

Colombia: The Strategy People's War

By the Revolutionary Communist Group of Colombia (GCR)*

Introduction

Since its foundation in 1982 the GCR has set for itself the task of building the Revolutionary Communist Party, a task it has been carrying out in the sense that the GCR is a party in formation.

In the course of this process of building the party and its political line, the GCR has come to more thoroughly understand and correctly apply the science of revolution, Marxism-Leninism- Mao Tsetung Thought, and with this it has been rectifying wrong views regarding the tasks and road of the revolution. It has come to understand that the ideological and political building of the party and its political line must be inseparable from the building of the other two fundamental weapons of the revolution, the army and the front, and that the building of these three weapons is a universally valid principle that must be concretely applied to Colombia, with its particularities as a nation oppressed by imperialism. Thus the building of the party, linked to its political line, is intertwined with the correctness or incorrectness of its approach to the questions of the armed struggle and the united front.

The GCR has come to also understand the powerful truth of Mao's views regarding "putting forward armed struggle from the start" and the proletariat's need to rely on its own armed forces to establish red political power and revolutionary base areas. It has come to more clearly understand the character of society and the character and laws of the revolution, as well as the unity between the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought and its application to the concrete conditions of Colombia.

On this basis, the GCR recognises that it has held erroneous views

regarding how to understand the essence of New Democracy. This does not mean that all of our views regarding New Democracy have been wrong. Although today's quantitative distribution of the population with its high degree of urbanisation (two thirds urban and one third rural) has led many forces to simplistically characterise the revolution Colombia needs as socialist, the GCR continues to hold that this revolution will be New Democratic in its first stage and that the strategic road is people's war. We continue to hold that the two basic tasks of the New Democratic revolution are total, thorough and complete independence from imperialism, and the solution of the agrarian problem, the destruction of the monopoly of the land presently held by the big landowners.

This rectification and the development of our political line have given our organisation a greater internal strength and cohesion and have raised the political and ideological level of its members. On the basis of discussion and struggle between different opinions regarding line questions, we have achieved a clear demarcation with ideas associated with the so-called "insurrectionalist strategy" that have come into fashion in the oppressed countries since the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua. This document we are presenting to the revolutionary communists and revolutionaries in general arose as a part and a product of this demarcation.

When we demarcate from "insurrectionalism" as a strategy for the revolution in the oppressed countries, we are not confusing this line with the road and orientation for revolutionary war in the imperialist countries, where the revolution must begin with insurrection in the cities at a point when the bourgeoisie can be defeated. Furthermore, in the imperialist countries, as in the oppressed countries, there can be no

revolution, or at least no proletarian revolution, without the guidance of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. This does not represent the slightest dogmatism of any kind on our part. We are convinced that without advancing on the basis of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought there can be no real revolution in Colombia, and that the way to advance correctly is to take as our starting point the Chinese Revolution and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, as well as the contributions of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement in which our organisation is a proud participant.

In Colombia the masses of people face two diverging roads. On the one hand, there is the road of counter-revolution, which is the road of imperialism, bureaucrat capitalism and semi-feudalism. The reformism of the big bourgeoisie is developing a capitalism that serves the interests of foreign capital, especially U.S. capital, while maintaining the monopoly of land ownership and the class political power of the big landowners. This gives rise to ever-sharpening economic crises, political instability and repression. On the other hand, there is the road of revolution, the road that will lead the proletariat and the masses of people, guided by the proletariat's genuine communist party now being formed, towards New Democracy, socialism and finally communism. This road will be opened up by the proletariat and its party when the party launches a people's war, the only way to resolve the two big problems the revolution must resolve: the national question, to liberate the country from the yoke of imperialism, and the agrarian problem, the centre of the democratic problem. These two great tasks are mutually inter-related.

The road of revolution faces two

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of Insurrection vs. and Red Political Power

different directions which correspond to two opposite outlooks vying to point the way for the working class and the masses of people. Faced with these two directions, revolutionaries, class-conscious workers and the advanced from among the masses, and the masses themselves, will have to examine the ideologies, politics and classes involved and take a stand. These two directions are the "insurrectional" strategy on the one hand, and on the other, the direction of revolutionary communism, of the proletariat, with its strategy and doctrine of people's war. The problem of the two directions is the question of the future of the masses of people in Colombia and the nation: either that future is "insurrectionalism," whose content is negotiation, national subjugation and mortgaging the people's revolutionary struggles to imperialism and to part of the bureaucrat bourgeoisie and landlord ruling classes, or it is a total, thorough and complete New Democratic revolution to destroy the domination of imperialism, the bureaucrat bourgeoisie and the landlords, and build a new order, state and society on the smoking ruins of the old order. The New Democratic republic and state will clearly aim for socialism and serve as a base area for the world proletarian revolution which will lead all humanity to communism.

The "insurrectionalists" are organised in the Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Coordinating Committee (CGSB) [the umbrella organisation which recently gathered together all the organisations criticised in this article — *AWTW*]. Their views are reformist, and if they struggle for state power, they do not do so on the basis of the interests of the proletariat but rather the class interests of the petite bourgeoisie, the national bourgeoisie and even a new pro-Soviet comprador bourgeoisie which seeks to ally with landlords

and part of the national bourgeoisie to take over the state for their own interests and those of Soviet social-imperialism....

Imperialism is an international production relation, a relation in which international finance capital subordinates the economies of the dominated nations by creating production relations and bureaucrat bourgeoisies within them. This bureaucrat bourgeoisie serves as the agent of imperialist finance capital; furthermore, the landlord class also serves as a social base for imperialist penetration. Imperialism, mainly through its export of capital, gives rise to a bureaucrat capitalism which serves foreign capital, leading to the disarticulation and disequilibrium of Colombia's economy, while the "development" that takes place is in contradiction to the interests of the working class and masses of people and even that segment of private capital whose character is national.

Imperialism's oppression of the country, closely linked to the landlord's monopoly control of the land, requires solutions that go to the roots of the problem, which means the destruction of imperialism, bureaucrat capitalism and semifeudalism. The essence of the New Democratic revolution is that it is a dictatorship of the revolutionary classes under the leadership of the proletariat, whose purpose is to put an end to imperialist oppression and semifeudal social relations and open the way to socialism. It is impossible to achieve this without a revolutionary war of the masses. Nevertheless, the "insurrectional strategy" proposes and fights for capitalist development, with the illusory and utopian solution of developing an "independent capitalist" country. The particular pro-Soviet variant of this seeks a bureaucrat capitalist country dependent on Soviet social-imperialism. What both these solutions have in com-

mon is that they do not seek to overturn the old order....

Characteristics of Insurrectionalism

It is within the framework of this situation that we must draw a line of demarcation with the "insurrectionalist strategy" and the trend which recently has taken to calling itself "People's Power." Afterwards we will focus on the analysis of the "insurrectionalist strategy" in Colombia, which has its own characteristics, though the basic elements of that strategy come from the "Nicaraguan road."

We will begin by describing its basic characteristics:

1. The insurrectional strategy is centred in the cities, since the mass movements, the focal point of the struggle, according to this strategy, mainly converge in the cities.

Thus "political" forces play the decisive role and military forces a secondary role. The important thing is the mass struggles and not the "vanguard" for which the masses are simply supporters. According to this strategy the vanguard is not as important as flexible alliances with the bourgeois opposition. Further, this strategy relies on the support of powerful forces on an international level, such as social democracy (the Second International) and Soviet social-imperialism.

2. The essence of the "insurrectional strategy" is that it seeks to narrow the targets of the New Democratic revolution, to preach reliance on bourgeois-democratic forms and to hide the need to destroy the reactionary regime and state. Since the "insurrectional strategy" is linked to Soviet social-imperialism and social democracy, the "anti-imperialist struggle" it promotes only targets U.S. imperialism, and even this in a limited way. After all, European imperialism (social democracy) forms a part

of the imperialist bloc headed by the U.S., and Soviet social-imperialism seeks to confront only certain pro-U.S. sections of the ruling classes and not the whole of the ruling classes and the state. The USSR's strategic orientation is to take over the state by means of a coup d'état, negotiations or violent action so as to share political power with some pro-U.S. and pro-European forces.

3. Within this insurrectional strategy, guerrilla warfare is intensified but does not go over to mobile warfare or positional warfare, although it can take those forms. The insurrectional strategy foresees the government's overthrow in the wake of a combination of general strikes and mass uprisings with guerrilla warfare.

There is a profound hole in this strategy, namely, the role to be played by the peasants in this revolution. For those who follow the Sandinista model, the peasants are not the principal force. The goal in the countryside is to establish a so-called "mixed economy" by maintaining the big and medium-sized capitalist farms and combining this with forms of "self-management."

The "insurrectional strategy" does not consider guerrilla warfare to be the key element in constantly mobilising the masses, especially the poor peasant and rural labourers, to build a Revolutionary Red Army and smash the old order on this basis. For people's war, guerrilla warfare is indispensable in order to mobilise the masses and raise their political level. The leadership of the proletariat and its communist party is basic to this strategy. In contrast, the "insurrectional strategy" sees guerrilla warfare as just one more means of pressure, along with mobilisations, demonstrations and strikes, national and international political pressure, in order to snatch political power.

Thus one difference between the "insurrectional strategy" and guerrilla warfare is that the latter gives great importance to the masses, to their organisation, to arming them, to their mobilisation and political and ideological education. The conscious, active participation of the masses of people in the revolution and the war is the key factor in

people's war. In contrast, the "insurrectional strategy" organises and mobilises them as a pressure group, not to unleash their pent-up revolutionary potential.

4. ... In class terms, although they maintain a certain peasant social base, the "insurrectional strategy" is oriented towards the petite bourgeoisie, parts of the national bourgeoisie and opposition forces among the ruling classes themselves, forces which they call "progressive."

The "insurrectional strategy," with its emphasis on political struggle over military struggle, is the opposite of the doctrine of people's war. People's war sees armed struggle as the highest form of struggle because it is the only road through which the masses can seize, build and defend their political power. It means the struggle to destroy the old order and state and build a new state and a new order piece by piece, and in this way seize power and control throughout society and reorganise it.

UC-ELN: Not One Step Back?

Let us look in more detail at the form this "insurrectional strategy" takes in Colombia. First there is the UC-ELN, the Camilista Union-National Liberation Army [Camilista refers to Camilo Torres, the pro-Cuban priest who was associated with this movement — *AWTW*].

The ELN arose in July 1964 in the mountains of the department of Santander (in eastern Colombia) as a "political-military organisation" whose aims were: a) The seizure of power for the popular classes, with the insurrectional road as the main form of struggle. This was necessary because "according to our conception of war of the people, a war waged by the immense exploited majority against the exploiting minority, we believe that when legal channels are closed for the majority of people an armed vanguard must arise to guarantee the continuity of the struggle for political power." ("Not one step backward, Liberation or death!", interview with Fabio Vazquez Castano, *Sucesos* magazine, July

1967) They sought to establish "a democratic revolutionary government and an equally democratic and revolutionary programme for national liberation." b) "The main theatre of the struggle in Latin America and Colombia is the countryside." This was because the rural population, in the 1960s, was bigger than the urban population, because the working class did not possess "the necessary maturity to lead a real revolutionary struggle," because "clandestine work can be carried out in the mountains." Since the peasants know the countryside best, they become "the vanguard of this struggle." c) "Unequivocal support for the Cuban revolution" and "admiration for the ideological firmness with which the leadership of the revolutionary government headed by Fidel Castro guides its people."

Since its foundation the ELN spoke of "base areas" as a tactic: "Our first stage of guerrilla life went through the following phases: first, clandestine survival; second, reconnaissance of the terrain; third, military training of the guerrillas; fourth, the creation of a revolutionary base among the peasants; fifth, the formation of intelligence and liaison units." At that time the ELN also contrasted protracted warfare to the "short-cut mentality," speaking of protracted warfare as "a mentality" and "a strategic tactical approach." The ELN used and still does use the term "base among the peasants" in the way that Guevara did. But this idea of a "base" as equivalent to influence among the masses is totally opposed to Mao Tsetung's concept of base areas. The conceptions "bases among the peasants" and "fixed base camps" are Guevarist and opposed, we repeat, to the Marxist-Leninist concept of base areas (we'll return to this later). The same can be said of prolonged warfare as a strategy and not as a "strategic tactical approach."

The ELN's line at the time of its foundation was a revolutionary democratic expression of the radical and nationalist petite bourgeoisie that saw in the Cuban revolution "a line that showed the way to insurrection, the road the

peoples of Latin America must follow".... This Guevarist-type focism was in opposition to the line of the pro-Soviet communist parties, although in the end the focoists always sought to come to an agreement with them, so that the CP would provide them with fighters and give them a political way out. In other words, the Guevarist line propagated by the "insurreccional" ELN needed urban forces to carry out its politics. Thus it won over Camilo Torres' United Front and sought the support of the pro-Soviet Communist party and the youth organisation of the Revolutionary Liberal Movement (MRL), a part of the big bourgeoisie. So it could be said that the present line of the UC-ELN is a "mature" form of the "insurreccional strategy," based on a mixture of Guevarism and Sandinism....

In the course of its history this "political-military organisation" was hit very hard with "encirclement and annihilation" campaigns, but its basic doctrinal conception has not changed qualitatively....

1. Now they say they uphold the strategy of "protracted people's war," but what do they understand by these words? They say that this strategy is expressed through "people's power," that it is "a new relationship between the vanguard and the masses"; "the vanguards strengthen the participatory role of the people and de-emphasise their own role." These Sandinista terms have a peculiar political meaning: the "vanguards" means the guerrillas and their "political-military" organisations," and "the masses" or "political forces" means mainly urban forces such as the bourgeois opposition and not the masses of workers and peasants.

The Guevarist outlook uses the term "vanguards" to mean guerrillas or "political-military organisations": "It must be emphasised that guerrilla struggle is a war of the masses, a war of the people; the guerrilla is the armed nucleus, the fighting vanguard of the people...." (Che Guevara, "General Principles of Guerrilla Struggle") They also call the guerrilla "the armed vanguard of the great nucleus of the people that support them."

The Salvadoran revisionist

Cayetano Carpio gave the following definition for "political-military organisation": "The political-military organisation is the practical application of the political-military strategy, that is, the combination of all methods of struggle."

It follows from all this that the guerrilla unit is the political leadership of a mass movement and in this sense there is no need for a party to chalk out political and military strategies. The guerrilla unit is the leading force and the main form of struggle for the masses is political struggle (strikes, mobilisations, peasant marches on the city, parliamentary cretinism, etc.). This becomes clear when in "the combination of all methods of struggle" guerrilla warfare turns out to play simply an auxiliary role, even though the guerrilla organisation is leading the movement. For example, in El Salvador, the FMLN is a political-military organisation which leads "all methods of struggle" for insurrection.

Since for the "insurreccionalists" the main form of mass organisation is *not* the army, but mass organisations and the political parties of the opposition, naturally the guerrilla struggle becomes an auxiliary to the movement as a whole. This is what they mean when they say that "the vanguards strengthen the participatory role of the people and de-emphasise their own role."

In essence, Guevarism and Sandinism deny and fiercely oppose the necessity for a genuine communist party which is the only guarantee of the leadership of the people's war. Perhaps it would be better to say that they deny the necessity for the three magic weapons of real revolution: a Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tsetung Thought party, an army led by such a party, and a united front of the revolutionary classes to carry out the war.

The UC-ELN, a faithful exponent of Salvadoran-Sandinista-Guevarist eclecticism, on this basis proposes a "strategy of protracted people's war" which negates the importance of the leading nucleus of such a strategy: the party. Since it rejects the party, it can only declare that what constitutes the "strategy of protracted people's war" is a

"new relation between the vanguards and the masses." In other words, according to the UC-ELN the strategy of protracted people's war means establishing a certain relationship between the guerrillas and the mobilisation of sections of the masses.

When UC-ELN-type insurreccionalists argue that the political forces are the principal thing and that the military forces or guerrillas are secondary, they are attacking Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, which holds that the party is the highest form of organisation of the proletariat, that the army is the principal form of mass organisation and that the party commands the gun, and that the other forms of mass organisation are subordinate to the principal form under the leadership of the party. Without these conditions it is no use even talking about people's war. Prolonged warfare is a strategy and its character flows from the fact that the revolutionary war cannot triumph quickly. "The protracted character of the war is explained by the fact that the reactionary forces are powerful, while the revolutionary forces accumulate strength only gradually. Therefore, any impatience would be harmful and to seek a 'quick decision' would be wrong." (Mao Tsetung) This principle is applicable to Colombia, though some would like to deny that. Therefore, a protracted people's war must be centred in the countryside and not in the cities. To make the principal thing the cities, including the big cities, to promote insurrection, is not a strategy of protracted war but rather a strategy of "quick decision."

2. The UC-ELN calls for the constitution of a "broad political front" which would be made up of "the masses' autonomous organisations." Through their organisations, the masses would engage in the process of building a new legitimacy, which would become the "embryo of the new state." Further, this would be achieved with the "collective vanguard," "a conception that allows us to unite the revolutionary forces in one integral and stable bloc, to begin creating
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the conditions for the constitution of a 'broad political front.'" Can a new state be built by winning "legitimacy" through working in mass political movements, or by leading the masses in people's war? The heart of the problem remains the role to be played by the masses in the revolution and the revolutionary war. It is obvious, as has already been shown, that the "vanguards" (or the guerrillas) are not supposed to be the principal factor, the protagonists, so then how can people's political power be built, since that means state power and state power means the armed power of the masses who exercise their dictatorship?

In Latin America and particularly Colombia there has been a tradition of "frontism." We must correctly distinguish between this and the conception of a front of the revolutionary classes.

"Frontism," now strengthened by the Sandinistas, can be defined as a political alliance of certain political forces or political parties that oppose the current regime. It means parties of the petite bourgeoisie, the national bourgeoisie and part of the ruling classes, united around a concrete programme. Usually, "frontism" looks towards using parliament. Just as some parties have their "armed wings," so also they have their "fronts." Other parties only promote fronts and renounce war. What has been especially widespread are Vietnam-style "National Liberation Fronts," also called "patriotic fronts," "people's fronts," "patriotic unions" and so on. The essence of such "fronts" is a narrow and restricted vision of the tasks of the national-democratic revolution, a belittling of the leadership of the party of the proletariat and the propagation of narrow nationalism. Lately we see El Salvador-style "Broad Political Fronts" advocated to promote national liberation struggles but not New Democratic revolution.

Doubtlessly the "insurrectionalists" are learning from the "original contributions" of the Central American process. To build a

"Broad Patriotic Front" the starting point is that alongside the political vanguard (the guerrillas) it is possible to also have other opposition political groups, and to use the combination of "direct democracy" (mass assemblies, etc.) with "representative democracy," i.e., elections, for example, the election of mayors. Thus "local power" — "the autonomous organisation of the masses" — is combined with bourgeois-democratic parliamentary elections. The centre of gravity for such "frontism" is not in the basic masses, but rather in the opposition forces, whether they be petite bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie or sections of the big bourgeoisie, and the utilisation of the parliamentary stables.

Still, our demarcation with "frontism" cannot lead to negating the importance of the kind of front of revolutionary classes advocated by Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. Our essential point of demarcation with the UC-ELN and the rest of the "insurrectionalists" on this matter is that they never mention the question of dictatorship. The reactionary ruling classes carry out the class dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and landlords against the people. What kind of dictatorship is represented by the "Broad Political Front" the UC-ELN calls for? Simply the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, especially a section of the national bourgeoisie, presumably in alliance with forces from among the big bourgeoisie and landlords. In this way the urban petite bourgeoisie will also come to power, all of them carrying out this dictatorship under the signboard "people's government." If this is not their goal, then what kind of dictatorship do they put forward? They would answer, "None, because we are not totalitarians."

The front of revolutionary classes is a dictatorship and it is the concrete expression of the new state and the new revolutionary political power arising in the revolutionary base areas. From a political point of view, the New Democratic revolution means an alliance of revolutionary classes "to enforce a dictatorship" over the imperialists, the bureaucrat and comprador

bourgeoisie, over the landlords, traitors and reactionaries. The revolution and the revolutionary organs of political power are nothing more than the dictatorship of the front of the revolutionary classes under the leadership of the proletariat. To put it even more clearly, "Who are the people? At the present stage in China, they are the working class, the peasantry, the urban petite bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. These classes, led by the working class and the Communist Party, unite to form their own state and elect their own government; they enforce their dictatorship over the running dogs of imperialism — the landlord class and bureaucrat bourgeoisie." (Mao Tsetung, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship") The organs of political power, the new state and the New Democratic Republic are formed and gradually arise in the heat of the people's war, in the revolutionary base areas. Without armed struggle the new state cannot be built or the outmoded and reactionary state destroyed. In short, political power grows out of the barrel of a gun. Instead of a party, the UC-ELN calls for a "collective vanguard"; instead of a front of the revolutionary classes, the "Broad Political Front," frontism.

The revisionist distortion (or incomprehension, in other cases) regarding the front of revolutionary classes should also be pointed out. The New Democratic revolution and the front, in their eyes, are led by the national bourgeoisie. Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought holds that the national bourgeoisie can participate at certain times and to a certain extent, both in the front and in the revolution. This does not mean the whole national bourgeoisie, but only its most revolutionary forces. As Mao Tsetung said, "the national bourgeoisie is only an ally during certain periods and to a certain degree," and even more importantly regarding this point, "The entire history of the revolution proves that without the leadership of the working class the revolution fails and that with the leadership of the working class the revolution triumphs. In the epoch of imperialism, in no

country can any other class lead any genuine revolution to victory. This is clearly proved by the fact that the many revolutions led by China's petite bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie have failed." (Mao Tsetung, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship") It is ironic that the national bourgeoisie has played an important role, including taking up armed struggle, and many of those who deny the existence of this class in Colombia are actually either its representatives or seek to ally with it. In any case, reality and history is proving the revisionists wrong.

3. When they discuss the principal aspects of their strategy, they give primary importance to the mass political movement and the broad political struggle in alliance with the middle classes and "democratic personalities" who can assure that it really will be a "Broad Political Movement"; this goes together with the "centralisation" of the various sections of the masses in different organisations which are to come together to form a "national coordinating committee of the masses" as happened in El Salvador.

Here we have another "original contribution" from Central America which flows from the points previously discussed. The Salvadoran concept consists of a guerrilla front, a national coordinating committee of the masses (in which the various mass organisations take part), the Revolutionary Democratic Front (the alliance of the bourgeois opposition parties) and the Revolutionary Democratic Government. All this is under the leadership of the FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front). The essence of this strategy was dealt with in the previous section of this essay.

4. The UC-ELN holds that the revolution needs "an international rearguard" based fundamentally on the peoples "who are building socialism" and furthermore, that there must be efforts to "win strategic space by improving international solidarity work with other struggling peoples, especially Latin American peoples, with the aim of uniting the continental revolutionary movement, while striving to win over and neutralise intermediate

forces by establishing relations with progressive governments and parties, with emphasis on the socialist countries."...

The UC-ELN is pro-Soviet, but it has contradictions with the biggest pro-Soviets, the PCC — FARC — UP [respectively, the Communist Party of Colombia; its army, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia; and its legal political party, the Patriotic Union — AWTW]. The UC-ELN combines pro-Soviet views with those of Christian social-democracy. Its international diplomacy uses pseudo-Marxist terminology as a trick....

Since the UC-ELN have their own army and a social base in the city and countryside, they can claim that the "shortest" and the "quickest way" to seize political power in Colombia is the insurrectional road; they say people's war takes "too long" and is not the road because, among other reasons, Nicaragua has "demonstrated" that the revolutionary military line developed by Mao Tsetung is not valid. Perhaps the road was very short in Nicaragua, but is that country ruled by a regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat? Are they building socialism there? Does the aid of Cuba, that agent of Soviet social-imperialism, guarantee the construction of a society in which the masses decide their own destiny without having to mortgage their revolution to any imperialist power?

Fight against...?

The road put forward for the revolution by the revisionists of the Communist Party of Colombia (Marxist-Leninist), the PCC(ML), is also the insurrectional road.

The essence of this party's present line has its origins in the 1980 11th party congress when the party was "restructured" on the basis of Hoxhaism. At that time, they used the pretext of repudiating their previous "Maoist deviations" to repudiate Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought and the concept of people's war.

Already, in its 10th or Founding Congress in 1965, [the PCC(ML) considered itself a continuation of the old CP and that party's previous

nine congresses — AWTW] the PCC(ML) held that since Colombia is "a predominantly capitalist country with feudal remnants," the revolution could not be bourgeois-democratic (of a new type) or New Democratic, but rather "patriotic-popular-anti-imperialist," that is, popular but not democratic. In reality, they called for a semi-socialist revolution. They referred to the "continental revolution," negating the various national revolutions; they negated the existence of a national bourgeoisie. They held that the conditions for revolution are created by the guerrillas themselves, acting as an "insurrectional foco." The PCC(ML) was not founded at the 10th Congress based on the guidance of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, but rather by Guevarism and Trotskyite theses. Nevertheless Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought did have some influence, though only in the sense of the erroneous idea that one can accept only certain aspects of the military theory Mao Tsetung developed. The PCC(ML) drifted through eclectic waters from 1965 to 1976, when it definitively split apart. Its conceptions of the party, the front and the revolutionary army were wrong. The People's Liberation Army (EPL) was the "armed wing" of the party, and the front — which they called the "Patriotic National Liberation front" — was really a form of the frontism traditional in Latin America. In reality, the PCC(ML) never took up the New Democratic revolution. The splintering produced by the ideological and political decomposition through which it left Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought behind led one of its fractions to "reconstruct" itself in the image of Hoxhaism in 1980, so that the revisionism of the organisation that calls itself the PCC(ML) today has its own distinct historical roots.

The PCC(ML) revisionists' summation of this period is the following: "In 1965 people begin to filter into the Northeast to work and create conditions for uprisings. Logically, focoist errors were corrected in the course of this work, but there was still the continued negative influence of Mao Tsetung's theory

regarding protracted people's war." This "negative influence" of theory and the strategy of people's war — according to the Hoxhaists — was really primitivism in leading the armed struggle. It was positive in the sense of raising the question of people's war, but still from the first the PCC(ML) was not consistent in the self-criticism it made of its focoism and did not break with this revisionist conception in theory and practice.

For a long time the PCC(ML) promoted Mao Tsetung and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, but it was not alone in doing so; many other organisations and circles defined themselves as defenders of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. Even while taking this positive aspect into consideration, what really took place in the "Maoist movement" in Colombia in the 1960s was a revisionist current expressed in two different forms. First, there was the focoist approach to armed struggle, represented by the PCC(ML). The positive thing was that it defended the importance of armed struggle to make the revolution, and held that there was no other road; the negative side was that there was no understanding of the difference between armed struggle and people's war, that people's war is not just guerrilla warfare, although guerrilla warfare is fundamental, and there were no ideological, political and organisational preparations to wage people's war. The EPL did not arise as a result of planned work, but rather because of the "necessity of the moment," to defend oneself. The experiences of other fractions arising out of the old PCC(ML) that have carried out armed struggle, such as the Destacamento Pedro Leon Arboleda (PLA), have been based on a revisionist combination of Guevara and Marighela [a Brazilian who wrote the *Mini-Manual of Urban Guerrilla Warfare* in the 1960s — *AWTW*] and have not taken up the military line of the proletariat.

The other main tendency in the "Maoist movement" was the revisionist current that accepted people's war in words but never carried it out in reality, and postponed work to

prepare people's war because "the objective and subjective conditions for revolution do not exist." An erroneous conception of preconditions prevented the accumulation of forces through armed struggle. Regarding the objective conditions, it was said that first it was necessary to win over the masses nationwide through economic mass movements. This was linked to criteria which saw a revolutionary situation as though it would develop along the lines of the Russian revolution. Regarding the subjective forces, it was said that it was necessary to build the party, unhooking party building from the building of the army and the front. The army was said to be the "armed wing" of the party, and the front, according to some organisations, was a pretext to engage in parliamentary cretinism. Some "ML" organisations, for example, carried out the line of "political-military organisations." They carried out armed actions without really being on a war footing, a small-scale version of focoism. These deviations must be resolutely corrected and combatted in order to correctly replace them with the revolutionary communist concept of people's war, in the theory and practice of class struggle, of the revolutionary action of the masses....

Now the PCC(ML) has repudiated Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, the theory of New Democracy and the strategy and theory of people's war. But what does it propose instead?

In the first place, they define themselves as plain Marxist-Leninists. Is it possible to define oneself as "ML" without recognising Mao Tsetung? Clearly it is not. It is not possible to be Marxist-Leninist without recognising and defending Mao Tsetung's immortal contributions to the science of revolution, in all of its aspects and not just regarding a few points of military theory, without recognising that the science of revolution is a harmonious and integral whole called Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. The question of whether or not to build on the basis of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought is ultimately a question of whether or not one seeks a real revolution. This

repudiation of Mao Tsetung is the heart of the PCC(ML)'s revisionism, from which a whole erroneous political line arises.

Secondly, they preach the insurrectional strategy and socialist revolution. But the insurrectional path they argue for is a combination of the insurrectional road, the "October road" Lenin formulated for the imperialist countries, together with a strong dose of Sandinism.

In a nation oppressed by imperialism, the revolution goes through two stages: the New Democratic revolution and the socialist revolution. To eclectically combine these two different stages into one is not a demonstration of "ideological purity," but rather of a profound ideological deviation and an erroneous analysis of Colombian society.

The revolution in Colombia cannot be a proletarian-socialist revolution because the interests of the different classes and social strata opposed to the reactionary classes correspond to democracy and not socialism. What history demands is to sweep away the domination of imperialism, bureaucrat capitalism and semifeudalism, and sweeping away these enemies does not constitute socialism but rather democracy, that is, New Democracy.

The New Democratic revolution only abolishes the private property of the imperialists, big bourgeoisie and big landowners. But the Trotskyite revisionists of the PCC(ML) hold that what should be abolished is all private property, all capitalism in Colombia in general, in "one single stroke of the pen," just because that is the subjective wish of a handful of people, without taking into account the fact that there are bourgeois classes and social strata that do not form part of the target of the national-democratic revolution. When the Hoxhaists of the PCC(ML) argue for their socialist revolution, what they mean is that they don't want any revolution.

The PCC(ML) says that Colombia is a "state monopoly capitalist country," accepting the pro-Soviets' views in this regard. The root of the question does not lie in a discussion about whether or not there is state monopoly capital, but rather in characterising what this concept me-

ans for an oppressed nation. The question is, what kind of capitalism exists in Colombia? The state monopoly capitalism is not the kind of state monopoly capitalism found in an imperialist country; it is not imperialist finance capital, but rather a specific and particular form, called bureaucrat capital. To carry out its domination, imperialism creates bureaucrat capital. But since the PCC(ML) also blurs the distinction between imperialist countries and countries oppressed by imperialism, its "state monopoly capitalism" is the same as imperialist finance capital. This is wrong. To believe that in Colombia there is "state monopoly capital" resembling imperialist finance capital must inevitably lead, in the sphere of politics, to the line that incorrectly speaks about the existence of "fascism" defined as the dictatorship of the most reactionary section of the bourgeoisie, and in the economic sphere to the conclusion that imperialism equals the transnational corporations, the IMF and World Bank, etc., and that it constitutes an "external enemy." A strange eclecticism. In Colombia there is no finance bourgeoisie nor finance capital; what exists is a bureaucrat bourgeoisie which administers imperialism's finance capital without owning that capital. This "state monopoly capitalism" is closely linked with imperialist capital, with the comprador interests and with the landlords. In reality, this "state monopoly capital" is bureaucrat capital (comprador and feudal).

Since the PCC(ML) sees Colombia as a capitalist country, of course it preaches socialist revolution, insurrection and civil war. In order to carry out such a revolution they advance a Popular Front, which is a "tactical front," in the "insurrectional strategy" style; they advocate a so-called "democratic convergence," that is, an alliance with sections of the petite bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie and even opposition forces from within the ruling classes, with the aim of "democratic reforms." In their clearly revisionist conception, they argue that the front and "convergence" should include bourgeois personalities opposed to "fascistisation." The

PCC(ML) has a peculiar idea of the principal contradiction and the targets of the revolution.

When they speak of the "fascistisation of the state," they say that the targets to be fought are militarism and fascism; in pro-Soviet style they claim that there are "democratic personalities" among the ruling classes who are not "fascists" and who oppose "the process of fascistisation." On the basis of this claim about "fascism" in Colombia they conclude that there are two camps in this country: the "fascists and reactionaries on one side; the working class, the masses of people, together with the revolutionary-democratic forces, on the other." (Supplement to *Liberacion*, organ of the EPL, 1987)

This is the contradiction because "this is precisely the context in which the guerrilla movement of which we are a part is calling for the unity of the revolutionary-democratic movement, so that alongside it there can appear a movement of democratic convergence, closing the door to the process of fascistisation and militarism and providing a political solution to this country's situation." This political solution proposed by the PCC(ML) is a deal, an agreement negotiated with the ruling classes who run the reactionary, bureaucrat-landlord state. A solution that includes a constitutional reform, a referendum, a national constituent assembly, in short, a reform of the system of government and the reactionary organs of political power. To win all these "wonders" they call for a combination of "all forms of struggle," with the political movement being principal and the guerrilla struggle auxiliary. Here we have their Sandinism.

From a military point of view, they call for the building of a regular army, giving emphasis to technique, advanced training in tactics and methods, commanders specialising in mobile and positional warfare, as well as the creation of militias and local civil guards. The real question is not "advanced training in tactics and methods" but rather that this is linked to a revisionist military line that argues for relying on weapons, technique and technology as the main thing and not relying on the

masses, and although they do rely on them up to a certain point they do not mobilise them nor raise their political consciousness.

The "Popular Front" programme emphasises plebiscites, referenda and a national constituent assembly as "mechanisms to make possible the changes this country needs." The anti-imperialist struggle they call for aims at "the self-determination of peoples," for the defence of "national sovereignty and natural resources." The agrarian question, which for them is secondary, is reduced to "a democratic agrarian reform" on the basis of "expropriation by the state without indemnification." Ultimately, negotiations and deals. They want to use the struggle against imperialism in order to better negotiate with it and to negotiate with the big landowners over the "expropriation" of the land in their hands. The PCC(ML) represents the interests of the "radical" petite bourgeoisie, and from a political point of view basically tend towards pro-Sovietism.

The interests of the bourgeoisie, especially the national bourgeoisie and the petite bourgeoisie, are expressed in lines and programmes that aim to resolve the problems of an oppressed nation from their class point of view. The kind of society that exists also propels different social forces to participate in the revolution, including in the armed struggle, but they do so with narrow and short-sighted ideas regarding what must be a total, thorough and complete New Democratic revolution. This is the case with the PCC(ML).

The Autumn of the Patriarchs?

In class terms the pro-Soviet forces, the PCC-FARC-UP, are representatives of the comprador bourgeoisie and certain pro-Soviet forces among the landlords, as well as a certain part of the national bourgeoisie. The outlook of these reactionary Soviet social-imperialist agents in Colombia, their understanding of the concept of revolution, is the insurrectional strategy: a combination of the pro-Soviet bourgeois line including the Vietnamese military line with a strong

dose of Sandinism. The principal aspect is its pro-Soviet bourgeois line. For these political and military forces the "insurrectional strategy" can be concentrated in the following points:

1. The mass struggle combined with guerrilla actions, with the latter auxiliary. As the UP leader puts it, "Convergence of the armed movement in the countryside with the union and civic movements in the cities." The central point is the revisionist theory of the "combination of all forms of struggle." This eclectic theory holds that the countryside and city are equally important, thus obscuring the vital importance of defining the centre of gravity and the central task.

The formula of the "convergence" of the armed movement in the countryside and "union and civic work" in the cities does not define the centre of gravity, because for revisionism the main work in the countryside is not armed struggle but the utilisation of other forms of struggle such as civic strikes [the closing down of shops and all economic activity — *AWTW*] peasant mobilisation for reforms including peasant "exoduses" [marches from the countryside to a city — *AWTW*], some land seizures, parliamentary cretinism, and guerrilla actions as auxiliary to all this. In answer to a question about the relation of guerrilla struggle to the mass struggle, Jacobo Arenas replied, "Its task is precisely to encourage an offensive of mass mobilisations leading to regional and national strikes which in turn will defend with our military action." (*Cromos* magazine, April 1988, Bogota) In other words, for the pro-Soviets the principal form of struggle is not armed struggle and the main form of organisation is not the army but rather the "mass political organisation" Patriotic Union (UP), an expression of their bourgeois "frontist" conception. Of course the party responsible for this political line, the PCC, a concentration of backwardness, paralysis and pro-Soviet imperialism, has nothing positive to teach about revolutionary war and proletarian leadership. Instead, pro-Soviet reaction in Colombia follows the eclec-

tic line formulated by the Vietnamese General Nguyen Giap, who put forward the necessity of combining work in the countryside and city equally. They speak of combining all political and military forms of struggle, as well as of the necessity to have "bases in the countryside," which they understand in a way similar to what the Salvadorans call "territorial control." This has nothing to do with the idea of revolutionary base areas. Their famous thesis about "the combination of all forms of struggle" so that the "guerrilla movement" is transformed into "a big mass movement" has nothing to do with a revolutionary war of the masses, since the objective is to "broaden the urban and rural mass movement for reforms and against militarism and fascism." The basic idea, they say, is to maintain and develop the self-defence capacity of the revolutionary-democratic process, "the armed movement's power to negotiate."

Thus the essence of the pro-Soviet line and strategy is to struggle to reform the political regime, the organs of political power of the bureaucrat-landlord pro-U.S. state, and gradually gain ground within this state by means of "democratic openings" (reforms, mass and military pressure, negotiations between the guerrillas and the reactionary regime). The "democratic opening" line followed by the totality of the "institutionalised left" is what guides all the pro-Soviets' present activity; the FARC and the UP are both subordinated to this line. This is why the FARC signed the 1984 "armed truce" [with the government — *AWTW*] and calls for "electoral truces" to guarantee "the cleanliness of the electoral process," and why they now call for an "indefinite ceasefire" and are going all-out for a plebiscite. The pro-Soviet forces need to strengthen their alliances with sections of the landlords and the pro-U.S. ruling classes. It is characteristic of the "insurrectional strategy" to seek alliances with bourgeois opposition forces while on the international level the "peoples' natural ally," the Soviet Union, shows them the strategic way.

Nevertheless, while at present the pro-Soviet forces are seeking to utilise reforms and democratic openings, they could move to seize power, through a coup d'état, an insurrectional-type movement, elections, or a through a combination of these.

2. At this point the pro-Soviet forces are not in a position to launch an insurrection....

3. The pro-Soviet forces of the FARC hold that to carry out their "insurrectional strategy" they must move "step by step" towards unity of action between the guerrilla groups, as already called for by the CGSB and on that basis create a unified joint command, along the model of the FMLN in El Salvador, although they say they do not discount the possibility of uniting all the guerrilla groups into the FARC itself. To achieve this aim they must dominate the rest of the guerrilla movement, as in fact they are doing, imposing their reactionary interests and programmes so as to increase their "negotiating power." Through this road of guerrilla unity and "union and civic" movements, they seek state power, with the objective of "cleansing and strengthening the state sector of the economy, to ensure its total independence from transnational capital and the IMF which represents it, so that this sector can become the leading sector of the Colombian economy." This means that the state should not be controlled by U.S. imperialism but instead by Soviet social-imperialism. The rest of the "Bolivarists" of the CGSB are in agreement with this line.

The problem for the pro-Soviets is not how to build a new state but how to "cleanse" the existing reactionary state so that it serves the rule of the pro-Soviet bureaucrat bourgeoisie and strengthens the reactionary dictatorship over the working class and the masses of people.

4. In order to get state power they hold that the targets of the revolution should be reduced: the targets should be the pro-U.S. section of the bureaucrat bourgeoisie, the so-called "militarist" forces, and they seek to reach negotiated agreements with representatives of European imperialism (social democrats).

They call some people “fascists” and others “democrats.” The pro-Soviets have been the main promoters of the theory of two sectors within the reactionary state: one pro-people and the other anti-people. They have also drawn lessons from the overthrow of Allende in Chile. Of course the lesson is not that one must develop guerrilla warfare of the masses. Rather, on the contrary, the lesson according to them is that it is possible to get into power through parliamentary cretinism as long as one has an army to back it up. That is why the FARC ideologists say that there are many possibilities to seize power, such as elections, general strikes, insurrections. They definitely do not mean that the masses are to make history and build a new society through people’s war.

5. In the military sphere, the FARC are a reactionary and mercenary army, a concentration of the political line and interests of the pro-Soviet comprador bourgeoisie and landlords, agents of Soviet social-imperialism. This is the bourgeois and pro-Soviet content of their line. Their plan is to “work” to “build a regular army of 30,000 men,” since according to Don Manuel “Tirofijo” [“Deadeye,” the head of the FARC — *AWTW*], without achieving this precondition it is impossible to launch the insurrection. This bourgeois line makes weapons and technique the main aspect and necessitates the formation of “elite commando units” as in Vietnam, using the masses for logistic support. But in order to create such an army they also need “a strong mass movement as a fundamental precondition.”...

Power-Sharing

The M-19 arose in 1970 when the right-wing populist party ANAPO lost the presidential elections and subsequently split up. [This is the date referred to by the formal name of this organization, the April 19th Movement — *AWTW*]. It has always defined itself as a “political-military organisation,” and not as a leftist group, and still less as a Marxist-Leninist organisation, but rather as nationalist with social-

democratic tendencies. In class terms this organisation represents the interests of a section of the national bourgeoisie and the urban petite bourgeoisie. Part of the M-19 also came out of the FARC, among people who came to believe that the FARC have “no future.” The M-19’s summation of the movement in Colombia led them to believe that they had to reclaim “the symbols of the fatherland” and proclaim that a proletarian international and proletarian internationalism are simply outmoded “nonsense.”

Their basic line has been to “wage war for peace,” by which they mean negotiations and national dialogue to achieve power-sharing. They propose a “transitional government” called “the national pact” because “Colombia is being torn apart by debate and bloodshed in a war we do not want,” endangering “the concept of democracy” — which, for the M-19, means the bourgeoisie’s dictatorship; the executive, legislative and judicial spheres of power; parliamentarism and universal suffrage for “all the people.” The democracy they seek is the worn-out, old-style bourgeois democracy that is not possible in a nation oppressed by imperialism in the era of imperialism and the world proletarian revolution.

The M-19’s present views arise from the military reverses it has suffered and also reflect how the national bourgeoisie has been hit economically as well as how they have lost the audience they used to enjoy among sections of the ruling classes. Since joining the Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Coordinating Committee, this organisation has accepted the theories of “democratic convergence for peace and life” and the “centralisation” of the mass organisations, and has come to include in its programme such points as “foreign debt and national sovereignty,” “political solution to the armed conflict,” and especially calls for the defence of small and medium industry against the monopolies, a point which is of a democratic character though it is not the essence of the matter.

The M-19 also shares the “insurrectionalist” line without being con-

sistent in its views. They were the first to promote urban warfare and later, in the countryside, to develop mobile and positional warfare. The war waged by the M-19 in the countryside has been guided by an urban mentality. They are perhaps the clearest representatives of the “classic” bourgeois military line of regular armies, combined with Guevarist theories. They say that in the political and military field they respect “the thought of Simon Bolivar.”

The M-19’s views constitute a particular version of “insurrectionalism” and they have never put forward the destruction of the reactionary state, since for them the state is not the problem. Theirs is a utopian conception of seeking an “independent capitalist” country.

Red Political Power and People’s War

Lately there has been a lot of talk about “People’s Power.” The UC-ELN, for example, argues that people’s power is a tactical question, in terms of “forging forms of local power” that constitute “spaces” within which to exercise democracy, organisational forms, cultural manifestations, etc., through which economic problems can be solved. This “power” is to replace the political power of the “oligarchy” and from there launch a “general tactical offensive.” They also call for combining bourgeois-democratic parliamentarism with “direct participation” or “the autonomous organisation of the masses.” In addition to calling for the election of mayors [who were until recently appointed by the government — *AWTW*], they call for “community assemblies” as an institution to counterbalance traditional city councils. These resemble the “assemblies” called for by the PCC(ML), whereas the UP calls the city councils “patriotic city halls.” All you have to do is change the name of these reactionary institutions, and presto, People’s Power! Speaking of these “patriotic city halls,” the pro-Soviets say that the “popular election of mayors provides us with a mirror in which to check ourselves out and prove to

what extent we are capable of exercising political power," so that these elections are the road to "democratise" society.

The mayoralties and city councils are the local executive and legislative power of the reactionary state; they are organs of the reactionary bureaucrat-landlord political power, controlled by *gamonales* [local feudal despots — *AWTW*]. Popular election of mayors is a way to "reform" and "democratise" the political regime, the organs of reactionary power, while the state system remains intact....

What is people's power? More correctly, what is red political power and how is it built? To build revolutionary political power the following conditions must be taken into account:

The existence of a party of the revolutionary communists. It is impossible without this prerequisite. This is shown by historical experience in Colombia and internationally. It is an important condition. The party must play the leading role in the organs of political power.

The existence of a revolutionary army of the masses. According to the Marxist theory of the state, the army is the main component of state power. Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.

The organs of political power are the representatives of the new state, built through armed struggle. The front of revolutionary classes represents this form of New Democratic state.

The development, consolidation and expansion of red political power is possible only on the basis of revolutionary base areas.

Political power is built on the basis of having launched people's war, where the armed and mobilised masses wage blows against the big landlords and reactionaries. The local political power of the big landlords, the *gamonales* and the municipal authorities must be liquidated; the armed power of the reaction must be destroyed, including the armed bands led by the landlords, etc. The revolutionary political power of the masses of peasants and workers must be built gradually.

A New Democratic state means a worker-peasant dictatorship over the reactionaries. Organs of political power mean people's assemblies and democratic centralism. All this is political power.

The existence of red political power depends on the evolution of the revolutionary situation.

The agrarian reform should be deepened through violent, revolutionary means.

Though the cardinal problem of every revolution is the violent seizure of power, which in Colombia means concretely the strategy of people's war, still the building of political power in the course of such a war is a question of both principles and strategy. To say, as does the UC-ELN, that the question is merely tactical, is to reduce the question to one of organisational forms with no future perspective. All the "insurrectionalist" forces that speak of political power never talk about what kind of dictatorship or state system they are promoting and what kind of organs of political power or system of government they seek — and we won't even mention the new-style Trotskyites who blather about "workers' power."

The theory and strategy of people's war, developed by Mao Tsetung during the course of the Chinese revolution, cannot be considered a synonym for focoism or similar to it or to the so-called "insurrectional strategy."

Mao Tsetung held that protracted people's war is a strategy by showing the relationship between the unevenness of the revolutionary situation (corresponding to the uneven socio-economic development of society) and the protractedness of the war. As he pointed out, "As a rule, revolution starts, grows and triumphs first in those places where the counter-revolutionary forces are comparatively weak, while it has yet to start or grows very slowly in those places in which they are strong". ("On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism") The uneven development of the revolution demands that the war be strategically protracted. But this is one aspect of the question. The other aspect is that the protractedness of people's

war has to do with the power of imperialism. The forces of the imperialists and the ruling classes are more powerful than the forces of the revolution, while by means of a war of annihilation the enemy can be destroyed piece by piece and the balance of forces changed. Mao did not consider people's war protracted simply in the sense of being extended through time; he warned that excessive impatience "will never do." Nevertheless, the mere fact of holding that the enemy is strong and the revolutionary forces weak does not define the protractedness of the war either. "Neither in theory nor in practice can a struggle be protracted merely by pitting the weak against the strong. Nor can it be protracted simply by pitting the big against the small, the progressive against the reactionary.... Our conclusion is derived from the interrelations of all the factors at work on both sides."

The theory and strategy of people's war is not a purely military outlook. Mao formulated it based on his analysis of the weak points and strong points of the reactionaries as well as of the proletariat and people, in the military, political, economic and cultural spheres.

It is a strategy to weaken the enemy politically and politically strengthen the people's forces, with the objectives of military victory and the training of the masses in building and exercising the new state power, and preparing them to overthrow imperialism and the reactionary classes, reorganise society and construct a new society under the leadership of the proletariat. The strategy of people's war involves an ensemble of political, ideological, economic, cultural and military factors.

The strategy of people's war is closely linked to the fact that in a nation oppressed by imperialism, the revolution must go through two distinct stages: the New Democratic and socialist revolutions. The New Democratic revolution can only be carried out and brought to victory based on the development of protracted people's war. This is true because in the political sphere the programme of New Democracy calls for a new state and a new-

democratic republic; in the economic sphere, confiscation of the imperialist and reactionary-owned enterprises and the landlords' land and application of the system "land to the tiller"; support and restriction for private capital of a national character; in the cultural sphere, a New Culture whose nucleus is cultural revolution. The programme of New Democracy can only be realised on the basis of people's war whose foundation is guerrilla warfare.

Those who preach "socialist revolution and people's war" or "national liberation and people's war" do not understand the essence of the question. Exactly because of these reasons people's war can only be led by the proletariat and its Revolutionary Communist Party; it cannot be carried out by any other class. To put the New Democratic programme into practice, a strategy and theory of people's war is necessary; conversely, the objective of people's war and its nucleus, guerrilla warfare, is to carry out the New Democratic programme. Political power, a new economy and a new culture are obtained through people's war. Guerrilla warfare and the red guerrilla army permit the gradual solution of the two fundamental tasks of New Democracy: total, thorough and complete independence from imperialism, and the destruction of the semifeudal system, the monopoly of land ownership in the hands of the big landlords. People's war means consistent anti-imperialism and revolutionary democracy.

Other social classes such as the petite bourgeoisie or sections of the national bourgeoisie can lead movements and armed struggle, but they can only develop limited work with limited objectives due to their bourgeois conception of the revolution and to their class interests. These forces promote various varieties of narrow nationalism and are not consistent in the anti-imperialist struggle nor in solving "the agrarian question." The proletariat and its genuine communist party can help these forces come forward as allies, along the road blazed by revolutionary communism.

The strategy of people's war has

an ideological component, that is, the education of the masses, their mobilisation in building the organs of political power, in such a way so that in the course of the war they are trained and achieve a high level of political consciousness and ideological firmness and are prepared for the moment when they seize control of all society and reorganise it.

The strategy of people's war is a war of the masses, organising them, mobilising them and relying on them. One of the basic principles of people's war is confidence in the masses' revolutionary potential. This principle takes the concrete form of organising and mobilising the peasantry, especially the poor peasants, the urban and rural proletariat, and the petite bourgeoisie — which means organising them into the guerrilla army — so that they carry out the destruction of the old political power and build the new power and the New Democratic state. The "insurrectionalists," whether they be pro-Soviets, revisionists, social-democrats or Christians, do have to rely on the masses to a certain extent. But they do not do so with the aim of unleashing the masses' power to destroy the old and create the new, but instead simply see the masses as a way to pressure the reactionary state and achieve negotiated agreements. They mobilise the masses only insofar as it suits their interests, due to their fear of the masses' revolutionary strength and the fact that they cannot and do not seek to carry the revolution through to the end.

Taking the protractedness of the war as our starting point, the creation of revolutionary base areas is a strategic problem to be able to lead the revolution and revolutionary warfare.

What, then, are revolutionary base areas in guerrilla warfare? "They are the strategic bases on which the guerrilla forces rely in performing their strategic tasks and achieving the objective of preserving and expanding themselves and destroying and driving out the enemy. Without such strategic bases, there will be nothing to depend on in carrying out any of our strategic tasks or achieving the aim of the

war. It is characteristic of guerrilla warfare behind enemy lines that it is fought without a rear, for the guerrilla forces are severed from the country's general rear. But guerrilla warfare could not last long or grow without base areas. The base areas are, indeed, its rear." (Mao Tsetung, "Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War Against Japan")

Certain conditions are required to create base areas: 1. the existence of armed forces; 2. the existence of a Revolutionary Communist Party; 3. inflicting defeats on the enemy using the armed forces with the support of the masses of people; 4. the mobilisation of the masses in the revolutionary struggle and arming the people in the course of the struggle, organising detachments and guerrilla units and, furthermore, creating revolutionary mass organisations, organising the workers, peasants, youth, women, children, merchants and professionals, "according to the degree of their political consciousness and fighting enthusiasm."

In the course of the revolutionary struggle, relying on the masses of people, the old political power of the *gamonales* and other open and hidden enemies of the masses is destroyed, and the new power, red political power, is consolidated, mobilising the revolutionary strength of the masses. The organs of political power must put into practice the New Democratic programme and the politics of the United Front, that is, the concretisation of the new state of the worker-peasant dictatorship under the leadership of the proletariat and its communist party, and in this way unite the masses of people against imperialism, the bureaucrat and comprador bourgeoisie and the big landowners.

In the course of the revolutionary struggle, the strength of the mobilised masses will thoroughly, completely and gradually destroy the old social and production relations and build new social and production relations, expressing a new politics, economics and culture.

The economic line to follow in the base areas should be based on the New Democratic programme and the united front and on self-

reliance, including, as part of this, the carrying out and deepening of agrarian reform by revolutionary means. Thus base areas, like the strategy of people's war itself, are not just a military question. As Mao said, the base areas are the strategic rear of the revolution. Further, the proletariat speaks of the rear formed by the world proletarian revolution, but in a way opposite to the revisionist idea of "an international rear area" promoted by the Sandinista types.

The strategic question of revolutionary base areas has to do with whether or not one wants to destroy the imperialist system, bureaucrat capitalism and semifeudalism, to rip out their roots, or whether on the contrary one seeks compromises with the reactionary regime or parts of it. As Mao Tsetung put forward, "Since China's key cities have long been occupied by the powerful imperialists and their reactionary Chinese allies, it is imperative for the revolutionary ranks to turn the backward villages into advanced, consolidated base areas, into great military, political, economic and cultural bastions of the revolution

from which to fight their vicious enemies who are using the cities for attacks on the rural districts, and in this way gradually to achieve the complete victory of the revolution through protracted fighting." (Mao Tsetung, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party") Mao's summation is valid for the conditions of present-day Colombia.

The strategy of people's war follows the strategic lines of surrounding the cities from the countryside, on the basis of establishing one or another type of base areas in the small cities and countryside, based on guerrilla warfare. This does not negate the possibility of uprisings by the urban masses leading to insurrections in the cities. Nor does it negate the use of strikes and general shut-downs in specific areas. But these forms are part of the overall strategy of people's war and cannot be separated from that. The central point is the Revolutionary Communist Party's capacity to mobilise the peasants to take part in the New Democratic revolution under proletarian leadership. □

