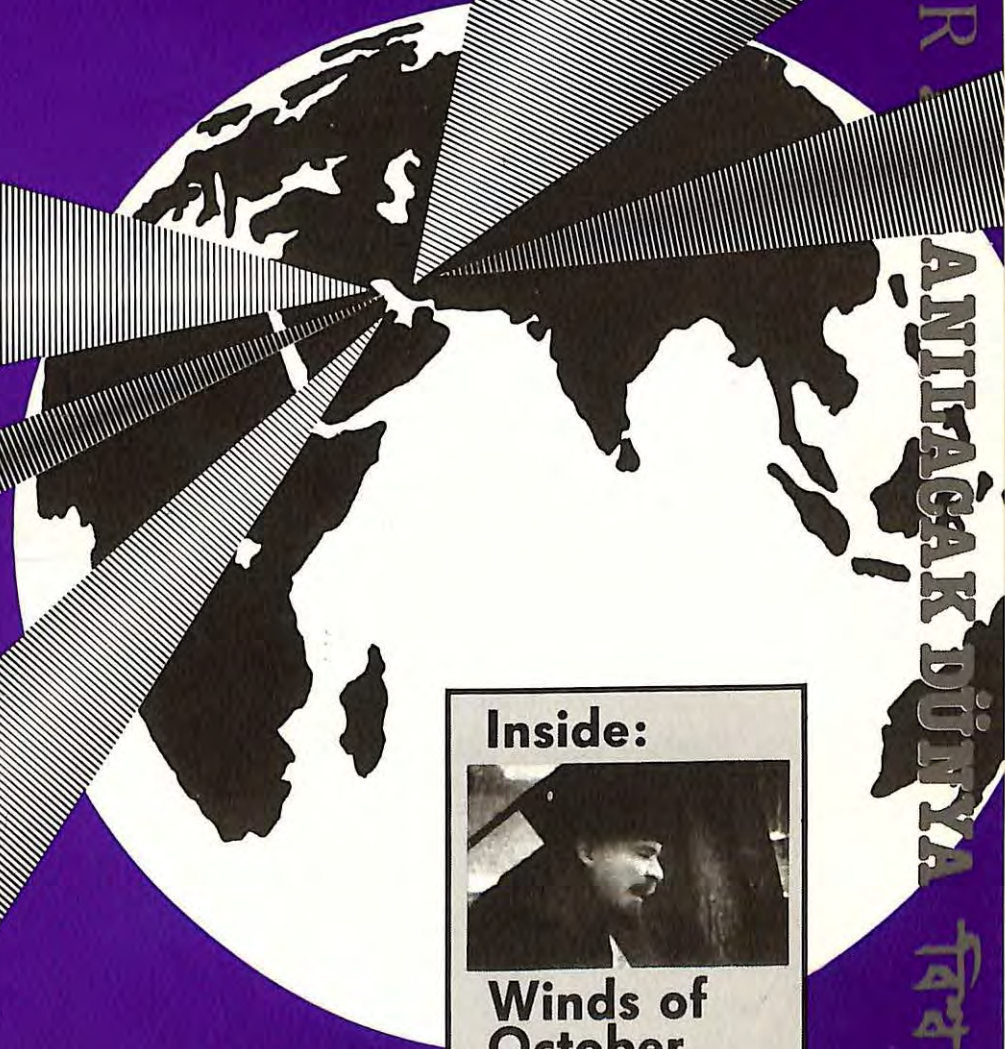


TO WIN 獲得的將是整個世界

1988/10

A WORLD

THE GULF FULCRUM



Inside:



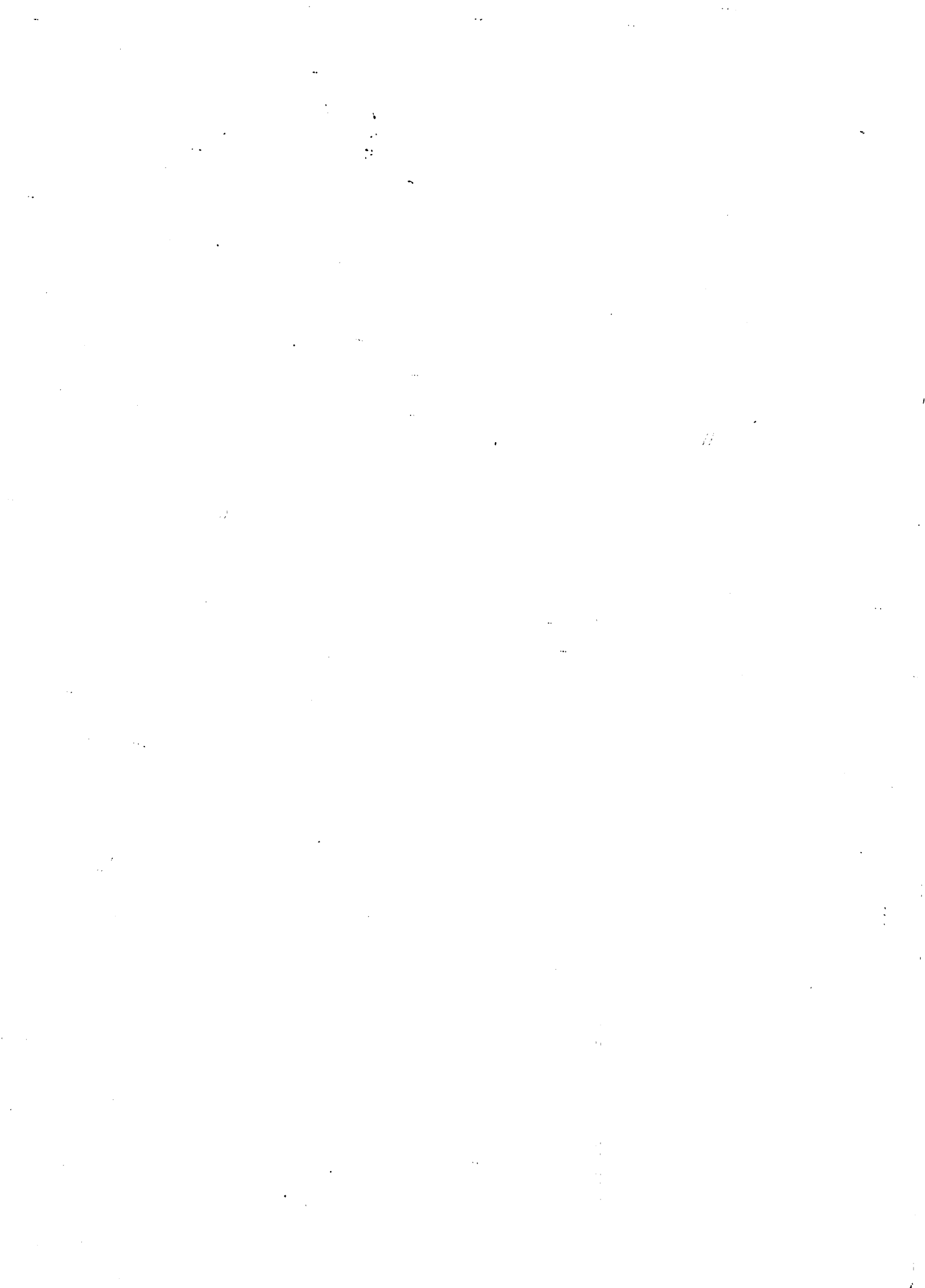
Winds of October Still Blow

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UN MONDO DA CONQUISTARE



Perestroika

"A drug-induced sleep in the land of milk and honey." This is about la dolce vita in Moscow, not Milan or Manhattan. Even more ironically, upscale book buyers in the West have made the Soviet General Secretary an international best-seller. What does Gorbachev think is wrong with the USSR and the world? What does he propose to do about it?

Burkina Faso

The most recent attempt to find an "independent path" to national liberation and even socialism without a revolutionary war of the masses, a proletarian party or Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. The coup was the bloody denouement of a play whose ending, like those of the Greek tragedies, was written into the form itself.

Winds of October Still Blow



THE PROLETARIAT HAS NOTHING TO LOSE
BUT THEIR CHAINS, THEY HAVE
A WORLD TO WIN. . .



PROLETARIANS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

1988/10

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FEBRUARY, 1988

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Peru: When the Andes Roar

"Armed battalions of the poor" led by the Communist Party of Peru ("*Sendero Luminoso*") take on the Peruvian government. Examination of 1985 offensive as well as the history and aims of the people's war.

India

The question for 800 million people of India is when not if these "wretched of the earth" will rise up.

Dominican Republic: Two Days of Popular Upsurge

By the leader of the Revolutionary Communist Union - Dominican Republic.

Homage to Yilmaz Guney:
Revolutionary Turkish Filmmaker

1985/2

Peru

More on the growing revolutionary war; the Pope's visit to Peru; and a selection by José Carlos Mariátegui.

Revolution or World War 3

Koklu Kopus analyses the political crisis arising from the West's deployment of nuclear missiles in West Germany, with an eye toward preparations for revolution.

Iran: Forging a Weak Link

The factors behind the revolutionary situation in Iran that swept the Shah from his throne in 1979. From a member of the Union of Iranian Communists (Sarbedaran).

On the Dynamism of Imperialism and the Fettering of Social Development

By Raymond Lotta.

1985/3

South Africa: Summoned by Revolution

Situation in South Africa analysed from a number of different angles; also a call to Azanian revolutionaries.

Peru: Election Boycott

Pamphlet from Communist Party of Peru.

Reggae

Jamaica's rebel music.

1985/4

South Africa

More on the deepening revolutionary crisis.

Iran: "Defeated Armies Learn Well"

Analysis by the Union of Iranian Communists (Sarbedaran) of the experienced gained during tumultuous years of revolution, including the armed uprising of Sarbedaran in Amol.

"Urban Guerrillas"

Against the West European "urban guerrilla" trend.

1986/5

Kurdistan

Nejimeh Siavush discusses what it will take to hoist the red flag in this explosive region.

Bangla Desh: A tinderbox

By a leading member of the Proletarian Party of Purba Bangla.

1986/6

Peru

Statements of Peruvian Communist Party Central Committee and Committee of the RIM on the heroism of hundreds of revolutionary prisoners massacred by the government. Also analysis of first five years of people's war.

Haiti

Articles on the crisis in Haiti, the mood of the masses and the tasks of revolutionaries. Includes a joint call by two Haitian Marxist-Leninist groups.

1986/7

Forward Along the Path Charted by Mao Tsetung

On the 20th anniversary of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and 10 years after the death of Mao and the reactionary coup d'état. This issue consists principally of articles submitted by participating parties and organisations of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, which analyse Mao Tsetung's development of the science of Marxism-Leninism and discuss why and how Mao Tsetung Thought is decisive for advancing the world proletarian revolution.

1987/8

Peru

An important new document from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Peru.

Philippines

An Open Letter from the Committee of the RIM to the Communist Party of the Philippines expressing concern over new developments in the line of the CPP.

France

Claude Duchène analyses the student movement of December 1986!

1987/9

Naxalbari, India

Reports and summation of 20 year anniversary of peasant uprisings in India. Writings from Charu Mazumdar.

Gorbachev

Analysis of the Soviet economy and global military preparations.

Peru

Day of Heroism (June 19th) commemoration. Part II of Communist Party of Peru document.

A World to Win

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TO WIN 獲得的將是整個世界 МИР ВБИГРАТЬ UN MUNDO QUE GANAR

A WORLD जीतनेकेलिएसाराविश्वहै

10 Issues Out, But A World Still To Win!

With the publication of the tenth issue of *A World To Win*, we are celebrating a kind of watershed. Three years ago, when we started publication, we declared that *A World To Win* was dedicated to "an 'old' idea: the proletariat of all countries faces the task of wrenching the world away from those who currently dominate, distort and even threaten to destroy large parts of it; that those who up until now have been the victims of history must become its masters; that exploitation, oppression, and class-divided society, far from being the natural order of things, stand as the barrier to the further advance of humanity."

We are happy to report that experience has shown that many, many men and women throughout the world continue to share the commitment to our common ideas and goals. The Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, whose formation in 1984 served as the inspiration for our journal, continues to grow stronger. Further, throughout the world a whole new generation is coming forward to fight for revolution and, in a number of countries, more and more of these young people are turning towards Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought which alone can lead to genuine proletarian revolution. And if *A World To Win* has played a modest part in this process we can only be thankful.

At the same time, the crisis in the Marxist-Leninist movement, brought to a head with the coup d'état in China following the death of Mao Tsetung in 1976, remains real indeed. The reversal in China was more than just the loss of a bastion of revolution comprising one fourth of the world's population — the Cultural Revolution led by Mao was also the most advanced experience of the proletariat in seizing power and transforming the world. Today's new generation of revolutionaries are coming forward at a time when our enemies of all stripes have done everything in their power to bury, distort and slander our legacy.

cont....

UN MUNDO QUE GANAR KAZANILASAK DÜNYA विश्वविजय

UN MONDO DA CONQUISTARE جهانی برای فتح

This is one important reason why *A World To Win* has from the beginning paid great attention to defending and popularizing the accomplishments of our class in different countries around the world. For example, our magazine has devoted articles to the important experience of the Naxalbari movement in India led by Charu Mazumdar and to the writings of the Turkish Marxist-Leninist Ibrahim Kaypakayya. Our most important effort, however, to uphold and reclaim our heritage has been number seven of our journal, entitled "Forward Along the Path Charted by Mao Tsetung," devoted entirely to a discussion of Mao Tsetung and the Cultural Revolution. That issue has been translated into English, Farsi, Turkish, Spanish and German and we have been informed that number seven, which fully retains its value one year after its initial publication, is being translated into other languages as well.

The problems of revolution continue to pose new challenges. We have tried to promote articles which help sum up some of the rich and vital lessons that have often been paid for in blood by the genuine Marxist-Leninist forces around the world. And it is also true that among those who are striving for revolution there is and needs to be discussion, debate and struggle in order to help arrive at a correct line for advancing. So we are happy to note that a number of articles in our journal have provoked a lively reaction among comrades in different countries who are often confronting similar questions. In particular, number eight of the journal carried an important Open Letter from the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement addressed to the Communist Party of the Philippines which has been much commented upon and discussed.

Of course, not all has been



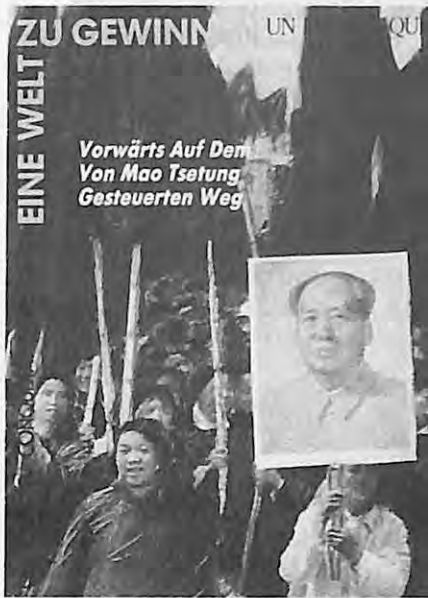
smooth sailing in our three years of existence. At various points some of the different editions of the journal have encountered difficulties. But experience has also shown that such obstacles can be overcome step by step. We are particularly happy to learn that *A World To Win* is again appearing regularly in the Spanish language.

In the course of publishing *A World To Win* a clearer understanding has been achieved of the role of the journal in the revolutionary process, as well as of some of the particular strengths and limitations that flow from *A World To Win's* character as a publication appearing in a number of different language editions and having a readership in extremely disparate countries. Over the years we have come to focus more sharply on *A World To Win's* role in concentrating questions of political line and theory. While we still strive to provide an important vehicle for analysis of major world developments, we have had to face the reality that the nature of a quarterly, as well as the "time lag" between the publication of the different editions, makes it impossible for us to comment on all important events.

In looking over the past period

we note with pride the special role that *A World To Win* has played in popularising the experience of the Peoples War being led by the Communist Party of Peru. In the future, we will continue to promote the most advanced expressions of the proletarian revolutionary struggle, in Peru and throughout the world.

Of course, with the world at such a critical juncture, as the danger of world war continues to menace and with the growing possibilities for major breakthroughs in the revolutionary struggle, it is certainly no time to rest on one's laurels. In the period ahead there is a great deal to be done on all the different fronts of the class struggle, including in further sharpening *A World To Win* as a weapon of the proletariat and wielding it better. It is important that *A World To Win* continue to receive contributions from its collaborators throughout the world dealing with the most vital questions facing the revolutionary movement. And it is important that efforts are redoubled to assure that *A World To Win* is translated promptly into different languages and distributed to those who are striving to transform the world. □



Readers Write...

Dear Friends,

...Now we were much captivated with the various articles that appeared in those issues [of *AWTW*], but of greatest interest to us, and an article which aroused a lot of debate and struggle and which is being popularised, is the article in issue 1986/7 by the Proletarian Party of Purba Bangla (PBSP) on "Mao's Theory of People's War." This article has been extremely useful to us who have, since the current regime in our country came to power, argued that their "People's Protracted War" was not a people's war as conceived and carried out by proletarian revolutionaries — especially Mao.

To us the (regime) carried out a guerrilla war of a fascist type. They chose their so-called "people's war" as a question of tactics, and not as an overall political and military strategy to win power. They arrived at this decision not from a concrete study of our country and society and summation of our people's struggles and worldwide revolutionary struggles, but after weighing the other options to seizing power: a coup d'état, conventional war (like an earlier one in which they participated), an insurrection and general elections.

Secondly, this article is useful in that currently there are so many armed groups fighting for "liberation" and, because this, there is a line which has cropped up arguing that since every tendency is talking about armed struggle, then a revolutionary, pro-people's line should not talk about armed struggle at all! Rather, so it is argued, there should be more open/legal work among the people — especially the working class — to assert their existence. This line argues that armed struggle has now become a fetish and every tendency is worshipping it!

And this same line has been tailing the current regime, helping it to consolidate by giving it counsel and talking of its historical failures as "mere mistakes." So, in light of the above, there is need to clearly draw a line between the revolutionary approach to armed struggle and these various phoney armed struggles — and that article has been very useful in that respect.

Of tremendous help to us too have been the other articles like that by the Iranian comrades in their self-criticism, the RIM's Open Letter to the Philippines NPA/ CPP, the Heroic Struggle by the Peruvian masses under the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist PCP, and many others. In short, all these articles concentrated a basic theme of much relevance to us here: If there is to

be a revolution, there must be a revolutionary party, an organisation grounded on and armed with the science of revolution (Marxism-Leninism-Maoism). If there is to be a revolution in ..., such an organisation is needed and it has to be created now!

We note that your publication was inspired by the formation of the RIM. We are eager to learn more about this movement and the Marxist-Leninist parties and organisations participating in same. We, therefore, request that you send us some materials from RIM like the *Declaration*.

In international solidarity,
(From a country in East Africa)

□ □ □

Comrades,

I am a sympathiser of the RIM. I have read the text of the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement*, from March 1984, and I am in complete agreement with the document. Unfortunately, there is no organisation here in ... that adheres to the RIM... I am trying to get organised, to take up work with the objective of constructing a revolutionary party. I would like to receive the publications of RIM. I would also like to receive the journal *A World to Win*.
(From Latin America)

□ □ □

Dear Comrades:

I sent you two books.

One of them is the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement*, which was translated and published by us. We agree with the analysis and strategy and tactics to communism.

Comrades! We are a small group. We fight for the world communist revolution with you. We think for this we must construct a powerful proletarian party based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought.

Revolutionary greetings,
(From a country in the Far East)

□ □ □

Dear Comrades,

I am writing to thank you for the work you are carrying out in our world today for the total liberation

of all mankind. Dear Comrades, I assure you that I am in great support of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement. This will create more room for the rapid development of the anti-imperialist movement, which is the main question internationally. We support all forms of struggles against revisionism and anti-Marxism. Dear Comrades, the Declaration and statement of 1954 and 1960, respectively, only created the emergence of revisionism which paved and protected the interests of the Western imperialists and the development of bourgeois governments.

Today, the Gulf is the focal point of military confrontation between the two imperialist blocs and the danger of a third world war will start here.

I want to distribute the materials of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement in my area. In case, you can also send me anti-imperialist materials for my work at home. We have to fight revisionism also in the neocolonies and their puppet regimes — generally called African Socialist States.

Dear Comrades, I remain in support of the internationalist movement against the imperialist camp.

From a village in Africa

□ □ □

Dear Brother and Sister Comrades:

I received my first two issues of *A World to Win* and I am very much pleased in reading such a magazine made available to the world (the brothers and sisters), moving forth side-by-side on the barricades in the fight against imperialism and reaction.

Nevertheless, it is bitter to know that many disasters/crises are more critical "beyond a doubt" going on in countries other than here in the USA. And I love so much to know the Kurdistan brothers and sisters are moving forth in their war and singing "their best songs to the tune of rifles" battle cry in the fighting, knowing full well it will bring about a change.

As a prisoner here in confinement in ... prison, I do my best to keep enlightened about the world as well

as struggle to bring about a change. Truly put me on your mailing list as it is my request to receive AWTW. Your brother in Truth and Revolution,

(From a prison in the U.S.)

□ □ □

Dear Comrades:

For several years now I have tried to follow the People's Struggle in Peru as waged by the PCP and have wished to become active in a support group in Britain. For a few years I have been active on the left, during the miners' strike, the printers' strike, local campaigns, etc. Purely on an individual level I have always advocated support for the Peruvian struggle, as I see it as the highest embodiment of the world contradiction between imperialism and the masses of the poorer nations. I also believe that Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought is the most genuine revolutionary ideology of our genre, as espoused by the RIM and its *Declaration*. In Britain today Maoism is rather depleted both numerically and ideologically. There is the CPB(ML) which is thoroughly degenerated into revisionism and social-chauvinism and the RCL, slightly smaller which, though ideologically superior to the CPB(ML), is still having difficulty breaking with Peking — unable to see the qualitative difference between Mao Tsetung Thought and the modern revisionism of Deng Xiaoping. This ideological contradiction, fundamentally a bourgeois/proletarian one, is carried through in much of its work — for instance, its lack of criticism of African "flag independence," failing to see the era as one of neocolonialist manoeuvring, and asserting that the petite bourgeoisie can solely lead the proletariat through revolution (i.e., their uncritical support for Nkrumahism).

... I consider your magazine *A World to Win* as filling a gap...

Comradely greetings,
(From a reader in Britain who describes himself as a student in Afro-Caribbean studies "homeless, broke and unemployed".)

□ □ □

Dear Comrades,

I am a political prisoner, now kept in a South Indian prison.

I request you to send us *A World to Win* free of cost regularly for the benefit of our political prisoners' commune belonging to our party. Likewise, please send any literature you have available. We are very sorry we are not in any position to pay the costs.

With revolutionary greetings,
Yours comradely,

□ □ □

Dear Revolutionary Comrades,

...I regard myself as a political activist who educated himself in the theory of *Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought*. I may not be a first class theorist but I have read many of the most important literature of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao. My independent reading has therefore convinced me of the correctness of Marxism.

Comrades, I came to know of the RIM and its activities through correspondence...

Comrades, at present I am trying to make anti-government activists and friends alike aware of your existence and activities. I will only succeed in my efforts if I had the necessary information in the form of pamphlets, booklets etc. from the RIM and its participating parties and organisations.

As you are aware of our struggle for liberation, certain conditions have created revisionist organisations of various kinds. This I believe will in future retard the *people's upsurge*. Therefore the time has come to clean the Augustinian stables who influence the struggle in Azania. The message on May Day issued by the RIM remains valid today and so it will be in future. Our militant workers and youth need a vanguard party which bases itself on the *scientific theory of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought*.

Revolutionary Greetings!
Forward Along the Path Charted
by Mao Tsetung

(From Azania [South Africa])

□ □ □



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. Make cheques payable to *A World to Win*.

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

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U.K.

Statement by the Committee of the Fill Up the Gulf Imperialists

In a series of moves and counter-moves, the U.S., Britain and France, aided by Italy and W. Germany, on the one side, and the USSR on the other, have crammed the already hot waters of the Gulf full to bursting with nuclear warships. They have marshalled the biggest concentration of naval firepower since World War 2.

In this situation, what stands out is both the rapid development of "the danger of a new, third world war as well as the real perspective for revolution in many countries of the world," to quote from the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement*.

The level of danger posed by the military buildup is matched only by the level of hypocrisy unleashed by the fleets of political mouthpieces serving both sides. Those four dozen aircraft carriers, battleships and submarines aren't there to protect Kuwait's 11 oil tankers. Nor are they there to take on Iran's speedboats and mine-laying sailboats. None of the imperialist powers has reason to fear the Khomeini regime. Least of all are these ships there to bring peace to a region where the war they've fomented for seven years has already killed over half a million people. Iran and Iraq have both been pumped full of weapons, money and military intelligence by East and West, which have both alternated between fueling the war and seeking to contain it, as it suited their interests.

The shooting of the U.S. warship that helped provide the excuse for all this was done by Iraq, with a French missile; the mines have been laid by both Iran and Iraq, and Iran's are supplied by Italy; Iran's Silkworm missiles were bought from China with American approval and Saudi dollars, while the USSR, so anxious to pose as Iran's big brother right now, has been the main supplier of Iraq and used the

excuse of protecting Kuwaiti shipping (presumably against Iran) to send its warships into the Gulf only a few weeks ago. The only consistency here and the only way to understand this madness is this: the various powers are each pursuing their particular imperialist interests, as members of two opposing blocs; the target has been control of the Gulf itself and the Gulf in turn could be key to who controls the world.

Both the Iranian and Iraqi regimes are dependent on imperialism. Both have turned their countries into a prison-house of nations and bombed and massacred the villages of the Kurdish people fighting a just war for their national liberation on both sides of the border. Iraq's Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in the first place, at the West's behest, to make sure that the Khomeini regime would listen to Western reason. The Iranian regime's boast about being tied to "neither East nor West" has concealed ties to both, even though the regime has increasingly tried to sell itself to the West. It was this ruling class that on the behalf of world imperialism butchered the Iranian revolution that had toppled the Shah. Its usefulness to imperialism abroad as well was more than amply demonstrated when Khomeini & Co bought arms from Israel with U.S.-backed Saudi money, which in turn went to prop up the U.S.'s Contra army in Nicaragua. When the Irangate affair leaked out and the people of the world responded with disgust, Iranian head of parliament Rafsanjani declared, "Mr Reagan, we praise your courageous activities and we demand you continue."

The target of this piling up of imperialist vessels in the Gulf is neither the Iranian nor the Iraqi regime. Each of the two blocs has sent its ships to circle like sharks in the Gulf waters to resolve the Gulf

situation on terms most favourable to it and unfavourable to the other side — which may not be exactly the terms most favourable to the Iranian or Iraqi regimes. As Mao Tse-tung once remarked about the fate of another clique, being a running dog of the imperialists is no fun.

The possibility of World War 3 breaking out in this region is real. But in the same way the mounting strains of imperialist contention have made the existing order far more brittle and likely to shatter in the face of revolutionary blows, it is not Khomeini-style upheaval that the imperialists fear most here — they are afraid that the masses of people will find their way out of the stranglehold of the established regimes and send some crowns rolling down the Gulf maelstrom.

This extreme situation is the result of the intensification of the contradictions of the imperialist system; it shows, as Lenin said, how the imperialists are giants with feet of clay. Even as they strut their boats and bombers, the increased contention puts still more strain on them. This show of strength and military might can be turned into its opposite, as pointed to by their inability to deal with a few old mines dropped from small boats. Their efforts to mobilise their reactionary puppet states in the Gulf for their war efforts and the possibilities and perhaps reality of actually fighting a war could set their puppet states ablaze and reverberate in their own home countries with unforeseeable consequences.

The revolutionary masses in this region have suffered far too much in their ceaseless efforts to liberate themselves to choose the solutions offered by the likes of Khomeini, or the feudal Islamic "freedom fighters" supported by the U.S. in Afghanistan, the patronage of the Saudi "moderate" kings, the Soviet-made "People's Republics" of Afghanis-

Revolutionary Internationalist Movement with the Crowns of and Tyrants!

tan and Yemen, the reactionary pro-Soviet Arab compradors like Kad-daffi and Assad, or the international brokers such as Arafat who have used the aspirations of the Palestinian people as an asset to be bargained away to the U.S., the USSR and the reactionary Arab states, and who together with other factions of the PLO have striven to make the revolutionary Palestinian masses abandon their aim of overthrowing the Zionist state of Israel. Who among the oppressed would want to repeat any of these experiences?

How many roads have been revealed to be dead ends by the developments in the Middle East? The "guardianship" of the Western or Eastern imperialists, Shiite and Sunni reaction, Islamic fundamentalism or pro-imperialist "hereticism," the strategy of seeking to pressure the imperialists into agreements by peaceful means or by terrorism. All have failed — imperialism's grip has not been loosened. Only through proletarian revolution, through genuine armed struggle of the masses led by a vanguard guided by the stand and science of communism, Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, will the oppressed be able to truly move towards freeing themselves and all mankind. Two great victories have been won on this road already, in the October revolution led by Lenin in Russia and in China under the leadership of Mao Tsetung. History has shown us that the reversal of the rule of the proletariat in those countries have taken them back to imperialism and reaction. These setbacks do not prove our revolution impossible; on the contrary, the experiences of the exploited and oppressed through all their strivings for liberation show that proletarian revolution is the only possible way forward.

The great possibilities for revolu-

tion — and the dangers — point all the more to the weakness or non-existence of a proletarian vanguard as a problem which must be solved in many countries of this region as well as elsewhere. There is the danger of falling into despair and letting the reactionaries off the hook. And there is the danger of falling into the trap of reactionary ideologies and of allowing oneself to be drawn into serving as a soldier for the various contending reactionary armies and interests.

It is not just past history that proves that proletarian revolution is the only practical alternative to eternal slavery to imperialism. In Peru today there is the example of a genuine people's war, led by a proletarian vanguard, the Communist Party of Peru (PCP), which has escaped the clutches of all would-be imperialist predators and manipulators and taken aim squarely not only at the reactionary government currently in place in Peru but also at the imperialist system as a whole. What has been proven possible in Peru is possible elsewhere. As Mao Tsetung said, "the correctness or incorrectness of the political and ideological line determines everything." It is not aid, arms or foreign support that is key for advancing the revolution. Mao points out that even if one begins without a single soldier, if one has a correct line soldiers will come forward.

The masses of people in the region gave a tiny taste of their power when they knocked down the mighty Shah, and it is the masses of exploited and oppressed alone who can stop this mass slaughter and the even greater slaughter the imperialists are preparing for. Revolution in the Gulf region and the Middle East would be a major blow to the war preparations of the imperialists of the Eastern and Western blocs.

In the imperialist countries that have marshalled their naval forces

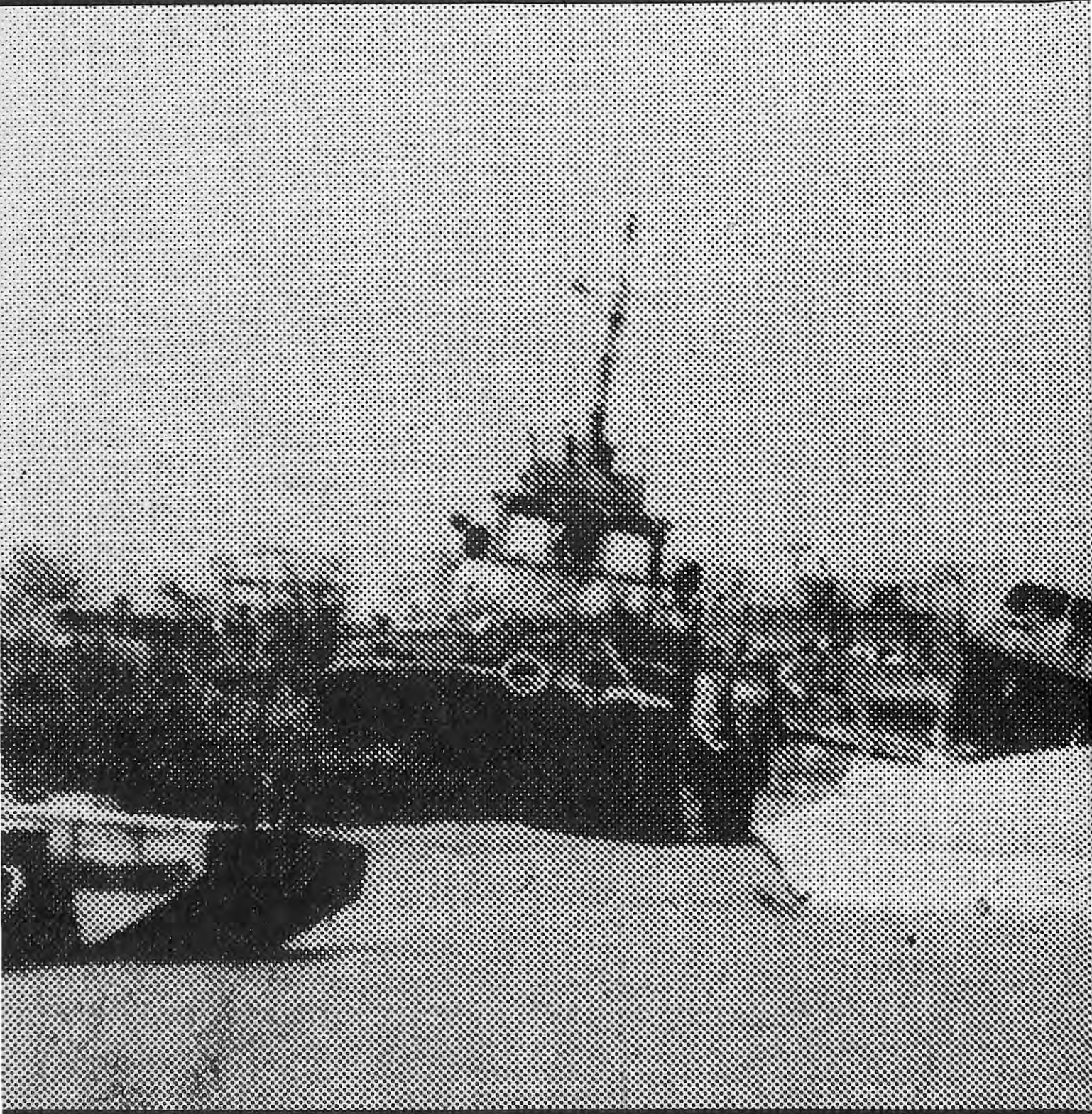
in the Gulf or whose armed forces are giving logistical support — the U.S., USSR, France, Britain, W. Germany, Italy, etc. — the revolutionaries, the exploited and oppressed, must expose and struggle against these moves by their imperialist ruling classes who have long fattened on the blood of the people of this region and the rest of the oppressed nations and who are pursuing their own bloodsucking interests as members of two war blocs lining up to contend for world domination. In opposing the danger of world war, it must never be forgotten that, as the *Declaration* puts it, "only revolution, the revolutionary war that the Marxist-Leninist forces are leading or preparing to lead, can prevent this crime." There is a tight cord connecting the revolutionary struggles of the masses in the Gulf and Middle East and in the imperialist countries, and indeed tightly connecting the worldwide struggle to overthrow the imperialist system which is the source of war and all the world's miseries.

The slogan of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement is "Prevent world war, step up the struggle for revolution throughout the world." As our Movement's *Declaration* says, taking as its starting point the stand of Mao Tsetung: " 'Either revolution will prevent war, or war will give rise to revolution'...And so the revolutionary communists must get prepared, and prepare the class conscious workers and revolutionary sections of the people and step up their revolutionary struggle."

21 August 1987

Statement by the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

IMPERIALISM ENTANGLED IN GU

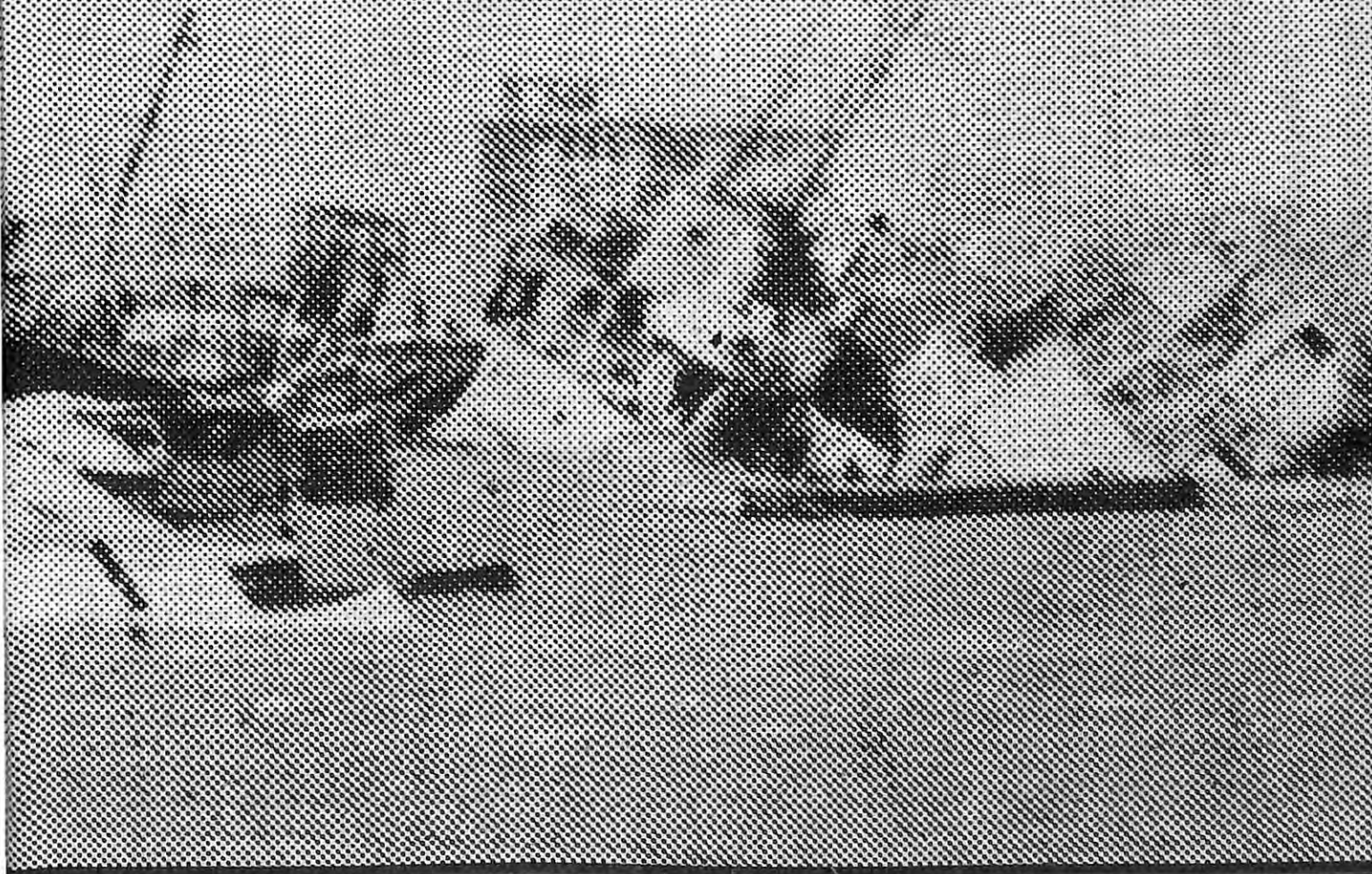


LF'S RISING WATERS

By Behnad Gugushvili*

It has been seven years since the Iran-Iraq war began. With over a million casualties and incalculable destruction, this long-lasting war is no doubt living testimony to the criminal abomination of the imperialist system and the reactionary forces preserving it as well as of the two belligerents themselves. The bloody hands of all the imperialist powers — the U.S., USSR, France, Britain, W. Germany, Italy, Sweden, etc. — and their reactionary client states such as Israel, Syria, Saudi Arabia, China, can be seen in every criminal act of this war. The

* Behnad Gugushvili is a member of the Union of Iranian Communists (Sarbedaran)



secret plotting and backroom scheming, the long-term and short-term manoeuvring of both imperialist blocs, headed by the U.S. and the USSR, along with their recent military build up and jockeying in the Persian — or Arab — Gulf and the Sea of Oman, are all evidence of this. The reactionary Gulf war is an embodiment of the intensification of the main contradictions and crisis of the imperialist world system and its increasing fragility, as all the imperialist powers become further entangled in the coil of a deadly rivalry to preserve and expand their overall strategic interests.

Background to the Gulf War

“The cumulative effect of the events and decisions of 1979-1980 was a strategic revolution in America’s global position. Up until the 1970s, U.S. foreign policy was anchored on the principle of interdependence with Western Europe and then later with the Far East. The Middle East was viewed as a semi-neutral (sic — *AWTW*) zone sealed off from Soviet power by a protective belt composed of Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, with a neutral Afghanistan providing a buffer. America’s interests, as well as the security of the Persian Gulf, was seen as resting on two secure pillars, Iran and Saudi Arabia. However, the collapse of Iran and the Soviet move into Afghanistan, preceded by the unimpeded Soviet military intrusion into Ethiopia and South Yemen, created an urgent security problem for the region as a whole, prompting by 1980 formal U.S. recognition of the security interdependence of three, instead of two, zones of central strategic importance to the United States: Western Europe, the Far East, and the Middle East” — Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Adviser to U.S. President Carter.¹

The Iranian revolution of 1979 and the Nicaraguan revolution that followed it were expressions of a great crisis that has gripped the imperialist world since the early 1970s. A crisis that each day demands a serious resolution more powerfully than the day before. The waves of the revolutionary struggle

of the Iranian people succeeded in depriving U.S. imperialism of its regional gendarme, and a gaping hole was blown open in the U.S. regional network of vassal states and faithful lackeys. Following on the heels of their defeat in Indochina, revolution in another U.S.-dependent country hit the “Number 1 World Master” hard. Among the oppressed and exploited it gave rise to revolutionary enthusiasm and a spirit of support for the Iranian masses’ struggle, both in U.S.-dependent countries and the imperialist countries themselves. For the U.S. imperialists, this meant losing its grip on a tremendous source of plunder and, even more, a strategic piece of territory. It meant the shutting down of one of the most important U.S. military and espionage bases in the region; the loss of vital listening centres along the southern borders of the Soviet Union; the expulsion from Iran of tens of thousands of American military and non-military experts and advisers; the dissolution of the ties commanding the half-a-million strong, armed-to-the-teeth army of the Shah; and the breaking up of the regional pact of Turkey-Iran-Pakistan, which was considered the extension of NATO to the Indian Ocean. For the Soviet social-imperialists, this meant a tremendous opening to advance its interests in its rivalry with the U.S.-headed imperialist bloc, especially since the genuine proletarian revolutionary forces were weak and unable to seize on the situation so as to turn it into a graveyard for the reactionaries.

The revolution, especially the Shah’s fall and the establishment of the Islamic Republic, gave rise to what the imperialists called a “power vacuum” in the region. In the course of this development, the Soviet social-imperialists took concrete measures to expand their influence in Iran and prevent the reconversion of its southern neighbour into a U.S. base. Obviously the Soviets were happy even with what had already transpired: the atmosphere of instability provided them with new room for manoeuvring to penetrate Iran. U.S. instability in the region made it possible

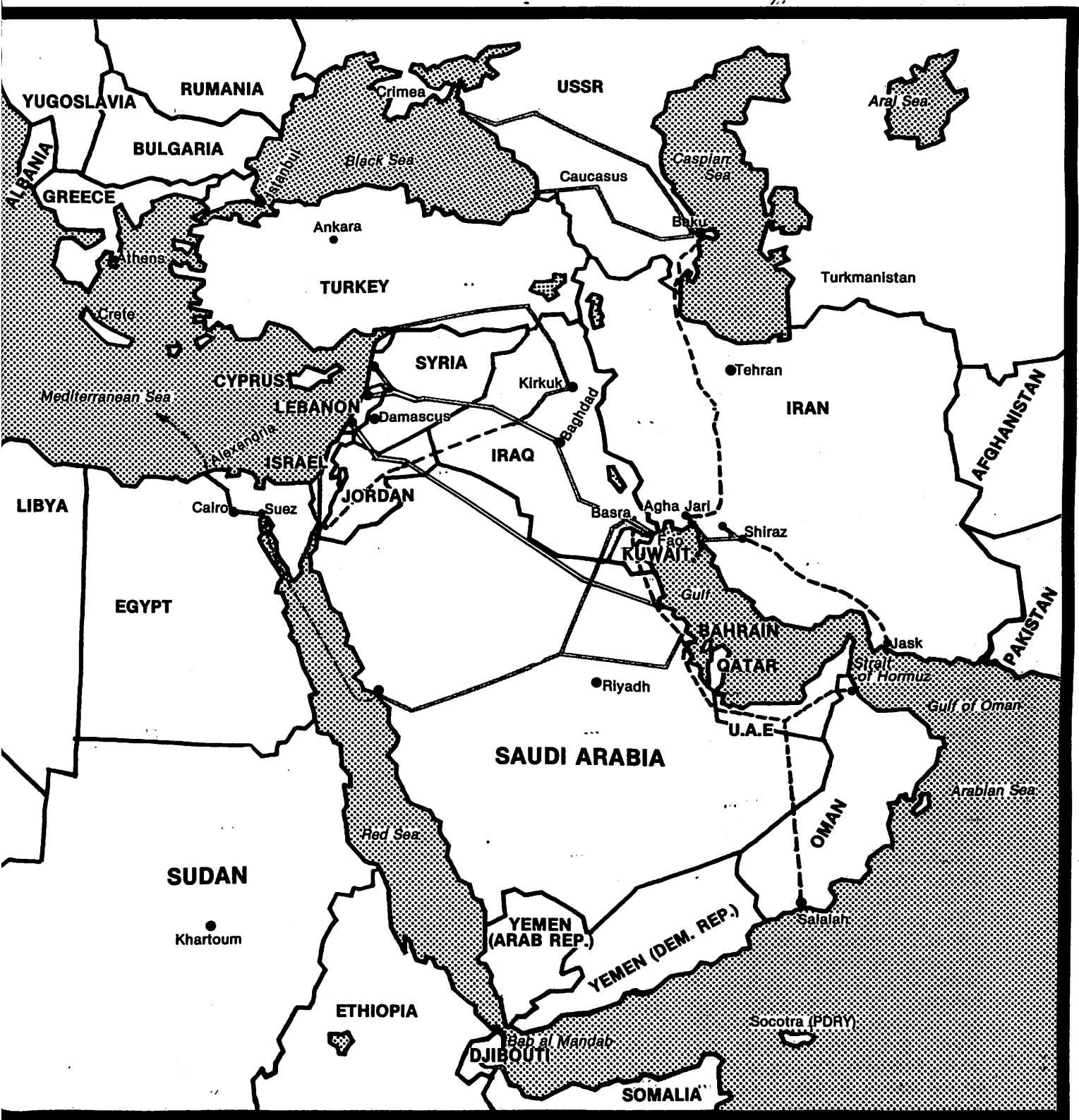
for them to occupy Afghanistan with an army of 120,000 shortly after the February revolution in Iran.

The U.S. was not just sitting by idly. As it became clear that the Shah was going to fall, months before this actually happened, American strategists tendered an approach towards the Islamic opposition and especially to Khomeini’s trend, which was at the fore, and undertook other major steps. In 1980, President Carter declared, “Any attempt by outside forces to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”² The U.S. promptly took steps to strengthen its client states such as Turkey, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and to build up its own military strength in the region. The military coup in Turkey on 12 September 1980 and the brutal clampdown on the revolutionaries there was part of this propping up.

Brzezinski wrote to President Carter in October 1980 that a war in the Gulf region would potentially be a threat to the region, but “the threat to the Gulf gives us a unique opportunity to consolidate our security position.” “We need to begin more subtle initiatives ... to put pressure on Iran in order to push it back from most if not all occupied territory and safeguard Iran from Soviet penetration or internal disintegration. We should enlist the help of Turkey, Algeria, Pakistan and the People’s Republic of China. Private and secret initiatives are needed.”³

The U.S. developed an overall strategy towards the Gulf which consisted of wearing out and suppressing the revolution in Iran, and through a series of carrot-and-stick policies reorganising a favourable government in Iran; containing the Soviet advances in the region, especially in Iran; consolidating the client states of Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states; expanding its influence in the states such as Iraq and South Yemen and using all pretences to build up its military presence and involve its

- - - - - Pipelines under construction
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allies there in a qualitatively greater way. In the face of all this, the Soviets pressed their own interests, using every escalation by the U.S. to movē in themselves, including with warships, all the while trying to present themselves as the non-belligerent superpower.

U.S. Imperialism and the Islamic Republic

Before Khomeini took power, the U.S. worked for a better alternative than Khomeini to try to put an end to the tumultuous period of social upheaval and revolutionary ferment and to prevent further disintegration of the U.S.-propped up state structure (especially its army and intelligence organisation). But they found no one else. Therefore, they paved the way for the establishment of the Islamic Republic (with its early heterogenous composition), or, to put it more accurately, they did not create serious obstacles to Khomeini's assuming power.

After the establishment of the new regime, the U.S. imperialists began to tighten up the remaining ties and develop new ties between Iran and the West. They assisted the Islamic Republic in breaking and diverting the strong revolutionary anti-imperialist spirit of the Iranian masses; in hunting and butchering the revolutionaries and suppressing the workers, peasants and oppressed nationalities. Under the instructions of the U.S. imperialists (see the review of General Huyser's memoirs in *AWTW* No. 9), officers in the army and SAVAK (the Shah's intelligence service, built and trained by the CIA and Israel's Mossad) declared their solidarity with the new regime, were given amnesty by Khomeini himself and were even taken back to work for the new rulers. These officers repaired the shattered army and SAVAK (now called SAVAMA) and assisted the buildup of the so-called Revolutionary Guards (*Sepah-e Pasdaran*, Islamic paramilitary armed forces which paralleled the regular army) of the Islamic Republic. All these forces were immediately dispatched on criminal operations to halt and suppress the just revolutionary struggle in Kurdistan and the anti-

feudal war of the peasants in Turkaman Sahra, to murder masses of the Arab people in Khuzestan (the south of Iran), etc.

It should be mentioned that even from the first days of the Islamic Republic, the Soviet revisionist lackeys in Iran actively joined in the rebuilding of the regime's military and intelligence forces. They sought to contain and suppress any revolutionary upheaval along the USSR's southern borders; also, according to their line of thinking, these were key areas in attempts to amass strength and influence in the state structure and expand Soviet influence over the new regime as well as prepare the ground for a possible Afghanistan-style Soviet-sponsored "revolution."

The U.S. imperialists also put political, economic and military pressure on the Islamic Republic to shake up the new regime and give birth to new alignments of reactionary forces and to create more favourable conditions for pro-U.S. forces within the state and throughout Iran. In December 1979, Brzezinski recommended "a number of steps designed to enhance our security presence in the region and to place greater pressure on Iran, including the possibility of assisting efforts to unseat Khomeini. I was particularly drawn to the notion of seizing Kharq Island and imposing a military blockade on Iran, combined perhaps with some air strikes."⁴ From these memoirs and other later revelations, it is apparent that the U.S. imperialists decided that massive military strikes might alienate some Islamic factions in Iran and Afghanistan from the U.S. and entail "Soviet exploitation of any major U.S. military action."⁵ But they were also concerned that some unforeseen "third force" might emerge (meaning the development of revolutionary upheaval in the whole society, springing free of the bloody reign of the new regime).

In the context of the U.S.' objectives and limitations, the Iraqi invasion of Iran in September 1980 was indeed invaluable for the U.S. and Western imperialists — and for the Soviet social-imperialists as well. Both used the Gulf war to the utmost and increased their influence

in this region at the expense of massive bloodletting of the two nations. The Iraqi invasion was backed by the U.S. with the hope of carrying out its objectives in Iran and also to increase its influence in Iraq. However, the complexity of the situation and the intensity of the inter-imperialist contention did not allow the U.S. to throw its full weight behind Iraq in the war, which would have risked pushing Iran decisively into the arms of the Soviets. The Soviets could not seriously oppose their long-time ally Iraq, nor could they alienate Iran. Thus the U.S. and Soviets, along with their allies, and through their clients, each *actively* played both sides of the war in order to safeguard and advance their imperialist interests.

The War Begins

On 22 September 1980, after a period of limited hostilities between the Iranian and Iraqi regimes ranging from the dropping of anti-Iraq leaflets by Iranian airplanes in Iraq to the sabotage of Iranian pipelines in Khuzestan and some border clashes, Iraqi forces launched a surprise attack, entering Iran from the south and west and occupying considerable parts of it, including Khorramshahr, Mehran, Susangerd and Qasr-e Shirin. Simultaneously, Iraqi airplanes dropped bombs on several Iranian cities. This lightning attack was designed to ensure rapid victories. The Islamic regime halted the Iraqis, and it did so by utilising the powerful anti-imperialist sentiments of the masses and obviously by relying on the masses' illusions about the Khomeini regime itself.

The first period of the war began in September 1980 and continued up to the summer of 1982. This period was essentially marked by the Islamic Republic's efforts to recover the occupied territory. During the same period the ground was laid for more openings to the West, and ties were established and strengthened. The Iranian armed forces met their military needs by resorting to the international markets through different European, Israeli and Argentine channels. These channels led mainly to one source: the U.S. Defense

Department.

The bloody hands of the old-line European imperialists were also active. It was revealed in 1987 that the main arms purchaser for the Islamic Republic was operating out of London with the full connivance of the British government. Further, it came out that the pre-1986 "socialist" government headed by Mitterrand had made substantial arms deals with Iran, while 40 percent of total French arms sales were going to Iraq. In this year of revelations, it even came to light that Italian mines were being laid in the warfields and waters of the Gulf and that nice, sweet peace-loving Sweden was selling arms to Iran. An updated "Special National Intelligence Estimate" on Iran worked out by the CIA and the National Security Council staff "portrayed the Soviets as well positioned to take advantage of chaos inside Iran. Our European and other allies could, however, provide a valuable presence to help protect Western interests... The degree to which these allies can fill a military gap for Iran will be a critical measure of the West's ability to blunt Soviet influence."⁶

The economic boycott of Iran by the West in the aftermath of the "hostage" affair provided favourable terrain for the East bloc to build up an extensive relationship with Iran, and numerous commercial proposals were made. In the early months of the war, transport of commodities to and from Iran went through the USSR. In view of Iran's military needs, the Soviets proposed military cooperation plans in an attempt to develop an important link in their relations with Iran, especially in this sensitive area. This was accompanied by a significant reduction in Soviet arms exports to Iraq. The Islamic Republic, however, did not accept the military proposals, for the needs of the U.S.-built army left over from the days of the Shah were basically American needs. In addition, the Soviets were not able to give all-around support to the Iranian regime because the other side in the war, Iraq, was a Soviet sphere of influence in the region, and the two countries had even signed a

"friendship and cooperation" pact in the early 1970s. Although significant pro-Western tendencies arose in the Iraqi ruling class towards the end of the 1970s, and although Iraq's attack on Iran was basically provoked by the U.S., the Soviets had significant concrete interests there which they had no intention of losing. Hence in the early days of the war the Soviets did not support Iran's proposal in the United Nations to condemn the Iraqi invasion. Due to the contradictoriness of the Soviet position and the overall complexity of the situation in the Gulf, active open political and military support for the Iranian regime was to be provided by two old rivals of the Iraqi regime, themselves close Soviet allies: Libya and Syria.

The Gulf War: A "Gift from God"

The war appeared to the Islamic Republic at the beginning to be a way to consolidate its counter-revolutionary rule and achieve national unity. Today it is a cause of great instability.

In the early days of the war, Khomeini called it "a gift from God." There is no doubt that it was a "gift from God" because like any other "gift from God" — including Khomeini's regime itself — this too sucked the blood of the oppressed! The war indeed rescued the regime from the masses' anger in the short-run. It started at a time when the Islamic Republic was internally torn with differences and its rule had been challenged in many parts of the country by the revolutionary masses; the communist movement, though without a clear orientation or a correct line, was growing; the revolutionary national war in Kurdistan was developing rapidly and the workers' movement was on the rise; and a peasant war in northern Iran (Turkaman Sahara) had just been put down. The revolutionary and anti-imperialist mask of the regime had been tarnished and their demagoguery was hardly cutting the mustard! When at the beginning of the war Iraqi bombs tore apart the city of Abadan, a major oil centre, and it was abandoned, one

of Khomeini's mouthpieces called this a good thing "because Abadan had become the Stalingrad of Iran." Which is true: in the workers' quarters Hezbollah gangs could not enter and tear down communist posters, rip up literature or knife revolutionaries, a common practice of such vigilantes in other parts of the country (leaving aside Kurdistan, which had become a burial ground for the Hezbollah).

Although the war had been triggered by the imperialists, the Islamic Republic used it from the beginning for its own reactionary ends, for suppressing the masses, launching extensive attacks on the revolutionaries and tempering its own military and paramilitary forces. The fact that Khomeini and other hated heads of the Islamic Republic were aggressively pounding the drums of war and calling for "war until victory" was not because of some reactionary mullah fantasy of establishing "World Islamic Rule" or "conquering Karbala,"⁷ etc. Even if some muddle-headed Hezbollah had any such illusions, the repeated and scandalous defeats of the Islamic Republic's "great offensive" at the front lines and the growing hatred of the oppressed masses of Iran and the Middle East for these great liars and butchers of the Iranian revolution has wiped out the basis for such fantasies. The war became a convenient cover for the Khomeini regime to disguise the real causes of the continuation and intensification of the social and economic misery of the masses. It gave the regime an easy cover to hunt down and murder revolutionaries and carry out more intensive, extensive and more open political suppression, like the medieval-style inquisitions, all in the name of national interests. Just to cite one example from the first days of the war: many youth and revolutionary Arabs, who are among the most downtrodden strata in the oil-producing state of Khuzestan, were arrested and shot, accused of being "Iraq's fifth column."

The Islamic Republic launched a vigorous ideological campaign of nationalism in order to mitigate and divert the outrage of the masses away from itself and towards the

“foreign enemy,” and called for “unity under the banner of Islam to save the country.” It tried to unleash national chauvinism among the masses to isolate the Kurdish national struggle.

But very soon, in less than a year, the Islamic Republic grew more exposed, and many saw its ugly face and realised that the main enemy lies inside the borders. In the meantime, internal divisions in the ruling classes widened and Khomeini’s own President (Bani-Sadr) and his followers started an open campaign against the dominant Islamic Republic Party. These cleavages opened the way for the boiling anger and outrage of the masses to burst forth.

Waves of the mass movement rose up against the dominant faction in the Islamic Republic. For various reasons that are beyond the scope of this article (see “Defeated Armies Learn Well,” by the UIC, *AWTW* No. 4), the genuine communist forces were not able to seize the opportunity and rally the masses under a revolutionary line. Thus the prospects, scope and demands of the mass movement remained limited and an alliance of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois forces assumed the leadership of the masses in the cities.

But in any event, the birth and spread of this movement was a serious obstacle to the regime and necessitated a serious settling of accounts on their part. In the last days of spring 1981, the security, military and paramilitary forces of the regime unleashed a simultaneous, all-out assault on President Bani-Sadr and his followers, on the mass movements, on communist and revolutionary organisations, and on individuals and groups within the opposition; after several months of bloody suppression, the developing offensive spirit of the masses was seriously set back, and finally crushed. To bring the masses to their knees, the regime executed more than 500 people per day for more than one month: communists, other revolutionaries, workers, nationalists, youth, university students, teachers, poets, writers and members of the bourgeois opposition. Their names were printed daily in the press. The Islamic

Republic carried out the infamous “Indonesian solution” (as it is called by the U.S. imperialists, after Sukharto’s bloody massacre of Indonesian revolutionaries in 1965), a solution which the U.S. had hesitated letting the Shah try for fear of provoking revolutionary upheaval. No wonder that in this period, the West, particularly the U.S., and also the pro-imperialist monarchist opposition, adopted an attitude of approval, and even at the Iran-Iraq front a kind of “ceasefire,” or more accurately, a lessening of hostilities, took place.

In the spring of 1982, the Islamic Republic managed to reoccupy the main areas in Iran seized earlier by the Iraqi army. Now the armed forces of both sides essentially lined up behind their own borders, face to face. However, this did not mean the end of the war. Rather, a new phase in the Gulf war began: a stalemate during which the Western media referred to “the forgotten war” or “the dead-end of the Gulf war.” This long period was marked by scattered and extensive attacks by Iran on Iraqi soil, sometimes leading human waves over minefields

The War and Factions

All along these criminals have used the war in their infighting, each trying to be the most die-hard supporter of the war and the most able to obtain war supplies. Provision of war needs, especially weapons, became a cover for each faction to seek ties with the imperialists, especially the superpowers, while continuing their shameless “anti-imperialist” sloganeering. During the course of the Gulf war foreign policy became the pivot for internal power struggles.

Ayatollah Karoubi, in his secret talks with Israeli officials in the fall of 1985 (disclosed during Irangate), said that Iranian politics were dominated by three parties, all of which were united in their commitment to the Islamic Revolution. “But the parties differed over foreign policy... They don’t even know if they have support abroad and who is supporting them and, if they have it, what they should do and what is expected of them. My group has the knowledge, influence and a certain power, and it can be put in service of the joint interest.” The Ayatollah pleaded for the West to adopt a policy of trying for the “moderation of the religious regime,” rather than for its “subversion.” He assured the Israeli official, the director-general of its Foreign Ministry, that his group believes that “the United States is less evil than the Soviet Union.”¹ The infamous U.S. dele-

gation to Tehran headed by Robert McFarlane reported that the high-ranking Iranians they met with said that, “You should know that if there is only one other country in the world which is against the USSR, it is us. We have a famous saying: The enemy of your enemy is your friend.”^{(1)²}

It is clear that the faction the Western press continuously refers to as “moderate” has a greater share of power, and that the so-called radicals are contending to hold to their share or to reach the top by more drastic means, such as by exposing the links of the first group with the West, by building up a stronger base among the Hezbollah and using it as a pressure group against the “moderates,” and/or by seeking links to the East bloc. The “moderates” are headed by three of Khomeini’s top men: Rafsanjani, the head of the Iranian Parliament, the Majlis; Musavi, the Prime Minister; and Khomeini, the President. It was this group which, with Khomeini’s knowledge and support, met with the U.S. delegation in Tehran in 1986. And it was the so-called radicals who, not part of the deal, first exposed it through leaflets in Tehran on 15 October and then leaked it out to the world through their Syrian friends. On 4 November, Rafsanjani publicly announced the U.S. mission but said that McFarlane and Co were “uninvited

and leaving countless victims in their wake. At this same time, weapons poured into both countries. The biggest military contracts were signed between Iraq and the Western countries, especially France, placing modern, sophisticated weaponry in the hands of Iraq's armed forces. The imperialists delivered their tested and even untested chemical bombs for Iraq to try on the battlefield, a criminal experiment costing thousands of lives. The Arab countries supplied Iraq with continuous aid — financial support from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait

and military supplies from Egypt and Jordan.

The market was also hot for selling spare parts to Iran for its U.S. Phantom jets, and anti-aircraft, anti-tank and ground-to-ground missiles. During this period there was not a trace of the West's economic boycott of Iran. The gates of commerce were opened to Japan, West Germany, Turkey, Italy. The Gulf war provided the West with a harvest of political, military and economic fruit in Iran.

The Soviets, witnessing the increasingly open penetration of

Iraq by the West and especially the U.S., re-evaluated their policy of reducing arms sales to Iraq and granted a \$2 billion credit to Baghdad; they also started up arms exports again so as to reinforce their position in Iraq against their imperialist rivals. In Iran, however, in 1983, the Soviet military security network suffered a heavy blow. In part thanks to the collaboration of the British and U.S. intelligence services, the Islamic Republic arrested more than 200 Soviet agents who had infiltrated the army, the *Pasdaran*, the intelligence apparatus and the high ranks of various ministries; among them was the commander-in-chief of the naval forces of the Islamic Republic, who was later executed. The Tudeh Party and the Fedayeen Majority (both Soviet-dependent revisionist parties) were declared illegal and some of their leadership was arrested. Eighteen Russian diplomats were expelled for espionage. Diplomatic relations between the two countries grew tense, though there were hardly any changes in the two countries' economic relations.

About this same time, the Islamic Republic — seizing upon the ebb in the overall revolutionary mood in the country — launched an all-out assault on the areas not under its control in Kurdistan and on the national struggle going on there; these areas were occupied by the Islamic Republic. Despite this military victory in Kurdistan, however, the regime was unable to stabilise its rule there. The regime had to establish hundreds of military outposts in the villages of Kurdistan and station tens of thousands of its *Pasdaran* and soldiers. It was forced to impose martial law in the cities, closing down the streets at 5 o'clock. It had to resort to the forced migration of Kurdish peasants to strategic hamlets. Nonetheless it has failed to subdue the heroic masses of Kurdistan.

in the Islamic Republic

guests"! Rafsanjani quickly got Khomeini's approval to round up the "radicals" and put their chief in front of a firing squad on the charge of having "declared war on God."

These events further revealed the desperation of the Khomeini regime. According to the report of the McFarlane delegation, published in *The Tower Commission Report*, "... in the course of the four-hour meeting it became evident that the three Iranian leaders — Rafsanjani, Musavi and Khomeini — are each traumatised by the recollection that after Bazargan met with Brzezinski in the spring of 1980, he was deposed (so strong was popular sentiment against doing business with the Great Satan) They still cannot overcome their more immediate problem of how to talk to us and stay alive. They are very fearful for their own vulnerability to factional attack if they are discovered in this dialogue before they can condition the people to a different perception of the U.S."³

Despite its representatives' fears for their skin, the regime more generally considers that its own life requires that it be sponsored more closely by the imperialists. It rests atop a comprador system engineered by and for the imperialists. To become the guardians of such a system without the imperialist masters is very difficult. The Iranian

rulers understand this well. As their Foreign Affairs Adviser said to the U.S. delegation: "We want TOWs, especially with technicians... We would appreciate your advice on F-14/Phoenix and Harpoon missiles. When the spare parts come on a large-scale, the public will naturally know where they come from. After some of this movement, our leaders could meet and accept this change officially. We have to prepare the people for such a change. Step by step."⁴

If at one point the Iran-Iraq war was a point of unity among the different reactionary circles of the Islamic Republic, today, with every round of intensification or ebb in the war, the in-fighting heats up and makes the Islamic Republic even more vulnerable. The problem that worries the Islamic Republic most of all is that these divisions will provide openings for a violent outpouring of the masses' outrage which would deal mortal blows to the Islamic Republic.

— B.G.

Footnotes

1. All quotes from "Deeper Inside a U.S.-Iran Link," *International Herald Tribune*, 13 October, 1987.
2. *The Tower Commission Report* (New York: Times Books, 1987), p. 313.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 298-299.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 317.

World War Preparations and the Gulf

The impact of the Gulf war in the region as a whole led to advances by the Western bloc, especially
(Continued to page 76)

The Iran/Contra Affair:

Ragged Hole in

By John Peters*

This November marked a year since the beginning of the Iran/Contra affair — the most severe political crisis within the ranks of the U.S. bourgeoisie since Ronald Reagan took office in 1981 and a major episode in current history.

Prior to the eruption of the Iran/Contra crisis, the Reagan administration had achieved certain successes in pushing forward the bourgeoisie's overall programme of preparing for war with the Soviet bloc and seemed to be riding high. It had overseen the most massive military buildup in U.S. peacetime history and had succeeded in putting the Soviet Union on the political defensive on a number of occasions. The U.S. had escalated its international bullying — from the invasion of Grenada, to the bombing of Libya, to the Contra terror campaign against Nicaragua — with seeming impunity. It had also taken certain initiatives to bolster the unity of the Western alliance around a prepare-for-war agenda. Domestically, the Reagan team managed, ever precariously, to hold the U.S. economy together, orchestrated an outpouring of jingoism and neanderthal-like reaction, and systematically beefed up the repressive powers of the state.

The bourgeoisie crowed that America was "back" and "standing tall." Reagan was applauded by the imperialist press as the most powerful U.S. president in recent memory, and for them, at least, he was virtually beyond criticism.

But the Iran/Contra crisis ripped some gaping holes in the fabric of this so-called "resurgent America." Reagan was knocked off his high horse and his administration was left seriously weakened. And the sharp divisions within the ranks of the U.S. bourgeoisie have by no means been resolved (the congressional investigating panel couldn't even agree on a unified summation

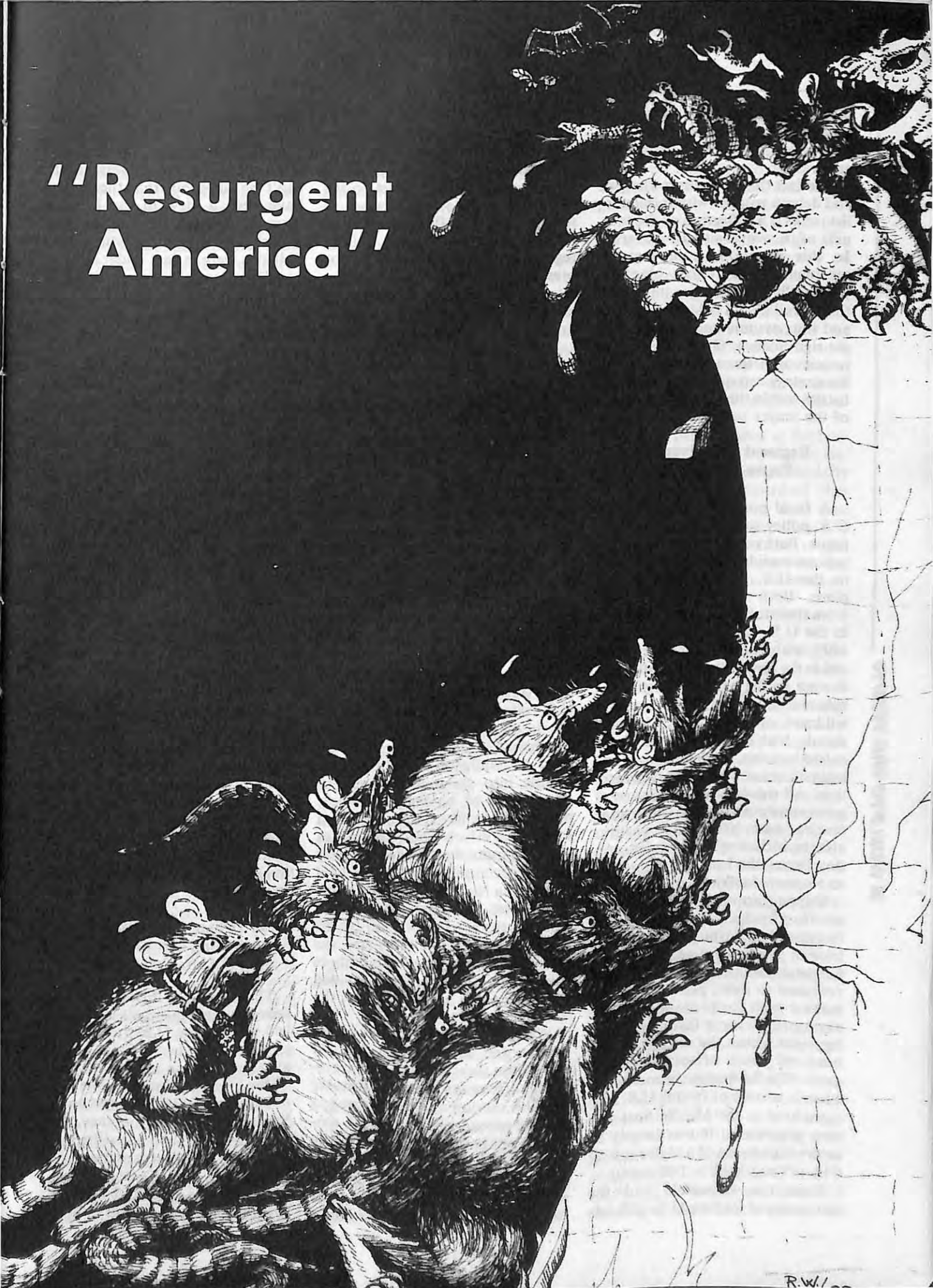
of the affair and had to issue two separate reports).

The scandal was touched off by revelations in a Lebanese magazine that high-ranking U.S. officials had secretly traveled to Iran — an inscribed Bible and key-shaped cake in one hand and TOW missiles in the other — to try and cut a deal with the Khomeini regime. Initially the U.S. government strenuously denied having had anything to do with the Islamic Republic. But these denials quickly came unraveled, and it was soon revealed that the U.S. had been secretly shipping arms to Iran, via Israel, for over a year. Within weeks it was also disclosed that the U.S. had been using the proceeds of these arms sales to fund a secret network of terror directed against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. Over the course of the past year, instance after instance of murderous — and global — U.S. skullduggery has come to light.

The ensuing ruling class debate, conducted through three government investigations, four months of public Congressional hearings, hours of media coverage and commentary, and a continuing criminal investigation, have revealed a U.S. bourgeoisie united on the essentials of the Reagan/resurgent America agenda, but seriously divided over certain aspects of how to carry it out. That is, the basic tenets of holding the U.S.'s global empire together while feverishly preparing to wage war against the Soviet bloc were never questioned. What was being sharply debated, however, were some very sticky problems in advancing that agenda, in Central America and the Persian Gulf in particular, and how U.S. initiatives in these regions affected its global contention and prewar positioning vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. The scandal also involved debate over

*John Peters is a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA.

''Resurgent America''



some aspects of the institutional functioning and decision-making processes of the bourgeois state apparatus.

The fact that such sharp struggle and debate erupted within imperialist ranks is a reflection of the tautness of the world situation overall. In this situation, even regional machinations by either bloc can potentially have a major impact on the overall global balance of power and thus assume enormous strategic significance. Given this, failed policies or differences over imperialist strategy can quickly spark fierce battles within the ruling class of any of the major powers.

Regional Initiatives and Prewar Positioning

A focal point of this crisis was U.S. policy toward Iran and Nicaragua. Both countries are located in regions considered strategically vital to the U.S. empire and its war plans. Both were also dislodged from their former puppet positions in the U.S. bloc by revolutions in 1979, with Nicaragua now ensconced in the Soviet bloc and with Iran, though in the grip of reactionary rule and tilting to the West, now a wildcard of sorts. Over the past decade, both regions have been convulsed by crisis, mass upheaval, and intensified inter-imperialist contention. All this has been a source of great consternation for U.S. ruling circles and prompted various efforts, including those under scrutiny during the Iran/Contra affair, to reassert American dominance.

Shipping arms to Iran was part of an effort by the U.S. imperialists to increase their influence within the Iranian government and, while the full details of this operation have not yet come to light, perhaps even to make a grab for predominance by engineering a more favourable realignment within the regime — and head off Soviet efforts to do the same. (To the degree the much discussed question of freeing U.S. hostages held in the Middle East was even a concern, it was largely to secure the release of a high-ranking CIA official held in Lebanon.)

Numerous editorials and the comments of leading U.S. officials

and ex-officials from both the Democratic and Republican parties have made it clear that no one in the U.S. ruling class had any problem with opening up a channel to the Khomeini regime and trying to strengthen U.S. influence. (In fact, U.S. dealings with the Tehran regime had been reported in the press over a year before the eruption of the scandal.) What was of concern, however, was the reliability of the forces with whom the U.S. was dealing, a concern highlighted by the exposure of these secret contacts and the unraveling of the initiative. Further, important voices in the U.S. ruling class worried aloud that the administration's dealings with Tehran, in particular the shipment of arms, coupled with the continuation of the Iran/Iraq war, could end up destabilising some of the U.S.'s firmest and most important clients in the Gulf region, as well as create openings for the Soviet Union there. These concerns were at the heart of the U.S. decision to reflag Kuwaiti tankers and dispatch a massive armada to the Persian Gulf.

The debate over U.S. policy toward Nicaragua was similar. The U.S. ruling class spoke in unison on the intolerability of a pro-Soviet beachhead in Central America, the need to bludgeon the Sandinista regime into submission, and the importance of having a pro-U.S. military force like the Contras as a tool in that effort. The question that emerged quite sharply was precisely how to accomplish that shared goal of bullying Nicaragua into the American orbit. Of great concern was whether the tactics pursued by the Reagan team might have had the effect of creating more instability in the region and thereby provided revolutionary openings to the masses.

While the exact contours of the debate are not entirely clear, it seems that there were — and are — sharp differences over the timetable for U.S. action against Nicaragua and the precise mix of political, economic, and military pressure to be applied. It is possible that the Reagan team may have been preparing for a more dramatic near-term move, relying heavily on military

force; others, perhaps even within the administration, may have argued for a longer-term view, utilising a broader mix of pressures. It can't be ruled out that there may have been a view in the Reagan team for a direct U.S. invasion of Nicaragua in the near future.

If this were in fact under serious consideration, there were perhaps fears in the ruling class that such an invasion could backfire by becoming not the lightning success that some U.S. military planners hoped for, but a protracted battle that would destabilise near-by pro-U.S. regimes and tie down U.S. forces in one region to the detriment of its overall global positioning and rivalry against the Soviet Union. Concern also seems to have been expressed within the ruling class that the Reagan administration was focusing too single-mindedly on the situation in Nicaragua and not paying sufficient attention to other issues in the region — for instance, the possibility of economic collapse and/or social crisis in Mexico.

While U.S.-Soviet policy in particular did not seem to be under debate during this crisis, the overall contention between these imperialist powers and their headlong rush toward a Third World War clearly set its context. Domination of the Third World is certainly a crucial pillar of both the American and Soviet empires. But such regional moves, like the U.S. initiatives toward Iran and Nicaragua, are tightly bound up with the contention and prewar positioning of these rival empires.

The Debate Over Institutional Functioning and the Character of U.S. Democracy

These policy differences were linked to other questions being thrashed out within U.S. ruling circles concerning the institutional functioning and decision-making processes of the executive branch. The question under scrutiny here was not the "preservation of democracy," the "restoration of constitutional rule," the "faithful execution of the law," or the proper "balance between the executive and legislative branches of government," as the

bourgeois media and the Congressional legislators put it. Rather the imperialists were concerned with issues such as the relationship between intelligence gathering and decision-making, between overall policy management and policy implementation, and there appears to have been a criticism leveled at Reagan for using the state machinery to circumvent and oppose a ruling-class consensus, specifically on the question of the role and level of support to the Contras. In other words, these gentlemen were debating how best to fine tune the decision-making processes of the bourgeois state in order to be able to advance the interests of U.S. imperialism at a very complex, tumultuous, and, for it, dangerous point in history.

Nonetheless, the crisis, the subsequent investigations, and the Congressional hearings did reveal much about the true character of democracy. The fact that the Reagan administration had carried out some of its most strategically sensitive operations in secret, without the knowledge of Congress, and in contravention to numerous laws, underscored Lenin's observation that in bourgeois democracies "the real 'business of state' is performed behind the scenes and is carried on by the departments, chancelleries and General Staffs," while "Parliament is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the 'common people.'" (*State and Revolution*) The cavalcade of professional assassins, anti-communists, arms merchants and mercenaries who were the core operatives implementing U.S. policy were living proof of the fact that the rule of the American bourgeoisie is based not on the supposedly hallowed principles of democracy and decency, but on a worldwide network of violence and terror.

Government officials competed to outdo each other in praising democracy; meanwhile, not a word of criticism was voiced about U.S. support for ruthless dictatorships from South Africa to Chile. Nor were objections raised about U.S. support for vicious Central American tyrannies that have slaughtered some 200,000 people over the last

decade.

The Congressional hearings in particular were designed, in part, to demonstrate the vitality of the U.S. political system — that problems and mistakes could be corrected through open debate. (The final Congressional report argued that the evils exposed by Iran/Contra did not result "from deficiencies in... our system of government.") They were also supposed to convince the masses that if the Republicans and Reagan couldn't be trusted, there was still the Democratic party or other bourgeois figures. Instead, the hearings demonstrated the bankruptcy of placing one's hopes on any segment of the bourgeoisie.

The debate at these hearings was always framed by what was in the interests of U.S. imperialism; its right to dominate and brutalize in pursuit of its global interests was never questioned. The ruling class preparations for a third world war were never discussed. Instead, all the Congressmen, Democrats and Republicans alike, felt compelled to declare their patriotism and their desire for a stronger America. Transparently false statements by various administration officials, such as Admiral Poindexter's declaration that he never told Reagan of the diversion of Iran arms sales funds to the Contras, went unchallenged. Discussion of many of the most sordid details that emerged from the scandal, including the international drug smuggling used to finance the Contra operation, was simply suppressed.

The hearings were also turned into a platform for Lt. Colonel Oliver North, a key Reagan administration official and a central figure in both the Iran and the Nicaraguan Contra operations, to spew out some of the most reactionary swill heard in the U.S. in a decade (and that is saying something given the overall atmosphere of resurgent America). North not only turned the hearings into a testimonial in support of the Contras, but lent the proceedings a distinctly fascist and warlike tone, declaring, for example, that "this nation is at risk in a dangerous world," and that the normal workings of democracy

could not always apply. He repeatedly boasted that he was proud of the crimes he had committed on behalf of U.S. imperialism, from Vietnam to Nicaragua, and would gladly commit them again.

The seriousness of U.S. war preparations and the real danger of a police state were underscored by revelations that North had been involved in organising a plan for the suspension of the Constitution and implementation of martial law "in the event of a national crisis, such as nuclear war, violent and widespread internal dissent or national opposition to a U.S. military invasion abroad."

North's performance at the hearings and his promotion into an instant national hero were particularly significant. They illustrated that while the U.S. ruling class had undercut the Reagan presidency, it was still fully committed to the resurgent America, prepare-for-war agenda that Reagan has embodied.

The Dénouement — for Now

The conclusion of the Congressional hearings in August represented a certain dénouement of the scandal, at least for the time being. Their outcome was both contradictory and inconclusive. Great care was taken not to cripple the current administration or force Reagan from office. The leaders of the U.S. were quite open about not wanting to trigger another Watergate, given the tenseness of the world situation and the intensity of the rivalry with the Soviet Union. Nor was the executive branch ever paralysed; witness the dispatch of ships to the Persian Gulf and the flurry of political manoeuvring leading up to the December 1987 Reagan-Gorbachev summit.

At the same time, however, the administration has been seriously weakened: two successive Reagan nominees for the Supreme Court failed to win confirmation; the Reagan team has yet to come up with a decisive plan of economic action in the wake of the October 19th Stock Market shock; and in Washington D.C., Reagan is increasingly called "irrelevant." None of the thorny issues that triggered the

scandal have been thoroughly resolved, something that has been quite evident in the continuing debate over U.S. Central American policy.

The Iran/Contra crisis and the continued turmoil within the U.S. ruling class doesn't reflect Reagan's "easy-going" management style, as the President's Tower Commission argued, his senility, or that a "cabal of zealots" had taken control of foreign policy, as the Congressional report put it. This crisis sprang from the fact that the U.S. imperialists are plagued with profound and multifaceted crises throughout their global empire and face minefields of contradictions wherever they turn. Any action they take in the Persian Gulf, Central America, or a dozen other theatres throughout the world threatens to create new problems, even catastrophes; yet inaction is impossible as well.

In the days ahead, as new economic, political, or military crises burst forth and the stakes and risks for the U.S. empire are raised, there will be tremendous pressures both toward closer ruling class unity as well as ever more vicious infighting.

The Iran/Contra events illustrate how the developments toward world war and revolution are closely linked. The Iran/Contra crisis pierced the suffocating atmosphere of resurgent America, politically jolted millions in the U.S., provided important openings for doing revolutionary work and exposure, and revealed the fundamental vulnerability of U.S. imperialism. And beyond the U.S., too, what came to light here is more evidence of the vulnerability of imperialism and its various allied reactionary forces all over the world.

At the same time, this crisis has by no means derailed the U.S. war machine. Rather it has aggravated the desperation and weakness propelling the imperialist powers toward war, in particular their difficulties in holding their empire and their various alliances together. In the future, such a crisis could be the trigger for all-out military conflict. All this points to the necessity of seizing upon such openings to step up preparations for revolution, which is the only road to preventing a third world war. □

Soviet "Dove"

It was the U.S. and the West bloc more generally which played the instigating role in the Gulf war, in order to protect their imperialist interests in a region which they have dominated for decades. The Soviet Union has exposed and condemned this repeatedly. But though their own role has been more limited, it is every bit as imperialist; in fact, while piously posing as the real hope for peace in the Gulf, the Soviet social-imperialists have fueled the war from the beginning and are now increasingly trying to throw their weight around the region, to muscle in on an area where they were previously a more marginal imperial power, even as the Western bloc, led by the U.S., tries to strengthen its own position. Soviet spokesmen routinely note that the Gulf war "only serves imperialism" — they should know, since they are one of the main imperialists it serves.

While Gorbachev coos about peace in the Gulf, the USSR is one of the biggest suppliers of arms fueling this reactionary slaughter. The USSR is the main single supplier of arms to Iraq, substantially outdistancing France, which is second. Bombs which pound Iranian cities, shells which tear apart the Iranian frontline, missiles which sink the tankers in the Gulf — and Iraq has hit *50 % more tankers than Iran* since it initiated this phase of the war — all these weapons and more originate in the munitions depots of the social-imperialists.

Of course, the Soviets have no monopoly on hypocrisy in this matter. In May 1985, the U.S. State Department declared, "The U.S. does not permit U.S. arms and munitions to be shipped to either belligerent," even as it was carrying out its "Irangate" shipments and, more routinely, funneling billions of dollars worth of arms through

Israel, Saudi Arabia, China and other U.S. clients. This is a practice the U.S. developed over many years, supplying South Africa, Guatemala and other such international pariahs through clients like Israel.

But the Soviets have mastered the art of international arms trafficking equally well. One of the main suppliers of weapons to Iran, for instance, is *North Korea*, which in 1982 supplied *over 40 %* of Iran's arms procurements — now who do you suppose supplies *their* weapons?! Syria, too, provides the Islamic Republic with weapons, also stamped "Made in the USSR." So while Gorbachev and Co denounce "the imperialists" for profiting from the bloodbath, these "doves" equal their counterparts in fueling the war *on both sides*. This simple fact is so damning of their hypocritical imperialist character that one will *never* find it published in the much trumpeted "glasnost" media (just as similar simple facts about Western arms sales are at most footnotes in the Western "free press").

It is particularly infuriating, then, to read arguments like that of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which informed readers of its monthly journal that: "... the imperialist countries are playing their role of war capitalists to the hilt — selling arms to one side or the other, or to both. In contrast to the Soviet Union, the capitalist countries are delighted to make money while Iran and Iraq destroy each other..."² When facts don't convince, just too bad for the facts — this is the way the PFLP seeks to clean up the image of the imperialist USSR.

These extensive Soviet arms supplies to the belligerents are not primarily due to the simple search for profit on arms sales. One Soviet apologist, Fred Halliday, argues

Bares Its Claws in the Gulf

that Soviet arms supplies are different from those of the West because the USSR doesn't have a profit-oriented military-industrial complex. As proof, Halliday argues that the Soviets have probably even lost money on arms deals in the Middle East.³ Whatever he thinks now that Gorbachev has more openly than ever put profit in command of the Soviet economy, such "proof" only "proves" the author's own vulgar economic reasoning. Did the arch-imperialist Reagan calculate the bottom-line profit on the "Irangate" arms deliveries? Or did strategic reasoning dominate? And what about in Vietnam, where the U.S. poured tens of billions of dollars into a war for a country which was hardly a major source of superprofits in its empire? The Soviets themselves have experience with strategic, rather than narrowly economic calculation; Cuba, for instance, has been a basket-case economically for years, but whether or not it has brought net profits into the Soviet coffers, it has served not only directly to secure footholds in Angola and Ethiopia, where its puppet troops prop up Soviet neocolonies, but more generally to refurbish the Soviet's tarnished socialist image, especially in Latin America. Or what about the price of the war in Afghanistan itself?

Certainly profit-making by arms manufacturers selling to petrodollar-rich reactionary regimes has in fact been *one* factor pushing forward the steady military buildup in the region. But the underlying compulsion has never been the immediate profit margin, and now less so than ever.

Today, control of the Middle East, and especially the Gulf itself, is a key to world domination. Part of the basis of the Gulf's strategic importance has been petrol. Though

the West has taken serious measures to reduce its dependency on petrol, with some success, Gulf supplies continue to be vital to the Western economies, including particularly Japan, which gets two-thirds of its petrol from the Gulf region. The Persian Gulf contains 57 % of all the world's known oil reserves, and they will last far longer than those in the North Sea, Alaska, etc.⁴ The long lines which carry Gulf oil to the West are the jugular veins of the Western bloc.

But the blocs are not contending over immediate supplies of petrol. Contention over petrol is but a part of a larger dynamic of contention, especially military contention, which now looms over all else. The Mideast is the recipient of *over one-half of all Soviet and U.S. arms deliveries in the world*. Of the ten largest non-Soviet bloc recipients of Soviet foreign aid between 1954 and 1976, seven were in the Mideast, including Turkey, Afghanistan, Egypt, Algeria, Iran, Iraq and Syria. In the early 1970s, three countries (Egypt, Syria and Iraq) got over half of all Soviet military aid to non-Soviet bloc countries.⁵ In 1978-1982, Syria and Iraq, the two largest recipients of Soviet arms transfers, *each* received more Soviet arms than did *the entire Warsaw Pact together*.⁶ This enormous stockpiling of weapons by both blocs in the region has turned it into a tinderbox and reflects how vital the imperialists of both blocs consider this region, and, in turn, the deployment of this vast arsenal makes control of the Gulf region ever more imperative for each. The web of interests woven together especially by these weapons is today so tight that any step by one imperialist threatens to rupture the entire fabric in the region and hurtle the imperialists directly at each other.

Arms supplies are key in this contention, but they do not translate into direct imperialist domination. The Soviets rely heavily on direct military aid, and are less capable than the Western imperialists of using other means to penetrate these countries. But their efforts do include diplomatic, political and economic measures as well. They have, for instance, used their proximity to Iran to negotiate a recent deal which will open a pipeline and railroad traffic from Iran into the USSR, allowing Iran to export 700,000 barrels per day (bpd) of its current production of 1.7 million bpd.⁷ Such a measure goes beyond economic significance, for this will allow Iran to divert its exports from shipment through the Gulf and so diminish Iraq's ability to continue the "tanker war" and bring the Western imperialists onto the scene. This in turn puts the Western imperialists into a bind, for the more they allow Iraq to harass Iranian oil shipments — one of Iraq's chief means of parrying Iranian ground superiority — the more this puts pressure on the Islamic Republic to turn to these new ties with the Soviets.

Soviet diplomacy has sought to establish new diplomatic ties in the region, including with the United Arab Emirates and other reactionaries; the Soviets present themselves as a non-belligerent, peaceful, socialist superpower which can bring peace and stability to the region. They recently proposed that all foreign warships leave the Gulf — a proposal so safe that Brezhnev himself floated it out in 1980. And why not? The assumption underlying it is that the Soviet social-imperialists are at least equal arbiters of the region's destiny in an area where the U.S. and Western bloc has been dominant for deca-

des. Naturally these social-imperialist "doves" have not put forward eliminating all foreign naval vessels from the *Red Sea*, where they have recently established naval bases and positioning points on the coast of their Ethiopian neo-colony, as well as in Aden in South Yemen.

Backing up the Soviet efforts to get its claws deeper into the various parts of the region is the direct Soviet military presence. In the waters of the Gulf, this is hardly on the same scale as that of the Western imperialists, yet the six Soviet warships there as of October 1987 — including a submarine depot ship, three minesweepers, one frigate and a destroyer — are by no means negligible. They are symbolic of a new, stepped-up Soviet presence in the region, a visible affirmation of the Soviets' diplomatic declarations that henceforth the USSR has a voice in the Gulf's destiny. Furthermore, they are part of the much larger force of fifteen to twenty Soviet ships normally stationed in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. Even more importantly, the Persian Gulf has the distinct advantage for the Soviets of being within striking distance of the Soviet mainland and Afghanistan. Over 300,000 Soviet troops are stationed in the southern USSR and have been put on alert status at least at one point due to activity in the Gulf region. The Soviets also have nuclear missiles and numerous aircraft capable of reaching the Gulf in less than 30 minutes. This capability has been enhanced by the presence of 100,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan, who have, since the occupation, constructed airfields and other infrastructure in southern Afghanistan which would facilitate any Soviet military presence in the Gulf.⁸

In South Yemen in January 1986, Abdu-l-Fatah, who was called "the man of Moscow," staged a coup d'Etat and overthrew his comrades in power who were also pro-Soviet but had lingering ties with the West. This was a palace coup directed by Moscow aimed at consolidating its control of South Yemen, which amounts to little more than one big Soviet military base.

Yemen is one of the poorest

countries in the world, with a very small population. It is not attractive from the point of view of imperialist plunder. But it is located at a point that, especially these days, makes it impossible to ignore. It lies right on the principal sea-route connecting Europe and Asia, via the Red Sea and Suez Canal. It borders the Arabian Sea for more than 1000 kilometres. It controls the choke-point of the Red Sea itself. It has three islands (Perim, Kamaran and Socotra) positioned in the middle of these waterways on which the Soviets have built bases for their nuclear submarines. The Eden airport has been developed by the USSR to be fit for use in wartime or other emergencies. The operational radius of the forces on these bases is so extensive that they can threaten the key U.S. Indian Ocean base on Diego Garcia island.

The loans granted by the USSR provide 1/8 of the total financial resources of South Yemen; they are used mainly to maintain the bases. One thousand Russian military advisers oversee the South Yemen military forces; another 1,000 economic advisers direct its economy — this in a country of only 2 million. East Germans and Cubans also take part in this colonial setup, which goes so far that the South Yemen armed forces, which have been doubled in size recently, are now integrated into the Warsaw Pact. They are under the Pact Central Command, and receive their orders from Budapest!

All this mounts up to an impressive array of military might, but any Soviet military move into Iran would encounter serious difficulty, not the least of which might well be the resistance of the Iranian masses. The West has recently heavily built up Turkey as an extension of NATO to deal with Soviet moves, and the U.S. has developed the 200,000-strong Central Command to move rapidly into the region. Militarily troops in the Soviet south would be forced to cross the Zagros Mountains, with very narrow passes.⁹ It is here that the U.S. has publicly declared that it would attempt to halt a Soviet advance, including, it has said, with the use of nuclear weapons to block the

passes. Obviously such an eventuality threatens to broaden into global nuclear war with all the horror and destruction that portends.

Indeed, the strategic decision-makers of both blocs have already edged dangerously close to the brink once in the region. U.S. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski writes in his memoirs of the period during the "hostage takeover crisis" in 1980: "By late August we had mounting intelligence that the Soviets were deploying forces on the Iranian border, in a mode suited for intervention in Iran." A "particularly sharp discussion" took place among government leaders "to assess the policy implications of the intelligence regarding a possible Soviet military intervention in Iran". "I argued that we should explicitly tell the Soviets that any Soviet military action would lead to a direct military confrontation with the United States. Muskie (then U.S. Secretary of State) offered the judgement that Congress would not feel that nuclear war was worth 7 percent of our oil, and Brown (then U.S. Secretary of Defense) rather sharply responded by asking what would happen if the Soviets invaded Iran and we did nothing. Did Muskie really believe that our losses would be only a percentage of our oil supply? Muskie reported that the American people might even accept the loss of Europe rather than risk nuclear war. I then joined in by asking Muskie if he accepted the proposition that the loss of the Persian Gulf might lead to the loss of Europe... In that case, I asked, isn't it vital that we deter the Soviets from moving into Iran?"¹⁰

Brzezinski tries to portray these developments as set in motion by Soviet deployments and threats of military intervention. The U.S. in fact had its own plans. Another Pentagon intimate reported that the Soviets got wind of a U.S. plan for military intervention in Iran and, "The KGB's 'best estimate' ... was that the United States was getting ready for military action, and the Soviets would have to meet force with force."¹¹ Another observer confirms that the Soviets feared a more major military intervention on the part of the U.S. during this

“hostage takeover crisis.” When the U.S. menaces were at their height in April 1980, just before the abortive helicopter rescue operation, the Soviets moved 50,000 troops in Afghanistan up to the Iranian border as a warning against U.S. direct intervention.¹² This same observer also reports that the Pentagon had developed plans for use of nuclear weapons in the event of a Soviet takeover of Iran.¹³

What is clear from all this is that both imperialists were engaged in planning for a *direct, major military confrontation* in the event that the other were to take any major direct step into Iran. The Soviets certainly knew, or could guess, at U.S. planning and counter-planning, but nevertheless did not hesitate to undertake a mobilisation on a scale which posed the possibility of a U.S.-Soviet confrontation. Indeed, Soviet military doctrine recognises no brick wall between limited and nuclear war; as one exposition of Soviet military doctrine states: “There exists no insurmountable barrier or solid wall between a limited war and a world war. Each local adventure ... by the imperialists ... carries within itself the danger of escalation into a world war.”¹⁴ (Naturally, this isn’t said to pertain to the Soviets’ own “local adventure” in Afghanistan!)

The Soviets have presented themselves as the superpower which can guarantee peace and stability; they have exploited the broad exposure of the U.S. imperialists that exists, as well as the U.S.’ inability to prevent the collapse of the Shah, a fact which continues to give nightmares to the assorted sheiks and other reactionaries of the region.

But the social-imperialists’ own record could hardly give comfort. How much stability have they brought to Afghanistan? Who are they to talk about peace while waging a savage war of suppression to ensure their own imperial domination of that country?¹⁵

The Soviet Union is essentially in the position of digging in its claws, aiming to advance its tactical position right now and waiting for the U.S. and/or its major allies in the region to encounter difficulty, in order to scoop up whatever advan-

tage it can to strengthen its overall position in the Gulf. There is some basis for its hope: the situation of numerous U.S. client-states is deteriorating. There is strife between Sunni and Shi’ite in Kuwait; the Saudi Arabian regime, one of the most important for the West, is sitting on a tinderbox; U.S. influence in Iraq, relatively recent, is hardly consolidated, and the regime there is fragile in any case.

In Iran, too, time could offer the Soviets an opportunity. There is no guarantee that the U.S.’ manoeuvring in Iran, which relies heavily on gangster-style intimidation, can be kept easily in hand. One force which could certainly explode in the U.S.’ face — one more time — is the Iranian masses. In a situation where the Islamic Regime was threatened and turmoil erupted, this time with the U.S. having even less manoeuvring room in Iran than it did during the Shah’s overthrow, the Soviets might try to step in as a saviour of “stability” in Iran, perhaps in response to some “appeal” by pro-Soviet forces there.

While the social-imperialists might be eagerly anticipating the possibility of harvesting some fruit should disorder ripen in the region, it is far from certain that they could bring this under their control, or that they will even benefit at all.

In fueling the slaughter that has marked the region for seven years now, the imperialists have created a situation where the governments of that area are increasingly hated by their own war-weary people, exhausted of internal resources and riven by factions. The Chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee declared that “The dangers of a possible Iraqi collapse are greater than commonly understood ...” While the social-imperialists insist that “the war serves only imperialism,” the U.S. imperialists warn that “the perils for the United States in the Gulf are certain to increase.”¹⁶ While each is also referring to the danger of advances, by the other, it is also this spectre, too, of mass upheaval that haunts the analysts of both imperialist blocs and puts pressure on both to seek some resolution of the Gulf

war — on the condition, and here’s the rub, that their own interests are safeguarded.

So, even while anticipating the eruption of disorder in the today Western-dominated Gulf, the Soviets too have their own imperial interests to protect in the region. The only disorder they support is disorder which can be controlled by them. The Soviets recently attempted to broker their own peace plan, as they did in 1970 in the Indian-Pakistani peace accord. This time the stakes are higher — and so far they have failed. The point of the accord the Soviets sought was to set themselves up as guarantors of order in the Gulf region, thus marginalising the West bloc; the Western imperialists immediately denounced it as trying to get around the “United Nations peace process,” which of course they are intent on dominating. All of which shows once again that, for both blocs, the only peace they find worth pursuing is one that advances their own imperialist interests. □

Footnotes

1. *The Iran-Iraq War*, by Ralph King
2. *Democratic Palestine*, July 1987, p. 28
3. *Threat from the East? Soviet Policy from Afghanistan and Iran to the Horn of Africa*, by Fred Halliday (Pelican Books: London, 1981), p. 46.
4. *Economist*, 8 August, 1987.
5. Halliday, p. 45.
6. “Soviet Arms Transfers,” Institute of Strategic Studies, p. 187.
7. *Middle East International*, 12 September, 1987.
8. *International Herald Tribune*, 27 August, 1987.
9. *The Soviet Union and Revolutionary Iran*, by A. Yodfat, p. 146.
10. *Revolutionary Worker* (RCP Publications; Chicago, USA), citing from *Power and Principle*, by Zbigniew Brzezinski.
11. Quoted in the *Revolutionary Worker* 10 August 1987.
12. Dilip Hiro, *Iran Under the Ayatollahs* (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1985), p. 285.
13. Hiro, p. 326.
14. Milovidov and Kozlov, *Philosophical Heritage* (Moscow).
15. For more on the Soviets in Afghanistan, see *AWTW* No. 9, “Afghani Communists Expose Soviet Plays”.
16. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Report, cited in *Revolutionary Worker*, 26 October 1987.

The Fall of Captain Sankara, or

Why You Can't Make Revolution without the Masses

His chest riddled with bullets, his Kalashnikov lying a few feet away in the dry dust of Ouagadougou, the Captain of the Burkina Faso "revolution," Thomas Sankara, was cut down in a palace coup on October 15, 1987. Several members of his military entourage and advisors lay dead at the scene of ambush beside him. Soldiers acting on behalf of rival ministers within the ruling National Council of the Revolution (CNR) he presided over hurriedly threw the bodies into a jeep and reappeared with shovels in the middle of the night to throw some dirt over them in a hastily-made common grave.

With Thomas Sankara died an "experiment" in radical reform that had raised the hopes of many in Africa and even elsewhere. Burki-

Thomas Sankara



na Faso was the most recent attempt to find an "independent path" to national liberation without a revolutionary war of the masses, without the leadership of a genuine proletarian political party, and without the science of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. The coup was the bloody denouement of a play whose ending, like those of the Greek tragedies, was written into the very form itself.

Sankara was by no means a revolutionary communist (and most of the time didn't pretend to be), but his militant, anti-imperialist posturing, his jaunty, confident style, his Ché Guevara military "look," and most of all his unorthodox attempt to "revolutionise" one of the world's poorest countries, captured the imagination of many African youth and intellectuals who followed his innovations closely, just as among them his death has become a subject of sharp controversy and has posed pointed questions: what kind of revolution was he leading, and was his path one that could liberate Africa?

* * *

Burkina Faso, formerly known as Upper Volta, is a landlocked country whose northern border stretches through 3000 kilometres of the Sahel, a semi-arid region on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert. It is located at the crossroads of routes that penetrated colonial Africa. Colonial conquest of Upper Volta dates back to a reign of terror in 1895, in which a French naval captain led his men through the cen-

tral plateau, killing people and animals, pillaging and burning villages. As part of the carving out of the French West African empire, its borders were altered regularly up until 1947. The vast majority of its population are rural, herders and peasant cultivators; its economy, never developed, was distorted and stagnated first by colonial plunder and further ravaged by repeated droughts and famine, bringing in their wake foreign "aid" from a host of Western imperialists and their parasitical representatives of the IMF, World Bank, the FAO, EEC, U.S. Peace Corps and so on.

The population is mainly Moslem and consists of numerous ethnic communities speaking over 60 languages and dialects. Ninety per cent of the eight million people live in the countryside, which is completely dominated by Ouagadougou, the capital. The city's population consists of a tiny modern working class, a fairly large number of government employees ranging from top-level bureaucrats to the lowest custodians, military personnel, artisans, employees of French concerns, and a small but rapacious class of merchants. The city is a creation of imperialism and a parasitic drain on the country as a whole.

In 1932 France actually administratively attached Upper Volta to the far richer coastal colony at its southern border, the Ivory Coast, making official its relationship as a gigantic reservoir of labour to work the Ivory plantations and fields. Today, *two million* Burkinabe con-

tinue to work in the Ivory Coast, and, as the desert advances, so does the southward migration.

France restored Upper Volta's "autonomy" in 1953 and subsequently granted formal independence in 1960 to a tiny comprador bourgeoisie, continuing its neocolonial presence under the rule of corrupt and staunchly loyal army officers who have been toppling each other ever since in a series of coups d'état, at times with the backing of the powerful civil servant trade unions. It was hardly shocking that Sankara's politically radical reign ended in the same abrupt manner. More importantly, the very means by which Sankara came to power and the very nature of the state power he took over is the fundamental reason he could not lead a thorough-going revolution.

Seizing Power from Above: The Left-wing Officer Corps

Sankara called his revolution a "peoples democratic revolution," the goal of which was to get the people to "assume power." In fact this concentrates much of the problem: political power was never seized from below, through people's war. Instead, emerging as the charismatic leader of a fiercely nationalist, anti-colonialist wing of the army, the radical young captain Sankara found himself Prime Minister in November 1982, when an army doctor commander, Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo, took over the presidency with the collaboration of the left-wing officers and unions. Sankara invited Libyan president Khadafi to Ouagadougou in April 1983 and was promptly arrested shortly after a French African Affairs official ar-



rived in town, worried over possible diplomatic realignments.¹ Youth demonstrated in Ouagadougou and Sankara's left-wing officer friends retreated to the elitist paramilitary camp in the southern Burkinabe town of Pô and planned a rebellion to get him reinstated.

On August 4, 1983, this column of future ministers marched into the capital city of Ouagadougou and took over the government, proclaiming the "revolution." This "left" coup relied on a totally bourgeois military line of tactically outmanoeuvring the temporarily disorganised alliance of right-wing and "moderate" forces within the neocolonial army; it was at best tentative and required hasty efforts to consolidate its urban social base among the radical left organisations which were influential in the urban petit bourgeois sectors, particularly in education and among civil servants, in order to hold onto state power. As Sankara put it candidly, "Without them we couldn't have won, they prepared the masses for us." And, somewhat surprisingly, "Our main support is from the organised workers" (by which he me-

ans, of course, the trade unions based on the civil servants in the capital!).²

Despite his sympathies for the plight of the peasants and undoubtedly genuine desires to improve their lives, Sankara did not rely on them and they never became his social base: his outlook and line coincided instead with that of the urban petite bourgeoisie, and from the beginning was one which could not liberate the vast majority of the toiling masses in Burkina Faso.

It is true that Sankara had gained some popularity, and the masses — although mainly bystanders — did not generally oppose him; he was confident that through time, he could win them to his revolution.

As for the sticky dilemma of shedding the army's neocolonial heritage, Sankara thought he could transform it into a people's army through "political education." "We want the army to melt into the people."

Although Sankara considered his leadership the "democratic representation of the people," in reality the struggle over political power was centred within the CNR



which gave representation to the major left currents and served as a vehicle for the four military bosses — Sankara, Blaise Compaoré, Jean-Baptiste Lingani and Henri Zongo — to try to arbitrate the political disputes and patch together a “unity” which would allow them to function and carry out a platform of reforms.

In fact if Sankara and his radical military friends could be judged on the basis of intentions and good ideas, their marks would not have been all failing. He wanted to help the peasant masses, to end the stifling weight of the chiefdoms in the countryside, to wipe out the corruption of government officials and the nest-feathering of the urban civil servants, to make women equal to men and lighten their burden, as well as to rapidly achieve the goal of two good meals per day and all the water the average peasant household needed; he wanted to rely on “ourselves” and not on the colonialists and imperialists to build up the economy and he hoped to develop African culture and forge strong alliances with other progressive African states. He wanted to be truly independent, was against any form of hegemonism or foreign domination and proclaimed common cause with “all the peoples of the world ready to help us in our struggle against injustice and tyranny.”

Relying on the Petite Bourgeoisie

The underlying political problem of Sankara’s conception of revolution was his failure to base himself on a correct class analysis and to embrace the only ideology that can liberate the oppressed — that of the proletariat, its science of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. Although he admitted he was influenced by and attracted to some aspects of Marxism-Leninism, he eclectically borrowed those ideas which corresponded to his radicalised petit-bourgeois class outlook — that of discontented lower officers in a neocolonial army — and combined them with others akin to pan-Africanism and tired old nationalism.

“There is no politics without

ideology. For us, ideologies provide light, ways of analysing things which allow you to discern the realities of society.... Human dignity, that is our ideology.” He believed in no mold other than the Burkinabe mold he was attempting to shape: “It’s a continual practice of Eurocentrism to always uncover spiritual fathers for Third World leaders.... Why do you want to put us in an ideological slot at any price, to classify us?... There can only be salvation for our people if we radically turn our backs on all the models the charlatans have tried to sell us for some 20 years.... We take from others what is dynamic and creative.”³

To fashion this Burkinabe model, Sankara took the battlecry from the Cubans: “Homeland or Death! We will conquer!” From Albania he borrowed the pick and rifle for the national symbol. He patterned his Committees to Defend the Revolution (CDR) after his closest ally, Ghana, which in turn had taken them from Cuba. Most of all he took a rich blend of modern revisionism from the Soviets and much of the failed African “socialism” they have spawned, to which he added some of the concepts and policies Mao Tsetung developed for revolution in colonial countries, although unfortunately not the scientific outlook of Mao Tsetung or his insistence on the need for a revolutionary war against imperialism and its allies.

The jumble of Sankara’s political views can be dissected into a number of competing trends and influences operating on the opposition political scene in Ouagadougou and Paris. The “leftist” political spectrum included, from the military, a “progressive” group of officers within the French and Moroccan-trained neocolonial army called the ROC (Communist Officers’ Regrouping), which was tightly linked to political organisations within the intellectual milieu. Among these were: the PAI (African Independence Party), pro-Soviet revisionists based among administrative cadre and the leading political force behind the mass organisation known as LIPAD (Patriotic League for Development); the

“pro-Chinese” (revisionist, pro-Deng Xiaoping) ULC-R (Union of Communist Struggles — Reconstructed) who were influential on the university campus, along with the pro-Albanian Voltaic Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR) which led the General Student Union and five civil servants unions; the strongest union association, the CSV (Voltaic Union Confederation); and some other Marxist and Trotskyist circles. Ministerial posts were divided amongst these left forces, except for the pro-Albanians, who were the loyal opposition — until Albania came out in support of Sankara and suggested they follow suit.

While the debate in the government and the leftist circles went on, the very practical problem remained that the imperialists had never been ousted from Burkina Faso and that, from its inception, Sankara’s revolution had been waged and developed from the top in a way that did not and could not (despite its rhetoric) rely on the conscious struggle of the masses of people and was not able to formulate a truly revolutionary programme based on their class interests — one which would not only promise but in practice set in motion a New Democratic revolution to break the neocolonial and semifeudal shackles and bring about the conditions necessary for going over to the second stage of a proletarian socialist revolution. This process alone is able to transform the distorted and backward relations of production into non-exploitative ones and unleash fully the potential of the peasantry and other revolutionary masses.

Sankara’s Programme

Sankara’s ruling military circle issued a “Political Orientation Speech” in October 1983 which was a mixture of nationalist, pan-Africanist and socialist notions nourishing a programme of reforms.

From the beginning Sankara was caught in the dilemma that the support for the “revolution” was almost exclusively centred among those urban-based sections of the

population who themselves enjoyed a more comfortable position relative to the huge impoverished peasantry. At the same time, it was clear that even Sankara's reformist programme could not be implemented without at least diminishing the extreme burden that financing the state apparatus (and especially the salaries of government employees which up to 1983 ate up over 75 % of the budget) represented for the regime.

Sankara led a battle against corruption, as he fined offenders and brought them to be tried before People's Tribunals. He cut civil servants' salaries by 20-30 %, did away with housing rebates, automatic bank loans and lucrative sideline investments, imposed heavy taxation ("contributions") including the twelfth month of pay, and periodically sent civil servants to the fields to participate in national projects and "combat petit bourgeois tendencies." Government workers were required to wear suits made out of locally grown cotton and were no longer allowed to eat imported fruits and vegetables. Sankara set an example himself by drawing very little pay, declaring all his possessions in front of a fraud board, and ordered the government Mercedes Benzes to be replaced with simple Renaults.

Other reforms included housing construction, a mass vaccination programme (called the "commando approach") in which three million children were immunised against common killer diseases in 15 days, and mass literacy campaigns modeled after those in Nicaragua and Cuba. He brought women into the government, and drew up extensive proposals hitting at their social oppression, including to abolish forced marriage, dowries, sale of young girls, polygamy and the sexually mutilating practice of excision (clitorectomy). To break down old and oppressive traditions, men were supposed to go to the market once a week. In the countryside Sankara encouraged a fight against desertification by launching a tree-planting campaign in which every ceremony of birth, death or marriage was celebrated by the planting of trees. There were also

campaigns to prevent brush fires, stop the roaming of cattle, and to channel the meager Voltaic river waters for hydro-electric power and irrigation.

The army was reorganised, eliminating or throwing out the old right-wing elements and reducing the number of leading officers. The 8,000 soldiers were to be turned into "development activists," participating in agriculture and national construction. In 1984, on the first anniversary of the "revolution," Sankara changed the name of the country to Burkina (Moré word meaning a free person) Faso (the Dioura term for homeland): the "land of the upright men."

But all of these measures could only be *quantitative* and relatively minor adjustments which left intact the basic parasitic relation between the state apparatus and the population and between the capital and the countryside. All they did was to anger the very strata on which the regime relied.

Semifeudal, Imperialist-distorted Agriculture

Over 90 % of the active Burkinabe population is engaged in agriculture as peasants — herders and cultivators. It is an extremely primitive and backward agriculture. Most of the arable land is used for subsistence farming and, except for the south, is relatively infertile and difficult to cultivate. The rudimentary tools and cultivation methods, including extensive farming, the problem of nomadism and insufficient fertilisers and pesticides all contribute to low yields. The grain harvest per hectare is only 540 kilograms, compared to 4883 kg/hectare in France!⁴ Added to this are difficult and erratic climatic conditions, the most serious of which is the 30 % decrease in rainfall over the past 20 years.

In the semi-arid conditions of the Sahel, which stretches through the northern regions, shrubs are disappearing and, with the generalised problem of deforestation, soil depletion, erosion and non-rotation of fields, as well as severe shortages of water and lack of widespread irrigation, the desertification is advanc-

ing. Numerous studies have shown that "desertification" is neither an act of God nor simply the result of climatic chance, but rather is largely man-made and has a great deal to do with imperialist relations.

Although some areas have shown the capacity to produce more, such as the grain-belt around Dédougou in the west, the lack of roads and refrigeration together with an economy geared toward producing for export has prompted some peasants to shift more to cotton and non-perishables. Capital investment has gone only into cotton cultivation developed by the colonialists in the fertile southern region, using up a disproportionate share of available inputs and experts.

Agricultural products make up 90 % of all exports, principally cotton and beef, supplemented by *karité* nut butter, peanuts and off-season fruits and vegetables destined primarily to the surrounding countries and France. Per capita income is just over \$200. Other food growing is largely for direct consumption and exchange and sale on the local market, often at the mercy of the exploitative merchant class that buys and resells grain in low seasons at high profit. Millet, sorghum and corn are the main subsistence crops. A few homemade products such as *karité* butter for oils and soaps, and the local beer, called *dolo*, allow for a slight money exchange that women can use to buy a few essentials, sharpen or repair their tools or buy a piece of chalk if they have a child in school. In the twenty years since independence, literacy had been raised from 5 % to only 16 %, and it had remained below 6 % in the countryside, with twice as many boys as girls allowed to go to school. As in many neocolonial situations, the "educated" either went to the cities or to neighbouring countries to find suitable jobs, since a weak national treasury could not continually hire new civil servants, and few now wanted to return to the grinding poverty and grueling labour of peasant life.

Life is hard; the very basic problems of sufficient food and drinking water remain major obstacles in the countryside. Because of a traditional tribal division of labour

in most of the many different ethnic groups, women are responsible for the entire material needs of their children as well as those children given to her by the lineage chief until the age of seven, forming in many cases a closed community. In a typical day, it is she (and her daughters at an early age) who must walk 10-15 kilometres for water, gather wood and keep a fire burning, walk with hoe, supplies and a nursing baby to plant her fields (the worst land and furthest from home) before returning to pound millet, clean house and prepare a large evening meal. In the evening she goes again for water and spends much of the night brewing beer from millet or sorghum, which can be sold on the local market. Life expectancy is 44 years, but only 35 for women. The imperialists rank Burkina Faso as the ninth poorest country in the world.⁵

This situation, which Sankara inherited and tried to reform, is similar to the other neocolonial carcasses the Western imperialists have created in Africa, and despite the stream of philanthropic aid rhetoric about the miseries of the Third World which spews from the IMF and World Bank, the greatest misery of Burkina Faso is imperialism itself. Existing side by side with old semi-feudal class relations are the relations between oppressed and oppressor nations: peasants barely able to feed themselves, hoeing the limited good soil to grow green beans for sale in Paris during the winter months; herders raising cattle for export to other African countries, while beef is not a big part of the Burkinabe diet; a stagnant, non-diversified economy, whose central budget had for decades been run by France and its transnationals.

The French imperialists carved out a clear-cut division of labour for its West African colonies: Congo and Chad grew cotton; Senegal, peanuts; Gabon, wood. In addition to being cannonfodder for European and colonial wars, hundreds of thousands of Upper Volta's people were sent into forced labour on French-owned coffee and cocoa plantations in the Ivory Coast. Burkina's backwardness suits imperialism and that has been a critical factor in its development.

As pointed out earlier, one of Burkina's Faso's most important and striking particularities is its relationship with the Ivory Coast to the south. The two million Burkinabe who work there represent 60% of young men between 18 and 35 in Burkina Faso, that is, an enormous percent of the country's most precious resource, the labouring masses. Their revenues are an important source of income for peasant families. The subsistence agriculture in Burkina Faso is the reverse side of the coin of plantation agriculture in the Ivory Coast, with its need for cheap labour. To oversee this reservoir in Upper Volta as well as its relatively minor investments in cotton as a cash export, France propped up a bureaucrat bourgeoisie, maintained its colonial army and delivered sustenance (not-developmental) level aid.

Spreading the Revolution to the Burkinabe Countryside

In his Political Orientation Speech Sankara vowed to wage "a sharp struggle against nature... and against imperialist domination of our agriculture." He was intent on giving priority to developing the countryside, "by giving the slogan of food self-sufficiency its true meaning, too worn-out from being repeated without conviction." In 1984 he nationalised the land, and took away the administrative and financial privileges of the traditional chiefs. He condemned the "exploiters of the people disguised as village chiefs." To reach their agricultural goals, the CNR prepared a 15-month Plan for Popular Development (PPD) in order to lay the basis for the first five year plan from 1985 to 1990.

The PPD aimed to first move towards economic autonomy and then independence through a number of state-financed projects that would build a basic infrastructure and respond to the most pressing needs of the urban and rural masses. This included drilling wells, building small earth dams, reservoirs, and irrigation projects and developing market gardening throughout the 30 provinces. Bigger "national interest" projects requiring massive investment and nation-



wide mobilisation were the hydroelectric dam at Kompienga, the irrigation dam at Bagré and the Ouagadougou-Tambao railway.

The main political vehicle created by the ruling CNR to carry out its policies at all levels and in all sectors of society was the Committees to Defend the Revolution, "mass organisations allowing the people to exercise its democratic power" and to actively participate in building up the country. Their duties were to politically educate the masses and involve them in the revolutionary changes, to organise collective national interest work projects, and "militarily defend the revolution against internal and external enemies of the revolution through military training" of CDR activists.

Set up in the more than 7000 Burkinabe villages plus every major school, factory, neighborhood and administrative unit in the urban areas, the CDRs became the new authorities, and thus the political struggle within the regime which had never been settled with the seizure of the presidential palace was reproduced within the CDRs. Old right-wing elements and parties out



of power, plus deposed chieftains, infiltrated them, and rival leftist tendencies vied for leadership to control various areas. In the cities, this took on the added contradiction of the union officials competing with the CDRs, which, initially at least, took over their social base. At a certain point this grew into open political conflict, as the teacher and civil servant unions contested the CDRs' power and refused to be subordinated to them.

The CDRs were in the main staffed by energetic and enthusiastic young supporters of the new regime, armed with a lot of freedom to go out and set in motion the changes they thought necessary. At the beginning, they were literally armed to defend the revolution, until "too many incidents of abuse" brought the end of this policy. In political terms, they replaced the rank and file of a ruling political party and in this context really represented the formation of a new class of petty officials.

Unquestionably this youthful initiative launched many wide-ranging and worthwhile projects, from

building schools and dispensaries, digging ditches and fixing up the marketplace, to conducting reading and writing classes, in addition to carrying out PPD objectives. In the countryside the CDRs took charge of community services and played a big role in watching over grain sales, preventing the merchants from charging double the official price of millet, which, as a leader of the CDRs put it, would have meant that some peasants starved to death. Hating the old chief structures, the youth naturally came into sharp conflict with these authorities they had displaced, a clash especially concentrated in the collecting of taxes, formerly the duty of the chief, who took a share. Later this tax was eliminated, which proved to be one of the biggest blows to the old order. Although the CDRs were set up to be the real links to the masses, at least one observer lamented that the peasants themselves often remained under the chiefs' thumbs, especially in Mossi country, and in the CDR-chieftaindom rivalry, no one defended the peasants' interests.⁶

Agrarian Reform vs. Agrarian Revolution

The experience in Burkina Faso is above all another painful illustration that there is no half-stepping about severing from imperialism if liberation is the goal. Sankara targeted imperialism as the number one enemy. He argued passionately for attaining self-reliance in food production and for a planned independent national economy. But the CNR's economic programme prevented them from

even getting close to leading the Burkinabe to stand on their own feet and attain their righteous goal of feeding themselves. Just as Sankara and friends did not rely on the struggle of the masses to wage a people's war to overthrow imperialism and reaction in order to seize power, neither did they fundamentally *rely* on the masses of *peasants* to transform the economic base of society in their own revolutionary interests and wage a struggle in the superstructure to break down tradition and its backward hold on social relations. This is a complicated question, but the agrarian reform was not able to mobilise the masses because it was not based on thoroughly rupturing with precapitalist modes of production that in fact dominate the Burkinabe countryside and weigh like an anchor on the social relations.

Correctly analysing the peasantry as the class having "paid the greatest debt in terms of imperialist domination and exploitation," and as the "principal force," the Political Orientation Speech incorrectly implies that the introduction of the capitalist mode of production has transformed or done away with precapitalist modes. Actually, the old and new forms of exploitation have become intertwined. Furthermore, although production was slightly boosted, especially in the already capitalist-developed cotton sector, how does this end imperialist exploitation of the peasants when the relations between the neo-colonialist machine "that must be destroyed" and imperialism have not changed? Increased productivity for whose benefit? The state's?

That is, a growing urban bureaucrat bourgeoisie totally dependent upon imperialism, along with a parasitical merchant class?

At a conference in March 1984 when the government decided to nationalise all the land, redistribute it according to family needs and carry out an agrarian reform which would "break the old feudal relations of production... by the poor and middle peasants themselves... abolish the old landed property... bring forward large-scale agricultural production..." these became mere incantations rather than reality because they were not part of a genuine New Democratic Revolution — and neither the *old* class relation between the exploiter imperialist countries and the oppressed nation of Burkina Faso nor the relations between exploited and exploiter in the countryside had been destroyed.

The system of land ownership and class relations in Upper Volta and similar African countries deserves further study and differ in important respects from feudalism and semifeudalism as it has appeared classically in Asia or Europe. Land ownership in Upper Volta was linked to tribal hierarchical organisation, described by many sources as "feudal or semifeudal" because in the past an exploitative *corvée* system was in operation, that is, free work plus certain favours exacted by the chief from peasants who worked the land, which was held by the tribe and "belonged" to the ancestral lineage but was "managed" by the chiefs. This was accompanied by a corresponding tribal superstructure that reinforced patriarchy, polygamy, and tribal hierarchy. Ranking among the most oppressive of tribal powers was the practice of the aristocratic chiefs of ruling by "giving away women." The more loyal the vassal, the more women he would receive, although the chief could take them back if he had some account to settle. Peasants handed their daughters over to the chief for redistribution down the lineages and their daughters' daughters in turn had to be returned, so that he had a constant supply. This is not ancient history. The court harems of the Mossi emperor on the eve of the revolution in 1983 had 350 women,

not counting women slaves.

Dispossessing the tribal authorities of their formal political and economic powers did not dispense with them as a force, and the old customs tended to persist. (Some found it advantageous to integrate into the CDR leadership, but many plotted their revenge.) For example, even after popular assemblies were set up in every village, the peasants often continued to elect their old masters to higher councils. Despite the outlawing of the tribal practice of giving gifts to the "spiritual" masters, who paralleled the chiefs and guaranteed fertility and good harvests, peasants often devised a way to offer their goats or cows at night or out of sight of the CDRs. Another even starker example cited in Jean Ziegler's recently published book, *La Victoire des Vaincus*, described the long lines of *bellahs*, or slaves of the *Tamachek* tribe, waiting to take back grain for their masters, and at first refused by the CDRs who said that servitude had been abolished. The *bellahs* replied, "Don't give us a hard time. You are here for two weeks, but the *Tamacheks* will be here forever!"

Although none of these incidents is surprising, and Sankara himself was aware of the continued hold of tradition on the peasants, he tended to see the tribal rites and powers as only "cultural" customs that the peasants would let go of, rather than that these powerful superstructural domains are the reflection of real, material social relations, still existing, even if they coexist with capitalist or imperialist ones.

The purpose of a proletarian-led agrarian *revolution* among the peasantry is precisely to shatter the old ownership system, to uproot the feudal (or semi-feudal) backward superstructure and to carry out "land to the tiller," distributing land by head. (This policy of distributing land per person and not per family, not incidentally, deals a major blow to old patriarchal property relations, as suddenly women own land too, and in the case of divorce and other changes, she can participate on a more equal footing.) Making the producers independent owners of their land is an important part of liberating them from precapitalist modes of production. Building a

solid foundation for a national economy can only be based on the *destruction* of these old relations and not by adapting or reforming them.

This stage represents the *bourgeois* revolution, because land reform doesn't go beyond capitalism. But at the same time, it provides the necessary prerequisite for any real and genuine advance to the socialist revolution: "The new type of democratic revolution clears the way for capitalism on the one hand and creates the prerequisites for socialism on the other," as Mao Tsetung put it. Only after the destruction of precapitalist modes can the question of which road in agriculture will liberate the peasantry — capitalism or socialism — come to the fore. Based on the initiative, knowledge and revolutionary enthusiasm of the peasants themselves, step-by-step cooperative forms can be developed, such as mutual aid, work teams and eventually cooperatives, as the advantages become clear to the poor peasants.

The proletariat is against phony "cooperation" not based on the destruction of the old feudal structures and relations. Such efforts only disguise and eventually incorporate the old relations. In fact, in Burkina Faso it proved impossible to go over even to a state capitalist form (the declared but non-existent state farms) on the basis of semifeudal agriculture and without breaking with imperialism.

The other major front of the New Democratic Revolution, and one which is inseparably linked to carrying out the agrarian revolution as well, is the necessity of rupturing with imperialism and thus building up an independent and self-reliant national economy. In a country where feeding the population and solving the water shortage are immediate priorities, industry — *light* industry — would be built up essentially to serve agriculture, with modest equipment such as pumps, wells and tools, instead of producing for export or developing resources unnecessary for these primary goals. This means de-emphasising the city and not supporting a top-heavy state, and certainly not basing one's survival on imperialist aid.

Various forms of cooperativisation were tried to get the villagers to produce more, or rather they were imposed, something Mao warns strictly against. Since village associations were not initiatives of the masses themselves, the peasants saw little reason to take part, except ironically in some cases where they banded together on a bourgeois basis to form them when they realised it was a means of obtaining bank loans and credit! Premature cooperatives, for their part, were artificial, as the same 1984 agriculture conference report put it, and tended to be taken over by bureaucrats, landowners, merchants or salaried soldiers, "who weren't afraid of pillaging the cooperative's resources because the only thing they risked was being sent to another village where they could start doing it again...."

Some Self-Reliance and Some Dependence

In 1983, France provided 40 % of Upper Volta's budget, some \$70 million. There were also some 3500 French personnel operating in various capacities there. Most of the aid pumped in through French organisms has gone to technical assistance and rural development as well as gold mining. Despite a "Volta-isation" of the economy after independence, French trade and food enterprises (breweries, edible oils, flour milling and sugar refineries), textile and others (tobacco, shoes, etc.) managed to hold onto a firm position and continued to receive extremely favourable treatment through the first years of the "revolution." In 1986 when the Burkinabe government decided to renew exorbitant fiscal advantages to the IVOLCY company (a "Voltaic" cycle firm, subsidiary of the French transnational CFAO) to the detriment of the local Burkinabe cycle producers, these national bourgeois were of course outraged.

This coincided with an overall policy of importing all kinds of consumer items, industrial and food products, although luxuries were almost entirely suppressed, to the displeasure of the vultures in the merchant class — those linked to highly structured European monop-

olies and the long-time traders from the Middle East, common throughout West Africa, both of whom use the network of small traditional merchants in the street and countryside. But measures such as importing tomato concentrate when a tomato processing plant near Bobo Dioulasso broke down, instead of fixing it, obviously worked in their favour.

Another form of dependence can be seen in the small industrial sector. Essentially French companies (80 % French capital) dating from colonial days have been developed in the name of cutting down on imports. In reality, by importing oily acids to make oils and soaps, they compete with and displace artisan products made from *karité*; or by importing equipment to manufacture soft drinks and European beer produced at 5000 times the cost of a hectolitre of *dolo* produced locally from sorghum, this imperialist-sponsored activity fails to make use of local raw materials, reduces greatly the number of people employed, means capital investment is being put up for *beer* of all things, and destroys important albeit meager peasant incomes while encouraging no other secondary economic activity except bars and liquor sales! As long as the government gave these companies tax breaks, peasants could buy the more prestigious bubbly beer instead of the homemade variety when they have a little change at harvest time.⁸

In addition to aid from the Western imperialist countries (the U.S., West Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands, and of course France), the World Bank, IMF, EEC and other intergovernmental channels have helped keep Upper Volta afloat, enough to begin and not finish many "agricultural development" projects, just enough to keep massive starvation from developing, and to keep solid control over that country's future and assure its non-development, unlike some other raw materials-rich and strategic countries, such as Nigeria and South Africa.

The IMF advocated the policy of "free trade," that is, the policy of ruining the peasants through cheaper grain imports, thus making Burkina Faso more dependent. Very often this destructive "aid" went for

such obvious absurdities as comfortable office buildings for World Bank representatives, or paying for the \$42 million FAO granted to construction projects where fully one-third of the budget was absorbed by necessities such as generators to run air conditioners for the Italian advisors, who refused to hire Burkinabe peasants to help.⁹ After the drought of 1984-85, aid arrived too late and sank grain prices for the following year — i.e., it didn't help feed the population when needed, and ruined the local market when it did come... an accident?¹⁰

At the outset of the revolution, in his Political Orientation Speech, Sankara vehemently denounced "imperialism, which in all its forms, tries to exploit us with so-called aid, which are only means of alienation...." More truthful were his eclectic pleas in an interview at the time of his visit to the UN in autumn, 1984: "We could use and we need aid from developed nations, but such aid is not so generous or forthcoming in these times. France helps, U.S. aid is ridiculously small, especially when you see the wealth and prosperity of that country. We have to be careful also about aid because we cannot accept it at the risk of our independence. And in the final analysis, we know we have to depend on ourselves."¹¹

Three days after his first major speech on foreign policy in October 1983, in which Sankara supported Nicaragua, the Salvadoran struggle and the Polisario in the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic, and denounced the American invasion of Grenada, Reagan's special envoy strode into his office with a diplomatic note from the U.S. government that threatened to "reexamine assistance and cooperation agreements" if Burkina continued to meddle in Central American affairs, about which, the note concluded, "it knows nothing."¹²

The dilemma Sankara faced was forging an "anti-imperialist" path within an inherited bourgeois state apparatus totally dependent on imperialist aid and subject to imperialist relations between oppressor and oppressed. An impossible task. So, rather than treating foreign aid as a reflection of this relationship, his

government tried to reform it; this was expressed perfectly by the National Secretary-General of the CDRs: "They used aid for Mercedes; we are using it for shovels, picks and wheelbarrows...."

In fact, although Sankara promised with the People's Development Programme (PPD) to aim for many small accomplishments which would "turn Burkina Faso into a vast field...." he actually gave prominence (as the Soviets often do in such countries) to pumping massive investment into a few big splashy construction projects which he thought would attract aid donors and earn him needed prestige and confidence. Most became embarrassing fiascos, such as the Sourou Irrigation project, which was designed to build a dam on the Black Volta River, so as to allow two grain harvests a year. Sankara emptied the state coffers in order to finish (with French bulldozers) before the important first anniversary celebration of the revolution, on August 4, 1984. The structure was completed on time, the waters were gathered and channeled, but then not a cent was left for irrigation equipment to make use of the water, which evaporated. Instead of expanding the land and relying on the people to devise and make use of inexpensive means to irrigate, the project ended up draining the treasury and *reducing* available farming land.¹³

An example of an industrial project totally unnecessary for developing the Burkina economy on an independent basis was the Tambao railway in the north, which called on the people to carry out a "Battle of the rails" and construct 300 kilometres of track in order to get out the country's unexploited manganese, gold and bauxite reserves. After 35 kilometres had been laid the money for rails ran out. When the World Bank refused to help finish the job because the project was too expensive, it was abandoned.

Non-Aligned Dependence

France was more than irritated by Sankara's rise to power, particularly his international stance, because Burkina Faso has always been an important crossroads of the French

sphere of influence in West Africa. (Burkina was never the heart of French superprofits in its West African empire, though they have managed well, given the difficult climatic conditions and their decision not to develop the productive forces.) In any case, France was never in any danger of leaving, though it had to endure stinging barbs from time to time, while, as *Le Monde* of 17 October 1987 put it, French policy was one of "not discouraging revolutionaries who dilute their wine." On the other side was Sankara, throwing barbs right and left about the imperialist pyromaniacs who burn down our forests, his hand stuck out stubbornly for more money.

One of the funnier episodes of this nature was the diplomatic "incident" between Sankara and French President François Mitterrand at a state dinner in Ouagadougou in November 1986. Sankara invited his "Socialist" guest to make his acts conform to his words, accused France of doing nothing to end the Iran-Iraq war or the regional wars in Chad and Sahara, and denounced him for receiving the bandit Savimbi (UNITA leader in Angola) and the South African murderer Pieter Botha on French soil. Raising his glass to Franco-Burkinabe friendship, Mitterrand retorted: "Captain Sankara has the cutting edge of youth, but it cuts too sharply. If you need us, you'll let us know. And if you don't, we can pass it up."¹⁴

In truth, politically and otherwise, France pursued attempts to "restabilise" the situation: the Socialists sent a hefty shipment of arms to President Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo as early as May 1983, the moment Sankara was arrested, to prevent his return to office. A year later the Socialist government refused to receive the number two military man, Blaise Compaoré, to renegotiate French aid, as a protest against the regime's recent execution of seven coup-plotters.

Further, there were recurrent rumors that the three-day border war with Mali in 1985 over a thin strip of land called the Agacher, in which some 300 people were killed, was instigated on behalf of France, which had just renewed and

strengthened ties with Malian president Moussa Traoré, in part forcing the question of what military support Sankara really had.¹⁵

Then there was the coup d'état in October 1987 — at Sankara's expense — and no more kidding around. More than one informed source pointed to evidence that it had been "run from abroad by remote control" through the cosy connections between Ivory Coast president Houphouët Boigny, one of the top contenders for official West African valet for French imperialism, and Captain Blaise Compaoré, Sankara's successor, who has promised tighter cooperation with Paris as part of his "rectification" program. Compaoré's wife, a Franco-Ivoirian, is the goddaughter of the Ivoirian head of state. As the French newsweekly, *Le Nouvel Observateur* put it, Blaise has "excellent references, in short," and, "without the active assistance of the Ivory Coast no putsch is possible."¹⁶

Sankara had boycotted attempts to create a French Commonwealth and repeatedly denounced the "Balkanisation" of Africa at Non-Aligned summits and Organisation of African Unity (OAU) meetings. He refused to attend the Franco-African summits of 1984 and 1985, calling them "organisational shackles inherited from the colonial epoch," and held his own summit with Khadafi instead.

How much to make of the Libya-Burkina connection? The two had frequent exchanges, but what counted were the arms that Libya supplied: Soviet tanks, rocket launchers, and especially Kalashnikov rifles, all of which supplemented the maintenance-level military stock provided by the French, considerably upped Burkina's operational potential and helped the "reorganisation" of the neocolonial army. On the diplomatic level, Sankara is said to have politely refused to join Khadafi's perennial proposal to "merge their two countries," and some sources even say his attempts to build unity between Arab and Black Africa switched more towards cooperation with Algeria after Khadafi refused

(Continued to p. 56)

Opening Statement to the Second South Asia Regional RIM Conference

A Regional Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organisations in South Asia upholding the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* has been successfully concluded. The conference was an important step in the consolidation of genuine Marxist-Leninist forces in the region and reflected the growing strength of the RIM. The conference carried on fruitful discussions of important questions of revolution in South Asia and those regarding the RIM. The following statement by the Committee of the RIM opened the work of the conference — AWTW.

Comrades,

The Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement extends its warmest welcome to all of the participating parties and organisations of our movement in the South Asia region.

This regional conference is taking place at a very important moment. The revolutionary situation in a number of countries in South Asia continues to develop rapidly. The grinding poverty of the majority of the masses, armed resistance of oppressed nationalities in India and Sri Lanka, the intensifying conflict in the ranks of the enemies themselves, and the scrambling of the different imperialist powers to increase and solidify their spheres of influence all create more favourable opportunities for preparing and launching the armed struggle for power.

It can be said that, in the three years since the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement was formed, important efforts have been made to come to grips with some of the key questions facing the Marxist-Leninists in the region. At the same time it is also clear that the Marxist-

Leninist forces in the region must still “race to catch up” with the favourable conditions for revolution, just as must our movement internationally.

Although each of the countries in the South Asia movement present their own particularities and it is neither correct nor possible to map out a common line for making revolution in all of these countries, it is also true that historical links, certain common socio-economic features, the mutual influence of the revolutionary movement in neighbouring countries and current geopolitical realities all make it imperative that the genuine Marxist-Leninist forces of the area, especially those participating in the RIM, carry out a vigorous exchange of experience, struggle over political line and develop practical cooperation. It is in this spirit that the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, in consultation with the participating parties and organisations of the region, has called this conference.

In a number of countries, the need to form, or reconstitute, a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party is glaring. As the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* points out, it is the task of the entire international movement to assist in carrying out this task. Indeed, in each of the countries of South Asia in which our movement is present (with the exception of Sri Lanka), there has been more than one participating organisation, and in all of them there are forces whose political positions approach those of our *Declaration*. Thus the problem exists of uniting the genuine Marxist-Leninist forces on the basis of a correct ideological and political line.

In our view, the *Declaration of*

the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement plays a critical role in this process. It provides an important basis for distinguishing Marxism from revisionism and provides clear and correct guidance for the Marxist-Leninists on a whole series of questions. It is not possible to envision principled unity with forces who attack our Movement and its *Declaration* as opportunist. Nevertheless, the *Declaration* still reflects the fact that the unity of our movement on an international level is not complete and this unity must be raised step-by-step through discussion and struggle. Furthermore, the *Declaration* cannot analyse the particularities of different countries — their socio-economic makeup, the specific history of the Marxist-Leninist movements, the specific form which people’s war must take, and so forth. All of these questions, also, are vital in the process of uniting the genuine Marxist-Leninist forces around a correct revolutionary line.

The discussion and debate amongst the different parties and organisations affiliated with the RIM in the South Asia region has been going on for several years and will undoubtedly continue in the future. The Conference cannot and should not attempt to definitively settle the many outstanding questions which appear on the agenda. But by fully exploring different viewpoints, by waging principled political and ideological struggle, this Conference can contribute to raising the level of the debate not only in the region, but in the RIM as a whole. □

Statement by the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

Press Statement of the Central Reorganising Committee, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)

The Second All-India Conference of the Central Reorganisation Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) was held in the second half of 1987. One of the important results of this conference was the merger of the Leading Committee, Revolutionary Communist Party, India with the CRC, CPI(M-L), both of which have been among the participating parties and organisations of the RIM.

The following is the press release of the Second All-India Conference, along with some excerpts of conference documents provided by the CRC, CPI(M-L) — AWTW.

The Second All-India Conference of the Central Reorganising Committee, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CRC, CPI(ML)) was successfully completed in the last week of September in Kerala. Delegates and observers from the Delhi region, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Punjab participated in the Conference. The Conference signified the culmination of the line struggle taking place within the CRC, CPI(ML) over the past few years and the political-organisational consolidation of the new revolutionary line. This significant advance was further broadened and strengthened through the merger of the Revolutionary Com-

munist Party, India (a Marxist-Leninist group working in Punjab) with the CRC, CPI(ML) on the basis of common political orientations.

The "Strategic Line for New Democratic Revolution in India," adopted by the Conference, calls upon the revolutionaries of different nationalities in India to chalk out programmes for the New Democratic Revolutions of the respective nationalities in order to wage national liberation struggle and complete the New Democratic Revolution in India as an ensemble of New Democratic Revolutions of different nationalities. The document points out that, "... the concrete programme for New Democratic Revolution in India must comprise a strategic line which gives the overall framework and the programmes for New Democratic Revolutions of different nationalities." In keeping with this outlook, programmes for the New Democratic Revolutions of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Kerala were adopted by the respective State Conferences. The programme for New Democratic Revolution of Punjab had been adopted by the RCP, I earlier itself. The document, "Strategic Line," also put forward a new perspective on the caste question and stressed the necessity to take up the struggle against the caste system as a strategic task, integral

to the New Democratic Revolution. It pointed out that, "... specific forms of organisation and struggle based on the dalits ...; and including other progressive forces..." should be built up to shoulder this task along with conducting struggle against the caste system through different mass organisations and the vanguard party itself.

The Political-Organisational Report summed up the lessons of the two-line struggle since the First Conference held in 1982, concentrating particularly on the developments since the 1985 Plenum. The Report self-critically noted the failure to understand the degeneration of dogmatism into right opportunism and properly grasp the real basis for the opportunist alliance between the upholders of the 1970 line and the revisionists within the Party. Analysing the recent trend of Marxist-Leninist groups upholding the 1970 programme transforming themselves into proponents of "Indian Integrationism" in one form or another, and their inability to break out of the confines of armed economism in areas where militant anti-feudal struggles are being waged, the Report noted that political as well as socio-economic developments have led to the degeneration of the dogmatist trend in the Marxist-Leninist movement into right opportunism. Failure in reco-

gnising this led to conceiving the struggle to develop the new line as one directed against dogmatism, whereas it actually was related to smashing revisionism. As a result, room was given for the growth of various revisionist trends in the organisation.

Based on this realisation, the Conference was able to draw the proper lessons from the line struggle which had come up since the 1985 Plenum, correct the error committed at the Plenum of allowing the practising of two different lines and consolidate the revolutionary orientation of the Party. The disciplinary action of expulsion taken against the leaders of the anti-Party activities, Vijayakumar, Kumar, Kadiravan and Rahul, were ratified by the Conference. It noted that the Party has strengthened itself through these steps.

Apart from the above-mentioned documents, "The World Situation and Our Tasks," "On Unity Within the Marxist-Leninist Movement in India" and a new Constitution were the other documents adopted by the Conference. Three Resolutions, viz, (i) hailing the merger of RCP, I and CRC, CPI(ML), (ii) supporting the demand for a Jharkhand State as a first step towards asserting the right of self-determination of the Jharkhandi people, and (iii) condemning the Indian Army of occupation of Sri Lanka, were also adopted.

The Conference elected a new leading committee and Com K. Venu was elected as the Secretary of the organisation.

The successful conclusion of the Conference was publicly announced through a rally held at Ernakulam on October 1. Com K. Venu, Com M.N. Ravunni (Secretary of the Kerala State Unit), Com Vilas Sonavane (Secretary of the Maharashtra State Unit) and Com Malvinder Singh Malli (Secretary of the Punjab Revolutionary Front) addressed the rally and explained the perspective of the new line and the tasks it puts forward in relation to the complex political situation in Punjab and other regions of the country.

5 October 1987

Secretary, CRC, CPI(ML)

The World Situation and Our Tasks

Excerpts from "The World Situation and Our Tasks," document adopted at the Second All-India Conference of CRC, CPI(ML), September 1987

The contemporary world situation is marked by the rising tide of people's revolutionary struggles in the oppressed nations, unrest and spontaneous mass outbursts in imperialist countries, intense contention and war preparations by the imperialist blocs led by the U.S. and Soviet social-imperialists and the all-around intensification of the global imperialist crisis.

Despite the heavy setback suffered due to the revisionist betrayal in China and Albania and the weakness of the subjective forces, the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed people has continued to surge forward. The intensification of imperialist, social-imperialist plunder has led to sharper and more resolute resistance from the oppressed peoples in different countries. In Latin America, Africa and Asia, mass rebellions have repeatedly broken out and in some cases decades-old dictatorial regimes have

been overthrown. The attempts by imperialist powers to channelise these rebellions into legal, reformist paths and dupe the people with cosmetic changes are being challenged. In the van of this revolutionary upsurge is the People's War in Peru led by the Communist Party of Peru, a shining beacon to all the oppressed peoples and revolutionary masses worldwide. It correctly manifests the revolutionary potential existing in the present world, in particular in the oppressed nations. It sharply brings out the vital importance of establishing a clear-cut Marxist-Leninist leadership for the full realisation of this revolutionary potential. It is no wonder that both the imperialist blocs are actively coluding to aid the local reactionaries in suppressing this mighty revolution.

In the imperialist and social-imperialist blocs also, more and more sections of the masses are taking to the path of struggle. Important mass upsurges have broken out from time to time in these countries also. Resistance and opposition to imperialist war preparations have

continued to develop as a broad mass movement. The revolutionary upsurge in the oppressed nations is also influencing these developments and aiding their further growth.

The rising tide of struggles and rebellions in the oppressed nations in particular and mass upsurges in imperialist, social-imperialist countries clearly indicate the developing trend of revolution. It clearly shows that the objective factors behind this trend have not weakened but have only intensified. Despite weaknesses of subjective forces and the absence of conscious proletarian leadership in most of the cases, this trend of revolution is still checking the imperialist, social-imperialist war designs. The imperialist powers simply cannot ignore this powerful challenge facing them and repeatedly coming up despite their temporary successes in putting them down or distorting them. Hence, along with their sharp contention, collusion directed against the people of the world remains an important aspect.

... In short, the present day world situation is characterised by the intensifying contradiction between imperialism and social-imperialism on the one hand and the oppressed peoples and nations on the other. This principal contradiction determines the course of development in the international political situation. This basic factor makes the trend of revolution the main trend. But at the same time, the contradiction between the imperialist blocs is also intensifying, in relation to the above contradiction and on its own. Even though this contention is accompanied by collusion on different occasions, contention is the principal aspect, preparing the ground for a world war.

The dominant trend of revolution at the international level is mainly represented by the anti-imperialist struggle of the oppressed nations and peoples. At present this trend of revolution is still checking the trend of war, but as the nature of these struggles is long drawn-out, and since most of these struggles are not led by a conscious proletarian vanguard, it will be unrealistic to expect that these struggles will prevent

war altogether. So it is dangerous to assume a complacent position. Since the preparations for world war by the imperialist powers are going on, and due to the subjective weakness of revolutionary forces, we cannot rule out the possibility of a third world war. The revolutionary forces have to make all efforts to heighten the level of revolutionary struggles to avert such a possibility turning into reality. The present world situation clearly shows the immense objective potential for the successful implementation of this task. The main factor hindering this is the ideological political crisis in the international communist movement caused by the setback in China. Hence, an essential and important condition for carrying forward this task is that of rebuilding the unity of the international proletariat on a correct ideological basis. Any advance in this direction is of great significance in the present world situation and it remains an important task before the Marxist-Leninists.

... The qualitative advance achieved through the Second Conference (the Second International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organisations, held in 1984 -- CRC) is based, first and foremost, on its higher level of ideological clarity. This ideological clarity is sharply projected through the following words of the *Declaration*, which reaffirmed that Mao Tsetung Thought is a new stage in the development of Marxism-Leninism: "Without upholding and building on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, it is not possible to defeat revisionism, imperialism and reaction in general." It is further elaborated through upholding the significance of the Communist Party of China polemics against Khrushchev revisionism and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. With this ideological clarity, the *Declaration* has given a strong refutation to all forces of revisionism and liquidationism. At the same time it has identified revisionist, dogmatist deviations and petit-bourgeois tendencies and exposed their sources and manifestations. This ideological clarity is a

clear line of demarcation drawn between genuine Marxist-Leninist forces and sham, and it is the solid foundation of the unity within the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement. At the same time, it is the sure guarantee of advancing along the correct lines of the process of regrouping all genuine Marxist-Leninist forces, including those presently outside the RIM, and achieving the task of building up an international organisation of the proletariat anew.

... The common ideological basis, clear-cut projection of a revolutionary orientation for struggle and the organisational approach reflected through the *Declaration* represents a correct step forward to resolve the crisis faced by the international communist movement due to the onslaught of revisionism. Yet, in keeping with the preliminary nature of the step, the unity reflected through the *Declaration* is obviously of a relative nature. A number of crucial differences still exist within the RIM. In our view, the *Declaration* also contains some erroneous views and shortcomings along with the correct aspects mentioned above. These errors and shortcomings have to be clearly recognised and identified, in order to pinpoint the important issues which have to be thoroughly debated and resolved in the future. That is, we must critically identify the errors and limitations in order to contribute more effectively to raise the level of debate within RIM, and participate more actively in the process of advancing its existing level of unity reflected through the *Declaration*. Secondly, this is essential in order to refute erroneous thinking which exaggerates the unity achieved either by characterising it as a "revolutionary synthesis" or by projecting the *Declaration* more or less as a clearly defined political line. Such exaggeration blinds the RIM to serious questions which remain to be resolved, creates a sense of complacency, downplays the vital role of further developing the ideological struggle and ultimately jeopardises the very unity achieved today. □

The Second National Congress of the Proletarian Party of Purba Bangla (PBSP) Held

We received the following communique announcing the conclusion of the Second Congress of the Proletarian Party of Purba Bangla [Bangladesh] (PBSP) — AWTW.

It is almost sixteen years after the First Congress that the Second National Congress of PBSP took place, in the third week of September 1987, at a certain spot of rural Purba Bangla amidst continual enemy pressure. It was successfully held with boundless enthusiasm and fervour and under the vigilance of and strict security measures taken by the guerrillas of the "People's Liberation Army."

Decisions were taken to hold the Second Congress by the first half of 1975. But due to an unwanted turn of events, it could not be held on time. For the same reasons, the very existence of the Party was itself seriously threatened. As such, it was impossible to proceed further without summing up the experiences of past revolutionary practice and without rectifying different mistakes thereby. This Congress culminated this long process of inner-party two-line struggles and summing up through which the Party could achieve a qualitative advance on different line questions.

The Congress discussed and accepted the Report placed by Comrade Anwar Kabir, Secretary of the previous central body of the Party (the "Supreme Revolutionary Council" — S.B.P.). The Report explained the national and international situation in which the Congress was held. It analysed the history of the Party from an excellent dialectical standpoint and line position and upheld the historical role played by Siraj Sikdar, founding Chairman of the Party, in the

development of the Party and the revolution. It explained the present situation of the international communist movement and highlighted the prospects of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement and pointed out the tasks before the Party. It put forward as the present central task the urgency of studying the socio-economic conditions of Purba Bangla and reviewing the political line on the basis of that study and summing up different lines, especially the ideological line. At the same time it specified some basic correct stands of the political line and upheld them. Other than this central task the Report identified three basic tasks in the sphere of organisation and struggle, viz. the task of developing regular guerrilla units, building a firm working class base and developing the structure of strong proletarian leadership for the Party. The Congress adopted a Constitution for the Party through necessary amendments of the previous one. The amendments were made from the point of view of giving more stress to internationalism and the proposed review of political line, and also on the basis of giving more importance to the question of professional revolutionaries and expansion of party democracy. The Congress elected the Second Central Committee of the Party, including Comrade Anwar Kabir whom the CC, in its first session, elected its Secretary.

The Congress adopted eight resolutions on different issues. In the first resolution it paid glowing tribute to the valiant fighters worldwide, including Siraj Sikdar and Charu Mazumdar and those of Peru and Iran who courageously embraced martyrdom for the cause of revolution. It paid respect to the memory of Yilmaz Güney. In one

resolution, solidarity with the People's War in Peru was expressed. The Congress expressed its firm support for the just struggle of the people of minority nationalities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh for the right of self-determination, i.e. for the right of secession against the Bengali big nation chauvinist and reactionary government. In another resolution, the Congress expressed support for the revolutions and just struggles of oppressed peoples and nations and of the working class of the world.

The holding of this Congress marks a qualitative advance in the overall development of PBSP. Our struggling Party, which suffered splits and setbacks in 1975 and, later on, almost reached the point of destruction, has again, in 1987, reached the doorstep of nationwide development and a new level of development of line and struggle. The split-away opportunists and revisionists from the Party have finally been identified; a great number of sincere leaders and activists of the Party have once again come under a single centre. The Party has achieved historic unity in the field of line and organisation. And, as such, this Congress was a congress of inner-party democracy, a congress of excellent ideological and organisational unity and of great victory achieved in the very arduous and complex struggle of rebuilding the Party. It was held at a time when a brighter future is going to open wide before the Party.... PBSP is going to shoulder greater responsibilities in days to come — and the Second National Congress is its vow, its pledge, its determination to shoulder national and international duties and obligations.

The Congress paved the way for the future. □

Seventy years ago the workers of Petrograd, led by Lenin and the Bolshevik party, stormed the Winter Palace, toppled the Provisional government and thus launched the first successful proletarian revolution. The October Revolution came in the midst of the First World War when millions of lives were sacrificed by rival bands of imperialist predators. In most countries of Europe the so-called socialist leaders of the workers had made themselves accomplices of this greatest of crimes, and called upon the oppressed to fight and die in the interests of their own exploiters. Only in Russia had the revolutionary communists been capable of forging a really revolutionary party willing and capable of leading the proletariat and the masses through the complexities of the revolutionary situation and forward to the assault on the old order.

The October Revolution is perhaps a misnomer, since the heroic deeds of October were but the prelude to years of bitter and bloody fighting against the old reactionary forces aided and buttressed by a whole slew of imperialist powers. In a bigger sense, October 1917 was the declaration of war of the whole international proletariat on the reactionary social order all over the world.

The revolutionaries of Russia had hoped to be followed by the workers of Europe, who themselves were suffering tremendously as a result of the war. Indeed, a big wave of revolutionary struggle spread over Europe in the wake of October. But the stranglehold of opportunism on the workers movement, as well as the remaining strength of the capitalists themselves,

proved too great and the attempts at revolution in Europe were beaten back.

Nevertheless, the Russian Revolution did serve as the clarion call to the workers of all countries as well as to the oppressed peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America who were subjugated by a handful of imperialist powers. The workers all over the world came to the support of the young socialist state. Founded in the wake of October, the Communist International spread Leninism to every corner of the earth and helped organise proletarian revolutionary parties in dozens of countries.

The October Revolution came to stand for the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. Unlike previous states, the proletarian state openly proclaimed its class character — a dictatorship of the oppressed and exploited led by the proletariat over the bourgeoisie and the landlords.

WINDS OF OCTOBER



Only a state genuinely in the interests of the vast majority of the people could so avow its colours.

From the beginning, the imperialist ruling classes and all reactionaries showed both fear and contempt for the socialist state. No lie was too outrageous, no manoeuvre too vile in their efforts to isolate and strangle the USSR led by Lenin and Stalin. Yet despite all this the proletariat of the USSR continued to persevere in its class dictatorship and in

STILL BLOW



the construction of a new socialist industry and agriculture. The socialist state was later able to stand up to the full fury of German imperialism directed against it during the Second World War.

Thus it can be seen that the workers of Petrograd were opening a whole new chapter in the history of mankind. Their guns blazed the way not only for the success of the revolution in Russia but in other countries as well, most notably in China, where Mao Tsetung led the proletariat and people in waging a protracted peoples' war against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism.

We must affirm today that the October Revolution has in no way lost its historical impetus. Indeed, life itself proves again and again the value of its example and its lessons. The road of October, of the proletariat's seizure of political power by the force of arms, remains valid for all countries, even if the forms and process of this armed seizure of power will differ greatly in the different types of countries.

Today the Soviet Union no longer belongs to the proletariat. A new bourgeoisie which grew up in the socialist society itself was able to seize political power



and restore capitalism even while sometimes maintaining the thinnest of "socialist" masks. The USSR today is no longer the bastion of revolution that it was under Lenin and Stalin. Today it is a vicious and dangerous social-imperialist predator which is sucking the blood of workers and peasants in many parts of the world, suppressing revolution and actively preparing for a third world war. The Soviet revisionists have betrayed and trampled on the October Revolution and it saddens the hearts of genuine communists everywhere to see the chauvinist, militaristic displays of these social-imperialists soiling the very streets where our predecessors spilt their blood hoisting the red flag of revolution.

It was Mao Tsetung who was able to correctly understand how it was possible for a new bourgeoisie to arise under socialism and attempt to overthrow the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the basis of summing up the bitter defeat in the USSR as well as the experience in China itself, he was able to develop the theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and launch the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Today it is impossible to truly uphold the October Revolution without also upholding the lessons of the Cultural Revolution, just as it is impossible to uphold Leninism without upholding Mao Tsetung Thought.

In today's momentous times, when both the danger of a third imperialist world war as well as the opportunities for revolution are increasing, the lessons and example of October are all the more vital. Armed with Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought the revolutionary communists of every country must lead the workers and oppressed further still along the road that began in Petrograd in 1917, reached its highest pinnacle to date with the Cultural Revolution, and will be completed only when the very existence of classes and oppression has been eliminated from the face of the earth. □

Citizens!
Today a thousand years of "Former Times" have collapsed.
Today the foundation of worlds is being reexamined.

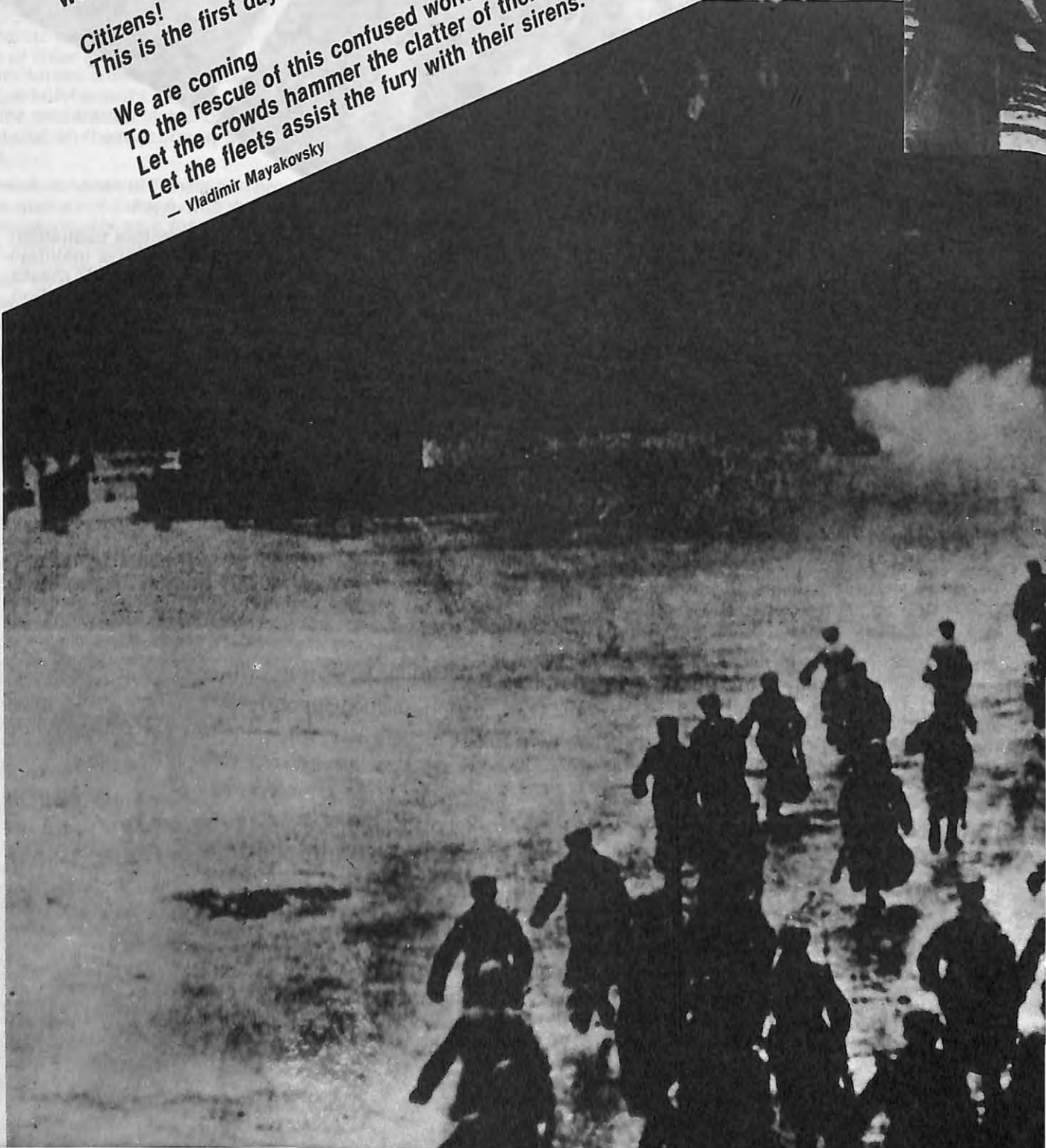
Today
We will transform life anew down to the last button on our clothing.

Citizens!
This is the first day of the workers' deluge.

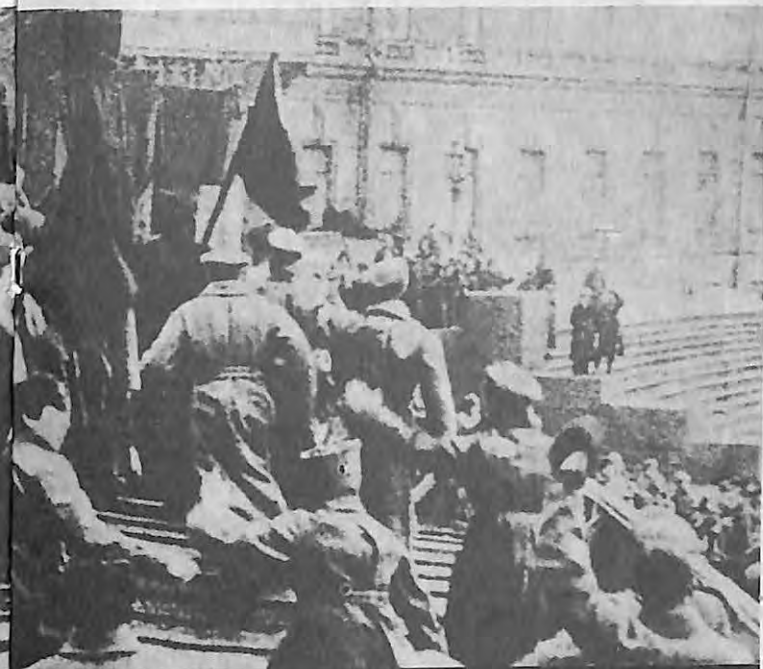
We are coming
To the rescue of this confused world.
Let the crowds hammer the clatter of their feet into the heavens.
Let the fleets assist the fury with their sirens.

— Vladimir Mayakovsky

Streets of Petrograd in the hands of workers, students, soldiers and sailors.



This proclamation appears on the walls of Petrograd announcing the flight of the Kerensky provisional government and control of Petrograd by the Bolsheviks.



Отъ Военно-Революціоннаго Комитета при Петроградскомъ Советѣ Рабочихъ и Солдатскихъ Депутатовъ.

Къ Гражданамъ Россіи

Временное Правительство низложено. Государственная власть перешла въ руки органа Петроградскаго Совета Рабочихъ и Солдатскихъ Депутатовъ Военно-Революціоннаго Комитета, стоящаго во главѣ Петроградскаго пролетаріата и гарнизона.

Дѣло, за которое боролся народъ: немедленное предложение демократическаго мира, отмена помещичьей собственности на землю, рабочий контроль надъ производствомъ, созданіе Советскаго Правительства — это дѣло обезпечено.

ДА ЗДРАВСТВУЕТЪ РЕВОЛЮЦІЯ РАБОЧИХЪ, СОЛДАТЪ И КРЕСТЬЯНЪ!

Военно-Революціонный Комитетъ при Петроградскомъ Советѣ Рабочихъ и Солдатскихъ Депутатовъ

25 октября 1917 г. № 4. 1778.

*Beat on the street the march of rebellion,
Sweeping over the heads of the proud;
We, the flood of a second deluge,
Shall wash the world like a bursting cloud.*

*Days are a bright steed;
Years drag glum;
Our great god is Speed!
Our heart a bellowing drum!*


*What is richer than our colours?
Can we be caught by the bullet's sting?
For rifles and bayonets we have ballads;
Our gold is our voices' ring!*

*Green meadows grow,
Days burst by —
Rainbow, curve your bow!
Hurrying horses, fly!*

— Vladimir Mayakovsky

Photo captions for pages 40-41.

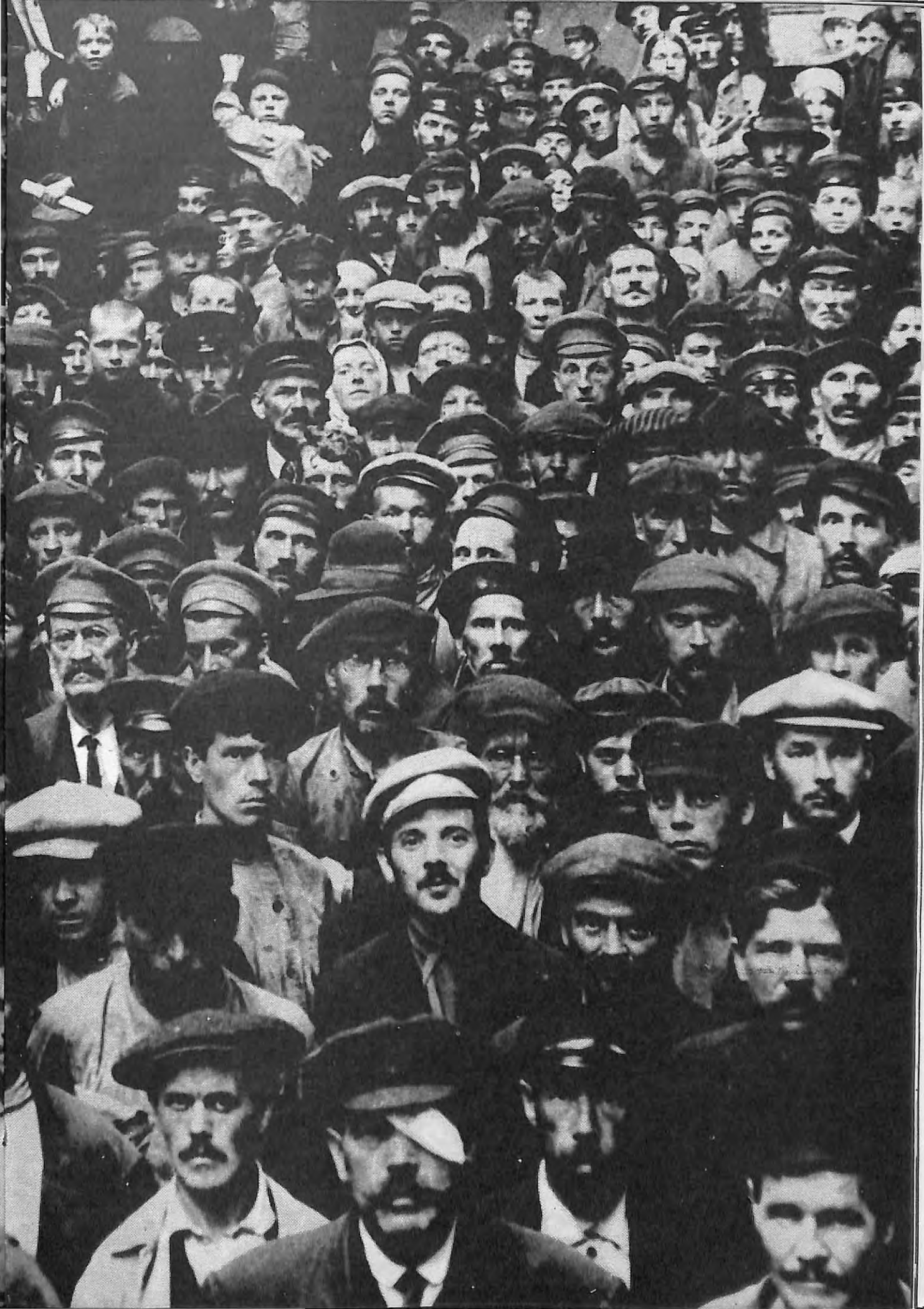
1. Fraternalisation of Russian and German soldiers.
2. Anti-war demonstration in July, 1917. Kerensky troops opened fire on demonstrators.
3. Aurora, poised, ready to aid Red Army in the seizure of the Winter Palace.
4. Workers of Petrograd.



So we came into the great meeting-hall, pushing through the clamorous mob at the door. In the rows of seats, under the white chandeliers, packed immovably in the aisles and on the sides, perched on every window-sill, and even the edge of the platform, the representatives of the workers and soldiers of all Russia waited in anxious silence or wild exultation the ringing of the chairman's bell. There was no heat in the hall but the stifling heat of unwashed human bodies. A foul blue cloud of cigarette smoke rose from the mass and hung in the thick air. Occasionally someone in authority mounted the tribune and asked the comrades not to smoke; then everybody, smokers and all, took up the cry, "Don't smoke, comrades!" and went on smoking. Petrovsky, Anarchist delegate from the Obukhov factory, made a seat for me beside him. Unshaven and filthy, he was reeling from three nights' sleepless work on the Military Revolutionary Committee.

It was just 8:40 when a thundering wave of cheers announced the entrance of the presidium, with Lenin — great Lenin — among them. A short, stocky figure, with a big head set down on his shoulders, bald and bulging. Little eyes, a snubbish nose, wide generous mouth, and heavy chin; clean-shaven now but already beginning to bristle with the well-known beard of his past and future. Dressed in shabby clothes, his trousers much too long for him. Unimpressive, to be the idol of a mob, loved and revered as perhaps few leaders in history have been ... without picturesque idiosyncrasies — but with the power of explaining profound ideas in simple terms, of analysing a concrete situation. And combined with shrewdness, the greatest intellectual audacity....

Selections from John Reed's Ten Days That Shook the World



Now Lenin, gripping the edge of the reading stand, letting his little winking eyes travel over the crowd as he stood there waiting, apparently oblivious to the long-rolling ovation, which lasted several minutes. When it finished, he said simply, "We shall now proceed to construct the Socialist order!" Again that overwhelming human roar.

"The first thing is the adoption of practical measures to realize peace.... We shall offer peace to the peoples of all the belligerent countries upon the basis of the Soviet terms — no annexations, no indemnities, and the right of self-determination of peoples. At the same time, according to our promise, we shall publish and repudiate the secret treaties.... The question of War and Peace is so clear that I think that I may, without preamble, read the project of a Proclamation to the Peoples of All the Belligerent Countries...."

[Proclamation follows]

"...This proposal of peace will meet with resistance on the part of the imperialist governments — we don't fool ourselves on that score. But we hope that revolution will soon break out in all the belligerent countries; that is why we address ourselves to the workers of France, England, and Germany...."

"The revolution of 6 and 7 November," he ended, "has opened the era of the Social Revolution... The labour movement, in the name of Peace and Socialism, shall win, and fulfill its destiny...."

* Dates have changed because a different calendar was used under the Tsar.

There was something quiet and powerful in all this, which stirred the souls of men. It was understandable why people believed when Lenin spoke....

"We want a just peace, but we are not afraid of a revolutionary war... Probably the imperialist Governments will not answer our appeal — but we shall not issue an ultimatum to which it will be easy to say no.... If the German proletariat realizes that we are ready to consider all offers of peace, that will perhaps be the last drop which overflows the bowl — revolution will break out in Germany...."

Suddenly, by common impulse, we found ourselves on our feet, mumbling together into the smooth lifting unison of the *Internationale*. A grizzled old soldier was sobbing like a child. Alexandra Kollontai rapidly winked the tears back. The immense sound rolled through the hall, burst windows and doors and soared into the quiet sky. "The war is ended! The war is ended!" said a young workman near me, his face shining. And when it was over, as we stood there in a kind of awkward hush, someone in the back of the room shouted, "Comrades! Let us remember those who have died for liberty!" So we began to sing the Funeral March, that slow, melancholy, and yet triumphant chant.... The Funeral March seemed the very soul of those dark masses whose delegates sat in this hall, building from their obscure visions a new Russia — and perhaps more.

Selections from Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World*



47

**THE
TRANSFORMATION
OF THE PRESENT
IMPERIALIST
WAR INTO A
CIVIL WAR IS
THE ONLY
CORRECT
PROLETARIAN
SLOGAN.**

Lenin



Mariategui on October

The people and the army wanted the revolution to give them peace. Kerensky's inability to do so aroused the army against the government. Unlike the other armies with which it was allied, the Russian Army did not believe in the myth that the war was between democracy and autocracy, because Russia's war had been led by the tsarist autocracy. The army was tired of the war and silently craved peace.

The Bolsheviks correctly based their propaganda on the people's sentiments. They called for an immediate redistribution of the land. They told the proletariat, "Neither of these things can be accomplished by a coalition government that includes the bourgeoisie. This government must be replaced by a proletarian government, by a workers' government, by a government of the parties of the working class. Such a government can only be a Soviet government. The Bolsheviks' war cry was, "All power to the Soviets!"

— Speech given to the Student Federation in Lima, Peru, 13 July 1923 by José Carlos Mariategui

I had thought the revolution was loved by everyone; I had thought to find a brave new world beyond the border; I found the collapse of an old world under whose ruins men were dying. But living among those ruins were men who were building a new world from the broken pieces under which all the armies of the earth had sought to bury them. The armies had made chaos; but there were creators in chaos! They were men like flames in the mist, signalling each other till fog dissolves in light!

My desire for this new land strengthened into a passion. Here was a real job, the biggest job in the world. I was going to be one of those creators in chaos....

"There is nothing impossible," said Sonia in clear, firm tones. Sonia shared my cabin; she was the interpreter they had found for me in Moscow, a communist giving her month's vacation to famine work. She was born in England of Russian exiles and came to Russia with the revolution. England

made her a textile worker; Russia made her a soldier on the Polish front and a commissar in a military hospital. Twice she had been wounded in battle; she had had typhus, smallpox and malaria. She had always carried with her a tiny revolver "in case they capture me and find out that I am a woman...."

"I also have thought in the past that there were impossible things," continued Sonia. "For eight months I ran a typhus hospital where a thousand men lay on wooden floors that could not be disinfected. The men had been in dirt so long that we had to cut the clothes from them; they were rotten with filth that crumbled in your hands. The lice were imbedded in their flesh; you had to scrub hard or use a razor to get them off. We had no beds, no mattresses, no sheets, no blankets, no soap. The doctors and nurses came down with typhus regularly in fourteen days; there was no possible way to protect them; when they took hold of those men you knew they would most of them be sick with typhus in two weeks.

"I thought it was impossible. But always something can be done. We commandeered a big school-building — the only building big enough for our sick. We took a great wooden tank that was used for washing clothes, and we scrubbed the men in it. We sent word throughout the city (it was a town of



The Russian empire is dying
 There are neither the silky sounds of skirts at the
 Winter Palace
 Nor the tsar's prayers at Easter
 Nor the cry of chains on the road to Siberia...
 Dying, the Russian Empire is dying...
 No longer will the yellow mustaches of pomechiks
 get wet in vodka glasses
 No longer will the copper beards of mujiks dying
 of hunger
 burn on the black soil like a handful of blood
 And Today
 The death
 that is approaching the Russian Empire
 Has neither a yellow head
 Nor a pitchfork
 In his hands is a lively red flag
 And on his cheeks the blood of youth

Nineteen hundred seventeen
 The Seventh of November
 With his soft and deep voice
 Lenin said:
 "Yesterday was too early tomorrow too late,
 The time is today."
 The soldier coming from the front
 said: "today!"
 The trench that killed death out of hunger
 said "today!"
 With its heavy steel black
 cannons, the *Aurora*
 said: "today!" —
 said: "today!" —
 And so wrote the Bolsheviki in history
 the date of history's most profound turning point:
 Nineteen hundred seventeen,
 the seventh of November

Nazim Hikmet 1925



thirty-five thousand souls) asking every family to bring us one suit of underwear for the men who were left naked when we cut their clothing off. From most it was a free gift, but communists, of course, were not permitted to refuse. They must give, even if they have no underwear left for themselves. We communists are making the revolution; we must do whatever is demanded." She spoke of the revolution not as a violent upheaval in the past, but as a process yet unfinished.

"...There is always a way. There may not be an easy way, or a way that is sparing of life, but there is always a way through. This famine is nothing compared to the wars of intervention, except that we're much more tired.... Now that we've beaten the intervention, don't think this famine can stop us."

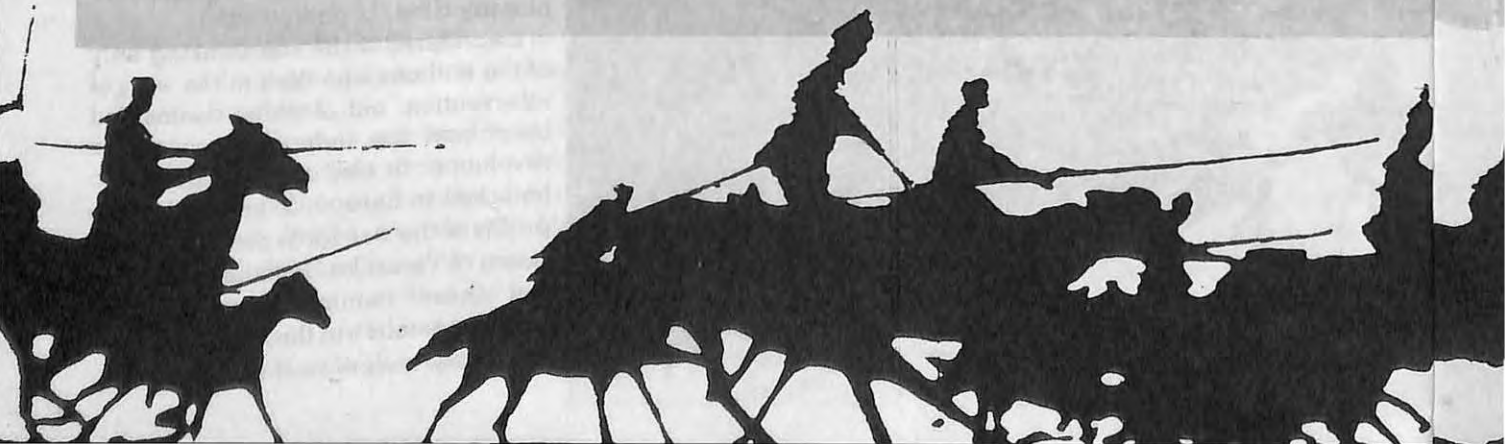
"Millions will die," I said to Sonia.

And Sonia answered: "Millions have already died."

I wondered if she was thinking only of the millions who died in the wars of intervention, out of whose deaths had been won the independence of the revolution, or also of the millions who had died in Europe, to no end but the profits of the war-lords and the ghastly peace of Versailles. Millions would die; but these communists who held together would win through.

From *I Change Worlds* by Anna Louise Strong .

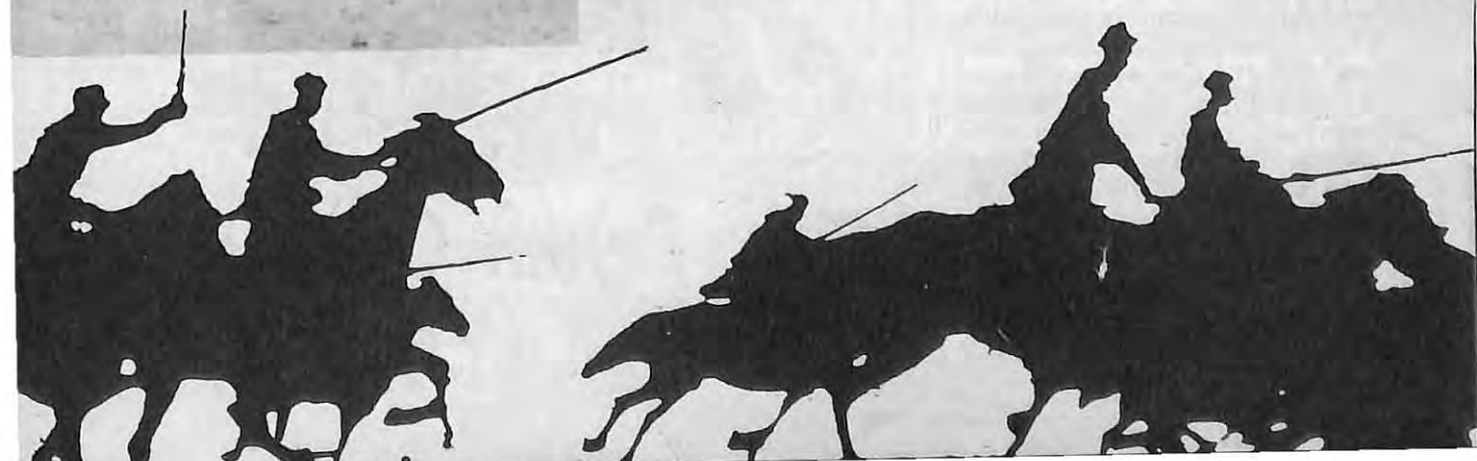
I, a son of the working people and citizen of the Soviet Republic, accept the title of soldier in the peasants' and workers' army. I commit myself to strictly observing revolutionary discipline. I commit myself to the cause of socialism, giving to it all my energy and my life....



As we came out into the dark and gloomy hall all around the grey horizon factory whistles were blowing, a hoarse and nervous sound, full of foreboding. By tens of thousands the working-people poured out, men and women; by tens of thousands the humming slums belched out their dun and miserable hordes. Red Petrograd was in danger! Cossacks! South and south-west they poured through the shabby streets towards the Moskovsky Gate, men, women, and children, with rifles, picks, spades, rolls of wire, cartridge-belts over their working clothes.... Such an immense, spontaneous outpouring of a city was never seen! They rolled along torrent-like, companies of soldiers borne with them, guns, motor-trucks, wagons — the revolutionary proletariat defending with its breast the capital of the Workers' and Peasants' Republic!...

Day broke, and the pickets of Kerensky's Cossacks came in touch. Scattered rifle-fire, summons to surrender. Over the bleak plain on the cold quiet air spread the sound of battle, falling upon the ears of roving bands as they gathered about their little fires, waiting.... So it was beginning! They made towards the battle; and the worker hordes pouring out along the straight roads quickened their pace... Thus upon all the points of attack automatically converged angry human swarms, to be met by Commissars and assigned positions, or work to do. This was *their* battle, for *their* world; the officers in command were elected by *them*. For the moment that incoherent multiple will was one will....

Those who participated in the fighting described to me how the sailors fought until they ran out of cartridges, and then stormed; how the untrained workmen rushed the charging Cossacks and tore them from their horses; how the anonymous hordes of the people, gathering in the darkness around the battle, rose like a tide and poured over the enemy.... Before midnight of Monday the Cossacks broke and were fleeing, leaving their artillery behind them, and the army of the proletariat, on a long ragged front, moved forward and rolled into Tsarskoye, before the enemy had a chance to destroy the great Government wireless station, from which now the Commissars of Smolny were hurling out to the world paeans of triumph....



On 15 October I had a conversation with a great Russian capitalist, Stepan Georgevich Lianozov, known as the "Russian Rockefeller" — a Cadet by political faith.

"Revolution," he said, "is a sickness. Sooner or later the foreign powers must intervene here — as one would intervene to cure a sick child, and teach it how to walk. Of course, it would be more or less improper, but the nations must realize the danger of Bolsheviki in their own countries — such contagious ideas as 'proletarian dictatorship,' and 'world social revolution'... There is a chance that this intervention may not be necessary. Transportation is demoralised, the factories are closing down, and the Germans are advancing. Starvation and defeat may bring the Russian people to their senses."

...To Americans it is incredible that the class war should develop to such a pitch. But I have personally met officers on the Northern Front who frankly preferred military disaster to cooperation with the Soldier's Committees. The secretary of the Petrograd branch of the Cadet party told me that the breakdown of the country's economic life was part of a campaign to discredit the Revolution....

A large section of the propertied classes preferred the Germans to the Revolution — even to the Provisional Government — and didn't hesitate to say so. In the Russian household where I lived, the subject of conversation at the dinner-table was almost invariably the coming of the Germans, bringing "law and order"... One evening I spent at the house of a Moscow merchant; during tea we asked the eleven people at the table whether they preferred "Wilhelm or the Bolsheviki." The vote was ten to one for Wilhelm....

Selections from Reed's
Ten Days That Shook the World

A bourgeois, a lonely mourner,
His nose tucked in his ragged fur,
Stands lost and idle on the corner,
Tagged by a cringing, mangy cur.

The bourgeois like a hungry mongrel,—
A silent question—stands and begs.
The old world like a kinless mongrel
Stands there, its tail between its legs.

— Alexander Blok



Тов. Ленин ОЧИЩАЕТ
ЗЕМЛЮ ОТ НЕЧИСТИ.



It was through the Russians that the Chinese found Marxism. Before the October Revolution, the Chinese were not only ignorant of Lenin and Stalin, they did not even know of Marx and Engels. The salvos of the October Revolution brought us Marxism-Leninism. The October Revolution helped progressives in China, as throughout the world, adopt the proletarian world outlook...”

— “On the People’s Democratic Dictatorship,” Mao Tsetung

International Character of the October Revolution

The October Revolution cannot be regarded merely as a revolution "within national bounds." It is, primarily, a revolution of an international, world order; for it signifies a radical turn in the world history of mankind, a turn from the old, capitalist world to the new, socialist world.

Revolutions in the past usually ended by one group of exploiters at the helm of government being replaced by another group of exploiters. The exploiters changed, exploitation remained. Such was the case during the liberation movements of the slaves. Such was the case during the period of the uprisings of the serfs. Such was the case during the period of the well-known "great" revolutions in England, France and Germany. I am not speaking of the Paris Commune, which was the first glorious, heroic, yet unsuccessful attempt on the part of the proletariat to turn history against capitalism.

The October Revolution differs from these revolutions *in prin-*

ciple. Its aim is not to replace one form of exploitation by another form of exploitation, one group of exploiters by another group of exploiters, but to abolish all exploitation of man by man, to abolish all groups of exploiters, to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, to establish the power of the most revolutionary class of all the oppressed classes that have ever existed, to organise a new, classless, socialist society.

It is precisely for this reason that the *victory* of the October Revolution signifies a radical change in the history of mankind, a radical change in the historical destiny of world

capitalism, a radical change in the liberation movement of the world proletariat, a radical change in the methods of struggle and the forms of organisation, in the manner of life and traditions, in the culture and ideology of the exploited masses throughout the world.

That is the basic reason why the October Revolution is a revolution of an international, world order.

That also is the source of the profound sympathy which the oppressed classes in all countries entertain for the October Revolution, which they regard as a pledge of their own emancipation.

...The October Revolution is noteworthy primarily for having breached the front of world imperialism, for having overthrown the imperialist

Peasant revolts in China during 1919.



International March, 1919.



Burkina Faso

(Continued from p. 34)

Sankara official state honors on one of his visits to Tripoli. In addition, he carried out the first state visit to the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic with this aim.

Sankara's tightest links were in fact with J.J. Rawlings' similarly military-coup-inspired regime in Ghana. The two formed a mutual defense treaty as of November 1983 and even carried out joint military manoeuvres. This alliance seemed to upset loyal French friends like Gabon and Ivory Coast and, in regional terms, the possibility of a pro-Soviet axis running from Tripoli to Ouagadougou to Accra was not a pleasing prospect to French or Western imperialism as a whole.

Sankara traveled to Cuba and the Soviet Union, but said he was not pitting Moscow against Paris. He displayed a contradictory attitude towards the Soviet Union and the East bloc, and within his circle and those supporting him the struggle was often sharp over this question. The Soviet connection represented a temptation in hopes of decreasing dependence on France, but this very same dependence locked the state into a certain orbit.

Soviet aid was, as is often the case in Africa, funneled through other pro-Soviet "non-aligned" regimes. Cuba, so uniquely qualified in the non-staples cash crop department, with many years experience as a Soviet neocolony, offered to help Burkina Faso build up its sugar industry. Ghana and Cuba helped construct an airport runway, Libya gave some \$10 million, and other aid came from Angola, Mozambique, Romania and North Korea, which sent iron and cement to build popular theatres in Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso.

On the other hand, Sankara announced that Soviet troops should leave Afghanistan and he favoured maintaining diplomatic ties with Albania.

China, for its part, donated some 100 wells as part of the campaign to reduce water shortages. They also gave several million dollars used to construct an "August 4th Stadium,"

and some hospitals. Despite all this "friendly aid" from non-Western sources, Sankara avoided mixing up what he called the struggle for independence from French neocolonialism with "skin reactions." To friends who were surprised at his rapid dispatch of a contingent to Jacques Chirac's side when the "right" regained a parliamentary majority in March 1986 in France, assuring him of Burkina's intentions, Sankara jokingly remarked, "Even if Jean-Marie Le Pen came to power one day in Paris we'd send a delegation and keep our relations with France!"¹⁷ (Le Pen is the head of the neofascist National Front in France.)

Against Apartheid and Women's Oppression

Attention was paid, by friends and by the Sankara government alike, to building up the capital of Ouagadougou as an important African centre for political, cultural and sports events. It became a magnet for artists and intellectuals, a Mecca for social democratic and revisionist leaders around the world, from Yasser Arafat to Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega. Reggae concerts were held in the new stadium, and the Panafrican Film Festival of Ouagadougou became the cultural event of Black Africa, pulling together artists and a broad public participation. The regime encouraged its reputation as a sort of anti-apartheid centre, organising a number of forums and demonstrations. In Sankara's fight to popularise women's "liberation," a women's rock group was formed, the "Doves of Peace."

The question of women's oppression in itself would be enough to seal the fate of the Burkina path, particularly as it had advertised that the liberation of women and revolution go together, raising a lot of false hopes and sharp opposition. For just as Sankara and Co handled the basic class contradictions in Burkina Faso — with a very militant, left-sounding phraseology which was very "right" (economist and unachievable) in essence and that never relied on the masses and their strug-

gle — they approached the woman question in the same revisionist way. As one woman put it, "It seems that the revolution is for men and women in the cities, not for us." Their view of liberation through economic production recognised the oppressive relations between men and women (hard to ignore or avoid the widespread consequences of women still being traded as a commodity, worked to an early death, voiceless in arranged marriages and political affairs, sexually mutilated to ensure male domination) but, because their approach to the rural revolution did not aim at dissolving all the old relations of production, they were unable to surmount the inevitable challenges actually posed in order to unleash the masses of women, and were stymied by such phenomena as women who defended polygamy because it was a way to share the excruciatingly heavy work load, to allow them to space out eternal pregnancies "for the lineage" and to get a little rest. Since the regime was incapable of carrying out a proletarian policy of resolving the woman question as part of unleashing women (and men) to uproot the old reactionary relations between people, they were reduced to making decrees proclaiming women's rights (which in the absence of real transformations could only remain as empty as India's "outlawing" of the caste system) and combine them with a "practical programme" which amounted to making the liberation of women *dependent* on first increasing the number of ploughs and wells, for example. In fact, this view is another version of the "theory of the productive forces" common to revisionists of different stripes who see the increase in the productive forces, and not the revolutionary struggle of the masses, as the key to advancing society.

Sankara's Overthrow

The urban sectors which had supported Sankara's efforts began to grow increasingly disillusioned with his programme. In particular, they were less and less willing to tolerate his reform measures that cut into

(Continued to p. 80)

THE WEAPON OF CRITICISM

57

Indian Communists Criticise Armed Economism

By Sunil

Reprinted from *Mass Line*

Report from the Flaming Fields of Bihar

A CPI(ML) Document Published
by: Prabodh Bhattacharya 10B,
Radha Madhab Dutta Garden
Lane Calcutta 700 010

Bihar has long occupied an important place in the peasant movements of India. In the pre-1947 period, it was a centre of militant peasant struggles led by the Kisan Sabha (peasant organisation) — one of the most important contingents of the All-India Kisan Sabha itself. Later on the total degeneration of the Communist Party India (CPI) into revisionism took its toll in Bihar also. The momentum of social change built up by the movement was dissipated in the par-

liamentary pigsty. Casteism in the worst form once again reared up its ugly head. Landlordism ran rampant under the blessings of all parliamentary parties. The CPI-CPM (Communist Party of India, Marxist, a centrist split-off from the CPI formed in the early sixties) revisionists have always fixed the blame for this degeneration on the "cultural backwardness of the caste-ridden Hindi belt." Socio-cultural backwardness is no doubt a reality in Bhojpur. But that is only one side of the picture. The other side is that the victims, the oppressed peasantry, are a potent powder-keg which can be ignited with revolutionary politics. Naxalbari and its politics of seizing power through armed struggle was such a spark. Within a short time "backward" Bihar was

catapulted into an advanced centre of struggle, symbolised by Bhojpur. Ever since then Bihar has remained a centre of militant peasant struggle.

"Report from the flaming fields of Bihar" claims to give us a picture of this struggle, particularly centred in South Bihar. The fact that the area covered was the centre of the earlier Bhojpur movement makes it even more important. But this book is not the ordinary journalistic record or sociological study one comes across. In the words of the authors, it is a "document," a political summation of its work carried out by the CPI(ML) (Liberation) led by Vinod Misra. As such the reportage only serves to substantiate certain political positions upheld by this group. Evidently, to do justice to the book, a review must assess this politics and draw appropriate lessons. Yet this is precisely where a notable drawback of the book stands out. Despite an impressive list of documents given as Appendices, the reader is never informed of the basic political line guiding the group's practice.

Since some reviewers have enthusiastically welcomed this very style of the book as a model to be followed by all, it is necessary to go into this aspect a bit more deeply. The main propaganda statement of the book (incidentally, the publisher is the central propaganda team of the VM group itself) is summarised in its last chapter. In brief, it claims that, "The ongoing peasant struggle in Bihar represents a new phase in the development of the Naxalbari movement" (p. 169). Before going into the numerous salient features of this "new phase" listed in the chapter, let us try to examine this very claim itself. How can a critical reader assess it independently? Obviously a clear grasp of the aims and politics of Naxalbari and the CPI(ML) could be a good basis for this task. Yet in this case that itself is insufficient. The VM group has abandoned a number of positions upheld by the CPI(ML) earlier, including positions on the crucial strategy of seizing power. In fact, this was the prominent aspect of the "Rectification" of 1979 and the "3rd Congress" of 1982 carried out

by the VM group. One comes across numerous references to those events throughout the book. One is also informed that they played a crucial role in initiating the "new phase." But any enquiry about the new political positions advanced by them runs into a stonefaced silence. Given the strident nature of political claims, an honest propaganda effort surely calls for providing such vital information also.

Let us take a specific example. According to the "Report," one salient feature of this "new phase" is that of "... sustaining guerrilla struggle, though still at a primary stage, for a long period in the plains" (p. 174). This is contrasted to the "fear" of other ML groups who wish to avoid the complex agrarian scene of the plains of South Bihar and shift to areas of "classical feudalism" and favourable topography for armed struggle. No doubt this sounds very innovative. But how does one link up this attempt to the latest strategy of forming provisional governments and carrying out insurrection from above (whatever it is!) — the strategy proclaimed by the 1982 Congress of the VM group? *Liberation*, organ of the VM group, envisages a rather complicated scenario for seizing power — "revolutionaries" coming to "power" through elections in one or two States, this government (or governments) confronting the centre and getting dismissed in the process, this dismissal leading to mass uprisings, etc. Moreover, it insists that this convoluted process "finally leads you to the basic path and ultimate form of struggle" (October 1984). Since the VM group has not yet been "forced" to form a government (though it is desperately trying its best), and hence has still a long way to go to arrive at the "basic path and ultimate form of struggle," what exactly is the purpose and content of its sustained guerrilla activities? Or, what does it have in common with the politics of seizing power through People's War put forward by the CPI(ML)? We hope this example gives a good illustration of the problem we had mentioned earlier. To be meaningful, the critique has to go beyond the bounds set up

by the authors. In other words, the "disinformation" campaign pushed by the VM group has to be consciously identified if one is to get to the heart of the matter.

Political criticism of the VM group's strategy has already been published by *Mass Line* (Vol. 9, No. 7). We will not repeat it here. Rather, we will try to pinpoint the acute manifestations of this revisionist strategy as seen in the "Report;" particularly, we will take up the questions of armed struggle, the caste question, and uniting the middle peasantry, since they are crucial aspects as yet unresolved by the revolutionary movement in India. We will also examine how the basic flaws in the VM group's theorisation of the transformations in Indian agriculture leads it to swing from right opportunism in "left" form to openly barefaced revisionism. The task is not an easy one since we have to sift out the truth from a maze of disinformation at each step. Yet it is fruitful since it helps us to deepen our grasp of what revisionism means today.

As we noted earlier, militant peasant struggles have long been a regular feature in Bihar. Yet the struggle initiated in the early 1970s in Bhojpur stands out among them. It was not just a militant peasant struggle, but part of an armed revolution for the seizure of political power. Apart from its contributions to developing tactics for carrying out armed struggle in the plains, this was the most important qualitative distinction setting it apart from other peasant struggles. And this distinction has been the most important factor in enthusing the oppressed peasantry throughout Bihar and creating favourable grounds for building up a broad peasant movement. Not surprisingly, this heroic struggle for power which provided the direct background for all contemporary developments in Bihar is dismissed with a few terse paragraphs in the long "Report." But these short paragraphs are sufficiently revealing.

In the words of the "Report," the intervention of Marxist-Leninists inspired by Naxalbari had only led "...to usher in a new phase of militant peasant movement." Or,

Bhojpur "... created a niche for itself..." due to "... the *militant, mass character...*" of the movement (p. 25, emphasis added). Armed struggle and the formation of revolutionary committees were nothing more than factors which gave rise to this "militant, mass character." Such is the summation of the VM group. These pages also inform us that the movement lost much of its "momentum" and "suffered serious setbacks" by the end of 1976. Though the "Report" is silent about the reasons which led to this setback, Vinod Misra deals with it in an illuminating paragraph of his introduction: "The independent course of the peasant struggle and the Party's attempt to import consciousness to it went through a peculiar phase of unity and struggle. The Party worked hard to develop communistic elements from among the peasant vanguards, always trying to check the spontaneous negative tendencies of the movement and give it an organised shape. There were, however, also strong attempts on the part of the Party to superimpose its set of dogmatic ideas regarding forms of struggle and organisation on the movement and, to be sure, these attempts proved counterproductive." (p. xxii) "The balance was restored" by "rectifying" these errors and ushering in the "new phase."

In order to understand this question of "dogmatism" and the real content of rectification, we must first note the aims attributed to the Party's "conscious" intervention — "developing communistic elements" and giving the movement an "organised shape." Truly, no trade union boss, not even Dange, could have expressed this better! This trade unionist rendering of the struggle for political power in Bhojpur is not at all incidental. It is a necessary premise for the claim of having rectified "dogmatist" errors. Naxalbari, led by comrade Charu Mazumdar, was born out of a revolt against the notorious revisionist assessment that the peasants of Telengana should not have struggled for power but should have only struggled for land. Given this history, any open criticism of the politics of seizing power invites an

immediate exposure. VM tries to avoid this by strictly stipulating that the dogmatist errors of the CPI(ML) related to "forms of struggle and organisation" and that the "balance was restored" by rectifying such errors only. His trade unionist rendering is a ruse to cover up the fact that the "Rectification campaign" of 1979 directly went far beyond such questions of form and dealt with throwing out the very content, the politics of seizing power through armed struggle itself. If the Party's task all along was no more than giving the movement an "organised shape," why bother with problems of line and strategy? VM has certainly learned some lessons. In the past, the revisionists could be more forthright. But now the times have changed and deception has to be more sophisticated.

The armed struggle in Bhojpur up to the mid-1970s was a vindication of Charu Mazumdar's assertion that armed guerrilla struggle can be carried out in the plains. But, at the same time, it also brought out the flaws in the Party's military line, particularly in relation to the task of sustaining and developing armed struggle. The influence of dogmatic thinking was reflected in the absence of any thorough analysis of the centralised state structure in order to identify its weaknesses. Instead of trying to develop a military line suited to the specific conditions created by the presence of this centralised state structure, an absolutist emphasis was put on sticking to a small area of operation and fighting battles against overwhelming odds. Hence, despite its significant contributions, the struggle in Bhojpur failed to develop beyond the initial stage due to such dogmatist errors in military line, apart from other factors. As we have seen, the VM group claims to have overcome this and speaks of carrying out sustained guerrilla activities today. Apparently this claim is substantiated by the "Report." A number of armed units operate under the control of the group and they engage in combat with landlord gangs and state forces. But what is the line guiding these activities? The policy statement on armed units clearly

stipulate that their task is to act "in the interest of the mass movements...." (p. A-8) An account of ideological remoulding tells us of how a poor peasant fighter was cured of his "illness" of rendering "armed struggle... (as) ... the principal form of struggle." (p. 168) A section of ongoing efforts to overcome "weakness" of the movement tells us that one such measure consists of ensuring that, "Armed actions should be taken in direct and immediate relation to mass movements." (p. 123) All told, the armed activity of the VM group is strictly limited to serve its plans for building up mass economic struggles and movements. Its military tactics of operating over large areas and so forth serves this political aim. In the presence of rabid counterrevolutionary violence of the landlords and the state, even economic struggle has to take an armed form. But the state's attitude to armed actions meant to back up economic demands is radically different from its attitude towards armed struggle aimed at its destruction. In the former case, armed repression is only one option since reforms or granting of demands can also serve the purpose. While the necessity to continue some form of armed activity is given by the openly violent nature of present-day Bihar, its "sustenance" is based on the abandoning of the struggle for power. All the talk in the "Report" of efforts to build base areas taking up "hill, forest and plain areas as a single zone" is just that — loud talk without any content. Armed economism does not lead to base areas. Besides the strategy of "insurrection from above" does not call for such bases either.

The intervention of Marxist-Leninists led by comrade Jouhar in the mass movement led by Jagdish Mahto and others in Bhojpur had elevated it to a struggle for power. Errors in the Party line were an obstacle for further development. The rectification of the VM group was not an attempt to surmount this obstacle but a swing to right opportunism with "left" form in some aspects. Despite its attempts to cover up, the review of the "Report" shows up the inevitable

fruits of this rightist swing. According to the "Report," militant land struggles have given rise to some "problems." For example, despite the growth of the peasant organisation and struggle, a great majority of disputes have "... found their way..." (!) to the courts and legal illusions remain widespread. Or, after successful seizure of land and its distribution "... many recipients... often become the least interested in struggle ... (and) ... concentrate on securing government parchas... to legalise their hold...." (p. 116-117) (To the veteran CPI-CPM activist this lament will sound very familiar. After all, this inevitable outcome of economism has been repeatedly experienced in their movements, and has found a regular mention in their reports.) For the VM group all this has nothing to do with economism. It only calls for more "Rectification" with a bigger dose of rightism. Thus, according to the "Report," "... this problem reflects a serious gap in the thinking of many cadres in the Party.... Basing themselves on an *ultra-left premise*, they negate the importance of taking up *economic work in real earnest*, for they consider it to be a waste of time ... in the period of sharp class war when guns are roaring all around." (p. 117) (emphasis added) Not to elevate but to stifle the revolutionary urges of the masses — that is the essence of economism, armed or otherwise.

Perpetuation of Caste Domination

Let us now pass to the caste question. The failure to overcome caste structure was an important factor behind the setback in Bhojpur. Though not as acute as in Bihar, this problem is commonly faced by movements led by revolutionaries in different regions of India. Generally speaking, caste and class stratification are no longer strictly identical. Yet a predominant section of the agricultural labourers and landless peasants come from the Dalit castes. On the opposite end, the major chunk of the landlords or upper stratum of the rural exploiters come from the upper castes. The partial transformations in caste and class

relations have created new complexities, even while they have created new opportunities. As a result of such transformations, a not so small section of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants come from the intermediate and even upper castes. In this situation, common class interests provide a good basis to forge unity and transcend casteism. Yet the presence of different castes within the same classes also present an opportunity for the exploiters to split up the ranks of the exploited along caste lines. The successful resolution of this complex interpenetration of caste and class remains a pressing task before the revolutionaries in India. In the past, the communist movement had adopted a mechanical approach. It argued that the development of class struggle would more or less automatically lead to overcoming casteism. Today a number of ML groups and other progressive forces have abandoned this erroneous view. Some of them have even gone to the opposite extreme of viewing the caste struggle as more or less identical to class struggle and theorising the isolation of the movement among the most oppressed castes as a virtue. How does the VM group tackle this problem?

One of the salient features mentioned by the "Report" to substantiate its claims of a "new phase" is that caste struggles have been transformed into class struggle. According to it, the approach which led to such results are as follows: "... more denunciation of casteism ... is going to make absolutely no difference.... While sharpening of economic struggles would accelerate inter-caste class polarisation, simultaneously we have also got to work within various caste organisations so as to provide them with a progressive orientation and... we have to assert ourselves as a force capable of guaranteeing security to the weaker castes." (p. 106) Recognising the specific problems raised by caste and evolving policies to deal with it is no doubt necessary and correct. Some of the methods mentioned by the "Report," such as paying attention to the caste composition in an area of work and establishing links with progressive

elements of intermediate and upper castes, addressing calls to specific castes in situations of caste conflict and working within caste organisation to promote progressive elements, are notable. But all policy and tactics should serve the basic line of uprooting casteism and annihilating caste. Is this true in the case of the VM group?

A good example to analyse this is the "Call to the Kurmi peasants" given in the Appendix of the "Report." (p. A 20-21) The context of issuing such a call was the struggle to win over the Kurmi peasants away from the influence of the counterrevolutionary Bhoomi Sena. Since this reactionary Sena was utilising caste feelings to turn the masses from the Kurmi caste against the agrarian movement, a call specifically addressed to them is no doubt justified. The problem is the content of the call. Its whole thrust is not on winning over the Kurmi peasants by weakening their casteist feeling. On the contrary, it is precisely that of trying to win them over by reassuring their *casteist sentiment itself*. Thus the call starts with, "The Kurmi caste is well known as an *honest, hardworking and brave caste*" and, "Altogether *your caste is held in high esteem* in the whole society." With the acknowledgment the call demands of the Kurmis, "Do you want to *preserve the respect* the people have always shown towards *your caste?*, and states, if so you should "... isolate and smash this... gang." (all emphasis added) In other words, the Kurmi peasant is asked to turn against the Bhoomi Sena on the basis of the Party's acknowledgment of his caste position and its guarantee of preserving this position. The message, crudely put, is this — abandon the Bhoomi Sena and support us. We are reliable and capable of preserving your caste interests. Our struggle will not hurt your interests. Such tactics might help in isolating the Bhoomi Sena. But they certainly do so only on an ideological basis identical to that of the Bhoomi Sena — casteism remains untouched.

The policy statement "On Castes" given in the Appendix (p. A 18-19) speaks of mobilising peasant masses belonging to all castes,

giving priority to the most oppressed lower castes, middle castes and upper castes in that order. But significantly enough there is no mention at all of the central task of overthrowing casteism or tactics related to this task. Rather, "... utilising the contradictions of other castes with that caste (i.e. the particular caste of the landlords..." and developing caste organisations of lower castes stand out as the main features of this policy. Again in the measures listed out to overcome "problems" faced by the movement we come across such decisions as, "The Kisan Sabha should make it a point not to concentrate too much on questions of social oppression...." (p. 123)

Earlier we had noted the mechanical approach of the old CP on the caste question. Assuming that the development of class struggle would more or less automatically lead to the overcoming of the caste question apparently indicates a dogmatist attitude of closing one's eyes to social reality since it does not correspond to the textbook. But this dogmatism is in essence really a reflection of right opportunism. In our society, class does not exist as a pure category, it interpenetrates with caste. Class aspirations are both bolstered and hindered by caste aspirations. While the class position directly determines the relation to political power, caste plays a determining role in fixing social status. The overwhelming presence of upper castes in the bureaucracy and other sections of the ruling classes clearly shows the links of caste with political power. This link is also manifested in an indirect form. The Brahmin, Rajput, Reddy or Nair coming from exploited classes can still enjoy some measure of social status and at times even the patronage of power due to his caste position. But this is a possibility totally denied to the Dalit (Untouchable) coming from the exploited classes, precisely due to his caste position. Particularly in the more backward regions where semi-feudal relations still dominate, social position and thereby indirect linkages to political power in some measure is often more sharply expressed in caste terms rather than in

class terms. So long as the exploited classes are organised purely on the basis of their partial, economic interests, leaving out the question of establishing their power, the caste question can be more or less ignored. At best it will only come up as a hindrance to the task of uniting the class around the economic, partial demands. But the moment one breaks with economism and poses the question of mobilising the masses to seize power the whole scene will necessarily change. Establishing the power of the oppressed and exploited will call for nothing less than a total upheaval of all social relations. In India, this can never be achieved without a rupture with casteism. Willingly accepting the power exercised through a Dalit is a totally different proposition even for the landless peasant of an oppressor caste than struggling for partial, economic interests. It calls for a conscious break with casteism.

It is true that the partial economic struggle provides a good basis to eliminate casteism. But it is equally true that the masses can unite in such struggle without a basic rupture in caste outlook. Interpreting this as the "transformation of caste struggle into class struggle" actually serves to cover up the reality of continuing caste consciousness which might be temporarily suppressed and lie latent while the pressing circumstances of the struggle for economic interests remain. The revisionism of the old CP which limited its sights to economism was the real basis for its seemingly dogmatist approach of ignoring the caste question. The CPI(ML) did not achieve a conscious break from this outlook on the caste question. Yet its revolutionary theory and practice stressing armed struggle to seize power and insisting on establishing the leadership of the landless and poor peasants indirectly set it on a different course. Its radical rejection of all collaborationism, determination in the antifeudal struggle and revolutionary class line immediately found the greatest response from the exploited of the oppressed castes. Its politics of seizing power brought them to the forefront and gave a tremendous boost to their social status. This

positive contribution also had its impact on Dalit organisations by bringing forth a new radical orientation within them. The task of the Marxist-Leninists is to build on the heritage with a conscious grasp of the caste question and its implications for the New Democratic Revolution in India. Only then can the indirect gain be consolidated and developed in opposition to revisionist theory and practice on the caste question. In the case of the VM group its orientation is altogether different. The same approach of the old CP with its economist content is reestablished, though in a different form. The essence of its policies and tactics consists of a conscious effort to mitigate caste contradictions which hinder its work of mobilising the peasantry for partial economic interests. Its recognition of the caste question means reassuring the oppressor castes that these class interests will not be hurt. Beyond that it *consciously* ignores the caste question. Once again, the times have changed. The old Kisan Sabha experience of the CPI cannot simply be repeated in contemporary Bihar. Revisionism must stoop to even more degenerate forms to secure its aims.

Class Line Dropped To Win Middle Peasant

Any attempt to build up broad peasant unity for the New Democratic Revolution in India has to resolve the complicated question of uniting the middle peasant and neutralising the rich peasant or capitalist farmer on the basis of resolutely implementing the class line of relying on the landless poor peasants and agricultural labourers. The complexity of this question has some specific features in India. They arise due to the caste question and also due to the fact that in regions where semi-feudalism dominates, the rich peasantry and upper strata of the middle peasantry also carry out feudal forms of exploitation and domination. In regions where neocolonial transformations have taken place this problem comes up in a different form and with different content.

Here the agricultural labourer or poor peasant who sells his labour has to immediately confront even the lower strata of the middle peasantry to fulfill his just demands of wage rise. In the past the CPI(ML) under comrade Charu Mazumdar's leadership had refuted the revisionist theory of S. N. Singh who advocated unity with rich peasants at any cost. But its "left" errors prevented it from developing a correct policy on building up broad peasant unity. Later attempts at rectification by Charu Mazumdar himself didn't make much headway since the source of such errors was not identified. The VM group claims that the movement in Bhojpur developed in opposition to the revisionist line of SNS. This is certainly true of the earlier phase of the Bhojpur movement led by comrade Jouhar. But according to the "Report," the limitations of the earlier phase on the specific question of uniting the middle peasantry still remains unresolved. As usual, the reasons are left out. But some of the policies intended to "rectify" this situation give us a clear indication of the trend of thinking and the future prospects of the opposition to S. N. Singh's line.

Some of the outstanding policies are as follows: "... guaranteeing that their (i.e. middle peasant) interests will not be hurt by *any means*," and "...taking care of their *caste sentiments*..." (p. 122, emphasis added). Along with these guarantees the main effort to mobilise them consists of "... raising with all seriousness certain burning issues concerning them directly and to pursue these issues till some success is achieved." (p. 122) On the one hand a radical declaration of taking work among the agrarian labourers, poor peasants and lower strata of middle peasants as the key link, a defence of this stand against critics who charge that they are splitting the broad peasant unity. On the other hand an openly rightist attempt at conciliation. What holds these contradictory views together? The class line of relying on the agrarian labourers, landless or poor peasants and establishing their leadership is directly related to the

struggle for power and beyond that of continuing the revolution in the new society. Leadership here means political hegemony reflecting the essence of the new political power. If this is left out and these classes are organised purely on the basis of partial, economic demands their struggle will only be a sectarian struggle — justified no doubt by their misery, but even then sectarian, since they do not take up the leading role in transforming society. For the middle peasant, such a struggle will only appear as unrelated to the class oppression he suffers. At the same time it will also appear as an added threat to his narrow economic interests and he will be alienated to the side of the exploiter. Once the "left" form of economism, of pushing only partial struggles of the rural exploited, reaches a blind end, it invariably turns into its opposite. The "error" is sought to be "rectified" by placating now the narrow class economic interests (in our case caste interests also) of the middle peasants and putting a brake on the struggle of the rural exploited. The middle peasant is sought to be won over on the sole basis of his economic interests, and the question of his accepting the hegemony of the working class, exercised through the rural poor, does not arise at all. Other interests and compulsions such as electoral prospects might hold off such a turn for some time. But the basic thrust of economism will inevitably make itself felt. This shift from the "radical" stand of mobilising economic struggles of the rural poor to that of openly placating the other classes is nothing new in India. It has already been demonstrated by the CPM practice in Kerala during the early 1970s.

In the case of the VM group, the conditions faced by it are basically different from those faced by the CPM in Kerala. In Kerala, neo-colonial transformation meant (and still means) that any raising of wage demands of the rural poor would inevitably hit the interests of the middle peasantry also. In Bihar, with all its complexities, the predominant presence of feudal landlords also means that broad sections of the peasantry can be

united against the direct oppressors since large sections of the middle peasants are also oppressed by them — i.e., if this unity is built up on the basis of the politics of destroying the landlords' political power. The economist outlook of the VM group evidently blocks this line of development. But that is only one aspect. A correct line on tackling the task of winning over the middle peasant has also got to take into account the specific features of the contradictions it has with ruling classes; contradictions introduced by imperialist penetration.

How Not to Look at Concrete Reality

The VM group is one among the ML groups which accepts that transformations have taken place in class relations. Its 1982 Congress even came out with an elaborate "Agrarian Programme" taking this into account. Yet the essence of its viewpoint is nothing more than a mechanical superimposition of some categories like "junker-type capitalist landlord" and "kulak rich peasant" borrowed from Lenin on the same old framework of semi-colonial, semi-feudal society. (Recently it has also started speculating on whether the big bourgeoisie can really be called "comprador" and if so to what extent, etc.) Lenin's categories of junker capitalist development were developed by analysing conditions in countries undergoing an independent capitalist development, however backward they have been. The junker path of development in Germany finally led it to the stage of imperialism. The reactionary essence of the transformation which has taken place in India consists in the fact that it *blocks independent capitalist development*. This blocking is not given by extraneous elements like caste and so on. It is given by the very nature of neo-colonial transformation. It means transformation and development carried out in the interests of imperialism and its local agents and implemented in accordance to its overall plans of role allocation for different regions. Even in the predominating semi-feudal condi-

tions of Bihar, particularly South Bihar, neocolonial penetration has started to make its presence felt. The increasing dependency of the peasantry on the market and the state for agricultural inputs and credit, growing production for the market, and transformation of erstwhile tenants (mainly middle and rich peasants of intermediate castes) into land owners are some manifestations of this process. The significantly slow momentum of neocolonial penetration in Bihar has led to a very complex agrarian structure. But the key to understand both the slow momentum and the agrarian structure is that of grasping the essence of the neocolonial pattern of development and control and the role allocation that has prevailed till now. The enforced backwardness of Bihar as compared to other relatively developed regions of India is mainly explained by this. Unless this is understood, the specific contradictions of the middle and rich peasantry can never be *politically* identified and an important basis for winning over the middle peasantry and neutralising the rich peasantry in favour of New Democracy can never be utilised.

The enforced neocolonial backwardness of Bihar and its interpenetration with specific internal features of Bihar society have to be analysed thoroughly to really identify these contradictions. Yet it is clear that this enforced backwardness has cut short the upward mobility of the rich peasants and middle peasants. Unable and unwilling to take up the risks of struggling against this barrier, these classes perceive struggle of the classes below them as a threat to whatever advance they have made. They see the main possibility for increasing surplus and even retaining their economic positions in the more ruthless exploitation of the rural poor. This is what underlies the phenomenon of the erstwhile backbone of the Kisan Sabha now playing the same role for the reactionary Sena after having been transformed into land owners. For these changes the most important barrier is no more that of semi-feudal domination, though they too might suffer from it. In present con-

ditions, the basis of uniting the middle peasantry and neutralising the rich peasantry in such areas has to be mainly sought in the anti-imperialist struggle (which takes the form of anti-state struggle in neocolonial conditions) rather than in the antifeudal struggle. Raising "burning issues" concerning these classes will be productive for building up broad, revolutionary unity of the peasantry, only if such "raising" serves the central task of the political struggle to smash the tentacles of imperialism, and the broad peasantry is made conscious of this task. Unless the two levels of political struggle — the main and immediate anti-feudal struggle given by the predominant semi-feudal structure and the anti-imperialist struggle related to the more basic factor which enforces backwardness are grasped and taken up, the task of building up broad peasant unity either will be sacrificed to "left" sectarianism or will be carried out on the rightist basis of placating the rich and middle peasants. The VM group's mechanical superimposition of borrowed categories neither helps it in political analysis nor does it help it in the task of building broad peasant unity.

This bankruptcy of theory and the dead-end reached by armed economism stands out in sharp contrast to Vinod Misra's boastful contentions in his Introduction. In his view the movement led by the group represents an East Wind, as opposed to the West Wind of Sharad Joshi. We have already seen the real nature of the wind raised by the VM group in some of its salient aspects. VM only underscores them by revealing his total blindness to the reality of India. Nothing other than this can explain the claim that the agrarian structure of India is typical of India or his ignoring the sharp and striking differences between rural Bihar and rural Maharashtra — differences which set the form of the movements which have come up in these two States. One understands reality to change it. But where there is no desire to change it, but only aspirations of finding a slot to accommodate oneself, such blindness is inevitable.

Today the agrarian revolution in

Bihar is at a critical juncture. The state has already declared its intentions to drop all pretence of neutrality and enforce landlord domination through the Arwal massacre and the banning of the MKSS. The success of the peasant movement in facing this attack and spreading as a People's War calls for greater heights of revolutionary determination and sacrifice. The oppressed peasantry of Bihar have already demonstrated that they are capable of this. But success in resistance is not the whole answer to tasks faced by the movement in Bihar. Along with this the vanguard has to break out of dogmatist theoretical fetters. These fetters obstruct the thorough analysis of the complex class-caste structure of Bihar. It prevents the movement from successfully integrating the anti-imperialist and antifeudal tasks of the struggle in order to broaden the scope of the struggle and isolate the enemies. It also prevents the movement from successfully tapping the national contradictions which exist due to the artificial integration of different societies into a composite State. At this juncture the "Report" from the VM group is a good teacher by way of negative example. It shows us the other possibility, the path of toning down the struggle and shifting the main focus to the parliamentary arena. After thoroughly pleading its case for right opportunism, the "Report" aptly concludes thus: "forging a strong unity among communist revolutionaries, winning over the middle strata of the peasantry and the democratic ranks of parties like the CPI and Lok Dal, skillfully utilising the contradictions among different political parties and factions so as to isolate the principal adversary, the ruling Congress... the *survival* of the movement depends much on a proper handling of these aspects of *practical politics*." (p. 176, emphasis added) The West Wind is puffing and blowing. But the fighting peasantry will never let it beat down the flames of the fires they have lit in the plains of Bihar — the sparks have come from Naxalbari. □

Gorbachev: Soul of Capital Personified

Perestroika — New Thinking for our Country and the World

Mikhail Gorbachev
Collins, London, 1987

By S.W.

The importance of this book is that, to some extent, we can take Gorbachev at his word. He is dealing with drastic problems and drastic measures, which require him to reveal something of just what the Soviet ruling class is up to and why. They are serious about *perestroika* (restructuring) and they are telling the truth when they say it will require an unprecedented level of *glasnost* (openness) — that is, unprecedented since socialism was overthrown in the USSR thirty years ago. There is still the “socialist” mask, which is to say that there is still the problem of the contradiction between what they say and what they do. In the long run, however, there must be concurrence as well as deception. So we should analyse what Gorbachev says he is trying to accomplish and to whom — and on what basis — he is appealing for support.

People will always be the victims of foolish prejudices and deceptions, Lenin once wrote, until they learn to search out the interests of *classes* in every event in political life. Since in his new book Mikhail Gorbachev calls for a return to the “methods” (although not the content) of Leninism, and hails Lenin as a Russian leader whose stature is comparable only to his own, it seems fair to apply this Leninist approach to him.

First, what audience, what classes, is Gorbachev addressing? Second, what is the problem, as he sees it? Third, towards what goal is all this directed, in whose interests?

I FOR WHOM?

This book, Gorbachev tells us in the first sentence, is meant “to address directly the peoples of the USSR, the United States, indeed, every country.” In the West first edition print runs have been somewhere around 100,000 copies for the various national editions, meaning that the book is expected to be a moderate best seller. In the USSR 300,000 copies were printed for the first edition, though this book has a slightly more Western flavour than Gorbachev’s party speeches, for instance. It is fitting that it appeared on the eve of the Reagan-Gorbachev summit, because it seems specifically aimed at Americans and people in other countries who want to know what Gorbachev has got to say in what is implicitly presented as a debate with the U.S. But there is a certain unity to the intended audience on all sides.

The book’s style itself reveals something about those for whom it was written. Despite the encumbrances of an ungainly, inconsistent and rushed translation, it faithfully follows the style of that most transnational of magazines, *Reader’s Digest*, the house organ of the philistine international — the smug, trite, narrow-minded and above all comfortably propertied (at least in aspirations). Its tone is, above all, reassuring.

In the press reports of the “Gorby-mania” that broke out dur-

ing Gorbachev’s visit to America, some of the most glowing tributes to the “evil empire’s” emissary seem to have come from among strata that have been the most strongly pro-Reagan. A Midwestern grain broker was pleased to discover that Gorbachev “is no radical” and that in fact he most resembles the man’s boss. Looking at it from the other side, can it be dismissed as an excess of vulgar pandering that led one of the USSR’s most senior journalists to “confide” to reporters that after Gorbachev, his favorite political figure is Ronald Reagan? Can it be that Gorbachev is pitching his *perestroika*, East and West, to some of the same kinds of strata that have supported “Reaganism,” “Thatcherism,” etc. in their respective countries?

Gorbachev says that this book is intended to appeal, in the West, to the “common sense” of “politicians and businessmen, scholars and journalists, teachers and physicians, clergymen, writers and students, workers and farmers.” (Certainly the rich West has no lack of “workers and farmers” afflicted with the “common sense” of businessmen, etc.) In reading the book, the reader finds that it is basically the same strata in the USSR itself that Gorbachev is addressing.

He doesn’t expect Soviet proletarians to be very enthusiastic. He uses a letter sent him from Lithuania to make the point: “There is no deep understanding of your policy among them [the proletarians] and there is still little trust in it.” A few pages later he reports, “the intelligentsia has enthusiastically supported the restructuring.” This requires more



Afghani refugees in Pakistan hang Gorbachev in effigy.

explanation, but not much subtlety. The main point that needs to be unraveled is that in Soviet terms "intelligentsia" refers not just to intellectuals but also to broader ranks of educated and therefore privileged urban strata. We'll leave aside, for the moment, the relationship between this intelligentsia and the real masters of Soviet society.

The question of audience is brought more clearly into focus by descriptions and insights written for the U.S. *Washington Post* by a Soviet-born, self-described "Sovietologist" now residing and working in the U.S., based on a recent trip back to the USSR. (We should add, in fairness, that Soviet society must be very open indeed these days, to judge by what would happen if an American defector to the USSR tried to return for a series of interviews with people on the street and old friends and acquaintances.)

Speaking of perestroika and what various people in the USSR have to say about it, Dimitri K. Simes writes, "The real beneficiaries seem to be the group I call Soviet yuppies — well educated professionals now prospering under Mr Gorbachev's

cultivation... Educated men and women, but mostly men, in their early and mid-40s... Unlike the workers, they were receiving higher incomes as a result of Mr Gorbachev's efforts to cultivate qualified professionals."

Simes describes one of them: "A university classmate of mine recently moved into a comfortable two-bedroom apartment in a prestigious building. He and his wife had just bought a second car and they talked casually about the separate vacations they took in the West. Their clothing would shine on New York's Fifth Avenue. Their candlelit supper table was loaded with sturgeon and salmon caviar, smoked fish, cold cuts and fresh vegetables. The bar boasted a variety of vodkas, scotch and an expensive brand of Armenian cognac. The furniture was made in Finland. The light from the imported lamps was elegantly dimmed. The spirit of proud prosperity was in the air."

Simes also paints a clear picture of who perestroika is *not* for. "We don't need all these nobodies exploiting perestroika to their advantage," a successful academic

administrator said. "The man in the street is unenthusiastic. 'Glasnost is for the bosses,' growled a young cab driver, and his comment seemed to speak for the Soviet masses who see Mr Gorbachev's reforms as an attack by the intelligentsia on ordinary working people."

A common trait of "Reaganism," "Thatcherism," etc., is their combination of reactionary appeals centring on patriotism with their ability to "deliver the goods," to some of the people, some of the time, in a bid to the already extensive privileged strata in these countries prepared to defend their imperialist fatherland because that's where their bread is buttered. Gorbachev, who speaks of learning from foreign experience, is their good and faithful student. Only he strives to give this technique a specifically *Russian* form, asserting he has rediscovered Lenin's method of "combining enthusiasm with material interest." Further, he is appealing not only to those strata satiated with imperialist plunder in his own country, but also to the same strata in the rival West, to whom he makes the claim that

friendship with the USSR is the best way to ensure more of the same. He even extends this appeal to certain strata in the oppressed countries who have never dared cut their ties to imperialism.

II "A DRUG-INDUCED SLEEP" AND "INNER STIMULI"

All accounts of life in the USSR today (including Gorbachev's) are heavily laden with words like pervasive stagnation, suffocating lethargy, inertia, suffocation. Gorbachev himself describes it as "drug-induced sleep." Is it, as certain stupid Westerners claim, because people in the USSR don't have enough happy commodities? There are many countries far poorer than the USSR but few so stultified. Some people wait in line endlessly for vodka, a Christmas goose, a nice apartment ... instead of working or doing something useful. They often get it, too, or they wouldn't bother. Life seems, for many people, an endless chase for material comfort (not survival), and if the rewards are not always as plush as in some Western countries, that may be a reason to defect to the West but not a basic difference between societies. The East bloc can easily match the West for philistinism.

What is unique about Gorbachev, among recent Soviet leaders, is that in this lethargy that is part of the grease and glue of Soviet society he sees the danger of its imminent demise. He sounds the alarm: if things don't get moving in the USSR, if they don't do a better job of "combining enthusiasm with material interests," then the Soviet Union is going to go under. Why? A huge "braking mechanism" had begun to clutch at the heart of Soviet production.

Gorbachev spares no drastic words. He says, "This society is ripe for change. It has long been yearning for it. Any delay in beginning perestroika could have led to an exacerbated internal situation in the near future, which, to put it bluntly, would have been fraught with serious social, economic and political crisis..."

"At some stage — this became particularly clear in the latter half of the seventies — something began to happen that was at first sight inexplicable. The country began to lose momentum... In the last fifteen years the national incomes growth rates had declined by more than a half and by the beginning of the eighties had fallen to a level close to economic stagnation. A country that was once quickly closing in on the world's advanced nations began to lose one position after another... The country was verging on crisis."

Maoists analyse this problem in its political dimension: after 40 years of socialism and the greatest economic growth the world had ever seen, a new bourgeois ruling class emerged from within the Soviet party and seized power, restoring capitalism and thereby ensuring that the same economic contradictions gripping the Western economies would eventually capture the USSR. Remarkably, most of Gorbachev's description could be equally applied to the West. But even more remarkably, Gorbachev all but openly identifies the problem — the reason for economic stagnation — as being a lack of sufficient profitability, and to him the whole notion of increasing economic growth rates is inextricably tied up with restoring the profitability of production. This is the "common sense" he shares with Western "politicians and businessmen," etc.; not only does he speak their language but he shares their most basic assumptions.

"Our country's wealth in terms of natural and manpower resources has spoilt, one may even say corrupted, us. That, in fact, is chiefly the reason why it was possible for our economy to develop extensively for decades... As time went on, material resources became harder to get and more expensive. On the other hand, the extensive methods of fixed capital expansion resulted in an artificial shortage of manpower. In an attempt to rectify this situation somehow, large, unjustified, i.e. in fact unearned, bonuses began to be paid and all kinds of undeserved incentives introduced under the pressure of this shortage, and that led, at a later stage, to the

practice of padding reports merely for gain. Parasitical attitudes were on the rise, the prestige of conscientious and high-quality labour began to diminish and a 'wage-leveling' mentality was becoming widespread. The imbalance between the measure of work and the measure of consumption, which had become something like the linchpin of the braking mechanism, not only obstructed the growth of labour productivity, but led to the distortion of the principle of social justice... A gradual erosion of the ideological and moral values of our people began."

How do you restore ideological and moral values, remove the brake on productivity and ensure social justice? No shameless bourgeois could put it more bluntly than Gorbachev: give full play to the role of profit. In fact, for Gorbachev, just like any open worshipper of capitalist relations, profit is not only the mechanism but the very essence of social justice.

There are two aspects to Gorbachev's economic programme. "The initial task of restructuring — an indispensable condition, necessary if it is to be successful — is to 'wake up' those people who have fallen asleep." This is to be done by administering rude shocks to some and sweet promises of success to others. Here Gorbachev's idea of "social justice" has been well captured by the Labour-minded *Guardian* in which Martin Walker labeled it "the almost Thatcherite strategy of squeezing wages and raising prices and job mobility." Perestroika, Gorbachev explains, means "working an extra bit harder."

But that is only the first part. The other aspect, Gorbachev says, is "the management system." "The management system which took shape in the thirties and forties began gradually to contradict the demands and conditions of economic progress. Its positive potential was exhausted. It became more and more of a hindrance, and gave rise to the braking mechanism which did us so much harm later..."

"It was in these conditions that a prejudiced attitude to the role of commodity-money relations and the

law of value under socialism developed, and the claim was often made that they were opposite and alien to socialism. All this was combined with an underestimation of profit-and-loss accounting, and produced disarray in pricing, and a disregard for the circulation of money.

"In the new conditions the narrow democratic basis of the established system of management began to have a highly negative effect. Little room was left for Lenin's idea of the working people's self-management. Public property was gradually fenced off from its true owner — the working man. This property frequently suffered from departmentalism and localism, becoming a no man's land and free, deprived of a real owner."

By "commodity-money relations," Gorbachev is referring to the exchange of commodities (things produced to be sold rather than for direct use), including labour power, according to the amount of socially necessary labour time it takes to produce them. True, this is a Marxist concept or category; but Gorbachev's reference to it is like a thief justifying himself with a quote from his indictment. Marx considered commodity exchange the germ of all capitalist relations. When the USSR was socialist, until Stalin's death, a "prejudiced attitude towards the role of commodity-money relations" prevailed because the supremacy of commodity-money relations means the supremacy of the bourgeoisie and all that the Soviet masses fought to overthrow and keep overthrown.

First of all, labour power ceased to be a commodity. No longer was it the case that proletarians could eat only so long as they could sell their labour power to enrich some capitalist. Second, it is true that in determining how other commodities are to be exchanged, the victorious proletariat can not simply abolish the law of value that regulates capitalism; but it must restrict it and work to eliminate the basis for its existence. The line and policies carried out by the party — and the role of the masses in the class struggle around that line and policies — de-

termine whether the results of the proletariat's labour are used against the producers, to build up forces and classes that stand against them, or to build up the basis for eliminating all class distinctions and everything that corresponds to them, in other words, to revolutionise society and the world.

Because the proletariat cannot simply abolish commodity-money relations all at once, and because the differences between classes and other inequalities are so deeply embedded that they require a whole historical period to uproot, there is the possibility of capitalism coming back to life and turning socialism into a hollow shell. No matter who owns the means of production juridically (in name), the question remains: whom, what class, does production serve? The law of value is not neutral. When it has the upper hand, wage labour (work for wages) is wage slavery.

Capitalism is a "no man's land" in a certain sense, in that the driving and determining force is not anyone's will, but rather capital's own ceaseless expansion. Men and women can work and things can be made only as long as that produces a profit, while the results of their labour enslave them, their class brothers and sisters and whole nations, producing misery, horror and destruction. Capital, dead labour, rules over the living. If the Soviet leadership under Stalin hadn't had a "prejudiced attitude" towards "profit-and-loss accounting," what would have been the difference between the USSR and its enemies?

One can read a good bit of this book before Gorbachev's frequent references to a "braking mechanism" become clear. In the first reference cited above, it seems to refer to the attitude of workers towards work; in the second reference it refers to the "no man's land" created by "prejudiced attitudes to the role of commodity-money relations." It turns out that these are two sides of the same coin, so to speak, because what Gorbachev proposes is to sharpen the operation of the law of value in the Soviet economy overall and at the same time to drive it in more deeply in particular in relation to the

individual workers — resolving "social injustice" by fighting "wage leveling" and "sponging" and "unearned bonuses" and "undeserved incentives" ...in other words, by *unevening* wages (increasing polarisation) and forcing Soviet masses to bow harder and lower to the almighty rouble, both at work and in the way decisions are made and everything is organised at every level.

This is what he means when he says "Perestroika is the all-around intensification of the Soviet economy."

Gorbachev explains the new law on state enterprises taking effect 1 January 1988: "the emphasis will be shifted from primarily administrative to primarily economic management methods at every level, and calls for extensive democratisation of management, and the overall activation of the human factor.

"The reform is based on dramatically increased independence of enterprises and associations, their transition to full self-accounting and self-financing, and granting all appropriate rights to work collectives. They will now be fully responsible for effective management and end results. A collective's profits will be directly proportional to its efficiency."

"Self-accounting and self-financing" and "independence" means that enterprises will expand or go under according to their profitability, which will play a more open role than ever in determining what gets made, where and how. (A major Moscow construction company was reported to be the first Soviet firm to go bankrupt under these new measures. According to Western estimates, a great many more are in danger.) "Appropriate rights" means more authority to enterprise managers, including increased authority to hire and fire. (Gorbachev calls this "the regroupment of labour.") "The overall activation of the human factor" means more rewards for management at various levels if they "produce" a profit and wages for producers more directly tied to the profitability of the company they work for and how much they produce — although, of course,

profitability means keeping down the wage bill.

Along with these measures, others include pricing reforms (beginning under Stalin and still to some extent today, some basic consumption items are sold at less than their cost); an increased role for small businesses and individual tradesmen; and steps to attract foreign investment.

"What is the main shortcoming of the old economic machinery?" Gorbachev asks, and then he answers, "It is above all the lack of inner stimuli for self-development." That "inner stimulus" he proposes is the *same* one so well known and hated in the West: the "cash nexus" standing at the heart of every social relation and the all-around rule of capital in every sphere of society.

It would be wrong to consider that this reform is making the USSR more capitalist, Gorbachev tell us. Once again there is some truth to what he says. Even the most blatantly "capitalist" measure in the reform laws coming into effect at the beginning of 1988, the decision to openly treat a large portion of the means of production themselves as commodities (so that capital is concentrated — including by one enterprise gobbling up another — more strictly according to profitability) is not, in itself, a decisive step, a change between social systems. The motive force behind planning, its basic criterion, since Stalin's death and Khrushchev's seizure of power, has been the accumulation of capital, including its concentration in the most profitable branches of production and so on, despite the evolving role of market forces since that time. That concentration is never, in any imperialist society, purely determined by *immediate* profit factors, but also by overall considerations of monopoly and empire.

Perhaps it is analogous to compare the USSR's 1 January 1988 economic reform with the "privatisation" of British Telecom and other UK industries, the sell-off of state enterprises in France, the dismantling of ATT and airline deregulation and all that's been associated with "Reaganism" in the U.S. This is no change of systems

but a matter of reorganising capital in the search for the fastest and greatest profit in certain fields — in the face of an overall deteriorating economic situation in *all* the imperialist countries, and in a context where the drive for the most rapid technological advances cannot be separated from preparations for fighting and winning a nuclear war.

Does the Soviet ruling class really think it can solve its most basic problems by adopting certain economic reforms already current in the West? Has the tremendous fluidity of capital achieved by Western finance resolved the Western imperialists' problems? Apparently the solution to imperialism's economic problems does not lie in the marketplace, even in the marketplace for capital itself, or at least in the world marketplace as it's presently divided. This cannot but lead one to ask if the "solution," East and West, might not lie in the political and military sphere to which various economic measures are subservient?

It is *not* the case that nothing was happening in the USSR in the seventies and early eighties, Gorbachev says: "Not that that period should be painted solely in dark colours... Science, the economy and culture continued to develop." The country was, in fact, undergoing an enormous military buildup, achieving strategic parity with the U.S. and its bloc in that field, despite the USSR's much smaller economic base. Its ability to continue that buildup is inseparably linked with perestroika.

III "PERESTROIKA IS A REVOLUTION"

Gorbachev says that "perestroika is a revolution." In fact, Gorbachev's "revolution" is a revolution upside-down.

For instance, even many cynical defenders of the USSR consider its gross class inequality embarrassing, but Gorbachev is of the opposite opinion: "The widespread practice of equalising has been one of the prime deformities in the past few decades." Then he goes on to say, "Only work determines a citizen's real place in society, his social status... What we value most is a

citizen's contribution to the affairs of the country." This stand cannot be allowed to pass as "the principle of socialism" ("from each according to his ability, to each according to his work") "firmly translated into life." He is not referring to workers receiving pay in relation to how much work they do. He is talking about determining social status and privilege according to one's place in relation to the production process.

The bourgeoisie of any country will always claim that those who work more, get more and that this is their guiding principle; often they say this is what makes capitalism truly just. In fact, what they all conceal, including Gorbachev, is that whether pay be determined by wages or piece rate (or the "rate plus bonus" system Gorbachev is so proud of introducing), the determining factor in distribution is to be found in ownership and other relations of production. After all, Gorbachev does not propose that those "citizens" who bend and lift all day be paid more than those "citizens" who sit all day and plan other people's bending and lifting. Most importantly, he is against any such changes in how production is organised. He sees the division of labour inherent in capitalist production relations as part of the solution, not the problem.

At one point Gorbachev plays what he must think is his ace in East-West comparisons. "We will believe in the democratic nature of Western societies when their workers and office employees start electing the owners of factories and plants, bank presidents, etc., when their media put corporations, banks and their bosses under a barrage of regular criticism and start discussing..."

Gorbachev is exaggerating. What he's talking about electing is something more like foreman and managers, and not the real bosses, the owners, the bourgeoisie at the top of the Soviet party and state who decide everything of importance. But even so, even if workers could elect their own bosses, bosses would be bosses and workers would be workers and the "inner stimuli" of profit, the logic of

capitalist accumulation in its imperialist phase, would still be in command. There would be no emancipation in such elections.

The bourgeoisie not only disposes of the means of production, it also reserves to itself all political power and the right of all violence, exercising a dictatorship over those it exploits. Gorbachev no more admits that fact than does any bourgeois; like the Western bourgeois he refers to "the whole people" to hide "the people's" division into antagonistic classes. (He neither dares nor cares to claim that the dispossessed rule in the USSR.) But he does not try to hide all the political aims of his policies, and they, in turn, are revealing.

Perestroika, Gorbachev tells us, is meant to prevent "discontent and protest." It is "a revolution from above." "The bodies of authority and public and economic organisations must learn to work so as not to give any pretext to such manifestations"; otherwise, "unusual actions begin to take place at the grass roots level."

Glasnost "is not antagonistic class struggle; it is a quest, a debate on how we can really get going with the restructuring effort and make our progress solid and irreversible." Even if we were to take Gorbachev at his word, his most lofty promise is a country where "criticism" and "debate" are encouraged as long as their premise and purpose is how to make the system work. A "debate" in the service of Russian imperialism. Oh yes, since the USSR is supposed to be socialist there are the unions, which are allowed to complain about "bad working conditions at some enterprises, a poor health service, substandard locker rooms." The workers are permitted to restrict their attention to such matters, as they are in almost every country.

Gorbachev writes of the present political situation: "The masses suggest a lot of useful and interesting things." "Workers and farmers are becoming more optimistic; intellectuals and professional people have been speaking out in an authoritative and demanding way." "The worst thing that can happen is if, in these revolutionary times,

the creative intelligentsia ... expends its energy on senseless high words rather than creative endeavour." We should take all this as a description of what is permitted: optimistic labourers who are not too authoritative or demanding, intellectuals who can be arrogant as long as they stick to the slots defined for them, and suggestion boxes all around.

As far as any other kind of activity by the masses is concerned, Gorbachev says, "Of course, no self-respecting society can allow anarchy, a free-for-all or chaos. Neither can we. Democracy also implies law and order, and the strictest observance of the laws by authorities and organisations, as well as by citizens." This book mentions "law and order" more times than it has pages. Anyone who threatens it will gain first-hand experience in the fact that the USSR is the only major rival to the U.S. in terms of the percentage of its population in its prisons (apart from South Africa). That's an advanced, world-level standard of "democracy," where, as in any other class society, laws reflect and enforce existing property and social relations. It's also known as "the golden rule" — those who have got the gold make the rules.

No Steps Forward, Two Steps Back

Nowhere does the *backward* nature of this "revolution" stand more naked than in Gorbachev's chapter on "Women and the Family." "But over the years of our difficult and heroic history, we failed to pay attention to women's specific rights and needs arising from their role as mother and home-maker, and their indispensable educational function as regards children. Engaged in scientific research, working on construction sites, in production and in the services, and involved in creative activities, women no longer have enough time to perform their everyday duties at home — housework, the upbringing of children and the creation of a good family atmosphere. We have discovered that many of our problems — in children and

"Now, in the course of perestroika, we have begun to overcome this shortcoming. That is why we are holding heated debates in the press, in public organisations, at work and at home, about the question of what we should do to make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission."

- Gorbachev's Self-Exposure

young people's behaviour, in our morals, culture and in production — are partially caused by the weakening of family ties and slack attitudes towards family responsibilities. This is a paradoxical result of our sincere and politically justified desire to make women equal with men in everything. Now, in the course of perestroika, we have begun to overcome this shortcoming. That is why we are holding heated debates in the press, in public organisations, at work and at home, about the question of what we should do to make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission."

Apparently *some* "heated debates" are to be permitted — for the most reactionary of reasons and in the service of the most barbaric so-

cial programmes. Once again under the rubric of "democracy" what we get is proof that the USSR has attained world standards in re-education.

Gorbachev's chapter on the question of the minority nationalities in the USSR is equally rabid. The nationalities first freed by the October Revolution and lately oppressed by Russian domination have given rise to much of the resistance to the Soviet ruling class recently. (A Western Sovietologist tells us that glasnost means that Moscow intellectuals can sleep peacefully at night, knowing that now the ranks of political prisoners are being swollen "mainly in distant Asian republics" of the USSR.) Gorbachev demands that the minority nationalities get off their "nationalist arrogance" and recognise that "the Russian nation played an outstanding role in the solution of the national question." He even cites the United States as a positive example of how relations between different nationalities should be solved, since in the U.S. today, people are just "naturally" required to speak English. Perhaps the Afro-American, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Indian and other peoples held in bondage in the U.S. could erect a monument to the "outstanding role" played by white Anglos in the "solution" of national oppression!

What this new Tsar's concept of "revolution" most resembles is the old Tsars' attempts to unleash reaction among certain strata and terror among others — or the "Reagan revolution" or any one of a long and terrible number of reactionary offensives *against* the oppressed and exploited.

IV "WE ARE A SUPERPOWER"

Gorbachev's brief history of the USSR seeks to make its revolutionary past serve its reactionary present. What is good about Soviet history is that it "brought formerly backward Russia to the 'right place' — the place the Soviet Union now occupies in human progress." What place is that? "Today they say, some with admiration

and others with open hostility, that we are a superpower!"

This is the point of view from which he divides Soviet history into "great achievements, dramatic mistakes and tragic events." His criteria are worth analysing.

First there was the "October revolution, an event that was a turning point in the thousand year history of our state." So much for the idea that the October revolution *smashed* that thousand-year-old state. So much for any mention of exploiters, oppressors, or imperialists the naïve reader might have thought the October Revolution was directed against. Gorbachev's history emphasises continuity, not overthrow. (He also mentions the "thousand-year anniversary" of the Russian Orthodox Church to be marked by a grand state celebration in 1988. These revisionists apparently need God's help to bolster the rule of Mammon.)

What was wrong with old Tsarist Russia, you see, was that "industrialisation and the collectivisation of agriculture was indispensable." The problem is viewed with bourgeois eyes. Gorbachev calls the collectivisation of agriculture "a great historic act, the most important social change since 1917," because it provided "the social bases for updating the agricultural sector of the economy and made it possible to introduce modern farming methods." For Lenin and Stalin, collectivisation of agriculture was above all the means by which a backward country with a predominantly peasant economy could become *socialist*.

Gorbachev's hatred for Stalin is so complete that in this book he never even mentions Stalin's name in discussing the USSR during the half of its history when Stalin was its leader. Not even in the relatively long section on the USSR's defense in World War 2 is Stalin allowed to appear on Gorbachev's stage. His name comes up only twice: both times praising Khrushchev for attacking "the Stalin personality cult."

It seems possible that Gorbachev makes so little mention of Stalin in *Perestroika* because as yet there is no consensus among the Soviet ruling class about just how far (and far

back) to go in openly attacking Stalin. Accounts of reactionary historical debates thriving in the USSR under glasnost seem to indicate differences as to whether Stalin should be considered mainly negative as of the mid-1930s, or the later 1920s. But there can be no doubt as to Gorbachev's stand in general. In his speech to the 2 November 1987 meeting of the CPSU's Central Committee, where he is more explicit in settling accounts with the party's socialist past, Gorbachev declared that the "guilt of Stalin and his immediate entourage" is "enormous and unforgivable."

What does Gorbachev consider Stalin guilty of? His criticisms of Stalin in the realm of theory could not be more telling: in that speech, Gorbachev attacks what he terms Stalin's "erroneous 'theory' of an aggravation of the class struggle in the course of socialist construction." Gorbachev considers the struggle against the bourgeoisie under socialism impermissible; his is the complete *opposite* of criticisms Mao formulated of Stalin because he did not "aggravate" the class struggle enough.

Khrushchev's "Great Contributions" and Lenin's "Method"

For Gorbachev the best thing since the October Revolution was its undoing. He labels the 1956 20th Congress of the CPSU "a major landmark in our history" which "made a great contribution to the theory and practice of socialist construction." To the destruction of socialism would be more accurate.

That party congress consolidated Khrushchev's pre-eminence as the leader of the new bourgeoisie and marked the beginning of the split in the international communist movement between emerging Soviet revisionism and the Marxist-Leninists led by Mao Tsetung. Khrushchev announced that the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union was finished, to be replaced by "the state of the whole people." The party of the proletariat, purged of most of its proletarian leaders and many members, was to be transformed into "the party of the whole

people." These "theoretical" contributions and the practical measures to dismantle the socialist organisation of Soviet society consecrated by the 20th Congress would not have been possible without that Congress's most infamous feature, Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and complete renunciation of his heritage.

Gorbachev has a few criticisms to make of Khrushchev's "subjectivist methods" and "improvisation" in economic management. We're told that Khrushchev's removal from office and the 1965 economic reform which "aimed at improving the mechanism of economic activity in industry and construction with emphasis on profit" represented "a new stage" in the process, despite the fact that "the substantial though temporary effect" of its measures "petered out," giving rise "to stagnation and retardation in the country." The revisionist bourgeoisie's search for new forms through which to satisfy its interests has been a long one. But it is appropriate that Gorbachev recognises and praises the turning point that Khrushchev represented, and that he sees himself as Khrushchev's successor, not Stalin's. Stalin was a Leninist; Gorbachev is an imposter.

Given all this, the reasons behind Gorbachev's call for a return to "Lenin's heritage and methods" require some analysis, and all the more because this call stands in apparent contrast with Gorbachev's style of barely pretending to be a Marxist and preferring to clothe himself in Western-style rhetoric.

Lenin is portrayed as flexible, realistic, unbound by formulas or dogma. (This is especially the case in Gorbachev's speech on party history, which focuses on Lenin's ability to lead the party through abrupt changes in the situation and in line.) All this is true, but rather one-sided. Lenin's realism and flexibility was in the single-minded service of the interests of the world proletariat; his application and development of Marxist principles went hand in hand with his struggle to demarcate between Marxism and revisionism. If the man is presented as flexible and creative without regard to the question of flexible and creative for

what, then all we get is a portrait of a modern and successful business executive who happened to be Russian. Since the old Russian bourgeoisie never really emerged from the Tsar's shadow and the new bourgeoisie has had so little to brag about, it should not be surprising that they have had to try to recast Lenin as the father of modern Russia.

Gorbachev insists that he has been helped by "Lenin's works, especially his last." It seems he doesn't consider Lenin's analyses of imperialism, the state, the party, the tasks of revolution, revisionism or philosophy to be relevant. What Gorbachev singles out is "Lenin's valuable ideas on management and self-management, profit-and-loss accounting, and the linking of public and personal interests," — ideas which he accuses Lenin's successors of having "failed to apply and develop properly." Even in this most limited sense he is not trying to borrow Lenin's ideas but only his mantle in order to have something to cover up naked social-imperialism.

During the early 1920s, after a revolution and three years of civil war and battles against 14 invading powers, at a time when large-scale industry in the USSR had ceased to exist, when peasants couldn't be persuaded to sell their crops because there was nothing for them to spend the money on, at a time when the only way of keeping everyone from starving was for the Red Army to go to the countryside and haul away the peasants' surplus grain whether they liked it or not, Lenin determined that "a strategic retreat," a "reverting to capitalism to a certain extent" was the only choice facing the ruling proletariat, if it wanted to preserve its political rule. It had to hire some former bourgeois factory owners and experts and functionaries because the proletariat had not yet had the slightest training in any of these fields. In fact, the few industries still going were filled with bourgeois and petit bourgeois ruffians seeking an excuse to avoid going to the fronts where the politically advanced workers were offering their lives for the world revolution.

Lenin had the highest hopes in the advance of the world revolution

throughout Europe; he had been willing to risk the Russian revolution in its cause. But when the revolutionary tide temporarily receded and broader advance proved temporarily impossible, Lenin was determined to consolidate the proletarian revolution in Russia, for the sake of the world revolution, even if the economic conditions for socialism did not yet exist there. The proletariat could first seize power and then create such conditions, he said. Further, Lenin was extremely specific and careful not to label these economic measures as socialist. As he said, the name "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" was to be taken as a declaration of intent and not as a description of the then prevailing economic system.

All this flexibility, creativity, etc., came from a fanatical devotion to the cause of the world proletariat. What Gorbachev would take from Lenin is not that, of course, but just a few superficial quotes turned inside out. He doesn't even really examine Lenin's writings on this subject nor his specific policies, since after all Lenin's whole purpose was to develop state capitalism in such a way as to permit a transition to a socialist economy, and that was reflected in all Lenin's thinking and measures.

"From Each According to His Ability"

Material incentives will still exist under socialism to varying degrees in various periods; in fact, during the whole historical period of socialism the principle "to each according to his work" (known as bourgeois right) can be restricted, but not yet eliminated. It must be restricted, as Mao summarised in his analysis of the historical experience of building socialism, because the inequalities and vestiges of the social divisions of the old society are the ground on which new polarisations and new potential exploiters will constantly and ceaselessly appear. You could say, using Gorbachev's terminology, that Mao leaned towards "wage-leveling"; a more profound point is that instead of portraying pay according to work

as the supreme justice, as though universal piece-rate were mankind's highest goal, he saw the importance of tearing up *all* the inequalities left over from the old class society.

The same is true of commodity relations in general, which, Mao said, persisted but had to be subordinated to "politics in command." This is why Mao gave so much importance to worker and peasant involvement in "affairs of state" and to the party and its line and policies as the key arena of struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, as well as to the revolutionisation of the relations of production, including the relations between people in production.

What Mao learned from Lenin, and further developed, was the understanding that the enthusiasm of the producers was the most important factor in increasing production, even though material incentives (specifically paying more for more work) in various forms and to various degrees would be necessary for a long time. That's why Mao pointedly recalled that in Marx's conception of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work," the first thing was the enthusiasm of the workers. As Mao said, if everyone needs material incentives, then who paid Lenin to lead the revolution?

Different things make different classes enthusiastic. Even the bourgeoisie combines the sticks and carrots of wage slavery with occasionally successful efforts to stir the enthusiasm of its workers without any direct promise of immediate material gain (for example, during war). Socialism's ability to do so on an incomparably more profound level and vast scale is due to its liberation of the means of production, including, above all, the producers themselves, from the chains that bind them. This means not only from bourgeois rule and bourgeois property relations, but also their step by step liberation from all bourgeois relations, ideas, customs and culture.

As Mao wrote, in criticizing a Soviet economics textbook that appeared after Stalin's death, "we find a discussion of the rights labour enjoys but no discussion of

He declares that the USSR recognises how important "the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, other Third World regions and also South Africa are for American and Western European economies, in particular as raw material sources. To cut those links is the last thing we want to do, and we have no desire to provoke ruptures in historically formed, mutual economic interests."

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its right to run the state, the various enterprises, education and culture. Actually, this is labour's greatest right under socialism, the most fundamental right, without which there is no right to work, for an education, to vacations, etc. The paramount issue for socialist democracy is: does labour have the right to subdue the various antagonistic forces and their influence? For example, who controls things like newspapers, journals, broadcast stations, the cinema? Who criticises?" (*A Critique of Soviet Economics*, Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1977.)

This is a question that could be

posed to glasnost Gorbachev. He has not invented anything very new, and Mao's contributions continue to expose him. Gorbachev's USSR can only dream of achieving the economic growth rates produced in revolutionary China by the approach Mao called "grasp revolution, promote production," or those of the USSR itself under the leadership of Stalin. The "inner stimulus" of profit is not so powerful after all.

In reading Gorbachev's comments on Lenin, one is reminded of another work of Lenin's, one of many that the Gorbachevs of this world never refer to because they and their ilk are the target. Lenin described "an international striving on the part of the bourgeois theoreticians to kill Marxism with 'kindness,' to crush it in their embraces, kill it with a feigned acceptance of 'all' the 'truly scientific' aspects of Marxism *except* its 'agitational,' 'demagogic,' 'Blanquist-utopian' aspect. In other words, they take from Marxism all that is acceptable to the liberal bourgeoisie, including the struggle for reforms, the class struggle (without the proletarian dictatorship), the 'general recognition' of 'socialist ideals' and the substitution of a 'new order' for capitalism; they cast aside 'only' the living soul of Marxism, 'only' its revolutionary content." ("The Collapse of the Second International")

V IS PERESTROIKA WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS?

What is perestroika for? In fact, what is the USSR for — what cause, exactly, is Gorbachev trying to accomplish and rally others around?

Determined to enlighten the credulous, Gorbachev sternly explains, "We will proceed towards better socialism rather than away from it. We are saying this honestly, without trying to fool our own people or the world. Any hopes that we will begin to build a different, non-socialist society and *go over to the other camp* are unrealistic and futile. Those in the West who expect us to give up socialism will be disappointed. It is high time they understood this, and, even more

importantly, proceeded from that understanding in practical relations with the Soviet Union." (Emphasis added — *AWTW*.)

Part of Gorbachev's argument here is circular, and part isn't. Both parts are imperialist.

The circular part is Gorbachev's definition of socialism: "More socialism means a more dynamic pace and creative endeavour, more organisation, law and order, more scientific methods and initiative in economic management, efficiency in administration, and a better and richer material life for the people." What's the difference between his definition of "socialism" and most capitalists' definition of capitalism? Gorbachev's basic premise is that socialism is whatever the USSR does, or, to put it another way, that his camp is the good one. But his description of "more socialism" is a description of imperialism, which long ago organised production on an extensive scale and subordinated science and technology to capital.

The part about never "going over to the other camp" is not tautological. It is the essence of Gorbachev's argument. Whatever changes in Soviet society Gorbachev may propose, he cannot emphasise enough that the USSR will still be the USSR: a great power, one of two superpowers, and a contender for world hegemony.

His appeal on the home front is blunt: "The Soviet people are convinced," Gorbachev says, "that as a result of perestroika and democratisation the country will become richer and stronger."

Glasnost is a political measure to serve that end. In a word, Gorbachev says, it means "more socialism," and "more socialism means more patriotism and aspiration to noble ideas, more active civic concern about the country's internal affairs and about their positive influence on international affairs."

Glasnost means patriotism; "noble ideas" mean "civic concern" for profit and Soviet "international influence." Let us translate here, now that we've found the Rosetta stone for Gorbachev's language: more glasnost means more imperialism. As Lenin said, in modern

times, nothing, absolutely nothing, can be done without the masses — and he was referring to imperialism and its mobilisation of part of the masses for war. That's what glasnost is for.

"The Last Thing We Want to Do"

What is this "influence on international affairs"? Gorbachev devotes half his book to it and ends it by declaring that the whole world needs restructuring. What he finds to be wrong with it is worth examining in detail.

The first thing to point out is that the division of the world into oppressed and oppressor nations is *not* what Gorbachev finds objectionable.

Gorbachev says, "While we do not approve the character of the current relations between the West and the developing countries, we do not urge that they be disrupted." "We do not pursue goals inimical to Western interests." He declares that the USSR recognises how important "the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, other Third World regions and also South Africa are for American and Western European economies, in particular as raw material sources. To cut those links is the last thing we want to do, and we have no desire to provoke ruptures in historically formed, mutual economic interests."

Of course, no one can claim that those relations are equally "mutual." Gorbachev himself recognises that the "gap is widening rather than narrowing." So he mentions the idea of a "new world economic order" that he says came out of a conversation with French President Mitterand: "if the enterprise is to function effectively," he argues, "it is imperative that employees' incomes are guaranteed, and, despite their low level, are sufficient. The capitalist is forced to do this, realising that in doing so he is ensuring himself profit today and tomorrow. But capitalism taken as a whole, represented by the Western countries, does not want to understand even this simple truth in its relations with its former colonies."

This analogy is truly amazing. It

is capitalism's own argument that self-interest obliges the capitalists to provide for their workers; it is Adam Smith, not Karl Marx speaking. It is an argument *for* wage slavery, not its overthrow. It is a lie that becomes a thousand times more evil when applied to the countries in the grip of foreign monopoly capital, for imperialism's superprofits in these countries are obtained precisely because of the supermisery of the masses, and if there has been some improvement in the living standards of some workers in the imperialist countries, it is on the basis of these superprofits.

But this topic — the immiseration of three-quarters of humanity — is only of passing interest to Gorbachev. He spends about as much time on it as it would take to sign a condolence card. He spends a bit more time offering some specific deals to "stabilise" the present world set-up.

Latin America is for the U.S., as long as it allows the Soviets to have some internal influence within certain regimes (Nicaragua) and external with others (Mexico, Argentina): "U.S. right-wing forces and propaganda portray our interest in Latin America as an intention to engineer a series of socialist revolutions there. Nonsense! The way we have behaved for decades proves that we don't plan anything of the kind." He makes even less of Africa, where again he basically concedes to Western dominance while asserting Soviet interests in relation to several regimes and its contacts with others, as well as its particular ties with the ANC in South Africa. In these regions, the Soviets are mainly engaged in building up positions for the future.

In the Middle East Gorbachev sees more of an opening for a Soviet thrust, although not yet a decisive one: "We are not bent on elbowing the U.S. out of the Middle East — that is simply unrealistic. But the United States should not commit itself to unrealistic goals either." What has the USSR got to offer? Protection for imperialism's keystone in the region: he insists that only the USSR has the power to guarantee Israel's existence, in exchange for increased Soviet par-

ticipation in the Mideast. As for Afghanistan, that's the Soviet's sphere of influence: "American interference delays the withdrawal of our troops." The U.S. makes a similar argument about "Soviet interference" requiring U.S. military intervention in Central America, with just as much justification.

When Gorbachev speaks of "realism," it is a threat, a throwing down of the gauntlet and not a retreat. He forthrightly challenges the U.S.-led empire and U.S.-leadership over other imperialist powers in those areas he considers most immediately strategic and accessible.

The first is "the Asian-Pacific region" which, he points out, includes "the USSR, the U.S., India, China, Japan, Vietnam, Mexico and Indonesia ... Canada, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand." The USSR, Gorbachev declares, is "an Asian country" and "due account" must be taken of its interests. "We are against this region as being somebody's domain." But it already is somebody else's domain. He is against this "almost half the globe" being the domain of the U.S. and its allies, including Japan, for the same reasons that Japan opposed U.S. and British domination of a smaller slice of the Pacific during the last world war.

The second is Europe, which gets the lion's share of Gorbachev's attention in this book: "If the world needs new relations, Europe needs them above all." "Some in the West are trying to exclude the Soviet Union from Europe." But "We are Europeans." (In point of fact, geographically speaking, the USSR includes both Europeans and Asians. "We" means Russians. But he is not talking about geography.)

Here, as elsewhere, he combines an abstract metaphor with a few modest proposals. He ambles through a long panegyric to "our common European home," comparing Europe to a condominium apartment house (where the U.S. is not a legitimate resident). "Every apartment in the 'European home' has the right to protect itself against burglars, but it must do so without destroying its neighbours' property," he warns — meaning

that any war on the European continent would be fatal to Europe's proprietor class. It is only "together and collectively" — i.e., with proper consideration for the condo's biggest proprietor — that "Europeans can save their home, protect it against a conflagration and other calamities, make it better and safer, and maintain it in proper order."

It is not true, as Gorbachev claims, that the U.S. "abducted" Europe; they eloped for mutual benefit. He is only flattering European imperialism in order to woo it, or at least to woo certain strata in these countries. That's why he praises "Western European intellectuals" for standing up for "inherently human European culture" against "the onslaught of 'mass culture' from across the Atlantic," a "primitive revelry of violence and pornography." (The U.S. may be a star pupil, but Europe started enslaving Africans, slaughtering Indians, massacring Asians, and generally carrying out war, terror and genocide for hundreds of years before Rambo.)

Gorbachev is not, for now, demanding that Europe evict its uncouth partner, only seeking a certain loosening of ties between some European countries and the U.S., and a shift towards more direct Soviet influence in Western Europe. His vision has both a present and future tense. When he deplores the post-WW2 division of Europe, he is both recognising it and offering a long-term claim to its redivision. (For instance, he offers both recognition and doubt about Germany's post-WW 2 division, as if to say, my Germany is permanent and yours longs to be reunited with it.)

His method is to mix a little incentive and a big threat. He extends "understanding" for nuclear-armed France and Britain's "national prestige and grandeur" but "it's known for a fact that if a nuclear war were to break out these weapons would only invite strikes and have no other real significance." He warns Europe that it is part of NATO and if an American military intervention such as the U.S. air raid on Libya were to involve an attack on one of the Warsaw Pact countries, "This


is war! The responsibility of all this has immeasurably increased in our nuclear age." Even in a conventional war, he warns, Europe's many atomic reactors could be bombed and wipe out Europe.

The USSR and the U.S., with their "colossal military, including nuclear arsenal" are "the most serious reality in today's world," he warns. Western Europe had better recognise the interests of its neighbouring "serious reality" or its house will burn down.

It should not be concluded that just because Gorbachev's most powerful argument for European cooperation is nuclear, the USSR is trying to conquer Europe. The USSR is not in a position to develop the same economic ties with Western Europe as the U.S., but the relations it seeks are not fundamentally different. He explains, "Western European states, like the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, have broad ties with the Third World, and could pool their efforts to facilitate its development. Such are, by and large, the imperatives of a pan-European policy determined by the interests and requirements of Europe as an integrated whole." (Gorbachev uses the same image in referring to Asian "security" as "building a house, with each of us putting a brick or two in its walls.")

To the USSR's fellow "serious reality," the United States, Gorbachev has a similar offer, though in a "realistic" spirit. He once asked Gary Hart, he says, "Can't America offer a different policy to developing countries than the one it pursues today? The U.S. can do much to build new interstate relations, and lose nothing economically in the process. On the contrary, America stands to gain from that. Why should the United States reject the opportunity as if it doesn't see on which side its bread is buttered?"

Again, the "new economic order": why doesn't the U.S. just wise up and treat the "developing countries" better? There is something of an appeal to some imperialist-dependent forces in these countries here, for there is certainly a hint that if the U.S. doesn't wise up on



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its own the USSR might make it do so. But more fundamentally, this is an appeal to American imperialism itself, or at least to some U.S. imperialists. The USSR doesn't seek to make the U.S. "lose economically." The U.S. can't deal with the "powderkeg" of the oppressed nations alone. If it knows "on which side its bread is buttered," why not "join hands with us"? The bread is buttered on the imperialist side and the USSR is "realistic" enough to offer to let the U.S. keep it.

The image of a "condominium" is profoundly true. The USSR does

not seek to "disrupt" the West's exploitation of the oppressed countries. It seeks a greater share in it. What the Soviet Union challenges is the U.S.'s chairmanship of imperialism's worldwide "condominium" which includes not only the apartment buildings but the vast backward areas of the world that are especially profitable for the absentee owners. But "the last thing we want to do" is to tear down the whole reactionary edifice. What is this "condominium" metaphor about, if not a redivision of the world while preserving imperialist relations?

Is it impossible to conceive of a situation, especially on the eve of war or in the course of it, where some European imperialists might decide that they'd rather keep the house and gardens then get blown up trying to oust their Soviet neighbours? Or even that Gorbachev's proposals might find an ear among some American imperialists, especially under dramatic circumstances?

Gorbachev forbids us to believe "the traditional notion" that war is a continuation of politics by other means. Anyone who insists that it's still so, Gorbachev says, is "hopelessly out of date" and a war-monger. Maybe he insists on this so much because at every turn, even in the pages of this book, it's hard to avoid getting a glimpse of what politics a war between the two blocs, even a nuclear war, would be a continuation of.

"A Richer and Stronger USSR"

To understand what he's really saying about world war, you have to put together different, apparently contradictory assertions, because Gorbachev wants to play the dove while making the USSR's rivals tremble.

"The fundamental principle of the new political outlook is very simple: *nuclear war cannot be a means of achieving political, economic, ideological or any other goals.* This conclusion is truly revolutionary, for it means discarding the traditional notions of war and peace." This part's the smile. He means you (Western Europe,

Japan, even the U.S.) can't achieve your goals in a war with us.

Then there's the other side, the teeth: "Some people say that the ambitious goals set forth by the policy of perestroika in our country have prompted the peace proposals we have made recently in the international arena. This is an oversimplification," Gorbachev warns in the beginning of his book. Towards the end he returns to this theme: "We would not beg for peace. We had more than once responded to challenges and would do so again." What else can "respond to the challenges" mean in this context except waging and winning a world war?

A nuclear war would be the U.S.'s fault, because "The U.S. sets the tone" for the arms race. But the Soviet Union can win it. His detailed descriptions of the devastation the USSR quickly overcame in the wake of WW 2 are as pointed as his remark that "not a single enemy bomb was dropped and not a single enemy shot was heard on the U.S. mainland" that time. "The Soviet Union emerged from the Second World War in a very difficult condition... Nevertheless, we succeeded in restoring what had been destroyed, in building up our economic potential and in confidently tackling our defensive tasks. Is this not a lesson for the future?"

The West, Gorbachev writes, "must first of all get rid of the delusion that the Soviet Union needs disarmament more than the West and that just a little pressure could make us renounce the principle of equality [in armaments]. We will never do that." Why not, unless your aim, just like that of your rivals, is world hegemony?

"Political goals," Gorbachev writes, "are more important than economic goals." Here he is referring to "normalising Soviet-American relations," and his point is that the USSR does not seek to do business with the West mainly for the money. He is telling the truth. The same thing could be said for perestroika: the goals put forward by Gorbachev go far beyond a certain amount of domestic economic restructuring. They are as global as they are reactionary.

Let us take Gorbachev at his word. His goal is a "richer and stronger" USSR — a richer and stronger machine for the extended reproduction of capital in its imperialist phase, for accumulating capital by rending flesh on a continental and intercontinental level, Moloch, a man-eating, world-destroying machine. The emancipation of the Soviet proletariat and the liberation of the world's peoples require its destruction, along with the destruction of its arch-rivals and all the imperialist juggernauts.

To return one last time to the question of for whom this book was written, it should be pointed out that overall the Western media has been soft on Gorbachev. It has mixed admiration with hypocritical charges about how people are forced to live in the USSR. There is no real probing, no analysis of the relationship between his economics and politics. In this the West is returning Gorbachev's favour, since they share a common interest in hiding the motive forces and nature of the imperialist system. He is their mortal adversary, but he is also their brother.

Gorbachev is for Russian imperialism and against all others; he serves its interests in a particular and complicated historical situation that requires specific measures and language. But his soul is the soul of capital personified. □



Gulf (Continued from page 17) the U.S., in mounting their world war preparations. It is obvious that all those nuclear weapons are not for the purpose of dealing with the threat of Khomeini, even if he posed any sort of threat to them at all, which he doesn't. In the period since 1981, the U.S. has been able to take the first steps towards a regional cooperation pact in the Gulf with the participation of reactionary Western-dependent sheiks and kings (the Gulf Cooperation Council) under the cover of fighting the menace of Islamic fundamentalism. It has permanently stationed its warships in the area on the pretext of ensuring "freedom of navigation" through the Straits of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf. At the same time, the U.S. has equipped Saudi Arabia with AWACS spy planes and taken control of the airspace of the region and established military transport capability over a wide area. Special installations and sophisticated bases have been set up in Saudi Arabia and Oman for possible use by U.S. military forces. Shock troops — the "Central Command," formerly the Rapid Deployment Force — have been organised with a budget of \$20 billion and a contingent of 200,000 troops. Under the banner of fighting "terrorism" and "state-supported terrorism," widespread propaganda has been waged to prepare public opinion for any conceivable military action in any part of the region by U.S. imperialism.

The Soviet social-imperialists have also stepped up the arming of Syria and Libya as well as the training and organisation of their military and administrative cadres in Afghanistan and the construction of a large, sophisticated military infrastructure there. They have expanded their already sizeable military bases in South Yemen and also reinforced their dependent government there through a coup d'Etat and a bloody settling of internal accounts.

It is very obvious by now that every time the Gulf war intensifies because the West and East feed the belligerents more armaments, military information and financial aid,

the final result is a greater military build-up of the imperialist powers in the region: more warships, more soldiers, more military infrastructure in the client states, etc. And it is the blood of the Iranian and Iraqi youth which is spilt to provide a pretext for these crimes, which are in turn but preparations for an even greater crime to come: imperialist world war.

Stalemate and Imperialist Provocations

Both the imperialist blocs had high expectations of this period of deadlock and saw great benefit in a protracted war of attrition. For both it was a "guarantee" that the situation in the region would not spin out of control due to immediate drastic developments on or behind the front, or that one or another "surprise" would not lay the ground for some unforeseen dramatic step by the rival war bloc. In addition, a stalemate resulted in the kind of war with all the needs, limits and parameters for both sides that induced deeper dependence and gave openings to both imperialist blocs to sink their claws in more tightly. For U.S. imperialism, the continuation of the stalemate meant that the Islamic Republic would increase its efforts to open up to the West, including expanding political and diplomatic relations with Europe, Japan and U.S. regional lackeys; it meant strengthened military ties between Iran and Israel, Argentina and the U.S. itself; it meant the rise of pro-Western commanders in the army and pro-Western politicians in the comprador ruling class. In this context, U.S. imperialism would alternately stoke the fires of war — a sudden influx of arms into Iran's arsenal could facilitate a great offensive — and on the other hand would give the Iraqi army military information which would bring Iran's offensive to nought. One result of this vicious game was thousands of victims in each round. Iraq's diplomatic relations with the U.S., which had been cut off since the 1967 Mideast war, began to improve, and in 1985 bilateral diplomatic trips took place between Baghdad and Washington.

The Soviets sought to use the stalemate to maintain their existing inroads and to expand their influence with both sides. For the Soviets, the ongoing war also meant that the potential of the Islamic Republic to intervene in the Afghanistan war had considerably diminished, and that the Russian occupation troops and the Kabul puppet government would not have to worry much about the western borders of Afghanistan or the Islamic Republic's aid to the reactionary Islamic opposition groups. During this period the Islamic Republic's financial and military support of these groups was considerably reduced.

As for their public position before the world, however, both imperialist blocs insisted on their "neutrality" on the war. "Anti-war" statements were submitted to various councils, though not meant to be approved. So while ships and planes from every part of the world headed towards the Gulf, filled with the weapons needed to carry on the bloodbath, while U.S.-made poison gas was used against thousands — in the 1980s! — the imperialists of both blocs pretended that the war was "irrational," the work of "crazy mullahs" and didn't really have anything to do with them at all. News of the horrendous events of the war was simply relegated to a few sentences on the back pages — the "forgotten war."

The process of the last seven or so years has proven that it was not the Khomeini regime or any of its factions that prevented the U.S. or USSR from filling the "power vacuum." Two major obstacles kept the Iranian regime from slipping smoothly into the camp of either of the two blocs: first, the revolutionary, anti-imperialist upheaval in Iran, and second, the fierce rivalry between the blocs themselves. Indeed, Iran never really severed its ties with the West. It was the USSR which would not accept any decisive comeback by the U.S. into Iran. In fact, what is portrayed as Khomeini's anti-East, anti-West stance always meant *pro-both* East and West.

Though the sensitivity of the situation in the Gulf and especially

the Iran-Iraq war imposed a certain prudence on both blocs, the pressure of the deep worldwide crisis all the imperialists confront compelled them to push ahead with bigger, more effective measures to fill the power vacuum, before their rival did. High-stakes gambling and risky manoeuvres became plausible strategies for each bloc.

Gulf: Focal Point of International Contradictions

In the winter of 1985, Islamic Republic forces occupied the Fao peninsula in a surprise attack. This took the Iraqi army completely unaware and seems to have astonished international observers as well. After these operations known as "Al-fajr 8 and 9," the Iranian authorities confidently repeated that the year 1365 (1985-86) would be the year of victory over Iraq and thus the end of the war. A top Iraqi official pointed out in an interview with the *Washington Post* in late autumn 1986, "In this period, the United States has given us misleading information on the makeup and mobility of the Iranian forces, and this led to the successes of Iran." At the same time, in order to prevent the possible defeat or even serious weakening of Iraq, the American and Israeli authorities had taken into account the means for preserving a balance: "In one of the last meetings before the trip to Tehran, it was proposed that the question of selling arms to Iraq be studied and that the balance of forces — which might have been disturbed by the delivery of missiles to Iran — be preserved."⁸

In the early days of 1987, the Islamic Republic started "Operation Karballa 4 and 5" along the southern front with the intention of approaching and surrounding Basra. Using the TOW anti-aircraft missiles just received from the U.S., the Islamic Republic stopped the counterattack of the Iraqi air force and, using the missiles supplied them by China, bombarded civilian areas of Iraq. In this period much of the Western media talked of the possibility of the war ending with the victory of Iran and the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime. At the

same time a special conference of the heads of the Islamic countries took place in Kuwait, only a few kilometres from the fighting, and asked for the aid of the American Navy to guarantee the security of the conference! U.S. authorities even talked of the possibility of bombing the front lines of the Iranian forces in case they posed a serious threat to Basra. Imperialist analysts began to say that the Iran-Iraq war was witnessing a new round of fighting but a continued impasse. In fact, the Iranian offensive on Basra was halted. The balance of forces between Iran and Iraq was fundamentally unchanged. The Gulf war continued, now characterised by exchanges of artillery fire, air strikes against tankers and commercial ships and some scattered operations on the northern front.

But "new" players, previously behind the scenes, began to step out and take direct action — an event that signalled that the intensification of the fighting during Operation Karballa 4 and 5 was not the peak of the Gulf war but a prelude to future explosive scenes. U.S. and Soviet naval forces began manoeuvres in the Mediterranean Sea. Nuclear-equipped U.S. warships, including an aircraft carrier, set out from Spain towards Lebanon, and the Sixth Fleet was positioned near the Straits of Hormuz. A U.S. battleship left Subic Naval Base in the Philippines and set out for the western part of the Indian Ocean. Soviet submarines appeared in the waters of the Arabian Sea, and the Kiev aircraft carrier began a patrol of the Mediterranean which took Western military experts by surprise. A Pentagon spokesman, acting as if all these were everyday occurrences, stated, "We're doing what we have to so as to have what we need at hand."

Western and Eastern imperialists were simultaneously talking about the necessity of "security" in the Gulf and "freedom of navigation" of commercial shipping in the waters of the region. At the same time, Iraq was advised to attack tankers carrying Iranian oil, a proposal reiterated in consecutive articles in the *Economist*. On the other

hand the reactionaries ruling China today provided the Islamic Republic with Silkworm missiles, with the tacit approval of U.S. imperialism. Italy provided Tehran with mines. From the spring of 1987 onwards the development of events in the Gulf region accelerated. A "stalemate" was no longer on the agenda of the U.S. imperialists; rather, they tried to heat things up and push developments to a higher level.

First in the spring of 1987 the reactionary and lackey regime of Kuwait asked the U.S., Soviets and Britain to protect its commercial shipping in the Gulf with their naval forces. The Soviets immediately declared their willingness; the Reagan administration stated the necessity to support and protect friendly Kuwait in the face of "the danger of Iranian expansionism and aggression." After the U.S. military vessel the *Stark* was hit on 17 May 1987 by Iraqi jet fighters, the U.S. government declared its decision to "reflag" Kuwait's ships and take them under their protection, in order to "maintain security and calm in the Gulf" and "in its own interests." Small-scale hostilities and suspicious attacks on various commercial ships and warships, as well as the mining of waters where British, American and Soviet warships patrolled, provided new pretexts for the more extensive presence of imperialist forces in the region. Today the Gulf waters are full of nuclear warships; "with about 30 U.S. Navy ships in the region operating alongside at least as many naval vessels from West European nations and the Soviet Union, the Gulf and its nearby waters sometimes appear as choked with warships as a pond with water lilies."⁹ As the Committee of the RIM stated: "The various powers are each pursuing their particular imperialist interests, as members of two opposing blocs; the target has been control of the Gulf itself, and the Gulf in turn could be key to who controls the world." These power projections are specifically part of all-around preparations of the two blocs on the global scale to unleash a far greater crime than the Gulf war against humanity, a third war for the redivision of the

world.

In addition, the U.S. imperialists have given particular responsibility to the Turkish government in relation to preserving the interests of the Western bloc in the region, activating the Turkish army as the southern arm of NATO in the east of Turkey — and expanding its radius of action to include parts of Iraq and the Iran-Turkey border area. The agreement between Iraq and Turkey permitting Turkish forces to enter Iraq within 50 kilometres of the border was a pretext for legitimising the stationing of Turkish troops in northeastern Iraq at the Iranian border. In this way the U.S. is stepping up the military capacity at its disposal and preparing to ensure the success of possible direct military intervention in the Gulf region.

Also, the U.S. is using the Gulf crisis to forge an important local army from its lackey states in the region. King Hussein of Jordan has several times offered to station a Middle Eastern "peacekeeping" force to be stationed in the Iran-Iraq border area after the "imposition of peace" between the belligerents. Recently Egypt has offered to contribute 15,000 troops to a proposed Arab force to defend the Gulf states threatened with being drawn into the war. President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and King Hussein discussed such a force in early December in Cairo.¹⁰ The offer has been welcomed by the Arab Gulf states and "Egypt is laying the groundwork for a significant expansion of its military presence in the Arab countries of the Gulf."¹¹

The Future of the Gulf, the Future of the Belligerents

From the very beginning the Gulf war has had the potential to expand and draw the Eastern and Western blocs into a face-to-face conflict that they themselves have called "the horizontal expansion of war." The war was instigated by the U.S. imperialists with the design of enabling them to replace their bloody claws on Iran; the Soviet social-imperialists chose to support it and seek to advance their own interests in Iran and Iraq. The process of the

war basically developed subordinate to inter-imperialist rivalry and also served to further intensify it. The fact that there has been no neat alignment of the imperialist blocs with the two belligerents does not belie this analysis. Nor does the fact that the two countries involved use the war to serve their own reactionary interests.

From the beginning of the war, a number of solutions for "ending the conflict" have been proposed to Iran and Iraq by both the imperialists and the countries of the region. Iraq has found a "solution" by "internationalising" the conflict through attacking tankers in the Gulf as well as Iran's oil installations and pulling in the other countries of the region into the war. Iran followed periodically with mad attacks aimed at bringing down the Iraqi government and persuading the imperialists that they should not support Iraq but Iran. The Eastern and Western imperialists, while accomplishing many of the specific tasks they set for themselves in the region, have ultimately turned the Gulf into a storehouse of explosives, and in fact have declared that the knot of contradictions of the Gulf war is part of and subordinate to a bigger knot, and this bigger knot can only be untied the way that Alexander the Great untied the Gordian knot. This is the only resolution for the actors of the Gulf crisis.

The actual situation of the world dictates to the imperialists that, in order to defend their reactionary imperialist interests, they must move their ships right to the brink of the maelstrom. It is not without reason that all the imperialist spokesmen, East and West alike, call the Gulf a focal point of world contradictions, and all of them acknowledge that World War 3 might be ignited by events there. As Boris Piatishov, a spokesman of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, said on the occasion of recent fighting in the Gulf, "If in the first act of the play you see a gun, you know by the third act it's going to be fired." Both imperialist blocs are well aware of the future they are actively preparing for. For them and for all the reactionary governments of the world, the continuation or end of

the war does not have any meaning or any importance in itself. What counts for them is how much each development serves their needs and their goals. It is the strategic interests of the imperialists that decide their political and military orientation, especially in a crucial region like the Middle East. Under such circumstances, even if a pause were to occur in the war, or a ceasefire be imposed on the belligerents, or even if conditions were to develop such that the Iran-Iraq war ends, the extinguishing of the war's fires would only be a manifestation of the further intensification of the contradictions that gave rise to it in the first place. The end of the Iran-Iraq war would mean not more stability but instead heightened fragility of the whole region.

Who Makes History?

Those who only look at the surface of events in the Gulf region would see only the power projections of the imperialists, the mullahs, kings, etc., and would believe what these reactionaries are trying to get everyone to believe: that it is they and they alone who are on the map and determine the destiny of the peoples of the region. The simple fact that the Iranian regime and every other state in the region is compelled to rule over the masses at gunpoint proves the contrary. Long decades of imperialist rule and exploitation have turned the entire region into a simmering volcano, which already exploded underneath the Shah. Today the rumbling rolls right under the bows of the imperialists' mighty nuclear warships. When it explodes, these vessels will return home laden with the bodies of their soldiers and officers who have tried to serve their "national interests" under the guise of "freedom and democracy," etc., and carrying into exile kings, sheiks, and mullahs — those still alive. The more the imperialists dig into the region with their vast deployments of military power, the deeper will be their own grave — perhaps enough to hold them all together! This is not idle talk. The real possibility exists of the Gulf war being transformed into revolutionary wars.

What does all this mean for the revolution in Iran? Though the gravity of the defeat of the revolution and its capture by counter-revolutionaries still weighs heavily on the minds and souls of the oppressed people of Iran and holds them back from rushing to the front ranks of revolutionary politics, there is a central debate going on right now *among the masses*: how should the burial ceremony of the Islamic Republic be arranged, and by which forces? Outrage and hatred of the Islamic Republic regime can be seen at a glance in the streets of Iran. A burning desire for revenge now burns in the hearts of the majority of the oppressed. The intensification of the Iran-Iraq war has broadened the scope and scale of the now open, now hidden struggle of the masses: frequent demonstrations often burst out spontaneously after barbaric bombings of the cities by the Iraqi air force, aiming against the war and *against the Islamic Republic itself*; slogans and graffiti cover the walls calling for death to Khomeini, death to the Islamic Republic; posters of government bigshots are crossed out and covered with mud during the dark of the night; strikes, though they always end in the savage attack on the workers by the Pasdaran, are widespread in the factories; desertion from the front is endemic.

Battle between revolution and counter-revolution rages in Iran; at its centre is the revolutionary struggle of Kurdistan. For the oppressed in Iran, the revolutionary war in Kurdistan is a sign of their potential revolutionary might and a clear picture of the desperation of the Islamic Republic in the face of the determination of the oppressed. No wonder Kurdistan was one of the important issues of "common interest" discussed in the May 1986 meeting in Tehran between the U.S. delegation and the Islamic Republic.

The growing desperation of the Islamic Republic can also be seen in recent shifts in its ideological propaganda. For a while, they tried to use nationalist agitation and "defence of the fatherland" to rally the masses. This lost its value very quickly. Today nationalist agitation

by Khomeini and his men is aimed at uniting army generals and overthrown monarchists abroad. Now Rafsanjani openly says to the masses: maybe you don't like us but let's unite and do away with the common foreign enemy and then deal with each other. Especially as the masses have come to understand its reactionary character, the Gulf war, earlier useful for consolidating and solidifying the reactionaries' ranks, now has become a destabilising factor. It is a hand-saw up the rear-end of the Khomeini regime: no matter which way they move it, it tears! The social and economic fabric of Iran has been so tightly woven around the war that every serious change in the course of the war shakes the entire society and intensifies the Islamic Republic's crisis. And any end to the war — not apparent on the horizon — will further heighten its contradictions with the masses and within its own ranks. In any case, this regime is digging its own grave.

The Gulf war provides tremendous exposure of the international manoeuvrings of the imperialists, and provides training ground for the oppressed in proletarian internationalism. Not only do the masses have the opportunity to advance the struggle against their own reactionary rulers, but in doing so they will strike heavy blows against the enemies of all mankind, who have assembled so arrogantly here in the Gulf. This task will be realised by mighty worker-peasant red armies marching to the fore under the banner of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought! □

Footnotes

1. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 454.
2. Quoted in Fred Halliday, *Threat from the East?* (London: Pelican Books), p. 27.
3. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 453; 568-569.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 484; 488-489.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 500.
6. *The Tower Commission Report*, (New York, New York Times Books, 1987) p. 21.
7. A city in Iraq held sacred by Shi'ite Muslims.
8. *Tower Report*.
9. *International Herald Tribune*, 28 December, 1987.
10. *Ibid.*, 11 December, 1987.
11. *Ibid.*, 26-27 December, 1987.

Burkina Faso

(Continued from p. 56)

their comforts (as meager as these might seem alongside those in wealthy countries).

Civil servants and others stopped participating regularly in political meetings and rural voluntary labour, and many intellectuals left in search of higher-paying jobs in neighboring states.

Parallel to this, political infighting within the CNR itself was escalating and the left organisations had realigned to take advantage of the erosion of Sankara's support. The unions began to flex their muscles, backed by at least a couple of members of Sankara's close ruling military circle. After a strike in the spring of 1984 he had laid off 1200 teachers, replacing them with CDR instructors, and throwing the LIPAD minister out of the government on accusations of pushing Burkina into the Soviets' arms and manipulating the CDRs.

On the first of May, 1987, after the four biggest union confederations presented a common demand for a return to "democratic freedoms," 30 leaders of salaried civil servants were arrested, including the head of the pro-Soviet LIPAD; one faction even reportedly wanted to execute him. The so-called moderate pro-Chinese revisionist ULC were also evicted from the government. Increasingly a split within the CNR broke out, with the unions and the CDRs more or less on opposing sides.

Sankara had proposed enlarging the CNR and forming a single party to try to unify the fast splitting revolutionary groups and hold them together. Within the army, many of the leading military figures, including Blaise Compaoré, preferred a front to a single party. Through increasing tensions and manipulations, coup plans were being laid. Despite Sankara's continuing popularity, particularly among the youth and students, the more he tried to put his "independent" stamp on the course of events as he tacked through the sea of reformist squabbles, hoping some unified

revolutionary tendency might eventually emerge, the more the thin non-proletarian base he had built his revolution on began to crumble underneath him.

* * *

When he took over the presidency Compaoré dissolved the CNR, formed a Popular Front and promised to reinstate the fired teachers, carrying out a "rectification," but keeping the goals of the revolution. The official line coming out of Ouagadougou is that Sankara was an isolated man, autocratic and trying to silence much of the voice of the left who helped him into power. While it is probable that Compaoré might find it useful to continue to mouth "leftist" slogans, his criminal ascension to power put a brutal end to the Burkina Faso experience and a return to a more "sober" recognition of the reality of neocolonialism.

Any genuine revolutionary regime confronting the mammoth task of uprooting the old oppressive relations in Burkina will face extremely difficult obstacles. Since Sankara's downfall, the bourgeois press has gloated at his inability to hold on as the "troublemaker" in French West Africa. The problem is not so much that Captain Sankara failed, but that his "revolution" could only fail.

Sankara tried to mobilise but could not rely on the peasantry, which has to be the bedrock and main base of support for any real revolutionary transformation in a country like Burkina Faso. He wanted to break out of the clutches of imperialism but stood at the head of a reactionary state apparatus that had been created by the imperialists themselves. The fact that he was shot down by the very neocolonial army in which he served shows once again, as if the proletariat had need of another such lesson, that there is no substitute for the destruction of the state apparatus by the revolutionary masses.

Sankara's relatively painless seizure of power in 1983 actually left the old state power and the old social system essentially intact. Despite this, the Western imperialists were not indifferent to this attempt to

deviate from the traditional neocolonial path, and their overall necessities in today's world accelerated their political and financial manipulations to normalise the script, after tolerating a brief flirtation with African social-democracy.

The playing out of this scenario, at the price of a tightened grip on the oppressed, strengthens the verdict that no social class other than the proletariat can represent their genuinely revolutionary interests and no shortcuts are available to liberation from imperialism from the difficult and demanding road of people's war and the conscious struggle of the masses. □

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Footnotes

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2. *Afrique-Asie*, No. 318, 12 March 1984, p. 21
3. Cited in *Genève Afrique*, 24(1), 1986, p. 39
4. Jean Ziegler, *La Victoire des Vaincus*, (Paris: Seuil, 1988), p. 192
5. Ziegler. Interesting account of tribal traditions and the life of peasant women in the fourth part.
6. See chapter four of René Dumont, *Pour l'Afrique J'accuse*, (Paris: Plon, 1986)
7. Recounted in Ziegler, pp. 176, 226
8. Bonaventure Traoré, "Une canette de bière ou calebasse de dolo," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 1984
9. Dumont, pp. 60-61
10. From an interview with French agronomist René Dumont
11. Quoted in *Newsweek*, "We Have to Depend on Ourselves," 19 Nov 1984
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14. *Afrique Internationale*, 199: Nov 1987, p. 16
15. See Pierre Engelbert, *La Révolution Burkinabè*, (Paris: Harmattan, 1986) and *Liberation Afrique*, Special Haute Volta, Sept 1984
16. See *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 29 Oct, 1987 and Ziegler, p. 157. Compaoré also was said to be close to the pro-Soviet LIPAD.
17. Sennen Andriamirado, *Sankara le Rebelle*, (Paris: Jeune Afrique, 1987) p. 214.

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