong with this? Where, in any of this, is there the notion that the party exercises the dictatorship of the proletariat and the functions of government *in place of* the masses? The only objection that can be raised – and the one that is in fact being raised in this CRC document – is that Lenin insists on the leading role of the party. You may object to that if you wish – and certainly the bourgeoisie, and various Mensheviks, social-democrats and so on, from the time of Lenin on down, have strenuously objected to it – but anyone claiming to be a communist and to uphold the dictatorship of the proletariat in principle must show how the masses can in fact exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat and prevent the restoration of capitalism *without* the leading role of the party that is, without the *institutionalized* leading role of the party. The one is the same as the other: recognizing this leading role in words while insisting it *not* be an *institutionalized* leading role amounts in reality to the same thing as *negating* this leading role altogether. We shall see how this CRC document aims to show precisely that the masses would be better off without the (institutionalized) leading role of the party under socialism, and how the document fails miserably – as it must – to show this.

To put this whole question of the role of the Soviets (and other mass organizations) in relation to the Communist Party in broader, and more historical, perspective, it is necessary to "demystify" this whole thing a bit. In the first place, although in a real and profound sense the Soviets were the creation of the masses, this was never a question of some "pure" or purely "spontaneous" creation of the masses. The Soviets were the product of the class struggle, in which the masses were influenced by a number of different political forces, including the Bolsheviks and also the Mensheviks and a number of others. And within the Soviets, from their inception, there was continual and often fierce struggle between representatives of different trends, ultimately representing different class interests.

A concentrated focus of this struggle was the question of what, after all, was the political role of the Soviets and what process they were to be part of. To put it simply, the Bolsheviks saw in the Soviets a means for the masses to be organized for the overthrow of the old order, the smashing of the old state machinery and the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat; the Mensheviks and others rejected and resisted this – their view of the Soviets flowed from their petit-bourgeois outlook – and when and to the degree that they led or influenced the Soviets, this was in the direction of turning them into mass organizations oriented toward social-democratic and/or anarchist programs, in opposition to the seizure and exercise of state power by the proletariat. Struggle over these fundamental differences went on within the Soviets before and right up to the October insurrection; and it went on, in different forms, after power was seized.

It is true that, not long after the seizure of power, Lenin recognized the need for an adjustment in the role of the Soviets and the relation of the Party to them, which is reflected in the statements by Lenin that the CRC document cites. But this has to be understood in the context of the concrete events of the time as well as in a larger historical perspective. As noted earlier, this was a situation of desperate civil war and then, even with victory in that war, of massive disruption, dislocation, and disintegration, economically and politically. In these circumstances, many of the most advanced elements within the Soviets had volunteered to become leaders and commissars of a Red Army that had to be created, almost literally, overnight and hurled into decisive battle. Others were mobilized on different but also decisive fronts of struggle: on trouble-shooting missions where crises of various kinds had erupted; to help in the suppression of counterrevolutionaries; to help staff the food administration, factory management, etc.; and to join and build up the Party.

The fact is that, by the end of the civil war, tens of thousands of workers, soldiers, and sailors held responsible administrative positions (and this policy of absorbing advanced masses into the governing apparatus would continue with the collec-

tivization and industrialization drives later, under Stalin's leadership). But it was also a fact that, as a result of all this, many of the best and most far-sighted leaders of the proletariat were enlisted not in the Soviets but in other institutions. And, along with this, there was a shift in the relative weight of the Soviets, as compared to these other institutions, including especially the Party, in the actual administration of society and the overall exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This is what Lenin is speaking to with his much-maligned analogy about cogwheels, conveyor belts, and so on, and his more general statement about the leading role of the party in the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat: Lenin is summing up, from the actual experience of that crucial period, that it is not possible to exercise this dictatorship simply through the Soviets or without systematic (institutionalized) party leadership of the Soviets (and other institutions and mass organizations). But he is not saying that the Soviets will no longer play a decisive role – he makes clear that they will continue to be relied on to perform the functions of government. He is not saying the party can *replace* the Soviets (or those other institutions and mass organizations) in the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat. He is not saying the leaders, rather than the masses, are decisive in the exercise of this dictatorship.⁴

Here it seems important to speak to another practice of the Paris Commune that Marx identified as a matter of decisive importance: the "replaceability" or "revocability" of leaders. Once again the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat has shown that it has not been possible to apply this principle in the strict sense in which Marx spoke of it, drawing from the Paris Commune, where officials were elected by the masses and subject to

4. The role of the Soviets, and revolutionary institutions and mass organizations more generally, in relation to the larger, more long-term process of socialist transformation of society is a very important and complex question. It is a question I will return to later, in answering further arguments in the CRC document about how the Soviets were "relegated to the background".

recall by them at any time.

It must be said straight-up that it does not get to the essence of things if the masses have the formal right to replace leaders, when the social conditions (contradictions) are such that some people are less "replaceable" than others. To give an extreme example, if the masses in socialist China had had the right to vote Mao out of office, and if they had exercised that right foolishly and voted him out, they would have been confronted with the stark fact that there wouldn't have been another Mao to take his place. In reality, they would find themselves in a situation where someone would have to play a role which, from a formal standpoint, would be the same as that of Mao; that is, someone would have to occupy leading positions like that, and the division of labour in society – in particular between mental and manual labour – would mean that only a small section of people would then be capable of playing such a role. Voting Mao out of office would only mean that somebody less qualified – or, even worse, someone representing the bourgeoisie instead of the proletariat – would be playing that leadership role. You can't get around this, and adhering to the strictures of formal democracy would be no help at all.⁵

This, of course, does not mean that the division between masses and leaders should be made into an absolute, rather than being restricted and finally overcome; nor still less does it mean that the leaders and not the masses should be seen as the real masters of socialist society. In revolutionary China great emphasis was given to the role of the masses in criticizing and in an overall sense supervising the leaders. And this found expression on a whole new level through the Cultural Revolution, which, Mao stressed, represented something radically new – "a form, a method, to arouse the broad masses to expose our dark aspect openly, in an all-round way and

from below". (Mao, cited in *Report to the Ninth National Congress of the Communist Party of China*, Peking: Foreign Languages Press [FLP], p. 27) Yet, as important and pathbreaking as this was, the fact remains that throughout the socialist transition there will not only be the need for leaders – and an objective contradiction between leaders and led – but there will be the possibility for this to be transformed into relations of exploitation and oppression.

Given the contradictions that characterize the transition from capitalism to communism, worldwide, if the party did not play the leading role that it has within the proletarian state, that role would be played by other organized groups – bourgeois cliques – and soon enough the state would no longer be proletarian, but bourgeois. It must be said bluntly that, from the point of view of the proletariat, the problem with the ruling parties in the revisionist countries is not that they have had a "monopoly" of political power but that they have exercised that political power to restore and maintain capitalism. The problem is that they are *not revolutionary, not really communist* – and *therefore* they do not rely on and mobilize the masses to exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat, and to continue the revolution under this dictatorship.

As spoken to above, through the Cultural Revolution in China new means and methods were developed for attacking the differences and inequalities left over from the old society – means and methods for restricting bourgeois right to the greatest degree possible at any given time in accordance with the material and ideological conditions. Yet it will remain a fundamental contradiction throughout the socialist transition period that there are these underlying differences and inequalities and their expression in bourgeois right, which constitute the material basis for classes, class struggle and the danger of capitalist restoration. This

is a problem that cannot even be fundamentally addressed, let alone solved, by a formalistic approach. It has to be addressed through waging class struggle under the leadership of revolutionary communists – making this the key link – and in no other way. And this is exactly how it was approached under Mao's leadership.

Specifically with regard to income distribution, through the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution a basic orientation and, flowing from it, concrete policies were adopted to gradually narrow wage differentials – in accordance with the development of common affluence and mainly by raising the bottom levels up. As an important part of this, there was an orientation of keeping the difference in pay between government officials and ordinary workers as little as possible – the fundamental spirit of the Paris Commune on this was proclaimed and upheld in practice – although such pay differences still existed and were viewed as something that had to be further reduced. But, once again, as important as it was to apply such principles, in correspondence with the actual conditions at any given time, this could not change the essential fact that, for a long historical period, there will persist differences and inequalities in socialist society which contain within them the potential to develop into class antagonism if a proletarian line is not in command in dealing with them.

The Exercise of Power in Socialist Society: Leadership, the Masses and Proletarian Dictatorship

With this in mind, let's return to the question of the "dictatorship of the party". The CRC document goes on to say that, "The position taken by Lenin in relation to the party and the dictatorship of the proletariat is not very different from the position Stalin adopted and implemented." (par. 5.9) This is essentially true – although this involves sharp contradiction, it is true in its principal aspect that Stalin upheld and applied Leninist principle in leading the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union – and this is to the credit of Stalin. But to cast Stalin, and Lenin, in a bad light and buttress its accusations against "the dictatorship of the party", the document says that, "Stalin argued that the

5. As a matter of fact, the members of the Chinese Communist Party, numbering in the millions and millions and including a very large percentage of workers and peasants, did have this formal right to vote Mao out of office. To be precise, they had the right to elect delegates to a Party Congress and these delegates, who elected the Party Central

Committee, had the formal right to refuse to elect Mao to that Central Committee. That they did not do this and why they did not do this is a further illustration, from a number of angles, of the basic point here: not form but social (class) content, rooted in underlying material contradictions, is the essence of the matter.

dictatorship of the proletariat is 'in essence' the dictatorship of the party. And in exercising this dictatorship, the party uses the Soviets as mere transition belts like the trade unions, Youth league, etc." (par. 5.9)

It is remarkable how the CRC document quotes this one phrase from Stalin, but it does *not* quote what he says, at great length, before and after it. First, here is the immediate context in which Stalin uses this phrase:

"The highest expression of the leading role of the Party, here, in the Soviet Union, in the land of the dictatorship of the proletariat, for example, is the fact that not a single important political or organizational question is decided by our Soviet and other mass organizations without guiding directives from the Party. In *this sense* it could be said that the dictatorship of the proletariat is, *in essence*, the 'dictatorship' of its vanguard, the 'dictatorship' of its Party, as the main guiding force of the proletariat." (J. V. Stalin, "Concerning Questions of Leninism", part V, in *Problems of Leninism* [POL], Peking: FLP, p. 184, emphasis in original)

Stalin then goes on to discuss, for literally page, after page, after page, how this must not be taken to mean that "a *sign of equality* can be put between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the leading role of the Party (the 'dictatorship' of the Party), that the former can be *identified* with the latter, that the latter [the Party] can be *substituted* for the former [the proletariat]". (ibid, emphasis in original) He explicitly argues that, "To say 'in essence' does not mean 'wholly'" (ibid, p. 185), and he discusses in some detail why this is so. He not only polemicalizes at length against a line of attempting to substitute the Party for the masses in the exercise of this dictatorship but specifically says that, "whoever identifies the leading role of the Party with the dictatorship of the proletariat substitutes the Party for the Soviets, i.e., for the state power". (ibid, p. 189, emphasis added)

Stalin stresses the importance of applying the mass line. He insists that the Party must maintain correct "mutual relations" with the masses, relations of "mutual confidence", and this means "that the Party must closely heed the voice of the masses; that it must pay careful attention to the revolutionary instinct of the

masses; that it must study the practice of the struggle of the masses and on this basis test the correctness of its own policy; that, consequently, it must not only teach the masses, but also learn from them". (ibid, pp. 190-91) He warns against any tendency to turn the leading role of the party into a dictatorship over the masses and emphatically states:

"Can the Party's leadership be imposed on the class by force? No, it cannot. At all events, *such* a leadership cannot be at all durable. If the Party wants to remain the party of the proletariat it must know that it is, primarily and principally, the *guide*, the *leader*, the *teacher* of the working class.... Can one consider the Party as the real leader of the class if its policy is wrong, if its policy comes into collision with the interests of the class? Of course not. In such cases the Party, if it wants to remain the leader, must reconsider its policy, must correct its policy, must acknowledge its mistake and correct it." (ibid, pp. 196-7, emphasis in original)

And so on – once again for page, after page, after page, Stalin elaborates these decisive points in opposition to the notion that the Party can substitute for the masses in the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat or even exercise dictatorship against the will and interests of the masses, by imposing its leadership on them through force.

But none of this is dealt with in this CRC document, which quotes the "in essence" phrase, adds a statement about how Stalin said the Soviets were used by the Party "as mere transmission belts" and leaves it at that. It is difficult to believe that the authors of this document did not even bother to read the whole passage in question – and still more difficult to believe that, if they did, they willfully chose to ignore all that Stalin goes on to say about this question. But, once again, these are the typical methods of those who oppose the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat from the standpoint of bourgeois democracy – even of a radical or "socialist" variety – these are the methods one is forced to adopt once one repudiates "the basic concepts we had held aloft so far" and succumbs instead to bourgeois logic.

It could be argued that, even with everything Stalin says about this

question, along the lines I have cited here, still the formulation that the dictatorship of the proletariat is "in essence" the dictatorship of the party is a rather unfortunate one. There is, I believe, some truth to this: ironically, this formulation itself can be interpreted as cutting against the very relationship that Stalin was insisting on – the relationship in which the masses exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat under the leadership of the party. It could be further argued that this formulation can reflect, or at least encourage, a tendency toward not relying on the masses, toward a "top-down" orientation. And, especially in light of experience – positive as well as negative – since that time, it must be said that there is some truth to this as well. Such a tendency did become rather pronounced in Stalin. This, however, was not a straight-line process but one in which a more correct orientation on Stalin's part was, in certain significant aspects, turned into its opposite, as Mao pointed out.

But the CRC document treats this as if, from the start, Stalin had an orientation of not relying on the masses; as if, following in Lenin's footsteps, Stalin was advocating and carrying out a line of replacing the dictatorship of the masses with the dictatorship of the party. In fact, this is a line Lenin firmly opposed; it is a line Stalin rejected – explicitly, emphatically, and with extensive argumentation – in the very work the CRC document cites. In that work Stalin, following Lenin, puts forward the correct, dialectical view of the relation between the party and the masses, a relation in which the party is the leading force and the masses are the motive force.

The CRC document takes off from its distorted use of Stalin's "in essence" statement to draw this conclusion:

"From this position, the nature and course of development of the bureaucratization process and the emergence of new classes can easily be traced. *Under such a political structure*, the absence of a conscious policy to restrict bourgeois right and the increasing reliance on material incentive for promoting production *laid the economic foundation* for bureaucratic capitalism. And when we reach the stage of Mao's finding that under the dictatorship of the proletariat the bourgeoisie emerges with-

in the party itself, the picture becomes complete." (par. 5.9, emphasis added)

This is opposed to the analysis Lenin made of the basis for "the emergence of new classes", and in particular the bourgeoisie, under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin pointed to Soviet government employees and the strata of intellectual workers in general, as well as to the persistence of small-scale production, as main sources of a new bourgeoisie; but his analysis was rooted in a materialist estimate of the social and class contradictions remaining in socialist society – it did not look for the source or origins of the new bourgeoisie in "the bureaucracy" as such. Lenin was right – on the right track – the CRC document is completely off.

As noted earlier, Mao developed Lenin's beginning analysis of this problem more fully, into a comprehensive line. The CRC document puts forward an "inversion" of this line – and of reality. It does not proceed from the underlying contradictions in the economic base (the remaining differences and inequalities, the persistence of commodity relations, etc.) – in the context of the international situation – and then examine the superstructure (in particular the governing institutions and ideas) *in that light*, but in fact proceeds from a distorted analysis of contradictions in the superstructure and superimposes this on the economic base. It reverses the relation of politics and economics, the relation between the superstructure and the economic base. It may seem superficially similar to the Maoist analysis but is actually the opposite of it: it is idealist while the Maoist method is materialist. It makes bureaucratic deviations – some real, many invented in this document – the *basis* for, or the essential factor in creating, the "economic foundation" of "bureaucratic capitalism".

This idealist viewpoint on the basis for the engendering of the new bourgeoisie in socialist society and the danger of capitalist restoration is repeated a number of times in the CRC document, including in the remarkable assertion that:

"he [Lenin] comes to the solution of replacing dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the dictatorship of the proletariat by simply reversing the dictatorship of the minority over the majority into a dictatorship of the

majority over the minority. Hence no qualitative break with the old structure is required. Ultimately, *the old structure* which concentrates political power in the hands of the state leadership, *leads* to the emergence and strengthening of a new ruling class from among the working class and the ranks and leadership of its party itself." (par. 9.2, emphasis added)

Here it can be seen even more clearly how the CRC document treats the superstructure – actually a distorted view of the superstructure in socialist society – as the decisive element in "the emergence and strengthening of a new ruling class".

Mao rejected the mechanical materialist "theory of productive forces", which sees the productive forces and the economic base of society as determinant in some kind of absolute way – which does not recognize the dynamic role of the superstructure in reacting back upon the economic base nor the role of revolution in the superstructure and the relations of production in unleashing and developing the productive forces. But Mao opposed this mechanical materialism with dialectical *materialism* – not with idealism⁶ – not with a line that denies the ultimately decisive role of material reality and specifically of the economic base in relation to the superstructure in society. The CRC document, however, under the banner of opposing "the economic reductionist position" (par. 7.4), misconstrues Mao's line and in fact denies the decisive role of economics in relation to politics (and we shall also see later how the CRC document further repudiates Marxist materialism in the name of rejecting "class reductionism").

Again, the Maoist line identifies the essential material basis for capitalist restoration as residing in the remaining contradictions in the social relations, above all the pro-

duction relations, within socialist society, as well as the international relations. It focuses on the superstructure fundamentally *in relation to these contradictions*. The line of this CRC document makes such contradictions in the economic base a secondary matter, subordinate to the supposedly decisive element: the existence of "such a political structure", i.e., a dictatorship of the proletariat which is not based on formal democracy.

Next let's turn to the discussion in the CRC document about the struggle between Trotsky and Stalin and how Trotsky's criticisms failed to "answer any of the basic questions faced by the dictatorship of the proletariat" but incidentally – and it is treated as incidentally – Stalin was right in the "major controversy" with Trotsky about the possibility of building socialism in one country. (See par. 5.10)

But how could Stalin have been correct – how could he have led in the building of socialism in the Soviet Union – if he was responsible (more than anyone else) for imposing a dictatorship of the party over the masses? What kind of socialism can be built under *such* a dictatorship? Or perhaps there never was any socialist society established in the Soviet Union? Or in China either, following the same logic. Then what was the economic base of these countries? Capitalist all along? Or something else – in which case you end up with the same basic analysis of Trotsky after all.

Once again, this whole line of argument metaphysically treats the relation of economics and politics, the base and the superstructure, although there is a certain "consistency" to it: if this line were applied, it would lead to both the economic base and the superstructure being dominated by the *bourgeoisie*. Perhaps ironically, this line seeks to replace the basic revisionist formula – state ownership plus the institutionalized leading role of the party *guarantees* or *equals* socialism – with the formula: mass democracy, on the strict Paris Commune model, plus the "traditional Marxist-Leninist" approach to socialist economics, is the basis for preventing capitalist restoration. Neither of these formulas is "better" than the other – they are both wrong.

For all the reasons that have been

6. In fact, the "theory of productive forces" (and mechanical materialism generally) is ultimately idealist itself. It metaphysically separates matter from consciousness. It does not grasp the way in which (as Mao put it) matter can be transformed into consciousness *and* consciousness into matter. Thus, it does not correctly grasp the material foundation of all ideas, *nor* does it grasp how ideas can be transformed into a tremendous material force.

previously discussed, the abandonment of the institutionalized leading role of the party will lead to capitalist restoration just as much as the insistence that this institutionalized leading role will in and of itself guarantee against capitalist restoration, regardless of the line of the party in relation to the actual material contradictions faced by the dictatorship of the proletariat, both within the particular country and internationally. Here it is important to recall what was said earlier: if the party does not play such an institutionalized leading role, some other force will, in fact bourgeois cliques, and they will institutionalize the rule of the *bourgeoisie*. This is owing to the underlying contradictions of socialist society, and under these kinds of conditions it is not possible for the formal structures of the Paris Commune to be implemented in every detail, and if they are, as Mao said, it will make too much room for the bourgeoisie, which will come to dominate them and dominate all of society.

Let's move on to this document's summation of what it calls Rosa Luxemburg's "piercing criticism" of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union (see section 6). According to Luxemburg, the Bolsheviks were fundamentally wrong, because like Kautsky, they "oppose dictatorship to democracy". And, argues Luxemburg, the Bolshevik position is "far removed from a genuine socialist policy" – she actually says that the Bolsheviks "decide in favour of dictatorship in contradistinction to democracy, and thereby in favour of dictatorship of a handful of persons, that is, in favour of dictatorship on the bourgeois model". (Luxemburg, as cited in the CRC document, par. 6.1, from *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, New York, 1970, p. 393, emphasis added) This is yet again the "classical outlook" of the petit bourgeois who stands midway between the bourgeois and the proletariat and recognizes in the dictatorship of both a subordination of petit-bourgeois interest to the interests of the ruling class, but who does not readily recognize the fundamental difference between these two dictatorships.

The CRC document continues with its presentation of Luxemburg's "piercing criticism" as follows:

"She observed that, the model of dictatorship of the proletariat esta-

blished under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky [sic], after the October Revolution, was actually trying to eliminate democracy as such, in the name of 'the cumbersome nature of democratic electoral bodies'.... 'To be sure every democratic institution has its limits and shortcomings, things which it doubtless shares with all other human institutions. But the remedy which Trotsky and Lenin have found, the elimination of democracy as such, is worse than the disease it is supposed to cure: for it stops up the very living source from which alone can come the correction of all the innate shortcomings of social institutions. That source is the active, untrammelled energetic political life of the broadest masses of the people.'... Opposing Lenin's claim that the Soviet system of proletarian democracy is a million times better than bourgeois democracy, she [Luxemburg] evaluated the situation under the dictatorship of the proletariat practised by Bolsheviks thus: 'In place of the representative bodies created by general popular elections, Lenin and Trotsky have laid down the Soviets as the only true representation of the labouring masses. But with the repression of political life in the land as a whole, life in the Soviets must also become more and more crippled. Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule.'" (par. 6.2, 6.4.; the citation in the CRC document for the statements by Rosa Luxemburg is: *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, pp. 387, 391)

This is a social-democratic line which – despite Luxemburg's attempt to distinguish her position from bourgeois democracy – perfectly exposes the fact that such a position conforms to the bourgeois-democratic outlook. The masses of people in the Soviet Union, at that time especially – the early years of the Soviet Republic – were certainly energetically, actively, and conscientiously involved in political life, on a broader and deeper scale than anything history had witnessed up to

that time. And Luxemburg's argument is in no way a refutation of Lenin's assessment that the dictatorship of the proletariat, as it was practised in the Soviet Republic, was "a million times more democratic" – for the masses of people – than any bourgeois-democratic state. To argue otherwise, as Luxemburg does, and to declare that the Bolsheviks were seeking to stifle the political activism of the masses and to eliminate "democracy as such", betrays an outlook that identifies the political activism of the masses with the strictures of bourgeois-democratic formalism and identifies "democracy as such" with democracy as practised according to bourgeois-democratic principles. And this is precisely what Luxemburg does with her emphasis on "representative bodies created by general popular elections" – in opposition, let it be noted, to "the Soviets as the only true representation of the labouring masses" – and her calls for "unrestricted" freedom of press and assembly.

The CRC document even goes so far as to say that, "The basic defect of the Soviet system" – note well: the "basic defect" – "is exposed by Rosa in this way: 'Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party, however, numerous they may be – is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for one who thinks differently.'" (par. 6.3., citing *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, pp. 389-90)

First, it is distortion and slander to say that there was freedom only for those who supported the government and the Bolsheviks. It is true – and it is right – that counterrevolutionary forces were suppressed, particularly when they rose in arms against the Soviet government. There was, for example, the famous incident of the Kronstadt rebellion in which, as Lenin frankly acknowledged, there were masses involved; but, as he put it, before long the intrigues of the old whiteguard generals (that is, the old generals of the counterrevolutionary army that had waged the civil war against the proletarian regime) came out into the open in relation to the Kronstadt events, as did the imperialist connections of these whiteguard generals. It became clear that the Kronstadt revolt represented an attempt to overthrow the proletarian regime and restore the old order. So, naturally and correctly,

people participating in such reactionary revolts were suppressed. (See "Tenth Congress of the R.C.P. (B.), March 8-16, 1921", part 2, "Report on the Political Work of the Central Committee of the R.C.P.(B.), March 8", *LCW*, vol. 32, pp. 183-85)

But there was plenty of criticism raised, and "allowed", of the government and the Party. This is very clear, among other things, in reading Lenin's writings and speeches from these years of the new Soviet Republic. Lenin talks openly about how they are existing in a petit-bourgeois atmosphere, and that they have to learn how to find some form of accommodation with the petit-bourgeois strata, particularly among the peasantry, without compromising away the basic interests of the proletariat. He discusses the whole problem in historical terms – how you can expropriate and crush the resistance of the big bourgeoisie and landlords relatively quickly once you've seized power, but you have to carry out a policy of long-term co-existence and struggle with all the small-scale producers and generally with the petite bourgeoisie – as he puts it, you have to both live with and transform the petite bourgeoisie, in its material conditions and in its outlook, as part of advancing toward the elimination of class distinctions (such a discussion can be found, for example, in *Left Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*, which was written in the first few years of the Soviet Republic). So Lenin's writings and speeches from those years – including, incidentally, some that are quoted, in a distorted way, in this CRC document itself – make very clear what Lenin's basic approach was, and that his was not an orientation that anyone who raised criticism of the government and the Bolsheviks should be suppressed and denied political rights.

Instead of seriously grappling with what Lenin has to say about these difficult contradictions, the CRC document looks to Rosa Luxemburg's misguided criticisms for guidance. Much of what is mistaken about these criticisms, and their underlying orientation, is revealed in the statement by Luxemburg that freedom is "always and exclusively freedom for one who thinks differently". This, of course, is linked to Luxemburg's call for "unrestricted" freedom of press and

assembly, etc. And this is in line with classical bourgeois democracy, which identifies freedom with the rights of the minority against "the tyranny of the majority". For example, this is very similar to the formulations of people like John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville in their writings on democracy and on individual liberty. In response to this, the question must be posed: who is it that, under the dictatorship of the proletariat, "thinks differently" most of all – if not the bourgeoisie and counterrevolutionaries? I am not being facetious: the "logical conclusion of the logic" of Luxemburg here is that they, above all, should be granted freedom, full political rights. And then where is the dictatorship of the proletariat?⁷

It is very instructive to contrast Rosa Luxemburg's statements on what freedom is, "always and exclusively", with the profound statements of Mao Tsetung on what constitutes the freedom, or the fundamental rights, of the labouring people in a socialist society: the right to control society, the right to be masters of the economy, the right to control and suppress the antagonistic forces that are trying to restore capitalism, the right to exercise their rule in all spheres of the superstructure. Everything flows from this freedom, or these fundamental rights, as discussed by Mao. This represents something much more profound and correct than Luxemburg's definition of freedom – in fact it is the opposite of Luxemburg's democratic formalism – it speaks to the essence of the matter.

"Who is in control of the organs [of power] and enterprises bears tremendously on the issue of guaranteeing the people's rights. *If Marxist-Leninists are in control, the rights of the vast majority will be guaranteed.* If rightists or right opportunists are in control, these organs and enterprises

may change qualitatively, and the people's rights with respect to them cannot be guaranteed. In sum, the people must have the right to manage the superstructure." (Mao, *A Critique of Soviet Economics*, New York: Monthly Review, 1977, p. 61, emphasis added)

Here Mao, like Lenin before him, puts forward the correct, the materialist and dialectical, view of the relationship between the exercise by the masses of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the leadership of their communist vanguard.

Let's move on to the next point that needs to be addressed in this CRC document: "But in spite of all these major breakthroughs, it can be seen now, that the New Democratic Peoples Dictatorship established immediately after the completion of revolution in China or the dictatorship of the proletariat which followed, did not mark any significant advancement from the basic framework developed by Lenin and Stalin." (par. 7.2)

To this, considering the spirit and thrust of the CRC document, one can only respond: "Thank god!" By now it should be clear that the "significant advancement" the authors of this document find lacking is in fact the abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the adoption in its place of models based on the "piercing criticism" of people like Luxemburg and her exposure of the "basic defect of the Soviet system" in its departure from bourgeois-democratic formalism.

So let's move on to another formulation in this document:

"The basic problems faced by the Soviet Union under Lenin and Stalin, namely, the lack of a political system in which the people can directly participate and assert their political will, socialisation of means of production leading to centralisation and the accompanying bureau-

7. It is important to note the attitude of Lenin toward Luxemburg, with whom he had many serious disagreements over a number of years, both before and after the October Revolution. While making many sharp criticisms of Luxemburg's positions and methodology, Lenin struggled with her as a comrade within the revolutionary camp. This CRC document itself states that Luxemburg was in prison when she made some of her criticisms of the new Soviet government, and that, "after coming out of prison and

getting direct information about the situation in Russia she withdrew some of the criticisms, and kept silent on some others. She realised the difficulty in allowing unlimited freedom to the enemies." (par. 6.6) But, unfortunately, the CRC document still insists on upholding Luxemburg's criticisms, specifically on the question of democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat, and makes them an integral part of its overall attack on the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union (and in China as well).

cratisation of the whole system, were all manifested in China also. Hence, the same process of capitalist restoration which had already reached an advanced stage in the Soviet Union had started in China also." (par. 7.3)

Class Struggle Under Socialism and Forms of Mass Rule

Having already spoken a number of times and from various angles to this document's fundamentally wrong analysis of the political system and its relation to the economic system in the Soviet Union (and socialist society generally), I will only call attention here to the word "Hence" that begins the last sentence above. This "Hence" represents the continuation of the idealist and metaphysical treatment of the relation of economics and politics that was pointed to earlier, particularly in criticizing the CRC document's "inverted analysis" of the basis for capitalist restoration. Once again, this "Hence" is hardly how Mao identified the basis and process of the engendering of the bourgeoisie in socialist society and the danger of capitalist restoration.

Indeed, another expression of the idealism reflected in the use here of "Hence" is its implication that capitalist restoration resulted primarily from the mistaken orientation and policies of the revolutionaries, in China as well as in the Soviet Union; whereas, in reality, the danger of capitalist restoration was rooted in the underlying contradictions marking socialism as a transition from capitalism to communism, worldwide, and the triumph of the capitalist-roaders was the outcome of the class struggle, both within the socialist countries themselves and internationally. The viewpoint of the CRC document on this decisive question echoes the loud proclamations these days about the "failure" of communism, rather than recognizing that what has happened in the Soviet Union and China represents, in its essence, defeats inflicted on the international proletariat by the international bourgeoisie, and that the mistakes of the revolutionaries were secondary and mainly mistakes in dealing with the very real problems and dangers caused primarily by imperialism and its still dominant position in the world.⁸ Such defeats

are, from the standpoint of historical materialism, not surprising, particularly in the early stages of the conflict between proletarian revolution and bourgeois counterrevolution; the point is to learn from all such defeats – to learn well the *real* lessons – in order to be able, time and again, to turn temporary setbacks into new and still greater breakthroughs, and to advance through the course of the ongoing historic battle to final victory.

But this cannot be done if the real terms of the struggle are not understood and an idealist interpretation is imposed on reality, as the CRC document does in the following:

"Actually he [Mao] was coming closer to the crux of the problem when he identified the areas of struggle in the superstructure, and in the relations of production. Similarly he recognised the fact that political power was not in the hands of the working class and other toiling masses of the people. Here he identified the crux of the matter – how to bring political power into the hands of the people." (par. 7.4)

Wrong! Mao recognized and said that important parts of the superstructure were not in the hands of the masses, and he called on them to seize back *those portions of power* that had been usurped by capitalist-roaders. But he never said that these capitalist-roaders had usurped supreme power, that political power over society as a whole was not in the hands of the proletariat. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was a revolution carried out in a situation where the proletariat held state power but faced a life-and-death struggle to prevent the rise to power of revisionism and capitalist restoration – it was the continuation of the revolution *under the dictatorship of the proletariat*.

The "16-Point Decision" issued in the early stages of the Cultural Revolution as a general guideline for carrying out this revolutionary struggle makes this very clear. It says the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution "constitutes a new stage in the development of the socialist revolu-

tion in our country"; that, "Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use the old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds and endeavour to stage a come-back" and that the proletariat must meet this challenge head-on. And what is identified as the objective of this Cultural Revolution? It is not to deal with a situation where the masses do not have political power but "to struggle against and overthrow those persons in power taking the capitalist road, to criticize and repudiate the bourgeois reactionary academic 'authorities' and the ideology of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes and to transform education, literature and art and all other parts of the superstructure not in correspondence with the socialist economic base, so as to facilitate the consolidation and development of the socialist system". ("Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution", ["16-Point Decision"], August 8, 1966, Peking: FLP, point 1, p. 1, emphasis added)

And, in important discussions with Chang Chun-chiao during the height of the Cultural Revolution (discussions quoted from in this CRC document, in fact), Mao himself makes clear that:

"Our present revolution – the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution – is a revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, and we have launched it ourselves. This is because a *portion of the structure of proletarian dictatorship* has been usurped and no longer belongs to the proletariat; but to the bourgeoisie. Thus, we had to make revolution." ("Directive on Great Cultural Revolution in Shanghai", in *Miscellany of Mao Tse-Tung Thought*, published by Joint Publications Research Service, Arlington, Virginia, USA, vol. 2, p. 451, emphasis added)

This CRC document is doing a "two into one" here. It is trying to combine its wrong-headed line on "the dictatorship of the party" with Mao's qualitatively different, and correct, analysis of the *bourgeoisie within* the party (the capitalist-roaders) and the need to wage struggle against these capitalist-roaders and to further revolutionize the party itself as part of the overall struggle

8. For a further discussion of this important point, see Avakian, "The End of a Stage – The Beginning of a New Stage", *Revolution*, No. 60, Fall 1990, Chicago: RCP Publications, "The defeat in China – the international dimension", pp. 9-11.

to remain on the socialist road and continue the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat.⁹

But this CRC document continues on superimposing its idealist vision on reality. It makes this assessment of the Cultural Revolution:

"As Mao himself pointed out it was actually the masses who developed the new form of struggle, the Cultural Revolution. It was actually a struggle against the structures of the bureaucratisation existing under the dictatorship of the proletariat. As it was a spontaneous outburst of the masses, the anarchic deviations it developed were quite natural. But what had to be done was to systematise all these lessons into a new political system and form of struggle to be practised under the dictatorship of the proletariat. But unfortunately, we cannot see any such positive development during Mao's lifetime." (par. 7.5)

Wrong again – incredibly wrong. To begin with, this is tailist and a worshipping of spontaneity. Ironically, this is the "flip side" (or "mirror opposite") of the argument that is frequently made that all the Cultural Revolution represented was power struggles among elite cliques with the masses used as pawns. The Cultural Revolution was not "spontaneous" – the Cultural Revolution, like all great revolutionary undertakings, was in a fundamental sense the creation of the masses, *but* the masses were given leadership in this by a communist vanguard (recall how Mao says that "we have launched it ourselves", referring to the proletarian headquarters in the Communist Party). Without this leadership there would not have been a Great

Proletarian Cultural Revolution – it would have been rather quickly suppressed, if it got off the ground at all, and certainly it would not have reached the heights and achieved the great transformations it did. The Cultural Revolution was the combination of the initiative of the masses with the leadership of a communist vanguard.

The authors of the CRC document don't want to recognize this because it doesn't fit in with their line of pitting the masses *against* the party – their line of declaring the party's leadership in the dictatorship of the proletariat to be nothing but "the dictatorship of the party" over the masses. Hence their statement that the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was "actually a struggle against the structures of the bureaucratisation existing under the dictatorship of the proletariat". No, it was not "actually" that. It was actually what Mao said it was – a revolutionary struggle whose target was the Party persons in authority *taking the capitalist road*.

Let's move on to how this CRC document characterizes Mao's discussions with Chang Chun-chiao regarding the Shanghai Commune. The document says that, "As can be seen in Mao's discussions with Chang Chun-chiao with regard to the Shanghai Commune, he had no new answer to the basic question which confronted them during the Cultural Revolution. Instead he went back to the theme of the party's ultimate authority to safeguard the dictatorship of the proletariat." (par. 7.5)

Here the CRC document misses the whole point. The problem is not that Mao "had no new answer" – the problem is that the authors of this document don't "get" Mao's answer. Mao's essential point was that under the conditions then prevailing in China, and with the international context in mind, the commune form that had been developed during the upsurge of the Cultural Revolution in Shanghai was not an appropriate form for the dictatorship of the proletariat at that point – it did not conform to the material conditions and in particular the relative strength of the opposing classes under the existing conditions. In other words, if they attempted to maintain the Shanghai Commune (and implement it throughout China), including a rather strict adherence to the model

of the Paris Commune of 1871, then the counterrevolutionaries would be able either to outright overthrow proletarian rule or else make use of the commune form and turn it into its opposite, using it to actually usurp power from the masses and then suppress them. Again, this is because of the underlying contradictions in socialist society and because of the international situation.

This is the point of Mao's analogy to the Paris Commune itself. He said that if the Paris Commune had not been crushed, it would have become a bourgeois commune. In other words, given the actual situation at that time, if the Paris Commune had lasted and the attempt had been made to maintain the dictatorship of the proletariat in that form, it would have been taken over from within by bourgeois forces.

Mao emphasizes, tellingly, that the essence of the matter lies not with the form but with the content. And he applies this to the experience of the Soviet Union:

"In regard to the form of soviet political power, as soon as it materialized, Lenin was elated, deeming it a remarkable creation by workers, peasants, and soldiers, as well as a new form of proletarian dictatorship. Nonetheless, Lenin had not anticipated then that although the workers, peasants and soldiers could use this form of political power, it could also be used by the bourgeoisie, and by Khrushchev. Thus, the present soviet has been transformed from Lenin's soviet to Khrushchev's soviet." (*Mao Miscellany*, vol. 2, p. 452)

Here again, the authors of this CRC document actually quote this but they miss the whole point – they dismiss Mao's profound historical observations as "Mao's confusion"! (par. 7.5) It is not Mao but the authors of this CRC document who are, profoundly, confused. It seems they have become so blinded with bourgeois-democratic formalism, and bourgeois-democratic prejudice and illusions in general, that they really don't understand that Mao is summing up the overall lesson that, so long as classes, and in particular the bourgeoisie, are around, then there is no form that, in itself, can constitute an impenetrable barrier against capitalist restoration. That the bourgeoisie can take over, and use for its own purposes, forms developed in the exercise of the dic-

9. In fact, the line of of the CRC document here is basically in unity with the "left" opportunist line that was put forward during the Cultural Revolution – the line which declared that the entire leadership of the Communist Party and the state (with the exception of Mao and a few others) was revisionist, and therefore it was necessary to "suspect all", even to "overthrow all". This was a line that, had it established itself in command of the Cultural Revolution, would have sabotaged it and strengthened the hand of the real revisionists, headed by Liu Shao-chi [Liu Shaoqi] and Deng Xiaoping; and in fact the revisionist headquarters led by them promoted or in any case made use of this "left" line in an attempt to derail the Cultural Revolution.

tatorship of the proletariat.

This is why the essence (the principal aspect) of the matter is the content, not the form. This understanding of Mao's is also reflected in his, unfortunately, prophetic observation: "If we should be overthrown and the bourgeoisie came to power, they would have no need to change the name, but would still call it the People's Republic of China. The main thing is which class seizes political power. That is the fundamental question, not what its name is." (*Mao Miscellany*, vol.2, p. 453)

These were the key points Mao was making in his discussions with Chang Chun-chiao: he was calling attention to the fact that both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat can make use of the formal structures created under the dictatorship of the proletariat, and that attention must be focused on the content – the *class* content – not the form; and, more specifically, he was saying that, under the conditions of that time, the adoption of the commune form would actually be more favourable for the bourgeoisie than the proletariat – it would *weaken* the proletariat in exercising its dictatorship and strengthen the hand of the bourgeoisie in overthrowing that dictatorship, or subverting it from within and turning it into its opposite. As a key part of this analysis, Mao particularly stressed that there has to be a vanguard leadership. He says, I don't care if you call it a communist party, or by some other name, you're still going to have a core of leadership.

This is not because Mao was determined to impose "the dictatorship of the party", but fundamentally because of all the things that have been said here about the underlying contradictions involved in the transition from capitalism to communism worldwide and how the revolutionary energy and enthusiasm of the masses and the class struggle overall proceeds in waves, or through spirals, and not in a straight line. To reiterate this crucial point: these underlying contradictions in socialist society – particularly between mental and manual labour, but also between the city and countryside, and workers and peasants, and other such major social contradictions – will express themselves in the fact that there will be an *objective difference* between the advanced section of the class and the class as a whole.

This, in turn, will express itself in the fact that there will be some kind or other of leading core – and if it is not a proletarian leading core, it will be a bourgeois one, whether openly or in "socialist" guise. This is related to the basic point that if a correct line is not in command, an incorrect line will be. And a correct line has to be *consciously* struggled for and applied. If you try to go about *spontaneously* exercising the dictatorship of the proletariat, you will hand things over to the bourgeoisie.

All this is why, as Mao says, there has to be a party as the leading core. And this is one of the essential reasons why, under the conditions of the time, the commune form would not work – would weaken the proletarian dictatorship and aid the bourgeoisie in outright overthrowing this dictatorship or taking it over from within.

To all this must be added the whole international situation: what institutions and measures are necessary to deal with the threat of imperialist attack, and how that interrelates with the existence of classes and class struggle within the socialist society and all the contradictions that have been talked about in this connection. Mao's discussion of this question is based on a profound grasp of, and represents a profound grappling with, these questions. But the CRC document has "missed" all this and instead applies a shallow formalistic approach.

So, it is simplistic and misses the essence of the matter to say that Mao "went back to the theme of the Party's ultimate authority to safeguard the dictatorship of the proletariat". Mao definitely did continue to uphold the overall leading role of the Party, but at the same time he insisted that the Party itself had to be revolutionized as part of revolutionizing society as a whole. Even the way in which the Communist Party was reconstituted as a result of the upsurge of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution shows that Mao was striving to apply as far as possible the basic principles and spirit of the Paris Commune while recognizing that it was not possible to strictly apply many of the specific forms and policies of the Commune. The Party was reconstituted, from the basic levels on up, in an open-door way, through open mass meetings where people in the Party units to be

reconstituted were subjected to the criticism and overall supervision of the masses. Once again, this was an application of the basic principles and spirit of the Paris Commune; it was an expression of the fact that the dictatorship of the proletariat was being exercised by *the masses* with the *leadership* of the party.

As for mass forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Mao supported and popularized the revolutionary committee as the form most appropriate for leadership under the conditions of the time – and the revolutionary committees too, it should be pointed out, were fundamentally the creation of the masses, with the leadership of the proletarian headquarters in the Party. This form first arose out of the mass upsurge in the Northeast of China, particularly in Heilungkiang (Heilong Jiang) Province, and then this was summed up and popularized – and, yes, institutionalized – throughout society, on all levels. This was a "new thing" of great significance created through the Cultural Revolution: a way, as mentioned earlier, of combining the masses with leading cadres of the Party and state in actual forms of government and administration on all levels of Chinese society.

The conclusion the CRC document draws on this point reflects no understanding of all this. The document simply says:

"Mao's main point is that what matters is not the form of the state structure but which class seizes power. This shows that Marx's emphasis on the new *form* of state under the dictatorship of the proletariat was almost forgotten." (par. 7.5, emphasis in original)

Shows this to whom?! It does not show this at all. Yet one more time, the authors of this CRC document have read (and even quoted) but not understood. On the contrary, what this experience really shows is that Mao in particular paid great attention to this question. While stressing that form in itself is not the essence of the matter, Mao at the same time paid great attention to the unity of the form and content of the dictatorship of the proletariat, especially to the development of new forms which increasingly enabled the masses to strengthen their rule in society – to exercise all-around dictatorship over the bourgeoisie and be the masters of the socialist economy.

It was Mao who earlier had led and supported the masses in the creation of the rural people's communes, in the face of bitter opposition from the revisionists in Party leadership. The people's communes, while not strictly following the Paris Commune model in every respect, applied basic principles of the Paris Commune. They were new forms of socialist production and social relations, and new transformations in the superstructure, which combined a further advance in public ownership in the economy with more advanced forms of administration involving the broad masses. More generally, Mao also summed up and popularized advanced experience in establishing, in both industry and agriculture, new forms of more advanced socialist production relations, new means of breaking down the old division of labour and involving the masses in management and administration while involving managers, administrators, and intellectual workers generally in productive labour together with the masses of working people. And, of course, all this took a still greater leap forward through the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

Ignoring this rich historical experience, the CRC document persists with its idealist formalism. A few pages later, it returns to and extends its misunderstanding, or misrepresentation, of the profound point Mao is actually making – the real lesson he is drawing – concerning the historical fact that Lenin's Soviets were transformed into Khrushchev's Soviets. The document actually argues that, "Mao had also not grasped the importance of a new political organisational structure" and that, in Mao's view, "the discovery of Soviets was of no significance". (par. 8.11)

This is unbelievable! As we have seen, this is not Mao's point at all. And it is an irony worth noting that earlier the CRC document argued that the Soviets, once they came under institutionalized Party leadership, represented nothing qualitatively new, even though Lenin stressed that it was the Soviets, not the Party itself, that performed the functions of government and that the Soviets were "special institutions" of a "new type" (see CRC document, pars. 5.7-5.8). Now this CRC document attributes to Mao the argument that the Soviets

represented nothing qualitatively new, when Mao is not saying anything of the kind and is making a completely different point.

Let's look at the CRC document's further evaluation of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution:

"The Cultural Revolution was possible only because of the leadership of Mao and it developed outside the existing political structure. Even though Mao had pointed out that many more Cultural Revolutions will be required during the whole period of socialism, it is quite clear that they are not going to continue in the absence of a system where such Cultural Revolutions are ensured. Mao and other socialist leaders in China could not develop or envisage such a system. What they tried was to establish an all-round dictatorship over the bourgeoisie, using the same old framework of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Such an approach appeared to be only more authoritarian, and even the anti-bureaucratic content of the Cultural Revolution was misrepresented in this context." (par. 7.6)

This is yet more idealism and metaphysics. Given all that has been said here about the contradictory character of socialist society, how could there be such a "guarantee" – what formal institutions or procedures could "ensure" Cultural Revolutions, let alone their success? And we must ask: appeared "only more authoritarian" to whom – to which class? Here once again this document reveals its consistent tendency to tail after the most backward and particularly to pander to bourgeois-democratic prejudices and the bourgeois outlook generally – including, frankly, crude anti-communism. In fact, here this document more or less openly takes up the standpoint of the bourgeoisie and bourgeois intellectuals whom this authority was directed against and who chafed under this authority. In this context it is worth repeating Engels's comments ridiculing the anarchists – comments that, interestingly, use the experience of the Paris Commune as a frame of reference and sum up the following lesson from that experience:

"Have these gentlemen ever seen a revolution? A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is an act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon

the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon, all of which are highly authoritarian means. And the victorious party must maintain its rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries. Would the Paris Commune have lasted more than a day if it had not used the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie? Cannot we, on the contrary, blame it for having made too little use of that authority?" (cited in Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW, vol. 25, pp. 442-43)

Of course, Engels had clearly in mind the class content of the dictatorship of the proletariat – he was not upholding authority in general or in the abstract but precisely the revolutionary authority of the proletariat – and the same applies to Mao and the other "socialist roaders" in China. They upheld and led in giving life and form to the *exercise by the masses of the dictatorship of the proletariat* over the bourgeoisie and those seeking the restoration of capitalism.¹⁰

The Problem of Bureaucracy, The Role of the Party and State Structures Under Socialism

Next, under the heading "Basic Error", this document sets out "to find out where and how Lenin went wrong". But this whole "discovery" only deepens the "basic error" that runs through this whole document. Not only do previous arguments in this document go from bad to worse, but new ones are introduced that represent an even more obvious departure – retreat – from Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. The remainder of this critique of the CRC document will focus primarily on these "new" arguments – which, as we shall see, are not really new at all.

The CRC document says: "In the political structure of the Paris

10. Here it seems necessary to repeat once more the fact that Engels (along with Marx) did not foresee the actual course that the proletarian revolution would take and the actual situation that would be faced by the proletarian dictatorships that have so far existed. Related to this, they did not foresee the length and complexity of the process of transition between capitalism and communism.

This bears on the statement by Engels (quoted earlier in the CRC document)

Commune, the Communist Party was not having any direct role.” (par. 8.4)

To this, once again, with historical perspective, we can only say “Thank god!” By this I mean that, if any of the most influential forces within the Commune had played such a “direct” leadership role, this would have been leadership by a party that did not truly represent the proletariat. This is because the leading forces in the Commune were not really communists: they were socialists, but not scientific socialists. They were political opponents of Marx, and if the Commune had lasted longer and their leadership in it had been consolidated, this would have led to the restoration of capitalism anyway. Once again, the lack of a real, communist vanguard party was a fatal *weakness* of the Commune. This relates to the fundamental point about the limitation of the experience of the Paris Commune and how it is wrong to raise this very limited experience against the much greater experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat since – although in fact the Russian revolution and the Chinese revolution upheld and applied the *basic spirit and orientation* that Marx identified in the Paris Commune.

Let’s move on to another statement in the CRC document:

“The absence of any mention of the role of the party in the whole scheme of the dictatorship of the proletariat as explained in *The State and Revolution* by Lenin is very conspicuous. It may be due to this influence of the political structure of the Paris Commune. But here, unlike in the Paris Commune, the Party was going to play the crucial role because by the time of the October Revolution, a party had already been developed as the vanguard representing the class interests of the proletariat. So this was the crucial theoretical question to be resolved during that

period. Lenin’s total neglect of this question was a serious lapse leading to the basic error in developing the understanding of the dictatorship of the proletariat.” (par. 8.5)

It is true that, in *The State and Revolution*, Lenin was not addressing the question of the party’s role in the dictatorship of the proletariat. His object in writing *The State and Revolution*, in the period between the February 1917 bourgeois-democratic revolution and the October 1917 proletarian revolution, was to demonstrate the need for the violent overthrow of the bourgeois state, the smashing of the old state machine and the creation of a new kind of state – the dictatorship of the proletariat. This, and not the role of the party in the dictatorship of the proletariat, was the crucial theoretical question that had to be taken up right at that decisive moment.

The State and Revolution was a polemic against the opportunist “socialists” of the time (Kautsky being the most “prestigious” and influential) who were denying the need for violent revolution and proletarian dictatorship and were distorting the basic Marxist teaching on the state – that it is an instrument of class suppression, which arose with the development of class antagonisms and will itself be eliminated with the elimination of these antagonisms and of class distinctions generally through the revolution of the proletariat and its radical transformation of society and the state. In writing this polemic, Lenin was basing himself on what Marx and Engels had summed up from the only historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat so far, the Paris Commune. The question of the role of the vanguard communist party in the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat had not yet come sharply into focus.

It is not inconceivable that on the

basis of extrapolating from the experience of the Paris Commune – and specifically the fact that there was no real communist vanguard in the Commune – Lenin might have reached some conclusions about the need for the party to play a vanguard role not only in overthrowing the old state power but in creating and exercising the new. But to suggest that, because he did not do so in *The State and Revolution*, this represents some kind of “serious lapse” that led to a “basic error” is yet another example of idealist and metaphysical thinking.

It was precisely through the experience of the October Revolution and then the exercise of power by the proletariat that this question of the party’s leading role was brought to the fore. At that point, Lenin certainly did take up this question, in the realm of theory as well as practice, continuously over the next several years. His writings and speeches in this period (the first few years of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Republic and the last few years of Lenin’s life) are full of discussion of this question and a wrangling over the contradictions involved with this – in fact, earlier this CRC document cited some of these writings and speeches (of course in a distorted way in order to accuse Lenin of advocating the “dictatorship of the party” over the masses).¹¹

The way this question actually arose illustrates the real relationship between practice and theory, and the fact that, as Lenin said, the most important function of theory is to address the pressing problems of the day, the actual theoretical problems thrown up by practice.

So let’s go on to another statement in the CRC document:

“After the seizure of power in October, the Congress of the Soviets became the formal authority of the new political power. But actually,

that the lack of sufficiently strong centralization and authority was fatal to the Paris Commune and that, on the other hand, “*Once you have won you can do with this authority what you like.*” (Engels, cited in CRC document, par. 3.5, “Letter to Carlo Terraghi,” on the Paris Commune), emphasis added in the CRC document) The crucial point is that arriving at a situation where “you have won” – where the victory of the proletariat has been secured so firmly and

irrevocably that the need for a powerful centralization and authority no longer exists (“can be done with as you like”) – can only be the outcome of a protracted class struggle, both within socialist society and internationally, all during which this centralized power and authority must be firmly upheld and exercised...by relying on the masses, with the leadership of the communist vanguard. It is precisely *this* centralization and authority that the CRC document is repudiating.

11. It could be argued that the very fact that (even in his writings that were only published after his death) Lenin did not address this question in any systematic way until after the October Revolution is a blow against the accusation that Lenin had intended all along to institute a “dictatorship of the party” and moreover that there is a thread running from *What Is To Be Done?* to this “dictatorship of the party” (an argument commonly made by social-democrats and such types).

the party was playing the crucial role in evolving all important policies and tactics behind the scene. In effect the party was controlling the Soviets, though its specific role in the new state structure was not defined." (par. 8.6)

Here, disturbingly, we see the CRC document raising the spectre commonly raised by the bourgeoisie – the spectre of those sneaky communists with their hidden agendas! We also see this document once again putting forward its familiar bourgeois formalism (complaining that the formal structures of democracy were not really being adhered to), but now this is done in the name of *opposing* formalism (the Soviets were only the formal authority but the communists were actually controlling things behind the scene). In fact, this was not at all "behind the scene". Earlier, this CRC document quoted Lenin saying that the Bolsheviks had "told the world" of the indispensable leading role of the party. The fact is that the Party's role was being more and more clearly defined as the overall leading force in the dictatorship of the proletariat, in dialectical relation with the masses, who were mobilized to exercise this dictatorship. This is precisely how Lenin dealt with it in theory and in practice, and so too did Stalin, in the main, especially early on (recall Mao's comment about how at first under Stalin's leadership they had nothing to rely on but the masses and so Stalin demanded all-out mobilization of the party and the masses, although later, after they had made some gains this way, they became less reliant on the masses).

The CRC document goes on to say: "So, under the pressure of the circumstances, in the face of both external and internal threats, the party was forced to play the central role, relegating the Soviets to the background." (par. 8.7)

Once again, it is a vulgarization and fundamentally wrong to say that the Soviets were "relegated to the background". Even "under the pressure of the circumstances", and with a necessary shift in the relative weight of the Soviets, in relation to other institutions – including especially the Party – in the administration of society and the overall exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat (as discussed earlier), the Soviets were still relied on to perform the func-

tions of government, under the leadership of the Party, as Lenin said. But here it is necessary to return to the larger historical question concerning the rôle of soviets (and similar institutions and mass organizations) in the process of socialist revolution and the advance to communism.

Stalin, in a talk on the Chinese revolution, and specifically in answering a question about the formation and role of soviets in that revolution (this was in 1927, in the early stages of the Chinese revolution), discussed how soviets are "organs of an uprising against the existing power, organs of struggle for a new revolutionary power, organs of the new revolutionary power". (Stalin, "Talk with Students of the Sun Yat-Sen University", May 13, 1927, Eighth Question, in *On the Opposition*, Peking: FLP, p. 689) Without getting into the specific, and rather complicated, tactical questions that Stalin was speaking to, relating to the Chinese revolution in that period, there is an important, more universal question that Stalin is touching on. In the experience of the Bolshevik revolution (and this was also true of the Chinese revolution in those situations where soviets were set up), the soviets were brought into being in the course of mass upsurge, and for a period after the seizure of power¹² they retained the same dynamism that had characterized them in this upsurge. But it was bound to be the case that this could not be sustained on the same level, in a sort of "linear" way for a protracted period of time.

This, too, is related to the points made earlier about the problem of maintaining the revolutionary energy and enthusiasm of the masses and how the class struggle and the revolutionary upsurges of the masses are bound to develop in wave-like or spiral manner in socialist society (as well as in capitalist society). This is bound to be reflected also in the degree of dynamism – or, at times, the relative lack of dynamism – of organs like the soviets under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The fact that, in the Soviet Union, the Soviets at any given time may not have had the same dynamism that they had during

12. In the Chinese revolution this refers to the seizure of power in parts of the country well before the nationwide seizure of power.

the period when the masses were rising up to seize power and then in the first years when they were beginning to exercise power – this is an expression of this objective wave-like development and not of sneaky and sinister attempts of the Bolsheviks to replace the dictatorship of the proletariat with the dictatorship of the party, as the CRC document alleges.

And, contrary to what this document says, Lenin did not make it a principle that "only the party", and not the masses, "can exercise the dictatorship". (par. 8.7) He grappled seriously with the problem of how to involve the masses in the administration of the state and how to combat bureaucratic tendencies that interfered with this. Again, his writings in the last few years of his life are full of grappling with this question, while at the same time he was forced to recognize that a bureaucracy of some kind or another could not be eliminated for a long time to come.

One of the most important ways in which Lenin led struggle against bureaucratization and the tendency for the Communist Party, as a party in power, to become corrupted was the campaign conducted to purge the Party of careerists – particularly of people who joined the Party when power had been consolidated and the Party was playing a leading role in the institutions of society, in the economic and political life of the country. Lenin insisted that the Party, especially now that it was the leading force of a proletariat in power, must continue to be made up of those who join it expecting and prepared for self-sacrifice in the interests of the proletariat. In 1921, in the period after the victorious civil war against home-grown reactionaries linked with a number of imperialist powers, Lenin said this about the purging of the Party:

"The purging of the Party has obviously developed into a serious and vastly important affair.

"In some places the Party is being purged mainly with the aid of the experience and suggestions of non-Party workers; these suggestions and the representatives of the non-Party proletarian masses are being heeded with due consideration. That is the most valuable and most important thing. If we really succeed in purging our Party from top to bottom *in this way*, without exceptions, it will

indeed be an enormous achievement for the revolution.

"...the Party must be purged of those who have lost touch with the masses (let alone, of course, those who discredit the Party in the eyes of the masses). Naturally, we shall not submit to everything the masses say, because the masses, too, sometimes – particularly in time of exceptional weariness and exhaustion resulting from excessive hardship and suffering – yield to sentiments that are in no way advanced. But in appraising persons, in the negative attitude to those who have 'attached' themselves to us for selfish motives, to those who have become 'puffed-up commissars' and 'bureaucrats', the suggestions of the non-Party proletarian masses and, in many cases, of the non-Party peasant masses, are extremely valuable. The working masses have a fine intuition, which enables them to distinguish honest and devoted Communists from those who arouse the disgust of people earning their bread by the sweat of their brow, enjoying no privileges and having no 'pull'.

"To purge the Party it is very important to take the suggestions of the non-Party working people into consideration. It will produce big results. It will make the Party a much stronger vanguard of the class than it was before; it will make it a vanguard that is more strongly bound up with the class, more capable of leading it to victory amidst a mass of difficulties and dangers." (Lenin, "Purging the Party", *LCW*, vol. 33, pp. 39-40, emphasis in original)

Such Party purges and other measures against bureaucratization adopted under Lenin's leadership could not and did not, by themselves, solve the problem – they did not and could not resolve the underlying contradictions that gave rise to bureaucratization, to careerism among party and state officials, and so on. But these policies unmistakably show the determination of Lenin to combat such careerism and bureaucratization and any tendency to turn the party and state into their opposite – into instruments of dictatorship over the masses.

This problem required new innovations, new means and methods of struggle – and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China was

such a new innovation, such new means and methods of revolutionary struggle, under the dictatorship of the proletariat. But, as Mao said, one Cultural Revolution could not solve all the problems. Nor could it eliminate the objective wave-like character of the class struggle and mass upsurges. As Mao said, there will have to be many Cultural Revolutions along the road to the final achievement of communism, yet there cannot be Cultural Revolutions all the time. During those times when a Cultural Revolution is not possible, bureaucratic tendencies must be combated and, more fundamentally, the means must be found for mobilizing the conscious activism of the masses to the maximum degree possible. But none of this can provide an iron-clad guarantee against capitalist restoration or change the fact that there will be periods in which the revolutionary "tenseness" and initiative of the masses is not at a high peak, even in socialist society.

Related to this is the approach of the party, as the leading force in the dictatorship of the proletariat, to the question of dissent and the clash of opinions, both within its own ranks and generally in society. In "End/Beginning" and in a number of other works, following Mao I have stressed the importance of allowing, even encouraging, these things under the dictatorship of the proletariat as a general principle. But, at the same time, it must be recognized that this question, too, cannot be dealt with in the abstract, formalistically, according to some notion of "pure" or "classless" democracy – it, too, will be decisively influenced by the actual conditions and in particular the class relations and class struggle, both within the socialist society and internationally.

Sometimes it will be possible – it will conform to the interests of the proletariat – to "open wide" in terms of such debate, dissent, etc., and the party must not hesitate to seize on such opportunities to "open wide"; at other times, it will be necessary to "close ranks" more and carry out ideological struggle, debate and so on in a more restricted way, and the party must also not hesitate to adopt *this* approach when it is required by the conditions at hand. Yet, through all this, the guiding principle must be that the forms must be found, both within the party and among the

broad masses, for debate, dissent, ideological struggle and so on – forms appropriate to the conditions and corresponding to the interests of the proletariat in the given situation; and every opportunity should be seized to "open wide" to the greatest degree possible consistent with the interests of the proletariat – with the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat by the masses and the continuation of the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, with the leadership of the vanguard communist party.

This must be done even though it is bound to involve risking a lot and repeatedly upsetting the established order under socialism – it must be done in a way that does not strengthen but undermines the basis for the old, capitalist order to be restored. This relates back to "the positive side of unresolved contradictions under socialism" and to the related principle that:

"The party in socialist society must act as the vanguard not only in terms of being a party in power but *also* in terms of actively involving itself in and leading – actually unleashing and winning leadership of – mass struggle in opposition to those aspects of the *status quo* which at any given time have become obstacles to the further revolutionization of society, which stand in opposition to the new revolutionary forces being brought forward. In short, be a party in power *and* a vanguard of revolutionary struggle against any parts of power that are blocking the road to complete liberation." (Avakian, "A Final Note", *Revolution*, Fall 1990, p. 46, emphasis in original)

All this involves profound questions that must be grappled with – but, again, they must be seriously grappled with from the standpoint of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and its summation of the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat, not on the basis of repudiating this and looking for "simple answers" that pit the party against the masses in what is, frankly, a classical anti-communist manner. What the *Declaration* of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement emphasizes is all the more important in light of recent world events:

"The summation of historical experience has, itself, always been a sharp arena of class struggle. Ever

since the defeat of the Paris Commune, opportunists and revisionists have seized upon the defeats and shortcomings of the proletariat to reverse right and wrong, confound the secondary with the principal, and thus conclude that the proletariat 'should not have taken to arms'. The emergence of new conditions has often been used as an excuse to negate fundamental principles of Marxism under the signboard of its 'creative development'. At the same time, it is incorrect and just as damaging to abandon the Marxist critical spirit, to fail to sum up the shortcomings as well as the successes of the proletariat, and to rest content with upholding or reclaiming positions considered correct in the past. Such an approach would make Marxism-Leninism brittle and unable to withstand the attacks of the enemy and incapable of leading new advances in the class struggle – and suffocate its revolutionary essence.

"In fact, history has shown that real creative developments of Marxism (and not phoney revisionist distortions) have always been inseparably linked with a fierce struggle to defend and uphold basic principles of Marxism-Leninism. Lenin's twofold struggle against the open revisionists and against those, like Kautsky, who opposed revolution under the guise of 'Marxist orthodoxy' and Mao Tsetung's great battle to oppose the modern revisionists and their negation of the experience of building socialism in the USSR under Lenin and Stalin while carrying out a thorough and scientific criticism of the roots of revisionism are evidence of this.

"Today a similar approach is necessary to the thorny questions and problems of the history of the international communist movement." (RIM Declaration, p. 13)

Unfortunately, the CRC document departs from and goes in opposition to this correct approach. And, in insisting on "Two practical steps taken by the Paris Commune...a political system run through revocable agents of power and the replacement of the standing army by the armed people"; in claiming to dig deeper from this perspective into the "dynamics" of political power (pars. 8.9-8.10), this document descends more fully into a bourgeois standpoint. It begins with this characterization of the nature of the state:

"In a class society, the dominant class wields political power claiming to represent the whole society. This reflects a contradiction between the political will of the ruling class and that of the society as a whole. *It is to resolve this contradiction* that power is concentrated in the state structure and wielded by the ruling class as its executive power. So this concentration of the political will of the ruling class in the name of the political will of the whole society, in the concrete form of the state, especially in its armed might, is characteristic of the political power so far existing in class society." (par. 8.10., emphasis added)

This is an incorrect characterization of the contradictions involved and the essence of the matter. The wielding of political power by the dominant class is not fundamentally or essentially aimed at resolving the "contradiction between the political will of the ruling class and that of the society as a whole". Fundamentally and in essence, it is aimed at dealing with the contradiction – the *antagonism* – between that dominant class and the class (or classes) over which it must exercise dictatorship in order to maintain its dominant position in society. And this is rooted, not in an abstract conflict of "political wills", but in underlying material conditions – the conflict of class interests corresponding to certain definite material relations of production. As Raymond Lotta has incisively summarized it:

"The state is an objective structure of society whose character is determined not by the class origins of its leading personnel but by the *specific social division of labour of which it is an extension and the production relations which it must ultimately serve and reproduce.*" (Lotta, "Realities of Social-Imperialism Versus Dogmas of Cynical Realism: The Dynamics of the Soviet Capital Formation", in *The Soviet Union: Socialist or Social Imperialist? Part 2: The Question Is Joined*, Chicago: RCP Publications, 1983, p. 41, emphasis added)

As opposed to this, the CRC document's presentation of this question – focusing on the "contradiction between the political will of the ruling class and that of the society as a whole" – is an idealist one that leads in the direction of covering over the *class nature* of the state (and, as we

shall see, this is exactly the direction in which this document is heading). The document continues this presentation as follows:

"The proletariat is aiming at qualitatively breaking with this structure. It must initiate a process which makes the society as a whole capable of reabsorbing this concentrated power. And the replacement of the standing army by the armed people is a concrete initial step in this direction. But in the absence of a complete economic, political, social system which guarantees this reabsorption, this alone will not serve the purpose. In the whole process, conditions and structures should be created so that the (political) will of the whole society can get expressed and realised directly without the mediation of a state. It is only then that the proletariat can achieve its goal of a society where the state withers away. If the proletariat cannot put forward such an alternative political system, it cannot make any qualitative break with the existing bourgeois system." (par. 8.10)

To begin with the last part here, this is a continuation of an idealist and metaphysical "inversion" on the relation of economics and politics as well as an application of metaphysics and idealism with regard to politics itself – in particular the state. All this leaves out the decisive question of the *transformation of the economic base* in terms of making a "qualitative break with the existing bourgeois system" – it separates the question of "bringing forward an alternative political system" from the economic base, or at the very least takes no account of the question of transforming the economic base and how this interacts with the creation of a new kind of state, which in turn will lead to the withering away of the state. In passing, it refers to "a complete economic, political, social system which guarantees this reabsorption", but then it focuses primary and overwhelming attention on the question of the political system, rather than focusing on the underlying material conditions and discussing the political system in this context – in dialectical relation with the underlying and ultimately decisive economic conditions.

As for its formulation that, "In the whole process, conditions and structures should be created so that the (political) will of the whole society

can get expressed and realised directly without the mediation of a state": this leaves out of the picture something very decisive that will characterize this "whole process" – namely the existence of classes and class struggle, above all the antagonistic contradiction and struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, but also the contradiction and struggle between the workers and peasants, between the working people and intellectuals, and other social contradictions which reflect class contradiction or contain the seeds of class contradiction and even class antagonism.

It is true that, *with the achievement of communism*, involving revolutionary transformation of both the economic base and the superstructure, the political and administrative system that will then exist will in fact express the will of society as a whole – although *not* without contradictions. However, the process of achieving communism cannot be conceived of as though it occurs, not through revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat to resolve profound social contradictions and class conflicts, but through the more or less linear and evolutionary development of structures that express "the political will of the whole society" and "the reabsorption of state power by the whole society". (par. 10.3)

Next we are told that "the whole system of the dictatorship of the proletariat so far practised, starting from Lenin and up to Mao, failed" (par. 8.11), because it did not put forward the CRC document's version of an "alternative political system" and did not conform to this document's vision of how to bring about the withering away of the state (or "the reabsorption of state power by the whole society"). To this, once again, we can say "thank god!" If, in reality, this "whole system of the dictatorship of the proletariat so far practised" had attempted to carry out the line of this CRC document, this proletarian dictatorship would have been undermined and overthrown far more rapidly than it was, and the international proletariat would have been robbed of a whole historical experience rich in *real* lessons. And we can add that we wish this proletarian dictatorship had "failed" the CRC document's test even more thoroughly – or, to put it positively,

that it had *succeeded* not only as far as it did in preventing the rise to power of the bourgeoisie but beyond that and down to the present time.

To restate and re-emphasize the crucial point and the crucial difference between Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and the social-democratic line of this CRC document on the question of the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular: *This document acts as if, once you have the dictatorship of the proletariat, the essential thing in the advance to communism is the extension of democracy – formal democracy. In reality, the essential thing is the class struggle – this is the key link, as Mao made clear.*

Formulations which are in some ways similar, on the surface, to some of what is said in this CRC document on "the reabsorption of state power by the whole society" can be found in Marx and Engels (and Lenin), but this document misses (or dismisses) the essence: the state arises on the basis of the split-up of society into antagonistic classes and it exists as the organ of one class – the economically dominant class – in suppressing others: it is an instrument of class dictatorship. This is spelled out very clearly and fully by Engels in "The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State": "The state, then, has not existed from all eternity. There have been societies that did without it, that had no idea of the state and state power. At a certain stage of economic development, which was necessarily bound up with the split of society into classes, the state became a necessity owing to this split." (Engels, "Origin", in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works [MESW]*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, vol. 3., p. 330) And, the state, wherever it exists and whatever the form of government, is "essentially a machine for keeping down the oppressed, exploited class". (ibid., p. 332)

"Society as a whole" *has no* "political will" – certainly not in class society. *Classes* can be said to have "political will"; and, once again, state power (dictatorship) is exercised by the dominant class in order to deal with the contradiction between the "political will" – or, more fundamentally, the objective class interest – of the dominant class and that of the classes it exploits and

oppresses.

Here an essential point to focus on is the fact that the most concentrated expression of state power is the armed force of the state *and* the fact that, so long as there is a state – so long, in other words, as society is divided into classes – the armed forces will *represent one class or another*. Such armed forces cannot represent "the whole people" or "the society as a whole" without class distinction. Under the conditions of socialism – which is not only a class society but a society marked by *antagonistic* class divisions – calls for abolishing the standing (full-time, professional) army and replacing it by the arming of "the whole people" amount to calling for the abolition of the proletariat's monopoly of armed force, which in turn amounts to calling for the abolition of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Once more, this is because the fundamental contradictions marking socialist society as a transition from capitalism to communism constitute a material basis for the continuing existence of classes and specifically the continual regeneration of the bourgeoisie, the continual engendering of the new bourgeoisie, both from among the functionaries of the party and state apparatus and from among the ranks of the people generally. In this situation, the abolition of a standing army *under the leadership of the party of the proletariat (its single communist vanguard party)*¹³ and its replacement by the arming of "the whole people" would result, in reality, in the development of *different* armed forces *representing different classes*, including the bourgeoisie. And this would be the case even if the overthrown ruling classes and their (open) supporters were excluded from the category of "the whole people" that is to be armed in place of the standing army of the proletarian state. The armed forces of the proletariat would be undermined and weakened; and the strength, including the armed strength, of other class forces, including bourgeois forces aiming at capitalist restoration, would be built up. In fact, in such a situation it would be impossible for the proletariat to retain state power and continue the advance toward communism. And this can be seen to be all the more the case when it is kept in mind that "domestic" counterrevolu-

tionaries would invariably seek out alliances with foreign imperialist powers and other reactionary states. Thus, the abolition of a full-time, highly trained armed force of the proletarian state would fatally cripple it in the battle against imperialist aggression and against the forces of capitalist restoration within the socialist country itself.

This, of course, does not mean that it is unimportant to arm the broad masses under socialism and that the standing army can be relied on by itself to safeguard the rule of the proletariat. In fact, both from the point of view of combating armed counterrevolutionary attacks (and imperialist aggression) and from the point of view of carrying out the revolutionary transformation of society toward the abolition of class divisions (and, with them, the state), it is necessary and vital to have a situation in which the broad masses are "in arms" and, more than that, are organized and trained, in a vast people's militia, alongside the standing army of the proletarian state (until such time as the standing army can be abolished).

But the decisive question, both with regard to the standing army and with regard to the people's militia, is whether the guns are in the hands of the masses in *actual fact* and *not just formally*. This question hinges on the nature of leadership that is exercised in the standing army and the militia. And, in turn, the nature of this leadership finds concentrated expression in *line* – both ideological and political line in its general expression and also its expression in concrete policies. This involves the internal relations within the armed forces (including the militia) and the

relations between these armed forces and the masses of people; it also involves the formulation of the fundamental purpose and aim of these armed forces and the principles of fighting, doctrine, and so on that flow from this.

In all this, the recognition of class differences among the people and the insistence on the leading role of the proletariat and its vanguard party, as concentrated in its line and policies, is decisive. It is this – it is the consistent application of this approach and the continual struggle focusing on line – which is decisive in determining whether or not the armed forces of the proletarian state represent the armed power of the masses acting in accordance with the revolutionary interests of the proletariat.

Liquidating Class Analysis in the Name of Opposing "Class Reductionism"

This is clearly not the standpoint of the CRC document. This document obscures the class nature of the state. In fact, its analysis of the state and the process of the withering away of the state ("the reabsorption of state power by the whole society") involves a fundamental distortion concerning not only the proletarian state but the *bourgeois* state as well. Under the heading "Bourgeois Dictatorship and Proletarian Democracy", we are offered this (re)evaluation:

"It was absolutely correct on the part of Lenin to evaluate that all different forms of bourgeois states are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and that all the different possible forms of transitional prole-

tarian state are essentially the dictatorship of the proletariat. But this aspect of dictatorship is only the essential part, not the whole of it. A bourgeois democratic state deals with an important question of human society, the contradiction between individual and society. But a bourgeois fascist state does not give room for dealing with that contradiction at the same level, even though both are essentially dictatorships of the bourgeoisie. For the first time in the history of the human society bourgeois democracy recognises the individual as a political entity and gives him/her a role in the political system, though formally. The weakness of this bourgeois democracy is that it is based on the rule of private property whereby it ensures the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Thus the equality professed by it becomes not only formal, but also bogus."¹⁴ (par. 9.1)

First of all, to critique bourgeois democracy in terms of its "weakness", in the way this CRC document does, is itself quite revealing! But beyond that, it is imprecise and incorrect to simply say that bourgeois democracy is "based on the rule of private property". It is based on the rule of *bourgeois* property. This might seem like a minor, even insignificant, point – and in other contexts it might be – but in the context of the CRC document's attempt to obscure the class basis and nature of bourgeois democracy, it is necessary to insist on this point and to explore its further implications. Bourgeois property involves, in its essence, the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. Marx and Engels emphasized exactly this point in the *Communist Manifesto*.

13. It might be raised: why could not the standing army, led by the party, be replaced by the organization of the broad masses in militias, also under party leadership? The reasons why it has not been possible so far in socialist society to simply have such militias *in place of* (instead of alongside of) the standing army – and some general assessment of the conditions necessary for such a step – have been discussed earlier. But it should be noted that the point I have emphasized here – the leading role of the party over the armed forces (standing army and militia) – is precisely what the CRC document must object to. For what is more indicative of a "dictatorship of the party" than the fact that it exercises leadership

over the armed forces? Such leadership must mean, according to the CRC document's logic, that the party has a monopoly on armed force, which is the concentrated expression of political power. Obviously, this viewpoint contrasts sharply with what is said here, in this critique of the CRC document, on the role of leadership in the armed forces and how this relates to the fundamental question of whether the armed forces (standing army and militia) really represent the armed power of the masses upholding the revolutionary interests of the proletariat.

14. It is necessary to comment on this formulation "not only formal but also bogus". "Bogus" and "formal" cannot be

so separated here. Since "the equality professed" by bourgeois democracy is and can only be formal, it cannot avoid also having an aspect of being "bogus". But on the other hand it is not entirely "bogus" – it does contain an aspect of real equality. The essential point – the profound point that Marxism emphasizes – is that *all* equality, even that existing under the dictatorship of the proletariat, is at the same time *inequality*. Further, equality, like democracy, reflects a situation where class contradictions still exist; and in fact, equality, with its aspect of inequality, contains the seed of class division even while, in its formal aspect, it appears to admit of no class distinction.

They showed how "modern bourgeois private property...is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few"; and they stressed that, for the communists, abolition of private property means abolition of these relations and conditions – it must be understood "In this sense". (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Peking: FLP, pp. 50, 51)

Private property in general does not necessarily involve this class antagonism. As a general category, private property includes articles of personal consumption and not just private ownership of the means of production. The former (personal consumption articles) do not in themselves involve relations of exploitation; and, for that matter, individual (private) ownership of the means of production does not necessarily involve such relations either (for example, farmland owned and worked by an individual farmer). As Marx and Engels make clear, it is *bourgeois* private property (along with other antagonistic property relations, such as feudalism and slavery) that involve these relations of exploitation and class antagonism; and while communism aims to abolish all private ownership of the means of production, and in fact all commodity production, it draws a clear distinction between various kinds of private property.¹⁵ To simply use the general characterization "private property" here – to simply say that bourgeois democracy is "based on the rule of private property" – is to help conceal the fundamental class antagonism of capitalist society – an antagonism which, as we know, is also covered over by the formal aspect of the relation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in capitalist production (it appears to be a relation based on the

equal exchange of wages for labour-power, while in fact it is a relation of exploitation).

The open hosannas to bourgeois democracy in this passage in the CRC document are rather remarkable ("For the first time in the history of the human society bourgeois democracy recognises the individual as a political entity and gives him/her a role in the political system, though formally"); and it is important to note how bourgeois fascism is contrasted here with bourgeois democracy to make the latter seem even more attractive. Once again, what we have is a distortion that covers over or seeks to mitigate the class antagonism involved in bourgeois democracy.

This whole thing is marked by familiar revisionist eclectics – on the one hand bourgeois-democratic states "are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie" but on the other hand they recognize the individual as a "political entity" and give him/her "a role in the political system, though formally". The CRC document does acknowledge ("though formally") that this character of all bourgeois states as dictatorships is the essence of the matter, but then, applying its eclectic method, it makes this essence non-essential. It focuses on "the contradiction between individual and society" and in fact places this on an equal level with – or, really, above – the essential fact that all forms of bourgeois states are dictatorships. Let's look at this more closely.

As a matter of fact, all states, and not just the bourgeois-democratic state, deal in one way or another not only with classes but with individuals. In this connection it is important to recall the earlier point about how the dictatorship of the proletariat itself involves an aspect of

coercion even toward individuals among the masses who, collectively, are exercising that dictatorship. All states – all dictatorships – uphold the general interests of the ruling class, first of all and essentially against the classes antagonistically opposed to the ruling class, but also against particular interests of members of the ruling class where and insofar as these come into conflict with the general ruling class interests.

It is true that bourgeois democracy does proclaim the rights of individuals in new and different ways from previous forms of the state, but once again it must be stressed that Engels's analysis that the state arises with the emergence of class antagonisms and that in essence *all states* are an instrument of *class suppression* certainly applies as much to the bourgeois-democratic state as to any other state. However, the CRC document explicitly attempts to divorce the relation of the individual to the state in bourgeois-democratic society from class relations and class dictatorship. Thus, we are told that "by equating bourgeois democracy to bourgeois state", Lenin has "neglected the non-class aspect of democracy reflected in the bourgeois democracy. The recognition of the individual's political role in the political system of a society is actually a historical advance in dealing with the non-class contradiction of individual/society." (par. 9.2)

In exposing "how Kautsky turned Marx into a common liberal" – how Kautsky tried to make it seem that Marx did not really mean it when he spoke of the *dictatorship* of the proletariat, for that would be a violation of democracy! – Lenin made this important observation: "As far as the philosophical roots of this phenomenon are concerned, it amounts to the substitution of eclecticism and

15. This critique of the CRC document was written as part of a book, "Phony Communism Is Dead...Long Live Real Communism!" Here it is worth repeating a footnote which appears in a different section of this book:

While, as emphasized here, the aim of the communist revolution is to eliminate all property relations in which people are exploited by other people, and not "to deprive people of their own property", as Brzezinski puts it, on the other hand it is the case that in the transition to communism – and more fully in communist society itself – many things which in

present-day society are owned and disposed of individually (or within the confines of the present nuclear family) will, to varying degrees, become socialized and will be consumed in a socialized context. One example: meals (their preparation as well as their consumption), which today are the province of separate individuals or families – and are a burden particularly on the women of these families. And more generally, with the elimination of commodity production and exchange, things which in present society must first be purchased as commodities in order to be consumed

(including not only food but other basic necessities as well as other articles of personal consumption) will be available to people directly, without the mediation of money (or other commodity equivalents), according to people's needs. In that context – in the absence of commodities and money – although there will remain personal possessions of various kinds (in particular items of personal consumption), these will never be more than personal possessions: they will not be a potential source of privately accumulated wealth that can be turned into capital, into a basis for exploiting others.

sophistry for dialectics.” (“The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky”, *LCW*, vol. 28, pp. 233-34) The familiar substitution of eclectics and sophistry for materialist dialectics is found in the CRC document’s attempt to separate individuals from the social classes they are part of in class society; to attribute a “dualistic” character to the bourgeois state and the contradictions it deals with; to insist on the “non-class aspect” of the bourgeois-democratic state.

In their last great battle against Deng Xiaoping and the other capitalist-roaders in China, Mao and his comrades brought out how Deng & Co. argued that it was necessary to pay attention not only to revolution *but also* to production; that rules and regulations in enterprises dealt not only with the relations between people in production (class relations) *but also* with the relations between people and nature in the process of production (a “non-class contradiction”). The revolutionaries in China pointed out that the relation (or contradiction) between people and nature in production cannot be separated in this way from the relations of people to each other in the process of production (production relations – in class society, class relations). They exposed the revisionists’ eclectics as an attempt to impose rules and regulations with a *bourgeois* class content under the cover of “non-class contradiction” and to oppose Mao’s line of “grasp revolution/promote production” with a line of suffocating revolution under the banner of boosting production.

The CRC document applies the same kind of eclectics with its argument that the bourgeois-democratic state is not only a means of class suppression *but also* has a “non-class aspect”. The substance and effect of this argument amounts to denying or adulterating the quintessential fact that the bourgeois-democratic state means democracy *only* for the *bourgeoisie*, that it means *dictatorship* over the proletariat and masses of people. To “forget” this – and to talk about the “historical advance” of bourgeois democracy “in dealing with the non-class contradiction of individual/ society” – is to forget a fundamental teaching of Marxism: in class society, individuals are, most fundamentally and decisively, members of classes, and

even their individual “wills” are a product of their social conditions and class position and not some individual essence independent of social relations.¹⁶

In order to make even clearer the essence of the question here and to reveal more fully the class basis of – the class outlook and interests represented by – the CRC document’s treatment of the bourgeois-democratic state and its relation to individuals as well as classes, it is worthwhile reviewing some important passages from major Marxist works which shed light on this. First, the following from Engels, in which he lays bare the class content of the self-proclaimed “universal principles” of the bourgeois revolution:

“The great men, who in France prepared men’s minds for the coming [bourgeois] revolution, were themselves extreme revolutionists. They recognised no external authority of any kind whatever. Religion, natural science, society, political institutions – everything was subjected to the most unsparing criticism: everything must justify its existence before the judgment-seat of reason or give up existence....

“Now, for the first time, appeared the light of day, the kingdom of reason; henceforth superstition, injustice, privilege, oppression, were to be superseded by eternal truth, eternal Right, equality based on Nature and the inalienable rights of man.

“We know today that this kingdom of reason was nothing more than the idealised kingdom of the bourgeoisie; that this eternal Right found its realisation in bourgeois justice; that this equality reduced itself to bourgeois equality before the law; that bourgeois property was proclaimed as one of the essential rights of man; and that the govern-

ment of reason, the Contrat Social of Rousseau, came into being, and only could come into being, as a democratic bourgeois republic. The great thinkers of the eighteenth century could, no more than their predecessors, go beyond the limits imposed upon them by their epoch.” (Engels, “Socialism: Utopian and Scientific”, *MESW*, vol. 3, pp. 115-16)

Next, the following, which Marx described as “the guiding principle of my studies”:

“In the social production of their existence, men enter into definite, necessary relations, which are independent of their will, namely, relations of production corresponding to a determinate stage of development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which there arises a legal and political superstructure and to which there correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life-process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary it is their social being that determines their consciousness.” (Marx, Preface and Introduction to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Peking: FLP, p. 3)

Finally, the following from Lenin: “Everyone knows that the masses are divided into classes;... that usually... classes are led by political parties; that political parties, as a general rule, are directed by more or less stable groups composed of the most authoritative, influential and experienced members, who are elected to the most responsible positions and are called leaders. All this is elementary.” (Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*, Peking:

16. It is perhaps necessary to point out that Engels “went overboard” on the question of individual wills in his 1890 letter to Bloch (see Marx and Engels, *Selected Letters*, Peking: FLP, pp. 75-78), in which his purpose was to “counterbalance” the overwhelming emphasis he and Marx had been obliged to put on the role of underlying material (productive) forces in determining human social development. In this letter, Engels ended up describing the conflicts in society as a clash of innumerable individual wills which are ultimately determined by the underly-

ing material forces. This was a description which tended to leave out, or “put to the side”, the fundamental fact that individuals and “individual wills” are shaped by the social position of individuals – and in class society this means above all their class position. But this particular tendency in this particular letter does not change the fact that Engels, and Marxism in general, recognizes the decisive role of classes and class struggle (since the time classes first emerged), which is clear in the *Communist Manifesto* and innumerable other Marxist works.

FLP, Chapter V, pp. 28-29)

The underlying and unifying point here is that those whose outlook corresponds to and is conditioned by the bourgeois world and worldview – and this applies to the petit-bourgeois democrats as well – are incapable of grasping the fundamental material reality that determines the content of a given society and its institutions and ideas. They cannot correctly comprehend the underlying basis and the actual class nature of bourgeois democracy and bourgeois-democratic notions of freedom, individuality, and so on, any more than they can correctly understand the actual content of *proletarian* democracy and proletarian dictatorship. They cannot get right the relations between different classes, between individuals and classes, and between classes as such and their ideological and political leadership (parties).

The CRC document, in its attempt to rationalize its “non-class” analysis (or analysis of “non-class aspects”), cites a passage – or, more accurately, *part* of a passage – from Chapter I of *The German Ideology* by Marx and Engels:

“...in the course of historical evolution.....there appears a division within the life of each individual in so far as it is personal and in so far as it is determined by some branch of labour and the conditions pertaining to it.” (*German Ideology*, p. 66 vol 1, Selected Works, Moscow”).

This is as cited in the CRC document (par. 13.4) – and this is all they cite – there is quite a bit left out. If we look at the whole passage in question, we see that what is left out makes clear that Marx’s and Engels’s meaning is the opposite of what the CRC document implies. Marx and Engels explicitly make the point that individuality in class society takes shape within and is conditioned by the class relations. For example, in the very next sentence after the one cited in this CRC document, Marx and Engels say this: “We do not mean it to be understood from this that, for example, the rentier, the capitalist, etc., cease to be persons; *but their personality is conditioned and determined by quite definite class relationships* and the division appears only in their opposition to another class and, for themselves, only when they go bankrupt.” (*MESW*, vol. 1, p. 66,

emphasis added)

What, in fact, Marx and Engels are getting at here is not that there is a “non-class aspect” to the “life of individuals” in class society, and to their labour in particular, *but* that there is a contradiction in the fact that they exist and carry out their labour as separate individuals yet their role in production and their role in society overall is conditioned and determined by the overall social production process with its division of labour. In capitalist society, their labour (and their overall existence) is bound together by commodity production and exchange and most essentially by the process of capitalist accumulation. Marx and Engels go on to elaborate on this, speaking specifically to the question of individual freedom and how, especially under capitalism and above all for the proletariat, the appearance (individual freedom) is in conflict with the essence (class oppression and exploitation). Here, in this longer passage from the work in question, is how they develop this point:

“In the estate (and even more in the tribe) this is as yet concealed: for instance, a nobleman always remains a nobleman, a commoner always a commoner, apart from his other relationships, a quality inseparable from his individuality. The division between the personal and the class individual, the accidental nature of the conditions of life for the individual, appears only with the emergence of the class, which is itself a product of the bourgeoisie. This accidental character is only engendered and developed by competition and the struggle of individuals among themselves. Thus, *in imagination*, individuals *seem* freer under the dominance of the bourgeoisie than before, because their conditions of life seem accidental; *in reality, of course, they are less free*, because they are more subjected to the violence of things. The difference from the estate comes out particularly in the antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.” (ibid, emphasis added)

In the *Grundrisse*, Marx further elaborates on this, making an observation that is very relevant as an exposure of the position and outlook set forth in this CRC document:

“In the money relation, in the developed system of exchange (and

this semblance seduces the democrats), the ties of personal dependence, of distinctions of blood, education, etc. are in fact exploded, ripped up (at least, personal ties all appear as *personal* relations); and individuals *seem* independent (this is an independence which is at bottom merely an illusion, and it is more correctly called indifference), free to collide with one another and to engage in exchange within this freedom; but they appear thus only for someone who abstracts from the *conditions*, the *conditions of existence* within which these individuals enter into contact (and these conditions, in turn, are independent of the individuals and, although created by society, appear as if they were *natural conditions*, not controllable by individuals).... A closer examination of these external relations, these conditions, shows, however, that it is impossible for the individuals of a class etc. to overcome them *en masse* without destroying them.” (Marx, *Grundrisse*, translated with a foreword by Martin Nicolaus, Penguin Books/New Left Review, “The Chapter on Money”, pp. 163-64, emphasis in original)

Let’s see where the authors of this CRC document are heading with their distortion of the Marxist position on the relation of individuals and classes, with their insistence on “the non-class aspect” of the bourgeois-democratic state and the “non-class contradiction of individual/society”. Before long, this is developed into a whole criticism of what is identified as “one dominant tendency” in “the line followed by communists from Lenin onwards”, namely:

“...a class-reductionist tendency. That is, analysing society only in terms of class and class struggle thereby neglecting the non-class aspects in the complex phenomenon of society. Lenin’s one sidedness in understanding the complexities of the dictatorship of the proletariat and his total neglect of the need to develop a political system will have to be attributed to this class-reductionist approach, which is still very dominant in the whole communist movement.” (par. 9.6)

This is a remarkable assertion! Besides everything that has been said, in refutation of this document, about Lenin’s actual theory and practice in leading the dictatorship

of the proletariat, have the authors of this document forgotten that it was Lenin who wrote literally volumes on the right of nations to self-determination, taking to task people like Rosa Luxemburg, among others, who tended to liquidate the national question, to reduce the oppression of the masses in the dominated nations to simply a matter of class exploitation, in the most narrow sense? If the concept of "class reductionism" has any legitimate meaning, it would refer to this kind of vulgar economist tendency – the tendency to reduce every contradiction to the most narrow expression of the relations between the workers and the capitalists. And no one was a more consistent and determined fighter against precisely this kind of tendency than Lenin. But, in waging the struggle against economist tendencies of all kinds, Lenin did so from the point of view of a definite class – the proletariat. And that is just the point. What the authors of the CRC document are actually referring to, when they invoke the spectre of "class reductionism", is nothing other than Marxist class analysis. They are expressing their fundamental disagreement with the statement by Mao that, "In class society everyone lives as a member of a particular class, and every kind of thinking, without exception, is stamped with the brand of a class."¹⁷ (Mao, "On Practice", *Selected Works*, Peking: FLP, vol. 1, p. 296)

As an illustration of this, we can cite the example that Mao himself uses in his "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art", where he speaks to the concept that some artists were raising – the theme of "love of humanity". He says that, in actual fact, in a society divided into classes, although people may talk about love of humanity, it is not possible for anyone to actually carry out this orientation in practice, since society is divided into classes and it

is not possible to love both the oppressors and the oppressed. Whether you want to or not, you have to choose which side you're going to be on. Again, all this will be fundamentally conditioned by the class relations in any class society. "Love of humanity" may seem, especially from a petit-bourgeois standpoint, to have no class character – or to transcend class relations and deal with a "non-class contradiction" – but in fact it will always find expression ultimately in class terms (so long as society is divided into classes). To insist on this understanding is not "class reductionism" – it is Marxist materialism.

But, taking up the CRC document's own concept ("class reductionism"), it must be said that, while all things in society do not necessarily express themselves immediately and directly in class terms, they are all "reducible" to class terms in the final analysis. For example, when Mao said in his 1968 statement in support of the Afro-American people's struggle that the contradiction between the masses of Black people and the ruling class in the U.S. is in the final analysis a class contradiction, he didn't mean that there is no national question involved; he meant that this contradiction would finally be resolved through the proletarian revolution. To say, more generally, that the national struggle is in the final analysis a matter of class struggle does not mean that the national question has no dynamic of its own; but it does mean that in essence and at bottom it is conditioned by the fundamental class relations and will find its ultimate resolution through the resolution of the class struggle with the final victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie and achievement of communism, worldwide; and it means that different classes, both within the oppressor nations and within the oppressed nations, will have different outlooks

on the national question, as on everything else.

At this point it should be clear how the CRC document's opposition to "class reductionism" is in actuality a petit-bourgeois demand for "freedom" from the Marxist method of class analysis and the whole proletarian world outlook and methodology – a demand which parallels the desire to be "free" of the proletariat and its dictatorship in the real world, to repudiate the entire historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat ("from Lenin onwards"). Here the following insights of Marx are very relevant. Commenting, significantly, on a variant of petit-bourgeois social-democracy that, in a different context and somewhat different form, also advocated "the transformation of society in a democratic way, but a transformation within the bounds of the petite bourgeoisie", Marx goes on to say that:

"...one must not form the narrow-minded notion that the petite bourgeoisie, on principle, wishes to enforce an egoistic class interest. Rather, it believes that the *special* conditions of its emancipation are the *general* conditions within the frame of which alone modern society can be saved and the class struggle avoided. Just as little must one imagine that the democratic representatives are indeed all shopkeepers or enthusiastic champions of shopkeepers. According to their education and their individual position they may be as far apart as heaven from earth. What makes them representatives of the petite bourgeoisie is the fact that in their minds they do not get beyond the limits which the latter do not get beyond in life, that they are consequently driven, theoretically, to the same problems and solutions to which material interest and social position drive the latter practically. This is, in general, the relationship between the *political*

17. By this it should not be understood that there is a direct one-to-one relation in all cases between the class position of any particular person and his/her way of thinking. For one thing, there is the fact that, as Marx and Engels pointed out, the ruling ideas in society are the ideas of the ruling class, and these ideas are bound to exert a considerable influence on the thinking of even the members of the oppressed classes. Further, it is a

basic principle of Marxist, *dialectical* materialism that ideas, having arisen on the basis of material reality, in turn exert a great influence on material reality, and that, in this way, ideas, particularly correct ideas, have considerable power to influence people broadly in society (this explains, for example, why some people, particularly intellectuals, from among the bourgeoisie or petite bourgeoisie take up the outlook of the proletariat and

join its revolutionary struggle). But, with all this, it remains true that, speaking of masses of people, there is in the final analysis a general correspondence between their class position and their outlook. And more generally, it remains a profound truth that, as Mao put it, "in class society everyone lives as a member of a particular class, and every kind of thinking, without exception, is stamped with the brand of a class".

and literary representatives of a class and the class they represent....

"But the democrat, because he represents the petite bourgeoisie, that is, a *transition class*, in which the interests of two classes are simultaneously mutually blunted, imagines himself elevated above class antagonism generally. The democrats concede that a privileged class confronts them, but they, along with all the rest of the nation, form the *people*. What they represent is the *people's rights*; what interests them is the *people's interests*. Accordingly, when a struggle is impending, they do not need to examine the interests and positions of the different classes." (Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, pp. 40-41, 43-44, emphasis in original)

Assessing Historical Experience

Viewing, from its standpoint, the whole history of socialism so far, the CRC document draws this conclusion:

"While upholding the heroic effort to create a new society and the new things which emerged through socialism (things which have played a positive role in shaping history) as communists our task is to focus on our mistakes and correct them; not justify them in the name of historical limitations." (par. 9.6)

In response to this, three points:

1. In fact, as communists our main task in this regard, *especially* in today's concrete circumstances, is to uphold and defend not merely "the heroic effort to create a new society" but the great historical achievements of the dictatorship of the proletariat in actually bringing into being a radically new society, for the first time in the Soviet Union, and then carrying this to even greater heights through the Chinese revolution and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. At the same time, and *on this basis*, we must also ruthlessly and penetratingly criticize our actual mistakes and seek the means of avoiding those mistakes in the future and minimizing mistakes in general to the greatest degree possible.

In this regard, it must be frankly said that it is inconsistent, not to say hypocritical, for the CRC document to speak of upholding "the new things which emerged through so-

cialism (things which have played a positive role in shaping history)" while at the same time insisting that "from Lenin onwards" the basic line and practice of the international communist movement regarding the most decisive question of proletarian state power was fundamentally flawed, that within a few years after the October Revolution the "dictatorship of the party" was instituted in place of the dictatorship of the masses, and that even the Cultural Revolution did not break out of this framework of "dictatorship of the party". To be consistent – that is, consistently Marxist – the necessary conclusion that would have to be drawn from such an analysis is that there *never* was any socialist transformation in those societies: for how could a Marxist think that such a world-historical transformation – and socialism, though it is not yet classless society, nevertheless represents a world-historical transformation – could be achieved not by the party leading and relying on the masses but by imposing the dictatorship of the party over them?! Viewed from this perspective, there would be very few, if any, "new things" – in particular, *socialist* new things – to uphold.

2. With regard to our mistakes, the first thing is to make a correct appraisal of what they *were* – and were *not* – and on *that* basis dig into the roots of them – the objective and subjective roots, those which did result from historical limitation and from an unfavourable balance of class forces and those which resulted from errors in outlook and methodology and in political strategy and policy.

3. This CRC document has failed to correctly appreciate and sum up the lessons from either the great advances or the actual mistakes involved in this historical experience. And this is not accidental: it is not possible to correctly analyze the mistakes without correctly evaluating the achievements and vice versa (this is related to the basic point of orientation stressed in the section of the RIM *Declaration* cited earlier – pointing out how the summation of historical experience is itself an arena of acute class struggle and that criticism of this experience and genuine creative development of Marxism is inseparably linked with a fierce struggle to uphold the basic

principles of Marxism). Unfortunately, however, the CRC document abandons basic principles of Marxism.

Centralization, Decentralization and the Withering Away of the State

As we have seen, an incorrect position on the role of the party, particularly under the dictatorship of the proletariat, is pivotal in the CRC document's abandonment of these principles. And the document actually goes so far as to assert that:

"another tendency encouraged by Lenin's stand on the Party's central role in the dictatorship of the proletariat is the dominant thinking in the communist movement which considers that the party determines everything in relation to social revolution". (par. 9.7)

To attribute such a position to Lenin clearly flies in the face of reality – including Lenin's practice as a leader of the October Revolution and the international communist movement and his contributions to Marxist theory. But to attribute this to Mao is especially outrageous. It was Mao who crystallized the understanding that the masses are the makers of history, that the people and the people alone are the motive force in the making of world history – Mao gave this concentrated theoretical expression and he consistently applied it in practice, in the struggle to seize power, to exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat and to carry forward the revolutionary struggle toward communism. And it is not surprising that, with such a distorted outlook on what has been the actual "dominant thinking" and practice in the international communist movement, this CRC document, while "on the one hand" upholding a leading role for the communist vanguard, soon proceeds to deny that leading role "on the other hand" and in essence.

This becomes even clearer as the document gets into what it calls a "new orientation". Not surprisingly, however, this "new" orientation is far from new: it is a rather well-known conception common to a variety of petit-bourgeois and bourgeois "socialists". And, as is common to such conceptions, this "new orientation" is grounded firmly in idealism. Continuing to discount or

dismiss the very real contradictions, within socialist society and internationally, that have been the essential basis for why, in certain significant respects, the actual historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat has differed from what Marx projected from the short-lived and very limited experience of the Paris Commune, this document insists that:

"A qualitatively new understanding of proletarian political power must be the starting point. It must reflect Marx's concept of the Paris Commune – as the reabsorption of state power by the whole society. So the proletarian state should not be a state like the bourgeois state or the state under socialism so far practised by the communists which concentrated the whole power in the centralised state structure. It will have to be a new political system in which the state ceases to be a state by starting the process of reabsorption of state power by society, through a process of decentralising political power, aimed at reaching a stage when the (political) will of the whole society can get expressed and realised directly without the mediation of the state. Such a system can be developed only by achieving the genuine socialisation of the means of production, which can again be assured through a political system which ensures proletarian democracy. This socialist system, in which the socialised economic base and the proletarian democratic political system are complementary aspects, must survive on its own becoming a social system acceptable to and practised by the whole people, under the leadership of the proletariat." (par. 10.3)

Note the equation: centralization – bad; decentralization – good. Again, this reflects the classical petit-bourgeois aversion to the rule of the proletariat through its powerful centralized state and its centralized control over the economy. This document is, in effect, calling for the abolition of the proletarian *state* – as soon as the proletariat has consolidated its rule and socialized ownership – and the replacement of this state by a non-state democratic political system.

In actual fact, the withering away of the state is not equivalent to the abolition of a centralized administrative structure – such a structure will still be necessary in communist soci-

ety, although there, even as compared with socialist society, it will be a structure of a radically new type. Nor does the process of the withering away of the state – the process of "the reabsorption of state power by the whole society" – find its most essential expression in the weakening of the central state apparatus and its replacement by decentralized political institutions. In essence, this process involves the drawing of the broad masses (and ultimately the people as a whole) into the administration of society – on *both* the central and local levels – as part of the whole struggle to overcome the division between mental and manual labour and all oppressive divisions of labour and related inequalities in society overall.

But let's look further at the question of centralization-decentralization and the CRC document's distorted view of this. In fact, what is being proposed with the CRC document's "new orientation" is the same old anarchist-sindicalist line that Lenin criticized: a line that sets decentralization *against* the centralized state power and economic control of the proletarian state – that treats these as essentially antagonistic, rather than grasping the non-antagonistic dialectical relation between them. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, without a powerful central state apparatus and its centralized control of the economy, decentralization will only lead to a situation of conflicting local and particular interests, will foster capitalist competition and contribute to the restoration of the capitalist system. In the real world it is impossible for the proletariat to exercise dictatorship over the enemy, *or* to practice democracy among the people, just as it is impossible for it to be the master of the economy, *without* such powerful centralization: without such centralization there is no way to maintain a unified and integrated socialist economy, relying on planned and proportional development serving the revolutionary interests of the proletariat, and no way for the larger interests of the proletariat as a class to be translated into lines and policies guiding the entire society.

On the other hand, centralization without relying on the masses and giving wide scope to initiative on the local and basic levels will also

lead to the restoration of capitalism, in the form (initially at least) of state capitalism. This is why Mao stressed that, in formulating plans for the socialist economy as well as in carrying out these plans, as with everything else, the mass line must be practised and fundamental reliance must be placed on the conscious activism of the masses. Summing up the pathbreaking experience in carrying out the line of "grasp revolution/promote production" in socialist China, Raymond Lotta points out that:

"The Chinese planning system delegated decision-making to local political authority, which, in conjunction with unified political direction and new forms of socialist management, increased the exercise of collective control by the proletariat. The Chinese revolutionaries demonstrated the possibility of combining regulation with creative experimentation, centralized control with local initiative, balance with breakthrough, and economic coordination with mass political campaigns; they put revolutionary politics in command of economic development. This model represents a qualitative leap in the theory and practice of socialist planning..."

"Mao summed up that too much top-down (vertical) control over the economy stifled popular initiative. Such a system of planning could not give full play to local capabilities and allow for creative utilization of local resources. It also undermined unified leadership over the economy as a whole, since there was no way that a complex and diverse economy could be managed on the basis of detailed commands from the top, no matter how thorough the statistical information and price calculations may be...."

"Thus the policy of giving greater scope to local authority was carried out in dialectical unity with unified central leadership and unified planning. Local initiative would have the effect of strengthening, not weakening, centralized leadership and unified planning. *But the real glue of this system ensuring that the interests of the whole and the overall needs of the revolution were being met was political and ideological.* And decisive to this was the practice of the 'mass line' to ensure that planning was carried out in accordance with the interests of the mass-

es and on the basis of mobilizing the masses.” (Lotta, “The Theory and Practice of Maoist Planning: In Defense of a Viable and Visionary Socialism”, a paper to be published in forthcoming issue No. 62 of *Revolution*, emphasis in original)

If the Vanguard Doesn't Lead, Who Will?

With this in mind, let's return to the formulation in the CRC document's “new orientation”: “This socialist system, in which the socialised economic base and the proletarian democratic political system are complementary aspects, must survive on its own becoming a social system acceptable to and practised by the whole people, under the leadership of the proletariat”. Here it must be asked: what is meant by this “whole people”? Does it include or exclude the overthrown exploiters? And what about newborn exploiters, arising from within socialist society itself? And what about degenerated elements from among the working people themselves, since no reasonable person can deny that in socialist society there will be such? Once it is allowed that dictatorship must be exercised over these groups, then we are back to the fact that “a social system acceptable to and practised by the *whole people*” cannot come about right away or in a short time – without protracted and at times very acute class struggle and in fact the thorough transformation of the economic base and the superstructure of society and moreover the whole world.

What, in this context, can “survive on its own” mean? Does it mean that if the “whole people” decide they do not want this system, it must be abandoned until a time in the future when, perhaps, this “whole people” will decide that after all they do want this system again – at least for a while. The absurdity of such a concept – which is related to the absurdity of this Khrushchev-like notion of a classless “whole people” – should be readily apparent.

Oh, but it is said that this “whole people” must practise this “socialist” system “under the leadership of the proletariat”. But here this CRC document runs into a logical contradiction of its own making. According to its own logic, it can legitimately be

asked: who gave the proletariat “the right” to assert its leadership? From the point of view of this “whole people”, why is that not just as bad as the dreaded “dictatorship of the party”? But, even if this proletarian leadership were to be accepted, *how* would this leadership be actually exercised – institutionally or “extra-institutionally” – what would be the means and mechanisms for this that would not actually land you back in the same old situation where the *vanguard* of the proletariat plays the leading role?

In fact, once again the very logic of this document will lead to the conclusion that there should not be any vanguard, at least not a *proletarian* vanguard. And, further, it will also lead to the conclusion that no one, no social classes or forces, should be excluded from “the whole people”; for who gave any one group “the right” to set itself up as the judge of who can be included among “the whole people”. There is, of course, an answer to this, but it cannot be provided with the bourgeois-democratic outlook that runs through this CRC document.

At this point the CRC document seems to allow that the leadership of a vanguard party will be necessary to carry out the overthrow of the old state power, the smashing of the old state machinery and then “the establishment of the new political system”. (par. 10.4) And further, “The vanguard party of the proletariat will have to play the leading role until the new political system starts functioning effectively, by completing the process of the socialisation of the means of production and then consolidating the power in the hands of the new ruling classes under the leadership of the proletariat. Once this is achieved the communist party must give up its monopoly control of the revolutionary transformation and allow the system to function on its own. Under the proletarian democratic system, the effectiveness of the new system will be accepted or rejected by the people through an open democratic process in which the whole people will be freely involved through their own political organisations or otherwise.” (ibid)

Once again, the document is embroiled in all kinds of logical contradictions of its own making.

First, on the question of violently overthrowing the old system and the

role of the vanguard party in this, as was pointed out in the beginning of this critique, in drawing some general conclusions concerning the CRC document: this document's position on the so-called dictatorship of the party is inescapably linked to a position that a violent overthrow, especially one led by a vanguard party, is also wrong – elitist and coercive not only against the bourgeoisie but also against masses of people who may not, at the start at least, agree with the vanguard party about the need to carry out this violent overthrow. Shouldn't this question (of whether or not to overthrow the old system) be put to a vote of the “whole people”? Or perhaps it should be put to a vote of the “whole people” minus the old ruling class and those (openly) siding with it? – but then, again, you would run into the vexing problem of who would decide, who would have “the right” to decide, who exactly should be included and excluded from the ranks of the “whole people”. Before long, this kind of formal democratic preoccupation would overwhelm any orientation toward overthrowing the system!

This might seem like a caricature of the CRC document's position, but it is not. It is not accidental that Khrushchev's line on “the state of the whole people” was part of a package that also included “the peaceful transition to socialism”. And the parallel also exists with regard to the line and logic put forward in this CRC document. If this line and logic is persisted in, it won't be long before some version of “peaceful transition” is also more or less openly adopted.

Returning to the question of when and according to what criteria it should be determined that the party should no longer play an institutionalized leading role in the new society, we run into another of the by-now-familiar logical contradictions in the CRC document. Who is to determine when “the new political system starts functioning effectively” and specifically when the consolidation of “power in the hands of the new ruling classes under the leadership of the proletariat” has been sufficiently achieved that the party must give up this role? Is it the party that decides this? But that is a contradiction in itself – how can the *party* decide for the masses that

they no longer need the party's institutionalized leading role? Or, if this is not decided by the party, then by whom and by what means is this decided – do the people vote on it? But then who decides when it is time to have such a vote, who organizes such a vote, sets the rules for it, etc., etc.? The silliness of these questions is a reflection of the underlying idealism of the whole line set forth in this CRC document.

Turning to the economic aspect, in no socialist country to date has there existed anything close to complete socialization of ownership, certainly not in the sense spoken of by Marx in *The Critique of the Gotha Programme* (where he conceived of all ownership being ownership by society as a whole). And experience suggests that it is likely to involve a long period before such complete socialization can be achieved. In both the Soviet Union and in China when they were socialist, the fact that things had not yet advanced to the stage where all means of production were owned by the whole people was identified as a major reason why commodities and with them the law of value continued to play a significant, if not overall regulating, role in the economy. In China, collective ownership by groups of peasants was still the most widespread form of ownership; with the relatively small production teams still the main economic accounting unit. Mao, and Chang Chun-chiao following him, identified this as a significant and long-term contradiction, very much bound up with the existence of classes and class struggle and the continual engendering of the bourgeoisie under socialism. So, to say that the party should step down from its institutionalized vanguard role when the process of socialization is completed, without addressing crucial questions like this, is another, more serious, reflection of the idealism of this CRC document.

The fact is that, exactly because of profound contradictions such as this and their reflection in the superstructure, the party will have to continue to play the leading role for a long period – in fact throughout the entire historical period of socialist transition, which is marked by such contradictions. And to actually play this role in the correct way – in the correct relationship to the masses – this leading role must be institution-

alized. As pointed out before, if this is not the case, then, owing to the actual contradictions still in force, some other group must and will dominate decision-making, but it will be bourgeois cliques of one kind or another.

What Kind of Party, What Kind of Revolution?

In opposition to this understanding, the “new orientation” envisioned in this CRC document holds that, from the time of the seizure of power, even when it must still play the vanguard role, the party “must assert its authority only politically through the bodies elected by the people”, and moreover the party must function as an “open party” and be “very democratic even allowing factions etc. as a matter of principle”. (par. 10.5) And then, once the functioning of the new political and economic system has been developed according to the principles set forth in this document, the party “should formally relinquish its monopoly of power”, and, “Its right to govern should be strictly based on the electoral support gained by its platform just like any other platform.” (par. 10.9)

This is yet more idealism. It is mere playing at socialist revolution, if it is even that. This may be an appropriate party for a socialist society existing in some idyllic imaginary world where there is no imperialist encirclement, no soil constantly giving rise to the bourgeoisie within the socialist society itself, no significant social distinctions and class

contradictions among the people themselves, no ideological influence of the exploiting classes, and so on. But it is clear that this has nothing to do with a revolutionary party that must act as the vanguard of a determined class struggle, both within the country and internationally, against a class enemy that still has a powerful base internationally and even within the socialist society itself has some powerful material conditions operating in its favour.¹⁸

It may sound “very democratic” to talk about an “open party” that allows factions within it “as a matter of principle”, and so on. But in reality this is just a recipe for a party with many different “centres”, none of which will be capable of representing the revolutionary interests of the proletariat, especially in periods of acute class struggle – a party that will degenerate into bourgeois factionalism. All this is indeed “very democratic” – it is very bourgeois-democratic – the “principle” involved in this is bourgeois principle.¹⁹

It should be recalled how the experience of the Bolshevik Party, in leading the October Revolution and the Soviet state it gave birth to, involved, as a significant aspect, breaking with the influence of social-democracy, represented most prominently by the German Social-Democratic Party of Kautsky. This was a process which culminated in a complete rupture, focused around World War 1 – a sharp turn in which the majority of the parties in the Second International went from quantity to quality in degenerating

18. The CRC document doesn't entirely forget to mention class struggle here. It says that the system of proletarian democracy it is advocating “will have to evolve further” (“Since socialism itself is a period of revolutionary transformation”) and that, “The question of such changes in the political-social-economic structures will itself be a matter of class struggle.” (ibid) But this vague notion of “class struggle” is part of the CRC document's idealized vision of “socialist society”, in which the material basis for the existence, and strength, of the bourgeoisie is not taken seriously into account – is not even correctly comprehended. This “class struggle” could only be as imaginary as the “socialism” this document dreams up. It has nothing to do with the real, and decisive, class struggle that must be waged as the key link throughout the socialist transition. It

doesn't help to talk about “class struggle” and “a period of revolutionary transformation” in a context where the nature of this “period of revolutionary transformation” is distorted and the basis and centrality of class contradiction and class struggle throughout this period is misapprehended and misrepresented.

19. One of the main expressions of bourgeois principle involved here is treating ideas, including the lines and “platforms” of political parties, as commodities that have to find their value in the “market place of ideas” (and the petite bourgeoisie is particularly susceptible to the illusion that in the operation of the “free market” equality will actually prevail). There is a basic failure to recognize that the essence of the capitalist market in particular is class domination and exploitation.

into opportunism, while on the other hand the Bolsheviks also went from quantity to quality in breaking with erroneous tendencies that had long held considerable sway in the international socialist movement. One of the sharpest focuses of this was precisely the question of the party.

As we know, in order to prepare for and then lead the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks, under Lenin's leadership, had to fight a fierce battle to establish and maintain the kind of vanguard party necessary for the tasks of proletarian revolution. And, in the aftermath of the seizure of power, the Bolsheviks again had to make another, further leap in conceptualizing and realizing a vanguard party that could lead the continuing struggle. One significant expression of this was the outlawing of factions within the Party. It is true that, while this may have been initially seen as a temporary measure to deal with an acutely difficult situation in the wake of the civil war, it was then given more general and long-term application. And this was correct.

Genuine communist parties, real

vanguards of the proletarian revolution, need the contention of opposing views and a vigorous ideological struggle within their own ranks, but they also need this to be done through the unified organizational structure of the party and not through the formation of organized factions, each with a different platform, set of leaders, and so on. Serious breaches of discipline and factional activity within the Bolsheviks almost killed the October insurrection (Kamenev and Zinoviev, who disagreed with the insurrection, or at least with the timing of the insurrection, publicly revealed the plans for the insurrection, with nearly fatal consequences); and, had factions not been outlawed when they were (1921), they would have killed the new Soviet Republic and obviously prevented the building of socialism under the dictatorship of the proletariat.²⁰

With the line that is put forward in this CRC document on the nature and role of the party under socialism, how will the proletariat be able to exercise its leadership – in fact its all-around dictatorship – in the

superstructure, including such crucial spheres as culture? What kind of culture; representing which class, will dominate the stage in this kind of setup? It is worth recalling that, in discussing the reasons why the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was absolutely necessary and most timely, Mao pointed to the fact that, even after power had been seized and up until the time of the Cultural Revolution, culture and education had overall remained under the domination of the bourgeoisie (of the revisionists in particular). It required a monumental struggle to seize control of these crucial spheres from the revisionists and to embark on the radical transformation of them. It would be extremely idealist to think that a proletarian line will dominate in the sphere of culture – or the superstructure generally – on the basis of *spontaneity* and without the systematic, all-around leading role of the party – a single party unified on the basis of a single line, not one divided into factions and riddled with factionalism. In the absence of such leadership, the superstructure will in reality be dominated by the

20. While it may be the case that the counterrevolutionary treachery of Kamenev and Zinoviev in this politically (and literally) life-and-death situation did not result from their involvement in an organized faction – and, in any case, this could not have been prevented simply by the organizational measure of outlawing factions – still their actions were of a clearly factional character: acting according to their own line and discipline in opposition to that of the party. And, as a matter of fact, the more full-blown and ongoing existence of factions will even more fundamentally undermine the unity of will and action of the party and make it incapable of playing a vanguard role, of leading the masses in revolutionary struggle, first to carry out the seizure of power and establish their own proletarian dictatorship and then to carry forward the revolution under this dictatorship.

In order to examine this question more fully, it is worth reviewing the specific circumstances that led to the outlawing of factions in the Bolshevik Party in 1921. The Bolsheviks confronted the challenge of rehabilitating a war-ravaged economy that now faced breakdown, of re-establishing links with key sectors of the population (particularly in the countryside), and of strengthening its organization in a milieu of social dislocation, political disaffection (including within the urban working class) and wavering

among middle strata. The civil war had been won, yet the fate of the revolution still hung in the balance. New tasks had to be faced, major policy adjustments were called for (the New Economic Policy was the systematic expression of that necessity), and new skills, especially in managing the economy, had to be developed. Meeting the challenges of the new situation required a united and resolute party, yet the party itself was, and could not but be, affected by the strife and upheaval of the preceding civil war period. Sharp two-line struggle raged over the road forward. That was inevitable. But the successful prosecution of that struggle was complicated by the growing problem of factionalism.

Various opposition groupings were organizing around separate platforms, forcing the agenda of party discussion around secondary questions, and putting adherence to their own platforms above party discipline. Lenin was concerned about the real danger of a split in the party at this crucial time; and he was concerned that the necessary liberalization in economic matters not fan bourgeois-democratic tendencies in the party. It was also the case that, where and when they were in a position to do so, factional elements sought to implement their own programs (for example, followers of Trotsky tried to carry out their program of militarizing the trade unions, a disastrous policy that would feed

demoralization within the trade unions and distrust towards the party within society as a whole, exactly at a time when the need to restore popular confidence in the revolution was at a premium). The influx of many young and inexperienced members into the party, alongside many unreconstructed ex-Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries, etc., created fertile ground for factional organizing within the party.

Left unchecked, factionalism would make it more difficult to arrive at and carry out party decisions, would undermine party unity and give greater scope for incorrect policies to take hold; in short, it would weaken the foundations of proletarian rule. Further, precisely because the Bolsheviks were now a party *in power*, factionalism took on a new and threatening dimension. The internal and external enemies of the revolution could, as they did, speculate on and take advantage of factional intrigue and work *through* groupings close to power in order to further their aims, while the proliferation of groups organized around their own platforms gave the enemies within the revolution greater room to manoeuvre and organize.

While the particular circumstances that led to the outlawing of factions in the Bolshevik Party in 1921 were ones of acute crisis for the new proletarian state and its leading party; and while the

(Footnote continued on next page)

*NOT SO. IN FACT, WHILE FACTIONS WERE FORMALLY OUTLAWED IN 1921, THEY CONTINUED TO EXIST — THOUGH THEY WERE MORE RESTRAINED. NOT UNTIL STALIN'S ASCENDANCY WERE FACTIONS ACTUALLY OUTLAWED IN PRACTICE.

bourgeoisie, and this, in turn, will mean that capitalist relations will become dominant in the economic base – that capitalism will be restored in society as a whole.²¹

The Bourgeois Electoral Model vs. Leading the Masses to Remake the World

Yes, it is true, the party must not rely on its position of authority, it must rely on the masses; but that does not mean it should degenerate into acting like any old social-democratic party, tailing the masses and reducing its role to the framework and confines of bourgeois-democratic politicking for votes, abdicating its responsibility to act as a vanguard and actually lead the masses in revolution.

That the CRC document's vision of the functioning of the "proletarian democratic system" is in reality not qualitatively different from a classical bourgeois-democratic system should be clear by now. Its "model", where the communist party's "right to govern" is "strictly based on the electoral support gained by its platform just like any other platform", would, at best, translate into a situation where rival power centres, coalesced around different platforms, would compete for the votes of the masses. The result of this (again, at best) would be some sort of "coalition" government, in which "socialists" and "communists" of various

kinds would be involved together with representatives of various other, more openly bourgeois and petit-bourgeois, "democratic" trends, and in which the fundamental interests of the masses would be "compromised away" and no radical transformation of society would be carried out (and any attempt at this would be quickly and ruthlessly suppressed by this "coalition" government). Hasn't there been enough – indeed far too much! – experience, all over the world, to graphically illustrate this?²²

The notion that somehow this kind of electoral process will result in the expression of the "political will" of the masses can only elicit a cynical snort of laughter from anyone who is at all familiar with this kind of electoral process and who is not suffering from "political amnesia"; it is a notion that could be believed only by people who take bourgeois democracy more seriously than the bourgeoisie itself does – who have not learned, or have "unlearned", that such democracy, with its electoral process, is an instrument that serves the exercise of dictatorship by the bourgeoisie over the masses. This does not mean that there is no legitimate role for elections in socialist society, but such a role must be based on the recognition that the formal process of elections cannot represent the highest or most essential expression of the "political will" of the masses; that elections

can only be a subordinate part of the overall process through which that "political will" is expressed; that elections, like everything else in class society, will be conditioned and shaped by the fundamental class relations; and that in socialist society elections must reflect and serve the exercise of political power by the proletariat, with the leading role of its party.

In contrast to this, the following characterization of the role of elections in bourgeois society applies as well to the (bourgeois) democratic electoral process the CRC document envisions for its version of "socialist" society and its "proletarian democratic system":

"This very electoral process itself tends to cover over the basic class relations – and class antagonisms – in society, and serves to give formal, institutionalized expression to the political participation of atomized individuals in the perpetuation of the status quo. This process not only reduces people to isolated individuals but at the same time reduces them to a passive position politically and defines the essence of politics as such atomized passivity – as each person, individually, in isolation from everyone else, giving his/her approval to this or that option, *all of which options have been formulated and presented by an active power standing above these atomized masses of 'citizens'.*" (Avakian, *Democracy*, p. 70, emphasis in original)

(Footnote continued from previous page) existence of factions within a party in power provides a particularly strong basis for counterrevolutionary forces, inside and outside the socialist country, to weaken and even to overthrow the socialist state or to subvert it from within and turn it into its opposite; there are more general principles involved. The history of the Bolshevik Party illustrates that, even before the seizure of power, the Bolsheviks already needed to rupture more fully with the organizational line that predominated among the socialist parties of the Second International, a line which allowed factions, etc., within the party. This was a line which flowed from the increasingly reformist outlook and program of the majority (and the most influential) of these parties – a line which was not oriented toward leading the masses to overthrow and smash the existing bourgeois state apparatus and establish a new, proletarian state. The outlawing of factions in the Bolshevik Party in 1921 – and, beyond that, the

establishment of this as a basic organizational principle of communist parties – represented the bringing of organizational practice and principle more fully into line with the objective needs of the proletarian revolutionary struggle, both before and after the seizure of power.

This question of factions within the party will be returned to later, in discussing the concluding sections of the CRC document.

21. In the pamphlet *Three Major Struggles on China's Philosophical Front* it is noted that Mao warned "that if we do not build a socialist economy, our proletarian dictatorship will become a bourgeois dictatorship, a reactionary, fascist dictatorship". (*Three Major Struggles*, Peking: FLP, 1973, p. 19) And, as the other side of this, if the proletariat does not in fact exercise all-around dictatorship over the bourgeoisie in the superstructure, including the spheres of ideology and culture, it will not be possible to build a socialist econ-

omy and remain on the socialist road. The line of this CRC document is an echo of – or actually the "reverse side" of – the line of Liu Shao-chi and his philosophical followers who, after the seizure of nationwide political power in China, advocated a long period in which the economy would be of a "synthesized" capitalist-socialist character and the superstructure would serve both the socialist and the capitalist sector and "also serve the bourgeoisie". (ibid p. 16) The CRC document's line arrives at the same place "from the other side": it would undermine the exercise of all-around dictatorship by the proletariat in the superstructure and create a situation where, in theory, different class forces would be "sharing power" in the superstructure; in reality, of course, this "synthesized" superstructure would mean that the bourgeoisie "synthesized" – "ate up" – the proletariat and seized control of the superstructure as a whole and transformed society in its image – back to capitalism.

Throughout the CRC document we find many references to the "political will" of the people or of the proletariat. But nowhere in this document is there the understanding – in fact this understanding has been repudiated – that there is no way of realizing, and more than that no way of even determining, the "political will" of the proletariat and the masses *except* through the leading role of the party – through its practice of the mass line and its application of a communist ideological and political line overall.

In fact, as we have seen, the CRC document consistently poses the vanguard role of the party *against* the conscious activism of the masses. This is unmistakably clear in its claim that, once the standing army has been abolished and replaced by the arming of the whole people, and once the party and its "vanguard role" have been reduced to a matter of the party competing for electoral votes on the basis of its platform ("just like any other platform"), then "unlike in the hitherto practised forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the new political structure, the people wielding the real power in their own hands, also with the arms in their hands, will be playing a very active role in the whole political life of the society, thereby being the best guarantee against restoration and also ensuring the best conditions for seizing back power if restoration takes place". (par. 10.9, emphasis added)

This is a most amazing statement!

How, for example, could people familiar with the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution argue that the masses in China were not "playing a very active role in the whole political life of the society" – both in general and specifically in combating revisionism and capitalism restoration? If we contrast the Cultural Revolution with the recent (bourgeois) "democratic upsurges" in China, we can say, without the slightest hesitation, that the conscious activism, the class-conscious revolutionary initiative, of the masses of Chinese people was expressed "a million times more" in the Cultural Revolution. And this has everything to do with the fact that in the Cultural Revolution the masses had the leadership of a communist vanguard, while the recent struggle has not had that leadership.²³ In this recent struggle there were positive factors and progressive, even revolutionary, forces taking part – there were open expressions of respect for Mao and support for Mao's line, there were contrasts explicitly drawn between Mao and his revolutionary followers on the one hand and the corrupt revisionist rulers of today on the other hand. But, with all that, in an overall sense, the forces and lines that occupied the leading position within the mass upsurge represented the interests of the bourgeoisie.

Here it is worth repeating the following on the role of the Leninist party and its relation to

the masses, which applies after the seizure of power and throughout the socialist transition period as much as it does to the struggle for the seizure of power:

"Lenin forged and applied these principles by leaping beyond what had previously been worked out by Marx or Engels and further by rupturing with conventional wisdom and practice in the Marxist movement, but he did so from the foundation of basic Marxist principle, by adhering to its basic methodology and entirely consistent with its revolutionary, critical spirit. To raise in opposition to these principles the experience of the Paris Commune, which was defeated – in part, if only secondarily, because of the lack of a Leninist-type party – or the Second International, which degenerated into an outright instrument of imperialism, is thinking turned inside-out and facing backwards, to put it mildly. To argue that the degeneration of the Russian Revolution can be traced to the very nature and role of the Leninist party itself is first of all contrary to the facts and an evasion of the fundamental problems besides. Lenin's argument in *What Is To Be Done?* – that the more highly organized and centralized the party was, the more it was a real vanguard organization of revolutionaries, the greater would be the role and initiative of the masses in revolutionary struggle – was powerfully demonstrated in the Russian Revolution itself and has been in all proletarian revolu-

22. Among the debacles suffered by socialist and communist parties that have fallen into bourgeois parliamentarism and/or focused their efforts on involvement in governments of "coalition" with various bourgeois forces, perhaps the most dramatic and tragic is the experience of the Indonesian Communist Party in the mid-1960s. This involved the massacre of hundreds of thousands of communists (and other Indonesian people), the decimation of a powerful communist party, at the hands of the reactionaries. Leading up to this, the Indonesian Party had increasingly made the focus of its work parliamentary and other forms of legal struggle; it had increasingly relied on its parliamentary successes and its positions in a coalition government (headed by the bourgeois nationalist Sukarno); and it was consequently unprepared for the counterrevolutionary coup d'état carried out by the Indonesian military (led

by Suharto) with not only the backing and back-stage direction but also the active participation of the U.S. CIA. (see "Historical Document: Self-Criticism by the Indonesian Communist Party, 1966", in *Revolution*, No. 55, Winter/Spring 1987)

Although the Sukarno government did not, of course, represent the dictatorship of the proletariat, still there is an analogy between the situation of the Indonesian Communist Party in that "nationalist" government and the position that a communist party would be in if it tried to implement the line advocated by the CRC document on how a party should operate under the dictatorship of the proletariat. As noted, such a party would in effect find itself in a "coalition" government in which the party would not be able to exercise sole leadership – in fact, it would not really be able to exercise leadership at all. The party, and the

revolutionary masses generally, would be extremely vulnerable to a reactionary coup d'état (and massacres that would accompany it). Here, once more, it is crucial to recognize that, even leaving out the overthrown ruling class, the "whole people", under the conditions of socialist society, means many different classes – including newborn bourgeois forces – and "the arming of the whole people" would in reality mean the development of many different armed camps among the people, including armed forces effectively under the command of bourgeois counterrevolutionary leadership.

23. Further, it should be noted that the great unleashing of the masses in the GPCR was possible, too, because it took place under the dictatorship of the proletariat, while the 1989 events were suppressed by a *bourgeois* state, a bourgeois dictatorship.

tions. Nowhere has such a revolution been made without such a party and nowhere has the lack of such a party contributed to unleashing the initiative of masses of the oppressed in *conscious revolutionary struggle*. And,...to argue that a vanguard, Leninist party may degenerate, may turn into an oppressive apparatus over the masses, and therefore it is better not to have such a party, only amounts to arguing that there should be no revolution in the first place; this will not eliminate the contradictions that make such a party necessary, the material and ideological conditions that must be transformed, with the leadership of such a party, in order to abolish class distinctions and therewith, finally, the need for a vanguard party." (Avakian, *For a Harvest of Dragons*, Chicago: RCP Publications, 1983, p. 84, emphasis in original)

Democratic Centralism, Two-Line Struggle and Keeping the Vanguard on the Revolutionary Road

The CRC document proceeds with its discussion of the party, taking up "the principle of democratic centralism, evolved and implemented by Lenin" as the organizational principle for communist parties. (see par. 11.2) The CRC document upholds democratic centralism, in theory, on the one hand, but, on the other hand, proceeds to argue that its implementation in practice eventually was turned into an orientation of overemphasizing centralism, virtually to the exclusion of democracy (this was the case, according to the document, especially after factions were outlawed in the Bolshevik Party and then this was made into a principle that has been generally adhered to by communist parties). Not only was this given theoretical expression in the "the whole concept of the monolithic communist Party, propounded by Stalin and solidified during the whole Comintern period and afterwards" (par. 11.4); but even "Mao's attempts to develop the two-line struggle within the party" as a "step to re-establish the style of functioning of democratic centralism practised by Lenin, in a more systematic manner" did not really bring any fundamental improvement, because Mao would not break with the orien-

tation set, first, with the outlawing of factions and then with the whole experience of Stalin's leadership in the Soviet Union and the Comintern. Thus, "in effect the two-line struggle etc. were only some minor steps at rectification within the overall framework established earlier". (see par. 11.5) In opposition to this, the CRC document argues, what is needed is, "A thorough re-examination of the concept and role of the communist party in the historical process of building socialism and communism." (par. 11.7)

We have seen to a considerable extent already what this CRC document's basic notion is of the concept and role of the communist party, but it is worth examining how, under the title "Demystification of the Communist Party", the document lays out a relativist and pragmatic line on this question. This begins with the statement that, "The Communist Party's role of being the vanguard of the proletariat is to be tested and proved in the course of the historical process" and that only when a communist party "realizes that it is always subject to the test of historical reality, can it come down to the complexities of reality. Then only can it realize that no authority has been bestowed upon it either by the working class and the people or by history." (par. 12.1) The document then goes on to discuss "the qualitative distinction between the party leading a revolution to seize power and the party with monopoly in power": in the former case "the party is compelled by the very context to be self-critical and continuously correct and develop its line and practice in order to mobilise the masses for revolution"; while "in the second case, the pressure of circumstances operate in the opposite direction". (par. 12.1)

The CRC document has touched on some real and profound questions here, and it might seem to be handling them in a correct, dialectical way. But, unfortunately, once again this is not the case. First of all, it must be pointed out that, while a party that is not in power does face the necessity to be self-critical and to apply the mass line and thereby constantly develop its line and its ability "to mobilise the masses for revolution", this will exert itself as a compulsion on the party *only so long as it remains a revolutionary*

party, only so long as it maintains an orientation of leading the masses to overthrow the old order and carry forward the revolutionary struggle toward the goal of communism. In other words, at any point, the party, rather than engaging in self-criticism and critically summing up and developing its line and practice in a more revolutionary direction, can do just the opposite – it can abandon the revolutionary road and thereby eliminate the need to be self-critical and to continually correct and develop its line and practice in order to mobilize the masses for revolution.

This is hardly a frivolous or minor point. The CRC document has overlooked here the very real and powerful pulls that are exerted on parties faced with the task of leading the struggle for the overthrow of the old order – pulls to give up on that struggle and to degenerate into revisionist, reformist parties. Historical experience indicates that resisting these pulls and remaining on the revolutionary road is extremely difficult and requires arduous struggle.

On the other hand, for parties in power, while it is true that there is a real pull in the direction the CRC document indicates – in the direction of not systematically applying the mass line and critically summing up their line and practice – it is not the case that such parties are almost bound to degenerate once they come to power (and especially if they have a "monopoly in power", as the CRC documents puts it). In the one case, as in the other, what the CRC document leaves out of the equation – or, at a minimum, fails to focus on as decisive – is precisely the ideological struggle within the party over the cardinal questions of line, including most fundamentally the question of what is the final goal for which the party is aiming – and indeed which must define its very purposes as a party – *and* how do the more immediate objectives and policies of the party link up with and serve that final goal?

It is hardly coincidental that the CRC document downgrades the importance of two-line struggle within the party, declaring Mao's major contribution on this to be a limited and flawed contribution. In fact, in insisting on the decisive importance of the struggle within the party between the two lines of Marxism and revisionism – and the

two roads of socialism and capitalism – Mao indicated a key means for combating the tendency of the party – in particular a party in power – to degenerate into a revisionist party. And an important part of the basis on which Mao made this contribution was precisely his criticism of the undialectical notion of a “monolithic party” (see, for example, Mao’s comment that, “To talk all the time about monolithic unity, and not to talk about struggle, is not Marxist-Leninist” – in Mao’s “Talks at Chengtu”, *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed: Talks and Letters: 1956-71*, edited by Stuart Schram, London: Penguin Books, p. 107).

Mao recognized that, objectively, there would be different tendencies within the party – reflecting different forces, ultimately different class interests – within society as a whole, and that the unity of the party could only be relative and not absolute, would not be static but dynamic, developing through a process of unity-struggle-unity. But what is essential to grasp – and what shows the essential difference between Mao’s line and that of the CRC document – is that Mao did not pose the necessity for struggle within the party *against* the need for the party to be firmly united around

one line and on *that basis* play the – institutionalized – leading role in socialist society, until the achievement of communism.²⁴

Mao did not approach the question of struggle within the party from the standpoint of bourgeois factionalism or petit-bourgeois anarchism. Mao recognized that, in a society marked by class contradiction and class struggle, organized factions within the party would inevitably mean bourgeois factionalism. Such factions would disrupt not only the unity of action of the party but also its unity of will; they would not only undermine the party’s ability to lead the masses but also – and what is basic in being able to lead them – to learn from them. Factions disrupt not only the chain of *command* of the party; they also, and even more fundamentally, disrupt its chain of *knowledge* – the flow of ideas from the masses, through the basic levels of the party, to the party leadership. In short, they disrupt the ability of the party to play its role as the vanguard of the proletariat in its revolutionary struggle, before and after the seizure of power.

All this is why Mao, while emphasizing the need for and decisive importance of two-line struggle

within the party, also insisted on the three principles: practise Marxism, not revisionism; unite, don’t split; be open and aboveboard, don’t intrigue and conspire. And this is why Mao insisted that, while the Communist Party itself must be continually revolutionized, at the same time the Party must exercise leadership in everything.

Mao’s line is aimed at keeping the party on the revolutionary road and strengthening its role as the revolutionary vanguard. In opposition to this, the CRC document’s line would reduce the party to a reformist party, a party mired in relativism, tailing the masses and tailoring its line to adapt principle to immediate circumstances. This is revealed in the CRC document’s statement that, “The proletarian class interest itself, under a given condition, is very much relative, changing according to the changing reality, though the ultimate interest of the working class, of building communism remains as a long term goal.” (par. 12.1) This is fundamentally wrong: the *proletarian class interest* does not change in the way the CRC document argues; particular tactics, or even strategies, particular policies, even programs, may change in this way, but the *class interest* of the pro-

24. In a talk, “On Democratic Centralism”, in 1962, Mao says that “secret factions” must be prohibited, but, “We are not afraid of open opposition groups, we are only afraid of secret opposition groups.” (*Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed*, p. 183) In reading the whole passage in which these statements appear and taking the whole spirit of Mao’s remarks, it seems clear that he is stressing a certain basic orientation of welcoming ideological struggle, if it is conducted in an open and aboveboard way; and when he talks about not fearing opposition groups that are not secret, he means something different from organized factions, with their own internal unity and discipline, operating within the Communist Party in opposition to the line and discipline of the Party. Rather, it seems he is talking about groups of people who will coalesce, less formally, to put forward a position on particular questions. Mao stresses that, “All leading members within the Party must promote democracy and let people speak out”. (ibid) At the same time, he stresses that this must be on the basis that Party members “observe Party discipline, the minority must obey the majority, and the whole Party should obey the Centre”. (ibid) In other words, discipline must be

observed and unity must be preserved – the discipline and unity of the Party, not of factions – this is what people must uphold, even when they may be dissenting from the prevailing Party line or a particular Party policy. Thus, Mao says: “as long as they do not break discipline, as long as they are not carrying on any secret factional activities, we should always allow them to speak and even if they should say the wrong things we should not punish them. If people say the wrong things they can be criticized, but we should use reason to convince them.” (ibid)

All this is related to another crucial principle that Mao emphasizes: “Very often the ideas of the minority will prove to be correct. History abounds with such instances. In the beginning truth is not in the hands of the majority of people, but in the hands of a minority.” (ibid) But, again, the grasping of the truth and winning people to the truth will not be served – it will be undermined – by the existence of factions within the Party. And for this reason, the practice of the Chinese Communist Party, under Mao’s leadership, was to strive for a situation in which there was lively, vigorous debate and ideological struggle throughout the Party (and in society generally)

but not to allow organized factions within the Party (at least not in any full-blown, institutionalized and “permanent” way).

The basic fact is that organized factions will lead to factionalism – they will lead to a situation where those adhering to these factions put the line and “unity” of their faction above those of the party. In certain exceptional cases, when the leadership of the party has been captured by opportunist elements who impose a counterrevolutionary line but it is not correct to simply and immediately abandon the party to such leadership and attempt to form a new party, it may then be necessary to organize a *revolutionary* faction in order to carry out the fight to defeat the opportunist line and leadership and re-establish the party on a revolutionary basis. But after a certain period of time, this struggle must be resolved one way or the other – either in the triumph of the revolutionary line and the re-establishment of the party on a revolutionary basis or in the complete triumph of the opportunist leadership and line – and in the latter case it is then necessary to break with such a party and to build a *new* party on the basis of revolutionary principles, of an MLM line, ideologically, politically, and organizationally.

* ACTUALLY, FACTIONS MAY SOMETIMES SUPPORT THIS “CHAIN OF KNOWLEDGE” AND MAKE IT MORE EFFECTIVE. THEY MAY LEAD TO A CLARITY OF OPTIONS...

letariat does not.

The difference here might seem merely semantic – since the CRC document does say that “communism remains as a long term goal” – but in separating this long-term goal from the “proletarian class interest itself, under a given condition” and declaring the latter to be “very much relative”, the CRC document opens the door to allowing that anything – any particular policy, etc. – can be in the interests of the proletariat, so long as it is accompanied by some general statement about the final aim of communism. The CRC document’s formulation on class interest is a “two-into-one” formulation: it eclectically combines the *class interest* of the proletariat with particular policies, etc., at any given time. The correct, dialectical understanding is that the class interest of the proletariat does not change, but at any given time it can be expressed in specific policies, etc., which can and do change.

The point, once again, is that, in any given situation and at all times, everything – all policies, programs, strategies, tactics – must proceed with the final aim of communism as the guiding principle and must serve – not only in word but in deed – as a part of the bridge leading from the present to the communist future. *There is a fundamental identity between the interests of the proletariat at any given point and its overall interests in achieving communism, and this identity must be reflected in the unity between the policies of the party at any given time and the basic line of carrying forward the revolutionary struggle to achieve communism.* It is this unity the CRC document would break with its eclectics, its relativism and pragmatism.

Given its overall viewpoint, it is not surprising that the CRC document does not see the need for a communist party whose principles of organization are consistent with and are an expression of the revolutionary aims and ideology of the proletariat and which enable the party to play its vanguard role throughout the long and unprecedented struggle against a powerful and desperate class enemy – an enemy whose desperation and determination to defeat the proletarian revolution become all the greater when it has been overthrown

and can recognize the threat of its historical extinction. The party envisioned in the CRC document is not so much “demystified” as it is “de-revolutionized”. And this is consistent with the non-revolutionary, social-democratic notion of “socialism and communism” that, unfortunately, characterizes this CRC document from beginning to end.

Conclusion: Rising to the Challenge or Repudiating Revolution

At this point, the main theses and arguments of this CRC document have been dealt with, and the question that once again poses itself is: where will this line lead those who persist in following it? By the end of this CRC document, where it broaches “Some Further Questions”, the larger implications of its line and methodology are becoming evident. In particular there is an orientation of applying the whole notion of combating “class reductionism” and focusing on the “non-class aspects” of a whole number of significant social questions. Thus it is clear that a retreat from the basic principles and methods of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is underway all along the line.

And this retreat is expressed not only in important political positions but also in terms of major questions of ideological line. Near the end of the CRC document, in the course of a discussion on the proper attitude toward the mistakes as well as the contributions of leaders of the international proletariat, we find the following statement: “Even during the rich experiences of Chinese revolution only Mao’s contributions were counted for the enrichment of Marxism.” (par. 12.2)

In response to this, it must be emphasized that it is not a question of Mao as an individual, or of his authority as a leader in some abstract – or *formal* – sense; and it is not that Mao never made mistakes or that his mistakes should not be summed up. The point is that Mao’s ideological and political line represents a scientific concentration of rich experience, both in China and internationally – it represents the application of communist theory to this experience and the development of communist ideology to a

new stage. Not to grasp this – or, more to the point, to retreat from a recognition of this – in the name of not one-sidedly focusing on the contributions of leading authorities, is once more eclectics. In opposition to materialist dialectics, it is idealism and metaphysics which breaks the link between practice and theory as a concentration of practice. It is relativist, and opens the flood-gates to the general relativist argument that one idea is as good as another. This is another significant expression of the overall petit-bourgeois outlook that has been adopted in this CRC document.

What has happened here is something very similar to what Lenin describes in “The Collapse of the Second International”: a major turn in world events has led to disorientation and near-panic, to the scrambling to discard principles which suddenly seem to be a burden rather than a boon in carrying out an orientation of bowing to the spontaneity of the masses and in particular bowing to petit-bourgeois prejudices and democratic illusions, trailing in the wake of the bourgeoisie. Before, “the man in the street” could perhaps be persuaded, particularly about the Soviet Union: “but that is not real communism”. Now that same “man in the street” looks at statues of Lenin coming down in the Soviet Union and is reinforced in the “spontaneous” (bourgeois-propagated) view that “communism was never any good, even in the land of the first communist revolution”.

This kind of tailing after backward forces and sentiments is strongly exhibited again at the end of the CRC document. In the concluding paragraph we are told:

“When the people of the former socialist countries put the communist strategy of monopoly power for the party during the whole transitional phase of socialism on the dock of history, communists cannot remain satisfied with the consolation that this is the result of backward thinking among the people. On the contrary, these experiences again and again indicate the Marxist teaching that the people alone are the creators of history.” (par. 14.2)

First of all, it is a grand(iose) exaggeration to say that “the people”

in these countries have put the principle of the institutionalized leading role of the Communist Party "on the dock of history". With regard to China, for example – and this is hardly an insignificant example – it is far from the case that the masses uniformly hold the position that the CRC document ascribes to them: it is clear that there are many who have a very real sense of the qualitative difference between the Communist Party of Mao and the corrupted "Communist Party" under Deng and who have a deep respect for the former and nothing but contempt for the latter – and this is especially so if we are talking about *the masses of workers and peasants*.

As for the Soviet Union, while there are a number of people (older workers in particular) who have a general sense that there are significant differences between the country under Stalin's leadership and the situation since (and who strongly prefer the former to the latter, for a number of reasons), it is safe to say that in the Soviet Union (and in other "former socialist countries" that have been part of the Soviet bloc) very few people have *ever even heard* a systematic presentation of the Maoist analysis of the process of capitalist restoration and of the nature of the ruling classes in the revisionist countries and of the conflicts among various factions within those ruling classes. It is precisely this scientific analysis that is required, but rather than make a materialist analysis of what has gone on in these countries – including a *class analysis* of the various forces and lines involved – the CRC document makes a philosophical principle out of worshipping the confusion and backwardness of sections of the people in relation to events there: "these experiences again and again indicate the Marxist teaching that the people alone are the creators of history".

This is the same thing as if, at the outbreak of World War 1, when a wave of national chauvinism swept through Russia, Lenin had heralded the chauvinist sentiments and demonstrations of masses of Russian people as a living testament to "the Marxist teaching that the people alone are the creators of history"! In fact, the logic of the CRC document here amounts to saying that whatever the masses – and in par-

ticular the intermediate or even backward masses, those most strongly influenced by the outlook and propaganda of the bourgeoisie – think at any given time is an expression of the real and highest interests of the masses. This is closely akin to the revisionist formula Lenin strongly criticized: what is desirable is whatever is possible, and what is possible is whatever is happening at the given time. This is not an orientation toward or a method for leading the masses to break with the shackles – including very importantly the *mental* shackles – of the old order and to create a new world through revolutionary struggle. It is a recipe for miserably tailing the masses and leading them around in a circle, following their own back-sides, without ever breaking free of those shackles.

Real and profound questions have been given concentrated expression in relation to the recent events in the (former) revisionist countries. The answer lies in going deeper, making even firmer one's grounding in Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, and on *that basis* fearlessly, and with a ruthlessly scientific approach, examining the historical experience of the international communist movement. But, once again, in this CRC document we see a different response – outright repudiation of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, of "basic concepts we had held aloft so far".

It is important to recall here something else Lenin describes in "The Collapse of the Second International": how such a leap into opportunism does not come "out of

nowhere" but is the explosion of certain erroneous tendencies that had been developing over a longer period (Lenin uses the analogy of a boil that finally bursts). To take one important aspect of this, the line that runs through the CRC document is related to the tailing after nationalism that has for some time characterized the CRC's line, in particular its expression in the notion of "an ensemble of new-democratic revolutions", carried out separately by each nation within (what is now) India – that this represents the road and the content of the new-democratic revolution in India.²⁵

The authors of this CRC document say that the CRC, in formulating its line on the national question, "faced this problem" of "class reductionism", yet, "Even though we resolved the problem of counterposing the class struggle with national struggle, we had not yet grasped the non-class aspects of the national question because of our own class-reductionist approach." (par 13.2) But now they "realise the gravity of the setback suffered by the communist movement due to the lack of a correct dialectical understanding between class and non-class aspects involved in developing a political and economic system during the transitional phase of socialism"; and thus they see the need for a more concerted struggle against "the concrete manifestations of this class-reductionist approach" (ibid), in order to be in a position to more systematically apply their newfound outlook and methodology to the national question and a num-

25. While the national question in India is complex and requires careful study, it can be said that the CRC's line departs from the basic Leninist understanding of the national question in the imperialist epoch as part of the world proletarian revolution, and the Leninist orientation of upholding the right of self-determination for oppressed nations but at the same time – particularly with regard to nations within a single state – striving to carry out a unified revolutionary struggle and to establish a single, unified revolutionary state over the largest possible territory on the basis of equality among nations (including, once again, the right of self-determination). The CRC line goes beyond upholding the right of self-determination in such circumstances and actually promotes separation, even to the point of insisting on separate revolutionary move-

ments, separate new-democratic revolutions, for each of the oppressed nations. If such a line were actually put into practice, the result would be that the proletariat in the Indian state – which can and must be united, through the vanguard role of a single multi-national party, to play the leading role in one overall new-democratic revolution – would instead be split along national lines and in fact would be subordinated to non-proletarian class forces and programs within each separate nation. Here we see once more an illustration of the fact that the position of the CRC abandons the stand – the outlook and interests – of the proletariat and takes up a petit-bourgeois stand, in this case tailing bourgeois (and other exploiting class) forces among these oppressed nations within the Indian state.

ber of other important questions.

In other words, there are connections between the erroneous positions of the CRC on a number of questions. There are, no doubt, a number of important elements involved in the CRC's motion backwards, and analyzing all the roots and development of this is beyond the scope of this paper. But clearly in the process of adopting an erroneous position on the relation between the national question and the overall new-democratic revolution in India – as well as on other key questions – the CRC began to move away from the class standpoint of the proletariat and to take up the class standpoint of the petite bourgeoisie, including in tailing various nationalist forces among the oppressed nations in India. This petit-bourgeois standpoint, with its tendency to resist any strong centralized ruling force – regardless of whether that force represents the proletariat or reactionary classes – contributed, in turn, to the repudiation of “the traditional Marxist-Leninist interpretation” of the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat (“from Lenin onwards”), with its necessarily strong central state apparatus and institutionalized leading role of the vanguard communist party. And, in turn, this leap to repudiate the principles of MLM on such a decisive question is bound to lead – and is already leading – to the application of an erroneous outlook and method and the adoption of erroneous positions on a whole number of important questions.

The authors of the CRC document are themselves actually drawing the connection between their erroneous political positions. They themselves are revealing a decisive point of outlook and methodology that links these erroneous positions: the abandoning of the class standpoint of the proletariat and of Marxist class analysis – indeed Marxist materialism in general – in the name of opposing “class reductionism”.

With this document, “On Proletarian Democracy”, its authors have retreated into the position that in fact it is not possible or desirable to cross the narrow horizon of bourgeois right – even of formal, bourgeois, democracy. Their answer to the question – can't we do better than that? – is No. Despite any declarations, or intentions, on their part

about upholding the final goal of communism; they have retreated to the “classical theme” of not only the undisguised bourgeoisie but bourgeois socialists singing the same old tired song – they have joined the chorus of those who proclaim, ever more loudly these days, that we cannot and must not move beyond the stage in human history where society remains divided into classes and is marked by social antagonisms.

Whether they intend it or not, their position would condemn the masses to a situation where they could not rise up and overthrow the old order, could not exercise dictatorship over the exploiting classes and could not carry forward the revolution under this dictatorship toward the final goal of communism. It would leave the masses under the domination of an economic system of capitalist exploitation and a corresponding bourgeois political system where, as Marx put it, they have the opportunity to choose, every so many years, which set of exploiters will rule over and oppress them. That is the logic of repudiating the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat in socialist society and the actual lessons communists must draw from it, and replacing this with demands for an illusory democracy that is impossible and undesirable under the conditions of socialism, and is unnecessary – and in a profound sense impossible as well – with the achievement of communist society, worldwide.

It is not my intent or purpose here to attempt to examine all the links between the complete full-blown opportunist line represented by this CRC document on the dictatorship of the proletariat and other erroneous tendencies that have characterized the CRC. My focus has been on exposing this full-blown opportunist line itself, which represents a concentration of an incorrect outlook, method, and political line. As expressed in the beginning of this critique of the CRC document, it is my hope that this critique will contribute to the comrades of the CRC *themselves* undertaking a thorough criticism and repudiation of this document, and in the process re-examining other positions taken by the CRC to see where and in what ways these positions have shared at least aspects of this incorrect outlook, method, and political line. □

Viewpoint:

This will be the last issue of *Mass Line*. The reasons leading to this sudden death are clear from the accompanying press release. Two issues are involved in these decisions. The attempt to resolve the inherent contradiction between the existing all-India structure of the CRC, CPI(ML) and the tasks of leading national liberation struggles by dissolving the “all-India structure” of the party, transforming existing State units into national parties and forming a coordination committee is one of them. The other is the way this has been done: through a decision of the all-India leading committee without any political preparation or consultation with the rank and file and the ideological views underlying all this. This method is not only undemocratic. It calls into question the claims of trying to fight against “social fascism” and reveals the aim of throwing the party rank and file into confusion and demoralisation. The new jargon on “Marxist-Leninist fundamentalism” conceals this aim which in essence tries to liquidate the organization and its ideological basis. By accepting these views raised by its erstwhile Secretary, the Leading Committee has endorsed them.

Those involved in publishing *Mass Line* are quite aware that an all-India journal like *Mass Line* can play an important role despite the limitations imposed by its language of publication. We are also confident that a sizable section of our readers and friends will provide us with the necessary support to continue publication. But, in the final analysis, the defeat of this liquidationism can only be accomplished by building up revolutionary Marxist-Leninist parties in the nations. Parties which boldly take up the historical task of

Mass Line Ceases Publication

Reprinted from *Mass Line*, a Marxist-Leninist newspaper in India, October-November 1991

New Democratic revolution through leading the national liberation struggle and thus contribute in resolving the crisis faced by the international communist movement. Right now this calls for a total concentration of efforts in the nations. Because the bitter fact is that those sections determined to take up this orientation are at present unable to divide their attention in order to simultaneously carry out the all-India tasks which are inevitable for waging successful national liberation struggle under proletarian leadership.

This handicapped situation is not of their making. It is the result of the revisionist line and practice developed by the leadership of the erstwhile CRC, CPI(ML), particularly over the past four years. And it is not at all surprising that it chose to fully expose its liquidationist designs, in a manner deliberately aimed at demoralising and wrecking the party, at a time when the struggle against this revisionism had sharply emerged and gained partial success. It is true that the recent turn of events in the former socialist countries and the howling glee of the bourgeoisie over the "collapse of communism" have enabled the wreckers to overcome their fear of exposure and finally come out with their banner of opposing "Marxist-Leninist fundamentalism". But this apparent burst of confidence is actually a desperate attempt to run for cover preening pompous sermons on the mysteriously growing "gap" between the brilliant theoretical leaps of the leadership and failure of the rank and file to "translate these ideas into practice" can hardly serve to hide this undignified retreat. As the outcome of the recently held Kerala State Conference proved, the major section of the rank and file

were getting rather weary of such idealist acrobatics and confirmed in their suspicion that it was leading them away from the revolutionary orientation adopted at the 2nd all-India Conference held in 1987. We must not lose sight of this significant lesson taught by the "backward" rank and file because it points out the real strengths and weaknesses, the potential for overcoming the present crisis, in the midst of the confusion and demoralization.

The liquidationist line promoted by the leadership and accepted by the majority within the leading committee of the erstwhile CRC, CPI(ML) has focused its attack on "Marxist-Leninist fundamentalism". What is meant by this is "the belief in some of the fundamentals such as class struggle, proletarian dictatorship etc., as inviolable". The argument is that they must be "redefined" in the light of contemporary developments. But there is redefinition and redefinition; to develop and enrich basic principles of Marxist theory and to define away these revolutionary principles as the revisionists have done. The whole course of development of the international communist movement since Marx shows the redefining and refining of these principles in close relation to the practical movement aimed at transforming the world. Some of these efforts have stood the test of time. Some have proved to be erroneous or imperfect. And each momentous turn of history, such as the ongoing collapse of the social fascist system, calls for a re-examination of concepts and development of fresh ideas and practice. But such turns of history have also produced fresh breeds of deserters from the proletarian camp, all in the name of "redefinition". And so one must be

clear about the trend, the direction concealed by the usage of this innocent word. The liquidationist line adopted by the leadership of the erstwhile CRC, CPI(ML) has made it clear that it essentially negates all the advances achieved by the international communist movement, mainly under the leadership of Lenin and Mao. Though paying lip service to their contributions, when it attacks "fundamentalism" and talks about redefinition it is attacking "... a typical, common, universal outlook that dominated the whole communist movement after Marx, causing the degeneration of scientific Marxism into Marxist fundamentalism". (From K. Venu's resignation letter)

Can there be a "scientific" Marxism which denies the very principles which separate this philosophy/political thought from others? Can there be a "scientific" Marxism which remains within the confines of abstract thought and refuses to be tested and enriched through practice grounded in the specific reality of one's society? The answer is a clear No. The denial of Marxist principles and links with practice is clear from the whole thrust of the argument against a new bogey "fundamentalism" and the accompanying vague call for "conceptual and organizational restructuring" of the party in order to tackle the "most important immediate task" of fighting against "social fascism". This idea is yet to be spelt out. But the thoughts lurking behind it tend to see social fascism as a product of the vanguard role of the communist party. The historical conditions which have made this role necessary and the practical problems of waging revolution against a ruthless enemy are far removed from these speculations

on a "fight against social fascism".

Mass Line does not support this view. It firmly believes that the contemporary crisis of the international communist movement can only be resolved by those who defend the gains of communism in the face of the bourgeois onslaught and strive to advance the revolutionary proletarian struggle by basing themselves on and developing Marxism from the heights already scaled by Mao Tsetung. As our readers are aware, *Mass Line* has consistently followed this orientation upheld by the 2nd Conference of the CRC, CPI(ML). It has never flinched in defending communism and has continuously publicized the ongoing efforts to regroup the international communist movement from a Maoist perspective through the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement. In keeping with this orientation it has brought to its readers information about the views and practice of other revolutionary parties, within India as well as abroad. But it has also not shied away from breaking with the dead traditions of Marxist-Leninist journalism in India, in content and form. Nor has it hesitated to criticize dogmas and point out weaknesses in Marxist theory and practice revealed by contemporary developments or open its pages to differing views. We do not believe that this was the result of some unique qualities shared by those involved in publishing this journal. It emerged from, and in turn enriched, a revolutionary orientation.

The decisions imposed by the now dissolved leading committee have put us in an awkward position. It reminds one of Mao's teachings on practising Marxism, being open and above-board and uniting with the many. The corollary was that those practising revisionism inevitably take to underhanded methods and cause splits. *Mass Line* was in a phase of reorganization. In light of the dismal state of affairs in the organization, the editor had already proposed resignation to the committee and a request to be reassigned to organizational work. But that could not mean the end of *Mass Line*. While differing with some of his assessments and plans the rest of those involved in publishing *Mass Line* had supported this proposal and gone ahead with future plans. These included the

publication of a "Theoretical Supplement" and the opening up of a broad debate on the questions of proletarian democracy involving a wide range of political views. Active efforts were going on to solicit articles for the Supplement, secure regular columnists and widen the distribution of the journal through a subscription drive. Each one of these steps were taken with the full knowledge and at least partial involvement of the leadership which was already involved in the conspiracy to wreck the party, not to speak of *Mass Line*.

More than a conspiracy which chose a method of operation intended to cause the maximum damage to the party and put its rank and file and organs in the most awkward situation, what is revealed is a totally contemptuous attitude towards the masses and the continuation of an irresponsible attitude towards this journal. This irresponsible attitude has continuously hampered the publishing of *Mass Line* in terms of getting timely information and support. It has also defeated some of the initiatives taken by *Mass Line* to interact with various progressive trends, particularly those related to women's and Dalit issues. If *Mass Line* has managed to survive and maintain a certain standard, despite reduction in pages and missed issues, the credit undoubtedly goes to a small group of dedicated well wishers and our readers. It is to them that we apologize for being unable to continue publication. Particularly to those who had recently subscribed expressing confidence in our ability to fulfill promises. Our insistence on refunding the balance due to all subscribers has been graciously accepted by the now dissolved leading committee. This will be completed by November though we will have to request subscribers from abroad to forfeit it for obvious reasons.

It is painful to be forced to say good-bye at a time when there is so much to do and each weapon counts. We are stepping back, but with rage and determination to spring back into battle. And we are confident that we will be back with you in the future to man positions standing on a truly solid, revolutionary foundation. Till then, good-bye. □

On

The following is a draft document published in December 1990, written under the leadership of K. Venu, secretary of the now dissolved All-India Leading Committee of the Central Reorganization Committee, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). — AWTW

1. Introduction

1.1. The recent wave of democratic upsurges in former socialist countries such as China, the Soviet Union and those in East Europe have raised many questions and challenges in front of the communists all over the world. The repercussions of these developments are not confined to the communist movement, rather they have shaken up the whole political realm at the global level. Communists, non-communists, and anti-communists, none can stand aloof. Questions are raised from various corners and answers are given from different angles. The communists have to grasp the depth of these problems and find out appropriate answers. It is with such an approach that this study is conducted.

1.2. The Marxist-Leninists in general all over the world have welcomed the recent wave of revolts and democratic upsurges against the social-fascist regimes of the former socialist countries. The Marxist-Leninists had already evaluated that the social system in these former socialist countries had degenerated into capitalism. Hence these upsurges are understood by them as an expression of the severe crisis faced by this particular form of capitalism. While hailing the people's struggles, Marxist-Leninist forces have cautioned them that bourgeois democracy or an unconcealed capitalism is not the solution. They have been called upon to continue the struggle for genuine communism. Mao's attempts leading to the lessons of the Cultural Revolution have been hailed as an alternative model to rely on and develop.

1.3. From the angle of the traditional Marxist-Leninist interpretation of capitalist restoration in the former socialist countries, this interpretation is sufficient. The capitalist roaders in

Proletarian Democracy

By the Central Reorganisation Committee, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)

the ruling communist parties of these countries transformed the budding socialist economy into a capitalist one by promoting, instead of restricting, bourgeois right and relying on material incentives for promoting production. The resultant bureaucratic capitalism has led to the present crisis in all these countries. This explanation is basically correct in relation to the economic aspect of capitalist restoration. But it is not sufficient to answer the principal political issue raised by the masses in these countries. Their major demand is the dismantling of the existing political system which ensures the monopoly of the communist party. The Marxist-Leninists have correctly pointed out that these parties are not communist and that the political system there represents the dictatorship of a new bourgeoisie, social fascism. But so far as the masses of these countries are concerned, there is no

difference between the essential structures of this social fascist political system and those which existed earlier when they were socialist. Even in China, where the Cultural Revolution gave rise to a new political situation, the state structure under Deng is not essentially different from the one which existed previously. The distinction is mainly in content, in who leads the State, Marxist-Leninists or revisionists. But the people are not able to see any qualitative difference in the structures of the political system, even though they can recognize the changes in their living conditions. That is why a mere call to re-establish socialism and a genuine dictatorship of the proletariat will not be sufficient.

1.4. Revisionists under the leadership of Gorbachev attribute the responsibility for the whole crisis of their bureaucratic capitalism to the deviations committed by Stalin.

Using the cover of Stalin's mistakes they justify the basic changes openly implemented by Gorbachev. Gorbachev is actually trying to resolve the internal crisis faced by bureaucratic capitalism by fully and openly introducing Western capitalist methods both at the economic and political level. This is intensifying the contradiction, within the ruling party and the political system of the Soviet Union, between the old bureaucratic bourgeoisie well entrenched in the system and the new bourgeoisie under the leadership of Gorbachev who want to dismantle the decadent bureaucratic system. Up till now Gorbachev has been able to cleverly manoeuvre and keep his lead in the process, though the mounting national struggles in different nationalities are bound to destroy the centralized imperialist system headed by him.

1.5. The internal restructuring initiated by Gorbachev's perestroika is

CRC Press Release

Reprinted from *Mass Line*, October-November 1991

The Central Reorganisation Committee, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) had correctly identified the deep-rooted dogmatism existing in the Marxist-Leninist movement in India and had initiated a determined struggle against it during the last decade. The established old concepts existing within the Marxist-Leninist movement on the New Democratic Revolution in India had become the biggest hurdle in grasping the reality. This was thoroughly smashed by the CRC,CPI(ML) by following the method of carrying out a correct Marxist analysis of concrete reality. The CRC,CPI(ML) came to the understanding that India is an ensemble of different nationalities having their own history and identity. In order to understand the concrete reality of India we must recognize these nationalities as historically formed socio-economic formations. By adopting this approach the CRC,CPI(ML) succeeded in recognizing the concrete reality of India. It came to the political conclusion that the establishment of the independent, sovereign existence of the nationalities is the historical task to be taken up today. This cannot be fulfilled without smashing the existing Indian state.

Along with this, the CRC,CPI(ML) also paid attention to developing a correct understanding of the developing and changing world situation. It rejected the

dogmatist approach of viewing the post second world war by sticking to Lenin's views and developed a new understanding on the dynamics of the contemporary world and on the revolution and world war.

To arrive at the new positions the CRC,CPI(ML) had to wage a continuous struggle during the last ten years against the dogmatist style of thinking. It has had to wage a determined struggle along these lines to draw the correct lessons from the unfolding incidents in the former socialist countries.

It has come to the conclusion that answers to the new challenges thrown up by these developments cannot be obtained from the established positions of the Marxist-Leninist movement on capitalist restoration in the former socialist countries. These events have raised questions about some basic Marxist principles which were considered as sacrosanct. The necessity of redefining these principles has come up. As an initial outcome of this search on the part of the CRC,CPI(ML) the document "On Proletarian Democracy" was published.

Comrade K. Venu, Secretary of the CRC,CPI(ML), has continuously taken the initiative in advancing these positions. Some sections within the organisation did try to grasp them, but practice has revealed that as a whole it is still

within the confines of the fundamentalist framework. As a result no significant breakthrough could be achieved in translating these ideas into practice. In the light of this situation, the secretary came to the conclusion that the task of reorganising the Communist movement on a new basis is not possible within the framework of the existing organisation. After considering ideological, political and organisational aspects, he proposed his resignation from the secretaryship and membership of the leading committee, so that he would be able to play a better role in developing the movement on a new basis. After a thorough discussion the All-India Leading Committee has upheld his views and accepted his resignation. Along with this the AILC has decided to dissolve the all-India structure of the party, keeping in mind the long-standing demand to resolve the contradiction between this structure and the tasks of leading national liberation struggles. With this the CRC,CPI(ML) ceases to exist as an all-India party. Its existing State units will be reorganizing themselves as national parties. It is also decided to form a coordinating committee in order to facilitate the exchange of experiences and views emerging from the national liberation struggles and give them a common orientation.

Central Reorganisation Committee, Communist Party of India, (Marxist-Leninist)

extended to the international arena, leading to the collusion between the two imperialist blocs led by the U.S. and the Soviet Union. This is accompanied by a process of realignment of economic and political forces at the global level. Along with his realization about the weakness of the bureaucratic system within the country, Gorbachev was also realizing the weakness of the social-imperialist neocolonial system, mainly maintained through manipulations at the state to state level, as compared to the dominant neocolonial structures system headed by the US. Hence the initiative by Gorbachev for collusion, envisaging a process of gradual absorption of Soviet social imperialism within this neocolonial structure. For the time being contention for control over the resources of the world will continue at a lower level.

1.6. The struggle between the bureaucrat bourgeoisie and the new bourgeoisie in the former socialist countries has not been completed, even though the new bourgeoisie has won decisive victories in the East European countries. Though Gorbachev, representing the new bourgeoisie of the Soviet Union, is in the lead, the powerful bureaucrat bourgeoisie within the party and the army have not yet accepted their defeat. The possibility of a coup by them cannot be ruled out. But that cannot stem the present tide of full-fledged and open capitalist restoration which has already reached the final stage in these countries. In China, the bureaucrat bourgeoisie have been successful in holding on to power after brutally suppressing the people's revolt against the social-fascist system and defeating the new bourgeoisie within the party and the army, at least temporarily. But the social fascists in China will not be able to continue for long as the people's revolt is mounting. This may even take new dimensions, because of the powerful influence of the Cultural Revolution led by Mao, which was already manifested in the previous people's upsurge there. The bureaucrat bourgeoisie of Albania, Vietnam, North Korea, and Cuba are also holding on to their guns even though the people's unrest is developing there also. The overthrow of the social fascists in these countries is also not far off.

1.7. The so-called communist parties which have been overthrown in

the former socialist countries are disintegrating. Some are even disappearing. The remaining forces and sections are getting polarized along the above-mentioned lines of supporting either the bureaucrat bourgeoisie or the new bourgeoisie. The same polarization is being extended to the revisionist parties of other countries also. In India, the Communist Party of India (CPI) is officially supporting the new bourgeois line of Gorbachev, though other elements are also there as a minor force. On the other hand, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has officially opposed the latest positions of Gorbachev while generally supporting the bureaucrat bourgeois sections in the Soviet party as well as in the Chinese party. But in the CPI(M) also elements supporting the Gorbachev line are reported to be active. Some degenerated Marxist-Leninist forces at the international level as well as in India are also getting polarized along these lines.

1.8. The bourgeoisie and the anti-communist forces all over the world have been utilizing these developments to propagate that communism is dead. Even though Marxist-Leninist forces were propagating that it was not socialism, but social fascism which was existing in all these former socialist countries, the fact is that people were not fully convinced or were not accepting this view as such. So the bourgeoisie have been successful in projecting the overthrow or the crisis of social fascism as the defeat of socialism and communism. Of course, the bourgeoisie is realizing that the crisis faced by state monopoly capitalism and social fascism is going to engulf them also. But they have been able to cover it up, because of the setback suffered by the communist movement. Under these circumstances, even among people who are generally in favour of socialism, doubts and apprehensions about the viability of socialism have already started raising their heads.

1.9. In this situation, it is the duty of the genuine communists to look back and identify the root cause for the problem faced by the communist movement. Without answering the basic issues raised in front of us, no communist organization can advance in its own practice. Such basic questions, if left unanswered for long, will demoralize the cadres and

weaken the organization. Therefore, the resolution of these problems, or at least attempts at resolution, must be taken up as an urgent political task. It is in this spirit that we call upon all genuine communists to re-examine the whole history of the communist movement and the basic concepts we have held aloft so far, so as to get a clear picture of the dictatorship of the proletariat as practised until now.

2. Dictatorship of the Proletariat

2.1. The concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat is central to the Marxian scheme of proletarian revolution, socialist construction and the advancement towards communism. Ever since this concept was put forward in a clear-cut manner by Marx and Engels, the entire development of the international communist movement has been inseparably linked with the practice centred around this concept. That is why we have to examine the emergence and development of this concept and its practice through its different phases.

2.2. Let us start with the clear-cut statement made by Marx on this subject: "As to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did that was new was to prove: 1) *that the existence of classes is merely linked to particular historical phases in the development of production*, 2) *that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat*, 3) *that this dictatorship itself only leads to the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society*." (from the "Letter to Joseph Weydemeyer", *Marx Engels Selected Works (MESW)*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973, Vol. I, p. 528)

2.3. Along with such a clarification Marx had summed up the experience of the European revolutions of 1848-51, deriving this explicit conclusion: "All revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it." (from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, *MESW*, Vol. I, p. 471) Thus he made it clear that the proletarian revolution has to smash the existing state

machine. And after the most valuable experiences of the Paris Commune, in the preface of the *Communist Manifesto* dated June 24, 1872, Marx and Engels recognized that the programme of the *Communist Manifesto* "has in some details become out-of-date", because "one thing especially was proved by the Commune, namely, that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes'". (MESW, Vol. I, p. 99)

3. Marx and the Paris Commune

3.1. The Paris Commune provided the answer to the most important question: what is to replace the smashed state machine? In his first outline of *The Civil War in France*, Marx beautifully expressed his concept of the Commune: "The Commune – the reabsorption of the state power by society, as its own living forces instead of as forces controlling and subduing it, by the popular masses themselves, forming their own force instead of the organized force of their suppression – the political form of their social emancipation, instead of the artificial force appropriated by their oppressors (their own force opposed to and organized against them) of society wielded for their oppression by their enemies. This form was simple like all great things." ("On the Paris Commune", Moscow, 1976, p. 153)

3.2. In the final version of *The Civil War in France*, he observed its functioning thus: "The Paris Commune was, of course, to serve as a model to all the great industrial centres of France. The Communal regime once established in Paris and the secondary centres, the old centralized government would in the provinces, too, have to give way to the self-government of the producers. In a rough sketch of national organization, which the Commune had no time to develop, it states clearly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest country hamlet, and that in the rural districts the standing army was to be replaced by a national militia, with an extremely short term of service.... The few but important functions which still would remain for a central government were not to be suppressed, as has been intentionally misstated, but were to be discharged

by Communal, and therefore strictly responsible agents. The unity of the nation was not to be broken, but on the contrary, to be organized by the Communal Constitution, and to become a reality by the destruction of the state power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence... nothing could be more foreign to the spirit of the Commune than to supersede the universal suffrage by hierarchic investiture. ("On the Paris Commune", Moscow, 1976, p. 73)

3.3. How did such a new political institution come into being? Marx explains: "The first decree of the Commune... was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people. The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time. Instead of continuing to be the agent of the central government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration." (Ibid., p. 71)

3.4. Out of all these measures, the first decree, "suppression of the standing army and the substitution for it of the armed people", is the crucial act differentiating the Commune from all the old states. Lenin declared that this "...constitutes the very essence of the Commune...." ("The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution – A New Type of State", *Collected Works (LCW)*, Vol. 24, p. 68) In his first outline to *The Civil War in France*, Marx wrote: "The people had only to organize this militia on a national scale, to have done away with the standing armies; the first economical condition... for all social improvements, discarding at once..., this constant danger of government usurpation of class rule at the same time the safest guarantee against foreign aggression and making in fact the costly military apparatus impossi-

ble in all other states...." ("On the Paris Commune", p. 154). In other words, the replacement of the standing army by the armed people was considered by Marx as a measure which would help the people to keep in check the danger of both internal usurpation and foreign intervention. Thus the Communal form of political system which not only mobilized and organized the political will of the working masses but also ensured its enforcement through an armed force which truly represented this will – i.e., the armed people. Marx considered that "...it affords the rational medium in which the class struggle can run through its different phases in the most rational and humane way." (Ibid, p. 156, emphasis added)

3.5. The Paris Commune lasted only for a few months. Summing up the reasons for its defeat Marx pointed out two mistakes. First, the Communards did not take the offensive against the retreating bourgeoisie. Second, the Central Committee surrendered its power *too soon* to make way for the Commune. Later on Engels repeated this point: "...it was the want of centralization and authority that cost the Paris Commune its life. *Once you have won* you can do with this authority what you like... but the fight needs to have all our force brought together in a fist...." ("Letter to Carlo Terragni", "On the Paris Commune", p. 292, emphasis added) Thus in their view, the defeat of the Commune did not lie in its unique structure – the absence of a standing army, elective posts, etc. In fact we can see that they have always upheld the Commune as the model of the dictatorship of the proletariat. They pinpointed the reason for defeat in the Central Committee's handing over its power *too soon* (before winning), i.e., the absence of a centralized authority necessary to safeguard the Commune. Yet Marx and Engels never undertook a detailed re-examination of the Commune lessons in the light of defeat, and left many questions unanswered.

4. Lenin and Proletarian State Power

4.1. After the Paris Commune, the October Revolution in Russia provided the next historical opportunity for materializing the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The

theoretical and practical experiences achieved by the Bolshevik Party in this regard, under the leadership of Lenin, still remain as the fundamental positions of the international communist movement on this question. So let us examine Lenin's concept as well as the experiences of the Bolshevik Party in relation to the realization of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

4.2. It was in the period after the February Revolution in Russia that serious discussions on the question of state and revolution emerged among the communists. Lenin took it up and tried to answer various questions raised from different angles and formulated the Marxist position on the subject. Lenin's famous book *The State and Revolution*, which was first published in August 1917, was the result of these attempts.

4.3. Lenin based all his analysis on the following understanding of the Marxist position on the state: "The essence of Marx's theory of the state has been mastered only by those who realize that the dictatorship of a *single* class is necessary not only for every class society in general, not only for the *proletariat* which has overthrown the bourgeoisie, but also for the entire *historical period* which separates capitalism from 'classless society', from Communism. Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same; all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the *dictatorship of the bourgeoisie*. The transition from capitalism to communism is certainly bound to yield tremendous abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: *the dictatorship of the proletariat*." (LCW, Vol. 25, p. 418)

4.4. During this period leading up to the October Revolution Lenin was basing his arguments mainly on the lessons of the Paris Commune as evaluated by Marx and Engels. Lenin evaluated the basic characteristic of the Paris Commune in this way: "The Commune... appears to have replaced the smashed state machine 'only' by fuller democracy: abolition of the standing army; all officials to be elected and subject to recall. But as a matter of fact this 'only' signifies a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different type. This is exactly a case of

'quantity being transformed into quality': democracy, introduced as fully and consistently as is at all conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois into proletarian democracy; from the state – a special force for the suppression of a particular class – into something which is no longer the state proper." (Ibid, p. 424) Lenin pointed out that while the Commune retained the representative institutions, it could overcome the parliamentarism of bourgeois democracy by abolishing the division of labour between the legislative and the executive. (Ibid, p. 429)

4.5. Lenin defined the nature of democracy during the transition period thus: "Democracy for the vast majority of the people and suppression by force; i.e., exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters and oppressors of the people – this is the change democracy undergoes during the *transition* from capitalism to communism." (Ibid., p. 467) Further, he explained the relation between democracy and the state. "Democracy is a form of state, one of its varieties. Consequently, like every state, it represents, on the one hand, the organized, systematic use of force against persons; but, on the other hand, it signifies the formal recognition of equality of citizens, the equal right of all to determine the structure of, and to administer, the state. This, in turn, results in the fact that, at a certain stage in the development of democracy, it first welds together the class that wages a revolutionary struggle against capitalism – the proletariat, and enables it to crush, smash to atoms, wipe off the face of the earth the bourgeois, even the republican-bourgeois, state machine, the standing army, the police and the bureaucracy and to substitute for them a *more* democratic state machine, but a state machine nevertheless, in the shape of armed workers who proceed to form a militia involving the entire population. Here 'quantity turns into quality'; *such* a degree of democracy implies overstepping the boundaries of bourgeois society and beginning its socialist reorganization." (Ibid, p. 477)

4.6. Lenin stressed the point, following Engels, that "the abolition of the state means also the abolition of democracy: that the withering away of the state means the withering away of democracy." (Ibid, p. 460) Lenin linked this withering away of

democracy with its advance. He said, "Communism alone is capable of providing really complete democracy, and the more complete it is, the sooner it will become unnecessary and wither away on its own accord." (Ibid, p. 468)

4.7. "...When there are no classes (i.e., when there is no distinction between the members of society as regards their relation to the social means of production), *only* then 'the state ceases to exist', and '*it becomes possible to speak of freedom*'. Only then will a truly complete democracy become possible and be realized, a democracy without any exceptions whatever. And only then will democracy begin to *wither away*... people will gradually become accustomed to observing the elementary rules of social intercourse that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copy-book maxims. They will become accustomed to observing them without force, without coercion, without subordination, *without the special apparatus* for coercion called the state." (Ibid, p. 467) This was how Lenin envisaged the withering away of the state and the rise of a new social organization under communism.

4.8. Like in the case of the Commune, the significance of the Soviet form of political organization was seen in the fact that it enabled the proletariat and the working masses "to take the organs of state power directly into their own hands, in order that *they themselves should constitute* these organs of state power." (LCW, Vol. 23, p. 326) Lenin said: "*The people need a republic in order to educate the masses* in the methods of democracy. We need not only *representation along democratic lines, but the building of the entire state administration from the bottom up by the masses themselves*, their effective participation in all of life's steps, their active role in the administration." (LCW, Vol. 24, p. 181, emphasis added) Following Marx, Lenin repeatedly stressed the significance of abolishing the standing army and replacing it with the armed people as a means of drawing the masses into the administration of society and to check the danger of restoration.

5. The Soviets and the Practice of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

5.1. Lenin put forward the overall

practical programme for the seizure of power by the working class in his famous April Theses, with the resounding slogan, "All Power to the Soviets". He defined that the new state will not be a parliamentary republic, "but a republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country from top to bottom". (*LCW*, Vol. 24, p. 23) Lenin tried to introduce the major aspects of proletarian state power which had emerged under the Paris Commune, except the principle of universal suffrage. Though the dissolution of the standing army was accepted in principle, it also could not be put into practice.

5.2. This overall programme for seizure of power was implemented by the second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies held on October 25-26, 1917. The Congress took power into its own hands and decreed that "all power in the localities shall pass to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, which must guarantee genuine revolutionary order". (*LCW*, Vol. 26, p. 247) Transfer of the land of the landed proprietors to the peasant committees, protection of the rights of the soldiers by introducing complete democracy in the army, establishment of worker's control over production, ensuring the convocation of the Constituent Assembly at the time appointed, etc., were also decreed.

5.3. The political system which was being developed in this way was centred around the Soviets as the organs of political power. The system of proportional representation along with the right to recall was adopted. An important crisis in the system surfaced in relation to the promised convocation of the Constituent Assembly. This was a demand and promise upheld by the communists before and after the revolution. The Constituent Assembly which was elected immediately after the revolution was still representing the pre-revolutionary situation. So it was not prepared to accept the new authority of the Soviets and its Central Executive Committee.

5.4. Under such circumstances, the Bolsheviks decided to withdraw their delegation from the Constituent Assembly. It was justifiable in the sense that the power of the Soviets which had emerged through revo-

lution was really representing the political will of the vast majority of the people. And this qualitative change had to be reflected in the Constituent Assembly. Finally the Central Committee of the All-Russia Soviets dissolved the Constituent Assembly through a decree. With this the change over to the new political system was reaching a significant point. At the same time it was facing new challenges.

5.5. In a major policy declaration made a few months after the revolution, Lenin defined that the "socialist character of Soviet, i.e., proletarian democracy, as concretely applied today, lies first in the fact that the electors are the working and exploited people; the bourgeoisie is excluded. Secondly, it lies in the fact that all bureaucratic formalities and restrictions of elections are abolished, the people themselves determine the order and time of elections, and are completely free to recall any elected person...." (*LCW*, Vol. 27, p. 272)

5.6. He defined the other aspect of the new system. "Dictatorship, however, is a big word, and big words should not be thrown about carelessly. Dictatorship is iron rule, government that is revolutionarily bold, swift and ruthless in suppressing both exploiters and hooligans." (*LCW*, Vol. 27, p. 265) In reply to Kautsky's charge that the Soviet system is dictatorial and not democratic, Lenin emphasized: "The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is rule won and maintained by the use of violence by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, rule that is unrestricted by any laws." (*LCW*, Vol. 28, p. 236) Lenin also refuted Kautsky's argument that classes can only rule, but not govern, by pointing out examples from history where classes not only ruled but also governed. Here Lenin's argument was actually based on the assumption that the dictatorship of the proletariat is a system in which the working class itself is governing.

5.7. But what was developed as the new political system was gradually coming under the control of the Communist Party. Lenin explained the situation thus: "What happens is that the Party, shall we say, absorbs the vanguard of the proletariat, and this vanguard exercises the dictatorship of the proletariat. The dictatorship cannot be exercised

or the functions of the government performed without a foundation such as the trade unions. These functions, however, have to be performed through the medium of special institutions which are also of a new type, namely the Soviets.... The whole is like an arrangement of cogwheels.... It cannot work without a number of 'transmission belts' running from the vanguard to the mass of the advanced class, and from the latter to the mass of the working people." (*LCW*, Vol. 32, pp. 20-21)

5.8. Further, Lenin categorically declared the role of the Communist Party thus: "After two and a half years of the Soviet power we came out in the Communist International and told the world that the dictatorship of the proletariat would not work except through the Communist Party." (*LCW*, Vol. 32, p. 199) Now the circle is complete. The practical programme for establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat which started with the attractive slogan, "All Power to the Soviets", ended with the reality that the dictatorship of the proletariat was exercised through the Communist Party, where the Soviets became mere cogwheels in the machine. Even though Kautsky's criticism was coming from the angle of bourgeois parliamentarism, the fact remains that in the present-day world situation, when a qualitatively new political system as envisaged in a genuine dictatorship of the proletariat has not emerged as a historical reality, it is not the class, but its party that actually governs.

5.9. The position taken by Lenin in relation to the party and the dictatorship of the proletariat is not very different from the position Stalin adopted and implemented. Stalin argued that the dictatorship of the proletariat is "in essence", the dictatorship of the party. And in exercising this dictatorship, the party uses the Soviets as mere transition belts like the trade unions, Youth League, etc. (*Concerning Questions of Leninism, Collected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 14-39) From this position, the nature and course of development of the bureaucratization process and the emergence of new classes can easily be traced. Under such a political structure, the absence of a conscious policy to restrict bourgeois right and the increasing reliance on material incentive for promoting

production laid the economic foundation for bureaucratic capitalism. And when we reach the stage of Mao's finding that under the dictatorship of the proletariat the bourgeoisie emerges within the party itself, the picture becomes complete.

5.10. Here it is important to note that Trotsky's criticism of Stalin did not answer any of the basic questions faced by the dictatorship of the proletariat. His criticism of bureaucratization did not lead to any basic understanding of the problems faced by the whole political system under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Rather he was also upholding the line of the development of the productive forces practised by Stalin. And as far as the major controversy between Stalin and Trotsky, that of building socialism in one country, Stalin was correct.

6. Criticism by Rosa Luxemburg

6.1. In her unfinished rough draft on the Russian Revolution written in prison, Rosa Luxemburg raised many serious criticisms on many fundamental questions related to the October Revolution. She wrote: "The basic error of the Lenin-Trotsky theory is that they, too, just like Kautsky, oppose dictatorship to democracy. 'Dictatorship or democracy' is the way the question is put by Bolsheviks and Kautsky alike. The latter naturally decides in favour of 'democracy', that is, of bourgeois democracy, precisely because he opposes it to the alternative of the socialist revolution. Lenin and Trotsky, on the other hand, decide in favour of dictatorship in contradistinction to democracy, and thereby in favour of dictatorship of a handful of persons, that is, in favour of dictatorship on the bourgeois model. They are two opposite poles alike being far removed from a genuine socialist policy...." (*Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, New York, 1970, p. 393)

6.2. She observed that the model of the dictatorship of the proletariat established under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, after the October Revolution, was actually trying to eliminate democracy as such, in the name of "the cumbersome nature of democratic electoral bodies". Her piercing criticism touched on the central question raised in relationship to the dictatorship of the proletariat: "To be sure every democratic institution

has its limits and shortcomings, things which it doubtless shares with all other human institutions. But the remedy which Trotsky and Lenin have found, the elimination of democracy as such, is worse than the disease it is supposed to cure: for it stops up the very living source from which alone can come the correction of all the innate shortcomings of social institutions. That source is the active, untrammelled energetic political life of the broadest masses of the people." (*Ibid*, p. 387)

6.3. The basic defect of the Soviet system is exposed by Rosa in this way: "Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party, however numerous they may be, is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for one who thinks differently. Not because of any fanatical concept of 'justice' but because all that is instructive, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on this essential characteristic, and its effectiveness vanishes when freedom becomes a special privilege." (*Ibid*, pp. 389-390)

6.4. Opposing Lenin's claim that the Soviet system of proletarian democracy is a million times better than bourgeois democracy, she evaluated the situation under the dictatorship of the proletariat practised by the Bolsheviks thus: "In place of the representative bodies created by general popular elections, Lenin and Trotsky have laid down the Soviets as the only true representation of the labouring masses. But with the repression of political life in the land as a whole, life in the Soviets must also become more and more crippled. Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule." (*Ibid*, p. 391)

6.5. Rosa Luxemburg raised serious criticism on the basic approach of the Bolshevik leadership: "The tacit assumption underlying the Lenin-Trotsky theory of the dictatorship is this: that the socialist transformation is something for which a ready-made formula lies completed

in the pocket of the revolutionary party, which needs only to be carried out energetically in practice. This is unfortunately – or perhaps fortunately – not the case. Far from being a sum of ready-made prescriptions which have only to be applied, the practical realization of socialism as an economic, social and judicial system is something which lies completely hidden in the mists of the future, what we possess in our programme is nothing but a few main signposts which indicate the general direction in which to look for the necessary measures, and the indications are mainly negative in character at that." (*Ibid*, p. 390)

6.6 Rosa Luxemburg had raised many other criticisms against the Bolshevik policy on nationalities, peasant policy, Constituent Assembly, etc. But after coming out of prison and getting direct information about the situation in Russia she withdrew some of the criticisms, and kept silent on some others. She realized the difficulty in allowing unlimited freedom to the enemies. Even then some of the observations she made on basic questions like democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat are of far-reaching significance and relevance, while her position on the national question still remains [word illegible].

7. Mao, New Democratic State and Cultural Revolution

7.1. Mao's attempt to evolve a healthy ideological and political struggle within the communist party by developing the two-line struggle to a higher level helped in creating a new atmosphere. Also his attempt to build a New Democratic state with a broad united front of different classes under the leadership of the working class was a departure and development conforming to the different situation in a semi-colonial condition.

7.2. But in spite of all these major breakthroughs, it can be seen now that the New Democratic People's Dictatorship established immediately after the completion of the revolution in China and the dictatorship of the proletariat which followed did not mark any significant advancement from the basic framework developed by Lenin and Stalin. Since the New Democratic state was formed as a united front of different class forces, some other political par-

ties other than the communist party were also participating in it. But all these parties were accepting the leadership and the authority of the communist party. Therefore, in effect, the situation was not much different from that in a state with single-party rule. This is one of the reasons why the advancement from this state of affairs to that of the dictatorship of the proletariat went on smoothly.

7.3. So the basic problems faced by the Soviet Union under Lenin and Stalin, namely the lack of a political system in which the people can directly participate and assert their political will, socialization of the means of production leading to centralization and the accompanying bureaucratization of the whole system, were all manifested in China also. Hence, the same process of capitalist restoration which had already reached an advanced stage in the Soviet Union had started in China also.

7.4. Mao could realize the gravity of the situation. He initiated investigations at the theoretical level as well as attempts at the practical level to break out of this situation. His theory on continuing the class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat was a major breakthrough in this direction. (Lenin had already put forward the position that class struggle would continue in different forms throughout the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But he did not develop it as Mao did, finding out new forms of struggle to deal with the question.) Mao's breakthroughs on other theoretical questions were also profound. He identified the economic reductionist position of the capitalist roaders, manifested in the form of the theory of the productive forces. His emphasis on the revolution in the superstructure as well as in the relations of production, his slogans during the Cultural Revolution such as "Put politics in command", "Take class struggle as the key link", "Grasp revolution, promote production", etc., were all a departure from the thinking that was dominant in the communist movement until then. Actually he was coming closer to the crux of the problem when he identified the areas of struggle in the superstructure, and in the relations of production. Similarly, he recognized the fact that political power was not in the hands of the working

class and other toiling masses of the people. Here he identified the crux of the matter — how to bring political power into the hands of the people.

7.5. He frankly admitted that there was no way out, no ready-made answer to the question. As Mao himself pointed out it was actually the masses who developed the new forms of struggle, the Cultural Revolution. It was actually a struggle against the structures of the bureaucratization existing under the dictatorship of the proletariat. As it was a spontaneous outburst of the masses, the anarchic deviations it developed were quite natural. But what had to be done was to systematize all these lessons into a new political system and form of struggle to be practised under the dictatorship of the proletariat. But, unfortunately, we cannot see any such positive development during Mao's lifetime. As can be seen in Mao's discussions with Chang Chun-chiao with regard to the Shanghai Commune, he had no new answer to the basic question which confronted them during the Cultural Revolution. Instead he went back to the theme of the party's ultimate authority to safeguard the dictatorship of the proletariat. This was a reflection of the same old concern which was haunting the communists since the bitter lessons of the defeat of the Paris Commune. Mao's confusion is evident in the following quotation: "In regard to the form of Soviet political power, as soon as it materialized, Lenin was elated, deeming it to be a remarkable creation by workers, peasants, and soldiers, as well as a new form of proletarian dictatorship. Nonetheless, *Lenin had not anticipated then that although the workers, peasants, and soldiers could use this form of political power it could also be used by the bourgeoisie*, and by Khrushchev. Thus the present Soviet has been transformed from Lenin's Soviet to Khrushchev's Soviet." (*Mao Miscellany*, Joint Publications Research Service, Arlington, VA, USA, Vol. 2, p. 452, emphasis added) Mao's main point is that what matters is not the form of the state structure but which class seizes power. This shows that Marx's emphasis on the new *form* of state under the dictatorship of the proletariat was almost forgotten.

7.6. The Cultural Revolution could not break this limitation. On

the contrary it itself revealed the very same limitation. The Cultural Revolution was possible only because of the leadership of Mao and it developed outside the existing political structure. Even though Mao had pointed out that many more Cultural Revolutions will be required during the whole period of socialism, it is quite clear that they are not going to continue in the absence of a system where such Cultural Revolutions are ensured, and Mao and other socialist leaders in China could not develop or envisage such a system. What they tried was to establish an all-round dictatorship over the bourgeoisie, using the same old framework of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Such an approach appeared to be only more authoritarian, and even the anti-bureaucratic content of the Cultural Revolution was misrepresented in this context.

7.7. With all its limitations, the Cultural Revolution has no doubt helped Chinese society to take a leap as far as its political development is concerned. Even though capitalist roaders could seize political power, the political discussions, investigations and trends that have come up in the post-Cultural Revolution period clearly reveal this situation. Though complete information regarding all these developments are lacking, available information shows that profound discussions regarding the problems of socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat have started there. These developments also reveal both the positive and negative aspects of the Cultural Revolution itself, especially the fact that the whole experiment was limited within the framework of the old concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat which has already been proved quite inadequate to face the new problems.

8. Basic Error

8.1. Our review reveals that the dictatorship of the proletariat practised so far in the former socialist countries since the October Revolution all ended up in the dictatorship of the party instead of developing towards a genuine system of the dictatorship of the proletariat, though there are many positive lessons to be assimilated by the working class. The whole system which was established and developed was mainly based on

the concept and practice of the dictatorship of the proletariat put forward by Lenin. Even Mao could not come out of that basic framework. So now we have to find out where and how Lenin went wrong.

8.2. As has already been pointed out, Lenin was fully relying on the experience of the Paris Commune as narrated and evaluated by Marx and Engels in order to develop the concept and practice of the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is why when the workers in Russia evolved a new form of organization during the 1905 Revolution, the Soviets, Lenin immediately upheld it as a potential form of organization corresponding to the needs of the future proletarian state structure.

8.3. It was in this background that Lenin raised the most crucial slogan of the October Revolution, "All Power to the Soviets". In his most important theoretical work on the state, *The State and Revolution*, he envisaged the Soviets as the main form of the political organ of the proletariat and other sections of the people. A political system functioning through the Soviets as the representative bodies of the workers, peasants and soldiers, was envisaged as something similar to the Commune of Paris.

8.4. In the political structure of the Paris Commune, the communist party was not having any direct role. But while evaluating the defeat of the Commune, Marx pointed to the fact that the Central Committee handed over power to the Commune too soon. It means that the Central Committee should have kept the political power in its own hands for a short period sufficient enough to defeat the enemies and ensure the functioning of the new proletarian state. But it is not clear how Marx would have looked upon the role of the Commune in relation to this new central role of the Central Committee during that transition period. It is also not clear how such a situation would have transformed into one where the party had no central role to play.

8.5. The absence of any mention of the role of the party in the whole scheme of the dictatorship of the proletariat as explained in *The State and Revolution* by Lenin is very conspicuous. It may be due to this influence of the political structure of the Paris Commune. But here, unlike in the Paris Commune, the party was

going to play the crucial role because by the time of the October Revolution, a party had already been developed as the vanguard representing the class interests of the proletariat. So this was the crucial theoretical question to be resolved during that period. Lenin's total neglect of this question was a serious lapse leading to the basic error in developing the understanding of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

8.6. After the seizure of power in October, the Congress of the Soviets became the formal authority of the new political power. But actually the party was playing the crucial role in evolving all important policies and tactics behind the scene. In effect the party was controlling the Soviets, though its specific role in the new state structure was not defined.

8.7. So, under the pressure of circumstances, in the face of both external and internal threats, the party was forced to play the central role, relegating the Soviets to the background. And Lenin openly admitted this situation and justified it saying that the proletariat can exercise its dictatorship only through the party. In order to justify this new role of the party Lenin even pointed out the degeneration of the working class; making it unable to rule as a class. (*LCW*, Vol. 32, p. 21) Moreover, Lenin was not raising this question as a specific problem of Russia, but as a universal problem, thereby making it a principle that only the party can exercise the dictatorship. Hence Lenin had reached a position just opposite to that of Marx.

8.8. The basic point of departure for the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat had already been identified by Marx while summing up the lessons of the Paris Commune – "the reabsorption of state power by society as its own living force". But Lenin did not take up the questions of translating this concept into practice, and thereby making a qualitative break with the hitherto existing understanding on political power. Even though he was talking about Soviet deputies being revocable agents of power and also about creating the new state with the armed people, in practice no concrete steps were taken to realize this. The unavoidable force of circumstances may be pointed out as the factor preventing any advancement in this direction. But we have no

evidence to show that Lenin paid any serious attention to this basic question itself. He did not understand the necessity of evolving a qualitatively new political system under the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the other hand, his whole attempt was to achieve this change by changing the leadership of the state, from a bourgeois one into that of the proletariat through its party.

8.9. Actually the structure of the new proletarian state envisaged by Marx and Engels had nothing to do with the existing structure of the bourgeois state. This is well reflected in the above quoted statement of Marx (reabsorption...) and in Engels' statement, "The proletariat seizes power and... then puts an end to itself as proletariat... and thus also to the state as state." (*Anti-Dühring*, Peking, 1976, p. 362) This is the point of departure – a state which itself becomes the guarantee for the reabsorption of state power by the society, a state which ceases to be a state in the traditional sense. How can the proletariat achieve such a goal which involves deep internal contradictions? Two practical steps taken by the Paris Commune are in front of us – a political system run through the revocable agents of power and the replacement of the standing army by the armed people.

8.10. But if we are really to achieve a qualitative break with the existing understanding of political power, we have to go deeper into its dynamics. In a class society, the dominant class wields political power claiming to represent the whole society. This reflects a contradiction between the political will of the ruling class and that of the society as a whole. It is to resolve this contradiction that power is concentrated in the state structure and wielded by the ruling class as its executive power. So this concentration of the political will of the ruling class in the name of the political will of the whole society, in the concrete form of the state, especially in its armed might, is characteristic of the political power so far existing in class society. The proletariat is aiming at qualitatively breaking with this structure. It must initiate a process which makes the society as a whole capable of reabsorbing this concentrated power. And the replacement of the standing army by the armed people is a concrete initial

step in this direction. But in the absence of a complete economic, political, social system which guarantees this reabsorption, this alone will not serve the purpose. In the whole process, conditions and structures should be created so that the (political) will of the whole society can get expressed and realized directly without the mediation of a state. It is only then that the proletariat can achieve its goal of a society where the state withers away. If the proletariat cannot put forward such an alternative political system, it cannot make any qualitative break with the existing bourgeois system.

8.11. It is here that the whole system of the dictatorship of the proletariat so far practised, starting from Lenin and up to Mao, failed. The whole system revolved around the idea of seizing and maintaining the political power through a centralized state structure. It not only did not initiate any process of reabsorption of power but, on the contrary, led to more concentration of power. Of course, during the Cultural Revolution, Mao tried to reverse the direction, but he could not make any qualitative advance since he could not come out of the basic framework already established. Mao had also not grasped the importance of a new political organizational structure. This is what is reflected in his remark that the Soviets of Lenin could easily be transformed into Khrushchev's, meaning that the discovery of Soviets was of no significance.

9. Bourgeois Dictatorship and Proletarian Democracy

9.1. The reason for such a basic deviation is to be further investigated. We may get some clue to understand the problem if we try to look at how Lenin analyzed bourgeois democracy and attempted to replace it with the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was absolutely correct on the part of Lenin to evaluate that all different forms of bourgeois states are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and that all the different possible forms of transitional proletarian state are essentially the dictatorship of the proletariat. But this aspect of dictatorship is only the essential part, not the whole of it. A bourgeois democratic state deals with an important question of human society, the contradiction

between individual and society. But a bourgeois fascist state does not give room for dealing with that contradiction at the same level, even though both are essentially dictatorships of the bourgeoisie. For the first time in the history of human society bourgeois democracy recognizes the individual as a political entity and gives him/her a role in the political system, though formally. The weakness of this bourgeois democracy is that it is based on the rule of private property whereby it ensures the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Thus the equality professed by it becomes not only formal, but also bogus.

9.2. It is on this basis that Lenin stressed on the point: "democracy based on private property or on a struggle for the abolition of private property". Here he is emphasizing the class-dominant aspect of democracy, the rule of private property. But by equating bourgeois democracy to the bourgeois state, he has neglected the non-class aspect of democracy reflected in bourgeois democracy. The recognition of the individual's political role in the political system of a society is actually a historical advance in dealing with the non-class contradiction of individual/society. Bourgeois democracy is reflecting this non-class aspect also. It is actually a development in the forms of social functioning which was (and is) taking place in the whole process of social development in close relation with the development of class struggle. Even though Lenin talks about the formal equality reflected in bourgeois democracy and its representative nature, he does not demarcate between the class-dominant and non-class aspects of democracy. So he comes to the solution of replacing the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the dictatorship of the proletariat by simply reversing the dictatorship of the minority over the majority into a dictatorship of the majority over the minority. Hence no qualitative break with the old structure is required. Ultimately, the old structure which concentrates political power in the hands of the state leadership leads to the emergence and strengthening of a new ruling class from among the working class and the ranks and leadership of its party itself.

9.3. The development of proletarian democracy will not take place simply by reversing the dictatorship

of the minority over the majority. Elimination of private property and socialization of the means of production are certainly crucial steps for establishing the system of proletarian democracy or the genuine dictatorship of the proletariat. But as has already been seen from the experience of the former socialist countries, the mere juridical socialization of the means of production is not going to solve this problem. Rather, that will create concrete conditions for further centralization of political power since the whole means of production get concentrated into a single entity. So the real socialization of the economy, an essential for proletarian democracy, can be achieved only through an effective political system which can ensure genuine democracy by decentralizing the political power, by ensuring the realization of real power by the people directly. So the socialization of the means of production and the development of a political system that ensures proletarian democracy are essential, complementary aspects of the socialist system which must be capable of surviving on its own.

9.4. Bourgeois democracy will be transcended only by passing through this transitional phase of proletarian democracy which will create a new form for social organization in communism. Here the non-class aspect of democratic functioning will further develop, creating favourable conditions for the all-round development of the individual, though within the contradictory relationship between individual and society.

9.5. Proletarian democracy is essentially a dictatorship of the proletariat in the sense that the class interest of the proletariat, of liberating itself through emancipating the whole of humanity, is aimed at and achieved through this system. And the economic and political system envisaged above is ensuring the attainment of such a goal. Such a social system can exist and survive only if the majority of the people accept it and protect it as their own. Hence the role of the communist party in this whole process will be basically different from that known and practised so far. The communist party, representing the genuine interests of the proletariat as the most advanced class, will certainly play the vanguard role in leading the struggle of the people against the

existing bourgeois reactionary system and smashing it, and in creating and establishing the new proletarian democratic system. It will also play a very active political role to ensure the political system as envisaged by it – politicizing the people throughout the period, and mobilizing them to defend and develop it. But the survival of this new socialist system will not depend upon the protective role of the communist party. Rather the system will survive only by passing the test of history.

9.6. In the light of this evaluation of the basic reason for the grave deviations in the concept and practice of the dictatorship of the proletariat from the time of Lenin onwards, we will have to come to the conclusion that the whole practice of the dictatorship of the proletariat up until now and the experience of building socialism was marked by serious deviations. As a new social system, emerging from the old, socialism was bound to suffer from many blemishes. But apart from those caused by circumstances, the line followed by communists from Lenin onwards has also played its part in this. While upholding the heroic effort to create a new society and the new things which emerged through socialism (things which have played a positive role in shaping history), as communists our own task is to focus on our mistakes and correct them, not justify them in the name of historical limitations. Examining these mistakes in the light of Marxism, we can see that they really reflected deviations from the proletarian world outlook. But at the same time we have to identify in which concrete form it is reflected. One dominant tendency can be identified as that of a class-reductionist tendency. That is, analyzing society only in terms of class and class struggle, thereby neglecting the non-class aspects in the complex phenomenon of society. Lenin's one-sidedness in understanding the complexities of the dictatorship of the proletariat and his total neglect of the need to develop a political system will have to be attributed to this class-reductionist approach, which is still very dominant in the whole communist movement.

9.7. Similarly, another tendency encouraged by Lenin's stand on the Party's central role in the dictatorship of the proletariat is the dominant thinking in the communist movement which considers that the party

determines everything in relation to social revolution. A one-sided subjective approach towards the party, blind faith in the party, etc., get strengthened as a result of this tendency. Of course, the conscious vanguard role of the communist party in the social revolution is still relevant and important. But how can a communist party play this role? Can it be achieved by imposing an unquestionable hegemony over the movement and society? Rather, this vanguard role can be achieved and maintained only if the communist party has a realistic understanding and it is capable of constantly remoulding its style of thinking and practice in order to make its policies and programmes conform to the ever-changing reality. If such a dynamic and flexible approach is not adopted, any party will easily degenerate and will be discarded by the people. After Mao's finding that the new bourgeoisie is emerging within the communist party itself, this question has become all the more important.

10. The Need for a New Orientation

10.1. As no socialist country is existing, the proletarian forces have to seize power anew everywhere. The world situation is favourable for this. People's struggles are mounting everywhere unabatedly. Especially after the collusion between the two superpower blocs, who were trying to intervene into and utilize each and every anti-imperialist national liberation struggle in their favour, now the struggles of oppressed peoples and nations are intensifying more directly against the whole imperialist system. The advancement of revolution in Peru, which is uncompromisingly fighting against both the imperialist blocs, is a good example clearly proving the nature of the revolutionary potential that is inherent in the present-day world situation. Many non-communist anti-imperialist forces are also advancing along the path of struggle more directly and forthrightly.

10.2. But if these struggles are to be guided along the correct path of advancing towards socialism and communism, the proletarian forces are duty-bound to explain to the people how they envisage the future of revolution. In the context of all the new developments in the former socialist countries, without a proper

programme for preventing capitalist restoration and the possible degeneration of proletarian power into social fascism, it is practically impossible for winning over the struggling peoples of the world on a broad basis towards socialism and communism. That is why putting forward such a programme with a new orientation has become all the more important and urgent.

10.3. The essential aspects of the new system envisaged under the dictatorship of the proletariat have already been explained in the previous two sections. They can be summed up as follows: A qualitatively new understanding of proletarian political power must be the starting point. It must reflect Marx's concept of the Paris Commune – as the reabsorption of state power by the whole society. So the proletarian state should not be a state like the bourgeois state or the state under socialism so far practised by the communists which concentrated the whole power in the centralized state structure. It will have to be a new political system in which the state ceases to be a state by starting the process of reabsorption of state power by society, through a process of decentralizing political power, aiming at reaching a stage when the (political) will of the whole society can get expressed and realized directly without the mediation of the state. Such a system can be developed only by achieving the genuine socialization of the means of production, which can again be assured through a political system which ensures proletarian democracy. This socialist system, in which the socialized economic base and the proletarian democratic political system are complementary aspects, must survive on its own, becoming a social system acceptable to and practised by the whole people, under the leadership of the proletariat.

10.4. The crucial question faced by the proletariat in achieving such a system will be in relation to evolving the concrete steps for the transitional phase. The means adopted for smashing the existing state machinery will be crucial in relation to the new understanding on political power. Since the existing forms of bourgeois or reactionary political power are all concentrated in the state structure centred around the armed forces, proletarian forces can

smash them only by using force. So the revolutionary overthrow of the existing state will have to be achieved by a violent revolution. This will be possible only under the leadership of a vanguard party of the proletariat with its people's army. The smashing of the existing state has to be followed by the establishment of the new political system, again under the leadership of the vanguard party. Here one of the crucial initial steps will be the arming of the people, as a part of the process of replacing the standing army with armed people. At present we will not be able to predict the duration of this transitional period. But we can definitely define the criterion to decide the duration of this transitional phase. The vanguard party of the proletariat will have to play the leading role until the new political system starts functioning effectively, by completing the process of the socialization of the means of production and then consolidating the power in the hands of the new ruling classes under the leadership of the proletariat. Once this is achieved the communist party must give up its monopoly control of the revolutionary transformation and allow the system to function on its own. Under the proletarian democratic system, the effectiveness of the new system will be accepted or rejected by the people through an open democratic process in which the whole people will be freely involved through their own political organizations or otherwise.

10.5. During this transitional phase the role of the party, both in smashing the state machine and in establishing a new political structure, will be crucial and central. But even then, after the seizure of power, the party should not directly wield the power. Rather it must assert its authority only politically through the bodies elected by the people. As the party plays this crucial role in the overthrow of the enemy classes, it will be enjoying tremendous prestige and authority among the people. During this phase masses will also be drawn into active political life on an unprecedented scale. So, even though the party will be playing the central role, development of its political line through line struggle, etc., must be known to the people. It means the party will have to function rather as an open party. The internal life of the party will also have to be

very democratic, even allowing factions, etc., as a matter of principle.

10.6. Organs of power by the people will have to be developed by transforming the united front or other similar forums which were playing an active role in mobilizing the masses for waging the war against the enemies into revocable representative bodies. These bodies must represent the political will of the majority of the people who have aligned with the working class in the struggle against the enemy classes. Those belonging to the overthrown enemy classes will not enjoy the right to be elected to such bodies of power, and they will be denied other civic rights also during this transitional phase. During the transitional phase, the attempt must be to make these bodies the real organs of power, gradually reducing the role of the party in the whole process of administration.

10.7. While during the pre-revolutionary phase, the role of armed force is principal, after the seizure of power, the role of force changes. Mobilization of the political will of the people becomes principal while the use of force follows it. This political mobilization should be carried out mainly through the political bodies, mass organizations and other open forums under the guidance of the party. The use of force in general will have to be transformed from the activity of a special body into the activity of the armed people themselves.

10.8. Socialization of the means of production is to be carried out thoroughly during this transitional phase. As we have already seen, mere juridical socialization will not solve the basic problem. The real socialization is closely linked up with developing an appropriate political structure to make the people capable of realizing the power in their own hands. So by developing the socialization process, both at the economic and political level, a genuine socialized economy can be promoted.

10.9. Once the functioning of the new political and economic system develops in this way, the communist party should formally relinquish its monopoly of power. Its right to govern should be strictly based on the electoral support gained by its platform, just like any other platform. The essential characteristics of the new political structure will be the rule through decentralized, revocable representative bodies, guarantee

of all democratic rights including universal suffrage, abolition of the standing army, etc., and its legitimacy will be based on the protection and development of the socialist system leading to communism. Since socialism itself is a period of revolutionary transformation, this system itself will have to evolve further. The question of such changes in the political-social-economic structure will itself be a matter of class struggle. And the communist party must play its vanguard role in leading this class struggle by politicizing and mobilizing the masses on the basis of the correct line. But unlike in the hitherto practised forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the new political structure, the people wielding the real power in their own hands, also with the arms in their hands, will be playing a very active role in the whole political life of the society, thereby being the best guarantee against restoration and also ensuring the best conditions for seizing back power if restoration takes place.

11. Role and Functioning of the Communist Party

11.1. Now, let us see what will be the role of the party in this new scheme of things. Lenin defined the Communist Party as the organized vanguard of the proletariat to lead the working class and other sections of the people in the revolutionary seizure of political power. We can see, here also, the influence of the lessons of the Paris Commune.

11.2. The principle of democratic centralism, evolved and implemented by Lenin, is still the most effective and advanced principle of functioning for any social organization. The iron discipline of the party envisaged in this system is necessary for an organization which wages a revolutionary war against the superior enemy forces. As far as the functioning of this system is concerned, Lenin provided the best model of dialectically linking up the democratic functioning within the organization before taking the final decision, with its implementation in a centralized manner. If this internal democracy is not ensured, the whole system can easily degenerate into an authoritarian centralism, and this usually happens, as the revolutionary organizations occasionally face emergency situations when internal

democracy will have to be curtailed. But if this is not strictly limited to such special circumstances and internal democracy is not ensured as a basic principle, the possibility for deviation is very much there. And this is the major weakness of the system of democratic centralism.

11.3. The practice under Lenin shows that there was a free and lively atmosphere within the organization to voice different views and opinions and to debate over such differences. In the post-revolutionary situation, groups were allowed to function openly and even to publish their own materials separately. But in the context of growing counter-revolutionary attempts, the 10th Congress of the Party (in 1921) under Lenin's guidance decided to ban such factions and their separate functioning. Even though it can be seen as a particular decision in a particular context, the approach adopted in the resolution and the nature of discussion in the Congress shows that the decision was arrived at on the basis of the principle of unity. The 10th Congress resolution on Party Unity declared, "The Congress... hereby declares dissolved and orders the immediate dissolution of all groups without exception formed on the basis of one platform or another (such as the Workers' Opposition Group, the Democratic Centralism Group, etc.). Non-observance of this decision of the Congress shall entail unconditional and instant expulsion from the Party." (*LCW*, Vol. 32, p. 244) The same resolution explained the approach towards the question: "In this question, propaganda should consist, on the one hand, in a comprehensive explanation of the harmfulness and danger of factionalism from the standpoint of Party unity and of achieving unanimity of will among the vanguard of the proletariat as the fundamental condition for the success of the dictatorship of the proletariat; and, on the other hand, in an explanation of the peculiar features of the latest tactical devices of the enemies of the Soviet power." (*Ibid*, p. 242)

11.4. Afterwards, the whole concept of the monolithic communist party, propounded by Stalin and solidified during the whole Comintern period and afterwards, was centred around this 10th Congress decision. And this monolithism naturally gave rise to an atmosphere where centralism was always emphasized,

while democracy was belittled or neglected. Stalin's open declaration that the dictatorship of the proletariat is in essence "the dictatorship of the Party" strengthened this trend. Any opposition to the leadership could be suppressed using the state machinery in the name of establishing this "dictatorship".

11.5. Mao's attempts to develop the two-line struggle within the party was a step to re-establish the style of functioning of democratic centralism practised by Lenin, in a more systematic manner. He could also bring forward the question of correct ideological and political line as the determining factor in establishing the correct leadership of the party. But as Mao did not openly criticize the above concepts, in effect the two-line struggle, etc., were only some minor steps at rectification within the overall framework established earlier.

11.6. The sanctification of the party and the consequent religious attitude towards it developed on the basis of the above concepts. The concepts of revolutionary authority put forward by Stalin by defining Leninism and establishing the authority of Lenin, intensified the negative effects of this religiosity. All views of the opponents of the established authority were considered not only irrelevant but taboos to the communists. For example, while criticizing their ideas, nobody thought it necessary to examine whether any ideas put forward by Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Trotsky, Bukharin, etc., were correct and worthwhile for consideration. Even though Mao's style of open two-line struggle through open debate and polemics created a new atmosphere, we can see that even during the Cultural Revolution the concept of revolutionary authority emerged in a more powerful way, again curtailing the democratic atmosphere. The personality cult, as the follow-up of the concept of revolutionary authority, assumed dangerous dimensions during the Cultural Revolution, especially at the instance of Lin Biao. Our own experience in the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) regarding the consequences of the concept of the revolutionary authority of comrade Charu Majumdar is a case in point.

11.7. After we have reached the stage of Mao's finding that the bour-

geoisie emerging within the communist party is the most important danger faced by the dictatorship of the proletariat, it is high time that we re-examine this whole experience in relation to the dictatorship of the proletariat and the party's role in it, especially in a context when the people are rising up in revolt against the so-called communist parties which were ruling them in the name of proletarian dictatorship. No eye-wash is going to save the situation. A thorough re-examination of the concept and role of the communist party in the historical process of building socialism and communism is the need of the hour. Instead of making the party the whole centre of political power, a new organizational structure and approach for the party have to be evolved suiting the working class aim of abolishing classes themselves. Some possible steps are suggested here:

12.1. *Demystification of the Communist Party.*

The communist party's role of being the vanguard of the proletariat is to be tested and proved in the course of the historical process. Whether it serves the proletarian class interest or not is also to be judged by examining whether its programmes and policies conform to the changing reality, making it capable of leading the class struggle of the working class and other sections of the people against the exploiting classes under a given condition. The proletariat class interest itself, under a given condition, is very much relative, changing according to the changing reality, though the ultimate interest of the working class, of building communism, remains as a long-term goal. Under a given condition, the tasks of a specific revolution, or its stage, can be defined; but that itself will be subject to change and modification, even though the basic outlook of the proletariat on that specific revolutionary phase will remain constant. Only when a communist party realizes its delicate position in this way, when it realizes that it is always subject to the test of historical reality, can it come down to the complexities of reality. Then only can it realize that no authority has been bestowed upon it either by the working class and the people or by history. It can only serve the people. Here we may note the qualitative distinction between the party

leading a revolution to seize power and the party with monopoly in power. In the first case, the party is compelled by the very context to be self-critical and continuously correct and develop its line and practice in order to mobilize the masses for revolution. But in the second case, the pressure of circumstances operates in the opposite direction. When this is coupled with the sanctification of the party degeneration is not far off.

12.2. *Discard the concept of the Revolutionary Authority*

Marxism is an ever developing philosophy and science. It has got the potential to assimilate the wealth of knowledge produced by innumerable branches of human investigation. It is true that the leadership of a real revolutionary movement can contribute much more than anybody else. But if the contributions to Marxism are limited to such personalities of specific periods, then the development of Marxism will be much curtailed. During the period of Stalin's authority the negative effect of such a policy was fully manifested. Even during the rich experience of the Chinese revolution only Mao's contributions were counted for the enrichment of Marxism. Moreover, as in the case of Stalin, while we refuse to recognize the contribution by anybody other than the authority, generally we also refuse to recognize any mistake committed by that authority. Even the Marxist-Leninist forces, including us, tried to defend the mistakes of Stalin by arguing that his intentions were to serve the proletarian interest. We were forgetting that such an argument is thoroughly anti-Marxist, because Marxism teaches us to evaluate the correctness of any policy not on the basis of the subjective intention of its author, but on the basis of actual results. The concept of the revolutionary authority created a kind of blind obedience or a sort of religiosity among the followers. Without smashing this religiosity, Marxism cannot re-establish its vitality and vigorous scientificity.

12.3. *Constant remoulding of the style of thinking and functioning*

On the basis of the above approach a thorough remoulding of the style of thinking and functioning is to be carried out throughout the organization. We had already started to tackle the question of remoulding the style of thinking and functioning,

and have developed some concepts and practice also in that direction. We have to further develop them including the above findings also.

13. Some Further Questions

13.1. The above evaluation of the past experiences and the suggestions put forward as theoretical and practical solutions of the crisis faced by the communist movement are to be considered only as beginning steps in this direction. An important aspect totally left out here is the analysis of the philosophical basis for the deviations committed by the communist movement and the steps for rectifying them. The question is very important and vital so far as a genuine communist movement is concerned. Even though there is a consistent philosophical approach behind our analysis and investigations as an undercurrent, we have to take up the study of this subject specifically and thoroughly, which is not attempted here.

13.2. In our analysis above, we have already identified one tendency existing for a long period in the whole communist movement – that of class-reductionism. Actually, during the past few years, when we were developing the new line, we were confronting this problem again and again. In understanding the national question itself, we faced this problem. Even though we resolved the problem of counterposing the class struggle with national struggle, we had not yet grasped the non-class aspects of the national question because of our own class-reductionist approach. While breaking with the old mechanical approach on the woman question and caste question we had recognized the non-class aspects involved in these questions. Still we had not started a struggle against the class-reductionist tendency which is well entrenched in our thinking. So, in these specific areas also we are facing serious obstacles, which can be overcome only when we really start a struggle against the concrete manifestations of this class-reductionist approach. Now we are realizing the importance of the non-class aspect of the individual-society relationship, in relation with the task of developing proletarian democracy. Also we realize the gravity of the setback suffered by the communist

movement due to the lack of a correct dialectical understanding between class and non-class aspects involved in developing a political and economic system during the transitional phase of socialism.

13.3. In this relation, there is another important question which has not yet been taken up for discussion. Marxism is facing a serious theoretical challenge from the environmentalist movement emerging and developing all over the world. The crisis of the capitalist mode of production is getting exposed in the form of the dark future of the whole of humanity and this globe itself. The environmentalists raise the relevant question that socialism could not produce any alternate model of production forces other than developing the production forces already given by capitalism, and thus show the way to overcome this crisis. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao had answered this question, even though from a different angle. He exposed the reactionary nature of the theory of the productive forces which was very much dominant in the whole communist movement, especially during the period of socialist construction, and established the course of revolutionary transformation based on the revolution in production relations. By emphasising the need to resolve the contradiction between town and countryside, he introduced a different concept of developing the production forces themselves. Actually this provided the theoretical basis for an alternate mode of production under socialism. During the Cultural Revolution many breakthroughs at the practical level also were achieved. Of course this is only a beginning. More questions are to be solved in this area.

13.4. While we have realized the complex nature of the individual/society relationship, it demands further deepening of our understanding on the differences and inter-relationship between the class-individual and non-class individual. Marx had already pointed out this division between personal and class individual. Marx said: "...in the course of historical evolution... there appears a division within the life of each individual in so far as it is personal and in so far as it is determined by some branch of labour and the conditions pertaining to it." (*The German Ideology*, MESW, Moscow,

Vol. 1, p. 66) But this question was not taken for consideration afterwards. It is in relation to this individual/society contradiction that the question of value system comes in. The Marxist position that there are no eternal values, and that the value system of different periods are closely linked with the socio-economic systems of each period has already been proven beyond doubt. But at the same time, the role of the complex interrelationship between class individual and non-class individual in shaping the value systems of each period is to be studied further. Moreover, while struggling against the existing value system, the revolutionary movement has got the responsibility to develop new alternate value systems according to the specific stages of revolution. The value system is closely linked up with the dynamics of the cultural realm which plays a very important role in the whole social fabric. But generally this task of developing the new value system is neglected while focusing on the economic and political tasks.

13.5. While we had tried to grasp the dynamics of capitalist restoration in the former socialist countries, we had realized the role of mechanical materialism which had dominated over the whole revisionist thinking. Now we see that in the whole history of the communist movement, the dominance of mechanical materialism played an important role in the deviations analyzed above. In spite of the positive role played by Lenin and Mao, in defeating the influence of mechanical materialism, as a whole it dominated over the movement. The economic reductionism in the form of the theory of the productive forces and many other forms, and class-reductionism reflected in the neglect of other aspects of social dynamics, are the major manifestations of this influence. Even though Marx and Engels considered settling accounts with mechanical materialism as important as settling accounts with idealism, the communist movement as a whole has not been able to carry forward the task as was needed. Lenin and Mao could make significant contributions in this direction, but the state of affairs in the movement as a whole remained very negative.

13.6. As Lenin correctly pointed out Marx did not give us a "logic with a (capital) L". Even though Marx's methodology of materialist dialectics is well applied in his theo-

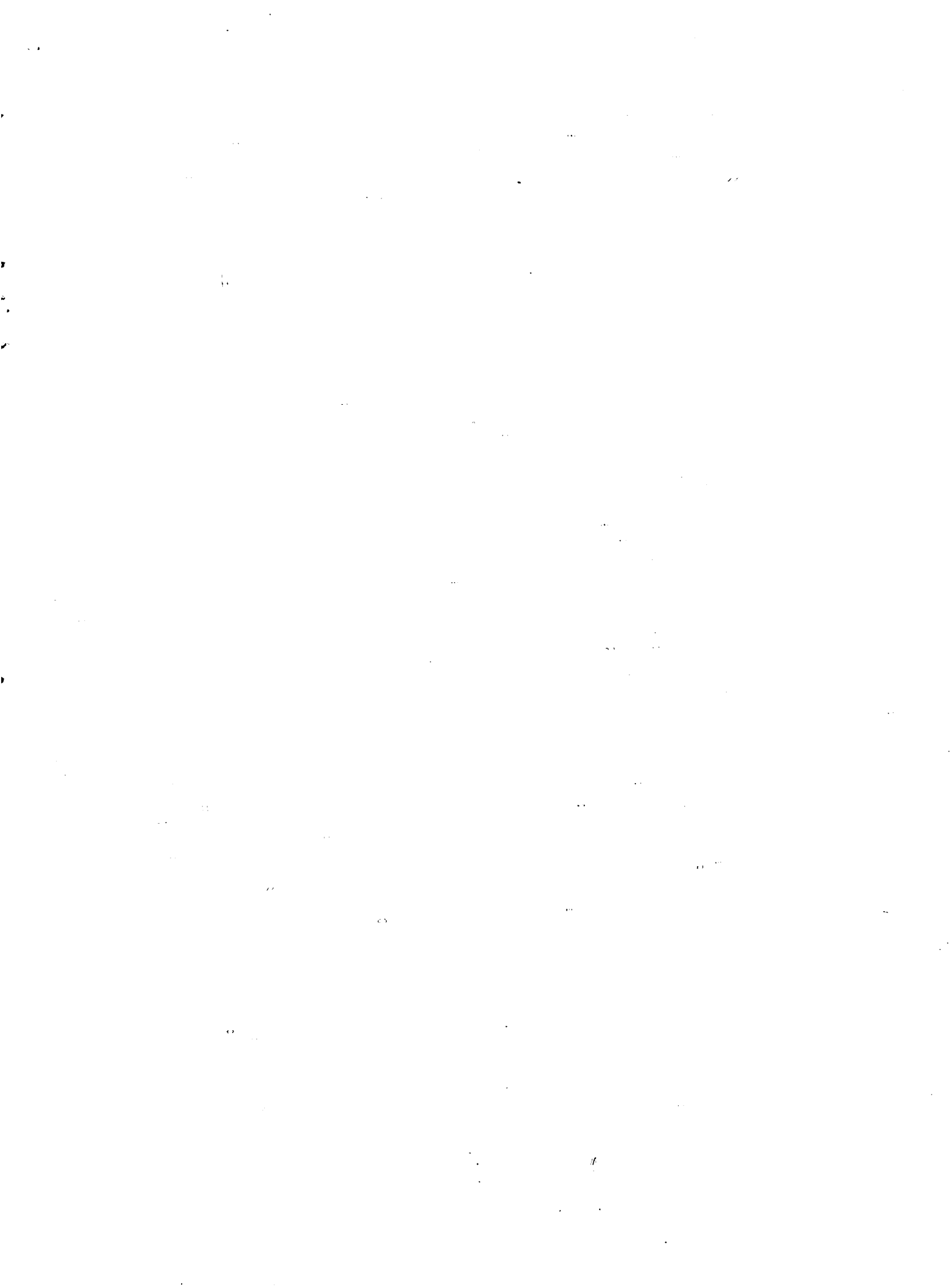
retical works, he could not sum it up in the form of a systematic exposition of dialectical logic. Lenin was referring to this. And Lenin and Mao contributed in the course of their attempts at the application of Marxian dialectics, according to the concrete conditions they faced. Still, we can see that materialist dialectics remains at a very preliminary level. And this backwardness is reflected in the continuous, repeated experiences of one-sidedness, inability to grasp the emerging new phenomena, etc, in the whole communist movement. Our own experience shows how late we were in grasping the actual social dynamics of our own societies. And even now we are only at a preliminary level in achieving this task.

14. Conclusion

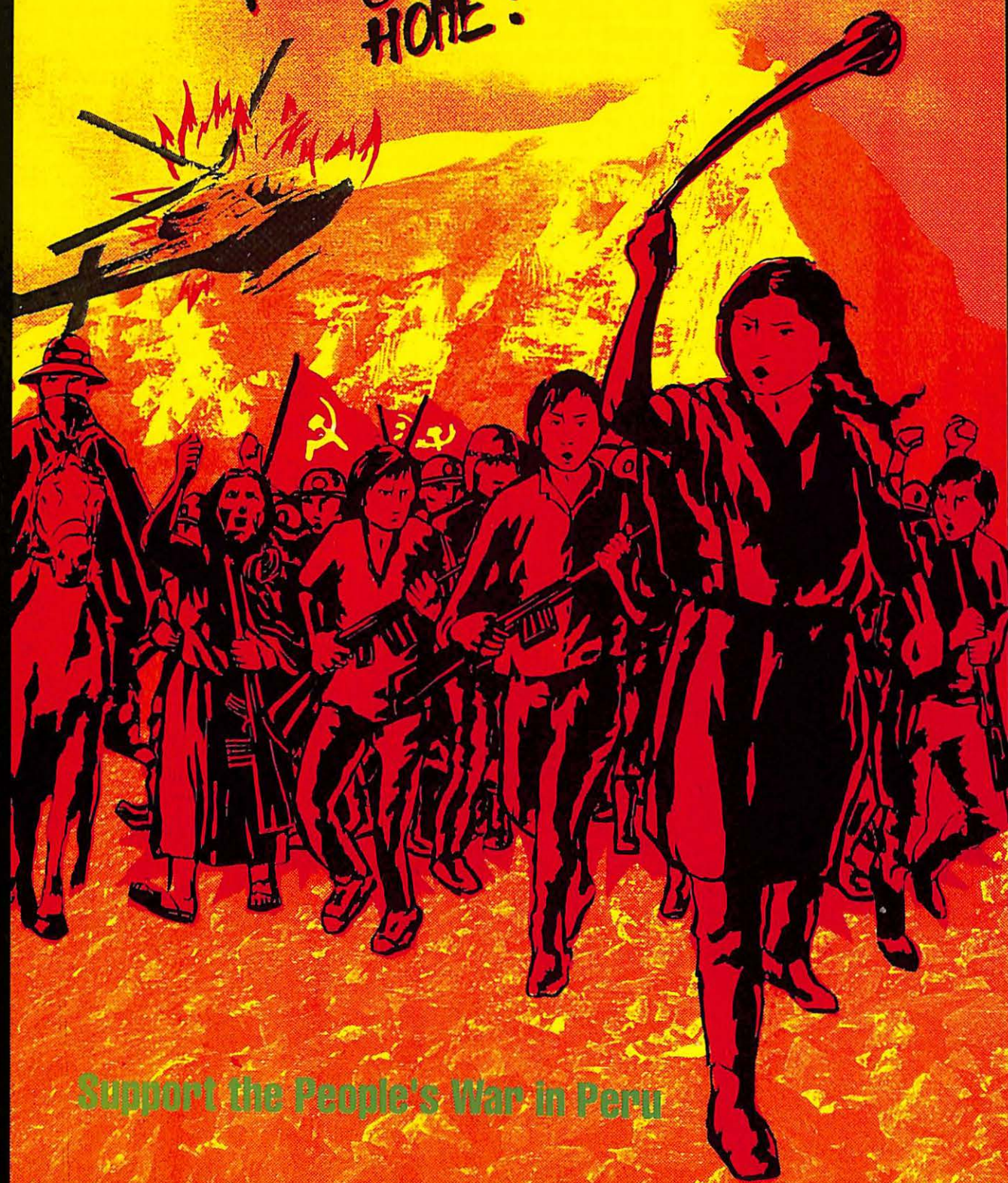
14.1. Marx made the following illuminating, objective observation about the proletarian revolutions of the mid-19th century in which he was a direct and intimate participant: "...proletarian revolutions like those of the 19th century criticize themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin it afresh, deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses, and paltrinesses of their first attempts, seem to throw down their adversary only in order that he may draw new strength from the earth and rise again, more gigantic, before them, recoil ever and anon from the indefinite prodigiousness of their own aims, until a situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible...." (*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, MESW, Vol. 1, p. 401) Marx is talking about the spontaneous proletarian revolutions whereas we are now discussing the 20th century proletarian revolutions led by the conscious vanguard of the proletariat, the communist parties. Still, the above observation gives us a deeper insight into the method we have to adopt for evaluating the experiences of the 20th century revolutions. Now, we realize that these experiences cannot be analyzed merely at the level of the subjective weakness of the communist parties. Rather, they have outgrown this to the level of the historical reality of this period. They have to be understood and evaluated in the

broader, objective canvas of the history of the period. The communists of the 20th century have to be the most active, vanguard participants in this process. They have to analyze "with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses and paltrinesses" of their previous attempts. And this will have to be repeated again and again, "until a situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible", because we realize that the path of making proletarian revolutions for realizing communism is a very protracted and tortuous one.

14.2. All the subjective and objective experiences of the whole communist movement as well as the whole historical experiences of this period amply prove that the historical materialist approach developed by Marxism is the only effective tool in our hands to comprehend the complexities of social dynamics and the process of historical development. The same tool helps us to understand the weaknesses of the communist movement itself. And this is one of the most important revolutionary qualities of Marxism. The analysis and attempts at rectification are to be grasped in this background. When the people of the former socialist countries put the communist strategy of monopoly power for the party during the whole transitional phase of socialism on the dock of history, communists cannot remain satisfied with the consolation that this is the result of backward thinking among the people. On the contrary, these experiences again and again indicate the Marxist teaching that the people alone are the creators of history. Communists have to be humble enough to learn from this experience without any attempts to cover up their own weaknesses and mistakes. Then only can they regain their vanguard role in the process of ever advancing historical developments. Communists have to ruthlessly expose and defeat the brand of Marxism propagated and practised in the form of sterile, dead dogmas. Marxism is a dynamic philosophy and guide to revolutionary practice. Our urgent historical task is to regain its vitality and dynamism in order to carry forward the task of revolution at all levels. □



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