

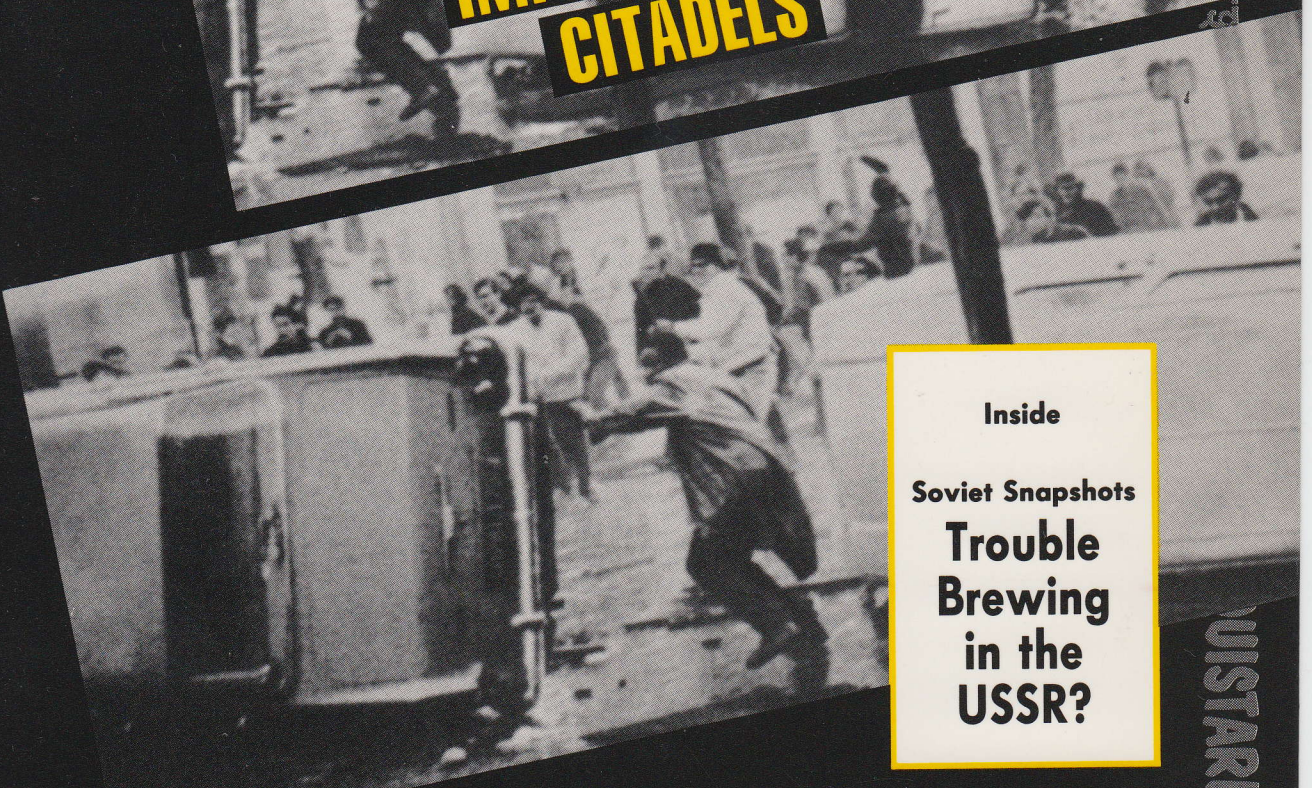
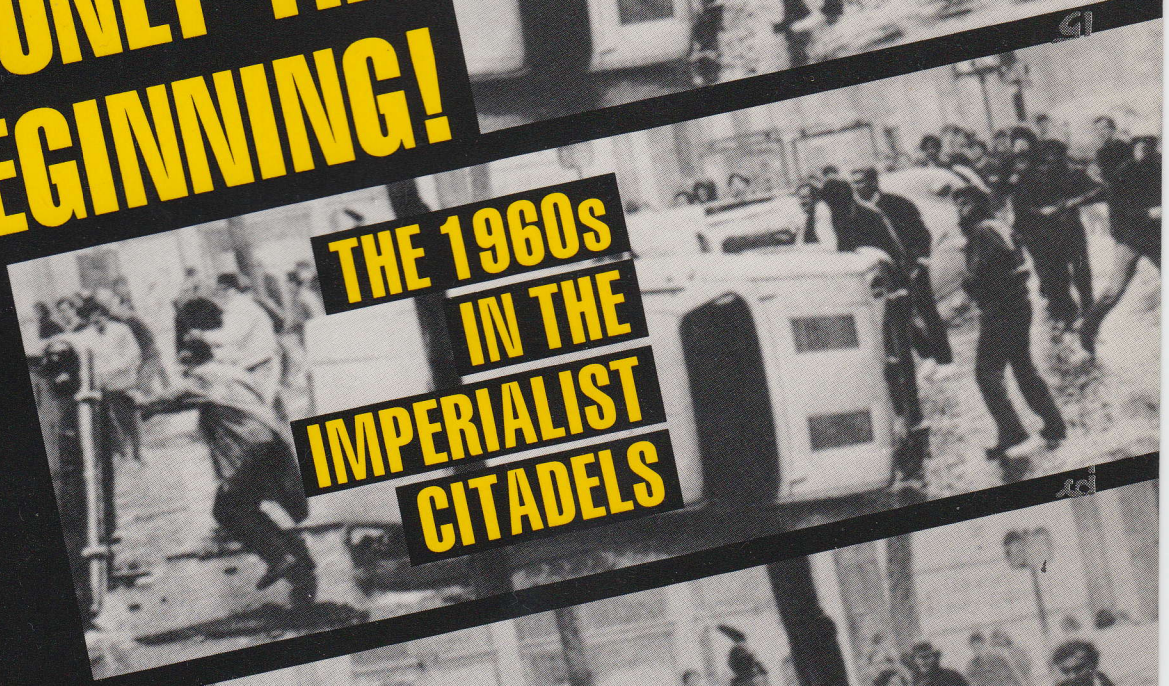
**TO WIN** 獲得的將是整個

1988/12

**A WORLD**

**ONLY THE BEGINNING!**

**THE 1960s  
IN THE  
IMPERIALIST  
CITADELS**



Inside

Soviet Snapshots

**Trouble  
Brewing  
in the  
USSR?**

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VUJSTARE



## **Trouble Brewing in the USSR?**

The Afghanistan war, national oppression in the USSR, the alienation of youth, the future of Soviet society — these are some of the topics a West German radical discussed on a recent trip through the USSR.

## **Philippines**

In a recent interview the Chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines discusses international relations. A response refutes his view that forces tied to imperialism, especially in the Soviet bloc, can aid revolution in the Philippines, and argues that such grave errors are the inevitable result of the CPP leadership's departure from Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought.

## **Colombia**

This article, written by the Revolutionary Communist Group of Colombia, examines the strategies for coming to power put forward by various armed organisations in Colombia, focusing on the urban-centred "Nicaraguan model," and contrasts these to Mao's concept of waging protracted people's war and establishing red political power in the countryside under the leadership of a genuine communist party.

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BUT THEIR CHAINS, THEY HAVE  
A WORLD TO WIN. . .



PROLETARIANS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

1988/12

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TO WIN

獲得的將是整個世界

UN MUNDO QUE GANAR

KAZANIACAK DÜNYA

विजय

A WORLD

जीतने के लिए सारा विश्व है

*A World to Win* has been inspired by the formation of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, announced on March 12th, 1984, which has regrouped many Marxist-Leninist parties and organisations from around the world. It is not an official organ of the RIM. Its pages are open to all those on the same sides of the barricades in the fight against imperialism and reaction.

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Reply to Liwanag:

# The CPP and False Friends of the Filipino Revolution

For some time, the genuine revolutionary communists the world over have been deeply concerned by developments taking place in the revolutionary movement in the Philippines. In the twenty years since its formation on 26 Dec. 1968 (the birthday of Mao Tsetung) the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) has won impressive victories in the armed struggle it has been leading — and these victories have been greeted with enthusiasm by the genuine revolutionaries and Marxist-Leninists the world over. But at the same time it has been impossible to ignore the ideological and political corrosion that has been eating at the very foundations of the CPP. The genuine Marxist-Leninist forces, and notably the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM), would have been flagrantly abandoning their responsibilities had they not attempted to express their concern to the CPP and call for the leadership and membership of the Party to repudiate the political deviations which threaten the very character of the Party itself.

Regular readers of *AWTW* will recall that in No. 8 of our journal we published a major open letter from the Committee of the RIM addressed to the Central Committee of the CPP. In this letter the Committee of the RIM raised a series of im-

portant questions concerning the line and policies of the CPP, notably criticising the stand taken by the CPP in relation to the critical period surrounding the fall of Ferdinand Marcos and the consolidation of the Aquino regime. The Open Letter pointed out that:

“The class nature of the regime you were fighting was lost sight of, the necessity to smash the entire repressive apparatus increasingly downplayed, bourgeois-democratic notions of ‘modern-day republics’ were promoted, as a wrong conception of the path and goal of the revolution have come to the fore; ... the proletariat has been progressively subordinated to other class forces, imperialist puppets are promoted as ‘progressives’ and ‘reformists,’ and one of the original strengths of the CPP, that of rallying the peasants in a genuine people’s war as the main force of revolution, is increasingly put on a par with (or even subordinated to) united action with bourgeois strata in the cities; ... imperialist countries are treated as socialist ones, dependent countries as independent revolutionary regimes, and eventually the necessity of completely rupturing with imperialism begins to give way to ‘practical’ plans to come to terms with imperialism, possibly under the banner of the ‘necessity’ of

Soviet aid.”

Since that letter was published, events themselves have proven again and again the bankruptcy of the line and policies the CPP had been pursuing. Indeed, the CPP itself was required to abandon a number of the most glaring errors — most especially its uncritical hailing of Aquino’s “positive efforts... to dismantle the fascist structures” (as their favourable response to Aquino’s call for a ceasefire put it) and its efforts during the first months after Marcos’ fall to discover a bloc of “liberals and progressives” within the Aquino government who “recognise the legitimacy of fighting an unjust system [and] desire to pursue genuine peace through principled negotiations, to enable the Aquino government to tackle the social roots of the people’s struggle.”

In fact, Aquino has shown no mercy in her murderous pursuit of the New People’s Army led by the CPP. The CPP has responded by resisting these armed attacks and calling for the overthrow of what they now call “the U.S.-Aquino dictatorship.”

Although no political party is immune to error, one would certainly think that mistakes of such gravity as an incorrect assessment of the nature of the regime in power would

call for serious self-criticism and an examination of the roots of such errors.

Instead, statements have appeared like the following in the 29 March 1987 issue of *Ang Bayan* (the CPP Central Committee organ) commemorating the eighteenth anniversary of the New People's Army. Speaking of the period immediately following Aquino's ascension to power, *Ang Bayan* declares:

"Of course, problems, big and small, did appear which tended to diffuse the revolutionary efforts and weaken the revolutionary forces' unity and resolve, like the proliferation of bourgeois liberal views and reformist and parliamentary ideas among their ranks.... But the Party and the revolutionary movement which it led continued to weather these challenges, preserved their unity, charted the revolutionary direction clearly and correctly...."

It is certainly no surprise that some "bourgeois liberal and reformist and parliamentary ideas" existed "in the ranks" when these very same ideas were promoted from the rooftops by Party leaders! (See the "Open Letter" in *AWTW* No. 8.) This refusal to make any serious self-criticism on the part of the Party leadership is especially notable when compared to the great hullabaloo that the CPP made over its self-criticism for boycotting the Aquino-Marcos election contest. Whatever final conclusions are to be drawn concerning the CPP's line and tactics on those elections, it can certainly be said that any other mistakes that may have been committed pale in comparison to the *fundamental mistake* of misassessing the very nature of the Aquino regime and spreading dangerous illusions about it among the masses.

Indeed it is clear that the leadership of the CPP, so ready to flagellate itself for the boycott policy, dare not open up the subject of their previous tailing of the Aquino regime because they have no intention of thoroughly examining, let alone uprooting, the series of deviations underlying these errors. The new policies of the CPP leadership are but a *new application of the same*

*erroneous line* under the new conditions *that Aquino has imposed on them*. In this light, it is not surprising that, to the best of our knowledge, the leadership of the CPP have not considered it necessary or useful to respond to the criticisms of the RIM Committee, which were offered in a fraternal spirit.

The most important recent statement by the CPP concerning the international communist movement came in an interview in July 1987, published in a special issue of *Ang Bayan*, with Armando Liwanag, described as Chairman of the Central Committee of the CPP. In this interview Liwanag addresses a number of questions concerning "the international relations of the Communist Party of the Philippines" (see excerpts published elsewhere in this issue).

It is impossible not to respond with alarm to the positions taken by Liwanag in the interview. Of course, these positions should come as no surprise to those who have witnessed the evolution of the CPP's position over the last number of years. Still, the fact that, for the first time, the highest authorities of the CPP have presented a comprehensive and aggressive repudiation of the basic Marxist-Leninist position on the struggle against modern revisionism, coupled with a distortion of Mao Tsetung Thought and an arrogant attack on Maoist forces the world over, can only confirm that the positions of the top leadership of the CPP are indeed menacing the very nature of the Party and threatening the success of the revolution itself.

### Mao Tsetung Thought

The Liwanag interview is full of wrong theses from beginning to end, but what gives a certain consistency and thread to the interview, and what makes the line of the interview itself an error and not just a composite of many errors, is Liwanag's short but decisive statement on the meaning of Mao Tsetung Thought.

At its foundation the CPP adopted Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought as its ideology. In the last several years the leadership of the

CPP has avoided like the plague any discussion of Mao Tsetung Thought and voices from top levels of the party have even been heard to demand that the CPP officially abandon it altogether. Nevertheless, even as the ideological and political position of the leadership of the Party has increasingly departed from the proletarian revolutionary science and ideology, and while references to the teachings of Mao have nearly disappeared from Party writings, the term Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought has continued to be emblazoned on each and every issue of *Ang Bayan*. While the precise reasons for this incongruity can only be the subject of speculation, it is reasonable to assume that the reluctance to make the formal break with Mao Tsetung Thought is due, at least in part, to the tremendous prestige Mao Tsetung's development of Marxism continues to have in the ranks of the Party and which is correctly associated with the victories won by the Party and the very revolution itself.

It is interesting to note that Liwanag broke the Party's long silence on the issue of Mao Tsetung, not by denouncing him, but by *reducing* Mao Tsetung Thought to *simply* "the light he provided on the problems of imperialism and feudalism and on the road of armed revolution for the completion of the national-democratic revolution and the establishment of socialism," thereby *robbing* Mao Tsetung Thought of its most important contribution, the theory and practice of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, which Liwanag never even mentions, and *denying* Mao Tsetung Thought as a *new and higher stage* in the development of the science of Marxism-Leninism. Liwanag offers his narrow re-definition of Mao Tsetung Thought even though the writings of the CPP have, in the past, referred to Mao Tsetung Thought as the "acme of Marxism-Leninism," and have also emphasised Mao's leadership of the Cultural Revolution, his theory of continuing the revolution, his combat against modern revisionism and so forth.



Liwanag states, and for once correctly, that the "CPP owes a lot to Mao Tsetung," but he goes on to repay this political debt by first reducing Mao to simply "a major part of the great treasury of Marxism-Leninism," a statement which underscores that Mao Tsetung Thought is not seen as representing a new stage. Then he goes on, "But the basic principles and lessons... can only be useful and valuable to the CPP as it can make its own concrete analysis of concrete conditions and win its own victories in the course of revolutionary practice." In other words, to the extent that some of Mao's ideas are immediately useful to the CPP they are to be tolerated — as long as they are ripped out of Mao's overall line and all-round development of the science of Marxism-Leninism. We must remember that even the reactionary classes try to glean insight from the writings of Mao (for example the imperialists' counter-insurgency experts who study his military works) but cannot grasp (and certainly cannot apply) the stand, viewpoint and method of Mao Tsetung.

Indeed, the *whole point* of the Liwanag interview is to put the CPP's official stamp of approval on its abandonment of Mao's line and its pathetic begging to be brought into the fold of the international "communist and workers parties," a code word for the revisionist parties recognised by the Soviet Union.

### The Negation of the Struggle Against Revisionism

It is only logical that those who want to unite with revisionists are first forced to negate the struggle against revisionism. Liwanag states, "The CPP was re-established in 1968 mainly and essentially because of the exploitative conditions and revolutionary needs of the Filipino people *even as* we took positions in the ideological debates of the 1960s" (emphasis added). Is it necessary to remind Liwanag that the Filipino people have *for a long time* suffered "exploitative conditions" and *needed* new-democratic revolution as well? Why was the

CPP re-established in 1968 and not in 1958 or 1948? Is it really true that the "ideological debates" were only *incidental* to the formation of the Party or, as Liwanag hints throughout the interview, actually harmful to the development of the revolution?

However much some would like to deny it, the CPP is a *direct product* of the struggle Mao led against modern revisionism, of which the infamous Lavaite revisionist clique (the PKP) in the Philippines was an integral part. Interestingly, it was the Lavaites who, under the conditions of the 1960s, were arguing for the *independence* of the party from the ideological struggle in the international communist movement. The *founding line* of the CPP was developed as a conscious attempt to apply Mao Tsetung's teachings on the revolution in the semicolonial, semifeudal countries to the concrete conditions of the Philippines. It was not *and could not have been* founded on the basis Liwanag now wants to propose for the international communist movement — namely the obliteration of the distinction between Marxism and revisionism which, as we know from repeated historical experience, always means the triumph of revisionism and the suffocation of revolutionary Marxism.

Speaking of "the ruling parties of Eastern Europe," Liwanag says, "We cannot afford to engage in endless open ideological disputes which can only benefit U.S. imperialism, our common enemy." What this really means is not that the ideological disputes should be *forgotten* but that verdicts should be *reversed*, that the previous positions fought for by Mao Tsetung be replaced with the positions he was fighting *against*.

For the most part Liwanag seeks to pass over in silence the actual content of the dispute between the Marxist-Leninists and the modern revisionists. But he does give some insight into his efforts to replace Marxism with his own eclectic stew when he discusses the problem of armed struggle. He specifically cites as one of "the major advantages"

of the ideological disputes of the 1960s the "emphasis on the correctness and justness of revolutionary armed struggle in *many* countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, including the Philippines." He is then quick to point out, "But I would not go so far as to say that armed struggle is immediately possible and necessary for *all* countries. Due attention must be given to concrete conditions in every country that determine appropriate forms of struggle" (emphasis added).

Liwanag begins by muddling the question at hand. Mao and the genuine revolutionary communists *never argued* that armed struggle is "immediately possible and necessary" for all countries. First, Mao made a clear distinction between the historical *need* for armed struggle which exists in *all* countries where the reactionary classes still hold power and the *requisite conditions* for the launching of such armed struggle for power which depend on a number of factors and differ qualitatively between the two basic types of countries — the oppressed countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America and the imperialist citadels. (Nor, for that matter, did Khrushchev and company ever argue that *all* armed struggle was to be prohibited in *all* countries of the Third World. We have seen that Soviet leaders since then have often found it useful to promote certain types of armed struggle as part of pursuing their overall revisionist and social-imperialist aims.)

In the polemics with the Communist Party of China the Soviets argued that liberation could be achieved *without the revolutionary war of the masses* and *without shattering the old state machinery* and they heaped abuse on Mao as a "warmonger" for arguing otherwise. The question at hand is Mao's teaching that "the seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution" and that this holds true for all countries. Is this what Liwanag is refuting when he says he doesn't want to "go too far"? Is this problem just one of the "matters belonging to

history" that Liwanag wants to close the book on? Does he really want us to believe that Mao's insistence that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun" had nothing to do with the formation of the CPP? In fact, didn't the CPP's deviations concerning the nature of the Aquino regime, its efforts to find a "civilian bloc" in the government to support, etc., all show that these lessons are *far from outmoded* and very much at the heart of the problems of revolutionary strategy today?

The question for debate in the split with modern revisionism was *not only* the general question of the universal need for violent revolution but also a particular question, one which also retains its full validity today, of the *general path* for the revolution in the oppressed countries. Do the teachings of Mao Tsetung serve as "the *point of reference* for the elaborating of revolutionary strategy and tactics in the colonial, semi- (or neo-) colonial countries..." (as the *Declaration of the RIM* puts it), or are these merely useful ideas to be applied or discarded according to the pragmatic whims of party leaders? Is this what Liwanag is getting at when he argues against "models"? Just what "appropriate forms of struggle" does Liwanag have in mind? Of course, revolutionary communists have *always* understood the need for utilising different forms of struggle in countries like the Philippines, but *in the service* of a strategy of protracted people's war based in the countryside.

We have briefly commented on Liwanag's effort to minimise the importance of Mao's polemic with the modern revisionists on the question of revolutionary warfare because he singles it out as having had "advantages." But the *other* questions involved in the dispute with modern revisionism are not outmoded either. For example, the criticism of Khrushchev's "goulash communism," the criticism of the Soviet thesis of the disappearance of colonialism which the Communist Party of China under Mao's leadership correctly refuted as an apology for neocolonialism, Mao's

refutation of the revisionist charge of being a "splitter" for having upheld principle in the international communist movement, the criticism of parliamentary cretinism, to name but a few, were vital to the formation of genuine Marxist-Leninist parties, including the CPP. Calling these life and death questions mere "historical disputes" is reversing correct verdicts and the inevitable prelude to repeating the past deviations Mao struggled against.

#### **Liwanag's Desire to be a "Stable and Serious" Party**

As pointed out above, the CPP never considered it appropriate to respond to fraternal criticisms of the RIM Committee, just as they had previously turned a deaf ear on the efforts to regroup the genuine communists internationally that resulted in the formation of the RIM. In lieu of a response to the Open Letter, readers of *Ang Bayan* are treated to a disparaging paragraph which states, specifically referring to those who uphold Mao Tsetung Thought, that, "those who have been successful in their revolutionary practice understand the needs of the CPP.... There are also the dogmatists who keep on debating, splitting and liquidating their parties or groups over theoretical and international questions, divorced from revolutionary practice in their respective countries." Translated this means that there are some, like Liwanag himself, who have "grown up" and realise now that principles should never be allowed to get in the way of the most immediate and narrow interests of a party or organisation. Liwanag calls this "success." Others, the "dogmatists," are still concerned with such questions as the nature of socialism as a transition to communism, proletarian internationalism, the coup d'état in China, Mao Tsetung Thought, and so forth. In fact it is those whom Liwanag calls the "dogmatists" (by which Liwanag means the RIM and other Maoist forces) who have waged a *real and consistent* struggle against revisionism in its dogmatic form as seen most clearly in the line of En-

ver Hoxha. Of course, the CPP has not participated in *this* struggle against dogmatism, just as it has not uttered a single word against the coup d'état in China, preferring, apparently, to treat it as an "international question" with no connection at all to the revolution in the Philippines. Instead Liwanag, careful to utter not a single word that could offend the "Marxist-Leninists" of the Kremlin, saves his abuse for the genuine revolutionary communists!

Liwanag makes very clear that the CPP seeks to establish relations with "stable and serious parties." Note that Liwanag does *not* say with genuine Marxist-Leninist parties, or parties following a revolutionary line, but simply those that are "stable and serious." We have already seen that the "ruling parties of Eastern Europe" are amongst those considered "serious" — and far be it from us to argue that they are anything but deadly serious in the pursuit of their counter-revolutionary aims. Amongst those parties out of power, "serious" means, in the West, those like the Communist Party of Italy or the Communist Party of France that long ago traded even the *pretence* of working for revolution for seats in parliament and positions in trade unions, while in the oppressed countries "serious" includes those who have based their strategy on building big opposition movements in the cities, compromises with the reactionary classes, and reducing the armed struggle (when it is permitted at all) to a pressure tactic in the service of "stable" non-revolutionary ends.

When the CPP was reconstituted in 1968 it in no way fit Liwanag's criteria of a "stable and serious" party. Rather it was a small group of revolutionaries determined to apply Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought to the conditions in the Philippines and to unleash a people's war to win victory in the New Democratic Revolution.

By "stable," Liwanag is insisting that the communist parties, starting with the CPP itself, forswear all struggle against revisionism in order to maintain "unity" in the party.



One is first required to ask, unity and stability for *what end*? Unity for the making of revolution, for advancing towards socialism and communism, for advancing the world proletarian revolution? Or unity based upon opposing, hamstringing or diverting the proletarian revolutionary struggle? As Lenin put it with such clarity, "what the workers need is the unity of Marxists, and not the unity of Marxists and revisionists"!

Liwanag *appears* to be abandoning political criteria in his search to establish ties with "serious and stable" parties and simply judge them all by his pragmatist standards of "success." Actually, he replaces the criteria of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought with opportunist criteria. For example, the CPP has, to our knowledge, has not issued any clear statement of support for the Communist Party of Peru (PCP) and the revolutionary war it is engaged in. This is because the victories won by the PCP in eight years of people's war are not the kind of "successes" that Liwanag is talking about. The PCP has had no "success" at all — and it is to their credit — in adapting their outlook and practice to that of the loyal and respectable "opposition" movement of the cities nor that of the pro-Soviet "armed opposition" current seen in some countries in Latin America and elsewhere.

What are the great "successes" won by the "serious" and "stable" revisionist parties the world over with whom Liwanag is so anxious to establish relations? Certainly not successes in making revolution, although some of these parties have had partial and temporary "success" in their role as guardians of the old order, of aiders and abettors of counter-revolution. We can only assume that the "international communist and workers parties" include the Communist Party of India or the Communist Party of India (Marxist) who help the bourgeois state track down, imprison and murder communist revolutionaries. What about the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party of Iran which boasted of having fought alongside Khomeini's soldiers who repressed the armed uprising led by genuine communists

in Amol in 1982 — does Liwanag want to establish "fraternal" or merely "friendly" relations with these counter-revolutionaries?

### Liwanag's Conception of Unity

Liwanag hopes to appeal to the deep-rooted sentiments of the members and supporters of the CPP in favour of unity against the enemy. But the responsibility for splitting the revolutionary ranks has always been on the revisionists who try to forbid revolution and try to suppress and drive out those forces who fight for Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. Real unity can only be forged around a correct revolutionary line.

In a statement that is hauntingly similar to the arguments made by the Lavaite revisionists when they argued for remaining aloof from the struggles in the international communist movement, Liwanag says, "The most important thing is for the CPP to uphold its internal unity; maintain its independence in the international communist movement; and not to allow the debates and splits, within or between or among other parties, to divide the CPP." In fact, as the history of the CPP over the last period has amply shown, the departure from a line based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought inevitably brings about *disunity*. For example, Liwanag argues that it is possible to have good relations with both the Soviet and Chinese revisionists at the same time. But while it is true that *now* (since the coup in China following Mao's death) both the Soviet and Chinese parties have a revisionist line, the bourgeois state interests of China and the Soviet Union are not at all the same (and are often in sharp conflict) and it is these state interests, and not some non-existent "proletarian internationalism," that govern their relations with other parties. Attempting to patch up the internal unity of the Party by promoting an amalgam of those holding different and conflicting erroneous viewpoints will prove to be anything but "stable." Departing from Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought inevitably unleashes all sorts of centrifugal forces

as the bourgeois self-centered outlook comes to the fore — as is seen, for example, in Afghanistan where the equally pro-Soviet Khalq and Parcham factions of the ruling party regularly demonstrate their "unity" through intrigue, imprisonment and mutual assassination.

### Bury the Hatchet, Get Down to Business

It must be said that the Liwanag interview is a pathetic call for aid from revisionists and social-imperialists. In fact, Liwanag seems miffed that, until now, the CPP has not received the material and political support that he believes they deserve from these sources. For some time, the CPP leaders have made it known in a myriad of ways that they are anxious to receive different forms of assistance, including military. According to Liwanag, the Soviets and their East European followers "can be of great help to the national liberation movements and newly liberated peoples" and it would be "ironical" if the CPP "does not get any support from them."

Liwanag says "the basis for friendly relations [with the USSR] is the common struggle against U.S. imperialism." But the fact is that the struggle of the Filipino people against U.S. imperialism is *qualitatively different* than the conflict between two imperialist powers (the U.S. and the USSR). The Filipino people seek a *revolution*, the Soviets simply want to replace the U.S. as imperialist overlords.

The USSR is *not the least concerned* with the liberation of the Filipino people. Their rivalry with the U.S. imperialists does not exclude all sorts of collaboration with Filipino reactionaries inside and outside the ruling circles. After all, didn't the USSR support Marcos to the bitter end? Haven't they always supported the Lavaite revisionist clique? Are we really to be so naive as to think, as Liwanag would have us believe, that this is because the Lavaites have "misinformed" the Soviets!?!

Although we are sure that the Soviets appreciate Liwanag's "offer," the fact of the matter is

that, for the moment, they believe their own interests are best served by backing the regime in power.

Furthermore, the Soviet social-imperialists are *opposed* to genuine revolution even if sometimes they promote the use of arms. Often their support for armed resistance in a given state is simply a means to pressure the existing ruling circles to come to some Soviet-sponsored agreement and, as a corollary, to pressure the revolutionary forces into serving such schemes.

One of the reasons that the Soviets have been particularly reluctant to give support to the CPP is precisely the fact that the party was founded on the basis of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought and initiated a genuine revolutionary war of the masses for liberation. Liwanag no doubt hoped his interview and similar statements would reassure the Soviets that the spectre of Mao Tsetung Thought had been eradicated from the Party. But even if Liwanag downgrades and minimises the influence of Mao Tsetung Thought on the formation of the CPP, on the nature of the war it has been conducting, and on the ideological training of its cadres, the Soviets are not so easily convinced. It is not so sure that they will accept Liwanag's call to simply forgive and forget, and they may demand the "public self-flagellation" that Liwanag considers "messy."

Of course, sometimes the Soviets might find it expedient to "aid" a liberation movement (especially one which didn't have such "messy" Maoist historical connections). The Soviets are not alone in this practice; even the U.S., for example, has tacitly supported the Khmer Rouge of Cambodia in their fight against Vietnamese occupation. But when an imperialist power does render such "aid" it is always in order to further its *own* imperialist interests. It should never be forgotten that the U.S. established its hegemony over the Philippines by portraying itself as "liberators" against Spanish colonialism.

Instead of alerting the Filipino masses to the dangers of such plots on the part of the Soviets, Liwanag is preparing the ground for Soviet

social-imperialist penetration. And Liwanag is not only talking about the CPP's "need" now for material aid. He stresses, "Even after total victory is won, cooperative relations... will be needed for consolidation, national reconstruction, socialist revolution and construction."

### Proletarian Internationalism or Capitulation at Home and Abroad?

However much Liwanag tries to deny it, "the theoretical and international disputes" are not at all divorced from the questions of making revolution in every country. Liwanag would like people to believe that it is quite possible to reverse verdicts on the great struggle against modern revisionism, solicit material aid from social-imperialists, rip the revolutionary heart out of Mao Tsetung Thought and yet continue to blithely go along achieving "success" in the revolution in the Philippines. This viewpoint is not only shocking nationalism (as if *any degree* of success in the Philippines would justify helping counter-revolutionary social-imperialists masquerade as "socialists"), it is also profoundly illusory. The people's war begun by the CPP has been aimed at wiping out imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism, at establishing New Democracy led by the proletariat and opening the way for socialism as part of the world proletarian revolution. But for Liwanag "total victory" has a much different meaning. What kind of "socialism" does he really have in mind when he suggests that those who have destroyed socialism in the USSR will help build it in the Philippines? What kind of aid in "national reconstruction" does he expect from those who have desecrated Tien An Mien Square with a Kentucky Fried Chicken<sup>2</sup> franchise? What type of "national liberation" has been "won" by "more than a dozen countries" since 1960? Is Liwanag willing to settle for the "total victory" achieved in Zimbabwe, Vietnam, Nicaragua or Angola? Is that really all that Liwanag can aspire to? It seems that the

"historical disputes" between revisionism and Marxism are of some value after all!

If one is ready to abandon the path of completely rupturing with imperialism, of making a genuine revolution in social relations, of liberating the country as a *base area* from which to advance the world proletarian revolution and drop the goal of achieving *communism* throughout the world, then it is indeed possible to imagine all sorts of expedient agreements with one or another reactionary force (and why not, as Liwanag seems to propose, many at the same time?). But the members and leaders of the CPP who were nurtured on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, the workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals who have taken up arms to destroy all that is old and rotten in the Philippines, are unlikely to be satisfied by Liwanag's vision of "total victory."

In fact, despite Liwanag's pledge to learn from Mao Tsetung Thought on the revolution in semi-feudal, semicolonial countries, it is impossible to apply it selectively. Those who abandon Mao's teachings on socialist revolution, revisionism, philosophy, and so forth will be *unable* to apply Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought to making revolution in their own country even if they see the utility of doing so.

Those who make revolution in their own country will want to unite with the oppressed and the exploited, and their leaders, the genuine revolutionary communists, all over the world. Those who abandon revolution internationally will end up abandoning it at home as well. The members and leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines, and the revolutionary masses of that country, should repudiate the road of Liwanag and his like, before it is too late.

### Footnotes

1. Bourgeois press accounts have claimed that Armando Liwanag was arrested by the state authorities. The CPP has not, to our knowledge, confirmed or denied this account.

2. An American "fast food" restaurant which was recently opened up in Peking's Tien An Men square, where Mao had declared the foundation of the People's Republic of China and where his tomb is located. □



## For Readers' Reference:

### CPP Leader On International Relations

Following are excerpts from the article, "On the International Relations of the Communist Party of the Philippines," an interview with Armando Liwanag, Chairman of the Central Committee of the CPP, published in the July 1987 issue of *Ang Bayan*, the organ of the CC of the CPP. — AWTW.

**Q:** The growth in strength of the CPP and the Philippine revolutionary movement has been substantial since 1968. How do you account for this? What is the impact of universal theory and international relations?

**AL:** The principal and most decisive thing is that, under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism, the CPP has independently made a correct critique of the history and circumstances of the Filipino people as well as of the old merger party of the Communist and Socialist Parties; repudiated the long line of Lavaite errors; and formulated the programme of national democratic revolution for the self-reliant struggle of the Filipino people against U.S. imperialism and the local exploiting classes....

The CPP was re-established in 1968 mainly and essentially because of the oppressive and exploitative conditions and revolutionary needs of the Filipino people even as we took positions in the ideological debates of the sixties. The Party has garnered victories because it has made the correct critique of the semi-colonial and semifeudal Philippine society and the correct programme of national democratic revolution, and has struck deep roots among the people and relied on them in fighting for their own rights and interests.

**Q:** What have been the advantages and disadvantages derived by the CPP from

the open and bitter debates and divisions in the international communist movement since the 1960s? How do you propose to enhance the advantages and overcome the disadvantages?

**AL:** Among the major advantages is the emphasis on the correctness and justness of revolutionary armed struggle in many countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, including the Philippines. Since 1960, the people in more than a dozen countries have won national liberation through revolutionary armed struggle, without having to take direct advantage of an inter-imperialist world war. The Filipino people have been encouraged to wage revolutionary armed struggle against U.S. imperialism and the local exploiting classes and for national liberation and democracy.

But I would not go so far as to say that armed struggle is immediately possible and necessary at all times for all countries. Due attention must be given to concrete conditions in every country which determine the appropriate forms of struggle. Furthermore, no single party or revolution in one country can be regarded as the exclusive model or centre for the proletariat and people all over the world.

Among the major disadvantages is that the international communist movement and socialist countries have been unable to take full advantage of the ever-worsening crisis of capitalism and maximise support for the national liberation movements. Consequently, the revolutionary struggle of the Filipino people has not been able to get as much international support as it should, especially from other communist and workers parties which are either in power or out of power. Also, the CPP has not been able to extend direct support to and coordinate with more progressive forces for concerted international actions against imperialist aggression, intervention and war preparations.

It is a sad thing that the open and bitter debates and divisions have also resulted in violent confrontations beneficial to the U.S. and the reactionaries. It is high time for all communist and workers parties to restrengthen the unity of the international communist movement.

To keep and enhance the advantages and overcome the disadvantages, the CPP takes the independent position of consolidating relations which it has with stable and serious parties; expanding relations with ruling parties in socialist countries and all avowed Marxist-Leninist and anti-imperialist parties and organisations elsewhere; and promoting anti-imperialist unity and the proletarian spirit in the international communist movement through a series of bilateral relations of friendship. Under the

guidance of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism, the CPP establishes and develops relations with foreign parties on the basis of national integrity, independence, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, full equality, mutual respect, mutual support and mutual benefit.

**Q:** What drives or impels the CPP to expand its relations with other communist and workers parties abroad? Will not increased foreign support militate against self-reliance?

**AL:** U.S. imperialism is escalating its military and non-military intervention in Philippine affairs. It is moving in the direction of all-out aggression, especially because the so-called "total war" and "low-intensity conflict" tactics under the Aquino puppet regime are bound to fail. As the revolutionary struggle moves to a higher stage, particularly the stage of the strategic stalemate, the U.S. is bound to escalate its intervention and act more harshly. At any rate, whether there is a people's war or not, the U.S. is engaged in intensifying the oppression and exploitation of the people in the Philippines.

It is U.S. imperialist intervention and aggression which make it urgently necessary for the CPP and the entire Filipino people to seek the broadest possible international support for their revolutionary struggle. The people need moral and material assistance more than ever because of the escalating barbarity and destructiveness of the enemy.

While I frankly speak of the need of the CPP and the people for international support, it should also be recognised and stressed that they extend support to fraternal parties and the people of the world by carrying out the Philippines revolution. Our victories are also the victories of revolutionaries and peoples the world over. The revolutionary struggle led by the CPP contributes to the advance of the revolutionary theory and practice of the world proletariat. To the extent that we are capable of, we also extend the most concrete and the most direct forms of support to revolutionary forces abroad.

Self-reliance can be maintained and even enhanced with the increase of international support. The support that comes must merely supplement and yet amplify the capacity of the revolutionary forces and the people to expand and intensify their struggle. Thus, even if international support becomes larger, it remains small or becomes smaller in proportion to the people's overall self-reliant efforts.

The CPP will never ask for support it does not need, cannot receive and absorb and cannot reduce in proportion to the total increased self-reliant effort of the

revolutionary people. After all, it is the Filipino revolutionaries who do the fighting and the dying to achieve victory in their just cause.

Even after total victory is won, cooperative relations with other communist and workers parties shall be needed for consolidation, national reconstruction, socialist revolution and construction. In the process of these, we shall be able to make bigger contributions to the strength and unity of the world anti-imperialist struggle and communist movement.

**Q:** Are you now in the process of establishing party-to-party relations with the ruling parties in Eastern Europe and elsewhere? How do you override the ideological and political differences since the 1960s?

**AL:** Yes, we are now in the process of seeking and establishing relations with the ruling parties in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. It is high time that the CPP does its part in strengthening anti-imperialist unity with them and taking advantage of the crisis of the world capitalist system.

The ruling parties of Eastern Europe can be of great help to the Philippine revolution as we try to be of help to them through revolutionary struggle against U.S. imperialism. To start with, we have a common No. 1 enemy in U.S. imperialism.

The ruling parties of Eastern Europe have been of great help to the national liberation movements and the newly-liberated peoples. They have helped movements and governments consisting of communists and non-communists. It would be ironical if the CPP or they would refuse to establish relations; and if the CPP-led Philippine revolution does not get any support from them.

I see no insurmountable obstacle to the establishment of friendly and fraternal relations between the CPP and the parties in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. There are no direct bones of contention between the CPP and any one of them. The basis of friendly relations is the common struggle against U.S. imperialism. When friendly relations are established, fraternal or comradely relations can begin to grow.

The CPP considers as matters belonging to history those differences in the past arising from disputes between certain parties. We cannot afford to engage in endless open ideological disputes which can only benefit U.S. imperialism, our common enemy.

The point is to establish anti-imperialist unity, gather as many points of agreement as possible and look forward to further developing friendly and fraternal relations. We would be breaking our necks if we keep looking back to

the past. It would be quite messy for one party to demand that the other party make some public self-flagellation.

Because of their different conditions, communist and workers parties have different views on the world situation and the situation in particular countries. To open and maintain friendly and fraternal relations, these parties must collect points of agreement, reserve points of disagreement and increase mutual understanding.

If any party wants to discuss any theoretical problem, it can do so within its own confines, or if the other party is willing, within the discreet venue of bilateral party-to-party relations. Friendly and fraternal relations will certainly put an end to the open debates and conflicts beneficial to and gloated over by the imperialists and reactionaries.

**Q:** What can you say now about previous CPP declarations that certain parties are revisionist and that certain countries are social-imperialist rather than socialist and practice global or regional hegemonism?

**AL:** Those previous declarations belong to history in the same way that the declarations made against the CPP by other communist and workers parties belong to history. Let history and our current studies prove the correctness, partial correctness or incorrectness of such declarations. So much water has passed under the bridge in more than two decades of disputation. Since a few years ago, the CPP has voluntarily ceased to apply certain terms or labels to other parties....

**Q:** How do you override the fact that certain parties have had relations with the Lava group? Will not the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and other parties close to it demand that the CPP merge or have a united front with the Lava group?

**AL:** ...At any rate, the question of the CPP dealing with the Lavaite problem is a domestic matter internal to the Philippines. The CPP is of the firm view that the Lava group is a political corpse or at the most a withering vine.

A united front, formal or informal, can be broad enough to accommodate any political corpse that comes to life by becoming anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and anti-fascist to some extent and ceasing to specialise in attacking the CPP.

**Q:** In your estimate, what would be the attitude of the Chinese Communist Party to the CPP's establishing and developing relations with the Eastern European parties, especially the CPSU? Will you manage to keep the relations between the CCP and CPP?

**AL:** The Chinese Communist Party and the Communist Party of the Philippines are two independent parties exercising mutual respect. The principles of the

CCP and CPP regarding party-to-party relations are agreeable to each other.

The CCP itself has restored relations with all parties in Eastern Europe except the Soviet Union. Relations with the Albanian Party of Labour are frozen.

There are still bones of contention between China and the Soviet Union which have an impact on the possibility of restoring party-to-party relations.

However, the CCP and the CPSU have relations with the same parties in many countries of the world. The CCP has not taken offense that these parties have relations with the CPSU. Neither has the CPSU taken offense that these parties have relations with the CCP....

**Q:** Towards the CPP's drive to expand its international relations, what is the attitude of the parties or small groups that have arisen for the first time in the sixties and proclaimed themselves as adherents of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought?

**AL:** Those that have been successful in their revolutionary practice understand the needs of the CPP and the Filipino people; and recognise that the CPP can best perform its internationalist duty by leading the Philippine revolution to total victory and availing itself of all domestic and international factors in favour of the Philippine revolution. There are also the dogmatists who keep on debating, splitting and liquidating their parties or groups over theoretical and international questions, divorced from revolutionary practice in their respective countries.

**Q:** In what way does the CPP regard Mao Tsetung?

**AL:** The CPP has high regard for Mao Tsetung as a great communist thinker and leader of world significance for having made the most comprehensive and profound critique of the semicolonial and semifeudal society and for having led to victory the new democratic revolution among hundreds of millions of people in so huge a country as China and laid the foundation for socialism there.

The CPP has a special high regard for Mao Tsetung because of the light he has provided on the problems of imperialism and feudalism and on the road of armed revolution for the completion of the national-democratic revolution and the establishment of socialism.

The CPP owes a lot to Mao Tsetung. Mao Tsetung Thought is a major part of the great treasury of Marxism-Leninism. But the basic principles and lessons we learned from abroad -- from all the great communist thinkers and leaders -- can only be as useful and valuable to the CPP as it can make its own concrete analysis of concrete conditions and win its own victories in the course of revolutionary practice. □



# Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

Central Reorganisation Committee, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) • Ceylon Communist Party • Communist Collective of Agit/Prop [Italy] • Communist Committee of Trento [Italy] • Communist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist-Leninist) [BSD (M-L)] • Communist Party of Colombia (Marxist-Leninist), Mao Tsetung Regional Committee • Communist Party of Peru • Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist • Haitian Revolutionary Internationalist Group • Nepal Communist Party [Mashal] • New Zealand Red Flag Group • Revolutionary Internationalist Contingent [Britain] • Proletarian Communist Organisation, Marxist-Leninist [Italy] • Proletarian Party of Purba Bangla (PBSP) [Bangladesh] • Revolutionary Communist Group of Colombia • Leading Committee, Revolutionary Communist Party, India\* • Revolutionary Communist Party, USA • Revolutionary Communist Union [Dominican Republic] • Union of Iranian Communists (Sarbedaran)

The *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* was adopted in March 1984 by the delegates and observers at the Second International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organisations which formed the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement. The above are the participating parties and organisations of the RIM. Available in the following languages (partial list): Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Creole, Danish, English, Farsi, French, German, Gujarati, Hindi, Italian, Kannada, Kurdish, Malayalam, Nepali, Punjabi, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish. 1£ plus 50 p handling.

For more information write the Information Bureau of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement at the following address:

BCM RIM  
London, WC1N 3XX  
U.K.

\* The Information Bureau of the RIM has announced the merger of the Leading Committee, RCPI and the CRC, CPI (M-L) in 1987.



# *The War of the Kurdish Masses is a War of the Oppressed*

## **Statement by the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement**

Today not a single Kurdish village has been left standing in Iraq. The Iraqi regime, freed from its eight-year-long debacle with Iran thanks to a cease-fire arranged by the same imperialists who pushed Iraq into the war in the first place, sent in 150,000 troops to subdue this rebellious people. When these highly-armed, battle-trained troops could make no headway against the Kurdish peshmerga guerrillas, the government poured chemical bombs down on the villages. Helicopter gunships strafed streams of people who were trapped as they flowed towards the Turkish border. Iraqi troops moved in to level the houses left behind in the empty villages so that they could never be inhabited again.

Thousands of Kurds were killed. Perhaps 100,000 fled over the border to Turkey, a country whose large Kurdish population is not allowed to speak Kurdish and where even the name of the people is banned. The Turkish government has long turned the Kurdish area of Turkey into an armed camp; under a mutual anti-Kurd pact with Iraq, Turkish troops crossed the border to attack Kurds in Iraq earlier this year. At first the Turkish regime tried to keep the refugees from escaping the death meant for them in Iraq. But if these Kurds had been forced to stand and fight the Iraqi army to the end instead of fleeing across the border, the situation might have turned into more than the Iraqi government could handle, and even undermined Turkey's political stability. This did not suit the interests of the U.S.-bloc imperialists, with their major military installations dug into the soil of the Kurdish part of Turkey. So NATO's mascot dog "generously" allowed the Iraqi Kurds in — only to disarm them and to force more than half of them out right away, driving them back into Iraq or

dumping them onto the mercy of the Iranian government, which like Iraq has taken advantage of the ceasefire in the Gulf war to send another 100,000 soldiers to join the 200,000 already occupying the Kurdish part of Iran to contain the rebellion.

The U.S. and its allies uttered a few pious words against chemical weapons. Then the Western governments turned around and insisted that since no Western bigshots actually saw the bombs fall, the horrible chemical burns on the faces and bodies of Kurdish children and adults could not be taken as "proof" that Iraq had used chemical weapons. Soon the whole affair was dropped from Western sight. The Soviet Union, seeking to maintain whatever influence it can with the region's reactionary regimes, maintained a discrete silence about this slaughter.

What the imperialists found objectionable, to the extent that they found anything wrong at all in this picture of carnage, was that Iraq's attacks could misfire at both ends, setting off an explosion of contagious anger in one, two, three or four of the reactionary states in which the Kurdish people are imprisoned and threatening the imperialists' arrangements in the region even further. In addition, their momentary pose of stern anger at the Iraqi regime was meant to remind it who it depends on for its weapons and its very life, despite the Gulf ceasefire. But both the chemical massacres and the phony imperialist "concern" were meant to work together to serve imperialist politics.

Since the beginning of this century, the imperialists who arranged for the Kurdish nation to be carved up between four different countries and their various local reactionary flunkies have unleashed countless attempts to subdue or exterminate this people. Kurdistan's rivers have often run red with blood. But these most recent events are not just more of the same crimes. This genocidal attack has been shaped by the ever-growing problems and contradictions the imperialists East and West face as each side reaches for decisive and deadly advantage over the other in preparation for a final confrontation. The Gulf is an extremely strategic and volatile region for which each side would do anything to entrench itself at the expense of its rival. Brutal testimony to this fact is the million dead in the Iran-Iraq war the U.S. and Soviet-led blocs both kept going with unlimited arms and other inducements as long as it suited them.

Iraq's genocidal attack was launched at the behest of the U.S, which is coordinating anti-Kurdish policy between Iraq, Turkey and Iran. The USSR, for its own reasons, has gone along with it. No matter what ploys and demagoguery the imperialists might resort to, the bloody threads tying together the military and political moves of all the region's reactionary regimes and their imperialist masters in assisting the Iraqi regime's genocidal campaign reveal the fear that the spectre of all-out Kurdish revolutionary struggle for national liberation and social emancipation strikes into all their rotten hearts.

A little taste of this potential was given when revolutionary Kurdish masses in Iran liberated large areas of the countryside and major cities after the Shah's fall. Since then the Kurds have waged unceasing war against the Islamic Republic of Iran, which now, facing its most desperate hours, looks with terror at the prospect of having to fight decisive battles in Kurdistan. Western imperialist authorities are calling the influx of Kurds into Turkey "a recipe for disaster" as far as the Turkish regime's stability is concerned. The region's reactionary states have in common Kurdish blood on their hands and the common fear that the existing imperialist-erected political geography could get blown apart by a revolution spreading out from Kurdistan.

But the Kurdish struggle has long been hindered and repeatedly betrayed by its bourgeois and feudal leadership who have been manipulated by different reactionary states in the region and their imperialist masters. Thus the means through which they seek to pursue the struggle undo the very aims of the Kurdish struggle. For instance, Jalal Talabani, head of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (in Iraq), has lent its services to the Islamic Republic at the very moment it is slaughtering Kurds in Iran. He crawled to the U.S. to meet representatives of the U.S. government, which has provided bullets and bombs to all the executioners of Kurds, in order to ask the U.S. to "prevent the annihilation of the Kurdish people". In the same way, Masood Barzani, a feudal chief-

tain whose family has been on the CIA payroll for many years, and for years has been selling his mercenary services to the Islamic Republic of Iran, now is singing hymns of praise to the Kurd-murdering Turkish reactionary government.

Such vacillating and capitulationist forces within the Kurdish struggle have enabled imperialists and their flunkies to use dual tactics against the Kurds. While principally unleashing their murderous vassal states against Kurdistan, using the latest in modern imperialist-designed barbarism such as chemical weapons, they have not neglected to make phony promises to Kurdish leaders to lure and corrupt them, spread demoralisation among the masses and promote surrender. Even the way the Voice of America, BBC and Israeli radio broadcast the news of the West's "concern" about the use of chemical weapons into Kurdistan was to proclaim the helplessness of the masses in the face of overwhelming weapons, in order to make the point that despite their resistance so far, now the Kurds cannot continue without "powerful friends."

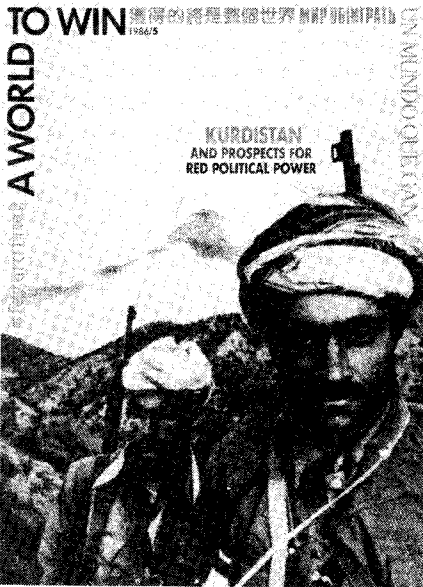
The likes of Talabani and Barzani repeat the humiliating refrain strategists in the imperialist capitals have placed in their mouths: "The Kurds are weak and what they need is strong friends." Talabani has even gone so far as to congratulate himself for his "diplomatic success" in getting Iran and the U.S. to "support" the Kurds. This slogan means that the Kurds must rely on one or another of the region's reactionary regimes for modern arms and money and that the only salvation for the Kurdish masses is for "powerful friends" (i.e. imperialists) to one day step in to grant Kurdistan autonomy — as though the imperialists themselves were not the main ones behind carving up Kurdistan in the first place and keeping it oppressed.

Nevertheless for 90 years neither murder nor deception has been able to subdue the Kurdish people. Their struggle cannot be wiped out; it can only be suppressed temporarily, only to spread and erupt like a subterranean fire across borders.

For today's favourable conditions to be turned to advantage, and to really wield the strength the Kurdish masses have so long given proof of, the Kurdish fighters must be able to sum up the historic experience of decades of heroic struggle and break through the forces sowing capitulation and confusion. They must wield the truly invincible weapon of the proletariat and oppressed, Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, and apply it to chart the strategy for people's war. Instead of the present bankrupt non-revolutionary fronts, what is needed is a party that can really lead a united front in a revolutionary war. There is no other way that the heroic Kurdish national resistance can be transformed into something more, into decisive defeat of their enemies. What other outlook and line other than that of the revolutionary proletariat, the class that has nothing to lose, could truly rely on the masses of Kurdish people and really mobilise them by leading them in a war to the end in unity with the Kurdish people's real friends, the proletarians and oppressed of the four countries between which Kurdistan is divided, the region and the world? Looking at the harsh lessons of history in Kurdistan and the world as a whole, what other friends, really, can the Kurdish people count on? What good has dependence on imperialist illusory promises and reactionary "friends" ever done anyone fighting for emancipation?

The war the Kurdish masses have been waging is not just a Kurdish war, but a war of the oppressed against four reactionary regimes which are key to imperialism's neo-colonial set up of plunder and domination in the Middle East and beyond. Both the bestial ferocity and methods employed in this most recent genocidal attack and the accompanying imperialist dual tactics reveal the dire necessities and fears driving the imperialists and their local hangmen. Amidst blood and gunfire, current history has raised the revolutionary masses of Kurdish people to the stature of a principal actor in the Middle East who can play a major role in tearing a major piece of the world out of the bloody hands of imperialism. The hundreds of millions of not "powerful" but ordinary friends of the Kurdish people, the proletarians and oppressed masses of the world, need such a victory and would support it. This would be a powerful contribution to world proletarian revolution.





For the full, path-breaking article on Kurdistan send for AWTW 1986/5.

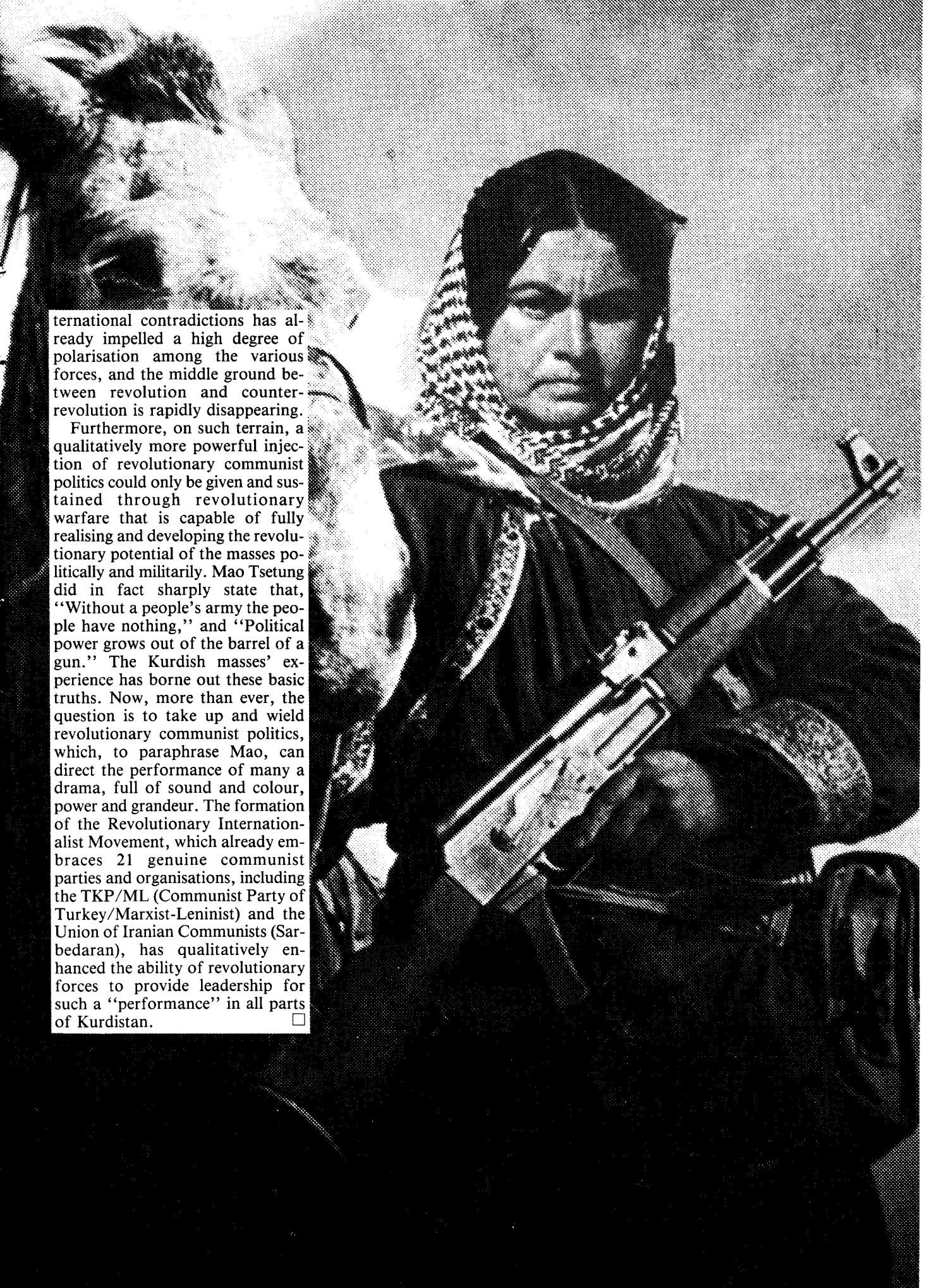


## Excerpts from Kurdistan and the Prospects for Red Political Power

Considering the highly charged terrain in Kurdistan, where all contending political forces with their corresponding ideologies are being compelled to deploy and manoeuvre troops amid increasing tension and where issues have a long history of being settled by force of arms even though not often commanded by revolutionary proletarian politics, it has become absolutely imperative for the genuine proletarian forces to establish and fortify a decisively stronger presence. The objective conditions are more than favourable for this since the proletariat alone is capable of taking and fighting for the consistently revolutionary stand that is required to unite and lead the vast majority of the Kurdish masses, especially today. The history of the national and revolutionary struggle in Kurdistan is itself forceful testimony to the necessity of proletarian leadership for the victory of the liberation struggle. Powerful upsurges as well as bitter setbacks experienced by the Kurdish people in the past along with the currently despicable and patently counter-revolutionary practices of some of the forces there have awakened among the masses a keen sense of yearning, even if in a spontaneous form, for truly revolutionary politics and ideology. Only the class-conscious proletariat and the revolutionary communists with the science of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought can respond to and satisfy this yearning and thereby unleash the masses to gener-

ate a tremendous fighting capacity, both politically and militarily, that can transform the Kurdish landscape into an unsuppressable red base area for the world proletarian revolution. That can and will be a thunderous blow to the imperialist and social-imperialist war preparations and to the ongoing strife for strategic entrenchment which has taken on particularly feverish dimensions in the region.

All the reactionary intrigue and sanguinary measures employed against the revolutionary forces in Kurdistan by imperialism and its regional puppets reveal their deep-seated and well-founded fear that the emergence of red political power in any part of Kurdistan would inexorably spread its influence not just throughout the Kurdish territory in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey but through the whole of these countries and even beyond. That is the fear that sends chills down the spines of these reactionaries at the sight of a peshmergas (the Kurdish word for fighter), particularly one armed with the science of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. The material basis for this agonising fear is yet to be fully appreciated and acted upon by the revolutionary forces. A vigorous presence of the proletarian internationalist line is both possible and desirable. Moreover it would induce a new alignment of forces, particularly among the revolutionary and progressive elements active there. The current intensification of the in-

A black and white photograph of a woman in a headscarf holding a rifle, with a horse's head visible on the left. The woman is wearing a dark headscarf and a patterned shawl. She is holding a rifle across her chest. The horse's head is on the left side of the frame, looking towards the camera. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

ternational contradictions has already impelled a high degree of polarisation among the various forces, and the middle ground between revolution and counter-revolution is rapidly disappearing.

Furthermore, on such terrain, a qualitatively more powerful injection of revolutionary communist politics could only be given and sustained through revolutionary warfare that is capable of fully realising and developing the revolutionary potential of the masses politically and militarily. Mao Tsetung did in fact sharply state that, "Without a people's army the people have nothing," and "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." The Kurdish masses' experience has borne out these basic truths. Now, more than ever, the question is to take up and wield revolutionary communist politics, which, to paraphrase Mao, can direct the performance of many a drama, full of sound and colour, power and grandeur. The formation of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, which already embraces 21 genuine communist parties and organisations, including the TKP/ML (Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist) and the Union of Iranian Communists (Sarbedaran), has qualitatively enhanced the ability of revolutionary forces to provide leadership for such a "performance" in all parts of Kurdistan. □

# Youth Revolt: Fresh Wind Hits Algeria

## Statement by the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

Stable, "non-aligned," "independent," "oil-rich" Algeria has exploded in the face of the imperialists and their local rulers, rebelliously announcing the end of the relative resignation to the compradors in power, who for too long have passed off their rule as "socialist" and "revolutionary." This powerful eruption by Algerian youth who took to the streets with stones and homemade torches setting ablaze all that symbolised the state machinery and private wealth is a refreshing and welcome sight. Indeed, although this was the outpouring of rage of youth with an empty future, it has posed much bigger questions challenging the social order and the future overall. Just as it also stirred the aspirations of hundreds of thousands of Algerians living abroad who spontaneously demonstrated their support, the imperialists from Paris to Washington and their lackeys throughout North Africa reacted with telling dread and apprehension, jolted that anything could go astray in "model" Algeria.

Significantly, as the youth in the poor neighborhoods of Algiers targeted Chadli Bendjedid's government and party offices, town halls, state-run stores, police stations (and their records) as well as luxury hotels, nightclubs and travel agencies, the rebellion spread quickly to other cities and towns. And Chadli's forces of repression snapped out their answer with all the confidence of a regime indeed taken by the throat; declaring a state of siege, the army occupied the streets they could enter with tanks, filled the sky with helicopters armed with rockets to intimidate the masses from assembling, and in the space of a short week, gunned down cold-bloodedly some 500 youth and arrested over 3000.

For not only has the regime's naked reliance on terror been brutally exposed to all, but the ugly helpless face of a neo-colonial, dependent state — *very* unstable and *very* aligned to western imperialism has been abruptly unmasked in the first major revolt shaking Algeria since the war of liberation fought against the French three decades ago. The uprising has helped to reveal the true nature of these post-"independence" leaders who have parasitically plundered the Algerian masses on behalf of imperialist interests, particularly French imperialism, in the name of their credentials in this heroic war waged by the masses of Algerians against French colonialism.

The Algerian war of national liberation led by the FLN (Front de Liberation Nationale) represented a sound defeat for French troops and forced the withdrawal of the colonial administration, shattering the notion that a smaller dominated country could not defeat an advanced imperialist one. However because this war was not led by the proletariat, it could not achieve its true goal of national liberation, and the bourgeois leadership of the FLN betrayed the cause of the war and the Algerian people. The *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* has summed up bitter experiences such as the aborted Algerian revolution: "While such revolutionary formations have led heroic struggles and even delivered powerful blows to the imperialists they have been proven to be ideologically and organisationally incapable of resisting imperialist and bourgeois influences. Even where such forces have seized power, they have been incapable of carrying through a thorough-going revolutionary transformation of society and end up, sooner



or later, being overthrown by the imperialists or themselves becoming a new reactionary ruling power in league with the imperialists.”

The Algerian government neither completely broke with reaction and imperialism nor was able to develop a self-reliant economy. Instead it has remained in the protective strangling tentacles of the western imperialists, especially France and the U.S., and this is the root cause of all the grievances being righteously brought to the world's attention today.

An oil-dependent economy has brought increasing chaos and disequilibrium in nearly every sector with growing hardships to the masses that are reflected in inflation, water and food shortages, tremendous rises in prices and unemployment, particularly among poor youth (and even more specifically among those who could not or did not want to escape to France to find jobs) which has climbed to over 40% in some of the main cities. Coupled with widespread corruption, the building up of a small but fat and pretentious urban bourgeoisie underneath the regime, pseudo-revolutionary talk that in practice amounted to few means of political expression and other anticipated semblances of bourgeois democracy, these and other factors have all nourished the present crisis and the revolt by the youth, which was clearly a long time in the making. They are the expression of the painful reality that far from being liberated, the masses still must resolve the question of political power. And the *only* way not to repeat the farce by the bourgeois betrayers of the first courageous war of the Algerian people is to launch a people's war to make new democratic revolution under the leadership of the proletariat which ousts and *completely* ruptures with imperialism, reaction and all remnants of the old society. For this to be successful it must be led by a revolutionary headquarters based on the science and ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, which the Algerian revolution has never had. No representatives of the exploiting and oppressing classes of any hue or disguised in any militant-sounding rhetoric — whether nationalist or Islamic — can take its place.

The current revolt has served to disfigure the false progressive image of a non-aligned state which some advocates of the three-worlds theory count among their victories. And if the masses have paid heavily to learn that Chadli's Russian-trained murdering troops are not only not fighting on behalf of the people but now guard the fort for the West, let us not be falsely led by those illusions either the second time. It should furthermore be no surprise that the popular spontaneous sentiment for pluralism and (bourgeois) democracy is echoed in the citadels of Europe (where Chadli's "excesses" have been mildly criticised, but his firmness in handling the situation clearly upheld) because this solution too, a facelift of a few political reforms including *multiple* bourgeois parties instead of one, enables them to maintain their same oppressor's grip on Algeria while the *oppressed* masses have the right to continue to be exploited and silent with the neo-colonial army at the ready if they should decide to "speak."

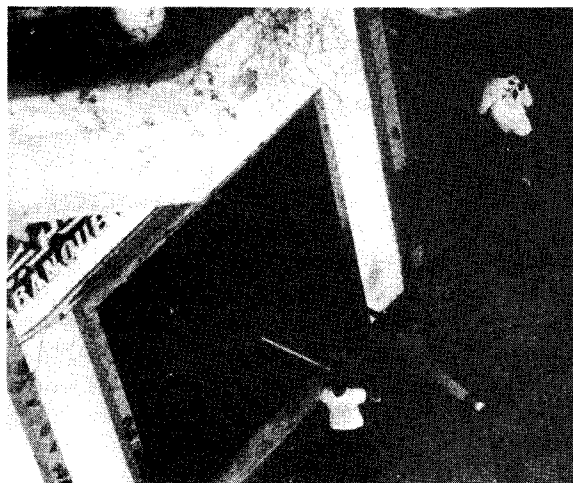
The revolt of the Algerian youth is a fine thing, breaking through the stale silence of the past with a new and defiant language that the oppressors hate. It provides a new and excellent opportunity for those rebels to pick up the weapon to finally liberate Algerian society from imperialism and reaction — the science of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. The enemies are preparing too. Take note of Yasser Arafat's phone call to Algiers to make sure "everything is under control." Those worried neighbors of the Algerian ruling class, the Arab compradors who have come running to Chadli's support, from King Hassan II in Morocco to Tunisia's Ben Ali, to Khadafi in Libya are very aware of the dangers of such a spark in the dry kindling of the Maghreb. If the rebellion has temporarily subsided in Algeria, the underlying combustion has certainly not, and chances are it will ignite again.

Let the Flames of the Algerian Rebellion Spread!  
Down with Imperialism and the Reactionary Comprador Regime of Algeria!  
Step up the Struggle for Revolution around the World!  
Long Live Proletarian Internationalism!

## Rocking the Algerian Casbahs

The first week of October the shortages of bread, grain and water grew unbearable. On October 4th, after a week of strikes and overabundance of police and army in the streets to restore order, the "Casbahs," the poor proletarian neighborhoods of Algiers, began to burn, spreading by the next day to similar areas in and around the capital city. Dozens of youth began to fall under army fire and quickly this attempt to repress the youth boomeranged: fighting with whatever was at hand and taunting the tanks and soldiers, the revolt swept throughout the country to all the major towns of Algeria, including the minority nationality Kabyle area. Before President Chadli Benjedid called his dogs off, he had filled the prisons with thousands of youth and killed several hundred in cold blood. Hardly a "zionist plot" as some of the Arab states called it, the rebellion was aimed right at the Algerian ruling class.

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*Banks are target for Algerian youth.*

One youth testified about how during the riots the Algerian army used torture, which they had learned from the French 30 years ago: I almost lost my life here as another victim of the Algerian paratroopers, 100 feet from where the French paras shot down my father. The Algerian War of Independence, launched in November 1955, raged until 1962 when the French imperialists lost administrative and military hold of their bitterly fought-over North African colony, a war in which nearly one million Algerians were killed.

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At the swank complex in Riad-el Fath (Garden of Victory, presumably over French colonialism), which offers bars, cabarets, luxurious boutiques, western restaurants, audiovisual and dance studios to a privileged urban few, a bottle of scotch sells for 2500 dinars.

For the under 20-year olds, who represent more than 60% of the 24 million population and the majority of whom line the walls with nothing to do all day long, it was amongst their first targets as they sacked the main street of Algiers. In a country where 95% of the export revenue comes from oil and gas — whose reserves are dwindling and thus setting off some alarms — the GNP is over \$2000 a year, but this relative prosperity has lined the wallets of a new small bourgeoisie while increasing immiseration even for basic foodstuffs is reserved for the masses. Two-thirds of the food is imported and before the riots meat and vegetable prices were sky high; the staple grain of the daily diet, semolina, had disappeared from the markets altogether. In the countryside, sharp water shortages brought production almost to a standstill.



# Afghan Marxist-

## Declaration of the Committee for Coordination and Unity

By the Revolutionary Cell of Afghan Communists (RCAC)  
and the

Committee of Propaganda and Agitation of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought for the Formation  
of the Communist Party of Afghanistan for the Emancipation of the Working Class (PAC)

The following two documents were released to AWTW by the Information Bureau of the RIM.

“If you really find it necessary to unite, make agreements for the realisation of the practical goals of the movement, but don’t sell out principles and don’t compromise on theoretical questions.” — Marx  
“To unite and before we unite, we should draw clear lines of demarcation.” — Lenin

The takeover of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) by the renegade and revisionist gang of Khrushchev and Co. through an inter-party coup was a severe blow to the international communist movement. As a result of this catastrophe the CPSU — the party that had led the great October Revolution to victory and had triumphantly established the dictatorship of the proletariat for the first time in the world and had played a stunning role in leading the Third Communist International — degenerated into a revisionist party, the first socialist state in the world degenerated to a social-imperialist state and in its aftermath revisionism took hold of many of the world’s communist parties. Despite their betrayal of Marxism-Leninism, the revisionists were able to take advantage of the credentials and prestige

of the CPSU and dragged along with it a majority of the world’s communist parties.

In such circumstances, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Party of Labour of Albania (PLA) shouldered the great responsibility of struggle against revisionism and of purifying the international communist movement. The theoretical struggle against Khrushchevite revisionism that was waged particularly by the CCP under the leadership of the great Mao Tsetung, and which developed to reach the heights of the Cultural Revolution in China, showed the international communist movement the way out of the impasse created by the emergence of Khrushchevite revisionism. Inspired by these struggles new waves arose in the international communist movement, and all around the world new communist parties and organizations came into being.

The communist movement of Afghanistan which has as its class base the country’s young proletariat and which took shape in the relatively favourable political situation of the early to mid sixties, has been inspired, in the essence of its thinking and its political drive, by the theoretical struggle of the CCP under the leadership of the great Mao Tsetung, and rose as one wave

among the waves of the new international communist movement, standing face to face with Khrushchevite revisionism. The Progressive Youth Organisation (PYO) entered the scene as the first communist organisation of Afghanistan based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, representing the young proletariat of the country and under the political-ideological leadership of the great comrade and martyr Akram Yari. The struggles of the PYO — and especially publication of *Shoaleh Jawid* which had a deep cultural influence in our society — created the powerful, revolutionary force of our society, the “new democratic trend,” as the largest and most influential political trend in the country. It was in this context that our newly founded communist movement emerged.

As the first communist organisation based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, the PYO was able to play a significant historical role in the political life of Afghanistan and the revolutionary struggles of our people. As the leading organisation of the “new democratic trend,” that is the *Shoaleh Jawid* trend, and more importantly, as the founding organisation of the communist movement

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# Leninists Advance

## Joint Statement on the Committee for Coordination and Unity

### By the RCAC and the PAC

Right from the beginning of their activity, the RCAC and the PAC, as two organisations based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, were determined to achieve unity between themselves by overcoming ideological, political and organisational barriers. Following continuous efforts towards this goal, recently both organisations agreed to form a committee called the Committee for Coordination and Unity in order to accelerate this process. Based on this agreement the Committee for Coordination and Unity was formed by the representatives of both organisations and its founding declaration [printed above — *AWTW*] was published on 19 Hammal 1367 corresponding to April 8 1988; thus a giant practical step was taken towards the unity of the RCAC and the PAC.

As the tasks of this committee are not fully enumerated in the declaration of the Committee for Coordination and Unity, this might give rise to different understandings in the communist movement of the country, hence we found it necessary to provide some explanation in this regard.

Based on the joint platform which has already been provided by the leadership of the RCAC and the PAC, after the achievement of a united viewpoint on political-ideological questions between the two organisations and when the basic tasks in struggle are laid down, the responsibility of the Committee for Coordination and Unity will be to work towards forging a constitution and draft programme of the communist party of Afghanistan and to organise activities towards holding a joint congress for the formation of a single

organisation built from the two groups. Along with the above mentioned tasks, the Committee for Coordination and Unity has the responsibility to organise practical cooperation between the RCAC and the PAC in various fields, and to deepen and expand this.

The RCAC and the PAC carry out their activity to achieve political, ideological and organisational unity through the Committee for Coordination and Unity and this requires that the process of the work of the Committee not be limited to the representatives of both sides or to their leadership. To provide a dialectical and real unity, the leadership of both organisations should inform the rank and file of their respective organisations about the reports of the representatives on the development of the work of the Committee for Coordination and Unity and should wage political-ideological struggle towards unity among the comrades of their organisation.

At the same time the leadership of both groups should, if necessary, and keeping in mind the need to develop united activity amongst all Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tsetung Thought groups and individuals in the country, inform them on the advance of the work of the Committee for Coordination and Unity.

On the other hand, the RCAC and the PAC cannot consider the work of the Committee for Coordination and Unity, as well as other areas of struggle, something merely related to them or even to the communist movement of Afghanistan. The necessity to receive direction and help from the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement in order for the work of the Committee for Coordination and Unity,

and the formation of the communist party of Afghanistan in general, to advance more rapidly and in a more principled direction requires that the reports of the Committee for Coordination and Unity be submitted to the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement.

In the actual situation, after a decade of heroic and bloody struggle against the Soviet social-imperialists and their lackeys and suffering the loss of an unprecedented number of victims, our people have dealt a military defeat to this aggressive imperialist force and have forced its troops to leave Afghanistan. But because of the lack of proletarian leadership at the head of the struggle, the fundamental problems of our people have remained unresolved and the fundamental tasks of the new national-democratic revolution have remained unaccomplished; in such a situation the struggle to form the communist party of Afghanistan is the main task weighing on the shoulders of all the communists of the country. We do not limit the struggle for unity among the communists of Afghanistan to efforts to achieve unity between the RCAC and the PAC, and we ask all the groups and individuals who uphold Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought to join the struggle around the joint platform of the Committee for Coordination and Unity, to expand the sphere of work of this committee and to help the struggle for the formation of the communist party of Afghanistan to blossom.

Unite around the banner of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought!

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in the country, this organisation accomplished much and won great honor. But the PYO was a newly founded organisation, and lacked practice and experience in communist struggle, and so carried in itself several opportunist tendencies and deviations. The principled political-ideological line which dominated the organisation while under the leadership of the martyr comrade Akram Yari needed more time and practical struggle to take root and develop. But the opportunist tendencies and deviations within the PYO on the one hand and the plots and intrigues of reaction, imperialism and social-imperialism on the other, dragged the organisation towards destruction and provoked a crisis in the trend. Ever since, especially after the disgraceful coup d'état of the "Khalq" and "Parcham" gangs and the military occupation of our country by the forces of Soviet social-imperialism, the necessity to shoulder the serious responsibility of leading the national-democratic struggle of the masses of people laid tremendous tasks before the communists of the country. Providing the political-ideological and organisational independence of the country's proletariat, and above all, forming the communist party, was at the forefront of all these great tasks; and by relying on this as a strong weapon, the two other weapons of the national democratic revolution of a new type — that is, the people's army and the national united front — could be formed and the leadership of the proletariat in the national-democratic struggles of the masses of people could be assured. But the political-ideological confusion of the movement was more than ever amplified as a result of the treachery of the Chinese three worldists reflected in the form of liquidationism, and the emergence of the influence of Albanian dogmato-revisionism in the form of de-Maoisation. As a consequence of this and several other factors, the movement for unity that began especially after the Saur coup came to nought and the unity of the communist movement of the country was not achieved. Thus the

communist movement of the country was not able to properly respond to the urgent needs of the on-going struggle of the masses and hence the way was paved for the expansion of reactionary forces dependent on world imperialism.

A lot has happened since then and the communists of Afghanistan have passed through many difficulties, lost their leaders, shed their blood under the dominance of wrong lines, and advanced at a crawl — but they did not completely lose their bearings. Under the seemingly solid surface of wrong lines a roaring, mighty trend of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought continued to push forward. Two years ago, this strong trend burst out of the icy, benumbed surface covering the movement from two different spots, almost simultaneously — and with such strength that it was able to reach new heights in the communist movement of Afghanistan.

This powerful force was embodied in the Revolutionary Cell of Afghan Communists (RCAC) and the Committee of Agitation and Propaganda of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought for the Formation of the Communist Party of Afghanistan for the Emancipation of the Working Class (PAC). Today these two groups consider that the first practical, important step for advancing the struggle to build the communist party of Afghanistan is to provide political, ideological and organisational unity between the RCAC and the PAC, and believe that by a principled, straightforward and honest communist spirit in the common political, ideological and organisational struggles against right and "left" deviations, the process of unity between these two outposts of communist struggle should be accelerated and one barricade be formed.

On the basis of this historical necessity, and realising and accepting their responsibility in this period of the history of the communist movement in the country, the PAC and the RCAC have initiated the formation of the Committee for Coordination and Unity of these two outposts of communist struggle.

Following its founding meeting, the Committee for Coordination and Unity of the RCAC and the PAC declares its existence on the basis of common points and relative political-ideological accord between the RCAC and the PAC.

This committee has put into practice the unity platform that has already been established and confirmed by the leadership of the RCAC and the PAC and emphasizes the necessity for practical cooperation.

This committee will inform the communist movement of Afghanistan and the international communist movement on the advance of its work.

This committee hopes that, by using the experience and achievements of the communist movement of Afghanistan and of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, unity will be achieved between the RCAC and the PAC, and a good example of unity will be provided to the communists in Afghanistan.

The banner of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought is the fighting banner of all communists of the world and the fighting banner of all communists of Afghanistan. In firm unity with our communist comrades all over the world, we should raise this banner higher and stronger in Afghanistan, and continue to advance forward, united, on the road red with the blood of thousands and thousands of our martyred comrades.

Down with social-imperialism, imperialism and reaction!

Long live Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought!

Down with revisionism!

Forward to the formation of the communist party of Afghanistan, Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tsetung Thought!

Let the political-ideological-organisational struggles of the RCAC and the PAC develop towards a communist and principled unity as the first practical step towards the formation of the communist party, Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tsetung Thought, in Afghanistan!

## Soviet Snapshots

# Trouble Brewing in the USSR?

By H.S.

The following are notes taken during a recent trip to the USSR by a sympathiser of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement from West Germany. The visitor was able to use the current situation in the USSR to encounter people there and carry out some political discussion with them. However, in a letter accompanying her notes, our visitor cautions readers that "language and other restrictions limited the scope of my discussions and also made it more difficult to meet with proletarians; generally I spoke with educated youth who knew English or German." Translated by AWTW.

### *Moscow*

A city of eight million people, the nerve centre of the Soviet Union. To get to the centre, I passed through seemingly endless rows of anonymous multi-storied residential buildings, then rode along Moscow's famed subway complex and emerged into daylight to witness a cortege of black limousines racing from the Kremlin, for a moment holding at bay the throngs of Soviet citizens bustling around the city centre. Moscow exudes the cold, raw power of the capital of an empire.

I make for the Old Arbat. The Russians still call it the Jewish quarter, where artisans had their shops and later merchants plied their wares in pre-revolutionary times. In the last year or two it has been converted into a broad, modern pedestrian walkway, lined with modern boutiques. Dozens of artists are doing portraits or painting famous historic sites for tourists; a few surrealists imitate Salvador Dali. One satirist causes a stir: he has drawn a fat, grotesque Brezhnev with his chin dragging along the ground because the numerous medals on his chest weigh him down.

Many young couples stroll, and a lot of single men are wandering about. Not a few of them are in uniform. The Soviet military is highly visible — I wonder whether the image of a man in a uniform is still so untarnished by Afghanistan, but later I learn that wearing a uniform on leave is mandatory.

I pass some poets, who have pasted their writings up on the walls, and a couple of singers, before stopping to listen to one who has gathered a crowd, a large man with shoulder-length blond hair. His singing is closer to declaiming poetry with guitar accompaniment, a characteristically Russian style. He grins sardonically. A youth on the edge of the crowd explains that the singer is asking, what will happen to the motherland if they open the doors and everyone leaves for the West? He finishes; only a few people laugh. The singer seems to be apologetic; he says the song is not anti-Soviet, that he is simply criticising the "defects of the system." This is a formula which recurs frequently. It was rarely clear whether people used it because they believed it, because they thought their listeners believed it or because it was Gorbachev's phrase and they tried to wield it like a shield to protect their own deeper-going criticism.

After dinner, I head home alone back through the Old Arbat. The night is beautiful and clear; the streets are still crowded. A woman alone at night suffers occasional harassment, especially from drunks, but Soviet streets do not witness the level of violence against women that haunts them in West Germany — though everyone says it is on the rise. The blond-haired satirist now has an even larger audience. I stroll on and come upon a dozen youth gathered around joking and every once in a while breaking into a song. I pick up on the word "Afghanistan" and approach the

group. The only one who knows English is a man of African origin, in his younger twenties, with a goatee and a hint of a Rasta haircut, named Andrei. I am pleasantly surprised because there is an almost unnerving absence of non-white people on Moscow's streets.

I ask what they sing about. Andrei asks where I'm from. West Germany, I reply. "We sing different kinds of songs," he says, "but that one was political, against *both East and West*." He awaits my response, looking almost defiant. "I can't disagree with that," I laugh. We discuss what he means by his statement; he says that, for instance, the song they just finished was against the war in Afghanistan. He repeats some of the lines of the song: "Who cares about her son who died? Nobody, only her. Tell me, do you even know why he died?" The government doesn't care, he goes on, it sent these blokes to die over there and then just forgot them. Here, listen to this other song.

Five or six of them gather around: a few young Russian women, 18-20 years old, dressed like folksingers, lead off; a fervent-looking chubby man, black-haired and bearded with glasses, a young "Raskolnikov," plays guitar; and the African man joins in. The song is against "what the Soviet government is doing in southern Africa and in Angola," Andrei explains.

They have formally constituted themselves as a singing political association; the core of the group has been together for a year or two, they — mainly "Raskolnikov" — write their own songs and sing them on the streets. They are part of the "three no's" movement which had a large meeting not long before in the capital: no to violence, no to racial and national chauvinism, and no to the idea that any single group has a monopoly on truth. They have had conflicts with the militia, but usually only when they try to sing after 11 pm at night, when it's forbidden to make noise. I ask what kind of reaction they get from passers-by. "Raskolnikov" replies: - There is the occasional fool who tries to provoke us. Many people simply don't understand why we do

this. But there are also people who like what we sing.

A few youth continue to sing while five or six of us settle into a discussion, which initially centres on the war in Afghanistan. They are against the policy of both the Soviet and U.S. blocs there and around the world, they say — but it soon becomes apparent that this is more complex. One person argues that neither West nor East is essentially flawed but both need to have their defaults pointed out and corrected by their people. Afghanistan was a "mistake" of the Soviets "just like Vietnam" was a mistake of the U.S. Both blocs want to get stronger and bigger and run everything.

"Raskolnikov" interjects that the foreign policy of both is frequently bad, but internally the Soviet system is worse. Stalin, he says, has a lot of responsibility for this. He then pulls out his "internal passport." This, he explains, is a system which the Soviet government uses to help regulate labour and maintain domestic control. It is marked on the internal passport where you have the right to work; to change this requires permission from the militia, which, depending on your personal history and where you want to move, may or may not be granted.

I respond that there are problems in the USSR which we do not have, but that there are also problems we face in the West which they don't have, at least in the same way — for instance, mass unemployment. What would they say to someone in the West who focused on that and argued, look, the USSR doesn't have millions of people without work, therefore it's better? Both countries are equally bad. "Raskolnikov" insists:

— Yes, both have problems, but still ours won't even allow its own people to travel and see the world. Look, you're here, you can come see us and how we live, but we can't come see you. We can't even know for ourselves.

He gets a chorus of support.

I persist too:

— Well, I'd like you to come see West Germany, so you would know for yourselves that it's not really any better. But what if Gorbachev

lets you go abroad? Will that be real freedom? How many of you will be able to afford it? Most people in West Germany can't. And for those who can, sure, you will be able to wander the world, but you will find that every country is simply a big prison with a different language. You will be free to travel and see all kinds of different prisons: the prison called America, the one called England or Germany as well as, when you come back home, the one called... Well, I'll let you describe your own country.

Most everyone laughs. Raskolnikov is not convinced, and starts to continue, but a couple of militiamen appear and tell them it's 11 o'clock, time to disperse. People head to the subway: an older fellow, a researcher, accompanies me part-way. I ask him what he thinks the future will bring. He's pessimistic: — All this you've seen tonight couldn't have happened two years ago. We couldn't have talked like that, openly, and certainly not with you. But I don't think it will go on. There is a logic to our system: every new leader opens up for a while to bring in his own policies and people, then shuts things down once he's consolidated his rule.

The next day, again on the Old Arbat, I come upon a display board about the need for more democracy in the USSR and inviting people to discuss the subject. Twenty or thirty people are already gathered in animated discussion; I find a man to help me, and soon he and I are talking and the whole group begins to centre around us. The group is made up mainly of men in their 30s and 40s, who look like they're from a variety of backgrounds; it is even joined by a passing army officer. My translator friend tells me that the organisers are from the Democratic Union (DU), a well known group which actively promotes democratic reform in the USSR.

The two DU people include a woman of about 40, stout, long brown hair, dressed in a peasant outfit, and a younger man who might have been an engineer or accountant. Both had the air of semi-professional agitators, speaking loudly and confidently and helping



each other with difficult opponents, though most people there agreed with their general thrust. They hit at the gap between the theory and practice of the Soviet legal system as well as the need for fundamental changes in the constitution. It appeared that they had a worked out strategy of mobilising from below to push the Soviet government towards more parliamentary democracy; but they also virulently attacked Gorbachev, even while paying him lip service, and it occurred to me that at least some among them might have an agenda for more dramatic change, including in alliance with powerful Western forces.

In any case, they soon began to point out how wonderful it was that we in West Germany now had the right to vote for different parties in elections, and waited expectantly for me to confirm this evident truth. I said that I didn't vote because the elections just served to build confidence in our government, and that it didn't matter who won, the people lost. Smiles turned quickly to frowns, and they declared to all present that I was undoubtedly a member of the Communist Party of West Germany, whose numerical strength seems to be vastly overestimated there, perhaps because of confusion with the much larger French and Italian parties. I replied no, that the West German CP *always* votes in elections and besides, from my trip so far I saw no reason to join a party whose goal was to make West Germany resemble the USSR. They then argued that in order for there to be real democracy there had to be freedom to criticise the CPSU and how could there be real freedom to do this unless people can organise together to do it, ie, in a multiparty system with free elections. I pointed to the classic Western democracies, Britain and America, and how both had multiparty elections and at the same time had given the world countless colonial wars, including Vietnam, were pillars of apartheid, and were marked by racism, unemployment and violence. Was this the freedom they wanted? Was it better — or essentially the same?

After another exchange on the

freedom to travel, I said I must go; most people express disappointment — but not the two DU people, who quickly and politely wish me goodbye.

In the late afternoon I go with an American I'd met to look for the hostels for foreign students studying in Moscow. While asking directions, we stumble on an older man, drunk, probably from the Caucasus, who asks where we're from. Upon learning I'm German, he remarks, now then, Hitler, there's a man who knew how to deal with the Russians! — and waits for me to agree with him. We leave. After an hour or so of fruitless searching, we ask an African man waiting for a bus. He says that you must show a student card to get in, and so we wind up in a discussion with him instead. He's from Nigeria and is studying chemical engineering in Samarkand. He does not really want to stay in the USSR, he says, because he misses his country and wants to help it, but he is married to a Russian woman, so his future is not too clear.

I ask him about what life is like for an African in the USSR. He says that he doesn't know Germany, but he has a relative in Philadelphia he once spent a summer with and in some ways it's different in the USSR, because the Russians don't know African people and don't have a long history and tradition of oppressing them like America does. But in many ways it's similar: quite a few Russians are racist, he says, and their racism towards Asians, which is very strong and has deep roots, carries over against Africans.

Being married to a Russian woman draws frequent harassment — I ask him "like what?" but the question makes him uncomfortable and he declines to give any details. This is one reason he prefers making his home in one of the Asian republics instead of in Russia itself. Some of the Russians think that their government spends too much money in Africa when they should spend it to make life better at home for "their own people," so he hears about that "more than I want to think about."

We get off onto Fela Kuti, the progressive nationalist Nigerian musician who was imprisoned a couple

of years ago, and what we think of his politics, and my American friend jumps in with her own favorite, so we're soon off onto the merits of Fela, King Sunny Adé and Juju music.

Our Nigerian friend has to go to dinner with his wife's family, so we part, leaving all three of us feeling better about the planet's prospects knowing that a German, an American and a Nigerian can spend an hour or so on Lenin Prospect in Moscow and share some views about Nigerian jazz as well as who are the real "International Thief Thiefs."

### *Baku, Soviet Azerbaidzhan*

The city is nestled on the west bank of the Caspian Sea. The fifth largest city in the USSR, it is an industrial centre of over a million people, for years the heart of the Soviet oil industry.

I meet a couple of Azeris at a downtown bookstore: Samed, in his mid-20s, who is a student at the art institute, and his friend Hamid, who is an electrical engineer. I pose a few general questions about Azerbaidzhan, which elicit vague general replies, then ask about Nagorno-Karabakh. They drop their voices to discuss this, even though we appear to be surrounded only by other Azerbaidzhanis. They agree that there have been some bad things happening to the Armenians, but they argue that some bad things have also been done to the Azerbaidzhani people. They ask what the West German press says about all this.

I say that I am at least aware that the Armenians are a majority in Nagorno-Karabakh and it seems should have some say about their fate.

An older man standing nearby breaks in on us and asks them what we're saying. They explain, a bit embarrassed, that he told them to inform me that there are not so many Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, and that it's Azerbaidzhani land.

— But, they say, it's true the Armenians are a majority today, and this is one cause of the problems. But you have to ask what the Armeni-

ans are up to and why. The Armenians have a lot of ties to their Western diaspora and are being stirred up over Nagorno-Karabakh by the West. The Armenian CPSU leadership are ambitious and have fomented the movement to take over Nagorno-Karabakh to expand their own power too, they say — seemingly contradicting their previous assertion that the West was behind events.

— Nagorno-Karabakh has been mainly Azerbaidzhani for hundreds of years, and it's only since the middle or end of the 19th century that the Armenians have been so numerous, and even so the large majority they have today is very recent. The Armenians might suffer some discrimination there, but the Azerbaidzhanis in Armenia also have their problems.

They tell me about the series of counter-demonstrations against the Armenians that have been going on in Baku, called by what seems to be an informal committee which has sprung up. Some demonstrations get official permission — the leadership of these comprises CPSU cadres as well as non-CPSU people. They draw 5- 10,000. Those without official permission, which seem to be more vehemently anti-Armenian, but which my friends know little about, are routinely dispersed by the militia and draw only a few hundred. I ask:

— What do you think are the root causes of the conflicts between Armenian and Azeri? After all, it's 70 years after the revolution, why should such problems still be occurring now?

They look at each other, pause and then offer some vague generalities about history being long and complicated. They ask my opinion. Time is running short, for they have told me they must leave shortly. I decide to speak more bluntly:

— I do not know everything about the situation there, although I think the Armenians have some just grievances. I think though that to really understand this problem one must look at the main problem between the different nationalities in the USSR, and that's the problem of the Russian domination of the other nationalities.

Their faces light up and they smother a laugh; we agree to meet the next day. Back in West Germany, I recount this story to a friend, who sums up succinctly: it's natural, they judged you by your stand on their main enemy.

The next day they begin to tell me some of the history of Azerbaidzhan. They tell me how Azerbaidzhan was divided into two parts by a Tsarist invasion and other developments in pre-revolutionary history which I know little about; but when they begin to talk of current developments — the fall of the Shah, events in Kurdistan, the situation of the Azeri language, etc. — they are surprised that I am already familiar with much of this. I tell them that I have friends in West Germany who are Iranians, including of Azeri origin, who were forced to flee from the Shah and/or Khomeini. This gives rise to another mini-revolution in our relationship, especially when in response to their eager questions about what these friends of mine think I reply that they oppose both blocs equally. This delights them, but it soon becomes apparent that they have their own version of what this means: that Azerbaidzhan has been divided in two by East and West, "like South and North Korea," and that both blocs are thus guilty of oppressing their people. They want to throw off both Russian and Western domination and unite the two halves of Azerbaidzhan into an independent country.

I talked to my Iranian-Azeri friends back in West Germany about what Hamid and Samed had said, and pieced together the following: Azerbaidzhan was indeed divided up when Tsarist troops invaded and forced Iran to sign a treaty at gunpoint. Later, the Azeri people played an important role in the October Revolution, including in the Red Army during the civil war, and after the revolution great strides were made towards overcoming national oppression and in building socialism. With the restoration of capitalism in the USSR, however, Azerbaidzhan was subjected to the system of national oppression set up by the new Tsars, so that now both sections of Azerbaidzhan are op-

pressed, one by Persians the other by the Russians. But, in the view of my friends in West Germany, even this common status didn't justify Hamid and Samed's goal of uniting Azerbaidzhan into one state.

For a number of years political refugees flowed into Soviet Azerbaidzhan, and probably as many as several thousand had come during the '50s, '60s and '70s. But recently the border had been shut tight by both the Islamic Republic and the Soviet government; Hamid thought this was because each side was afraid of the other at the same time as the Soviets wanted to try and gain influence with Khomeini by getting tough with his opponents. The USSR has even recently expelled a number of Iranian refugees living in Baku who dared criticise glasnost, even though they were generally pro-Soviet. They took me by the consulate of the Islamic Republic, which had a black flag draped out front in mourning for the victims of the Iran-Iraq war. Hamid and Samed said not many Soviet Azeri people were attracted by Khomeini; they thought instead that though the fall of the Shah had raised great hopes in Soviet Azerbaidzhan for something new in Iran, the results had turned out to be a "great tragedy" and disappointment for the Iranian people.

I ask about the Afghanistan war. Samed replies:

— Of course we are opposed to it. Look, we're a small nation here in the Soviet Union. Why would we want to go way over there and force our will on some other small people like the Afghani people?! The Soviet government compels people to do this, that's all.

They went on to say that the Afghani resistance was not so progressive, that they were mainly Islamic types like Khomeini, pro-Western, but still it was up to the Afghani people to decide what they are going to do internally. This was the right of all nations, without having any Great Power come in and dictate to them. I compared Hamid and Samed's support for the Afghani people with the Russian singers on the Old Arbat, whose anti-war sentiments spontaneously drifted into concern for the "poor

Russian soldiers" killed and then "forgotten" in the war — unfortunately, they "forgot" about the Afghan people; though Hamid and Samed's views were spontaneous too, they reflected a different set of contradictions.

None of the traditional arguments that had been run out for eight years carried any weight with them: no defense of the borders, no repulsion of Western aggression, nothing. Further, for them, "we" meant "we Azeris," not "we Soviets" — and "we Azeris" most definitely had no stake in the fighting.

This set me thinking, for indeed they *did* have a stake: in supporting the liberation war there against the Soviet Union. Certainly the fact that the Afghan resistance is marked so heavily by reactionary Islamic groups limits how much such an understanding would develop spontaneously. But what if a real people's war were launched, led by revolutionary forces who set up red base areas, carried out radical social changes and clearly exposed the Soviet Union's social-imperialist character? Wouldn't such a war have the potential to influence reactions here, in the soft belly of the Soviet empire, from passive opposition to genuine internationalist support, and wouldn't it be a tremendous aid to the emergence of a genuine proletarian revolutionary trend in the USSR itself? Mao remarked that the salvos of the October Revolution had spread Marxism-Leninism around the world — perhaps the salvos of a people's war against the Soviets in Afghanistan could bring genuine Marxism-Leninism back to the USSR!

As for what the future held for Afghanistan, Hamid and Samed thought that Gorbachev would go ahead and pull the bulk of the Soviet troops out. They couldn't say what would happen after that. As for why Afghanistan happened in the first place, they thought this was because the USSR, like the U.S. and all the big powers, wanted to increase its power and influence abroad, to get ever bigger.

— Why? Was this "socialist" ex-

pansion, as the West often said?

No, they replied. What they had in the USSR was not socialism. Something had gone wrong — but exactly what they didn't seem to know. They searched back in the Soviet experience. They weren't sure what they thought about Lenin overall, but one thing they were sure of was that he was no chauvinist. He was against the Russian people being above the other nationalities; in part they attributed this to Lenin's being only "partly Russian." Lenin was also opposed to wars like Afghanistan, they said, and would have been seriously disappointed at the way the Soviet Union turned out.

The idea of communism, Samed said, was a great one, and the October Revolution had held great promise. But what existed in the USSR was not what Marx and Lenin had fought for. Stalin bore some fault, they thought, and things had been on a steady decline for a long time. Maybe someday communism would be reached by human beings; but certainly not so long as some nations oppressed others.

We were all silent after this — I was churning with different emotions. I was far from sure just what communism meant to Hamid and Samed, but I was touched by a sense that somewhere in them the struggle and sacrifice of Lenin and the Soviet revolutionaries had not been completely lost; yet at the same time I understood more clearly the ambiguity of their feelings towards Lenin and Stalin: they liked their internationalism when it cut against the chauvinism of the Russian oppressor nation, but this same internationalism bothered them when it challenged their own nationalist sentiments.

We talked more about Stalin; every day there were major articles in the Soviet press blasting him as "a ruthless dictator." A veritable crusade has been launched criticising Stalin's role in the second world war, focusing at this point on "his great mistakes" of purging the military officer corps and not relying enough on technology; a book which is being touted as the authoritative work on Stalin and his

leadership in the war is being much publicised in advance of its appearance this winter (1988-1989). I was even to encounter the idea, and more than once, especially from Russian intellectuals, that Stalin was as bad as Hitler.

Samed and Hamid, however, thought this was going too far. Stalin's mistakes were big mistakes, Samed said, because Stalin was a great man and did things on a grand scale. He thought making Stalin into the same as Hitler meant that the Soviet effort in World War 2 was not worth anything, and that if nothing else he had proven able to mobilise the Soviet people and lead them to defeat fascism.

I agreed with them. I would have liked to have gone further and told them that I considered Stalin a great revolutionary leader, but I was anxious about being too open with my politics. Also, in the USSR the terms of the debate about Stalin are different and have dimensions which I didn't understand very well. I knew, for instance, that forces identified with Brezhnev had defended Stalin publically against criticism by Gorbachev supporters and I was sure their reasons had nothing to do with revolution. Besides, I thought it more important to get into Mao, without whom it would be difficult if not impossible to correctly appreciate Stalin.

I asked them what they knew about the big ideological struggle between China and the USSR back in the '60s. Neither knew much more than that Mao and the Chinese party had opposed Soviet domination of China.

I explained what I could about Mao's theory of capitalist restoration in the USSR, the existence of a new bourgeoisie and the need to continue the revolution. If I was expecting fires to light up in their eyes, it didn't happen.

### *Tbilisi, Soviet Georgia*

Georgia is a mountainous region located just east of the Black Sea and north of Armenia. The coastline itself resembles Greece, with a warm climate and vineyard-draped mountains plunging into the sea. The Georgians are an ancient peo-

ple; Georgia's "Golden Age" took place back in the 11th and 12th centuries. Stalin was born and raised here, and many people still uphold him, though for generally nationalist reasons. The local party is going to make their contribution to the current anti-Stalin crusade by putting up a monument to the "victims of Stalin," to be located in the park overlooking the city, which will retain its name: Stalin Park.

Early morning in the main square at the University of Tbilisi:

This is not exactly like the Free University of Berlin. There are no literature stands, no kiosks, no political tables, and even if foreigners were allowed inside the university they would find no leaflets announcing political events, avant-garde or progressive films, or anything of the sort. The atmosphere is tranquil, with friends hanging out but no obvious opening for talking to anyone.

Very few people speak Western languages here, but finally I meet a 17-year-old, fairly militant Georgian student, Sergei, with whom I set up a meeting at noon. While waiting for him, a young woman, Nana, seeing I'm reading in German, strikes up a conversation. Shortly thereafter my friend arrives and joins in. Within a few minutes, the group grows to 15 or 20 students huddled around in a whirlwind of debate.

The students talk more openly here. They immediately began to tell me about a conflict with the Soviet military. It seemed that the Soviet Red Army had set up a military target range near the site of a sixth century Georgian Orthodox church, one of the oldest ones in the area. According to the students, the soldiers had already been desecrating the church, writing slogans like "Ivan was here" on the walls in Russian.

All the students leap in to add their own accounts of crimes the Russians had committed against Georgian culture, and the discussion spins off onto this for a while. They speak in Georgian among themselves; though Russians make up 11% of the population in Georgia, and presumably at least that

much of the university population, none are in this group today.

Finally they get back to the story of the target range. Many Georgians think that the Army has gone too far, and there is talk of organising a demonstration. There had been one several years ago, against an amendment to the Constitution which would have omitted — consciously, they say — to enscribe Georgian as the official language of the Republic. But police repression back then had been heavy. Thousands of people had protested; according to one version, everything went peacefully, but Sergei — who uses his linguistic abilities to give an edited translation of people he disagrees with — says that there had been clashes with the police. The militia beat up a lot of people, including pregnant women, and arrested some, he doesn't know how many, but it was a "fight." A large section of the Tbilisi militia is not Georgian, he explains; they have 350 Armenians and Azeris in the force. This is deliberate government policy, to use the different nationality groupings to police one another, so that the militiamen have no local ties which restrain them from cracking down hard. I asked whether there were many women there. Very many, maybe as many as men.

Back in West Germany I read that the demonstration my friends had talked about had in fact taken place. Between 5,000 and 10,000 people had marched down Rustaveli Prospect, the main street in Tbilisi, to the headquarters of the party. The head of the CPSU in Georgia had, according to the West German press, conveyed the protestors' demands to Moscow and assured them that Gorbachev personally was reviewing the situation.

The students in Tbilisi had given me their opinion of this local party chief. Yusef, one of the more outspokenly nationalist students, said that although he might not be such a bad individual, the local party head was interested above all in keeping his own position and so would try to play off the local people against the bureaucracy in Moscow. Yusef concluded that they couldn't trust this man.

This battle around the target range has been going on for several years, and middle-ranking Georgian officials have played an important part in it. A question that had already arisen in Baku sprang to mind again: just what are the bourgeoisie in these republics — what is their relation to the Soviet imperialist bourgeoisie? This demanded analysis of the relationship of these republics to the USSR overall — it was a question that was already sharply posing itself before all these struggles, but not clearly enough to those whom I was meeting, at least not from a revolutionary viewpoint.

While going through the events surrounding the target range, we touch on the Georgian Orthodox Church and religion. I remark that it seems like many things are springing up in the wake of *glasnost*, including the churches, several of which I had seen open even very late at night, when almost everything else is closed up tight. In fact, church attendance in the USSR is almost as great as in many countries in the West. The revisionist ideology of this society which calls itself socialist and routinely oppresses millions obviously leaves people searching elsewhere for real meaning to their lives and, as in any other class society, spontaneously they first look to other forms of oppressive ideology for salvation.

Several students assert that it's important to defend the Church against the central government. I ask whether they believe in god. Almost all do; they immediately ask me about myself; I tell them that my background was religious but I no longer believe. This raises some eyebrows. Then I ask them how many go to church? They look around inquisitively at each other, then laugh — no one, it turns out, ever goes. Defending the Georgian Church is a sort of "cultural matter," one of them loosely explains.

Sharp debate ensues about why such things as the struggle around the target range happened. One student ventures that it is just because of ignorance, that the Russians don't care about all the different smaller national minorities and so such things are bound to happen. Yusef retorts that this is true, some



Russians are ignorant, and step on other peoples without realising what they are doing. This is one thing. But other Russians suppress the smaller nationalities consciously, knowing full well what they are doing, and this is another thing altogether. He adds that, anyway, the Russian people are mediocre as a people and have proved themselves, in his words, to have "no historically redeeming value." Nana, the young woman whom I'd begun talking to, obviously found Yusef's anti-Russian sentiments provocative — she joined the general laughter at Yusef's verdict on the Russians, but then countered that he went too far, that at least the Russian people had tried to do something when they made the revolution. Anyway, she added, the Russians are "a young people" historically speaking (!) and "perhaps they could learn to change."

The theme of whether the Russian people had any "redeeming value" seemed agreeable to all the students as a vehicle for lots of barbs and laughter at the Russians' expense. Unfortunately, I got too carried away with their enthusiasm and laughter and failed to pose a very fundamental question: are *all* Russians their enemy? Are there not millions of Russian proletarians and others too who are oppressed and held down by the way things are and who can be mobilised to fight *all* oppression, including that of the minority nationalities?

I try to turn the discussion to what they want to do about the problems they see.

— We are all against communism, declares one.

— No, Yusef intervenes, the point isn't that we're against communism in general, we're against the kind of communism that we have here. We're against the kind of communism that says that we all like the Soviet Union, that all the peoples in the USSR enjoy equal rights, that everything here is getting better and better — we're against *this* communism.

— Look around you, wouldn't you be against this?, someone asks me.

— Are you for capitalism?, I respond.

— Well, capitalism doesn't seem to

have such a good way of dealing with small countries either, does it? Look what the U.S. is doing to Nicaragua.

Most agree that both blocs face big problems.

— We want national independence. We want Georgia for the Georgian people, not to be run by anyone else, East or West, Sergei says.

— Well, I'm against East and West too, but do you really judge everything simply on whether it's good for Georgia?

It seems you're against nationalism, Sergei responds. People need national feeling. Don't you have national feeling for Germany?

— No. And then I try to explain how I feel about the difference between nationalism in imperialist countries and oppressed countries. If I were in Turkey, I say, where West German business tries to run everything, and I were to go around trying to promote national feeling for Germany, is this the same thing as a Turk who comes to West Germany and, in the face of the dominant German culture, backed by its vast financial power, tries to preserve his language and heritage and defend his rights? Not only do I not have national feeling for Germany, I say, but I am against it. Look what it led to in the last war. Isn't that enough already? Then I say that I would oppose, not support, any war by West Germany, even if West Germany itself were invaded.

They all agree that German nationalism has caused big problems.

— But what about a country like Ireland? Do you think the Irish people should defend themselves against the British?

— Yes, but that's more like Turkey than like West Germany.

— Well, if Georgia were attacked I would defend it, says Yusef. But if the Soviet Union were attacked.... He hesitates, thinking. Well, I don't know what I would do. (This time Yusef's remarks don't draw the approving laughter they usually do — things have grown more serious.) But, and he grins broadly again, if I were in Germany and you attacked Georgia, then I would do everything I could to wreck your war effort. (Now everyone laughs.)

Now it's me who hesitates — I had decided before beginning the trip that I would not go around talking about my ideas about Mao and the Cultural Revolution, so as to avoid problems with the Soviet authorities. Though I'd already broken with that decision in Baku, with Samed and Hamid, it seemed a different matter to go into this in front of 15-20 students like this. I decided to go ahead, and asked what they knew about Mao.

— Well, Mao was for China's independence, one student ventured. Not one of them, it turned out, had ever read anything by Mao.

I start to explain about his ideas about capitalist restoration but haven't gotten very far when Nana interrupts and says that behind all these ideas is really just Mao's determination to keep China free of any possible domination by the USSR, and that was fine for China, but in Georgia they didn't need a Chinese they needed a Georgian.

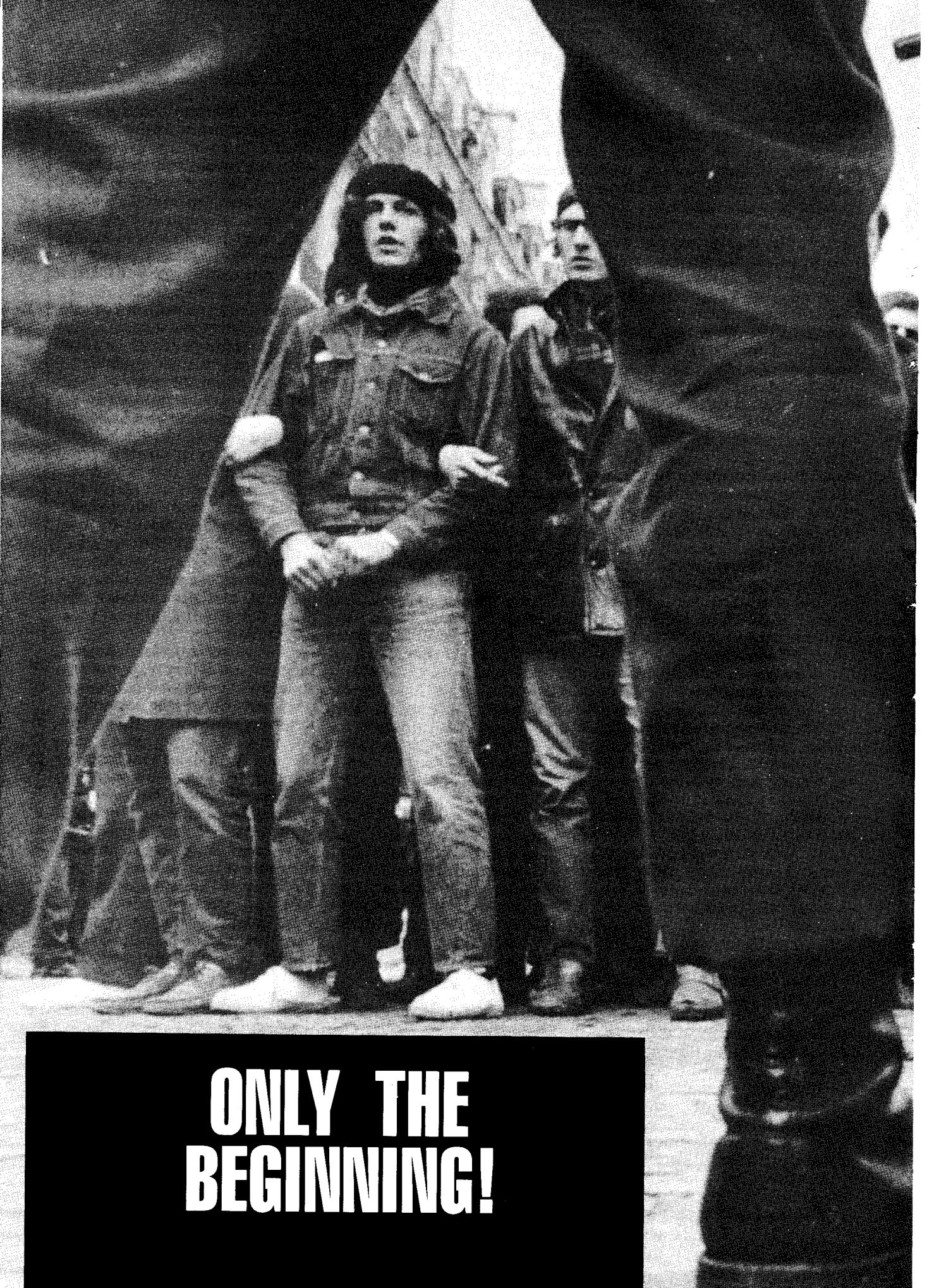
One of the students then leapt in with a tirade against the other peoples in Georgia:

— The Armenians, for instance, sure it's good they're protesting about Nagorno-Karabakh, but they only care about the Armenian Republic. They have their own homeland, their own republic, so they don't care about what happens here. Do you think the Armenians in Tbilisi care about the Soviet target range? Of course not. The Russians are the same. Perhaps they bring more into Georgia, because their people have influence in the government. The Jews are the only ones who care about what happens here, and that's because they don't have their own homeland. So they contribute to Georgia, they care about our struggle here.

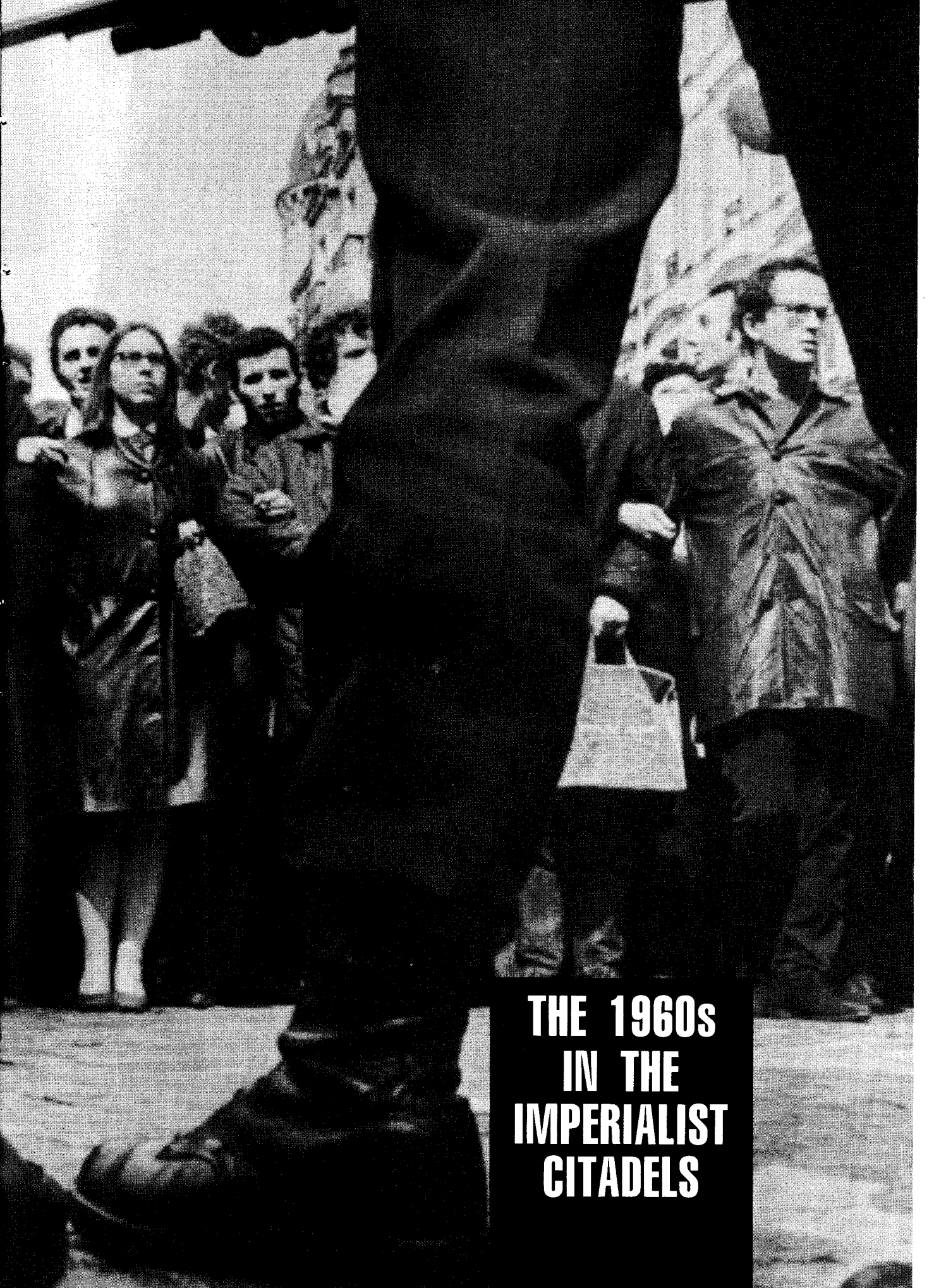
This again launches a big debate, which loses me completely.

I reflect that, for all the berating of Stalin that is rampant among Soviet intellectuals today even in places like Georgia and Azerbaidzhan, to make some real advances they needed to learn from his approach to the national question. Stalin held that, insofar as nationalism among the Georgian, Azeri and other such oppressed national-

(Continued to page 82)



**ONLY THE  
BEGINNING!**



**THE 1960s  
IN THE  
IMPERIALIST  
CITADELS**



**Statement by  
Comrade Mao Tsetung,  
Chairman of the Central Committee  
of the Communist Party of China,  
In Support of the  
Afro-American Struggle  
Against Violent Repression**  
(April 16, 1968)

Some days ago, Martin Luther King, the Afro-American clergyman, was suddenly assassinated by the U.S. imperialists. Martin Luther King was an exponent of non-violence. Nevertheless, the U.S. imperialists did not on that account show any tolerance towards him, but used counter-revolutionary violence and killed him in cold blood. This has taught the broad masses of the black people in the United States a profound lesson. It has touched off a new storm in their struggle against violent repression sweeping well over a hundred cities in the United States, a storm such as has never taken place before in the history of that country. It shows that an extremely powerful revolutionary force is latent in the more than 20 million black Americans.

The storm of the Afro-American struggle taking place within the United States is a striking manifestation of the comprehensive political and economic crisis now gripping U.S. imperialism. It is dealing a telling blow to U.S. imperialism, which is beset with difficulties at home and abroad.

The Afro-American struggle is not only a struggle waged by the exploited and oppressed black people for freedom and emancipation, it is also a new clarion call to all the exploited and oppressed people of the United States to fight against the barbarous rule of the monopoly capitalist class. It is a tremendous support and inspiration to the struggle of the people throughout the world against U.S. imperialism and to the struggle of the Vietnamese people against U.S. imperialism. On behalf of the Chinese people, I hereby express resolute support for the just struggle of the black people in the United States.

Racial discrimination in the United States is a product of the colonialist and imperialist system. The contradiction between the black masses in the United States and the U.S. ruling circles is a class contradiction. Only by overthrowing the reactionary rule of the U.S. monopoly capitalist class and destroying the colonialist and imperialist system can the black people in the United States win complete emancipation. The black masses and the masses of white working people in the United States share common interests and have common objectives to struggle for. Therefore, the Afro-American struggle is winning sym-

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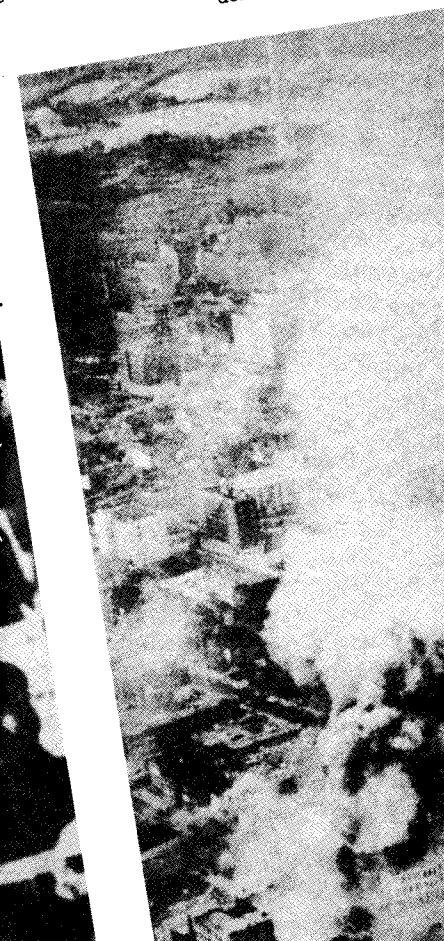
Shan, Shensi Province, China. Demonstration in support of U.S. Black Liberation struggle. One of many demonstrations under the leadership of Mao's line in support of the people of the world during the Cultural Revolution.







Newark, U.S.A. A series of Black ghetto uprisings shook the U.S. during what the U.S. ruling class called the "long hot summer" of 1967. Here Black people face off against National Guardsmen who, along with police, killed several dozen people and wounded thousands more in that city.



Washington D.C., April, 1968. Troops ringed the White House and Capitol and they in turn were surrounded by the flame and fury of the Black masses who rose up there and in 110 other cities across the country that week.



Cartoon from the newspaper of the Black Panther Party, a revolutionary U.S. Black political party.

Oakland, California, U.S.A. Black Panther Party demonstration, December, 1969. The Black Panther Party put armed struggle back on the agenda in the U.S., at a time when the revisionists had ruled it out of order.





Demonstrators in the U.S. brandish thick poles bearing the red flag and the banner of the National Liberation Front of Vietnam — their government's wartime enemy.



West Berlin, Germany, 1968. Students carrying portraits of Ho Chi Minh as well as Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, resurrecting the spectre of the 1919 German communist uprising, as they march against the war in Vietnam and the German capitalists and government.

(Continued from page 34).  
 Pathy and support from increasing numbers of white working people and progressives in the United States. The struggle of the black people in the United States is bound to merge with the American workers' movement, and this will eventually end the criminal rule of the U.S. monopoly capitalist class.

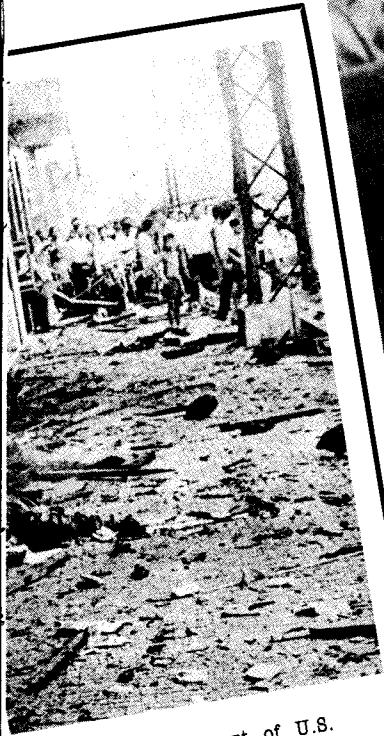
In 1963, in my "Statement Supporting the Afro-Americans in Their Just Struggle Against Racial Discrimination by U.S. Imperialism" I said that "the evil system of colonialism and imperialism arose and throve with the enslavement of Negroes and the trade in Negroes, and it will surely come to its end with the complete emancipation of the black people." I still maintain this view.

At present, the world revolution has entered a great new era. The struggle of the black people in the United States for emancipation is a component part of the general struggle of all the people of the world against U.S. imperialism, a component part of the contemporary world revolution. I call on the workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals of every country and all who are willing to fight against U.S. imperialism to take action and extend strong support to the struggle of the black people in the United States! People of the whole world, unite still more closely and launch a sustained and vigorous offensive against our common enemy, U.S. imperialism, and against its accomplices! It can be said with certainty that the complete collapse of colonialism, imperialism, and all systems of exploitation, and the complete emancipation of all the oppressed peoples and nations of the world are not far off.

— Mao Tsetung

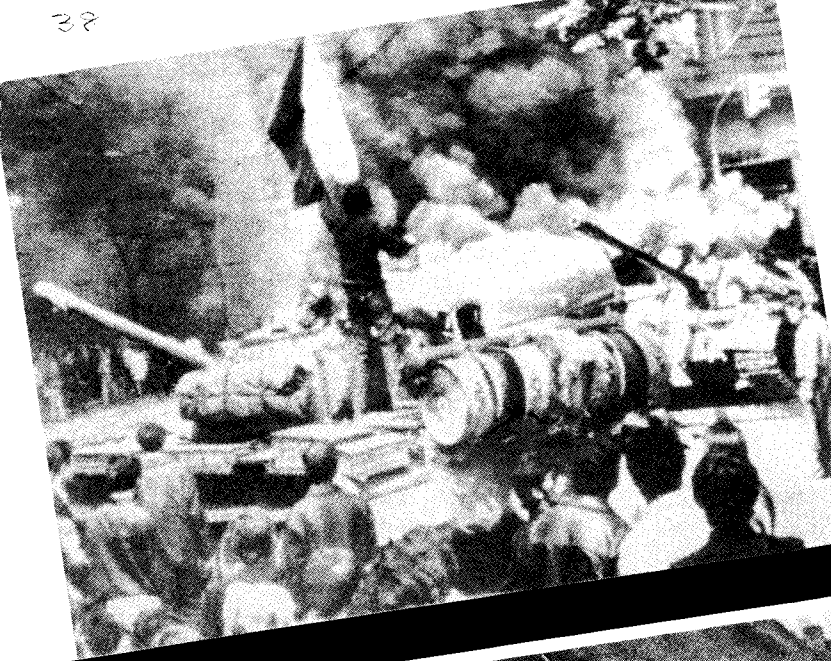


Milan, Italy, early 1970s.

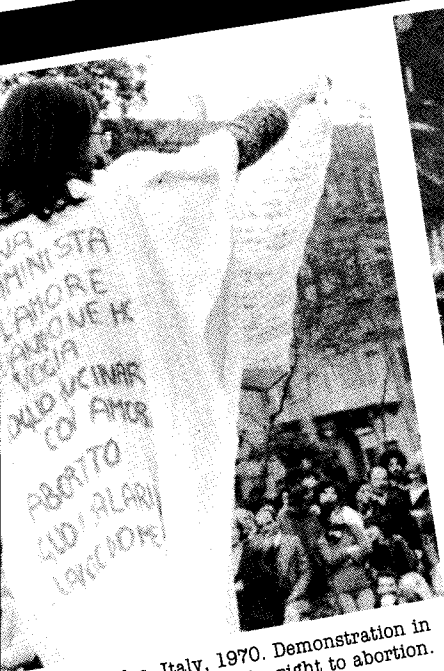


Wreckage of part of U.S. embassy in Saigon. The military defeats inflicted by the Vietnamese people vividly showed the truth of Lenin's statement that imperialism is a "colossus with feet of clay."

The war in Vietnam against U.S. imperialism was the sharpest of the struggles of oppressed peoples and nations, the storm centre of the world revolutionary struggle. They formed the context that conditioned the upsurge in the imperialist countries during the 1960s.



**P**rague, Czechoslovakia, August 1968. Revolutionaries condemned the Soviet invasion, which underlined Mao's analysis that with the rise to power of a revisionist bourgeoisie within the Soviet party the former socialist bastion had turned imperialist.



Naples, Italy, 1970. Demonstration in demand of the right to abortion.

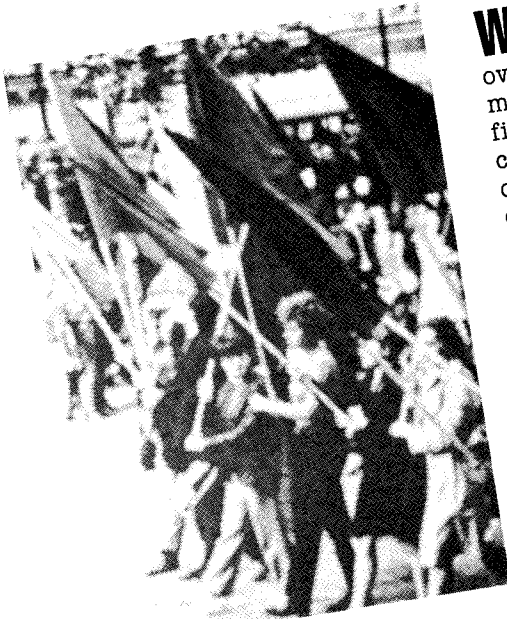


West German feminists.



Students occupy the Sorbonne in





**W**hen the students took over the Sorbonne in Paris, men wanted women to confine themselves to typing, coffee-making and child care. Women insisted on debating and fighting. This struggle within the struggle raged in every country. The outrage against the oppression of women was to become an extremely important aspect of the overall revolt against all the social relations enforced by imperialism and reaction.



Amsterdam. Demonstration against the coronation of Queen Beatrice, a symbol of Dutch imperialism.



Berlin student conference.

Japanese students and workers attack police water cannons.





# Night of the Barricades

It was at that moment, about 6:30 pm, that word reached the student leaders of new conciliatory proposals from Louis Joxe, the Acting Premier. He offered the immediate withdrawal of police from the Latin Quarter, permission for the students to hold a meeting there that night, and reopening of the Sorbonne on Saturday. These proposals were put to the crowd. Their answer was a

with courageous, on-the-spot, reporting — France stayed up to listen....  
 ... "2 am: It is now obvious that police are preparing a powerful attack. Radio announces we are surrounded and that government has ordered police to attack ... In front of us we turn over cars to prevent police from charging with their buses and tanks (Radio said tanks were coming but we never saw any)

flouted and then routed. In the two or three weeks after the Night of the Barricades, France was in a state of revolution. That is to say, the existing power structure — not only political power, but every sort of power — was challenged and in some cases overturned, and an attempt was made, however confused and disorderly, to put another in its stead. Students, workers, active citizens joined together

great roar of "Liberez nos camarades!" (Free Our Comrades). The government's gesture had come too late....

... As news reached the students that the police had called up heavy reinforcements, the throwing up of barricades became more feverish. Building sites were plundered, billboards torn down from the walls, scaffolding and barbed wire piled up, and everywhere cars were tipped on their sides and jammed in among the pavés (cobblestones). Anxiety was blotted out by a sort of frenetic joy. They were like men preparing to sell their lives dearly...

from Red Flag/Black Flag.

... I must insist again that the general mood was defense not offensive, we just wanted to hold the place like an entrenched sit-down strike ... Their tactics are simple: at 100 yards distance they launch gas grenades by rifle which blind, suffocate and knock us out. This gas is MACE (Vietnam and Detroit Mace). Also explosive grenades, one student near us picked up one to throw it back, it tore his whole hand off ... But then police attack at three points simultaneously: at two extremities of Gay Lussac, at our barricade and at Rue d'Ulm ... Finally we are forced back. Our barricade burns. At this point all I can remember is that I fainted from lack of air"...

from 1968 by David Caute

spontaneously in hundreds of insurrectional committees all over Paris, but also in the provinces. This very widespread revolt against the old forms of established authority was accompanied by an acute and profoundly enjoyable sense of liberation. All sorts of people felt it in all walks of life. A great gust of fresh air blew through dusty minds and offices and bureaucratic structures. This throwing off of constraint, this sense of relief was the authentic stamp of the revolution, the proof that the changes being wrought were really of revolutionary proportions.

Suddenly and for a few precious days, the French, whose normal life is bound by many petty regulations, enjoyed the pleasures of a primitive anarchistic society. It was a society without policemen, with everyone his own traffic cop. In spite of the vexations of life, the strike, and the drying up of gasoline pumps, men will look back on that period and remember it with joy.

The most striking feature of those days was the sight of people talking to one another — not only casual exchanges, but long intense conversations between total strangers, clustered at street corners, in cafés, in the Sorbonne, in course. There was an explosion of talk, as if people had been saving up what they had to say for years...

from Red Flag/Black Flag

## The Morning After

As can be seen from the above account, this was not an insurrection, an attempt to overthrow the government and seize power. But it did drastically change the country's political climate, as the following brings out even while exaggerating (although written by respectable reporters) the degree to which a real revolution had taken place:

... To live through a revolution is a delirious experience. It is a little frightening, but also exhilarating, to see authority

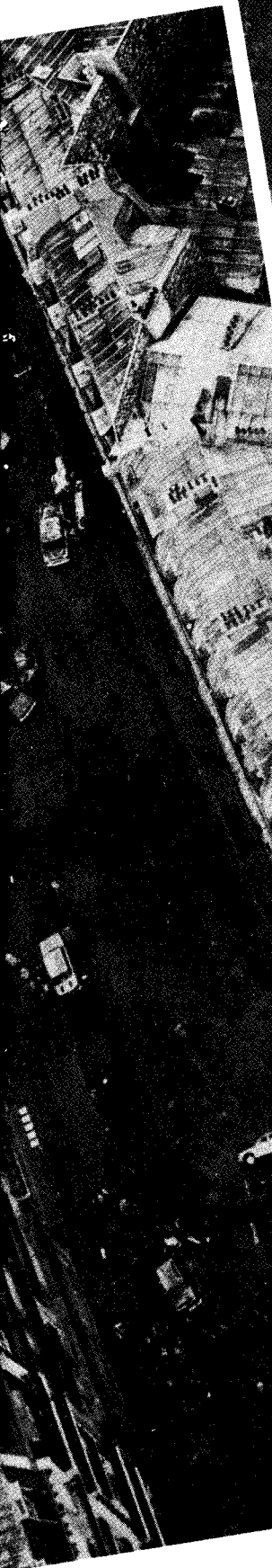
One of many posters on the streets of Paris in 1968.



double: one three-foot high pile of wood, cars, metal posts, dustbins ... Of course the majority of people simply look on. We organise a cordon to keep photographers and bystanders away from us..." In many homes transistor radios remained on all night. The two commercial stations, Europe One and Radio Luxembourg, rose to the occasion



Paris, May 10, 1968.



If the theoretical struggle against modern revisionism played a vital role in the rebuilding of a Marxist-Leninist movement it was especially the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, an unprecedented new form of struggle, itself in large part a fruit of this combat against modern revisionism, that gave rise to a whole new generation of Marxist-Leninists. The tens of millions of workers, peasants and revolutionary youth who went into battle to overthrow the capitalist roaders entrenched in the party and state apparatus and to further revolutionise society struck a vibrant chord among millions of people across the world who were rising up as part of the revolutionary upsurge that swept the world in the 1960s and early 1970s.

The Cultural Revolution represents the most advanced experience of the proletarian dictatorship and the revolutionising of society.

*(Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement)*



Chinese workers and students greet Mao during the Cultural Revolution.



France, 1968. Students marched from the Latin Quarter to the Billancourt Renault factory outside Paris. The revisionist union leadership locked the plant gates shut to keep out "the ultra-left plague." Some workers climbed out onto the roofs to salute the red flag and join the students.





Workers outside the Renault plant at Flins, after government riot troops led by armoured cars drove them out. Flins workers then sent to the Sorbonne for students to help them battle police and retake the factory.

# l'Humanité

ORGANE CENTRAL DU PARTI COMMUNISTE FRANÇAIS

**RETOUR  
A LA NORMALE...**



"Back to Normal" — Poster mocking the common slogan raised by the "parties of order" — the government and the PCF — in June 1968.

## Self-exposures

**From Headlines of l'Humanité (organ of the French Communist Party - PCF)**

- Unmask the Phoney Revolutionaries (May 3 1968)
- Nanterre and Sorbonne Closed to Students Three Weeks Before Exams — Communist Party Denounces the Responsibility of the Government and Ultra-left Adventurists and Friday's Police Violence (May 18 1968)
- Strikes Spreading, Factories Seized / Exams Immediate Concern of Great Majority of Students (May 18 1968)
- Bosses and Government Up Against the Wall — We're Ready to Take Part in Serious Negotiations Say CGT and CFDT (May 23 1968)
- Victorious and United Return to Work / CGT Paris Denounces Efforts of Groups Foreign to the Working Class [at Flins] (June 6 1968)
- "I must remind you that the Communist Party has never had anything in common with the so-called revolutionary groups whose methods we have denounced from the beginning.... The only goal of the Communist Party is the happiness and prosperity of France. (PCF General-Secretary Waldek Rochet, June 29 1968)

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# The Whole World Is Watching — Chicago, USA, 1968

It was a high point of the anti-war movement during the '60s upsurge of mass struggle. We were marching down Michigan Avenue toward the Conrad Hilton Hotel, which was the headquarters for the candidates, their staffs, and the press. For most of the afternoon we had been trapped in Chicago's lakefront Grant Park...

But when we tried to leave the park area to march on the Amphitheater, site of the Democratic Party's National Convention on Chicago's southside, we found all the routes of exit blocked. The sunken tracks of the Illinois Central Railroad could only be crossed where roads bridged them. In the middle of each of these cross bridges now sat a .30-caliber machine gun on a tripod, flanked by helmeted soldiers with rifles.

"On orders of the Chicago Police Department, there will be no march," announced the

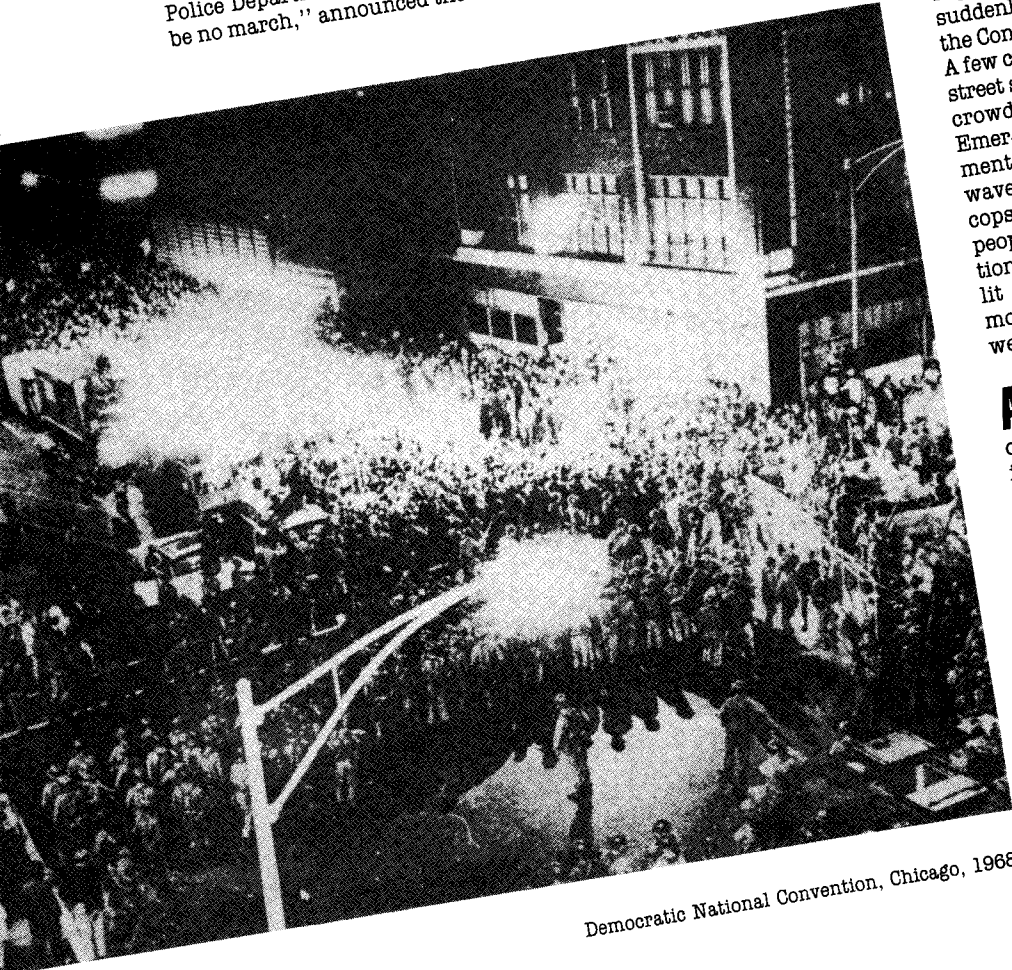
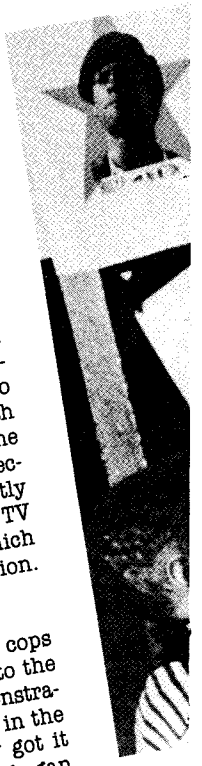
police commander.... But many of us dispersed in small groups to attempt an end run around the blockade, so that by 6:30 several thousand had infiltrated the line of troops and had massed on Michigan Avenue. Just then a mule-drawn wagon train of the Poor Peoples Campaign which had been driven all the way from the South appeared and also began moving down Michigan. The crowd surged around it. Several youths ran to the front carrying the flag of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam and a black anarchist flag. Cheering and shouting, we surged forward. Chants of "Dump the Hump" and "Peace Now" went up.

On lower Michigan Avenue, the scene was one of lively chaos. The National Guard troops on the bridges had been liberally dispersing tear gas from the CA-3 backpack

sprayers, but the wind was blowing it back through their own ranks and into the downtown area around the Conrad Hilton Convention Headquarters. As the impromptu march came down Michigan, the bulk of the crowd in the park was able to break through one of the cross streets and join the rest of us at the corner of Michigan and Balbo. There were already several thousand demonstrators gathered directly across from the Hotel. They now picked up chants. Upstairs in the Hilton, campaign workers for Eugene McCarthy who had become sympathetic after three days of police attacks began throwing toilet-paper streamers out of the twelfth-story windows and blinking hotel room lights in rhythm with the chants. "Hell no, we won't go," "Fuck you, L.B.J.," and "The streets belong to the people" merged into a roar.

The police seem to have been caught completely by surprise as a huge crowd — which was supposed to have dispersed — suddenly reassembled right at the Convention Headquarters. A few cops had rushed into the street swinging wildly, but the crowd swarmed past them. Emergency calls for reinforcements crackled over the radio waves. City buses loaded with cops began to arrive, but the people now filled the intersection. The scene was brilliantly lit by the flood lights of TV mobile camera vans which were also in the intersection.

At 8 pm a phalanx of cops charged down Balbo into the intersection. Some demonstrators were sitting down in the intersection, and they got it the worst. The cops began clubbing everyone, beating demonstrators, newsmen, and random pedestrians alike. The air was filled with debris as the larger portion of the crowd looked for anything and everything to throw. At one edge of the intersection the cops cornered a large group of people against the plate-glass window of the Hilton's Haymarket Restaurant ("A place



Democratic National Convention, Chicago, 1968.





Militant anti-war demonstration outside Fort Dix, New Jersey, U.S. army base. Fall, 1969

where good guys take good girls to dine in the lusty, rollicking atmosphere of fabulous Chicago," or so their advertising went). People were banging on the windows, seeking help from the startled diners. Suddenly the glass pane shattered as dozens of demonstrators fell through onto the dinner tables, cutting themselves on the shards of broken glass. Pandemonium broke loose as crazed cops climbed through the broken window, still clubbing, and pursued people through the hotel lobby.

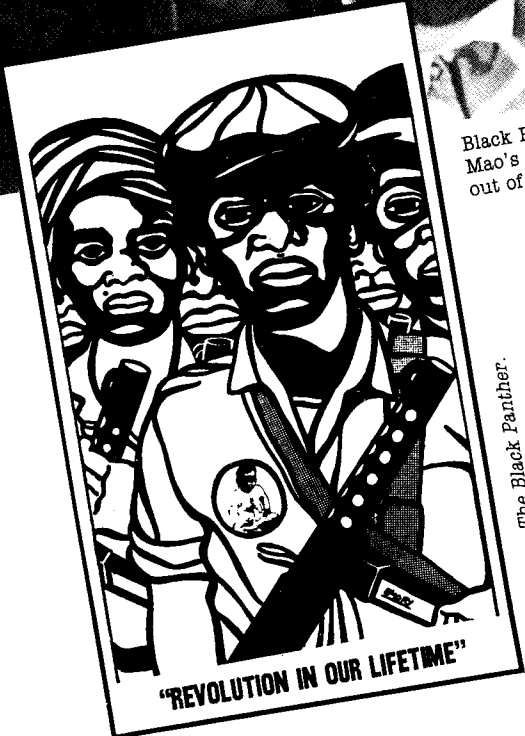
thing heavy and portable. Pop bottles, glasses, a telephone, and heavy hotel glass ashtrays came raining down from the hotel windows, smashing among the advancing cops.

Unknown to those of us on the scene, the TV networks had switched from live coverage of the Convention in the Amphitheater on the southside to live coverage of the melee at Michigan and Balbo. At the height of the action the great mass of demonstrators outside the intersection suddenly burst into the now world-famous chant, "The whole world's watching! The whole world's watching!" ... from the *Revolutionary Worker* — July 18 1968



Black Panther Party instructor explains Mao's slogan "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."

We wish to thank those photographers who donated their photos for this photo section.



Cartoon from The Black Panther.

Hundreds of people above, leaning out of hotel windows, were shocked and outraged. Young campaign workers who had come to Chicago "Clean for Gene" and determined to "open up the democratic process" couldn't believe their eyes. Below them on the street, knots of blue-shirted cops gathered around individual fallen demonstrators to beat them with riot sticks. Suddenly the festive display of toilet paper streamers was replaced with a shower of any-

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# THE WEAPON OF CRITICISM

New Books  
on the 1960s

*"Be Realistic,  
Demand the Impossible"*

By N. W.

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**Sixty-Eight: The Year of the Barricades**

By David Caute  
(Hamish Hamilton, London, 1988)

Available in North America, Australia and New Zealand through Penguin Books.

French edition: **1968 Dans le Monde**  
(Laffont, Paris, 1988)

**Street Fighting Years**

By Tariq Ali  
(Collins, London, 1988)

**Red Flag/Black Flag**

By Patrick Seale and Maureen McConville  
(Ballantine Books, New York, 1968)

**Wir Haben Sie So Geliebt Die Revolution**

By Dany Cohn-Bendit  
(Athenaum, Frankfurt, 1987)  
Spanish edition: **La Revolucion y Nosotros que la Quisimos Tanto** (Anagrama, Barcelona, 1987).

French edition: **Nous l'Avons Tant Aimée, la Révolution**  
(Editions Bernard Barrault, Paris, 1986).

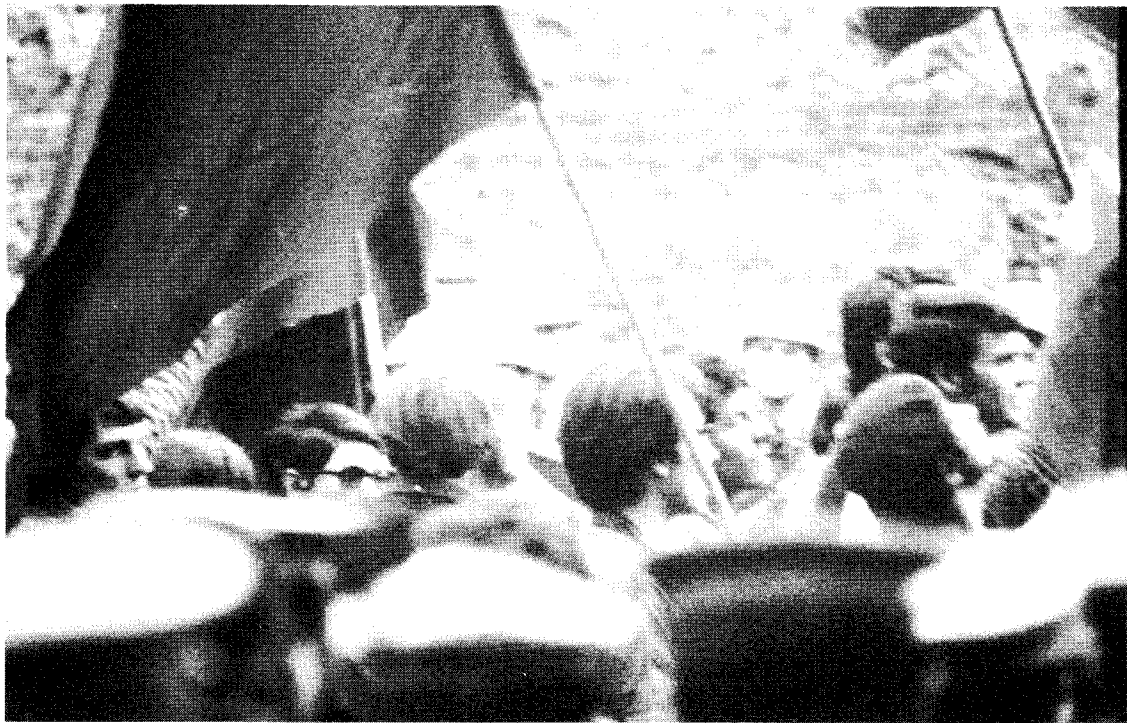
This book is based on the four-part television series called **Revolution Revisited in the UK.**

**Génération, 1. Les années de rêve.**

**Génération, 2. Les années de poudre**

By Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman  
(Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1987)

"Everybody" is talking about the 1960s lately, but it is hardly a question of universal nostalgia. That decade was not unanimously dearly beloved and those who come to commemorate it now assemble with opposing aims. Many of the mourners hated the deceased during his lifetime and have gathered with broad shovels to bury the 1960s as deeply as possible. They heap dirt upon the very idea that the world could or should be different than it is now. This heavy-handed revanchism needs refutation. More common are works by authors with 1960s credentials who seek the same ends in a more subtle and skillful manner, claiming to do excavation to reveal "the real Sixties." This needs some digging on our part as well. Then there are those who do come in praise of that period, but tend to look back on the richly diverse currents intertwined at that time through the eyes of "today" — from the point of view of the political stand current in most circles of today's Western intelligentsia — and neglect or slander the revolu-



Workers and students march in Milan, Italy, 1968.

tionary aspects amongst the complex convergence of contradictions that marked that decade. This needs some analysis.

In examining some recent books on this subject, our aim is not to undo that decade, as the bourgeoisie seeks to do, nor to somehow bring it back to life in what would inevitably be a reformist manner, as some suggest. The 1960s were not, for all their great achievements, marked by the full ripening of the objective and subjective conditions for revolution in imperialist countries, but they did see the rudiments of the elements that one day will bury the imperialist bourgeoisies there. We are partisans of the 1960s in that our aim is to carry the struggle through to the end. Looking at things from that point of view, this representative selection of books on the 1960s in the imperialist countries provides helpful and even essential material for coming to a deeper understanding of the questions involved; further, these different books complement each other in some useful ways.

**I Barricades in the Metropols**

The British historian, novelist and journalist David Caute's *Sixty-eight* is by far the most ambitious book on the 1960s, as it claims to review the whole world during that dizzyingly event-filled year.

The book centres on 1968's

events in Britain, Czechoslovakia, France and the U.S., with chapters on Japan, Italy and West Germany as well, and some material on Belgium, Spain, Yugoslavia and Mexico. It opens, appropriately, with the January 1968 Tet offensive, the uprising that marked a turning point in the war against U.S. aggression in Vietnam and, as the author points out, "also unleashed the greatest wave of anti-American feeling around the world ever experienced." This is the author's political starting point as well: "The greatest evil of the age was the Vietnamese war." U.S. President Johnson, the U.S. "peace candidates" such as Robert Kennedy, Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern, all were determined to pursue this war, in various different ways, and all the major governments of Western Europe and Japan supported it overtly or covertly. This, for Caute, is what made it the year it was.

Caute's chronology begins with a flashback to the escalation of the war and of the antiwar movement in the U.S. in 1965, the massive teach-ins against the war in May and the first big anti-war demonstrations of that fall, including the blockading of military trains in Oakland, California. Then he fast-forwards to the May 1967 Bertrand Russell International Tribunal in Stockholm where dozens of Europe's leading intellectuals and

prominent Americans condemned the U.S. for war crimes in Vietnam. (Although French President de Gaulle sought to avoid endorsing the U.S. invasion of a country where France had recently been defeated, he prohibited the holding of the Tribunal in France. The Labour government forbid the Tribunal in Britain.) In January 1968, student demonstrators in Tokyo attacked the visiting U.S. warship *Enterprise* and stormed into Japan's Foreign Ministry building. The same month saw the beginning of a movement by students and intellectuals in Poland for artistic freedom, leading to bloody street clashes and university strikes in the following months.

On March 1st, in Rome, a city controlled by the revisionist Italian Communist Party, police unleashed an attack of unparalleled viciousness on students gathered on the long, steep Spanish Steps ascending a hill in the centre of the capital for a march to demand university reform. Burning police vehicles paralysed the city as students fought their way through. Two weeks later, intense fighting once again threw the city into chaos as students who had seized Rome University after that battle of the Spanish Steps clashed with police blocking their way to the American Embassy. Over half a million students at 26 universities were on strike. The occupation of the university at Tren-

to was followed by the seizure at Turin, where student "Red Guards" who modeled themselves on the youth of the Chinese Cultural Revolution turned the school into a focal point of rebellion against established Italian society which reached down into the bowels of the enormous Fiat car works in that city and horizontally throughout the country.

A decisive point in the radicalisation of the student movement in West Germany had already occurred in June 1967, when a policeman shot a student dead in front of the Berlin opera house during a demonstration against the West German government's support for the visiting Shah of Iran. In April 1968, bullets also cut down and nearly killed Rudi Dutschke, a leader of the German Socialist Student League (SDS), who had played an important role in the chain of militant antiwar protests in the winter of 1967-68. In the wake of this shooting, students carrying red banners and portraits of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the murdered leaders of the German communist uprising of 1919, clashed with police as they assaulted West Berlin's City Hall and the fashionable Kurfurstendamm. Similar events shook a dozen other West German cities. In Frankfurt, students singing the Internationale drowned out Good Friday hymns in St. Peter's Church. Despite the relatively advanced radicalism of the student movement in West Germany, however, it was not able to break out of the confines of the university during this period.

These events helped fan fierce French demonstrations against the war in Vietnam. A mass raid on the American Express office in Paris by secondary (high) school and university students led to serious arrests. Students at the University of Paris' barren new suburban facility in Nanterre, already involved in skirmishes with authorities over the regimentation of campus life, seized the administration tower on March 22nd to demand the release of the arrested demonstrators. A leader of the revisionist French Communist Party (PCF) called in by the dean to calm the students was chased off

campus. As conflicts escalated, the administration shut the school down. Students who considered themselves Maoists smashed an attempt by a South Vietnamese government official to speak in Paris' Latin Quarter. On May 3rd, 500 activists met at the Sorbonne in the Latin Quarter to demand the reopening of Nanterre.

Riot police surround the Sorbonne courtyard and herd the students into rows of police vans. As the first of the ponderous black vehicles departs, trying to make its way through the Place de la Sorbonne in front of the university, students who had gathered outside to see what was happening block its path. Fighting erupts. The riot police find themselves suddenly under attack and surrounded. They lash out wildly, beating youth and other passers-by in the university district without discrimination. Young hands wielding iron bars or whatever else they can get dig through the blood-stained broken glass and the asphalt to pry up the ancient square paving stones below. The whole Latin Quarter becomes a battleground on a scale unseen in recent European history.

On March 17th, London witnessed its biggest antiwar march so far: 25,000 people attempted to storm the American Embassy at Grosvenor Square. In the following months, news of the revolt in France and the upheaval following the Berlin shooting of Rudi Dutschke also found echo in Britain.

In the U.S. that April 5th, millions of Black people rose up against police and 75,000 National Guard troops in 110 American cities following the assassination of Martin Luther King. Flames filled the horizon behind the White House; the fighting was the most serious to rock any major imperialist power since the second world war. Also that same month, Black and white students seized New York's Columbia University and turned it into a centre of revolt in that city. Sorties went to and fro between the campus and the Black and Puerto Rican ghettos. The city's middle classes were split into two hostile camps between those who

supported the students and those who supported the police against them.

The week of May 6th-13th in France saw the seizure of all of France's universities and many secondary schools. Some young workers, especially amongst the lower sections of the second worst-paid working class in the European Common Market at that time (after Italy), had already launched a prophetic series of violent strikes in the preceding months. Now trains from Paris' drab outskirts brought in young workers, unemployed youth, young men recently demobilised from military service and trade school youth, as well as a great many students from the academic *lycées* who had been organised through the nationwide *Comités Vietnam de Base*. They all took part in the debates and fighting in the Latin Quarter alongside the more elite university students. Something else was new in French political life: young women were only slightly less numerous than young men amongst the fighters.

The night of May 10th students and youth build dozens and dozens of cobblestone ramparts to protect the Latin Quarter from police attack. At 2 a.m., a police barrage of tear gas projectiles and hand grenades begins to pour down on the fortifications. Millions of people are following the events on live broadcast radio. Though by morning the police finally dislodge the rebels, "the night of the barricades" has brought about the political isolation of the government. The country is seized by the sentiment that the regime has become intolerable. Students and their friends take over the Sorbonne and commence a permanent political meeting that is to draw participants from every class and corner of the country. What is said there is taken seriously in all quarters.

At least a thousand people join the few dozen students who had seized the Fine Arts School and turned it into a poster factory. Working in teams of 200, and submitting each design to the Sorbonne General Assembly, during the six-week occupation they were able to put out 350 different posters in print

runs of tens of thousands. The imagination, impatience and forcefulness with which they mocked authority incited astonishment and delight below and grim horror above.

The PCF stepped forward to seize the mantle of "the party of order" from the hands of the encircled ruling Gaullist party. From the beginning the revisionists had denounced the Nanterre and Sorbonne students as "provocateurs." The right blamed everything on the "Jew red" Nanterre student leader Dany Cohn-Bendit; PCF leader Georges Marchais echoed this by painting the devil behind all the disorder as the "German anarchist Cohn-Bendit." The PCF was to support the government in banning Cohn-Bendit from France. But the PCF also had its own interests and methods.

In an attempt to both put itself at the head of the rising tide and calm the waters, the PCF called a 24-hour general strike May 13th. In fact, strikes were to paralyse the country for over a month, with about 10 million going out. This situation was extremely complicated. Some factories closed because the PCF union leadership wanted to keep "the ultra-leftist plague," as they called it, away from "their" workers and retain the initiative. For instance, the powerful revisionist leadership of the CGT union at the Billancourt Renault car factory near Paris thought that seizing the plant and chaining its doors tight was a fine way to keep out student radicals. Nevertheless, some young workers climbed out onto the roofs to fraternise with the students. In other factories radical influences predominated amongst the strikers.

Such was the power of this upswell that tumultuous mass meetings were called by people in almost every conceivable walk of life. A mania for organisation swept the people. Housing estate (project) housewives, office employees and highly paid professionals, astronomers and museum curators, hospital staff members and people in the most varied workplaces and neighborhoods set up "action committees" to organise the practical needs of the struggle as well as the

details of daily life, since official authority seemed paralysed. By the end of May, 450 such committees had sprung up in Paris alone in loose coordination with the Sorbonne General Assembly. Film directors staged a revolt and took over the Cannes Film Festival, from where their action committee issued a revolutionary manifesto. Other action committees sprouted in France's every nook and cranny. French Prime Minister Pompidou, his voice weary and heavy with pessimism, warned against impending civil war. Historians would later call this the first day of France's "dangerous week."

Two days later, on May 25th, the government, employers' federation and unions met to negotiate a country-wide pact patterned on the 1936 accords that had helped contain the turbulent proletarian unrest of that time. Now they agreed to raise the minimum wage (the prevailing wage for many workers) by over a third at one blow, to hike other wages 10% overall and to cut the workweek from 48 hours to 40. (As Lenin once pointed out, in times of crisis economic reforms are the easiest for the bourgeoisie to grant.) Yet when the PCF took these agreements to the plant it considered its stronghold, Billancourt Renault, they were rejected. Even stronger rebuffs came from other combative factories where pro-Mao students had "gone to the workers" during the previous months. Carrying portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao, students marched from the Latin Quarter to Billancourt with the banner, "the hands of the workers will take from the fragile hands of the students the banner of revolt against the regime."

But the strike movement could not in and of itself issue a real challenge to the whole bourgeois state, despite the depth of the political crisis in which the government was caught. On May 27th, the same day these proposed accords were announced, an enormous rally at the Charléty sports stadium — street demonstrations had been banned — brought together some student and union leaders and forces from the Socialists to pro-

pose "a political solution" to the crisis: Pierre Mendes France, the "man of the left" who had led France in the beginning of its war against Algeria, clamoured to be made head of a "provisional government" pending elections. "Today," a Socialist trade union leader proclaimed, "revolution is possible." Actually, what they proposed was a change of regime *without* a revolution in the same kind of manoeuvre the parliamentary left had once denounced as a "putsch" when de Gaulle used it to become president in 1958.

May 29th, President de Gaulle, his wife and aides climb into three helicopters and vanish. The only words reporters can get from him are directed at his wife: "Hurry up, Madame, I beg you." Panic brings the country's propertied classes to the edge of madness; on the streets the mood is the greatest jubilation imaginable. In fact, de Gaulle's helicopter took him to a secret meeting in Baden-Baden, West Germany, with the commanders of the French Army. Plans were made to bring 20,000 troops from France's army stationed in West Germany to deal with Paris. The military men who had once opposed de Gaulle's end to the war in Algeria were to be pardoned, including the general who had almost been successful in having the president shot.

The next day de Gaulle issued the country's propertied classes an ultimatum: close ranks around him or else. If he were toppled, the pro-Soviet PCF would end up in power. This argument was accepted even by the Socialists, who had managed to co-opt a section of the student movement and others under the guise of supporting the revolt. The Socialists feared that under the conditions of the time any government formed by the opposition was liable to be dominated by the PCF. The PCF, too, pulled back; this kind of revolt against Gaullism was neither liable to bring them the shared place in the ruling alliance they sought, nor was it in the interests of the Soviet Union and its allies. De Gaulle's men are said to have appealed to the PCF leadership to stand with them to protect France against the Socialists who



would subordinate French foreign policy to U.S. interests. Thus all the reactionary parties, right and "left," agreed: it was de Gaulle or disaster.

In response to the president's call, the swank Champs Elysées swarmed with hundreds of thousands of well-dressed men and women thronging to support their government, their fatherland and their God. Maids were obliged to march with their masters. But there were people of the lower classes as well. The "party of fear," as the press called them, could organise too: the Gaullist Committees for the Defense of the Republic were at least as serious about preparing for civil war as the rebels that threatened them.

The temporary confluence of the Socialists, the PCF and its unions and student radicals collapsed. By mid-June, the police were once again to have the Sorbonne to themselves. But at the Flins Renault plant, 50 kilometres from Paris, where revolutionary students had worked and established links during the preceding winter, 1500 students slipped through police blockades to join several thousand workers fighting to drive out the riot police who had seized their factory. The fighting lasted several days in the woods in the surrounding countryside. A 17-year-old Maoist student was drowned by riot police. Once again, the student quarter in Paris exploded into flames. In the following days, two more workers were killed fighting riot police at the Peugeot plant at Sochaux. Battles raged at the Cleon gearbox plant and at a non-union Citroen plant where over a third of the workers were immigrants living in company barracks.

The government ordered all the organisations associated with the rebellion dissolved and moved to arrest their leaders. The PCF, the Socialists and others prepared to fight their battle in parliament. A new stage had been reached in the confluence of workers and students, and two roads were clearly posed.

These events sent the world spinning even faster in the following months. The Soviet Union moved to quench disorder in its part of Europe. In August, Soviet tanks began

pouring across an air bridge into Czechoslovakia. The Czech party leadership had advocated a certain nationalism and other reforms, but it feared disorder worse than the invaders. It advised non-resistance.

A week later, the cracks in U.S. society widened abruptly in the wake of wave upon wave of violent police attacks on demonstrations against the Vietnam war at the Democratic Party's Chicago Convention. In turn, the fact that a section of the U.S. ruling class was coming to see the need to end the war had an impact on the development of the antiwar movement and divergences within it, as two roads posed themselves in the U.S., too, though not exactly in the same manner as in France. On the one hand there was a powerful attraction exerted by the Democratic Party candidates who promised to put an end to the war — as in France, the idea arose that elections held out the promise of quick victory for the goals of the mass movement. On the other, consciously revolutionary contingents were taking shape amongst the Black and other oppressed nationalities and in a student movement very influenced by this development, in the context of a general discrediting of existing American society.

The Black Panther Party (BPP) had erupted onto the national political scene in 1967 when shotgun-toting young Blacks uniformed in black leather coats and berets marched into the California state legislature to protest legal moves to further disarm the masses. The Panthers gathered increasing influence amongst Black proletarians and others more widely in the San Francisco Bay Area and in nearly every American city with a Black population. In September 1968, Panther leader Huey Newton was sentenced to prison and the police shot up the BPP headquarters in the first of what was to be a long and deadly series of police assaults aimed at exterminating the Panthers. A violent and prolonged conflict beginning in November 1968 with a strike at San Francisco State College pit Black and other minority students and white radicals, many of them influenced by the Panthers, against a

school administration acting under the orders of California Governor Reagan and the government. Each side was able to rally considerable political strength amongst different sections of the population in the San Francisco Bay Area and around the country.

The October 1968 London demonstration against the war, far more massive than the previous March, also saw an increasing political polarisation. An intense debate boiled up in the London School of Economics and other occupied universities and more broadly about whether or not to attack the American Embassy this time. Although Wilson's Labour government had firmly supported the U.S. in Vietnam, the left wing of the Labour Party was able to dictate terms of the march in return for its support. A minority contingent went ahead and ferociously assaulted the American Embassy.

In West Germany, too, the student movement faced similar debates amidst tear gas and water cannons. Italy was shut down by events bearing some similarity to May-June in France, though on a smaller scale. In July 1968 Japanese students had seized 54 universities after the crash of a U.S. Air Force plane into Kyusho University. The tenor of the times was such that students armed with staves and helmets fought to prevent the wreckage from being cleared, because they wanted it to remain as a sign of the struggle against U.S. bases. By November, the Faculty Senate at Tokyo University voted to resign collectively to support student demands.

This brief summary is meant to give something of an idea of what makes the *Caute* book fun to read and of the year itself (although this recapitulation also uses some material from all the books cited in this review). It also should give something of an idea of the limits of *Caute's* approach. This is not really a book about 1968 in the whole world, though it is hard to imagine how it could have been kept to 400 pages or any manageable size if it had been. In fact it focuses on the student movement in the U.S. and Western Europe.

This would be a good thing to do, if one were to do so openly and to infuse such a specific focus with an understanding of the world's wider events that were shaping the development of the events that Caute is considering, but this is not the case. It is justifiable for Caute not to centre his narrative on the third world and other international factors. But it is not justifiable to dismiss them. Though Caute gives importance to the 1968 Tet offensive, he does not draw the vital conclusion that the events of that year in the imperialist countries would have been far different if it had not been for the vast revolt of the masses of the oppressed nations of the world against imperialism and the military defeat that the head of Western imperialism was facing. Furthermore, what if the USSR had not restored capitalism and become imperialist? What if Mao had not launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in order to save socialism in China and support the world revolution?

At the same time, Caute does not examine the underlying contradictions and trends within the imperialist countries themselves that, in this overall world context, gave all the talk about revolution there a material basis. Further, he treats these events as though contradictions in all the Western bloc imperialist countries were the same (except for fascist Spain), and so fails to provide an explanation for the important differences between the processes in different countries. These factors sap some of the life out of his account. The reader is swamped with one image after another of tens of thousands of students charging police lines, until after a while it all tends to blur together from Tokyo to Turin. (The material on Japan, West Germany and Italy is especially unsatisfying.) In real life, the events of 1968 were sharp, varied and particular.

Another problem that stems from the arbitrary uniformity Caute imposes on these historic events has to do with differences in time and tempo as well as other national particularities. In other words, 1968 was overall a rather key year, but it was not, as Caute says, a prelude

to universal ebb. Spain and Portugal were to undergo their "1960s" in the mid-1970s; the seventies in Italy, also, were years of floodtide, especially through the first half of the decade. 1968 in Britain was more middle class than elsewhere, but the following decade saw the lower classes issue violent challenges to the order. Even in countries like the U.S. where there is good reason to use 1968 as a point of reference, Caute's identification of 1968 as the high point and the rest as a quick descent into insignificance stems mainly from the author's own view that the more radical things became, the less worthy they are of his consideration.

Thus the development of organisations influenced by or attempting to take up Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought is beyond Caute's limits, not only for chronological reasons (since in many countries this was more a post-1968 phenomenon) but basically for political ones (since prominent forces in France and Italy, Black Panthers in the U.S and others already were invoking this ideology during the period Caute covers). For all his cant about "Red Fascism" consisting of seeking "to smash all thought other than Mao's," Caute himself does not hesitate to consider his way of thinking as the only one that can be considered thought.

Caute's views are most sharply revealed in his juxtaposition of events in the East and West blocs. What he sees as the "responsible" movements of the East bloc, where students sought above all, he says, to enjoy a liberal university with a worthy library, are thrown into contrast with the wild behaviour of students in the West who seemed to consider the university at best a good place to protest. Apparently without the slightest fear of appearing ridiculous, he informs the reader that Mao's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and China's Red Guards cannot be considered a real part of 1968 because they were "instruments of the state," whereas he devotes praise and several chapters to Czech head of state Dubcek and those around him, including several dozen generals, who were ignominiously pushed aside by the

Russians. Thus the liberal Caute who opposes the dictatorship of the proletariat in China does not hesitate to defend the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, as long as it is linked to the imperialism he favours.

We don't really come to understand much about the East bloc in this account, although Caute was there at the time. It seems to be taken up mainly as a foil. As for what happened in the West bloc imperialist countries, his understanding seems to be this: there was the war in Vietnam, "a blunder and a crime," which was bad; and there was justifiable protest against it. There were unjust fetters on students and intellectuals and anachronistic repression in social mores, and that too had to be opposed. Insofar as things were restricted to these targets, and insofar as the forms of struggle were not too violent and did not take a turn unacceptable to the present mood of people like Caute, he is generous with his descriptions. What he hates most of all is the radicalisation and the polarisation within that upsurge between those who were persuaded that the war in Vietnam and other evils were "blunders" that could be corrected in a society they found basically to their liking, and others who found their society intolerable and came to see these evils as part of an unreformable imperialist system that needed overthrowing.

For Caute, it was this growing radicalisation that killed the movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, particularly, he says (apparently referring to the U.S.), because Black militants, feminists and other *unreasonable* people were breaking up the "unity" that had prevailed: "This fracture in the bonding vision of the sixties proved fatal." Reading between the lines one can also see that he is greatly influenced by the turn against street demonstrations taken by some bourgeois circles who for various reasons had supported some of them.

Caute seems to feel that social movements that had started for good reasons suddenly lost their brakes around 1968 and went careening off; it is as if the intelligentsia in the imperialist countries

suddenly and inexplicably went mad. Why were renowned professors drawn to students who sought to burn down the archives? How could the wife of a respected orchestral conductor invite fellow rich people to a fund-raising party for Black radicals who quoted Mao and carried guns? At the same time that he describes what he obviously conceives of as horrifying and almost incomprehensible excesses, Caute gives very little importance to the subjective factor, to the ideas and political lines that animated the movements he describes. The overall result of all this is that the times and their protagonists seem far more strange and removed from today's reality than they should. The underlying reason why he does not care to consider their thinking worthy of examination is that he disagrees with it whilst seeking to preserve the illusion that he himself has no ideology.

His approach leads him to rely almost exclusively on secondary sources, on establishment journalists and analysts of the time, especially in regard to countries other than Britain (which gets more attention than necessary). Those who were young then — and far more importantly, those who were representative of the various trends at work — are not given much chance to speak.

For instance, Black people are treated as threatening or amusing; the revolt of the oppressed nationalities in the U.S. and other imperialist countries is never taken seriously. Caute never really examines the Black Panther Party in the U.S. An examination of a revolutionary organisation with a significant base amongst Black proletarians would undermine his assertion that the upsurge of the 1960s in the imperialist countries remained isolated from the workers. When he does mention the Panthers, it is only to quote the notorious white dandy Tom Wolfe telling us that they do not have much influence in the ghetto. To give another shameful example, Caute also blithely dismisses the women's liberation movement: it gets tossed aside at the end of a chapter billed, in order of importance, "Films, Sex

and Women's Liberation." A reader dependent on this book alone for knowledge would never guess that there is anything wrong in the dominant relations between men and women or what a powerful role the rebellion against women's oppression played in the general revolt against unjust social relations. Caute acts as though the really important demand was for more of the same kind of sexual relations that already characterise bourgeois society, which amounts to the same kind of tawdry titillation that most of the snickering bourgeois establishment exhibited in the face of the seriousness of the youth of that time.

Because of Caute's stand and that of the sources he chooses to depend on, his book presents a view of 1968 as seen through the eyes of people who were both vaguely sympathetic to that upsurge and vaguely threatened by it. Although they didn't exactly stand with "the Man" (authority), still they were ideologically "over 30." (Thirty was sometimes jokingly referred to in the 1960s as the dividing line age between youth and "the man," though more than a few elderly men and women stood firm for revolution whilst some younger types were just waiting to "get off the bus" of that upsurge at the first stop.) Caute's general amazement at the "weirdness" of the times brings to mind a character from a 1968 Bob Dylan song, also a magazine reporter: "Something is happening here and you don't know what it is, do you, Mr Jones?"

The irony is that such people played an important role in the 1960s in the imperialist countries. Not that their views were really much more radical than now. But in the context of those times, when the upheaval of the world's exploited and oppressed, within the imperialist countries as well as the countries they fattened on, threw the idea of revolution on the agenda — to various degrees, and with varying degrees of understanding, in different countries — such people often failed to give the ruling classes the unconditional support they so desperately needed, or even sided with the wretched of the earth.

Otherwise, the question of seizing revolutionary political power in the imperialist countries could not have even been posed.

To Caute, looking back with mixed nostalgia and loathing, and neglecting the factors that made even university professors go a little wild at times during those years, it was the spiraling interplay of unreasoned repression and unreasonable radicalism and the capitulation of well-meaning intellectuals to the latter in the face of the former that brought about today's "triumph of the profit motive and the idolisation of market forces in the era of Reagan and Thatcher." In other words, extremism bred extremism; the tragedy was that the centre did not hold. The 1960s movements, by fighting against the liberal-social democratic-Labourite forces, are responsible for the triumph of the open right of today.

First, the facts Caute himself marshals against the American Democrats, British Labourites, European revisionists and continental social democrats militate against this conclusion. Second, open reaction is no more the only card in the hands of the bourgeoisies today than it was in the 1960s. Consider the case of France, which in contradiction to Caute's "backlash" theory is now under a Socialist president; its current Prime Minister led the Charléty rally at which the Socialists proclaimed "the revolution" in May 1968. Still there is nothing less reactionary about France than Britain or America and it might even be accurate to say that in the wake of 1968 the de Gaulle government instituted more reforms than the Socialists when they came in 13 years later.

The often bare face of reaction in the 1980s cannot be blamed on the 1960s. The point is that although the imperialist ruling classes never stopped feeding on human flesh, during the 1960s they were politically and ideologically on the defensive in many countries. There was the wide-spread feeling that policies of the governments, life in these societies and often imperialism itself was not tolerable and did not have to be tolerated, that the world should and could be turned upside

down. To different degrees in different places, not only the Reagans and Thatchers but also their rivals within the system were also exposed, and the system itself was brought under attack. Today the imperialists in every country are furiously firing their political artillery to wipe out the traces the exposures and experiences of that period left amongst the masses, whilst also building up openly reactionary political currents amongst strata who were often made to shut up in the 1960s. The same trends are operating in all the imperialist countries, though in different forms.

It cannot be concluded that this period and the political crises of the regimes did not last because the 1960s radicals went "too far."

As the spiraling upsurge in the imperialist countries began to run into serious obstacles, middle forces in society who had been drawn into protests against some specific and immediate outrages were not able to go over to a vision radical enough to seek the total transformation of imperialist society, and amongst more radical forces there was a tendency to tailor their work to suit these vacillating allies. If there is a single fault that should be found with the radicals of the 1960s in these countries, it was that too often their understanding and goals were not radical enough. They were not clear enough on the strategy and means for revolution; they did not thoroughly enough grasp the nature of their societies or correctly analyse who could be relied upon for revolution, who were allies and who could at best be won to friendly neutrality. Rather, many radicals tended themselves to see the masses of people in these societies as homogeneous, just as Caute does. *They did not go far enough.*

The charges those like Caute lay against the 1960s can only be substantiated if it is shown that the course the most radical forces of that decade embarked upon was fundamentally wrong because their basic premise of the possibility of ever making revolutionary change was unfounded. The argument goes like this: there was no revolution, therefore revolution was impossible, therefore working within the

system, as hopeless as that may seem even according to the facts Caute supplies, is still the best that can be hoped for.

## II France Towards Civil War?

Hamon and Rotman, despite their backgrounds in radical journalism, share Caute's basic premise. The stated theme of their two-volume *Génération* is that what the far left of the 1960s in France mistook for a revolutionary situation was really a *mutation* in France society, a rapid forced march towards its modernisation and a change of management between two very different generations.

For the most part, their two-volume history written in a semi-novelistic style is organised around the collective biography of students from Paris' most elite schools who were to form the leadership core of the Proletarian Left (Gauche Prolétarienne — GP) and the Trotskyite Revolutionary Communist Youth (JCR), perhaps the two best known organisations to come out of France's 1968. (The Communist Party Marxist-Leninist of France [PCMLF], which like the GP considered itself Maoist, and other such groups which arose in the 1970s, are excluded in this account.) Most of the specific figures chosen to represent this "political generation" on whom the authors focus have either become the new management, fully co-opted into the upper reaches of French society today (like the newspaper publisher Serge July, who is one of the main characters in this work as well as playing a starring role in Cohn-Bendit's book), or were broken or died. (Such as Pierre Goldman, who, according to the authors, seems to have shared many of July's more radical views during the 1960s and early seventies, but who was mysteriously gunned down in the streets of Paris before his ambiguities could be resolved. Goldman's 1979 funeral, attended by former comrades who only a few years later were to begin entering government ministries, forms the book's prologue.)

One cannot disassociate the book's methodological shortcomings from the authors' views. To say

that this work is self-serving would be an understatement. It is an apologia for a large section of those who have currently established offices in the corridors of power. It would not be an exaggeration to say that it is a part of the current government's authorised biography. Still the book is broad, varied and detailed enough to allow the reader to come to understand a number of points. Whilst its principal characters are chosen according to the authors' own political preconceptions, in contrast to the Caute book one of Hamon and Rotman's chief merits is that they detail some of the thoughts, attitudes and political lines in play during that period, if only to allow their chosen protagonists to repent. For this reason, unlike Caute's old men's account of the sixties, in the Hamon-Rotman book one gets a real whiff of those "years of dreams and gunpowder."

(These differences between the two books can also be understood, in a very limited way, as having to do with differences between what happened in Caute's Britain, and France, where there was revolutionary upheaval on a far greater scale. Here it is worth recommending the now out-of-print book *Red Flag/Black Flag*, a short and very readable account of France's May 1968. Written by two young correspondents for a British magazine while barricade embers still smoldered, it is a good example of what some people in Caute's profession thought in those days, since it warmly supports what it calls "the revolution" without abandoning the class prejudices for which Caute insists on being a spokesman.)

The first volume of Hamon and Rotman's account opens with a long train ride carrying a delegation of very young *lycée* members of the PCF's youth organisation to a Moscow Youth festival to be presided over by Khrushchev. At that time the PCF cast its shadow over an enormous part of French society; it was taken for granted that any worker, student or intellectual who was serious and not reactionary would follow it. Yet there was nothing revolutionary about it and there had not been for a long time.

This fact was to become all the more stark during France's vicious war against Algeria, which the PCF at first supported and never thoroughly opposed. The youth in Hamon-Rotman's account carried out clandestine work in support of the Algerian liberation movement; the PCF employed the dual tactics of forbidding and sabotaging such work while also seeking to prevent them from rupturing with the party. The PCF's Union of Communist Youth (UJC) undergoes a crisis. Some members leave to take up Trotskyism, which enables them to become a sort of disloyal opposition to the PCF. Under the influence of the Cultural Revolution in China, the UJC(ML) is formed in 1967, and students seeking to "serve the people" begin to organise secondary-school committees against the war in Vietnam and get hired in factories. There is the explosion of May 1968: small groups of revolutionaries unexpectedly find themselves at the head of a mass revolt they had hardly dreamt of and which initially the UJC(ML) had opposed because of the fear that the student movement would swamp the workers. When this sort of economism was swept aside by the development of events during the spring and summer of 1968, the UJC(ML) fell apart, to be supplanted in the fall of that year by the Proletarian Left.

The salvoes of the Chinese Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution beginning in 1966 had had enormous impact on people in revolt everywhere. But there was a particularity to the way it became a dividing line in France between the "Marxist-Leninist" PCF — a major pillar of the system — and those opposed to the existing order. This, however, did not mean that all those who called themselves Maoists grasped or even accepted Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. After May 1968, the whole range of the most radical forces opposed to the regime came to be called Maoists, or even more generically, "les maos," by friend and foe alike. This common term encompassed very different political tendencies, even including people who called themselves "anarchist Maoists" as

well as more serious trends.

For Hamon and Rotman, in looking back, what was good about "les maos" was that they discredited the PCF and thus cleared the way for today's Socialist Party to come to office unencumbered by the necessity for any alliance with the pro-Soviet party. (Before 1968 the pro-Soviet party's domination of the reformist political terrain dwarfed the splintered fractions of today's ruling Socialists.) What was bad about "les maos," according to Hamon and Rotman, was almost everything they did before the final collapse of almost all the forces borne out of 1968 at the time of Socialist President Mitterrand's election in 1981. Obviously, this question of good and bad can only be settled by class criteria. But the authors have put their fingers on some truth in insisting upon the heterogeneity of much of what passed for Maoism in France during this period. This is well expressed by a cynical joke. In Italy, the revisionist PCI had explicitly announced its departure from Leninism and distanced itself from the USSR before the Sixties storms broke. The French party, though equally revisionist, had adopted a more pro-Soviet and pseudo-Leninist hard edge, whilst still taking credit for the 20 years of labour peace that had prevailed in France until 1968. A French "pro-Italian" PCF dissident in this book remarks to a fellow whose admiration for Mao coexists with the rather different political thinking of the Cuban revolution, "We're all Maoists because we all oppose the Soviet Union." As one reads on, especially in the second volume (dealing with the period from autumn 1968 through the mid-70s), the reader is increasingly aware of opposite currents vying for the Maoist label and vastly different class standpoints converging in opposition to the PCF.

(Again, Serge July is a good example, since he emerged from within the "Italian" current in the PCF in the mid-60s, took some of these ideas with him into the Proletarian Left he helped found and lead, and continues to express them in his daily newspaper *Liberation* which has become a pillar of the "hip"

faction of the French establishment and the present government.)

"This is only the beginning," proclaimed one of that year's popular slogans. But the beginning of what? The "revolt against the regime" was fraught with ambiguity. There were different class interests involved. In this account, the reader gets a glimpse of how this operated even within the still mainly student organisations that grew to be enormous in the wake of May 1968. There was conflict between some political veterans whose entry into the movement was preceded by the acquisition of the prerequisites for bourgeois success, on the one hand, and on the other many secondary school students who came from a much more mixed and often dispossessed class background, who had not had the same revisionist political training, and whose involvement in the revolutionary movement meant jumping off the educational steps that might lead up from the shop floor. But everything cannot be reduced to the class origins and positions of the leaders of this movement.

Hamon and Rotman are indignant at the accusation that their protagonists were simply rich kids having their fling before taking their appointed places in the ranks of the bourgeoisie. Their indignation has a correct side to it, even if this does turn out to be the trajectory followed by many of the particular individuals the authors chose to focus on. After all, it was the PCF who used the fact that the students were headquartered in the most elite schools to argue that the May revolt should be considered an anti-worker provocation. The ideas put forward by these young intellectuals were taken up by millions, including proletarians, and they must be seriously examined.

There are some especially vivid sections describing the attempts by student radicals to "go to the workers," and different sections of workers themselves who sought to join up with revolutionary students. One gets a sense of some of the complexity of the situation amongst different strata of those the revolutionaries tended to lump together as "the workers." The portrait is iron-



ic: on the one hand, young workers, often in desperate economic conditions and in factories that had sprung up in formerly rural areas, factories where the PCF's CGT union or any other of the unions were weak, sometimes fighting their way through police lines to link up with students in a way more likely to lead to arrest than to a pay raise, and on the other, students whose revolutionary impulses were usually mixed with the idea that a revolutionary movement should centre on better wages and working conditions for the wage slaves. "We Will Have Our 70 Centimes," screams the front page of an early issue of the *Cause du Peuple* (later to become the organ of the GP). This slogan concerning an insignificant wage increase is illustrated by a photo of a proletarian about to tear a riot cop apart — at a time when some sections of workers themselves had rejected the idea that they could be bought for many times that amount.

One idea, prevalent amongst many of the people Hamon and Rotman focus on, was that as long as the unionised workers were in some way or another under PCF leadership, the PCF could forbid proletarian revolution and the only way to overcome this situation was by years of proving to be better trade unionists than the revisionists. For the UJC(ML), the slogan and proposed immediate task was to "build a class struggle CGT."

When events themselves outstripped this line, another which came to the fore in the GP was that "civil war" should be prepared for by fusing violent confrontations with the day-to-day struggle of the most "marginal" workers, especially immigrants, young unskilled workers and women, and secondary school students, until such time as these "detonators" would explode and the majority of the French people would spontaneously rise up in armed revolt and seize power.

Some initial class analysis of the workers themselves was done, contrasting the interests and mood of the skilled workers, salaried workers and foremen whom the CGT tended to consider most important, and the unskilled labourers and

production line workers, and the concept of a "real proletariat" was raised, but this glimmering was overshadowed by the idea that not only the whole of the workers but even 90% of the people could and had to be won to the revolutionary banner before there could be any revolution. Their approach had more in common with a classless populism — in some ways, with the French reformist parties, minus their insistence on elections — than the Leninist understanding that "imperialism inevitably leads to a 'shift in class relations,' to a split in the working class between the oppressed and exploited proletariat and an upper section of the workers benefiting from and in league with the imperialist bourgeoisie," to quote the 1984 *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement*. They talked about civil war, but at the same time failed to see the possibilities for successful proletarian revolution in the elements that were already in view of a real civil war, between two camps of the people.

Here the regime was in crisis, the middle classes were sharply divided for and against it, and a section of proletarians with nothing to lose was stirring intensely. Why was there no real insurrectionary attempt, an attempt at a second Paris Commune? The degree to which the objective situation was fully ripe is a question that deserves very serious study; at any rate, it is clear that the revolutionary forces themselves were very weak, especially at the moment when the regime was most in crisis, and that this in turn was a factor (though not necessarily the key factor) in holding back the ripening of conditions towards a revolutionary situation. But the main aspect of this weakness was not the numerical smallness of the revolutionary forces, or even their organisational preparations, although the weaknesses in these terms were considerable. Primarily it had to do with the political and ideological lines that guided them.

These were not errors that could be easily corrected, given the basic problems in the stand, viewpoint and method espoused by the GP and others. Hamon and Rotman

give some revealing anecdotes in this regard, and quote extensively from the book *Toward Civil War* which served as the GP's manifesto. This book upholds Mao and the Cultural Revolution, which was (and continues to be) a touchstone question dividing Marxism from revisionism, but at the same time it tends to see the question of supporting armed struggle as the basic dividing line, which leads it to mix up the opposite political and ideological (and military) lines of Mao and Che Guevara and neglect the crucial question of the *goals* of the revolution. This is where the GP's conception got most fuzzy at best.

In defining those goals, Mao is opportunistically portrayed as opposed to Stalin, rather than determined to go even further than Stalin in the all-around transformation of society under the dictatorship of the proletariat. In fact the whole concept of the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which was central in the Cultural Revolution the GP upheld and equally central to revolution in France, is reduced to the common revolt against "authority" in both countries. What is most missing is exactly what was to be proletarian about the revolution in France — what goals differentiated proletarian politics from the reformist politics of the Socialists (or pro-Soviet revisionists) whose call for "revolution" envisioned the strengthening of French imperialism.

This was combined with equally eclectic notions about revolutionary strategy. *Towards Civil War* proclaims that "the revolution" will come in 1970 or 1971. Our intention here is not to mock their impatience, for it was far better than the stand of the Trotskyites, for instance, who after May concluded that since the regime had resolved its immediate crisis nothing should be allowed to interfere with building an electoral following. It was also better than that of the anarchists, who lost their bearings completely when the storm centre shifted away from the universities and often ended up tailing the Socialists and other reformist union leaders who tried to channel people into the institutionalisation of vari-

ous forms of factory and university councils and away from the question of overthrowing the government. (Today the ex-anarchist Cohn-Bendit expresses regret for not having supported the Socialists' Charléty rally.) But what was the GP's plan to overthrow the government?

They conceived of civil war as the result of a spontaneous process whose development their actions would spur on, not as an armed insurrection organised by the vanguard party based on proletarians with nothing to lose. Their idea of what was to be done did not centre on the political and organisational preparation of the conditions for organising such an insurrection. What was called for was to conduct "the daily anticapitalist struggle" (strikes, occupations of workplaces, apartment building takeovers, etc.) in an "offensive rather than defensive manner," as though such struggles could ever do more than play a role in *preparing* a real, military offensive to overthrow the government. Instead they proclaimed "the revolutionary mass movement is the people's army" and "the place where the masses seize politics and make history" — glossing over the difficult but basic question of how to go over from the mass political and economic struggles to something qualitatively different, the organisation of a revolutionary *army* and the seizure of state power which would allow the masses to make history in whole new way. Even at the beginning the GP denigrated the need for a Leninist vanguard party, which is the only way that such a revolution could be organised, and these views would come increasingly to the fore.

The March 4 1972 funeral of Pierre Overney showed just how far the revolutionary movement had surged forward in the less than four years since "the night of the barricades" in the Latin Quarter and how great the advantages for revolution still were. The government had banned the GP and its *Cause du Peuple*. The elderly Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, two of Europe's most prominent intellectuals, had stepped forward to sell the illegal newspaper in the

streets and in front of factories. As Hamon and Rotman recount, the GP's initial troops, drawn from secondary school and university students in revolt against the established order, now drifted from factory to factory, making propaganda, stirring trouble, getting fired and then hired somewhere else.

Here and there, these efforts took hold: unskilled workers, usually young and often Arabs or other immigrants, were forming an increasingly significant part of the organisation's membership. Enormous numbers of Arab workers were being flown in from their homelands to work in France's factories. Their receptiveness to revolution came not only from their French experience, but also that of liberation movements and revolutionary wars, including the Algerian liberation war against France as well as the Palestinian upsurge going on at that particular moment. Pierre Overney, son of an agricultural worker, was probably typical of the French proletarians who were being drawn to the Maoists. He had been 19 and working at Renault in 1969 when he joined the GP. He became a professional revolutionary quickly.

Three GP members fired by the Billancourt Renault factory — a former student at one of France's top schools, an Arab and a Portuguese — were on hunger strike to demand their rehiring. Overney and other GP activists, armed with metal bars and red flags, were giving out leaflets in front of the factory when a guard shot him dead. The PCF-led CGT, realising very well that it was their leadership over the plant that was at stake, reacted to this murder by calling for the Maoists to be arrested.

Two hundred thousand people take part in the funeral march through the proletarian neighborhoods of eastern Paris towards Péré Lachaise cemetery, where many thousands more await them. From above nothing can be seen in the streets but red banners, red streamers, red flowers. The CGT organised workers *not* to attend, and indeed, there was good reason to fear marching. Still there are small

contingents of CGT members and members of the Socialist-led CFDT, alongside a far larger mass of labourers who simply carry red banners. Here and there, amidst these ranks drawn from the bottom of society, emerge well-known faces of philosophers and movie stars. They join in chanting, "We will avenge Pierre Overney" and sing the *Internationale*; the GP spokesman particularly emphasises the end of the first verse, which in French refers to the violent beginning of the end of the old society. One of the country's most prominent establishment journalists would write, later that day, that the youth of France no longer seem to hold out any belief in the world they had been offered.

Yet for the GP leaders whose views Hamon and Rotman recount, the situation was becoming intolerable. They felt trapped with no room to breathe. On the one hand, they found themselves with little idea of revolutionary strategy other than to carry out violent "vanguard" or "commando" actions, such as the subsequent kidnapping of a Renault Billancourt executive, which although popular with their social base was leading them inexorably towards a level of military confrontation they could not win. On the other they had no idea of how a revolution could be prepared by relying on the most dispossessed workers, but instead saw the sentiments of these radical proletarians as an obstacle to winning over the sections of workers still under PCF leadership. This impatience with the radical minority and for recognition as the spokesman for the majority, even if the majority were not in a revolutionary mood, had led the GP to increasingly attempt to clothe itself in the costume of the French resistance against the German occupation. In an effort to accomplish this, the GP had staged a grotesque ceremony of homage to the martyrs of the French resistance shot by the pro-occupation French government at Mount Valerian. These murdered resistance fighters were members of the PCF-led Immigrant Workers Organisation whose blood sustained the armed struggle in Paris during World War 2 despite the PCF's ambiguous position towards them. By

1971, when the PCF had long ago turned fully counterrevolutionary, and not at all adverse to blaming the country's disorder on Jews and foreigners, there was no question of revolutionaries honouring these dead together with the PCF. But in their quest for a banner that would immediately rally the majority, the GP tried to echo the wartime alliance against the German occupation between the PCF and de Gaulle's followers by joining with a prominent "left" Gaullist to lay a wreath to "the victims of fascism, old and new." The goal of the overthrow of French imperialism, no matter what kind of government was in power, was becoming replaced for all practical purposes by the slogan and strategy of "resistance" against the bourgeoisie (compared to a foreign occupier).

There was unfortunate prophecy in what the press mocked as the "Gaullo-Maoist" sacraments. Wrong views about how to make revolution were contending, with decreasing success, with views that were to betray the revolution altogether in order to fully enter the mainstream without encumbrance. This came to a climax in 1973. At that point, many people who had come out of the student movement were increasingly seduced by the idea of "workers' self-management" that came to be associated with a struggle by employees at the Lipp watch factory who took over their plant rather than see it closed down and attempted to go into business for themselves. The whole idea of a vanguard was rejected as an obstacle to their consciously non-revolutionary endeavor. This mood coincided with a new wave of government attacks on the GP and its leaders. The leadership decided to bail out of its impasse. As Hamon and Rotman describe it, what these leaders feared most was the proletarian and revolutionary-minded base of GP. They dissolved the organisation in haste and shame.

It is not our intention here to do a summation of the Marxist-Leninist movement in France. Such a study could not be confined, as the Hamon-Rotman book is, to the GP, but would also have to examine

the other organisations and lines that existed then and especially after the GP's heyday. (It is worth noting that the PCMLF, founded in February 1968 by people who had left the PCF in the early 1960s, summed up at a conference in 1972 that it had never emerged as a clear pole of opposition to the GP because it shared many of the GP's errors, and thus failed to play a significant role in the events of 1968 and the years following it.) The reader emerges from the end of the second volume with a tremendous sense of waste — not the sense of regret for "wasted youth" that Hamon-Rotman's characters express, but for the wasted opportunities to build a real communist party, based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, with a solid base amongst proletarians in France and real influence throughout French society, that would not have let a moment of the French bourgeoisie's weakness slip by without seizing on it for launching an insurrection or preparing for the day when it could be launched. Such an achievement would have, to say the least, had far more revolutionary impact in the long run than what was accomplished in France during those years.

### III "We Loved the Revolution So"

In contrast to Caute, who declares the idea of revolution insane, and to Hamon and Rotman, who describe it as an idea better dead and buried, Dany Cohn-Bendit's book attempts to show some continuity between the *enragés* in revolt in 1968 and social movements of today. Cohn-Bendit is the one figure most of the world's newspaper readers most associated with the French May 1968. Today he describes himself as "a thorough anticommunist" and a pacifist, but not repentant. His short book gives something of the rich flavour of the different contradictions in play during that period, although taken as a whole what the reader learns the most about are the present views of the author.

It consists of a series of interviews with people who played an impor-

tant role in the sixties and early seventies in France, West Germany, Holland, Italy, the U.S. and Brazil. Though those interviewed have some things in common today, as well as a common past, a certain contrast and debate emerges. Abbie Hoffman argues that demonstrations and protests are still necessary, against Jerry Rubin who defends getting rich by any means necessary. In the same spirit as Rubin, the former West German radical turned Hesse state minister Joschka Fischer and the ex-GP leader July spit out the oldest renegade sophistry: when former revolutionaries have "made it," the revolution has won and continued revolution has become the enemy. July explains that the 1981 election of Socialist President Mitterrand marked the triumph of what was good about 1968, after 13 lost years. Another former GP leader, still working in the shipbuilding yard where he once organised a contingent to attend Pierre Overney's funeral, explains that the present Socialist bosses in the now-nationalised yards are worse than the former ones. "We need revolution," he concludes, "but we [workers] just can't make one." Depressed that many workers who surround him are in the clutches of the PCF or its rival, the fascist Le Pen, and afraid that such people will never "be able to take off their blue work uniforms," he has become a nudist.

A Brazilian journalist who once plunged into armed struggle explains that now that the country has a constitution and elections, violence is no longer valid. The absurd irony of this claim is even more striking in the television series the book is based on, when the former revolutionary declares that his goals for "democracy" have been fulfilled while he and Cohn-Bendit gaze out at the sea from a hilltop overlooking the vast slums of Rio de Janeiro. Another Brazilian former fighter with similar views points out in passing that violence is the only possible response those struggling for social change can expect in an oppressed country whether it has a constitution or not.

In one of the book's most interesting exchanges, a German

feminist activist vigorously contests Cohn-Bendit's contention that the oppression of women has been reformed all but out of existence. (As if any evidence were needed, ample testimony is provided by the book's photos of women — which present women as either ultra-feminine or ridiculous, and mostly as naked.) Perhaps the most disgusting interviews are those with former members of the Italian Red Brigades and the German Red Army Faction who shed tears of pathetic repentance for having taken up arms without shedding the slightest light on the question of how the imperialist bourgeoisies are to be overthrown.

Cohn-Bendit, like Hamon-Rotman, considers violence "the great temptation" in the 1960s and '70s, and like them, he concludes that escalating violence forced many radicals to decide whether they really sought to overthrow the system or merely to reform it. There is some profound truth here, even though some of the people who mouth it are only trying to justify selling out.

First, many people who in one way or another were part of that upsurge did have something to lose, and when it became apparent that there was not going to be a successful revolution in their countries in the near future, they did have to choose between risking privileges or returning to the comfortable places the bourgeoisie had prepared for them. Second, and more importantly, the vision of many such people did not go beyond the narrow horizons of a demand for a more perfect bourgeois democracy, a freedom that meant above all freedom from the evils they themselves most felt and an equality that above all meant an equal chance for themselves and others like them. As Marx once said of petit-bourgeois rebels, they tend to take the conditions for their own liberation to be the universal demands of mankind. Violence was not necessarily a dividing line issue with such people then, because at times it seemed to serve the ends they sought, but ultimately many tended to see all forms of struggle as ways to put pressure on the ruling classes.

The many people Cohn-Bendit interviews have more in common than being veterans of the same decade. To a large degree, it seems that there was much in common in their views even during the 1960s, whether they considered themselves anarchists or Maoists. This book confirms what is also revealed in the Hamon-Rotman volumes. Although many people waved the "Little Red Book" of *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, which at that time outstripped the *Bible* as the world's bestseller, this did not mean that they fully understood revolution as the violent overthrow of one class by another, which Mao had called a universal principle, nor the proletariat's goal of fighting through to free all mankind by eliminating all classes and class distinctions. Sometimes the Chinese Cultural Revolution was one-sidedly seen as the liberation of the individual, which was the same content often given to the 1960s upheavals in the West and which in fact was a major ideological current within them. This wrong understanding of the content and goals of proletarian revolution was the other side of the coin of the failure to grasp the strategic necessity of preparing and ultimately leading revolutionary war.

Thus today various of Cohn-Bendit's interviewees and the author himself declare that they have come to support the parliamentary system. This represents a certain capitulation to imperialism and the most philistine willful ignorance in the face of an imperialist system which makes life hell for the vast majority of the world's people no less today than twenty years ago, but it does not mean, as many of these people themselves seem to think, that never again can there be sudden changes of mood and violent opposition to the government on the part of the middle classes in the imperialist countries.

Tariq Ali's autobiographical book runs in a similar vein, except that since he was never very radical in the first place there is not much obstacle to the reader accepting his contention that his views have not changed much. Ali, who became a Trotskyite at the height of his

notoriety, ends his book by praising Gorbachev as a symbol of the possibilities of reform in a time when Western reformists are immersed in despair. His anecdotal reminiscences are interspersed with sharp-tongued bits of poems written by the English romantic poets, inspired by the French revolution of 1789, to denounce those amongst their ranks who sold out the bourgeois-democratic movement "just for a ribbon to hang at their throat." These poems could be useful today but for the fact that Ali seeks more than analogy; he is also upholding the political content of these poems as a model. He considers it his work to repair "the English revolution of 1640 and its failure to create lasting republican institutions or to crush the economic power of the landed gentry." This, so long after British capitalism has ceased to be revolutionary and so far along in its history as a thoroughly republican predator of nations, is reactionary and absurd. Yet this is exactly the content of the "socialist democracy" he envisioned. Further, this is now coupled with the most abject reformism: "it was impossible for movements in advanced capitalist societies to make a *single* leap from a capitalist state to a socialist system." His 1960s failure to understand the reformist project as a gradual one is the only thing for which Ali repents.

The offspring of a bourgeois Pakistani family and later a "critical" intimate of Ali Bhutto when he was Pakistani head of state, Ali seems to have found himself equally at home amongst the British bourgeoisie who populate this account of the 1960s to an undeserved extent. This book is really far more of an "upstairs" than a "downstairs" affair. But it has its moments. Although his family was pro-Soviet and supposedly Communist, Ali recounts that when he arrived at Oxford in Britain what excited him most was not the campus talk about socialism, but a speech against God. Quickly learning to swim in left Labour waters, he was to try to combine support for the Vietnamese in that war with the belief that the antiwar move-

ment must remain within the political limits set by imperialism.

For instance, some people who remember when the daily press labeled Ali the very height of radicalism in Britain may be surprised that what he apparently considers a highlight of his career is the way in which he succeeded in preventing the major part of the 100,000 people who took part in the October 1968 London march against the war in Vietnam from attacking the U.S. embassy. (There's not much street fighting in *Street Fighting Years*, despite its title, which amounts to false advertising.)

This tactical stance was in line with his fear of alienating the Labour politicians and their backers high and low (especially high) who were willing to support the movement if they were allowed to set the political terms. In fact, Ali is not nearly as hard on the left Labour opponents of the U.S. in Vietnam or the U.S. "antiwar" politicians as the avowed capitalist Caute, who comes off quite a bit more radical in this regard.

Although those who called themselves Maoists in the UK were not at that time the major phenomenon that they were in France or other countries, it is interesting to note that Ali considers "the Maoists" to be the exact opposite pole of what he stood for, from the tactical plane (regarding demonstrations) to the world level. His admiration for the Chinese Revolution from the point of view of Third World nationalism takes second place to his bitter reproach of Mao for having broken with the Soviet Union. This parallels Ali's own inability to really break with the Labour Party, despite his lack of enthusiasm for imperialist domination.

In most imperialist countries the 1960s upsurge was intertwined with splits in the ruling classes that were both aggravated by it and gave it a certain amount of fuel. It was unfortunately all too common for radicals to become confused by this and to end up throwing away revolutionary opportunities in the name of "broad alliances." In Britain, to a larger degree than elsewhere, the 1960s suffered especially from an inability to break even temporarily

with sections of the ruling class. The influence of Trotskyism in Britain was an expression of this. The political paralysis interacted with the comparatively homogeneous middle-class composition of the movement, which, in short, did not go as far as in some other countries. While the failure to distinguish between proletarian revolution and various varieties of social democracy and revisionism, and to hew a revolutionary path on that basis, may have taken a ludicrous form in the case of people like Ali, in general it was genuinely tragic.

#### IV Will It Happen Again?

Hamon and Rotman tell us that the idea that 1968 was "only the beginning" was an "historical misunderstanding," because in fact what was happening was sudden readjustment in basically healthy societies. Cohn-Bendit, for his part, says he still swears by the slogan "under the cobblestones, the beach," referring not only to the sand the students found when they dug up the pavement but also to a whole vision of a utopian society. The difference is that now he hopes to land on that shore by way of parliamentary reform. These views are truly far more out of touch with reality than any previous ideas anyone might have had, when one considers how much the parliamentary system in these countries rests on worldwide exploitation and oppression, and what the consequences are in terms of crisis and revolt.

The idea that the 1960s "won," as argued by Jerry Rubin and Serge July, really means that such people "won" by changing sides. This claim of victory is no less false when expressed by others who point to gains regarding the availability of abortion and birth control, loosened restrictions on personal conduct and other things. The assertion that life under imperialism is gradually getting more and more tolerable clashes with the present situation for very large sections of the masses in most imperialist countries as well as the countries they dominate.

A sort of inside-out form of this argument is given by Caute, who asserts that the 1960s were defeated,

because the war in Vietnam continued and was followed by other imperialist aggression, and because the following decades have seen such blatant, open reaction. Those who view today's imperialist world darkly are more attuned to reality than those who declare it rosy, but both these versions have in common the idea that the imperialist system can become something different without revolution.

It is true, for instance, that the events of 1968 occasioned an overall series of adjustments in French society. In the U.S. and Britain, the 1950s saw a certain bourgeoisification of sections of the workers who had had nothing before the second world war. This realignment within the working class had lagged in France until the 1960s, and it sharpened more after 1968. This was the most important of France's post-1968 "modernisations." To give a different example, one could say that the 1960s saw a certain modernisation of U.S. society, especially the demolition of the legal edifice of segregation that had arisen to enforce the semi-feudal ties that previously held Black people to the land. To cite a third example, after 1968 throughout most of Western Europe there were changes in the prevailing archaic university system which, in the end, were quite necessary in order to satisfy imperialism's evolving needs. But what about 1905 in Russia, which unlike 1968, did see an attempt to seize power led by the proletarian party? Did not the Tsarist government bring about important reforms, including the building up of the middle class in the countryside, the establishment of a parliament, etc., in other words, a certain modernisation of the country, without in any way removing their foot from the neck of the masses? Didn't a great many people at that time — including some less far-sighted Bolsheviks — conclude that Lenin was wrong and revolution impossible?

The fact that revolution did not fall into anyone's lap in the imperialist countries during the 1960s does not prove revolution was impossible. This is not to say that the conditions for a successful insurrection based on the most advanced sec-



tions of the proletariat fully existed then, especially taking into account the political, ideological and organisational weakness of the revolutionary forces at the height of the regimes' crisis. But given the degree to which, for a time, the governments found themselves isolated and the ruling classes were on the defensive, reality itself gave a certain taste of the elements and possibilities of an all-the-way revolution.

There is a two-fold lesson that applies to today's as well as yesterday's imperialist countries: revolutionary crisis can break out suddenly and without warning, though they do not break out without basis; and if the revolutionary communists do not play their full role in leading a successful insurrection then no crisis will in and of itself produce proletarian revolution.

It cannot be concluded that the revolutionaries went too far, that they rushed ahead of events, but rather that they lagged behind them and failed to make the maximum advances possible.

Although the world has changed since the 1960s, the nature of the imperialist societies has not changed. The illusion that these societies are basically healthy is one that only a privileged minority can easily share. In a phrase almost identical to Cohn-Bendit's conclusion, Caute tells us that what is happening today is "the greens, not the reds," that is, parliamentary-focused social movements and not out-of-control or revolutionary outbreaks. This is not true, taking the world today as a whole (Palestine, South Africa, Haiti, South Korea, Algeria, Burma, for instance). Nor is it an all-sided description of what has been going on in the imperialist countries themselves (West Berlin, Paris, New York, London and Madrid have all seen significant riots in the last few years).

The setback caused by the loss of socialist China and the subsequent collapse of much of the international communist movement that looked to Mao Tsetung was a grave blow. But it is still a fact that where there is oppression there is resistance. The growing influence and abilities of the Revolutionary

Internationalist Movement hold out hope of great revolutionary leaps. In Peru there is not only a revolutionary upheaval but a people's war led by a real Maoist Communist Party, the PCP, a participating party of the RIM. Really, looking at the earth as a whole from the point of view of revolution, not much of today's world can be said to be very stable.

The most important difference between the 1960s and now does not lie in the obvious difference between the overall level of struggle within the imperialist countries then and now. Rather it lies in the relative reserves Western imperialism disposed of then, reserves which it no longer possesses, and the overall *heightening* of all the contradictions of the world imperialist system. No imperialist government today could so easily buy its way out of a social crisis as the French bourgeoisie did in 1968. In those days many Western imperialist governments could attempt to distance themselves from the job the U.S. was carrying out in Vietnam on behalf of the West bloc as a whole; further, the U.S. was able to cut its losses and disengage from that war. In today's world, even a regional war that did not soon involve all the major powers East and West in one form or another is inconceivable. Furthermore, the West and East imperialist blocs cannot disengage from their conflict with each other — neither can allow the other uncontested world supremacy.

The fault lines in imperialist society through which the 1960s erupted have not been forever sealed. The bottom layer of dispossessed proletarians in the imperialist countries has not disappeared; in fact, in almost all of them there has been a sharply increasing economic polarisation amongst the wage workers themselves, and if a certain strata of the middle classes have prospered this is not necessarily true of the middle classes as a whole in these countries. There have been certain reforms to eliminate no longer useful anachronisms, but who could plausibly argue that any aspect of life in any imperialist country is less subordinate to the needs of profit and slaughter? A number of people

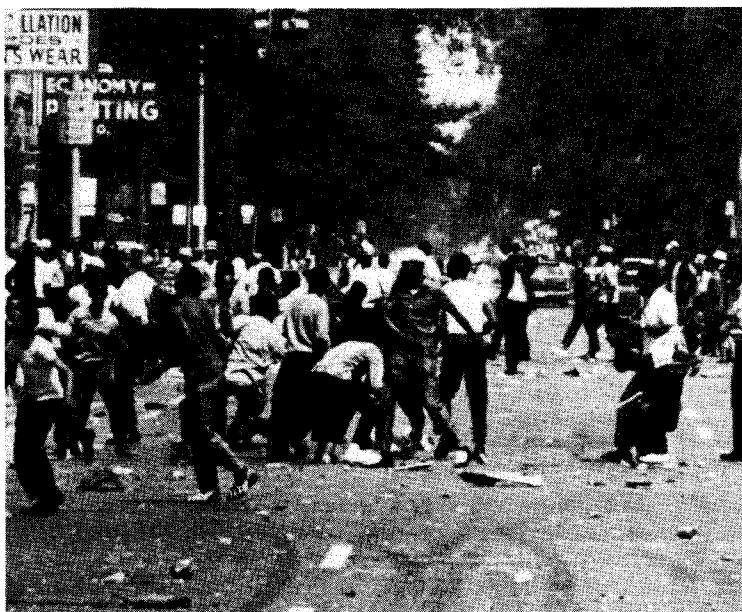
in these books point to increased awareness about the oppression of women as one of the most important gains of the 1960s — but can it really be argued that today this oppression has become less explosive in any of these countries? Clearly there is a class that has nothing to lose, and it does have not to stand alone against imperialist capital.

The greatest achievement of the 1960s in the imperialist countries is that they put proletarian revolution there back on the agenda after a long period when revisionist and imperialist "common sense" declared it outmoded. The mutual interpenetration of violent revolt by students and youth in general with a powerful upsurge amongst certain sections of the proletariat and a general ferment in society overall, in the context of the storms raging in the oppressed countries and the Cultural Revolution in China, allowed the idea of revolution to repossess its reality in France and the U.S., to take two rather different examples.

In the 1960s, some people, looking for a revolutionary crisis through the eyes of the 1930s, did not recognise the elements of one when when they saw them. Today, one factor preventing some people from envisioning a revolutionary crisis in the near future in the West is their insistence on looking for it through "1960s eyes," that is, expecting student demonstrations followed by strikes or some other pattern according to the tempo and interrelationship of events as they occurred 20 years ago. It is far more likely that the development of things in today's world will impose new and unexpected features. With that in mind, the objective and subjective elements of that time and the whole experience must be meticulously summed up and made use of, as part of preparing the analysis, line and leadership so that in the coming period some imperialist countries can be torn out of the hands of imperialism. For us the experience of the 1960s in the imperialist countries is a paving stone to be neither tossed away nor fondled, but rather used to sharpen our knives. □

# July 1967: Rebellion in Detroit

From the *Revolutionary Worker*,  
voice of the Revolutionary Com-  
munist Party, USA, 20 July 1987.



“The club! Those goddamn peckerwoods are going to raid the club again!”

A rowdy crowd of about 200 is gathering at 3:30 a.m. Sunday beside a police paddywagon that has just pulled up across from the United Community League for Civic Action, on Twelfth near Clairmount.

Originally a Black activist club, the UCLCA was a target of the white political machine. When the club owner was laid off from his job in the auto plants, he started using it as a “blind pig,” or after-hours drinking and gambling joint, in order to survive. The routine police raids normally netted about twenty people, just enough to cram into a single paddywagon.

But tonight, unknown to the cops, there is a party going on for two Black GIs just home from Vietnam. Inside, eight-five people celebrate their safe return.

One of the cops swings a sledgehammer through the plate glass door to get in. Curses volley back and forth between the crowd and the police. “Go home, whitey. Why don’t you go fuck with white people?”

Club patrons are being hustled into a paddywagon, their arms

twisted painfully behind their backs. The police can hardly believe the number of people inside. It will take many round trips with the wagon — about an hour — to haul them all down to the Tenth Precinct station.

With each wagonload, the crowd grows larger and more angry. Soon, some of the onlookers, outraged at how roughly the women are being arrested, are yelling at the top of their lungs. The cops line up in the middle of the street with their batons ready. “If you stay where you are, no one will get hurt.”

But Bill Scott, 19-year-old son of the club owner, climbs on top of a car. “Are we going to let these peckerwood motherfuckers come down here anytime they want and mess us around?” “Hell, no!” barks the crowd.

Someone ducks into an alley to find a bottle. He aims for a sergeant at the club door; it shatters in front of the pig’s feet. “They’re scared!” a man shouts. The cops make for a few people nearby, but the crowds merge and force them to retreat.

As the wagon and cop cars pull away, a hail of bricks and bottles smashes against them.

A litter basket is hurled through the window of a white-owned drug-

store, and then a clothing store. Slowly, people begin to enter and take what they want.

Against a background of burglar alarms and gleeful laughter, a stunned cop yells into his radio receiver, “All cars stay clear. Repeat. Stay clear of Twelfth Street area.”

By sunrise, a looted shoestore is in flames. By sundown, the gun battles will begin.

(This scenario is drawn in large part from *Hurt, Baby, Hurt*, by William Walter Scott.)

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“A spirit of carefree nihilism was taking hold. To riot and to destroy appeared more and more to become ends in themselves. Late Sunday afternoon it appeared to one observer that the young people were ‘dancing amidst the flames.’” (Kerner Commission Report)

Bill Scott would later set down on paper the elation he felt when they seized control of Twelfth Street:

“For the first time in our lives we felt free. Most important, we were right in what we did to the law.

“I felt powerful and good inside for being a part of those who finally fought back regardless of fear.... Within the aggregation of people this night there was a certain unique

madness that had taken possession of everyone's body and soul which was almost what could be called the unification of the rebellious spirit of man; a fearless spirit ordained for complete liberation of the self, combined with and supported by a community at large. Guess one could say it was like fighting and gaining your citizenship, after having given it away to obedience to the law — police law — which was a one-man judge and assassin that ruled black people." (*Hurt, Baby, Hurt*)

The police sergeant who led the raid on the "blind pig" recalls:

"The real trouble didn't start until we started to leave with the last wagonload, and we couldn't get our cars out. By the time we pulled away, more bottles and bricks were coming. A lot of the windows were broken out in one of the cars. We answered radio runs for looting, fire, shooting, curfew violations and anything else that happened.

"The sniping was real. I was in the station more than once where we were being sniped at the desk in the station. Some of the motormen tell me that in the armored personnel carriers, you'd hear a bang or a ping on the outside, and you couldn't tell for sure if somebody had thrown a rock or if somebody shot at you.

"Yes, I was scared. You're damned right I was scared. More than once I was scared." (Excerpts from a forthcoming oral history by Sidney Fine)

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To keep Detroit's Blacks "in line" was the task of the city police force, which was 93 percent white. Neighborhoods were prowled by the Big Four, the police cruisers whose four officers would "beat the hell out of you for recreation." In late June 1967, Danny Thomas, a Black 27-year-old army vet who lived only four blocks from Twelfth and Clairmount, was killed by a gang of white youths when he tried to protect his pregnant wife from their sexual advances. She later lost the baby. The police refused to arrest the gang. The incident was kept out of the major newspapers until the city's Black newspaper made it a banner headline.

Thus, although placed at the

heart of American society as urban workers, Blacks were still forcibly held in an exploited and oppressed condition relative to whites.

A sense of the anger simmering in places like Twelfth Street is typified by Bill Scott, when he recalls how he felt after weeks of searching for a job in that summer of 1967:

"[One] day I realized with complete understanding that something was wrong because there should have been a job for me somewhere in that entire city.... But then there were no jobs for a lot of people on the streets. Wait a minute now, after all I was doing the American thing by trying to pull myself up by my bootstraps; I was educating myself; there should have been some kind of work.... I had just finished submitting a job application at one of the many downtown employment offices and was on my way back to my sister's home, when something came to me like the ring of a bell which caused me to ask myself one question, 'Tell me something, Bill, why is it that you don't see any of these white cats walking around looking for a job, not to mention that they are on their lunch breaks, well-dressed, and carefree as anybody would want to be?' This was the day I decided to reject anything that was white. I could no longer tell myself that it was going to work out and I had also to get to work on my racist feelings towards my own world: Black. There was nothing in the white world that had been meant for me... nothing. I wasn't even supposed to be out there in the first place. And going to college wasn't going to change the way white people mistreated and murdered Black people in any way possible." (*Hurt, Baby, Hurt*)

\* \* \*

July 23, 1967

"That Sunday, my wife went to church on Twelfth Street, not too far from where the incident had occurred. And she came back, she said, you know, there's a sort of stillness that's there that I don't understand. She said, it's too calm. And I said, well, you know, there is something rather strange. And we looked outside and there was an inordinate amount of fires that were

trickling up through the air!"

This recollection on the tense calm that settled into the initial six-block riot area during the first daylight hours after the police retreat comes from a Black teacher. About 25-years-old at the time, he worked evenings as a driver and was able to observe much of the rebellion as it broke into full fury for the next few days. But on Sunday, city officials, caught off-guard and their forces vastly outnumbered in the initial outbreak, were hoping the disturbance would ebb by itself through a policy of police restraint and media blackout. He continues:

"The mayor, Jerome P. Cavanagh, said don't shoot the looters. I think part of the reason why that was the case, they said it was that the Black community had been responsible for his being elected. Well that started, I would say for the next two days or so, a sort of interracial stealing binge, in which you had Black folks and white folks hand-in-hand going into various stores, pillaging them, giving a certain amount of time for the people to get their goods, and then they would flee the area."

In a picnic-like atmosphere of tinkling glass, shouts of laughter, and Motown music blaring from transistor radios, for two days the way wealth flows in the city was reversed on a grand scale. Impoverished folk liberated basic foodstuffs from grocery stores where they'd been cheated for years, and less-needy residents could be seen rolling sofas out of exclusive stores like Charles Furniture on Olympia Street. At posh clothing outlets along Livernois, the "Avenue of Fashion," cooperative looters were heard exchanging their waist sizes with each other. Some looted with shopping lists in hand. The owner of a music shop reported losing every electric guitar, amplifier, and jazz album in the place — but the classical records were left untouched.

The burning and looting were seen as one way to strike back at the relations of distribution, the hidden "ghetto taxes" and how all of life was stacked against them, and in their forays they liked to target the most hated businesses. One auto

worker who stayed away from his job at a Ford plant on Monday told a reporter:

"People are bitter. White people gyp you all the time. I went to a gas station at Wyandotte and Michigan to get a tire changed. It was raining and the man wouldn't change it. Then he wanted to charge me \$12 to change it because I'm a Negro. That kind of stuff is wrong. I've been looking for this riot to happen for years."

As he escorted the reporter on a tour of the looted area, he stopped in front of a now-empty furniture store to say,

"You go in there to buy furniture and those people would act like they were doing you a favour. They send furniture down here that the white people wouldn't have and then they charge you double for it. It's too much."

Late that evening, a 45-year-old white man, working in a grocery-looting team of whites and Blacks, was shot to death by a market owner. It was the first fatality in the riot.

Five different banks were stormed, all to no avail. But among the more prized items taken were a total of 2,498 rifles and thirty-eight handguns. Many of these would be put to use in the days to follow.

Fully one-quarter of the looters were under 17. And the role of ghetto youth in this and other stages of the rebellion stood out clearly. Youngsters whose only image of the cops had been that of the hated Big Four could hardly believe their own sudden strength. This was not lost on city officials, who grimly concluded afterwards that 60 percent of those participating had been between 15 and 24 years old. Mayor Cavanagh showed movies of the rebellion to the members of the Kerner Commission in Washington, then said:

"Look at the faces. You will see mostly young men. These young men are the fuse. For the most part they have no experience in real productive work. For the most part, they have no stake in the social arrangements of life. For the most part, they have no foreseeable future except among the hustlers and minor racketeers. For the most part, they are cynical, hostile, frustrated,

and angry against a system they feel has included them out. At the same time, they are filled with the brava-do of youth and a code of behavior which is hostile to authority." (John Hese, *The Algiers Motel Incident*)

With neither a 9-to-5 curfew nor the presence of city police an equal match for these huge and youthful mobs, Cavanagh was forced to call in 350 state troopers and 900 Michigan National Guardsmen on the very first day of the rebellion. The guardsmen were summoned from their summer encampment in a rural area of the state. Many had never visited a large city nor seen a Black person except on television. One can imagine their thoughts when their convoy reached Grand Blanc and they saw an ominous plume of smoke rising above the unseen city forty-five miles further to the southeast. It was at that point that they were issued their ammunition.

The Guard troops were stationed at various high-school staging areas in Detroit. Undisciplined, trigger-happy, without any riot training other than a few words about "mob control," they were then dispatched down the darkened city streets where no mobs were to be found, only lots of hostile activity. By Monday there were 800 state police and over 9,000 guardsmen in the city, the latter representing 85 percent of all Guard forces statewide. This would not be enough.

According to various accounts, it was sometime on Monday that the whole character of the rebellion took a leap. Gunfire against the authorities, which had started the preceding evening, became the favoured activity of the rioters, both Black and white. It began with Fire Department personnel drawing hostile bullets. All told, on 285 occasions firemen had to retreat from the scene of a fire. When armed officers intervened, it developed into fierce gun battles fought directly with police and National Guardsmen. It was reported that during a single hour on Monday, for example, a police dispatcher counted two precinct stations, two riot command posts, and five fire stations all under sniper attack.

On Monday afternoon, President Johnson dispatched a task force of 4,750 paratroopers, comprising the 82nd and 101st Airborne divisions, from Ft. Bragg and Ft. Campbell to Selfridge Air Force Base north of Detroit. He also sent a team of personal envoys, headed by Cyrus Vance (former Deputy Secretary of Defence under Kennedy and later Secretary of State under Carter). But there was deep division within ruling circles over the deployment of these troops, which had been requested twelve hours earlier by Governor Romney and Mayor Cavanagh....

Finally, Johnson authorized that the federal troops be deployed, and simultaneously that the Guard be federalized. With the guardsmen already stationed on the west side where the rebellion had erupted, the army soldiers were deployed on the east side, where the rebellion had only recently spread. Thus, on Tuesday some of the rebels moved away from the crack federal troops and shifted over to the west side of the city. Gunfighting continued for another two or three days.

The *Detroit News* vividly described the scene in the Wednesday edition:

"Negro snipers turned 140 square blocks north of West Grand Blvd. into a bloody battlefield for three hours last night, temporarily routing police and national guardsmen.... Tanks thundered through the streets and heavy machine guns clattered.... The scene was incredible. It was as though the Viet Cong had infiltrated the riot-blackened streets."

Some observers perceived a certain degree of organisation among the rioters. Even the small degree of organisation that people among the Black masses had built (Black vets in particular) expressed itself powerfully in various ways. One observer testified that he'd overheard an early walkie-talkie command to spread the disorder to the east side. The authorities in their fear saw things everywhere — some real, some not. The Fire Chief felt that arsonists used divide-and-conquer tactics, and that others lured his men into gun ambushes by telephoning bogus reports of fires. A survey of metro-

area residents two weeks after the rebellion found that 55.5 percent felt that it had been planned, and many were inclined to call it an insurrection or revolution.

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The sheer scale of this rebellion is impressive. Consider the portion of the city which police designated the "central civil disorder area." This area alone straddled both sides of the city, extending over some forty of the city's 140 square miles [over 350 square kilometers]. When the smoke finally cleared, some 1,300 buildings had been burned and 2,700 looted, property damage exceeded \$50 million, and 5,000 people were left homeless by wind-swept fires. There were 7,231 arrested (6,407 of them Black), 386 injured, and 43 dead (33 of them Black).

In addition, the rebellion ignited simultaneous uprisings — all of them serious enough to deploy National Guardsmen or state police — in five other cities: in Pontiac, Flint, and Saginaw to the north; in Grand Rapids, some 150 miles to the west; and in Toledo, Ohio to the south. Disturbances of varying intensity were also simultaneously occurring in more than two dozen other cities in Michigan, Ohio and other states.

After surveying the rubble, Henry Ford II, chairman of Ford Motor Company, was asked to comment. Ford emphasized that what Detroit had seen was not a race riot. It was

"a complete breakdown of law and order. But I don't think that as citizens of this country, any of us can allow these things to go on. These small minorities — these rabblers, whether they be white or Black — have to be taken to task. They seem to want to take the law into their own hands. I think these people must be apprehended and tried for their respective crimes, whatever they may be, in courts of law. And I think they should then be judged on whatever they may have done.

"It is my feeling that this country may turn out to be the laughing stock of the world because of situations such as we've had in Detroit. I don't think there is much point in trying to sell the world on emulat-

ing our system and way of life if we can't even put our own house in order." (*Automotive News*)

The ruling class was deeply disturbed: this uprising in one of the chief industrial centres of the nation's heartland, quelled only by the intervention of the U.S. Army, had broadcast a message to the whole world that the American system was bankrupt — and vulnerable.

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A single week of rebellion allows the oppressed to distinguish friends from enemies better than whole years of normal times.

Early on the first day of the rebellion, Hubert Locke, a Black administrative assistant to Detroit's police commissioner, called together several of the city's Responsible Negro Leaders. In pairs, they fanned out through the Tenth Precinct to plead with the crowds to disperse. One pair comprised Deputy School Superintendent Arthur Johnson and U.S. Representative John Conyers, Jr., who was quite popular among his constituents.

At one intersection, Conyers stood upon the hood of the car and shouted through a bullhorn, "We're with you! But please! This is not the way to do things! Please go back to your homes!" "No, no, no," the mob chanted, "Don't want to hear it!" "Uncle Tom!" One man in the crowd, a civil rights activist whom Conyers had once defended in a trial, was inciting the crowd and shouting at Conyers, "Why are you defending the cops and the establishment? You're just as bad as they are!" Rocks and bottles flew toward the car, one of them hitting a cop nearby. The crowd was getting "uglier." Johnson whispered into Conyers' ear, "John, let's get the hell out of here." As Conyers climbed down from the hood of the car, he remarked to a reporter in disgust, "You try to talk to those people and they'll knock you into the middle of next year."

Recently, we asked D., a Black revolutionary who was very young at the time, how much the rebellion of the "young kids" had impinged on the routine of the older Black workers, like his father. He

recalled:

"At home, that's all they talked about. Even with a lot of the older Blacks, there was mixed feelings. You had a lot of them, they finally sensed that this is the beginning of something; finally, the Black folks that rose up. A lot of that hostility and outrage toward the system is coming out, it was being actualized in Black youth. From just the young brother and sister throwing a rock through a window and grabbing something, or a old person just hollering — it affected everybody."

For two decades, the powerful forces underlying these storms had been coalescing. Prior to World War 2 the livelihood of Blacks in the U.S. had been largely characterized by sharecropping and subsistence farming in the south, together with the enforced illiteracy, Jim Crow segregation, and lynch-mob terror that bolstered this semifeudal existence. But on the basis of its dominant world position secured through the war, the U.S. set about mechanizing southern agriculture, profoundly transforming the economy and whole mode of life in the region. Millions of Blacks and others, their farm labour superfluous, were forced to leave the land and migrate to the cities. Between 1940 and 1966 some 3.7 million Blacks left the South. Indeed, by 1966 a higher proportion of Blacks (69 percent) than of whites (64 percent) lived in metropolitan areas.

Detroit was typical. The proportion of its population that was Black grew from 9 percent in 1940 to 16 percent in 1950 to 34 percent in 1965.

But this was more than just the shift of people on a map. It was a shift in the whole economic status of the masses of Black people, from peasants to proletarians. In Detroit, Black people sometimes quipped that Hitler and Tojo did more for the emancipation of their labour than did Lincoln and Roosevelt. This was because many Blacks filled positions in industry that were created by the war itself and by the generally prosperous American economy that ensued. In the early 1960s Detroit's auto industry experienced a sales boom. Employment at the Big 3 auto companies



grew from 723,556 in 1960 to 1,020,783 in 1968. The proportion of Blacks employed in these companies, which in 1940 had been less than 2 percent, climbed from 9.1 percent in 1960 to 13.6 percent in 1966.

At the same time, Black auto-workers were concentrated in the worst and most hazardous of the plant jobs, jobs that were strenuous, grimy, noisy and noxious and required little skill. Although 13.6 percent of the overall workforce was Black, among labourers and operatives it was 26.6 percent and among craftsmen it was only 3.0 percent. In one typical factory, the Dodge Main assembly plant, whites comprised 90 percent of all skilled tradesmen, 95 percent of all foremen, 99 percent of all general foremen, and 100 percent of all superintendents. On top of this, the United Auto Workers (UAW), which for decades had outright excluded Blacks from its union rolls, continued to be blatantly racist.

In some ways, the situation inside the auto plants was a microcosm of the general situation in the northern cities facing Black people who remained overwhelmingly at the bottom of a society where the white middle class was enjoying new post-war privileges and the trickle-down treats of U.S. world domination....

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One of the most distinctive aspects of the Detroit rebellion, even when placed beside other urban rebellions of the decade, was the mass participation by members of the working class, including basic industrial workers. In this regard, the rebellion was a sort of "weather vane" that pointed to the revolutionary potential of the urban proletariat, and it was the reference point for a revolutionary movement that grew in the auto plants during the next few years.

Participation in the rebellion was highest among the most deprived strata of the Black working class, but it also extended broadly to Black and white strata above (as well as below) that point of concentration. In Detroit, Black and other people who could be classified "lower middle class" rioted side-by-side with those on the bottom of so-

ciety. A survey of 1,200 men being held at Jackson prison after their arrest in the rebellion found that 40 percent were employed by the Big 3 auto companies, and an additional 40 percent by other large, mostly unionized employers. Also, 80 percent received wages of at least \$6,000 (in 1967 dollars), which was only slightly below the citywide family income average of \$6,400 for Blacks and \$6,800 for whites. (Poverty level was \$3,335 for an urban family of four.)

In the auto plants themselves, absenteeism was so high during the rebellion that many assembly operations ground to a halt for two days. The afternoon and evening shifts were cancelled off the bat due to the curfew, even though the curfew was not enforced against persons commuting to and from work. But even on the day shift, with no curfew in effect, many plants in both Detroit and Pontiac experienced absenteeism levels as high as 80 to 85 percent. Fortunately for Mr. Ford and his ilk, assembly operations were already down by more than half for model-year changeover; nevertheless, absenteeism due to the rebellion caused production losses exceeding 3,000 vehicles worth many millions of dollars.

While large numbers of autoworkers were in the thick of the rebellion, within the auto plants themselves the atmosphere, although tense, did not erupt into violence or walkouts as the companies feared. The *Automotive News* commented, "the automotive industry almost miraculously escaped the fury."

But the rebellion upped the ante in the already racially polarized factories. One worker, who commuted from the Black suburb of Inkster to work in Detroit, recently recalled for us the atmosphere inside one of the Big 3. During the week of the rebellion, some white foremen locked themselves in the foremen's office at shift-end until all the Black workers had left, afraid that they might get hurt. In the immediate wake of the rebellion, workers who had been involved were circumspect about their activity, "they didn't talk much about it. Some stole more

than the kids." Nevertheless, due to the liberated climate overall, the political balance had shifted on the factory floors. For example, previously "you had Black Uncle Toms who didn't want to sit with Blacks. But when the riots happened, they left the whites and came to sit with the Blacks. I told them, 'Go back where you came from.'"

Alongside the participation of workers, the role of Vietnam veterans stood out in the rebellion and was reflected in the gun battles. The occupying soldiers of the U.S. Army and Michigan National Guard weren't the only ones who could put their combat experience in the rice paddies and rain forests of Southeast Asia to use in the alleys and boulevards of a modern city. Once again, America's reactionary marauding overseas had come back to haunt it....

There are some lessons learned young which stubbornly linger. One who was ten-years-old in 1967 had this to say in 1987:

"What it showed, actually, is that revolution is possible in the United States. Looking back, that it's possible. The fact that the riots had a significant impact on everybody, not only Blacks but Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, and even the progressive whites, it had radicalized everybody. Not only that, it had an impact on people all over the world, that something like this could take place right here in the United States. Before 1967, Blacks thought it was impossible to really rise up against the system that way. And it showed, too, the potentialities of the masses of Blacks, if the energies and hostilities are directed at the oppressor. That's how I look back on '67. It's been so much written about it, it's so much to actually learn about it and consciously relearn about the '60s. But really it symbolized revolution is ripe and can happen right here in the citadel of imperialism." □

# 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

\* From *Alborada Comunista*, periodical of the GCR, May 1st 1988 (Abridged)

# 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 focoism 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  
(Continued to page 74)



## “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism”

# New Document from RCP, USA

The Second Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, a participating party in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, held its Eighth Plenum meeting earlier in 1988. This meeting finalised and approved the following document, first drafted by the RCP, USA leadership in the autumn of 1987 and subsequently circulated throughout the party for a period of internal discussion and debate. It also passed the accompanying resolution. They appeared in the *Revolutionary Worker*, August 29 1988 — AWTW.

### Introduction

The science of revolution of our class, the international proletariat, has been strengthened and developed as it has been wielded as a weapon in the class struggle. Specifically we have pointed to the necessity of upholding Mao's qualitative contributions to that science as a basic touchstone and dividing line in the international communist movement, in opposition to revisionists of various kinds who have betrayed Marxism and revised its basic tenets. In the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* it is stated: “The principle involved is nothing less than whether or not to uphold and build upon the decisive contributions to the proletarian revolution and the science of Marxism-Leninism made by Mao Tsetung. It is therefore nothing less than a question of whether or not to uphold Marxism-Leninism itself.... Without upholding and building on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought it

is not possible to defeat revisionism, imperialism and reaction in general.”<sup>1</sup>

At the time of the formation of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, our party changed our formulation of the science from Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought to Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. We did this to be in conformity with the *Declaration*, but more importantly because we thought this more correctly described the science. While this may have seemed a mere technical punctuation point (putting a hyphen instead of a comma), it was in fact making certain that the contributions of Mao Tsetung were not being relegated to a lesser role, as an appendage to Leninism. At the time we discussed the reasons for this change within our party. Today we feel it is even more correct to name the science Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

In making this change we believe we are bringing the name in correct relationship to the science as it has been developed by its practitioners and theoreticians since the time of Marx. The theoretical basis for this change is the fact that there have been three milestones in the development of this theory. Marx founded the science and laid out the basic precepts; Lenin developed it to another level; and Mao took it again to another level. Previously, in opposition to a Lin Piaoist conception that we had entered a new era, which Mao Tsetung Thought was equated with, we were careful to point out that there is not a new era. It remains the case that this is the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution. However, we tended to

confuse the notion of *new era* with *new stage* in the development of the science. While there is no new era — we are not in a new historical epoch — there have been qualitative developments in the science made by Mao Tsetung of such importance that we can say there is a new and higher stage in the science. Thus we call our science Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

By this formulation we mean the same thing as Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. Why, then, make the change? Because, whatever the intentions, to use Mao Tsetung Thought does not give proper weight to the contributions of Mao; it can suggest that these contributions are less important than the contributions of Marx and Lenin. We want to make clear that the contributions of Mao are on the level, of the same magnitude, as those of the other great revolutionary leaders and theoreticians, Marx and Lenin. Secondarily, and as an expression of the principal reason, it is easier and better to popularise the science as Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. It is important, however, to stress that in making this change we do not have differences with the characterisation of the meaning of the revolutionary science and its development by Marx, Lenin, and Mao which is found in the *Declaration*.

### Marxism-Leninism-Maoism

In *For a Harvest of Dragons* Chairman Avakian explains the process of the development of this science:

“This does not mean, however, that Mao Tsetung Thought is some

RCP, USA

# Resolution Hailing the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

On the occasion of our 8th Plenum meeting, the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, warmly hails the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement and the parties and organisations in its

ranks. We express our firm support for the RIM, its *Declaration*, and for the advances achieved by its parties and organisations in our common cause. In this same spirit, our Central Committee sends its

greetings and firm political support to the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement for its important ongoing work and for the fundamentally correct direction it has persevered in, on the basis of the *Declaration*.

The Central Committee resolves anew that the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, will carry out our own revolutionary tasks in the U.S., guided by the spirit of doing our part for the world revolution.

Long Live Proletarian Internationalism!

Strengthen the Ranks of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement!

Workers and Oppressed People of the World Unite!

addition to Marxism-Leninism that is relevant (only) to the 'third world,' nor still less that it is 'Chinese Marxism-Leninism' as at least some of the Chinese revisionists have been known to allege. As pointed out earlier, the greatest of all Mao's contributions is the theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, whose basic analysis of the transition to communism, as well as the basic methodology guiding this analysis, has universal application, despite the reversal of the revolution in China — and indeed in order to understand and act upon the profound lessons of this setback. And overall Mao Tsetung Thought represents a qualitative development of Marxism-Leninism. Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, then, is an integral philosophy and political theory at the same time as it is a living, critical and continuously developing science. It is not the quantitative addition of the ideas of Marx, Lenin and Mao (nor is it the case that every particular idea or policy or tactic adopted or advocated by them has been without error); Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought is

a synthesis of the development, and especially the qualitative breakthroughs, that communist theory has achieved since its founding by Marx up to the present time. It is for this reason and in this sense that, as Lenin said about Marxism, it is omnipotent because it is true."<sup>2</sup>

Understanding our revolutionary science as a synthesis, and using Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to give the most correct expression to this synthesis, we can identify the following as its main, essential features.

## 1.

The philosophical foundation of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is dialectical materialism. Dialectical materialism recognises that all reality is material reality, that all reality consists of matter in motion, and ideas have their origin in this material reality. Further, all reality exists as the unity of opposites: The basic law of nature, society, and thought and their development is the law of contradiction, of the unity and struggle of opposites. The unity and identity of all things is temporary and relative; struggle be-

tween opposites is ceaseless and absolute, and this gives rise to radical ruptures and revolutionary leaps. All ideas of permanent equilibrium, permanent stability, and permanent order, of preordained or everlasting things — all such ideas are wrong and ultimately reactionary. This applies to human society and its development as well as to the rest of material reality. Dialectical materialism also recognises that practice is both the ultimate source and the final criterion of truth, and it places most emphasis on revolutionary practice. As Marx so powerfully expressed this, "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it."<sup>3</sup>

As applied specifically to human society and its development, dialectical materialism stresses both the fundamental role of production and the contradictory and dynamic character of production itself and of its interrelationship with the political and ideological superstructure of society. Social life begins with and is sustained by the process of social production. And, as Marx put it, "The mode of production of material life conditions the social,

political and intellectual life process in general.”<sup>4</sup> But the productive forces of society can only be developed by people entering into certain production relations. Within these production relations new productive forces develop. At a certain stage of their development, the productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production. A radical rupture, a revolutionary transformation, must take place in society. This revolutionary transformation is carried out in the political and ideological superstructure, and it centres on the struggle for political power. Politics and ideology cannot create a revolution in the absence of the necessary material conditions, but once the necessary material conditions have developed — out of the basic contradictions of society — the superstructure becomes the decisive arena in which the future direction of society is battled out between the major contending forces, or classes.

## 2.

Every revolution of the past, since the emergence of class society, has seen the replacement of one system of exploitation by another and the rule of one exploiting class by another. But the proletarian revolution is different. The very process of capitalist production has created the material conditions such that society can be organised on a whole new nonexploitative foundation, and this mode of production has forged a class, the proletariat, in whose interests it is to carry out this historic task. Herein lies the greatest significance of the motion of capitalism’s fundamental contradiction, the contradiction between socialised production and private appropriation, and of its resolution by means of proletarian revolution.

In summing up some of his decisive contributions to the materialist conception of history, Marx pointed out:

“What I did that was new was to prove: (1) that the *existence of classes* is only bound up with *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 constitutes the transition to the *abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society*.”<sup>5</sup>

This is a basic principle and foundation of the analysis of the contradictions in present day society and the road of resolving them in the interests of humanity, moving human society to a new and qualitatively more advanced stage: communism.

Marx gave concentrated expression to what is involved in the achievement of communism:

“This Socialism is the *declaration of the permanence of the revolution*, the *class dictatorship* of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the *abolition of class distinctions generally*, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionising of all the ideas that result from these social relations.”<sup>6</sup>

## 3.

Today we live in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution. Lenin analysed this as an era in which all the contradictions of capitalism are intensified. By its very nature, imperialism, the highest and final stage of capitalism, engenders violent upheavals and war. Imperialism is the economic and political system that is dominant in the world, which sets the basic framework for society on a world scale. And proletarian revolution is the only means of eradicating imperialism and all systems of exploitation from the face of the earth. This is a process which is, despite twists and turns, and very real setbacks, already underway.

The proletarian movement is an international movement. “The proletariat in advancing the struggle can *only* advance it by approaching it, and seeking to advance it, on a world level first of all. This doesn’t mean of course that you try to make revolution irrespective of the conditions in different parts of the world or the

conditions within particular countries, but it means that even in approaching that you proceed from the point of view of the world arena as most decisive and the overall interests of the world proletariat as paramount. And that is not merely a good idea. It has a very material foundation, which has been laid by the system of imperialism.”<sup>7</sup>

“Proletarian internationalism really is founded on a concrete material reality. There really is a world imperialist system that is the common enemy of people whether they reside in the citadels, the homelands, where the imperialist monster is centred and has its foundations so to speak, or whether they live in the vast areas of what’s referred to commonly as the Third World, the colonial and dependent countries.”<sup>8</sup>

## 4.

In the world today we can speak in general terms of two types of countries: on the one hand the imperialist countries, which control and dominate the major levers of the world economy, means of production, and products of the labour of the proletariat and oppressed classes all around the world; and on the other the oppressed countries which are overall dominated by and subordinate to the imperialists of different countries. It is from the proletariat and the oppressed in all of these countries that revolution has and will burst forward. However, there are two main streams of the proletarian revolution: In the different kinds of countries, the objective conditions — the actual contradictions — pose different basic roads for the accomplishment of the seizure of political power. In the imperialist countries, the road is what is generally called the October Road — political work and struggle leading to armed insurrection in the cities, launching a generalised civil war. In the oppressed countries, the road is generally that forged by Mao Tsetung in China, that of a protracted war based in the countryside, and accumulating strength to encircle and eventually seize the cities.

As Mao Tsetung has stressed,

these two different roads to the seizure of power correspond to the two general types of countries, but in both types of countries the armed struggle for political power is the highest and most decisive form of struggle. It is the duty of communists everywhere to prepare for and wage a people's war — a war that actively involves and fundamentally relies on the masses of the oppressed — in accordance with the particular situation and the correct strategic road for revolution.

In the two different types of countries the proletarian revolution takes place through different processes and class alliances — though the leadership of the proletariat and the ultimate goal is common to both. In the imperialist countries, the revolution is of a directly proletarian socialist character. In the oppressed countries the revolution takes place through two stages, with a new-democratic stage (targeting imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat/comprador capitalism) clearing the path for the socialist stage. In both cases, depending on the character and stage of the revolutionary struggle, it is crucial to correctly analyse who are friends and who are enemies — which are the main and leading forces of the revolutionary struggle, which social forces must be won as allies (or politically neutralised), and which must be overthrown.

## 5.

The means of achieving the goal of communism is proletarian revolution. The basic features of this were developed by Marx, together with Engels, including the decisive lesson they drew from the experience of the Paris Commune and its defeat, in 1871: "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes."<sup>9</sup> The October Revolution in Russia, which was led by Lenin and Stalin and was the first successful proletarian revolution, further established in practice the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it has been clearly demonstrated and summed up through the experience of the Soviet Union and the Chinese

Revolution that the revolution must continue under the dictatorship of the proletariat. In other words, the struggle to transform all of society has proven to be a protracted and complicated process that is not "settled" once the proletariat has overthrown the bourgeoisie and established the proletarian dictatorship, nor even once the decisive means of production have been socialised. Classes, class contradiction, and class struggle — most decisively the contradiction and struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie — continue all throughout the transition to communism. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, led by Mao Tsetung, represents the highest pinnacle yet achieved by the international proletariat in the advance toward communism: This Cultural Revolution indicates a powerful means and method for mobilising and relying on the masses to fight against capitalist restoration in socialist society and for making new breakthroughs in carrying forward the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and advancing toward communism.

## 6.

The party of the revolutionary proletariat plays a crucial role in the struggle to seize power and wield it. The party leads the masses in revolutionary struggle through the application of the mass line in accordance with the fundamental principle that the masses are the makers of history and must liberate themselves. The party must play the vanguard role — before, during, and after the seizure of power — in leading the proletariat in the historic struggle for communism. But at the same time, once power has been seized by the proletariat and the party has become the leading force within the new proletarian state, the contradiction between the party and the masses becomes a concentrated expression of the contradictions marking socialist society as a transition between capitalism and communism. Those in the party, particularly its leading ranks, who take the capitalist road and try to restore capitalism in the name of

"socialism" and "communism," become the main target of the continuing revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the process of identifying and struggling to defeat these capitalist-roaders, the party itself, on all levels, must be further revolutionised and thus strengthened in its role as the revolutionary vanguard as a crucial part of deepening and carrying forward the revolutionisation of society overall toward the goal of communism.

## Conclusion

Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is our outlook and methodology; it is our weapon for understanding and changing the world, in visualising the goal, and in forging the path to achieve it.

In today's world especially, with the heightening of all the basic contradictions, the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism have great importance and power in bringing about revolutionary victories.

## Footnotes

1. *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement*, pp. 14-15.
2. Bob Avakian, *For a Harvest of Dragons* (Chicago: RCP Publications, 1983), p. 114.
3. Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," original version, in Marx and Frederick Engels, *Feuerbach. Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlooks* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), p. 98 (also cited in *For a Harvest of Dragons*, p. 25).
4. Marx, "Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*" in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973) Vol. 1, p. 503.
5. Marx, "Marx to J. Weydemeyer" (March 5 1852), in Marx and Engels, *Selected Letters* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1977) p. 18 (also cited in *For a Harvest of Dragons*, p. 30).
6. Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 282 (also cited in *For a Harvest of Dragons*, p. 40).
7. Bob Avakian, "Advancing the World Revolutionary Movement: Questions of Strategic Orientation," *Revolution*, No. 51, Spring 1984, p. 4 (also cited in *Bulletins*, p. 44).
8. Bob Avakian, "The Imperialist System and Proletarian Internationalism," from 1982 interview on WFRG Atlanta, *RW* No. 187, January 7 1983, p. 4 (also cited in *Bulletins*, pp. 44-45).
9. Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party, Preface to the German Edition of 1872*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 99.

## Colombia

(Continued from page 69)

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. There 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. □

## USSR

*(Continued from page 31)*

ities was concerned, as long as it was directed against Great Russian chauvinism, it was fine, but the problem was that sometimes it didn't stop there and this nationalism would turn into chauvinism of the Georgians, Azeris and so forth against each other.

After an ebb in their debate, I ask them whether, with only 3-4 million Georgians, they think it would be possible to set up a viable independent government?

— Vietnam is a small country, but they defeated a very big power, Yusef quickly retorts.

Yusef points to the swiftly growing nationalist movement in the Baltic Republics. He says that the Georgians want to be independent, but that they are not alone, that all the other minority peoples in the USSR feel the same.

— Well, it seems you're prepared to go quite a ways.

— Yes, we are.

I reflect for a moment on our discussion and grow nervous. Holding a discussion at the main entrance to the University of Tbilisi with a dozen students urging me to understand the need for the Georgian and other minority peoples to break away from the Soviet government was not my preconceived notion of how political discussion was carried out in the USSR, even under glasnost. Here at least things had undeniably taken a turn that would have given Mr Gorbachev nightmares. Glasnost was intended to mobilise what the revisionists call the "human factor" in the USSR, not least of all the intellectuals. But Gorbachev's point was to broaden the regime's base and mobilise behind the broad goal of making the USSR stronger and more efficient, and here were the cream of Georgia's educated youth, who should be the next generation of scientists, party cadre, teachers, etc., castigating Russian chauvinism and openly debating whether it was possible to break away from the USSR.

I asked whether it might be dangerous to have a discussion like this.

A unanimous "no." A couple of years ago it would have been, Yusef

goes on. But now we have — he paused for effect, grinning ironically — glasnost! Back then a demonstration would be met with bullets or at least billyclubs, he said. He then recounts how there were large demonstrations in Georgia in 1956, which his father took part in, where dozens of people were killed.

— But, I ask, aren't there people in the party or the Komsomol who might get you into trouble for such talk?

This brought a round of laughter. "We *are* the Komsomol," they rejoined. Every one of the dozen or so students intent on liberating Georgia was, it turned out, a member of the CPSU youth group. And would they go on to become party members? Some would, some wouldn't. This was seen overwhelmingly as a career decision; if someone needed to join the party to get ahead in his own job, then he or she would — and, it was made clear, their friends would understand and not particularly hold this against them. Such was the pitiful fate of the former party of Lenin.

I ask whether they think our discussion is a good example of what Mr Gorbachev had in mind in launching "glasnost." This draws a big laugh.

As the group breaks up I get a chance to talk with a couple of them more individually, though Sergei's presence as translator perhaps shies anyone away from the idea of inviting me home. Nana says that she thought Lenin had really been a genius, that he had some magnificent ideas, but that somewhere along the way these had been lost.

Nana, Yusef, Sergei and I get in an exchange on what the Georgians call the "cult of women," which refers to the way women in Georgia are looked at. Nana tackled Yusef head-on for his belief that this too was one of Georgia's "national traditions" that shouldn't be tampered with. Sergei even went so far as to argue that the "cult of women" included the idea that Georgian women should only marry Georgian men, and that the women should be virgins until married but Georgian men need not be so long as they went out with non-Georgian women. Nana labelled

this outright hypocrisy — then asked my opinion. I agreed, and added that if Georgian men insisted on trying to keep the women under their domination then not only would that make it harder to mobilise all their people, especially the masses of women, but also their movement would be infected from the beginning with ideas of inequality. Yusef yielded slightly, saying that he "personally" would never demand unequal rights like that from a woman, but after all it was a national tradition, and there were the Russians stomping on all their traditions.... Nana asks me later whether most German women thought as I do. I answered that many do, perhaps even more and more.

— I bet that's because a lot of German men think just like the men here, she said; Sergei was obviously displeased, but Nana and I had a good laugh.

### *Piatigorsk, Soviet Georgia*

This is a resort town in the Caucasus Mountains. It has the prosperity typical of a tourist town, and today is distinguished by the fact that it is one of the closest resorts to Stavropol, the home town of Mikhail Gorbachev.

I come upon a group of vacationing Azerbaïdzhani students and have no trouble engaging them in a discussion. We quickly get onto the subject of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. They are all 100% certain that the Armenians are in the wrong. But, they reassure me, there is nothing to worry about, because Gorbachev is dealing correctly with them.

On the Afghanistan war, they try to distinguish the Soviet position from that of the U.S. in Vietnam, arguing that Vietnam was an unjust war because the U.S. invaded half-way around the world, while Afghanistan was different and justifiable because it is right on the Soviet border.

After a fruitless back-and-forth on this, I ask them about the differences between the West and the USSR; the main speaker among them replies that there is probably more freedom in the West, in fact,

there is "too much freedom." By this, he means that people can just do "whatever they want," that they can become prostitutes or junkies or simply go crazy, and that such things wouldn't be allowed to happen in the USSR. I begin to argue, but then wonder whether it's worth the effort and instead ask what they are studying. Except for one journalism student, they are all studying law. Just like Mikhail Gorbachev. I decide that I've profited enough from my discussion with these future pillars of Soviet society. The good-byes are polite, but not overly friendly.

### *Leningrad*

Walking through Leningrad, you feel like you could turn a corner and bump into an episode out of *Ten Days That Shook the World* — the famous names of the Revolution resound everywhere: the Winter Palace, Smolny Institute, the cruiser Aurora which opened fire in support of the initial Bolshevik assaults, the Peter and Paul Fortress where so many revolutionaries fell to the Tsar's torturers. The morning is consumed finding out that Leningrad University is not as convenient a place to meet people as were the universities in Tbilisi and Baku. Finally, I encounter — or rather, am hustled by — a black marketeer named Vassily. Preconceptions about young guys who walk up to you and, glancing furtively from side to side, whisper, "Change money?" are turned topsy-turvy as he informs me that he is a student in the medical school. We talk for an hour or so. He looks like a Russian movie star, clean-cut, big smile, hip, handsome, and very sure of himself; he speaks excellent German, is up on the Western rock scene, knows about the recent Amnesty International tour for Human Rights, likes punk rock, Nina Hagen, Pink Floyd, and Bruce Springsteen and wants to exchange any rock tapes I have for Russian souvenirs.

I decline, but am curious: this medical student should be a pillar of respectable Soviet society — yet here he is risking jail by working the black market. I ask him why he

does this and what he intends to do with his earnings. He says that he doesn't have a father and his mother works in a factory, so they don't have much money; he will be obliged to work as a doctor for the government, at fairly low wages, despite Gorbachev's recent salary hike for many professionals, unless he can put together enough money on the black market to set up his own private practice. "Perestroika," he offers by way of explanation.

His business is going well, and Vassily should be able to accomplish his goal within a year or two of finishing school. He is one of the few people I meet in the USSR who is sure he would like to move to the West. He knows that doctors make a lot more there. I try to argue with him, pointing out problems in the West: unemployment, violence, racism against immigrants, sharp polarisation between rich and poor, and besides, I ask, why does he think so many of the youth in the West commit suicide or take drugs? — Yes, he interjects, that's just why I'm worried — if I stay here, I'll get onto hard drugs, like my friends. — A lot of your friends do drugs? — Most of them. There's more drugs around since Afghanistan. — Do they ever have problems with the militia? — Sometimes, but sometimes you can pay them off.

We get back into the argument about his desire to go to the West. I try to explain that even if the West is materially richer, that this wealth comes from its greater empire, especially in the Third World, but this doesn't exactly inspire Vassily. I am disappointed, but hardly surprised. For, when all is said and done, if you want to be bourgeois, it's true that, however luxurious the lifestyle of the social-imperialists and their hangers-on, the bourgeois lifestyle is more luxurious and more accessible in the West than in the East, exactly because of the West's world position.

I ask what Vassily thinks about the recent developments in Soviet foreign policy.

— Yes, these are good, we have a greater chance to go to the West than before.

At last, I say to myself, I've met a genuine Russian young burgher.

— What about Afghanistan? Did you have to serve in the military?

— Not yet.

— Will you have to?

— Well, this is complicated. Even under Brezhnev you could pay some money and get out of military service. It's the same now.

— How much?

— 2000, at most 3000 roubles.

I had heard this same story in Tbilisi, only the price is higher in Leningrad.

— Do you know men who've been to Afghanistan?

— Sure, several guys from my high school class had to go. They came back with photos, they did awful things there. They told me that the Army shot children, old people... they destroyed whole towns... you know, just wiped them out. A lot of Afghani people died, or fled and became refugees. Many Russians died too. Guys come back without hands, without legs. But it's in their heads too. My friends are not normal anymore. They don't fit in anywhere.

I thought of the broadcast of "Vremya," the Soviet evening news, which I had watched the night before with a Russian friend; it showed rocket attacks on the city of Kabul, focusing on the Afghan women and children who were victims and the Soviet doctors who came to their aid. *Sputnik*, a Soviet popular magazine translated and distributed in the West, even wrote that, "There is one point on which everyone is unanimous, soldiers of the people's army as well as peasants, representatives of the opposition, local mullahs, those who form public opinion as well as the men of the bazaar: the Soviets never dishonored themselves as soldiers. Yes, they always conducted themselves as true soldiers with the enemy. They did everything possible to avoid damaging the fields and irrigation works — not with their heavy equipment, nor their wheels, nor even their artillery. Conscious of the risk they were taking, they would even drive over mined roads so as not to damage the fields.... If they had the time, they repaired any damage done to roads, buildings

and canals by the war."

Just like in the West during Vietnam, the official media continues to cover the government's bloody crimes with its lies and distortions long after millions know the truth about the war. Vassily came by his cynicism "honestly."

He tells me what he knows about the recent events in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Why does he think this is happening?

— Basically all these different peoples, Armenian, Azerbaidzhani, and all the rest of them, they really don't want to stay part of the Soviet Union. This has never happened before like this. But it can't really continue. Our system is too clever, they have the Soviet army, which is huge, and so.... His voice trails off.

— Besides, the Armenians just want more for themselves anyhow. They're just like everyone else. Do you really think this is so different? Then he laughs,

— You know, if Lenin were alive today, he'd... (and then he makes a face expressing astonishment and horror) at all this.

— It would seem to me that there must be people who want to carry on what Lenin set out to do, who take all the things Lenin said seriously?

— Of course. But they are very very depressed people. You should see them. What do you think it's like to try to change such a society?

He tells me about the underground rock scene in Leningrad. He thinks there's a lot of concerts, but "none this week." He has some tapes of groups he thinks I might find interesting, but I'm leaving before he can round them up. He recommends two groups, "Alisa" from Leningrad and "D.D.T." from the Urals, whom he compares to the Clash or the Sex Pistols (two radical British punk groups). I ask him why he likes punk.

— Because they say and express that society is all messed up, that everyone is out for themselves in this place.

I observe that he seems to have adapted, and he replies, what else can I do?

I begin to get a feeling that I have had numerous times before on the



trip when dealing with phenomena from the West that have been imported into the East bloc: they look the same, but something gets displaced, like an object sent into outer space on a space ship that still looks like it always does but suddenly begins to float around, so that it's hard to get hold of it. What was the impact of punk music here? Astonishingly broad ranges of youth were familiar with it, and most people I talked to were inspired by its rebelliousness. But for many the very existence of such rebellious music coming from the West reinforced the idea that Western democracy was better, since it allowed the punks to rebel, even though the punk music itself attacked the West.

Before parting, Vassily tells me that the main hangout for artists, punks, students, and so forth in Leningrad is a place on Nevsky Prospect called the Saigon Café. I perk up at the name: Soviet cafes are so uniform that no one bothers with names, much less names like that one.

I set out along Nevsky Prospect and walk a mile or so: no Saigon Café. I retrace my steps; the Saigon Café turns out to look just like every other anonymous-looking government-run stand-up café, with no name out front, no chairs, nowhere to sit. People stand around small counter-tops, talking in small groups.

It is, however, more of a "scene" than anything else I'd come across in the USSR. There are perhaps a hundred people, artists, young students, long-haired youth, a dozen punks and even a junkie or two, though it was the kind of ambience where it was possible that the "junkies" just wanted to look like they were junkies. There were also simple passers-by, and every so often a militiaman would come in, walk around, look everyone over and then leave; a few high-ranking military officers wandered in with chic women dangling on their arms. The scene didn't recall anything I knew in West Germany. No one really knew why it had been nicknamed the Saigon Café; one student offered that it resembled what people imagined Saigon to be like be-

fore the Americans fled: seedy, run-down, corrupt and dangerous.

Indeed, I'd just gotten my coffee when a man walks up to the young student standing next to me, casually slides a book out from inside his overcoat and hands it over. The student studies it discreetly, and then they whisper a moment and the student hands over quite a few roubles. I ask about the book: the student reluctantly shows it to me, very quickly — a history of mid-nineteenth century philosophy — then apologises that he must leave.

A couple of attempts to engage people in discussion about Armenia wind up in deadends; from my experience so far I deduce that it is not so much out of lack of interest as that discussing sensitive topics with a Westerner in a crowded café is still too much for most people even under glasnost.

I go out front and step up to a guy who would have fit right in with the Autonomen in West Berlin: very young, with a spiked green Mohawk haircut and a black leather jacket with "Long Live Free Punk" written in English on the back along with an A with a dot over it, which seems to be the local symbol for anarchism. He said that there were not many punks, that it was hard to be one in the USSR.

— The militia took me in, they beat me up just a couple of days ago, he said, showing me a scar on his forehead.

I said that it happens in the West too. I observed that there was a lot of struggle among the punks and Autonomen in West Germany and Britain, that some were revolutionaries, some fascists. What was going on here?

— Same thing. That guy there, he said, pointing to a similar looking fellow who I'd intended to try to talk to next, he's a fascist. Don't see him. He's no good. I'm not a fascist, I'm not anything. I'm just a dirty punk, just a dirty punk.

— Oh, I said, trying to digest this. Well, what's it like for you here, can you get work?

— Of course I don't work. Punks don't work. And who do you think would hire me?

We talked briefly, for he spoke little German, then I asked about

getting hold of him again. He said that it didn't matter because he was leaving in a few hours to go back home to Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, a few hundred miles from Leningrad.

— Are there many punks in Tallinn?

— Not really. I'm the punk in Tallinn.

— Only you?!

— Well, there's a few others, but they're not completely serious. There's a lot more of us here in Leningrad.

A young boy, maybe 12 or 13 years old, who was hanging out with him, then piped in that he was a punk too, and that there were more and more of them in Leningrad, at least several dozen.

I asked the older punk what he thought needed to happen in the USSR. He held out his hand, palm up, then turned it upside down.

The Moscow Station, the largest train station in Leningrad, late at night:

It's filled with all sorts of people, well dressed Muscovites returning home, peasant women sleeping on benches, floors or anywhere else they can, soldiers playing cards, a few Asians I can't recognise, probably Uzbeks. But not the least of its inhabitants are the drunks. There are occasional fights. A large puddle of blood in the middle of the floor goes untouched the whole 30 minutes or so I'm there. The militia haul off a drunk every few minutes, dragging them with their feet scraping along the ground, presumably heading to gaol to dry out.

It is painfully obvious that alcoholism still ravages Russia, debilitating everything from labour productivity, a major concern of Gorbachev, to male-female relations. When I asked one older woman, Vera, about the Soviet policy of encouraging Russian women to have children, she said that one of the reasons this was happening was that, because of their enormous long-term intake of alcohol, quite a few Russian men couldn't produce offspring. Though I wondered if she exaggerated, still it pointed to the enormity of the problem. Vera continued to live with her husband, she

confided, but he now had a mistress because he and she had ceased being lovers long ago — one of the main reasons was his drinking. She stayed with him because her generation looked down on divorce and because he made a good salary.

Encouraging Russian women to have more children is an element of the crusade underway in the USSR to “make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission,” as Gorbachev puts it — which means chaining women even more tightly to their traditional role as mothers and homemakers. The government is concerned that the “Islamic population” is increasing faster than the Russians, so birth control is discouraged; this has led to a situation where the average Russian woman has had to resort to several abortions — some estimates are as many as six or seven. Contraception is no easier to get under *perestroika* than before, and Russian women are even being offered cash incentives to produce more than a single child.

Divorce is rising dramatically, especially among the younger generation, to the point that the divorce rate in the big Russian cities is one divorce for every two marriages, almost as high as in the West. The single mothers I met seemed resigned to a very difficult life, and complained of the same frenetic schedule and social isolation as face single mothers in West Germany.

I thought of how frequently Western academics compare social life in Russia today with the West in the '50s. The comparison was off, for many reasons — but perhaps it hit one correct point: that beneath the tranquil surface of Russia in the 1980s lay a rotten social foundation displaying many of the same symptoms as the West had just before it exploded into the rebellions of the '60s.

On the way home that night I ask directions from a young woman, Irina, who decides to accompany me to the hotel. It turns out that she too is a medical student. I tell her about my encounter with Vassily; she marvels, and tries to figure out if she might know the guy.

— But of course he's right to want

to go to the West, she goes on. In the West there's more opportunity: if you're bright and work hard you can make money and become somebody; if you're not intelligent, then you won't make it, and you'll be a nobody. She smiles.

Even until then, late in the trip, being in the USSR had retained a sense of mystery and excitement for me — though I knew Soviet society was essentially the same as what I was already familiar with, nonetheless it offered new twists to be discovered and analysed, and particularly the challenge of trying to find more rebellious people. With Irina's words however I felt the same heavy weight that I sometimes felt back home when I'd come on one too many “good German” right in a row — the thick layer of bourgeois muck that would weigh down on anyone trying to explode Soviet society into the air from below.

The next day on Nevsky Prospect I encounter another musician, Anton, a “metalisti,” he says, which refers to “heavy metal,” but the categories don't always transfer too neatly. Anton is a huge, imposing figure, almost two meters tall, clad in leather, but with a voice so soft and gentle that I wondered whether he should have been singing children's lullabies instead of hard rock anthems. His mother and father both worked in the coal mines in the Donets river basin, the heartland of modern Russia. Anton's father was killed in a mining accident when he was a young boy, and his mother now lives with another man. He left home to come here and try to make it as a musician. When I asked how long he'd been a musician, Anton holds his hand up to his knee: “since I was this high,” he grins.

I ask Anton what he sings about. — Ancient Russia. Especially the epoch of Mongol Tartar domination hundreds of years ago.

— Why this?  
— Because the Russian people have suffered for a long time and they have never really gotten what they deserve. We often must do this: sing about the past to tell about the present.

He thinks that though Gorbachev might be a tiny bit better, he's es-

entially the same; he runs things for himself and his cronies. Anton has a song about how the Russian people have been forced for too long to live like slaves:

— It will take more than someone like Gorbachev to teach us how to live as free people.

He had a few ups and down in his musical career, including because he sang songs against the war in Afghanistan, even though they were allegorical, before it was a popular thing to do. Now he thinks there should be a monument to the soldiers who fought and died in Afghanistan but who have been forgotten by the society. He tells me of friends he had who came back, and that they are different, they have continual problems. I tell him what happened at Bitburg, where the W. German government and Reagan tried to “honour” the soldiers of Nazi Germany in order to build up nationalism and pro-war sentiment in general — doesn't he think there might be a parallel, that honouring veterans of Afghanistan means honoring the war? He is upset at the very thought:

— No, look, the Soviet government doesn't make propaganda to glorify the soldiers; instead, it has a policy of doing everything it can to ignore the soldiers and pretend like they don't exist. Talking about them is a way to go into what they've been through and expose what the war was really about. It doesn't support it.

Throughout the trip I tried to be cautious about drawing quick conclusions about many things I saw in the USSR. But though Anton from the Donets basin is as thoroughly Russian a figure as I will meet on my trip, I feel like I've seen him many times in West Germany: his big, friendly heart, his “innocent” humanist intentions, his populism, whose devotion to the cause of the working people of his country is all mixed up with devotion to the country itself. Anton's thinking reflected the conditions of life of the large section of Russian workers which is on the one hand exploited and oppressed by the Soviet ruling class, but on the other has become somewhat bourgeoisified, is constantly promoted as the beneficiary of

Soviet "socialism" and strongly identifies with Russia. Here, I felt, was an explanation of this gentle pacifist who sings songs of the glory of the peasant rebels of ancient "Rus."

I ask Anton about the problems of the national minorities. He thinks that the problems are not so bad in the USSR as they are in the West bloc. (The Soviet media obviously devotes much attention to the racial problems in the West, especially the U.S. — just like the Western media loves to report on Armenia, the Baltic Republics, and, in W. Germany, on the problems of the Volga Germans, etc. Thus it often happens that Soviet citizens are well informed about the Ku Klux Klan, Günter Walraff's book about being Turkish in Germany, the number of homeless in New York or London, and so on, but are forced to get their news about Armenia or the Baltic Republics by word of mouth.)

Anton went on:

— Here there's a difference: our minority peoples have their own republics where they can go, which, for example, Black people in America don't have. But on the other hand things may be getting worse. He doesn't know why.

Near the Neva River, we pass by a large hotel for foreigners; a couple of women who appear to be prostitutes wait not far from one of the entrances. Anton's embarrassment is evident; I ask him if there is much prostitution.

— More and more, he says. "Those poor women, how they must suffer." His concern is obviously genuine and deep.

— Why is it happening? I ask.

— More and more people have the idea that money buys everything, I suppose, plus, he adds after a pause, perhaps out of concern for me, there's the Western tourists who have money and fancy goods to buy Russian women.

He tells me about a popular play from Leningrad which concerns the hundreds of prostitutes who were rounded up in Moscow just before the 1980 Olympics, and who were kept together in camps away from the foreign media in order to preserve the "socialist" image of

the USSR. According to the play, the prostitutes are run by the Soviet "mafia," whom Anton bitterly dislikes. The Soviet "mafia" is an expression which has been greatly popularised under Gorbachev and generally refers to a network of extremely rich gangsters who run the black market and who are *outside* the party, though it can refer to people in the CPSU who are seen as more or less bought off. The "mafia" are also targeted in a very popular recent film, *Assa* — pro-Gorbachev forces view them as one of the chief obstacles to cleaning up corruption, and thus to the success of perestroika and glasnost. This anti-"mafia" campaign, whether orchestrated or simply heavily promoted from the top, clouds the issue of who are the real exploiters in Soviet society — the new bourgeoisie headquartered in the top ranks of the CPSU itself. The anti-"mafia" campaign seems to have taken root more in Russia than in the national republics, where people are at least clear that the main enemy is not corrupt black marketeers.

Anton thinks that there is no danger of war because the Soviet peoples could never be mobilised to fight the West. If there's any danger it comes from an attack from the West, especially the U.S., though he harbors fear of a reunited Germany as well. He thinks it is very important for music from the USSR to reach the West, and dreams one day of performing in London and New York so that American and Western youth could see and learn about the Russian people through music. However he would never emigrate from Russia. Why?

— I was born here, my home, my life, my fate, it is here.

### Thoughts on Leaving

Before my trip, I read over a couple of novels which foretell the apocalyptic disintegration of the USSR in the near future, generally because of a revolt against poverty in Russia combined with rebellion of the national minorities in Central Asia, the Baltic Republics and the Caucasus. Though the authors are invariably pro-Western and loath to

see any comparisons with the seething anger among the oppressed nationalities and immigrant workers in their own empire, they have hit at a certain truth about possibilities in the USSR. One could hardly venture a guess, however, whether such upheavals were closer, or further, than in the West.

A revolutionary organising in the USSR would face many of the same obstacles as in the West: the burden of a protracted period of "peaceful" development there and some improvement in the material conditions of life for many people, despite real and deepening problems, and a general passivity among the average Russian where the view prevails that however difficult things might be they are still tolerable. Even as far as Gorbachev is concerned, though his shake-up is giving space for the growth of different and often opposing developments, still there is a sense that forces high in the state itself are pushing for improvements, for their own reasons, and that, even if they can't be relied on, they can be pushed from below to meet the people's aspirations. Some bourgeois critics who were formerly opponents of the government, like Sakharov and Medvedev — who always hated genuine revolution and in the early 1970s called on the Soviet government to beware the "extreme danger" of the Cultural Revolution, which they denounced as "Chinese totalitarian nationalism" — are now prominent supporters of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Opposition movements have sprung up everywhere, but many of these, especially in Russia itself, are at the same time *loyal* oppositions.

But the consequences of any misstep for Gorbachev and Co. may well be dramatic. People's aspirations are running far faster, further and in different directions than those on the CPSU agenda, especially among the youth and the oppressed nationalities. Many people sense that now is the time to act. The Soviet bourgeoisie has the political initiative — but sections of the masses are developing some of their own. Imagine a Soviet citizen on a short stay in Western Europe; it is doubtful they would find the

fervent political debate I found. Indeed, I wondered whether such political ferment could be found anywhere else in the imperialist world today. The "red bourgeoisie" has in a sense crossed a Rubicon: they can no longer clamp down in the old way, and any attempt to go back would require not simply reinstituting the old methods but stepping up repression and control in a qualitatively new and more dangerous way. Broad masses, the intelligentsia and the oppressed nationalities, especially youth like those met on this trip, would view such a development as a move to decisively bury their dreams, in their opinion, for as long as they live. It is an understatement to say that they would not take this lightly.

Moreover, some of the insularity which has characterised the Soviet people's perceptions of their position in the world are breaking down. What has happened in Afghanistan is giving rise to speculation and thought on the relation between this and overall conditions. I recall seeing a videoclip of a debate held with some Americans in a Soviet university several years ago, where when the Americans began to talk of Soviet napalming of villages and "genocide" in Afghanistan the Soviet students cat-called and laughed at this as ridiculous. The German commentator caustically observed that they were a hand-picked audience. Perhaps they were. But no one is laughing now. There has been a significant shift in mood around Afghanistan, which has raised questions about just what the Soviet Union and the Soviet Army are all about. Returning veterans have sharpened polarisation about attitudes towards the war. Some have formed vigilante gangs and set out to "clean up" the Soviet society they risked their lives to protect, including by beating up punks, dissidents and the like. Others have brought out enough of the truth to seriously undermine the government's own rationale for the war. Large numbers of the youth I talked to took for granted the parallel between Afghanistan and Vietnam. And Vietnam, they were taught, was a "crime" of the American

"ruling circles." What are they to conclude Afghanistan resulted from? An "error," as their leaders say, a "defect" of an otherwise healthy system... or something more fundamental, such as "the system" itself?

Ironically, one phenomenon which the Soviet leaders have much feared, the populace's increasing contact with and exposure to the West, has also had the effect of teaching a significant section of the people, especially youth like the singers in Moscow's Old Arbat, enough about the West that they have decided on their own terms that Western capitalism offers no real alternative. In their case, this has not given rise to demoralisation nor to returning to the Soviet fold, but to a deeper searching and to a developing stand against both blocs. Nonetheless, as they have taken up their struggle they grab, in Engels' phrase, for whatever weapon is at hand — and more often than not, these are forms of bourgeois ideology, especially nationalism and bourgeois democracy, but in any case based on some premise other than the complete overthrow of Soviet social-imperialism.

The need for a deeper understanding of the national question in the USSR and the urgency of this were posed sharply. For me, for example, Azerbaidzhan had always meant *Iranian* Azerbaidzhan, the Third World. Though nationalism was not my outlook, still the nationalism of the oppressed nations fighting imperialism evoked reflex support from me and was different from, say, the nationalism of imperialist countries which went for one imperialist against another.

Initially I took a similar attitude towards Soviet Azerbaidzhan. But for a number of world-historic reasons, it is not the same as Iranian Azerbaidzhan. Soviet Azerbaidzhan is an oppressed nation, but *within* an imperialist country; it occupies a different position in the world imperialist system and has a different history than does Iranian Azerbaidzhan, including a period of socialist development under Lenin and Stalin.

The awakening nationalist sentiments in Azerbaidzhan and the

Soviet East nonetheless represent, at least for the most part, righteous resistance to national oppression, and they are giving the new Tsars a big headache; but they also pose a great challenge to those who want to seize this awakening to eliminate *all* oppression and inequality.

In my debates with the rebels in the USSR over this tangled web of contradictions, my heart ached as I witnessed their struggle to sort through their friends and enemies and to chart a path forward without ever even having had the chance to study Mao or to have been exposed to the lessons he summed up of the restoration of capitalism in the very country in which they must do battle.

Indeed, in the USSR everyone must read Lenin — but where are the Leninists? The conditions under which the rebels of the USSR struggle are not easy. But they *are* struggling, and under more favourable conditions than for a long time. For their own reasons, the Soviet bourgeoisie has shaken things up. The ice has broken. But just what will come out on top remains to be determined, and many things that can be seen reaching up to the surface hearten any revolutionary. The forms of oppression in the USSR are indeed different — the plundering rag of the fatherland here is the ever present hammer-and-sickle red flag. I thought often of Mao's analysis that the transition from capitalism to communism would be protracted and difficult, that the proletarian dictatorship was fragile and could be easily defeated from within — as indeed it was. But Mao also pointed out that, if the rightists seize power and restore capitalism, they will know no rest and their people will give them no peace. Whatever form capitalist madness assumes, Soviet "socialism" or any other, it is still madness: life asserts itself, people rebel, and their struggles, their hopes and dreams inevitably burst forth in the same general direction as those of rebel slaves around the world. □