

TO WIN

獲得的將是整個世界

2005/31

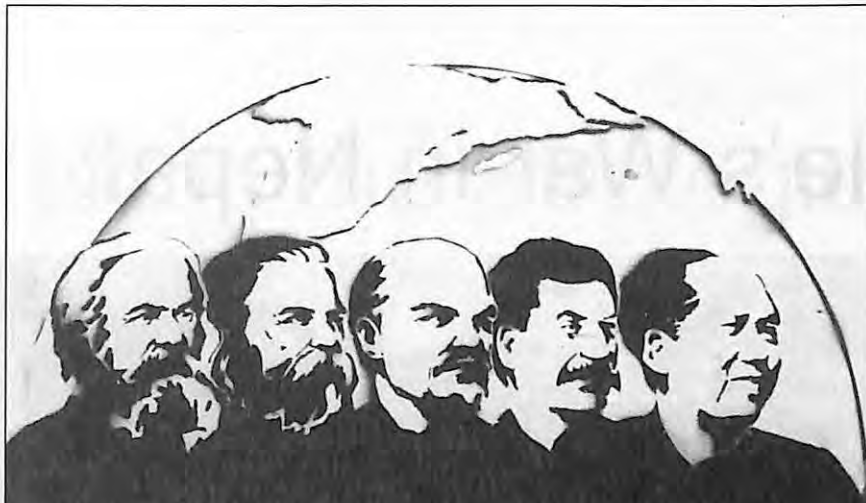
UN MONDE A GAGNER KAZANILACAK DÜNYA

UN MUNDO QUE GANAR

**Communism
and the
Challenge
of our Times**

جهانی برای فتح EINE WELT ZU GEWINNEN বিশ্ব বিজয়





THE PROLETARIANS HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT THEIR CHAINS.
THEY HAVE A WORLD TO WIN. PROLETARIANS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

2005/31

Nepal People's War on the Strategic Offensive

The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) has declared that the People's War it has been leading since 1996 has entered the stage of the strategic offensive, when the balance of power in the country has shifted decisively against the old regime and the revolutionary forces are moving towards the country-wide seizure of power. This article looks at the dynamics behind these developments and at the challenges looming immediately before the Nepalese detachment of the world proletariat — including the threat of US-imperialist backed Indian intervention.

Malaya: Revolution and Its Abandonment

S.R. examines the history of the Communist Party of Malaya in the course of reviewing a book by the party's former leader. The inability of the party to firmly grasp Marxism-Leninism-Maoism led it to defeat and liquidation.

Afghanistan Maoists Unite in a Single Party

At a time when the US imperialists are stepping up their military aggression against the peoples of the world and setting up puppet regimes in the name of democracy, the determination of the world's revolutionaries to step up their own efforts to overthrow imperialism and usher in a new stage in human history, communism, was signalled by the strengthening of the proletarian vanguard with the formation of the Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan, right in the heart of one of the US's most recent conquests.

Lessons for Revolutionaries from the Iraq War

The war in Iraq can be divided roughly into two phases: first, the US invasion and war against Saddam Hussein's regime, which ended in the complete defeat of the Iraqi army and Bush's declaration of victory ("Mission Accomplished") on 1 May 2003, and second, the guerrilla war against the occupation, which broke out in Falluja on that same date, and has continued gathering strength ever since. The first of two articles, written shortly after the first phase, examines the imperialists' real military strengths, as well as the Achilles' heel on which these strengths are founded, while the second applies this analysis to later developments.

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The People's War in Nepal:



Mass rally in Rolpa, western Nepal.

By F.O. *

As we were going to press, Nepal's King Gyanendra openly took all power into his own hands. He dissolved parliament and sent troops to place its leaders under house arrest. He also declared the suspension of political rights guaranteed under the 1990 constitution and unleashed "feudal fascist brutality", as the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) called it, by outlawing all anti-government protests of any kind, including criticism in the press. When students in the city of Pokhara held a rally, the army surrounded their residence. A

*F.O. is a supporter of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) who prepared this article on the basis of Party documents.

BBC reporter outside heard shooting and cries as the troops stormed in. CPN(M) Chairman Prachanda called the king's coup an attempt to "push Nepalese society of the 21st century back to the 15th". He characterised it as "a turning point of decisive battle between autocracy and republic" and repeated the party's call for a "united front against the feudal aristocracy", "a storm of united countryside rebellion under a minimum common slogan of a people's democratic republic and constituent assembly against this last lunacy of the feudal clique" to "overthrow the feudal autocracy to its roots." The CPN(M) statement also said that the King's proclamation was an act "of foreign reaction against the country and the people." Recently the US am-

bassador and other representatives of the imperialist world order have warned of the real possibility that the Maoist-led people's war could seize countrywide political power.

— AWTW

Introduction

When the last issue of *A World To Win* went to press in December 2004, the People's War in Nepal had reached the state of strategic equilibrium. Since then it has continued to develop towards a higher level amid vigorous struggle and a number of triumphs, both politically and militarily, over its foes. The enemies of the people at home and abroad were dealt severe blows that resulted in tremendous changes in the subjective conditions of the Nepalese proletar-

Taking the Strategic Offensive

iat. In light of the realities of the relatively favourable objective situation and developments in the subjective conditions, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN[M]) has concluded that the People's War in Nepal has advanced from a state of strategic equilibrium to a state of the strategic offensive.

In 2004 the CPN(M) held a historic plenum, after which Party Chairman Prachanda issued a statement on 31 August, making the Plenum's decisions public and proclaiming it a success. The Party drew important lessons from the experience of more than eight long years of fierce battle in the vigorous civil war against the enemy; it summarised many important political questions related in particular to the strategic offensive and the growing possibility of Indian expansionist military intervention; and it spelled out the

need for ideological, political and organisational rectification to meet these challenges.

Strategic Equilibrium Matures Through Quantity to Quality

According to the military theory propounded by Mao Tsetung, protracted people's war develops through the stages of strategic defensive, strategic equilibrium and strategic offensive. After the accomplishment of the new-democratic revolution in China, revolutionary forces in many of the world's countries tried to apply this theory in practice. In the course of this, there have been serious differences in understanding how to grasp and apply Mao's military theory to the concrete reality of particular situations. In the classical concept of many Marxist-Leninist-Maoist par-

ties and organisations, there has been a tendency to understand the strategic equilibrium in particular as a situation characterised more or less by a balance of power. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) tried to develop a viewpoint based on grasping all the stages of protracted people's war in their inter-relationship and their motion and process of development, from quantitative development to qualitative transformation. The strategic defensive is a state where the people almost with bare hands, under the leadership of the revolutionary party, begin fighting the formidable enemy. In the process of leading the people's war, the revolutionary people, under the leadership of their revolutionary vanguard, who are equipped politically and ideologically with Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM), equip themselves militarily by seizing weapons from the enemy, and the Party leads the guerrilla fighters to build a people's liberation army and attain political as well as military supremacy over the enemy. The ideological, political and military strength of the party enables it to lead the war to create base areas – the marrow of the revolution and of the people's political power.

The development of people's power and the decomposition of the enemy's power at a certain point reaches a position where the enemy is not able to defeat the revolutionaries and the revolutionaries are not yet able to overthrow the reactionary state power. This power balance is defined as the state of strategic equilibrium, a state in which the people's strength and the enemy's strength are in a certain sense equal. Yet arguments are made from various quarters in this situation that the enemy is still a bigger force and in particular that it has superiority in terms of weaponry, so that declaring this situation of unequal stores of arms a state of equilibrium amounts to adventurism. But the balance of



Some 60,000 Maoist supporters attend a public rally in Kathmandu, 3 April 2003.

power between the new state and old state never means absolute numerical equality in purely military terms – gun for gun, tank for tank, or regiment for regiment, that is to say, in static terms of military force or the possession of firepower; it refers instead to the qualitative situation between the revolutionary army and the masses of people on the one side and the reactionary state on the other. The emergence and existence of two states, two armies and two ideologies in the process of the development of the people's war has been the most basic condition for the emergence of a state of strategic equilibrium. The destruction and near-collapse of the old state and the fact that it is in the process of being superseded by the new revolutionary state has been the main factor in the development of the strategic offensive. Quantitatively, the enemy may have acquired better hardware and greater manpower, such as a larger number of military personnel and a larger quantity of weapons and ammunition, as well as



Sixteen year old girl in Shreed village, 150 km west of Kathmandu, works on land redistributed to the masses in a liberated area.



Students fight with riot police in Kathmandu during an anti-monarchy rally, April 2004.



Learning how to operate a gun in the village of Sailungeshwari in Dolkhha, eastern Nepal.

military, logistical and financial support from foreign and imperialist powers; yet the People's Liberation Army (PLA) enjoys political and military supremacy that is ultimately qualitatively more important than that of the enemy. While the feudal state has support only from reactionary and imperialist states, the People's Army enjoys all-out support from the broad masses of the people of Nepal, and the growing sympathy and support of the oppressed of the whole world.

Against more than 70,000 mercenary Royal Army personnel, more than 50,000 thousand (armed) police and several hundred intelligence agents trained by Mossad (Israel's

spy agency) and helped by the CIA, the PLA has developed divisions in all three regions of the country and thousands of other military units, including people's militias in the cities and villages. Against the enemy's huge stores of weapons and ammunition, the People's Army now has a large number of weapons that have been seized from the Royal Army. Most of these were supplied from abroad, which means that the PLA's real quartermasters are the governments of the United States, India and Belgium. Seizing these weapons from the reactionaries represents a great victory for the revolutionary forces. While the reactionary regime has the financial support of the

imperialists, the Party has the self-sacrificing support of millions of oppressed and has also seized banks and State economic institutions. Of all these, the most important factor behind the advance in the People's War is the active support of the broad masses of Nepalese people.

Stressing the essence of the quantitative and qualitative difference, the document of the 2004 Party Plenum said, "In view of the numbers of the Royal Army, the quantity of weapons, the quality and conditions of supplies, imperialist and expansionist support, economics, logistics and the state of other material resources, it can be seen that the enemy's power greatly exceeds the power of the People's Liberation Army. Looking only at the existing situation, the question obviously can arise as to whether declaring the strategic offensive amounts to a left adventurist mistake. But if our analysis takes into account the process of development of the People's War over the last eight years, the military strategy and tactics developed by the Party, the skills developed by the PLA, and the instability, anarchy and internal contradictions that are wracking the old state, the picture of the balance of power looks completely different." While the People's War has been developing from the level of the strategic defensive and the people's power has been growing stronger and stronger, the parliamentary system, the Royal Army and the feudal monarchy have been disintegrating and growing weaker and weaker.

The reactionaries at home and abroad, in order to prove that the Maoist revolution has brought only misfortune to the country, have been making a hullabaloo, proclaiming that the Maoist revolution has undermined the economic infrastructure, that the national economy has been down-sliding, and that the People's War has been destroying long-standing social norms and values based on traditional harmony. But the fact of the matter is that the new political power has been steadily advancing through the dialectical process of destruction and con-

struction. What the CPN(M) has targeted for destruction is the old state and the old economic infrastructure that serves the Nepalese feudals and their imperialist masters,

and indeed it has been destroying social values based on the old norms and values that served this economic foundation. It has been striving to build a new revolutionary infra-

structure and to establish new norms and values in their place. But the CPN(M) never destroys things simply for the sake of destruction, it destroys only those that stand in the

Free Comrades Kiran and Gaurav!

As the main article on the People's War in Nepal points out, the Indian government has arrested and is holding a large number of leaders of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). While the world-wide campaign to free Comrade Gaurav was developing, the Indian government arrested another veteran leader and member of the Standing Committee of the Party, Comrade Kiran, in June 2004, while he was undergoing treatment in the Indian state of West Bengal. The Indian government's efforts are aimed at helping decapitate the revolutionary party and the revolutionary war in Nepal, and it is no accident that they have stepped up the intensity of these efforts as the revolution comes closer to the seizure of power.

The imperialists and reactionaries have repeatedly taught the oppressed the world over painful, bloody lessons about the precious value of revolutionary leaders. Time after time mighty upsurges from below have been crushed or derailed by a combination of mass repression and carefully targeted attacks on the revolutionary leaders at the head of the masses. What Indian revolutionary does not remember with pangs of heartache how Charu Majumdar was grabbed and executed by the Indian state as he unleashed the spring thunder of righteous rebellion among India's downtrodden peasants in Naxalbari, or what revolutionary from Turkey has never lain awake at night, wondering just "what might have been" if Ibrahim Kaypakkaya had somehow managed to escape the Turkish death squads that cut short the life of that path-breaking 21-year-old communist leader? The

Revolutionary Internationalist Movement itself has the bitter experience, as the article points out, of seeing the People's War in Peru suffer a grievous setback in the wake of the capture of Communist Party of Peru Chairman Gonzalo and much of the Party's central leadership.

Maoists are firm believers that the masses are the makers of history – but they also have a deep understanding of what that means in the world today: that in the course of fighting their oppression, the masses need and must bring forth leaders who have the understanding needed to lead them forward through the twists and turns of the complex struggle to prepare for revolutionary war, seize power and remake the world. Without such leadership, however powerful the upsurge of the masses, it will inevitably ebb or go down to defeat against the still far more powerful enemy.

The US imperialists are lashing out today in an unprecedented wave of aggression, "taking the gloves off" their secret police and declaring open season on all who oppose them. Revolutionaries must step up their efforts to protect their leaders from the increasingly great threat they face. This holds particular importance with regard to the Nepal People's War, where the Indian government in particular has openly declared its intention to go after the Nepalese revolutionary leadership by suddenly arresting a large number of them over the last two years.

The Indian authorities have earned the hatred of millions and exposed themselves for their criminal complicity with the feudal monarchy in Nepal by their treatment

of the revolutionary leaders. Comrade Gaurav, for instance, a member of the CPN(M) Politburo who was travelling to Europe to carry out Party work, has been held since August 2003 merely on charges of having false papers – a charge that is normally resolved within days or weeks. They have even threatened to deport comrades Kiran and Gaurav to Nepal, as they have already done on the sly with Party leaders Matrika Prasad Yadav (a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee) and Suresh Ale Magar, kidnapped in New Delhi and illegally delivered into the hands of the Nepali Royal Army. This is in clear violation of international law and poses a direct threat to the lives of these revolutionary leaders. The reactionary Nepalese monarchy has been sharply condemned by Amnesty International and other human rights organisations for having the world's worst record for "disappearances".

These attacks on leaders of the revolution in Nepal have provoked a wave of protest around the world. Protests have been held from Istanbul to London and Delhi. The World People's Resistance Movement is waging an ongoing campaign in defense of Comrades Kiran and Gaurav and the other leaders and has already sent one delegation of lawyers and human rights activists from Europe to India to put its government on notice that the whole world is watching their reactionary manoeuvres.

To take part in the defense or for more information, please contact: wprm@wprm.org. ■

way of the emergence of a new and better society.

On the backdrop of the development of people's political power across the country and amid the

tumultuous process of destruction and construction, the revolutionary war has entered the strategic offensive. The Plenum document further said, "The following picture

shows that to delay entering the strategic offensive is to commit rightist errors, such as self-preservationism, and would throw the overall People's War into perplexity and

Comrade Kiran

Comrade Mohan Baidya, popularly known as Comrade Kiran, has been working uninterruptedly for more than three decades as a professional revolutionary in the Maoist communist movement of Nepal. His deep study and excellent grasp of Marxist philosophy, dialectical and historical materialism, and revolutionary aesthetics has contributed a lot to developing the Maoist movement in Nepal, and he established himself as a profound Maoist leader, philosopher and revolutionary aesthetician of the Nepalese masses. A true proletarian internationalist, Comrade Kiran wrote many philosophical works interpreting and establishing Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in the Nepalese revolutionary movement.

Comrade Kiran resolutely fought against revisionism, neo-revisionism, and all sorts of deviations within and outside of the Party. In addition, he played a decisive role in defeating M. B. Singh's right opportunist line.

In the Fifth Congress in 1985, he was elected General Secretary of the erstwhile CPN (Mashal). Under his leadership, the Party analyzed M.B.'s political history in the communist movement and synthesised that he had represented right opportunism throughout his self-proclaimed revolutionary life. The National Conference held under Comrade Kiran's leadership following the Fifth Congress brilliantly exposed M.B.'s right opportunism hidden in his revolutionary prattling in the unanimously adopted document, "Anarchist Individualism, the Nepalese Dimension of Right Opportunism".

Noteworthy to mention here is that Comrade Kiran stands as a rare leader in the international communist movement for having voluntarily handed over his position of supreme leadership as General Secretary of the Party to another comrade. Comrade Kiran, with his deepest contentment, proposed Comrade Prachanda to take this responsibility, based on the latter's greater ability to lead the communist movement. He also came to be one of the main contributors to developing the revolutionary line of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN[M]) under the leadership of Comrade Prachanda. Party leaders, cadres, PLA fighters and the entire Nepalese people have a deep respect for him, not only for his philosophical contributions to the movement, but also for his esteemed sacrifice and determined service to revolution under the Party's leadership.

The Indian expansionist ruling class has put Comrade Kiran, a Standing Committee Member of the CPN(M) Central Committee, a beloved leader of the oppressed Nepalese people and an outstanding leader of the international proletariat, in an Indian jail for over a year as of January 2005. ■

Comrade Gaurav

Comrade Chandra Prakash Gajurel, popularly known as Comrade Gaurav, has been contributing without relent for almost three decades as a professional revolutionary in developing the Maoist movement in Nepal. He has always presented himself in the revolutionary camp and fought against wrong lines in all the line struggles in the Party's history. In the Fifth Congress, 1985, he eloquently pleaded against M.B. Singh's right opportunist line document, which argued that the Party was falling back due to the majority's centrist weakness. Comrade Gaurav's stand in the Fifth Congress played an important role in safeguarding the revolutionary spirit of the Party and navigating it safely from M.B.'s eclectic and opportunist positions. He is one of the main leaders in defeating opportunism of different shades and establishing a correct Maoist line.

His consistent revolutionary work for decades, his Maoist skill in the field of organisation and his theoretical and political writings on various issues in the national and international field concerning economic, social and political questions and his proletarian internationalism have made him a popular leader among the entire Party and the revolutionary Nepalese masses across the country. Since the Fifth Congress, he has been discharging his revolutionary duty as a Political Bureau member of the Central Committee.

On his way to do Party work abroad, the Indian expansionist rulers arrested Comrade Gaurav, a beloved Maoist leader of the Nepalese people, in Chennai airport. He has been held in Chennai jail, south India, since 20 August 2003. ■

recoil.”

In accordance with dialectical materialism and the Maoist understanding of the laws of revolutionary war, the state of strategic equilibrium does not remain static or continue for a long period of time. The People's War has developed through a process of uneven development, which is characterised by political offensives in all regions, while the military situation differs according to the region, meaning that the revolutionary forces could be on the military defensive, equilibrium or offensive, depending on the region. This process has developed over time, so that the PLA has developed its political and military supremacy over the Royal Army such that the enemy has not been able to seize both the political and military initiative in any part of the country at all, including in the district headquarters or even the capital itself.

The state of strategic equilibrium saw a rapid change in the power balance of political and military strength on both sides. For instance, politically, the CPN(M) achieved unity with different revolutionary forces who had been waging national liberation struggle in Nepal. The unity of the Maoists with the Kirat Workers Party in the east as well as with other forces who had been fighting for national liberation was a tremendous achievement for the Maoist movement. It is important to note that every communist party in the world upholds the principle of the right of self-determination, as propounded by Lenin. To apply this in the concrete reality of the Nepalese revolution, the CPN(M) laid the ideological foundations from its very inception, from the 1995 historic first conference of the Party, where it advocated that without uniting the national revolutionary movement with the Maoist revolutionary movement the victory of the People's War would be difficult. The process of uniting the national liberation movement and the revolutionary People's War had also been defined in the second historic national conference of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) as a Maoist military

strategy, one of the important military, political and ideological points to be applied for revolution in the twenty-first century, as the fusion of the two strategies of people's war – the strategy of protracted People's War and the strategy of insurrection.

As every revolution advances through revolutionary practice, by relying on the masses to take their destiny into their own hands, the Nepalese revolution has also liberated millions of Nepalese from national and regional oppression. In this process the people's power has been further strengthened through the declaration of national and regional autonomy, applying the MLM science, granting the right of self-determination to resolve contradictions caused by the national and regional discrimination imposed by the reactionary system. In this process, hundreds and thousands of people across the country forcefully rallied behind the Party's plan and programme. Even a simple call of the Maoist-led mass organisations, such as a trade union organisation, peasant organisation, women's organisation or student organisation, won great support from the broad masses of people, leading to the success of even blockades of district headquarters and general strikes called by the Party. Hundreds of thousands of students in colleges and schools across the country have been mobilized under the leadership of the CPN(M)-led student organisation. Most significantly, on the eve of going over to the strategic offensive, a blockade of the capital by the revolutionary district governments surrounding it and the shut-down of major industries by the trade union federation reflected the achievement of unprecedented power.

Militarily, the CPN(M) has developed the strength of the People's Liberation Army to the brigade level in all three regions, and thousands of people's militias have been readied to throw themselves into battle. The PLA was able to destroy the reinforced fortifications designed by the US imperialist military experts in Nepal and seize weapons and ammunition they supplied. As the

military defeats suffered by the Nepalese feudals and bureaucrat capitalists mounted, so did the dismay of the US imperialists and Indian expansionists. Imagine their fury and frustration at the idea that their agents were being wiped out by their very own weapons.

On the other side, in the enemy camp, political and military degeneration and fragmentation continued throughout this period. The reactionary camp of the semi-feudal semi-colonial state had been undergoing ever-deepening crisis and political degeneration. The enemy has not been able to resolve the deep-going political crisis that emerged with the palace carnage in 2001, when the king, crown prince and other members of the royal family were killed, and with the dissolution of parliament and parliamentary government by the autocratic moves of Gyandendra Shah on 4 October 2002. Nepal has continued to suffer imperialist and foreign domination and has been a ground for vulgar infighting between the imperialist and expansionist forces. The direct political control and intervention of the imperialist and expansionist powers over the Royal Palace, the Royal Army and the parliamentary parties and their ranks has been repeatedly exposed, and as a consequence the demoralised palace, army and parliamentary parties are losing their remaining links with the Nepalese people. Facing political defeat and in this demoralised situation, the Royal Army has suffered defeat after defeat in battle against the PLA, and desertion by the rank and file is an everyday occurrence. Fragmentation and degeneration are thus prevalent within the army and police. The contradictions have sharpened for the soldiers not only because they have had to fight their brothers and sisters in villages in the service of imperialist flunkies and the Nepali feudals and bureaucrats, but they have also suffered from their own internal contradictions (including that the military and police personnel were not paid for six months), despite the carrot and sticks being dangled, such as additional



International Women's Day in Kathmandu, 8 March 2004.

allowances to any soldier who goes to fight in the Maoist base areas, and hundreds of thousands of rupees – a small fortune for Nepalese masses – being offered as compensation to the families of soldiers killed in action. Similarly, all quarters and strata of the people country-wide outright reject any promises made by the royal regime, such as its promise that the owners of automobiles destroyed while defying the revolutionaries' calls for strikes would be compensated.

Despite the efforts of the reactionaries, the call to blockade Kathmandu was an unprecedented success without the use of major force by the Maoists. Despite this, imperialist flunkies in Nepal argued that the blockade had been successful more because of the Maoists' armed power than their popular support. These reactionaries fail to understand

that if the people were influenced only by weapons it would be the reactionary regime with its superior weaponry that would prevail. The government "secured" the empty highways, but the people refused to heed its calls. Through corruption and nepotism entire budgets were gobbled up in the course of weapons purchases. The morale of the police and military has fallen so low that without help from the imperialists or Indian expansionists the Nepalese reactionary system would be on the verge of collapse.

Taking all this into account, and having analysed the balance of power in the given situation between the developing revolutionary forces and the degenerating reactionary forces, the Party has reached a synthesis that the People's War has entered the stage of the strategic offensive.

**Strategic Offensive:
The Larger Situation**

The document adopted by the historic Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), entitled "By Raising Revolutionary Transformation to New Heights, Let Us Enter into the Stage of the Strategic Offensive", highlighted the basis for the strategic offensive laid by the development of the People's War. The Plenum discussed some fundamental questions concerning this matter, both in the political and military field, and in doing so has further enriched and developed Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theory and practice, contributing to a new wave of political discussion in the international communist movement.

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Malaya: Revolution and its Abandonment

My Side of History

by Chin Peng
(Media Masters;
Singapore, 2003)

By S.R., a veteran revolutionary
from Malaya¹

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Malaya witnessed many a protracted and arduous struggle against colonial domination and semi-feudal oppression by its people, who are composed of many nationalities². Yet in November 1969 new and startling events aroused the nation, the poor and exploited in particular. Politics in Malaya suddenly appeared exciting. The news came like a breath of fresh air, sweeping the country, from drab factory floors to vibrant green fields, from campus hostels to prison cells. A great anticipation gripped the land as the Voice of the Malayan Revolution radio, broadcast from then revolutionary People's China, told the deprived and downtrodden of heroic battles being fought and won by the guerrilla fighters of the Malayan National Liberation Army, giving new hope to the hopeless. The rebel radio, *Suara Revolusi* (in Malay), as it came to be known, announced the first statement in a long time by the Communist Party of Malaya, "Hold Aloft the Great Red Banner of Armed Struggle and March Valiantly Forward!" This revival in the revolutionary armed struggle marked the twentieth anniversary of the first shots fired against Britain in its colonial possession, which had signalled the long war for national liberation.

Throughout the greater part of the 1970s, the nation remained abuzz with expectancy as regular news and analysis never heard before crackled over the airwaves.

Since its birth, the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) had been in the thick of the struggle for liberation. But since the passing of Mao Tsetung in 1976 and the end of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) in China, the revolutionary struggle in Malaya had been winding down. Little was heard from the CPM leadership from that time until very recently. It was only towards the end of the 1990s that the CPM leaders broke their long silence to let the world know their version of the protracted and tragic saga of the Malayan revolutionary movement. Abdullah Che Dat ("CD"), the Chairman of the CPM, and his wife, a Central Committee member, Eng Ming Ching, alias Suraini Abdullah, have both chronicled their side of events in 1998 and 1999, respectively. Their books, in the Malay language, *Perang Anti-British dan Perdamaian (The Anti-British War and Peace)* by Abdullah CD (Nan Dao publisher, Hong Kong, 1998), and Suraini's *Rejimen Ke-10 dan Kemerdekaan (Independence and the Tenth Regiment)* by the same publisher, are, however, banned by the Malaysian government and, therefore, not available to the people in Malaya.

Chin Peng (Chinese name, Chen Ping), the Secretary of the Party and its de facto leader since 1947, published his *My Side of History* in September 2003. This is in some ways an authoritative narrative of events, containing many very inter-

esting anecdotes, but also his apologetics as well as frank admissions of his, and the Party's, failings. Like Abdullah CD and Suraini, unfortunately, Chin Peng throws little light on the CPM's understanding of the communist ideology and the Party's political line, which supposedly guided the activities of the Party – and this in itself is telling. It should also be mentioned that for several decades of the period when Chen Ping was head of the Party – from 1959 to 1989 – he lived in China. This period included the tumultuous years of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR), giving Chen Ping an exceptional vantage point to report on the earthshaking events of that time – including a personal interview with Mao Tsetung – yet *My Side* readers with high expectations of analysis of these events will come away sorely disappointed.

A Historical Overview of the CPM

Malaysia today has a population of more than 20 million, made up mainly of Malays, Chinese and Indians³. There are also small numbers of aboriginal peoples living in the jungles or in the fringes of the jungle as tribal communities practicing shifting cultivation, as well as hunting, trapping and fishing. During the colonial period, the bulk of the Malay people lived in the countryside as small farmers and peasants. Malay society was highly differentiated in terms of power structures, with the Sultans at its summit. These feudal rulers were subrogated to the British rulers who had deprived them of any real power over the people. They were no more than figureheads.



Malay society was an agrarian society, with landlords and peasants, including many tenant farmers. There was no industry, hence scarcely any bourgeoisie and proletarians. With the advent of British colonialism, feudal Malaya had been turned into a colonial and semi-feudal society. Beginning in the nineteenth century Chinese migrant workers were brought into Malaya by the British in large numbers, so much so that the Chinese formed the largest single ethnic group in Malaya until the 1950s.

The Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) was founded in April 1930 in a small village near Kuala Pilah in the State of Negri Sembilan. Prior to its establishment, it had been organised as the southern overseas branch of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the Nanyang Communist Party (South Seas Communist Party in Mandarin). It was built almost entirely by Chinese immigrant workers and those who took flight from persecution in China, especially following the 1927 counter-revolutionary carnage carried out by Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang (Nationalist) Party. Following a decision of the Shanghai-based Far East Bureau of the Comintern, the first Party Congress was held and on 30 April 1930, the CPM was officially founded. Ho Chi Minh, the famous Vietnamese revolutionary and a key figure in the founding of the Indo-Chinese communist movement, was one of the Comintern representatives at this Congress.

In its early years, the CPM functioned as an underground organisation and experienced enormous hardships and severe repression at the hands of the British colonial authorities in Malaya. Arrests of Party members, suspected members, and sympathisers were frequent. In Singapore alone, for example, in a five-year period between 1931 and 1935, there were 432 police raids on CPM members' homes and their hiding places. While a large number of those arrested were deported to China, local prisons were also filled. Amidst the repression, the Party was nevertheless able to make progress

in organising workers in plantations, mines and the transport system, as well as among students from Chinese schools, that is, schools using Mandarin as a medium of instruction.

At the outset of the Western imperialist Pacific War against Japan, which coincided with Hitler's Operation Barbarossa against the then socialist Soviet Union, the CPM made overtures to the British colonial authorities, offering to jointly resist Japan's conquest of Asia in return for the release of its members from British jails. This was the period of British-CPM collaboration, when the CPM hurriedly organised the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) to carry out "behind enemy lines" guerrilla operations against the new occupiers of the country, the Japanese. Britain offered to arm and train Malayan resistance fighters in guerrilla raids, ambushes and sabotage. This arrangement lasted from 1941 to 1945, that is, during the Second World War.

When the Second World War ended (1945), Britain reoccupied Malaya, but owing to a capitulationist line laid down by the then secretary general, Lai Te, a secret agent of both Japanese and British intelligence, a fact that was later uncovered by the Party Central Committee, the CPM carried out a policy of co-operation with the British colonialists. In 1947 the CPM leadership exposed and eliminated the British spy, but the capitulationism that marked the line of the Party leadership continued to prevail. The CPM never subjected its ideological-political underpinnings to any thorough-going two-line struggle against its non-proletarian, reformist political line. But it was at its worst in the immediate post-war years (1945-48), when the CPM considered the adoption of an economist programme, and trade unionism in particular, to be the best possible option in this period. Chin Peng, nevertheless, concerned mainly with prestige and numbers, declares that it was this period when the CPM was at its strongest. The British Military Administration then ruthlessly suppressed the CPM (which by then had

succeeded in recruiting sections of the working class and the peasantry from the Malay and Indian nationalities too) and the Party-controlled/influenced mass organisations. By mid-1948, it had become impossible for the Party to function openly, and it was once again compelled to go underground.

Between 1948 and 1959 the CPM once again launched a guerrilla war against the British colonialists, who had reoccupied the country after the Second World War. This war was called the Anti-British National Liberation War by the CPM, but it was termed the Emergency (1948-60) by the British rulers and later by the colonial puppet regimes in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, to which power was "transferred" in 1957 and 1965 respectively. In the Anti-British War period, Britain employed not only its elite armed forces, but also twenty-four other mercenary battalions made up of troops from Fiji, Africa, and Australia, as well as Gurkha soldiers from Nepal. In addition to these, several Malay regiments of the British puppet army, auxiliary militarised police and "home guards" from the local populace, were press-ganged to fight against Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA) regulars of (at most) 8,000 men and women, who were supported by approximately 60,000 Min Yuen (CPM mass organisation) members. British imperialism employed air strikes, artillery fire-power, tanks, armoured military vehicles, and the whole range of the latest in modern weaponry against the CPM. The British counter-insurgency campaign was accompanied by the most savage of military tactics against the mainly civilian population in the countryside.

It was the most unequal of contests, yet Britain never succeeded in totally crushing the rebellion. But, cut off from its support base of the rural civilian population, which was forcefully evacuated from their dispersed and tiny squatter farms and concentrated in so-called new villages and placed under constant guard and barbed wire by the British Military Administration, the MNLA

fighters found themselves isolated deep in the jungles of Malaya. It was against this background that the Party leadership decided to retreat north of the border and set up base camps in southern Thailand. So demonised was Chin Peng (branded as the leader of “communist terrorists” and the “most wanted man in the British Empire”), who had a price on his head throughout this period, that people spoke his name only in whispers.

In 1955, Chin Peng led a negotiating panel at the much talked about Baling Peace Talks. Chin Peng and his negotiating team felt compelled to walk out of the talks, as the British puppet “chief minister” of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman, demanded the total surrender of the CPM. In 1975, in looking back at this period, the Party was to admit its own errors in pursuing a right-opportunist line – “peaceful transition to socialism” and the illusions of parliamentary politics – (influenced from abroad by Khrushchev and Liu Shao-chi) from the mid-1950s till 1961.

The CPM re-launched its guerrilla war against “independent” Malaya, which from the mid-1960s was called Malaysia. This time, against the backdrop of the Cultural Revolution in China and a series of humiliating defeats suffered by the US forces at the hands of the Vietnamese people, a period of high tide in the struggle against US-led imperialism world-wide, the CPM proclaimed a revolutionary armed struggle for national liberation to accomplish the “new-democratic revolution” in Malaya. The Party declared its adherence to Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought and proclaimed that it was “the vanguard of the proletariat and the highest body of the organised proletariat” as well as the “nucleus” that “leads the Malayan revolution” against “imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism” (The New Constitution of the CPM, May 1972). Moreover, the Party this time claimed that it was correcting its right-opportunist errors of the past, and as in other neo/semi-colonial, semi-feudal countries of the Third World, taking the road of protracted people’s war, the road of sur-

rounding the cities from the countryside and seizing country-wide political power by armed force.

Between 1967 and 1977 the mass media in the country was full of stories of armed raids and ambushes carried out by the CPM-led Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA) against the armed police force and the military of what the Party then called the “puppet regime” of imperialism, principally British imperialism. From 1969 on, daily radio broadcasts of the Party, *Suara Revolusi Malaya* (The Voice of the Malayan Revolution), operating from Hunan in southern China, reported news of battles and victories and setbacks, as well as the Party’s analysis of events and the domestic and world situation. These broadcasts, in Malay, (Mandarin) Chinese, Tamil, English as well as several non-Mandarin Chinese dialects, greatly inspired many people from all nationalities and walks of life. Revolutionary-minded youth, especially from among young Chinese Malaysians of proletarian background, flocked to the then MNLA and MRLF (Malayan National Liberation Front) in ever-growing numbers. This was taking place despite fierce repression under “emergency rule” – deprivation of even the most basic of civil liberties, which could mean indefinite imprisonment without trial simply for possession of revolutionary literature, or even summary execution and disappearance if captured in areas of military operations by the “Malaysian” or Thai “security forces”.

The GPCR in China, then sending shock waves and a deep-seated apprehension of a revolutionary upsurge among the powerful and the privileged world-wide and at the same time igniting hope and confidence among the oppressed and the exploited, undoubtedly also influenced events in Malaysia. The essence of revolutionary China’s support meant that it provided the proletariat in Malaya, as throughout the world, with the ideological-political wherewithal for the gathering storms. Right-opportunist or revisionist influences/trends in left-wing

organisations were struggled against and positions and standpoints laid bare in many countries, and to some extent this was also true in Malaysia, including within the CPM. Parliamentary politics, bourgeois elections and trade unionism were subjected to intense criticism up and down Peninsula Malaya and in Singapore. Chairman Mao Tsetung’s exhortations, “it is right to rebel against reactionaries”, “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun”, “without a people’s army, the people have nothing”, and “nothing is impossible if you dare to scale the heights”, all found ready resonance among young hearts in Malaya as in other countries.

Following the death of Mao and the counter-revolutionary coup in China in 1976, however, the level of armed combat against the Malaysian armed forces dropped drastically and petered out from the second half of the 1970s through the “lost decade” of the 1980s. In 1989 the Party leadership made a formal decision to end the armed struggle altogether, culminating with an agreement to end armed hostilities between the Malaysian government and the CPM. This agreement, brokered by the Thai government, included the formal recognition by the Party of the feudal king as well as of the imperialist lackey government of “Malaysia”.

British Counter-Insurgency: Two Sides, Two Histories

A great deal has been written about the so-called Emergency, mostly by British historians sympathetic to the colonial point of view and by British former military officers in their memoirs. The writings of British counter-insurgency experts on their “Malayan campaign”, such as Kitson and Thompson, were, and are still, hailed as a “great success story” and given substantial media and academic attention, often as a lesson in contrast with the failings of the US war in Vietnam. Some British officers had organised a clandestine armed force, known as Force 136, which collaborated with the CPM-led Malayan People’s Anti-Japanese

Army (MPAJA) in covert operations against Japanese rule in Malaya (in the Second World War, known as the Pacific War). Chin Peng was the CPM's cadre liaising with British secret agents in war-torn Malaya then. Chin Peng's *My Side of History*, hence, gives the readers a fascinating first-hand account from a passionate partisan fighter's point of view of events, great and small.

Other writings on this period were by British officers, civilian and military. John Cross (*Red Jungle*, London, 1957) and Spencer Chapman (*The Jungle is Neutral*, London, 1949) were British army intelligence officers who had stayed behind (Japanese) "enemy lines" and had worked with MPAJA guerrillas. They have both written inside stories of the anti-Japanese guerrilla war, which are fairly unbiased, at least racially, and give detailed and accurate descriptions of CPM cadres in their secret jungle camps. But as a rule, these colonial memoirs are extremely triumphalist in style.

While most such writings gloat over Britain's triumph over the CPM, invariably praising the draconian measures in "combating the 'communist terrorists'", there are exceptions: the analysis by John Newsinger (lecturer in history, Bath University) of the Japanese occupation period and the "Emergency" years in his article, "The Military Memoir in British Imperial Culture: The Case of Malaya", which appeared in the radical journal *Race & Class*, 35, 3 (1994), thoroughly exposes British war crimes against the Malayan people. In this respect, Chin Peng's *My Side of History* is at its best in laying bare the horror and brutality that accompanied the suppression of the rebellion, including the forced evacuation of half a million poor rural residents of Chinese decent and their concentration into the so-called new villages. It is often claimed that this infamous undertaking, known as the "Briggs Plan" (after General Harold Briggs, the new director of operations in 1951), coupled with relentless jungle operations in pursuit of CPM guerrillas, "turned the tide" against the Party's

anti-British war effort. Despite the much-vaunted "winning the hearts and minds" rhetoric in the writings of most British and pro-colonial historians and journalists, outrages and atrocities against unarmed civilians by the British army were common occurrences. Accompanying the ruthless military approach, which included beheading prisoners and massacring civilians, was the "divide-and-rule" political strategy that undoubtedly did contribute to isolating the guerrilla army, which was made up mainly of ethnic Chinese in the jungle, thus cutting off their food supply and their "eyes and ears" from among the vast Malay peasantry and Indian plantation workers.

Even among those somewhat sympathetic to the people, harping on Britain's "enlightened" approach to waging counter-revolutionary wars has been commonplace. Some historians, such as Newsinger, hold that the CPM should never have resorted to armed struggle, one-sidedly focusing on the CPM's political-military disadvantages, which they claim sooner or later made inevitable Britain's "success" in "quelling the communist revolt". For those yearning to fully comprehend the history of the Malayan revolutionary movement, the picture available so far is necessarily a very partial one.

So up to now, a more comprehensive rendering of the "Emergency" years and the later period of armed struggle (1966-76) dealing with the crucial ideological-political dimension, principally the question of the CPM's political line, had yet to be written. The Party leadership had been mostly silent, save for occasional statements and a brief outline of the CPM's history ("The Brilliant and Militant Course of the Communist Party of Malaya", 1975), and despite its opportunity to broadcast its views over the *Suara Revolusi* radio service.

My Side of History is not a history of the Communist Party of Malaya, nor, as Chen Ping concedes, a thorough-going account of the Emergency. In his own words, it is simply his "recorded journey", a

"dream" he had "for his country". Chin Peng says that his generation "dreamed of doing away with British colonialism in Malaya. I am proud of this fact." Unquestionably it was right to fight to end colonialism, but why was it necessary for a communist party to lead this endeavour? *My Side of History* unfortunately does not even give a clue. To do so would entail class analysis – which Chin Peng shuns – of Malayan society under British colonial rule.

Chin Peng reveals that Marxist philosophical works, Mao's military writings, particularly "On Protracted War", and Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China* (all loaned to him by a school teacher), greatly influenced his early years before he was recruited into the Party. But how did he apply his book learning to the realities of Malaya? How did he come to break from narrow nationalism and embrace internationalism, class struggle and social revolution under conditions of a foreign occupation? How did he see the (class) character of Malayan society? What did his Party consider the most effective way to unite the Malayan people of all nationalities and mobilise them for a revolutionary war in overthrowing all forms of oppression? How did the CPM leadership view the enemy's divide-and-rule racial policy and overcome its many political ruses? How did the Party hope to apply the mass line of Mao Tsetung in the countryside when its support base (mainly ethnic Chinese) was being cut off from the guerrilla army? How did it expect its MNLA guerrilla fighters to swim like fish in the sea of the masses of people? Moreover, how did the Party view important inner-party contradictions and struggles? Did the CPM leadership ever view the two-line political struggle as dynamic, as the motive force propelling the Party forward? And how did the CPM leadership break from the rightist political line of the period before it came to adopt its general line for the new-democratic revolution? These, and other crucial questions, beg for answers.

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José Saramago: An Appreciation

Different class ideologies contend sharply in the sphere of art and politics, which has an important influence on how people look at the world. We encourage you to submit reviews or suggestions for them covering any genre – theatre, literature, film, music, the fine arts or others. We are looking for art and literature that unmask the intolerable burden of the existing order and stirs the imagination of people struggling to create a different one. We also count on you to help make known the rich material covering all the regions of the world and reflecting the conditions of our class and its revolutionary ambition, which is often ignored or suppressed by the imperialist culture industry.

Baltasar & Blimunda,
by José Saramago.
Translated by Giovanni Pontiero.
The Harvill Press, 1998 (current UK edition).
In Portuguese, *Memorial do convento*, 1982. Available in many languages and editions.

By N. F.

Blimunda is an uncommon name, even in the Portuguese language, and it is an uncommon woman that the name designates in this novel by José Saramago, a writer who is already well known for the unusual names of his characters. Through Blimunda and her companion Baltasar, we are told two intertwined stories in this work, which unfolds in eighteenth-century Portugal after the establishment of the maritime routes to India and Brazil.

The novel describes a time of savage oppression, an era when the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and King João V worked in close collusion. Lisbon was the capital of a colonial empire stretching from Brazil to India, via Africa, Macao and Timor. It was a city of narrow, stinking and insalubrious streets where poor Portuguese and Black slaves lived miserable lives. Nevertheless, it was also a time when the Portuguese royal family and the clergy, whom the king showered with lavish benefits, dined at tables stocked with the spoils of the Portuguese colonial empire, even while the various groups within the ruling class were locked in internecine strife over their share of the wealth brought from the territories the colonists were occupying and plundering.



It is in the context of this panorama, after an auto-da-fe (burning at the stake) performed by the Inquisition, that we meet Baltasar and Blimunda. He is then 26 years old and had lost his left hand in the war against Spain. In its place, he skilfully uses an iron hook held by belts. Blimunda is 19 years old when they meet. When she goes without eating – for instance, if she opens her eyes in the morning before eating breakfast – she has the strange faculty of being able to peer through people's bodies into their very souls, or in other words, to see what is hidden inside men and women. The Inquisition had accused her mother of witchcraft and condemned her to be deported to Angola. This couple, in which Blimunda's extra ability compensates for what Baltasar lacks, gives us the intersection of two stories. One is the story of the construction of the convent at Mafra. The other is the story of a flying device named Passarola that will conquer the skies.

After some years of marriage, King João was desperate to see the birth of an heir to give continuity to the royal family. Lured by the Church, which used the queen as its marionette – vulnerable, submissive and easily manipulated due to her double condition of gender subalternity (inferior status) and being a frail foreign woman – the king promises to raise a convent in Mafra, 40 km northwest of Lisbon, if god grants him an heir. The novel makes it clear that it is an heir and not a son

that he seeks. This king used to slip into the convents regularly, and there is a reference to the bastards born from his relationships with nuns and novices.

Saramago skilfully describes the queen's role as receiver of the royal semen. A member of the ruling class, she is nonetheless manipulated and subalternised by the clergy and by her husband, as is the case for the women of her class as a whole. The submission that results from the construction of the feminine gender condition within the ruling class, the social place that makes her a marionette of a negotiated marriage, her manipulation by the Church, and the understanding of her functions as confined to reproduction, all contrast with Blimunda's situation. In the former, a blindness toward what surrounds her, due to the hold of religion; in the latter, a capacity to see where the eyes of others don't want to or cannot see. In one, the exclusiveness of the reproductive role and a sacrificial sexuality; in the other, the ecstasy of passion, due to the absence of material interests. In one, the absence of choices in the construction of her own life, always

delineated by a third party, while the other chooses, delineates, creates and rebels – even using forbidden violence when a friar tries to rape her.

We are told, then, the story of the construction of the convent, from the intrigues of the court and the castles that surround it to the sacrifice and cost in human lives involved in its construction. The novel shows the dark side of the history of the construction of great edifices, that of the men who build them. This project of unprecedented grandeur was meant to glorify the power of the king and the Church, and was to be inaugurated in 1830. But the king fears he may die without inaugurating the basilica, and calls for the work to be speeded up by using the forced labour of people brought from the whole country. Eventually 30,000 workers are brought to a place that was once a small village. There is an emblematic episode in which 600 men transport a great marble stone using ox carts along a sinuous and uneven path. Some of them die in this stupendous effort, due to the whim of the person in charge of construction. Intending to signify the magnificence of the king's power

through the greatness of the monument, this person decrees that the convent's balcony will be made of one huge, uncut, man-killing slab.

We follow also, with Baltasar and Blimunda, the story of the flying Passarola of Bartolomeu de Gusmão, a conflicted visionary priest eventually driven to madness and death by the Inquisition. He is based on a real historical figure. Gusmão tested an aerostat (balloon) in 1709 and experimented with several flying machines, at a time when the unknown – such as the capacity to fly – was seen as a divine manifestation. For this the Holy Office persecuted him until he fled the country and took refuge in Spain, where he died in 1724. This character, who believes that people have both soul and will conjugated within them, is shown to us as entrapped in that contradiction. If we see him kneeling when he watches the passing of a religious procession for a dying man with the purpose of saving his soul, he also metaphorically shows us the stages that humanity confronts in its journey: first he trips, later he walks, then he runs, and one day he will fly. Using Blimunda's insight...and her ability to capture "wills" – the wishes that people carry inside them and that disappear with their deaths – it becomes possible to defy gravity and cause a ship to rise into the air, in an era where the mere enunciation of such a dream was heresy. With Blimunda, Baltasar and the priest Gusmão, we watch the creation of the flying machine and the materialisation of this dream of ascent and flight.

The novel begins with an auto-da-fé, and it also ends with one. The couple have been separated and searching for one another for nine years. When Blimunda finds Baltasar once again, he is among a group of people tortured by the Holy Office and already half burned. Saramago gives the identity of another real historical figure to one of those victims. He is António José da Silva, a Jewish Portuguese playwright burned by the Inquisition in 1739 after a long persecution and the banning of his writings.

The author harshly castigates the

Baltasar & Blimunda – Excerpt

"They were not afraid, they were simply astounded at their own daring. The priest laughed and shouted. He had already abandoned the safety of the handrail and was running back and forth across the deck of the machine in order to catch a glimpse of the land below, north, south, east, and west, the earth looked so vast, now that they were so far away from it, Baltasar and Blimunda finally scrambled to their feet, nervously holding on to the cords, then to the handrail, dazed by the light and the wind, suddenly no longer frightened, Ah, and Baltasar shouted, We've done it, he embraced Blimunda and burst into tears, he was like a lost child, this soldier who had been to war, who had killed a man in Pegões with his spike, and was now weeping for joy as he clung to Blimunda, who kissed his dirty face. The priest came up to them and joined in their embrace, suddenly perturbed by the analogy the Italian had drawn when he had suggested that the priest himself was God, Baltasar his son, and Blimunda the holy ghost, and now all three of them were up there in the skies together, There is only one God, he shouted, but the wind snatched the words from his mouth. Then Blimunda said, Unless we open the sail, we shall go on climbing, and we might even collide with the sun."

Catholic Church by painting a vivid picture of the hierarchy's corruption, hypocrisy and stupidity. The Inquisition, with full powers and thoroughly supported by the secular power, persecuted those it accused of Judaism, heresy, or witchcraft. From top to bottom, the whole rottenness of the religious institution is exposed, from the inquisitorial bishop – with his power games and his sumptuous meals – to the friar of the low clergy, institutionally forced to deny his sexuality, who tries to rape Blimunda. The convents, where upper class women unable or unwilling to marry took shelter, became recreational palaces for the noblemen. (The real convent at Mafra contained royal living quarters.) The reproductive form within the ruling class concentrated the inheritance on a unique son, relegating the other sons to an ecclesiastical life so as to prevent them from marrying and producing legal heirs among whom the family property would be dispersed. The celibacy to which these family members were condemned by purely material considerations is doubly denounced in this novel. The hypocrisy of the religious hierarchy in this respect is brought out through the friar's attempted rape of Blimunda – she kills him without hesitation – and the recurring comparison of convents to brothels.

But Saramago goes beyond attacking the agents of the Church. His novel also demolishes Catholic religious doctrine by bringing to life its internal contradictions, its different application to different classes, and its contribution to the maintenance of the situation in ideological terms. An ally of the secular power throughout the process of colonisation, the Church contends for the primacy of the soul above all because it has enough surplus to console the body of those who act in its name. While the only character who escapes alive in Saramago's narrative is the priest Bartolomeu, we are told that he will end up persecuted by his peers, without being exempted in any way from the inherent contradictions of the position he occupies.

The royal family, through whose

elements – fragile or perverse – the context of the ruling class is presented, shamelessly squanders the wealth shipped back from the plunder of the colonies. The violent exploitation and dispossession of the inhabitants of the colonial territories and the traffic in slave labour had, in other countries, a significant function in the primitive accumulation of capital. In the case of Portugal, the Crown's ostentation and exuberant spending simply wasted the plundered goods. This trade and colonialisation brought the people in the colonising countries few advantages, the book tells us. The poor have to buy everything; nothing comes to them from the colonies, which for them are mainly places where they can be deported.

The Author and his Works

The Swedish Academy awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature to Saramago in 1998. He has remained a non-consensual voice, one that has caused some annoyance to the ruling class of various countries.

Saramago was born in 1922 to a landless peasant family in a small village in the centre of Portugal. As he explained in a short autobiographical essay he wrote when he won the Nobel Prize, Saramago, his father's nickname, "is a wild herbaceous plant whose leaves served in those times as nourishment for the poor." His family moved to Lisbon when he was a few months old, and he was raised there, though he spent long periods in the village. Portugal came under a ferocious military regime in 1926. Although a good student in secondary school, he was barred, due to his class origins, from entering the university, which was then limited to an elite of ruling class children. The fall of the fascist Salazar regime through a coup d'état on 25 April 1974 was followed by a revolutionary upsurge and a chaotic period of bourgeois democracy that deceived a Portuguese working class and people who had only known a few months of it in their history, after the overthrow of the monarchy in 1910. The nearly half century of

Portuguese fascism was characterised by a stifling repression and a suffocating atmosphere created by the threat of long years in prison, torture and murder, the prohibition of organisations of the urban working class and rural workers, and a skilful management of the interests of the different capitalist sectors under a paternalistic cover. For most of his life Saramago was a member of the illegal and thoroughly revisionist Communist Party of Portugal.

He worked at many different occupations, including the printing trades. To supplement his family's income and for pleasure, he took up translation at night, bringing into Portuguese the work of rebellious authors such as Mongo Beti and Nazim Hikmet. Although he published his first novel in 1947, he put out nothing more and had no connection to the literary scene for several decades. In the early 1970s he became a journalist and returned to fiction later in the decade. *Baltasar & Blimunda* was the most notable of a series of novels that began flowing from his pen late in life when he was finally able to devote himself to writing. He moved to Spain in 1991 after the Portuguese government labelled his *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ* "offensive to Catholics" and took action against him. His literary work has won countless prizes in many places around the globe. *Baltasar & Blimunda* was made into the opera *Blimunda* by Azio Corghi. Some of his other novels have been adapted for films. Although winning a reputation in Portuguese and Spanish, he was not well known in English until after his Nobel Prize. Now his major books have been translated into more than 20 languages, making him one of the world's most influential novelists.

In 1998, when he visited Mexico, a government official aware of his interventionist reputation, urged him to confine himself to addressing "the specific issues of literature". Saramago publicly retorted that the government was silencing him be-

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Iranian Popular Music from a Social Point of View

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“Pop” music” satisfies an important part of the cultural and spiritual needs of the people in today’s world, and every society produces it. Hundreds of millions of youth listen to this music, become inspired or depressed by it, dance or sing with it. It can make them thoughtful or carefree. Lullabies may lull them to sleep or cries of rage may resonate in their veins. Pop is short for popular, relating to the general public, and usually means the kind of music youth relate to in terms of rhythm, melody, language and subject matter. It can influence broad sections of society, especially the youth, and reflect the feelings and social and political concerns of a given time and place.* So pop music is closely linked to the social situation in each country and takes on a “national” character and colour. Even though the rapid expansion of global communications in the field of culture and art has somewhat disrupted borders and national divides in music, there are still real distinct differences and characteristics. The music’s ability to penetrate and integrate different societies is, because of language, minimal. As a result of scientific and cultural communications internationally some words and expressions of stronger and dominant languages enter others, but the texture, musicality and behaviour of a language change with difficulty and slowly. In terms of

*In the Farsi original, the word “pop” is written in English. As the article points out it is referring to the wide phenomenon of contemporary popular music and not “pop” as a specific genre, as the word is often used in the West. *Translator’s note.*]

music’s rhythm and melody, however, things are different and pass more easily from one nation and its ethnic music to another. Also, similar social, political and personal attitudes have made their way into pop music in various nations. This is because of a number of factors: the imperialist system is increasingly global and people all over the world become rapidly informed and influenced, and important aspects of tribal and expanded family relations in underdeveloped parts of the world have weakened or been liquidated and as a result relations between men and women and between parents and children in different countries are becoming more similar.

The characteristics of Iranian pop music reflect this framework. It all started in the 1950s [early 1330s in the Iranian calendar] when a trend arose to incorporate both Western melodies and instruments. Considering the thinking that was dominant in music then, this trend was new-ist in form. But as lyrics go, it had nothing new to offer. The content of the lyrics was basically no different from that of the traditionalists, and if there was any variety it was in terms of distancing itself from love themes and moving towards nature. The melodies were mainly taken from conservative French and Italian easy-listening music and sometimes Armenian-Russian themes, arabesque, flamenco and Spanish folk music. This music became famous as jazz in Iran even though it was different to the jazz rooted in the sad songs of the black slaves in the US. This music didn’t even dare to stand with the high tide of music at that time in the West, that is, rock and roll, a music that was advancing by breaking a lot of barriers and rules in rhythm, beat and melody, in language, in performance and in the use of instruments and lyrics. But at any rate Iranian “jazz” music, with songs such as “The Death of Swan”,

"Mehregans' Cold Breeze", "The Golden Charette", "It Was Night in the Desert" and so on, was considered a move forward, and despite all its conservatism opened the path for new pop music.

Before getting into the birth of Iranian pop music, it is worth mentioning some of the characteristics of Iranian "jazz" so that some of the later developments can be better understood.

First, the lyrics did not have any social content, and did not deal with political and social matters even through allusion. The conservatism and the general fear resulting from the atmosphere of amnesia and suppression following the 1953 coup d'état [in which the government of the nationalist reformer Mossadegh was overthrown by a CIA-backed coup, re-installing the monarchy of the Shah] were casting their shadow over music too. Perhaps an occasional artist would try to let the life and work of the masses into the world of songs through folk music, but such works were rare.

Second, except for a few folk songs with a peasant colour, both the language and class interests of the lyrics reflected old aristocratic romanticism, which concentrated on describing the different body parts of the female loved one and moaned and cried about her infidelities, and had a clearly feudalistic view of women as the property of men.

Third, the love lyrics were exclusively written with a male viewpoint and language. The description of the loved one and the tales of frustration and rivalry were all from a male point of view, even if sung by a female performer. In fact, generally women singers didn't shine in this field and women songwriters were non-existent. A handful of duets (where a man and woman sing in the same song) in this period offered a pale secondary role for women as independent beings. But even a woman who was not dumb and passive, and entered into dialogue with the man, still fell under his shadow. At the same time, the comical, light character of these duets, which usually had a happy ending, would make them marginal and not too serious.

Fourth, god featured in most of the songs, either as the ultimate support in whom the songwriter would find refuge at the height of his hopelessness and the betrayal of his beloved or of life itself, or as the entity addressed by the poet's complaint, the responsible and determining factor in human destiny. In any event, god's omnipresence in the lines and refrain of the lyrics tells of the dominance of superstition, and inevitably undercut the positive spirit of protest, rebellion and change in these works.

Fifth, this field of music, like all the others, was devoid of singer-songwriters. The French and Italian counter-parts of this music were identified with artists who were at once the singer, songwriter and composer, but not so in Iran, where the singer at most might have played an instrument. Due to the lack of singer-songwriters, many songs were marred by an unevenness in the song's feeling, content and form, and the performance style would not suit the content – the result was thus ineffective and weak. But the main shortcoming in this field was the separation of the elements of production. Each person would carry out their task independently of the others, like clerks in an office; there was no debate, no back-and-forth, and no mutual influence between the four elements of the song, i.e. the songwriter, the composer, the arranger, and the singer. Either this was not felt necessary, or feudal pride and prejudice and a monopoly mentality would prevent others from entering one's own field.

Pop Music with a Conscience

In the late 1960s (1340s), a new wave in music rose that rapidly changed the character and colour of the songs and found a vast audience. The precursors of this wave were youth whose minds were not in tune with the old spirit of defeat and sleepiness, who were not unfamiliar with musical developments in the west and who had enough courage and self-confidence to take up the task of subverting the spirit ruling the

music that dominated the radios and record market. These pioneers did not descend from the skies nor were they people whose ideas and work were imbued with "god-given talents". They were products of the particular objective and subjective conditions. And their thoughts and actions in the realm of cultural and artistic activity were formed and developed under the same conditions.

In those days, the traditional texture of urban society was undergoing sudden and disruptive developments. A wave of migration arose, and the cities were becoming balloons ready to burst. The development of capitalist relations and the activation of the labour market in the cities accelerated the beat of people's lives. Masses of migrants would burst in here and there, running for work, and large numbers of women stepped out of the closed circle of the home to integrate into social life. Students' eyes were opened to the outside world and a variety of life choices, the small capitalists raced to climb the ladder of success and amass money as soon as possible, and the rich feudal lords lifted themselves from their cushions to turn their riches and lands into capital. The tunes of the old, crippling traditional music no longer responded to the new situation.

The pioneers of Iranian pop music had political minds and a social consciousness. These were young composers, songwriters and singers who to different degrees stood in opposition to the ruling despotic system. They refused to conciliate with suppression and censorship. They identified with the revolutionary intellectuals, who in those days had lit the flames of armed struggle against the monarchy. Some of them followed the ideal-seeking struggles and revolutions in other countries and drew inspiration from Vietnam, Palestine, the Cultural Revolution in China, and the revolutionary struggle in the 1960s in the West, including the Black and anti-war movements in the US. Most of them had experienced the Beatles, Pink Floyd, Bob Dylan, Janis Joplin, The Doors, Theodorakis

and many others. It was this mentality and this consciousness that gave creativity and life to the works of this period and strengthened the spirit of opposition and rebellion in their audience. This young, thirsty generation searched for and found a different message behind allegories, phrases, cords, riffs and beats. The songs, even when they reflected hopelessness and ambiguity, harboured a submerged rage and frustration that expressed social discontent. Their love songs smelt new and earthy, not alien to the conditions and social life of their creators. The personal aspect of separation and sorrow that ran in the vein of these songs would soon fade and be interpreted as a common and collective pain. "Scent of Wheat", "Friday", "You Are the Rain", "Home", "Dead End", "Two Windows", "Two Fish", "Rivers", "Mirror", "The Ever-Believing Friend", "The Bird", "Namaz" [prayer] (which even during the Shah, under clerical pressure, changed into "Niaz" ["Need"]) and so on... were all created in this kind of atmosphere. In the days of the 1979 revolution, pop music that no longer let itself be bound by censorship went into the street with a direct language, and allegories and allusions made way for joy and slogans. "Many Things to Say", "My Land, a Birth in Blood", "The Chanters of Dawn", "Deceiver"... are the products of this time. The establishment of the Islamic Republic ended a shining period when Iranian pop music flourished.

The Boundaries of Pop

Before going into the subsequent development of Iranian pop music, it is necessary to mention some of the important characteristics of this music before the 1979 revolution.

First, both direct and indirect political anti-regime references entered the content of everyday music, though this was mainly done through allegories and symbolic subjects and characters. But even though the world was undergoing great revolutionary turmoil, the international struggle did not become the subject of songs. The nationalistic thinking

of the artists, though not explicit, did not permit international solidarity and an internationalist spirit to enter the songs. Of hundreds of songs written in those years, "O' Sorrowful from the East", which was inspired by the liberation war of the people of Vietnam, is an exception. The view dominating pop songs reflected the tendencies and aspirations of middle-class intellectuals (urban petit bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie), ranging from optimism and militancy to hopelessness and frustration.

Second, there was very little use of folk pieces, as these contained limited and old content and were detached from the new subject matter of urban life. Thus, the work, life and struggle of the downtrodden and poor did not enter pop music even through folklore. The pop music of the 1960s and 1970s was a step behind "street music" in terms of influencing the workers and lower urban strata. (By "street music" we mean songs played in taxis and inter-city buses that had the tone and air of the oppressed and poor and used lumpen-type language.)

Third, the outlook dominating these songs was still male. They neither reflected women's suffering and fury towards patriarchal and male chauvinist relations nor gave wing to women's dream of liberation, even though here and there songs were made that reflected romantic relations from a woman's point of view or a common look at a question ("Flat-mate", "My Man", "Divorce" and "Two Fish" were among these). The work atmosphere was also male-dominated. All composers and arrangers were male. There were very few women songwriters. Women artists saw and searched for a place mainly in performance.

Fourth, the role and presence of god in songs was reduced. But the hand of fate was still present in many songs. Of course in this period there were strong, good songs that pinned their hope on humans and no longer made real, earthly demands of heaven and other non-existent imaginary forces.

Fifth, the seeds of teamwork were spread in pop music, raising the

quality, depth and effect of the works. Some young enlightened artists took initiative. They would debate the elements of musical production – content, subject, form, lyrics and melody. They built up comradery, one-heartedness and a common approach. They would inform each other of what happened behind the scenes (including in terms of work and the official policies of the regime regarding artists and the media, as well as the struggles and sacrifices of the revolutionaries). Their motivation went beyond profit or personal fame, as they felt an obligation towards the masses. Time and again, the regime's execution of a revolutionary, a direct experience with the poverty and misery of the masses, or news about a social horror would spark the creation of a song.

The rise of theocratic reaction [in 1980-81] was accompanied by an invasion of medieval beliefs and thought in the art field and a monopoly in the media. A huge number of artists could find no outlet for expression. From the very beginning, women were banned from singing alone, and their singing role was limited to singing in a chorus, so that nobody would forget that for Islam in all aspects of life women are secondary and subordinate to men and cannot occupy any field on their own, independently. Immediately prior to February 1979 music professionals close to the monarchy, who produced artwork within the official reactionary ideological and cultural framework, had begun to leave the country. But the artists of the people, including the pioneers of pop music who favoured revolution, remained and with unbelieving eyes watched the Islamic regime behead the revolution and bury the hopes and aspirations of the people. Like thousands and thousands of others, they became enraged and started to resist, and were defeated and retreated, confused and hopeless. In these days of retreat, days when the revolution was drowned in blood, songs like "No More Lullabies", which called for vigilance and resistance, went unheard. It was no surprise that such songs found

inspiration in the revolutionary movement in Kurdistan, which stood as a revolutionary trench of the people, fighting in arms against the wave of religious reaction. Somewhat later, "My Schoolmate" popped in, which was less explicit and survived the gestating days of the war so that it could take wing in the air of another generation's rebellion.

With the bloody establishment of the Islamic Republic, pop music migrated abroad. First, was a wave of nostalgia: those who before the revolution enjoyed privilege and high positions in society were nostalgic for their previous life and means; the nationalist homesick were nostalgic for the motherland's soil; and revolutionaries and their sympathisers were nostalgic for their martyred comrades and lost opportunities to change the old society and liberate the masses of people. And all these feelings were reflected in songs of exile and immigration. The pioneers and front guard in pop music were wounded and confused, but more than this, they doubted their ideals. The forward-looking, protest and militancy in their works was breathing its last breaths. The means to communicate with the pop music audience in Iran seemed blocked. The country was in the grip of a destructive war, suppression and a smothering atmosphere. The music market abroad was controlled by pro-Shah entrepreneurs who had escaped the 1979 revolution. The orientation of this market was defined by the tastes of those who wanted to reproduce the official art and culture that ruled in Iran before 1979. The main buyers were once again those who were affluent, now in exile. For their parties and fêtes they needed a happy-go-lucky music, to shed tears of regret they needed a passive, nostalgic music, marked by *erfanic* [gnostic – belief in god] sentiments. Pinned down by hopelessness, a lack of belief in ideals and market pressure, the grouping of pioneers broke apart. Distances widened. Hands no longer moved to pick up the pen, or if they did, they didn't write the lyrics or the melodies that were needed.

But there was still hope! The pop

music audience did not remain limited to this rich gathering with its bad taste. Hundreds of thousands of youth were escaping the fires of reactionary war and seeking refuge abroad. How were their spiritual and cultural needs to be answered? In Iran too, ears were longing for songs. And song does not know walls or barbed wire; through thousands of byways it reached black market street sellers. They would flow from tongues before the reactionary guardians could react. Many of these songs were "Los Angeles Pop", with its typical shallowness and facile happy-go-lucky air. But different, more influential works were also created, reached people's ears and filled their hearts, such as "Bread, Cheese and Spices", "Sweetie", "Red Home", "Flowing Forest", "Ms Sun", "Take Me Home", "Kite" and others. In short, the pop songs produced abroad came, rapidly spread and put the stamp of defeat on the culture of moaning and *nohe*. [*Nohe* is a funereal, wailing song Muslims sing for the dead.]

The Mullahs Lose the Rhythm

The Islamic Republic had lost the rhythm. What the regime's media wanted to shove down people's throats in the name of cultural and artistic works not only didn't attract anybody, but was hated and resented. Youth, even the children of the rulers, had no liking for "Islamic Art". This was considered a danger to those planning the security policies of the regime – they needed a solution. In the early 1990s they were copying FBI instructions on security threats and ways to deal with them, and were trying to ape their American god-fathers in this field too. According to US internal security officials, there are three ways to confront security dangers. First, is reconnaissance and prevention before the danger occurs. Second, suppression after it occurs. Third, co-opting and digesting the threat, changing its nature from a negative element to one that is positive for the ruling system. One example of this third way is the approach of the US ruling cultural

establishment to branches of music that step onto the scene as an anti-system, protest art form and rapidly spread among the oppressed. The cultural policy makers and the entertainment industry bosses, instead of direct suppression and boycott, adopt the music's form but change its content; they buy and corrupt the pioneers if they can, or push them to the sidelines and silence them if they cannot. And they then use the degenerate works created with this policy to promote their own ideology, values and thought among the masses. The Islamic Republic decided to do the same with pop music, hoping they could bring the passed water back under the dam and fill the youth's brains with whatever they decide.

Thus, all of a sudden a kind of distorted pop music made its way onto Islamic Republic Radio and Television. Pop was no longer "*taghoti*" and "*haram*" [blasphemous and sinful]. Young people who were forced to play and practice pop music for their own enjoyment in basements and closets started cautiously to come out. But there were lines not to cross, and there was no fooling around. Any content that implied, in any form or allegory, any kind of resistance, opposition or struggle against the existing order was forbidden! Any exposure of the injustices and horrors of class society, forbidden! Any expression of women's yearning for equality, or the feelings of women, forbidden! Any declaration that humanity should decide its own destiny, any exposure of superstition, forbidden! Tales of love, real and felt romantic relations between men and women, forbidden! [This "forbidden" list is based on a song of the time.] According to the rules and regulations of the censorship and repressive apparatus of the Islamic Republic, artists could write political and social songs on the condition that they promote current Islamic Republic policies. They could, for instance, praise the "beauty and greatness" of the reactionary war or worship the country and its Islamic subjects praising it to the heavens and above the people of

other countries, in a nationalist-fascist manner. No talk of love, unless it is *erfani* love, love for god, the prophet and the imams. Any liking for the opposite sex could be shown only in a pale way, without fire and in a sick platonic manner.

The Challenge Today

The soul-less, artificial and impotent music that has been produced and distributed in Iran in the name of pop music is the product of these reactionary regulations and policies. In this scene, there are a handful of profiteering and opportunistic composers, songwriters and singers who produce "pop music" based on the instructions ("recommendations") of the regime's cultural apparatus. For example, they are asked to make a song promoting prayer (*namaz*), or the need to refer to god, or in praise of the armed forces, and make it so it has the same feel as the songs of Ebi [a singer from Los Angeles]! Then these people steal from the known melodies of others, pilfering words, phrases and allegories, and mix this with reactionary content. They produce rubbish and are paid for their servitude. Even *nohes* and hymns are pop these days! With the tune of "King of Hearts" they praise Imam Hossein. "Clown" can be considered the most socially orientated product of this official pop, with its watered-down hollow pity for the poor, more like a charity mentality. The most political is "The Street of Dreams", which envies Imam Ali's sword and wants to be "true Shiite" in the face of plunderers of the treasury and today's Ibn Moljems.

In the margins are others – the majority. Enthusiastic youth, with no means. Talented but modest. They see no aspiration or mission for themselves. Their dream is to go abroad, produce there freely and become famous. They worship the pioneers of pop music and believe they can't even get close to them, but they are not willing to take up a pioneering role in today's conditions. In short, they are hooked on conservatism and self-censorship. Some of them, in order not to be "cheap"

and at the same time not to give a pretext to the Islamic censors, fall into a trap and hang onto the *erfani* and opium-like lyrics of hundreds of years ago. They put new packaging on an old product that does not answer today's need. Or as they themselves say, in order to escape "Los Angeles degeneration" they roam the deserts and mountains and resort to danger-free songs about nature, spring and so on. Their melodies are soft and childish, bringing to mind the "children's programme" songs, void of sudden highs and lows, of movement or shock. If they want to be "daring" and convey a political message, they do a remake of "Oh Iran" or produce something else with the same nationalistic content, not to offend anybody. If there is talk of love or romantic feeling, it is so softened that it clearly can't stand up against the romantic and erotic songs and video clips produced abroad. In this area, they themselves prefer to go to the pop market abroad.

This situation has caused honest young pop musicians in Iran to talk about a kind of dead-end in music. They are not talking about a temporary crisis or ebb; they believe pop music has reached a dead-end in Iran. The reality is that "Iranian pop", not only pop in Iran, is going through a crisis. For this music to develop and get over this crisis, there needs to be a pioneering new wave in both form and content. And this will not be possible unless once again pop music is spearheaded by young, new, tradition-breaking, advanced social works. The ruling suppression and censorship in Iran will no doubt try to prevent the official production and distribution of such work. But it cannot block the path of thought and mental activity of creative artists. These works can be produced underground, and the final product sent abroad to be distributed and returned to Iran. The lyrics and melodies of such songs can be sent through proper channels to committed artists abroad to be performed using their own talent and greater resources. What is important for the artists is to recognise their mission and their

social commitment, and this is not limited to those living in Iran. The advanced artists living abroad still bear an important part of the burden of overcoming this crisis and setting the direction of things. The favourable elements exist for such a change to take place. There is endless political and social subject matter that can inspire artists of the people. We have musicians who have decades of experience, who have mastered the language and technique of song writing. The presence of women in this scene, though less, in the fields of playing and music-making, is increasing. The influence and integration of the melodies and rhythms of Latino music, and to a lesser extent hip-hop and rap, has made Iranian pop richer and more varied. Experimentation and innovation in the language of lyrics has borne fruit, bringing about sometimes creative and surprising expressions and interpretations. "Forbidden", "Rise", "Male Chauvinism", "Break It", "Nakedness" and "Rare Flower" are examples of this movement taking hold. What is missing is the belief in the cause of liberation, which must find its place in the mind and deeds of the workers in the art field. The pioneers must re-find it; the young travellers must come to know of it. What is still needed is the spirit of rebellion and protest that must beat the drums, push the keys and strum the strings to send the song like an arrow out of the bows of the instruments. Society is demanding a new sound.

In this writing no singer, songwriters or composers are named. Only the songs are named. This is because the goal of writing this article is not to create authorities or judge individuals. The content of works is paid attention to. Often it happens that a given individual produces both progressive and backward songs. But the songs mentioned have the stamp of certain artists after all, and we hope that by emphasising the value and role of these songs proper respect is paid to the artists. ■

Afghanistan Maoists Unite in a Single Party

The Maoist movement of Afghanistan took a leap forward by uniting into a single communist party, the Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan in a unity congress held in May 2004. The successful conclusion of this process was a great achievement for the Maoist movement in Afghanistan and for revolutionary communists the world over.

This new Party is the fruit of a process that started after the military invasion of Afghanistan by US imperialism and its allies. This dramatic development intensified the pressure on the forces upholding Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM) in Afghanistan to arm themselves with a clear programme and line. In this new situation, a unification process was initiated by the Communist Party of Afghanistan (a participant of RIM) and the Struggle Organisation for the Liberation of Afghanistan (Peykar), which was later joined by the Revolutionary Unity of Workers of Afghanistan. An appeal was issued to all the MLM forces of Afghanistan, which received a warm response.

The fundamental basis for forging unity was ideological and political principles, in particular MLM as the ideology and the guiding thought of the practice of the Communist Party, and new-democratic revolution as the minimum programme of the Party, as preparation for the transition to the maximum programme, socialist revolution and the final goal of communism. Also part of the basis for unity was agreement on the strategy of people's war and on preparation for people's war as the central task of the day. The participants also emphasised internationalism and the struggle within RIM to achieve a new type of international.

Refuting sectarianism in the organisational sphere was a prerequisite for the unity needed, which meant struggling with the goal in mind of achieving a common pro-

gramme and constitution. What followed was nearly two years of political and ideological struggle, two-line struggle, criticism and self-criticism involving all the participants in the unity process, as well as others who became involved in the process.

However, this unity could not have been achieved without a vigorous struggle against a line that arose in the course of the unity process that viewed the process as immature and hasty; the proponents of this line believed the unity process amounted to a process of merely joining the existing Communist Party of Afghanistan. Instead, it favoured two separate steps: first, to wait until the whole movement outside the CPA unites, only after which would integration with the CPA take place and the "real" Communist Party come into being.

This line failed to grasp the new situation in the world following the post-11 September invasion of the country by the imperialists and the consequent urgency for the country's Maoists to unite around a basically correct line. This line also did not understand that in this situation the Maoists could make rapid advances in revolution in a country that was a focal point of imperialist aggression. Politically, this line failed to shake off erroneous ideas about party-building that had long dominated the communist movement in Afghanistan. Organisationally, these forces were not ready for full integration into a process marked by a party spirit, which required rupturing with what Lenin called a small-circle mentality, and instead tended towards sectarianism and concern about losing the interests of a narrow group or circle.

This struggle in fact strengthened the understanding of the Maoist forces and ultimately nourished the integration process. The fruit of this process, the main weapon for revolution in Afghanistan, i.e. the

Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan has indeed followed a long and painful path, full of twists and turns. For many years the masses were deprived of this weapon by shortcomings and deviations. The founding of such a Party is a triumph of four decades of positive and negative experiences and has come at the cost of immense sacrifice.

The Initial Leap Forward

The Maoist movement in Afghanistan has its roots in the struggles of the 1960s, which drew their main inspiration from the fight of Mao Tsetung and the Communist Party of China against the revisionist theories of Khrushchev, leader of the Soviet Communist Party. One of the first steps in this process was the formation of the Young Progressive Organisation (YPO) on 6 October 1965. This was a clear alternative to the pro-Soviet revisionists, who were organised under the name of the People's Democratic Party ("Khalq") and later the revisionist party called "Parcham", which split from it. The YPO upheld the banner of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought and offered a strong line of demarcation from revisionism for genuine revolutionaries in the country. It exposed the strategy and tactics of the revisionists, clearly rejecting their parliamentary cretinism and the policy of supporting capitalism in the state sectors as the path to socialism. The YPO called for overthrowing the old system through armed struggle as the only path to liberating the people and paving the way to socialism.

This fundamentally correct orientation won over a majority of the radical youth and intellectuals and a noticeable number of advanced workers, who gathered around the publication of the movement led by the YPO, *Shola-Javid* ("Eternal Flame"). *Shola-Javid* played an

important role in shaping the thinking of hundreds of thousands of youth who were desperately seeking a revolutionary way out of long years of oppression by the backward semi-feudal system, as well as many workers, peasants, teachers and women. Many cadres, especially from the students and teachers, were trained to become leaders of the movement. Women participated on what was for Afghanistan an unprecedented scale, and in some areas even became revolutionary organisers. Mass protests and demonstrations in the country surged ahead under the powerful influence of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, reaching new heights in 1968-69, in demonstrations that were largely organised by Maoists or held jointly with other organisations.

The period from 1963-73 in Afghanistan is known broadly as the period of "Crown Democracy", but among radical forces as "Semi-Democracy" or "False Democracy". During this period, though Zahir Shah (the King), a representative of the old semi-feudal semi-colonial system, was still in power, some of the traditional parties took advantage of a weakening of the monarchy to emerge or come out in public after long years of repression and suppression by successive rulers.

In this situation, the growing strength of the Maoist movement terrified the reactionary establishment, which tried in vain to suppress it, arresting and imprisoning large numbers. The rise of the Maoists also alarmed the revisionist parties, Khalq and Parcham, who after years of activity were being overshadowed and were facing rejection from the masses, especially the youth, because of their stodgy revisionism and reactionary co-operation with the state. They were hoping to get themselves a share of the reactionary power by relying on their ties with the Soviet social-imperialists, who were themselves far from happy at seeing the growth of a Maoist trend right on their own border.

As for the Islamic fundamentalists, who were associated with feudalism, although they were weak

politically, they too were alarmed by the strength of the Maoist movement. Though they were not happy with the way the government was protecting the old semi-feudal semi-colonial relations, they were furious at the widespread enthusiasm, particularly among the youth, for progressive and revolutionary materialistic ideas.

Even the so-called nationalist or progressive religious forces could influence only certain parts of the country and only some sections of society. The only real and genuine political force that could unite all the oppressed, no matter what their nationality or religion or gender, were the Maoist forces organised around the YPO. The truth of this could be seen in the huge steps forward they had been able to take in a short period in a country where backward and reactionary ideas had been dominant for a very long time.

Ultimately, however, the young Maoists' lack of experience and internal differences came to surface and started to wear on the movement. Political-ideological weaknesses in the YPO unfortunately contributed to this trend. The first serious and open opposition came from an adventurist line that appeared in a document called "the Historical View" and which mainly reflected the influence of "focoism" and some of the thinking of Che Guevara.

Organisational changes, and in particular the serious illness of an outstanding leader of the YPO, Comrade Akram Yari, dealt another sharp blow to the political and organisational line of the YPO.

In 1970 a rightist line within the YPO and the new-democratic movement, which came together around a group known as *Enteqadion* ("the criticsers"), launched a series of attacks on YPO and the line of *Shola-Javid*. In 1972, after the YPO dissolved, this group seized the opportunity to openly attack the YPO in a pamphlet entitled "Reject Opportunism and Forward Towards the Red Revolution" in which it announced the formation of the Revolutionary Group of Afghanistan's People, which was later changed to Rahaii (the Liberation

Organisation of Afghanistan). Raising the argument that "essential attention should be paid to the economic needs of workers", the criticsers liquidated the struggle to prepare for people's war. They also took up an economist line towards the peasants, denied the role of the vanguard party and ignored the importance of ideological and political work among the working class and peasantry.

It soon became apparent that their economist view was a reflection of the Rightist revisionist line that was gaining power in the Communist Party of China. Indeed, as soon as the revisionist line seized power in China the criticsers showed how critical they really were of reaction by supporting it. Soon this economist deviation developed into full-blown revisionism, as they adopted the reactionary Three Worlds Theory. When confronted with the Russian invasion, these forces wound up calling for an Islamic Republic, using the argument that the resistance of the people was an Islamic resistance.

Centrism also had an important influence in the YPO from the beginning. Under its pressure, the YPO did not officially adopt a position against Soviet social-imperialism until the second general meeting. The centrists held back line struggle in the movement and undermined the struggle to achieve clarity on two main questions, the seizure of political power and preparation for People's War, and the necessity of forming a vanguard party.

In part due to this, the very existence of the YPO and its relation to *Shola-Javid* became known only when differences and criticisms of the organisation surfaced. As the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Communists of Afghanistan*, one of the participating groups in the unity process, observed: "...due to this policy ... a communist journal was not published, the organisation's pamphlets and articles remained internal, waging the ideological and political struggle against the revisionists and other reactionaries was disrupted, and it was not possible to wage struggle against the adventur-

ism of 'a historical view' and the economism of the criticsers on a national scale. As a result, the struggle to forge an ideological-political line and form a communist party was seriously interrupted."

A short while after the Fourth General Meeting of the YPO in 1972, the organisation proved incapable of dealing with the mounting difficulties and it was dissolved, although the Maoists continued to exist in different forms and organisations. As a later Maoist organisation observed: "As a whole the YPO general line and in particular the struggle against Khrushchev revisionism and the popularising of new-democratic thinking was a great achievement, but as a Maoist organisation the YPO failed to forge a more specific programme related to new-democratic revolution in the country and (its connection to the final goal of communism). Without precise principled criteria for political-ideological and organisational struggle, its active political life was paralysed...." (*Rstakhiz* – theoretical political organ of Struggle Organisation, 6 August 1994).

The YPO had gathered circles and forces who lacked the necessary political and ideological unity. They acted more like a front than a communist organisation, which rendered them incapable of dealing with the economist, centrist and adventurist lines that inevitably emerged. It is also true, however, that the immaturity and inexperience of the movement played an important role. These mistakes weakened the organisation and made it easier for the enemy forces to inflict fatal blows. The worst days, however, were to come later.

The Islamic forces also tried to respond politically to the growth of the radical left. In 1970, the "Young Muslims Organisation" was founded to counter the increased popularity of the left as a whole and *Shola-Javid* in particular. One of their first actions was the assassination of an outstanding Maoist speaker and organiser in Kabul University, Comrade Seidal Sokhandan, a vile deed that was carried out by Hekmatyar, who later became a feared warlord. Fearful of a response by the Maoists, Hekmatyar

fled to Pakistan where he lived under the protection of Pakistani Islamic fundamentalists and the Pakistan secret services, which went on to hook him up with the CIA during the war against Russia. In those difficult times, Hekmatyar put forward the idea that it was easier to beat the Russians than to defeat the Maoists. This served as a justification for the Islamic reactionaries to co-operate in certain ways with the Soviet occupation against the revolutionaries, a reactionary logic that was shared by the so-called Lion of the Panjshir, Ahmed Masood.

In 1973 a coup by Daud Khan, the cousin of Zahir Shah, sent Zahir Shah into exile in Italy. The revisionists in Khalq and Parcham, with their network of connections and the direct assistance of the Soviet embassy, now believed that they had a better chance to work from above and influence the big bourgeois compradors, and so cooperated with the coup. This coup boosted the influence of Soviet social-imperialism in Afghanistan and paved the way for the successive coups that followed, which ultimately led to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

The Maoists, though disorganised and disoriented by the dissolution of the YPO in 1972, nevertheless were able to carry on a serious resistance to the regime.

In 1975, Sorkha, the Peoples Liberation Organisation of Afghanistan, was founded while Daud Khan was still in power. This represented an attempt by the final leadership of YPO to reorganise the movement, but Sorkha in fact represented more the shortcomings and errors of the YPO than its strong points, in particular with regard to the question of the path to seizing power. In May 1976 a revisionist coup supported by Soviet social-imperialism put the Khalq party in power. This was not long before the October 1976 coup in China threw the Maoist movement around the world into confusion. Mired in eclectics and deprived of the former base area of world revolution, Sorkha proved unable to resist the brutal, savage attacks of the revisionists in power, who were determined to annihilate anything

associated with the *Shola* trend. Within a short time Sorkha had lost nearly all its leaders and activists, and ceased activity.

The years between 1976 and 1979 (when the Russian invasion took place) was an important period in the history of the communist movement of Afghanistan. The criticsers solidified their position around the Three Worlds theory, and the centrists consolidated their forces around the centrist force Samandar. At this time another group was formed, Struggle to Form the Communist Party of Afghanistan, which was known as Akhgar after its paper. Many of Akhgar's cadres had split from the Criticsers. They set their main task as the formation of a communist party and in 1976 raised the banner of Mao Tsetung Thought, sharply attacking the Three World Theory as well as the centrists around Samandar. However, many cadres, including a number of intellectuals in exile in Europe, were influenced by the dogmato-revisionist response of Enver Hoxha and the Albanian Party of Labour to the events in China. The leadership of Akhgar soon fell prey to Hoxhism and published a "critique" of Mao in *Akhgar*. The struggle to defend Mao's line continued but did not make much headway, and finally Akhgar as an organisation succumbed to liquidationism from 1983.

After the Soviet Invasion

The next period is marked by the invasion of Soviet social-imperialism in January 1980. The dominant forces during this period were the Islamic fundamentalists, due in particular to the military and financial help of the CIA and regional intelligence services (in particular Pakistan) and also due to the rise of the mullahs in Iran. The Maoists became increasingly disoriented due to the fundamental weaknesses in their political and ideological line, as well as the continuing crisis in the international communist movement as a result of the coup in China. They were unable to pull together and come up with a correct summation of past mistakes and correctly analyse the new situation

and, on that basis, seize the opportunity to build a communist party and wage a war-of resistance against the invaders as part of a people's war. Instead, most of the forces degenerated into appendages of various bourgeois and feudal jihadis. SAMA (Liberation Organisation of the People of Afghanistan), the strongest revolutionary organisation of this period, was formed in 1979. It grew out of a coming together of a number of forces that had belonged to the new-democratic movement (*Shola-Javid*) and also included some smaller groups that had formed independently after that time. But it is clear that the dominant section of SAMA's leadership was from the cefitrist section of the new-democratic movement.

SAMA was in fact essentially a front consisting of a wide range of forces with communist elements, including some who had a past in the YPO and the new-democratic movement. After the founding conference, it openly rejected any sign of past communist inclinations and, in the name of adopting language common to the people, it eliminated any socialist elements in its programme and made it a national-democratic programme. After the capture of Majid, the main leader of SAMA, and the split-off of a left faction (Samandar forces, the centrist faction in the YPO), SAMA retreated further and publicly withdrew the national-democratic programme, treating it instead as an "internal" programme. An "Islamic programme" was produced for open use. Upon being pressed, SAMA's leaders argued that "this is just a cover". They believed that using this Islamic cover could save them from the Islamic fundamentalists. History showed instead that, far from being a shield that could protect them from the sword of the Islamic fundamentalists, this tactic was suicidal poison for the revolutionary movement in Afghanistan.

A short while later, in the summer of 1981 a series of fights erupted between SAMA forces and forces of Hekmatyar's Islamic Party in the Kuhdaman region, during which

SAMA was successively defeated. In an effort to save SAMA, its leadership entered negotiations with the government. This led to crisis, followed by splits and desertions. It was the beginning of the end of SAMA, which went on to suffer further degeneration and contamination under the influence of the imperialists and Chinese revisionists.

Summation of the disastrous trajectory of SAMA has been decisive for forging a correct political and ideological line in the Afghanistan movement.

The New Communist Movement

The new communist movement of Afghanistan initially was inspired by the formation of RIM in 1984. The Committee for MLM Propaganda and Agitation (at that time understood as Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought, MLMTT) was formed in 1985 and started publishing *Shola*. Another group of comrades split from SAMA and obtained, read and discussed the RIM *Declaration*. They went on to call themselves the Revolutionary Nucleus and adopted the RIM line. These developments were a slap in the face to SAMA's leadership, who accused the newly organising Maoist forces of being a "KGB front". RIM used these forces to make some initial efforts to deepen its understanding of the situation in Afghanistan and begin to bring together the genuine Maoist forces.

Another group, the Organisation to Struggle for the Liberation of Afghanistan (Peykar), had formed in 1979 just before the Russian invasion and took part in the anti-Soviet resistance. Despite numerous difficulties, they managed to make some summation of the history of the communist movement in Afghanistan and to uphold MLMTT and later MLM, and to support RIM. Another group that supported RIM and Maoism was formed among the centrist forces of the Unity of Marxist-Leninists of Afghanistan (UMLA). This group broke with the centrists and, under the name of UMLA (Mao

Tsetung Thought Section), joined the new Maoist current.

So from the mid 1980s, under the influence of the political and ideological line of RIM, the new communist movement in Afghanistan began to emerge from a period of deviations and disorientations and take new organisational forms. The attempt to unite these forces into a vanguard party led in the early 1990s to the formation of the Consolidation and Unity Committee of the Communist Movement of Afghanistan. This Committee was initiated by the PAC and RN and then UMLA (MTT Section) and subsequently joined by Peykar. Despite its efforts, at this time continuing differences made it impossible to unite all these groups into a new party. RN and UMLA (MTT Section) formed the Revolutionary Organisation of Afghanistan, which became a RIM participant and later founded the Communist Party of Afghanistan. PAC joined the Party a few months later.

As the report to the Unity Congress states, "the foundation of the Communist Party of Afghanistan in 1991 was a qualitative rupture from the line that made the formation of the party an aim in itself and set various unnecessary and incorrect preconditions. Nevertheless, due to shortcomings that the whole MLM communist movement of Afghanistan, including the founders of the Communist Party in 1991, were suffering from, this ideological-political and organisational rupture was not able to successfully lead to uniting the communist movement of the country into a single party."

During the 1990s, the Communist Party of Afghanistan and Peykar each tried on their own to struggle and unite the different parts of the Maoist movement. And each had some success. These moves were welcomed by RIM, which vigorously promoted the struggle to unite the Maoist movement in Afghanistan. Another group, the Revolutionary Unity of the Workers of Afghanistan, though it supported a united Maoist party and RIM, had been limited by Taliban suppression to its own area. They now joined in the unity process.

It is now up to the new Party to actively intervene politically and ideologically to unite the many comrades who are still outside the Party or those who have been held captive by revisionist organisations such as SAMA and Rahaii. Those who are still yearning to be revolutionary communists need to check out the line of this new party and the embryonic international communist center that this Party is part of, RIM, and join with it to strengthen the Party and take its Programme to the masses, especially to the young generation, in order to prepare to launch a people's war of resistance against the imperialist invaders and the reactionary feudal forces, Islamic or other.

The Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan faces the crucial test of defending and applying Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in a complex ideological battlefield where monstrous crimes were committed by the Soviet Union cloaked as "communists" and where Islamic fundamental-

ism has had a deep and pernicious influence in the society. Only a vibrant and bold Maoism capable of answering the most demanding questions of the masses and responding to their deepest aspirations will be able to build upon the achievements of the early stages of the movement and offer a living alternative to all stripes of non-proletarian ideology, whether in its obscurantist, bourgeois-democratic or revisionist forms.

The Maoists in Afghanistan have won great respect from many masses, and the fire of Maoism that was lit by the YPO and its leaders, especially martyred Comrade Akram Yari, has never died. Though the incorrect lines that dominated the various sections of the communist movement after the disintegration of the YPO inflicted bitter blows to the movement, the new communist movement has now taken a giant step out of that period. The new communist movement in Afghanistan, inspired by the formation of RIM and the struggle of the Maoists the world

over, and by summing up past experience and learning the bitter lessons of that experience, has reorganised itself, giving rise to the Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan. As is stated in the report to the Unity Congress: "The successful conclusion of this congress and the uniting of the communist movement (MLM) into a single communist party will surely enable the MLMists in Afghanistan to complete the great struggle to prepare a revolutionary people's national resistance war against the invaders and their pitiful lackeys, as the present concrete form of People's War in Afghanistan, and as quickly as possible to raise the red banner of resistance in a principled way on the bloody battlefield of Afghanistan. This is the only way that our Party as a participant in RIM can rightfully assume its internationalist tasks and responsibilities." ■

Resolution of the Unity Congress of the Communist (MLM) Movement of Afghanistan

We have the honour and pride to announce that the communist (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) movement of Afghanistan is united in the Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan. This victorious stride is the result of the unification process of the MLM movement of Afghanistan, which culminated specifically in holding the successful Congress of the Party.

To respond in a principled and proper way to the needs of the communist and national-democratic struggle – leading to a victorious new-democratic revolution, socialism and world communism – it is crucial to unite the Marxist-Leninist-Maoists on the basis of a principled communist line. This essential task became imminent after the US launched an overall campaign of aggression after 11 September, specifically directed against Afghanistan. The communist movement of

Afghanistan responded to the challenge. Shortly after the aggression of the US and its allies against Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Maoists started to unite the communist movement of Afghanistan in a single party.

This process, despite ebbs and flows and turns and twists, proceeded successfully. The ideological and political struggle launched around the Draft Programme and the Constitution of the party proved to be an unprecedented ideological-political struggle that has been unique in the history of the communist movement of the country. From the start the process was marked by a significant international aspect and continued to develop and strengthen its proletarian aspects.

The process of uniting the communist movement of Afghanistan (MLM) benefited from the orientation of the RIM Committee. An outstanding example was RIM's

calling for the Joint Regional Conference of MLM Parties and Organisations of Iran and Afghanistan. The Conference, in addition to making advances in the process of uniting the communist movement of Afghanistan, was an important qualitative leap in strengthening the unity of the MLM movement in the region.

The Communist Party of Iran (MLM) demonstrated a comradely internationalist spirit and made qualitative contributions throughout the process of uniting the MLM movement of Afghanistan. Our Congress greatly appreciates this contribution and we hope our joint struggle in the region further strengthens our relationship in the future.

The common ground that was established in the process of struggle further advanced the communist movement of Afghanistan. One of the important aspects of the unification was the joint resolutions issued

by the organisations participating in the unity process.

The Unity Congress of the communist (MLM) movement of Afghanistan as the final step of the process to unite the MLM movement in a single party, that is, the Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan, was held by the Communist Party of Afghanistan, the Struggle Organisation for the Liberation of Afghanistan, and the Revolutionary Unity of Workers of Afghanistan.

The Congress began with the singing of the Internationale anthem. The participants engaged in an active struggle that culminated in a successful Congress. In adopting the Programme and the Constitution of the Party, as well as in electing the members of the leadership of the Party, they demonstrated a great spirit of internationalism. The report to the Congress was received and discussed by the Congress enthusiastically. The discussion of different sections of the Draft Programme and Constitution of the Party was marked by excellent struggle and a spirit of unity. The Programme and Constitution both were adopted by unanimous vote. In electing the leadership a high proletarian spirit was manifested by all the participant comrades.

Another strong point of the Congress was a message from the RIM Committee to the congress, which was received with great appreciation and enthusiasm. In response, the keynote speaker of the Congress reciprocated by expressing appreciation of the message. The Congress decided to deliver a comradely message in response to the RIM Committee's message.

The message to the Congress from the Communist Party of Iran (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) demonstrated its internationalist spirit as well as its keen interest in uniting the Maoist movement of Afghanistan in a single communist party. The Congress will respond to the message, showing its great appreciation for the comradely endeavours of the Communist Party of Iran (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist).

In the unity process, the com-

munist movement of Afghanistan was inspired by the advances of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) on the path of people's war. In the midst of holding the Congress we learned that the People's War in Nepal has made new advances, and this heightened the enthusiasm of our Congress. The Congress salutes the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and will send a message to this party.

The role of internationalist struggle of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA in preparing revolution in the USA, as well as in opposing the war of aggression led by US imperialism specifically in Afghanistan, is crucial to the international communist movement and to the people's resistance movement world-wide. At the present time, as Afghanistan is directly occupied by the US and its allies, the unity between our two people's struggles is an important task. We salute the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA and hope their struggle continues to be heightened.

The Unity Congress of the communist (MLM) movement of Afghanistan salutes and greets the Communist Party of Peru, the Maoist Communist Centre of India, the Maoist Communist Party [Turkey and North Kurdistan] and all the other participating parties and organisations of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement and all the Maoists world-wide, who are involved in revolutionary struggle against imperialism and reaction, and hopes for increasing success in their revolutionary struggle against the class enemy.

We declare that our Congress successfully concluded the process of uniting the Maoist movement of Afghanistan in a single Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan. The Unity Congress is confident that the organisational integration of different participant forces in the Congress on a principled basis and based on the Programme and Constitution of the Party in all different levels will be completed quickly and that the comrades will be able to carry out their revolutionary tasks united. The process of the Congress and its successful conclusion in a single communist

party, the Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan, is an important and qualitative step in the direction of the further development and advance of the Afghanistan Maoists to prepare, initiate, and develop the revolutionary and popular national war of resistance in Afghanistan against the imperialist invaders and national traitors, as the present concrete form of people's war in Afghanistan. This path must be travelled on a correct basis and as soon as possible so that the banner of the proletariat is hoisted in practice in the battlefields of the national war of resistance.

The unity of Maoists of Afghanistan in the single Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan is an achievement for the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement. Our Congress hopes that this achievement plays a positive role in serving the overall struggle of RIM.

The Communist Party of Afghanistan (Maoist) is the direct result of the successful conclusion of the unity process of the Maoist movement in Afghanistan. The banner of this Party is the banner of all Maoists of Afghanistan. The Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan invites all Maoists of the country to step forward to join the Party in order to be able to carry out their national-democratic task based on proletarian principles.

The Congress concluded with the singing of the Internationale.

Long Live the Unity Congress of the Communist Movement (MLM) of Afghanistan!

Long Live the Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan !

Long Live the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement!

Down with the US Imperialist Invaders and Their Allies!

Step Forward to Initiate and Develop the Revolutionary National War of Resistance!

The Unity Congress of the communist (MLM) movement of Afghanistan

1 May 2004 ■

The Fall of Saddam's Regime and Its Lessons for the Future

By J.F.

The war in Iraq can be divided roughly into two phases: firstly, the US invasion and war against Saddam Hussein's regime, which ended in the complete defeat of the Iraqi army and US President George W. Bush's declaration of victory ("Mission Accomplished") on 1 May 2003, and secondly, the guerrilla war against the occupation, which broke out in Falluja on that same date, and has continued gathering strength ever since. The first of the following two articles was written shortly after the first phase, which it examines in depth, and before the guerrilla struggle blossomed. A companion piece, written in January 2005, applies the lessons drawn in the first article to these later developments.

—AWTW

It seemed clear to just about everyone that toppling the regime of Saddam Hussein, capturing Baghdad and establishing control over the rest of Iraq would be an undertaking of considerably greater scope and difficulty than what was essentially a drive-by shooting in Afghanistan. Although Iraq's armed forces were significantly weakened as a result of the war with the US-led imperialist coalition in 1991 and the decade of economic sanctions that followed, they were still estimated to number somewhere between 280,000 and 350,000 soldiers, with several thousand tanks and artillery pieces, as well as many thousands of rocket-propelled grenades, anti-tank missiles and light mortars. Their level of



Shiites in Karbala, Iraq, where scores were killed in bombings, shouting anti-U.S. slogans. Americans, not Sunni Muslims, have been the focus of their anger, even according to the New York Times, March, 2004.

armament, training, organisation and experience – including the war with Iran that lasted almost a decade and the war against the US that followed shortly thereafter – far exceeded that of the Taleban.

On the other hand, something that increased the US imperialists' confidence that they would achieve a relatively quick victory in their assault on Iraq was the fact that they had already been waging a "low-intensity" war against Iraq for years. This was a multi-faceted campaign lasting over a decade designed to weaken and if possible prompt the overthrow of the regime. Among the key elements of this effort was the economic embargo placed on Iraq. The UN took over control of Iraqi oil

exports and the funds generated by the sale of that oil. With just a few exceptions Iraq was prohibited from importing any new weapons or spare parts for its existing heavy weapons systems (artillery, tanks, aircraft, etc.). This resulted in a severe degrading of Iraq's military strength. The restrictions on the import of food and medicine led to a general decline in public health and fitness, which also degraded Iraq's fighting capability.¹ The US used arms inspections to carry out extensive spying operations in Iraq, allowing it to develop detailed information on Iraq's communications systems and the location of vital military facilities, etc. Finally, the US, together with the UK, carried out what was more or less a



Thousands of Sunni and Shiite Iraqis head for Fallujah with food and medical supplies. April 2004.



continuous bombing campaign against Iraq, purportedly to protect their planes patrolling the so-called "no-fly" zones in northern and southern Iraq. In fact, these bombings were principally designed to degrade and even destroy Iraq's anti-aircraft defences.²

This campaign reached its high point in October 1998 when the US Congress passed the Iraq Liberation Act and US President Clinton announced that it was official US policy to bring about regime change in Iraq. On 18 December 1998 the US launched "Operation Desert Fox". In a kind of dress rehearsal for the war in 2003, the US created an "inspections crisis", claiming falsely that Iraq was not co-operating with the UN inspectors. The inspectors were withdrawn and US President Clinton ordered a military strike that included the firing of 415 cruise missiles at targets in Iraq, 90 more than were used in the entire 1991 Gulf War, and the dropping of over 600 laser-guided bombs. The US was apparently hoping that this attack would trigger a coup against Saddam, which did not materialise. However, the attack did add to the overall damage to and decline of Iraqi military capabilities.

Operation Desert Fox was followed by a stepped-up bombing campaign in 1999. This reached such intensity that by August 1999 the Pentagon announced that Anglo-American air forces had fired over 1,100 missiles at 359 different targets in Iraq – three times the number fired during Desert Storm in 1991. During the build-up to the



In Baghdad's Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City, an Iraqi artist puts the final touches to a wall painting based on the US Statue of Liberty and a widely published photograph of a tortured detainee at Abu Ghraib prison. May 2004.

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invasion beginning in March 2003, the bombing campaign was stepped up again with special attention being paid to trying to disrupt and destroy Iraqi command and control capabilities (e.g. military headquarters and communications networks).

This decade-long military "softening-up" operation combined with economic sanctions had the desired results, ensuring that when the US-led forces invaded Iraq in March 2003 they faced an Iraqi military whose arms and equipment were outdated and in a poor state of repair, with severely degraded anti-aircraft defences and a communication system that was largely disrupted. Its soldiers (and the overall population as well) had a general health and fitness level significantly below that of the invading forces.

Looked at in conventional terms, the contest could have hardly been more unequal. One side included the world's most powerful military machine, backed up by its largest and most advanced economy. The US-led



Fallujah youth holds up sign that says "Fallujah will be the graveyard of America."

forces enjoyed complete air superiority and bases around the Gulf, Middle East, Turkey, Indian Ocean, the United Kingdom and the US itself from which to launch assault and bombing raids and which were beyond the reach of any Iraqi counter-attacks. The other side, Iraq, was a semi-feudal, semi-colonial

country whose population, relatively small industrial base and military had been devastated by a decade of economic sanctions and almost continuous military attacks.

In addition, due to its reactionary anti-people character, Saddam's regime, which up until 1990 had loyally served as the local overlord

and enforcer for its imperialist masters, had no perspective of mobilising the one element that could have made a significant difference in its favour: the masses of people. It was the certain knowledge of the isolated nature of Saddam's regime and Iraq's significantly weakened economic and military strength that gave the US rulers a high degree of assuredness that they would relatively quickly succeed in their drive on Baghdad. Feeling fairly secure that another cheap "victory" was at hand, the US imperialists displayed the cynical arrogance for which they are so well known, dubbing the rape of Iraq that was about to take place "Operation Iraqi Freedom".³

In effect the US military planners were looking to pull off a Blitzkrieg (lightning war) whose focus was to take Baghdad, overthrow the regime and thereby end all organised resistance by the Iraqi military. In this offensive – as in most of their wars for colonial conquest – the US rulers were seeking rapid success in which their losses and the sacrifice faced by their troops (and the population at home) would be kept to a minimum, and just as importantly, political opposition to their actions – both at home and around the world – would not have time to develop and spread. Many of the essential features of the US strategy and tactics were shaped by these necessities.

In particular, the strategy of the US imperialists must on some level take into account that, like all imperialist armies, the US Army is beset with contradictions. The most important of these is the fact that the bulk of its soldiers are drawn from the ranks of the proletariat itself. In fighting such wars the majority of its soldiers are objectively acting against their own class interests. This remains true even when, as a result of a combination of imperialist chauvinism, lies and compulsion, they "volunteer" for duty. Thus, when their losses begin to mount and the hardships in general rise with the length of deployment in unfriendly territory their morale is bound to fall. If these factors are combined with political exposure of the real aims of

an imperialist aggression, their resolve to bear sacrifice and to fight will be even more undermined. In fact, in such circumstances it is possible that actual opposition and resistance to a particular imperialist military adventure – and even to imperialism in general, as happened in Vietnam – will emerge within the imperialists' own armed forces. The latter continues to haunt the US ruling class and its top generals today.

Thus, even if the US and other imperialists themselves are incapable of fully recognising it, with all their high-tech weapons and massive fire power, in the final analysis Mao's famous statement about the relation of people and weapons in war holds true: "Weapons are an important factor in war, but not the decisive factor; it is people, not things, that are decisive. The contest of strength is not only a contest of military and economic power, but also a contest of human power and morale. Military and economic power is necessarily wielded by people." (Mao Tsetung, "On Protracted War", *Selected Works*, Vol. II, pp. 143-44) This truth underlies the necessity for all imperialist armies to seek quick victory. Especially when a quick victory cannot be achieved, one of their greatest strategic weaknesses – the contradiction between their reactionary imperialist aims, interests and methods and the fact that "military and economic power is necessarily wielded by people" – can begin to come into play and to lay the basis for their possible defeat.

Originally the US's plan of attack called for its forces to open two fronts – in the north through Turkey and the area of northern Iraq under Kurdish control and in the south from Kuwait – and to converge on Baghdad from both directions. The idea was to force the Iraqis to split their forces to the north and south of the Iraqi capital, thus weakening both fronts. This plan suffered a serious blow when mass resistance in Turkey to the attack on Iraq led to the Turkish parliament refusing to give approval for the movement of US troops through Turkish territory and

into Iraq. This gave rise to a fairly significant controversy within the US's leading circles and especially between the political and military leadership. With an entire division tied up off the Turkish coast, some of the US's top generals wanted more time to move these and other troops into position in the Gulf before starting the assault. The US political leadership overruled them and ordered the attack to begin without much delay.

This controversy and its resolution once again highlights the interconnection between war and politics. Over the entire planning process for the war the political leadership demanded that the fewest troops possible be assigned to the task. The military leadership, very aware of the uncertainty of war and steeped in their doctrine of applying overwhelming force, consistently insisted on using more forces than the civilian leadership were inclined to commit. This controversy became so heated that when US Army Chief of Staff General Shinseki publicly called for many more troops than the US administration was prepared to employ, his replacement was announced a year before his scheduled retirement. This effectively discredited him and undercut his authority.

This desire to use as few troops as possible and accept the resulting military risks was driven by *political* considerations. The imperialists are faced with a great political necessity of maintaining public support for their wars of aggression. At least at the outset of such wars the promise of quick and relatively painless victory is an important tool for achieving this aim. In addition, in the overall strategic concept currently being implemented by the US imperialists *the seizure of Iraq was just one step in a whole series of military aggressions* it is planning to carry out in order to reshape the world in its interests and cement its hegemony. If at that point they had conceded that the number of troops needed to implement their plans in Iraq was as high as what many of their own generals were saying, the attack on Iraq would have to have

been postponed for at least months – thereby putting the whole enterprise in jeopardy – and the promise of quick and painless victory in their offensive as a whole would have been undermined.

This fact created a great compulsion to seek a way of moving these plans forward with the smallest possible troop commitment. Such compulsion – which ultimately stems from their class position – is also an important factor underlying their inability to take a fully materialist approach to understanding the world in general and military affairs in particular. It can lead to them making strategic miscalculations and even fatal mistakes.⁴ Whether or not at the time (or currently) the US war planners actually believed they could conquer and pacify Iraq with the troop levels they predicted, no one can say for sure – most likely there were and are major differences of opinion in their ranks on this. The essential thing is that they were determined to go ahead, and their political goals and necessities had to take precedence in military affairs.

Three specific factors were involved in the US decision to push ahead without delay: 1) Key US decision-makers were confident that Iraq's weakened military would be no match for the juggernaut they intended to field. 2) The US was desperate to get its forces into place and launch the attack no later than the end of March so as to avoid major fighting in the oppressive heat of the Iraqi summer. 3) The international movement against the planned invasion was growing at a speed that caught almost all observers off-guard and was causing the political cost of the coming war to rise daily. When combined with the open split between the US and France, Russia and Germany, and the efforts of these last three countries to use diplomatic manoeuvres to delay – if not actually prevent – the start of the war, the US felt compelled to attempt to short-circuit all opposition by launching the invasion. They also had a great specific necessity to stop the UN inspectors, who were at the time in Iraq looking for Saddam's supposed

"weapons of mass destruction". The inspectors were finding nothing, including at those sites identified by the US as "certainly" containing such weapons. The US rulers were well aware that these weapons most likely did not exist and that if the inspectors were allowed to continue the inspections for several months longer the US's *casus belli* – the pretext of Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction that was supposed to justify the war – ran a great risk of being exposed for the ruse it was.

To carry out its plans, the US and its allies drew together an attack force of impressive size and power. At the time the war began, the US-led forces in the Gulf Region and other areas surrounding Iraq numbered over 270,000 personnel and were armed with over 1,300 armoured vehicles (tanks and armoured personnel carriers), hundreds of artillery pieces and rocket launchers (self-propelled and towed), hundreds of helicopters (including almost 150 AH-64 Apache attack helicopters), over 1,000 advanced jet aircraft (both carrier- and ground-based, including strategic bombers using airfields in the Indian Ocean, the UK and the US itself), six carrier battle groups and dozens of other warships armed with 2,100 Tomahawk cruise missiles capable of carrying both conventional as well as nuclear warheads (of which there were also at least several hundred in theatre). These forces were assisted by a multi-layered airborne and space-based surveillance, navigation and communications network made up of various types of piloted aircraft (U2, AWACS, RC-135, EP-3E, JSTARS, etc.), unmanned drones (Hunter, Global Hawk and Predator) and as many as 100 satellites (military, GPS, weather and commercial earth-sensing). By the time the operation was completed a total of 467,000 US military personnel were deployed world-wide to support it. This included 30 per cent of all active-duty US military personnel.

As these force levels show, the claim made by the US imperialists that in the "new warfare" light and highly mobile forces would be cen-

tral to future wars was – at least in the case of Iraq – quickly put to rest. This was to be a massive armour and air assault using the heaviest divisions currently in existence anywhere in the world. In addition to all these troops and military hardware, the US launched an extensive psychological warfare operation. US agents in southern Iraq established radio and television stations and printed millions of copies of leaflets claiming that the Iraqi people would be free after Saddam's regime was defeated and spreading the lie that the occupying aggressors would be their "liberators".

With its original plan of moving the 4th Infantry Division through Turkey to attack from the north no longer viable, and faced with tremendous time pressure to launch the attack before the end of March, the US military was forced to make some modifications to its original plans. The principal ground assault would be launched from Kuwait in the south heading north toward Baghdad, with two main forces proceeding parallel to one another. To the east the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (including one British division) would move toward Baghdad from the south-east along a route that for the most part lay between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (crossing to the east of the Tigris as it approached Baghdad), and to the west the US Army V Corps would approach Baghdad from the south-west along a route that lay mainly west of the Euphrates and which led through the Karbala Gap.

As mentioned, the necessity of achieving a quick victory while holding US casualties to a minimum was reflected in the plan of attack. It was designed to be a shock attack whose speed and firepower would overwhelm the Iraqi forces, destroying any major troop concentrations with air attacks, long-range artillery and armour, thereby preventing any significant counter-attacks. Since speed was of the essence, the major population centres and urban combat were to be avoided to the greatest extent possible. At the same time, any Iraqi forces along the planned route of advance that refused to

surrender were to be engaged and destroyed. The principal objective was to proceed north, and encircle and capture Baghdad. The US rulers were fairly certain that by concentrating on capturing Baghdad they could bring about the fall of the regime, and that this would result in the rapid end of any significant military resistance. They were even hoping that the regime might collapse before that, either as a result of a “decapitation” strike (killing the regime’s leadership) or just the shock of the invasion itself coupled with the capitulationist inclinations that are fairly widespread in such a comprador regime.⁵

In addition to this main axis of attack the first actual objective of the US forces was to capture Iraq’s southern oil fields. Along with this, the British forces were tasked with capturing the port city of Um Qasr and Basra, Iraq’s second-largest city, which is on the Shat al Arab waterway not far from both the Gulf, the border with Iran and the southern oil fields. Special Operations Forces (SOF – Green Berets, Navy Seals, etc.) were deployed in large numbers to the west of Baghdad in the area extending to the border with Jordan and tasked with capturing key objectives in that region (mainly airfields, etc.). This was also intended to tie down additional Iraqi forces away from the main line of attack.

To the north, although the assault on Baghdad from that direction had to be cancelled, the US brought in a large number of SOF to lead the troops of the KDP and PUK, the two main Kurdish political parties, which were collaborating with the imperialists. These forces were reinforced by the US 173rd Airborne Brigade, which flew from bases in Europe and parachuted into northern Iraq with around 1,000 soldiers. Ironically, the real military significance of this action was probably aimed more at Turkey than at Iraq. Turkey continues to claim large areas of northern Iraq, including the city of Mosul and the oil fields north of Kirkuk, as its own. Deploying the 173rd in this way was certainly meant as a clear signal to Turkey that

it should not attempt to take advantage of the impending war to move into and occupy the Kurdish areas of Iraq. The US was counting on using the Kurdish forces for its own aims. A Turkish invasion would have certainly produced serious fighting between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds, threatening a collapse of the US alliance with these forces. It also would have created serious contradictions between the US and the comprador elements in Iraq that the US was seeking to unite around its banner. Undoubtedly the US commanders also hoped that this well-publicised action might also tie down more Iraqi troops in the north and keep them from joining the defence of Baghdad. The US military later estimated that when the war started approximately 40 per cent of Iraq’s regular forces were stationed on the front north of Baghdad.

As stated above, the US estimated the opposing Iraqi force to be at 280,000 to 350,000 troops organised in 17 divisions – no more than a third of the numerical strength that Iraq had at the beginning of the 1991 Gulf War. Approximately 2,200 tanks of all types, 2,400 armoured personnel carriers and 4,000 artillery pieces were presumed to be in the Iraqi inventory. Much of this equipment was considered to be obsolete or in a poor state of repair.

In contrast to the 1991 Gulf War and contrary to many people’s expectations, the ground invasion was not preceded by weeks of a discrete campaign of aerial bombardments. There were two reasons for this. The first is that the US decided to try to eliminate Iraqi resistance by launching a surprise cruise missile and bombing attack aimed at killing Saddam Hussein and other top leaders of his regime at 50 separate locations (all of which failed).⁶ Launching this attack on 20 March forced them to set into motion the other portions of their land attack, in particular the seizure of the southern oil fields, which the US imperialists, for obvious reasons, considered one of their key strategic objectives. The second reason for not preceding the ground invasion with an air

campaign was the fact that an air campaign had been going on for the past 10 years. Thus, there was little need to repeat the pattern of what had been done in 1991. The necessary damage had already been inflicted.

A particular advantage that the US was counting on was complete control of the air space over the battle area. This would enable the unrestricted use of its vast array of aerial reconnaissance assets to find any major Iraqi troop concentrations that might confront its advancing forces and would offer the chance to severely weaken if not destroy them utilising air attacks and long-range artillery before the US troops would have to engage the Iraqi defenders directly on the ground. For the way the US and other imperialist armies fight, this kind of “force multiplier”,⁷ as they call it, is a crucial advantage.

In the context of this overall matrix of freedom and necessity, the US decided it was safe enough to implement what it called a “rolling deployment”: starting their offensive before their follow-on forces – the forces they would be using to secure their lines of communication and rear area – were completely deployed in theatre. This approach was somewhat controversial before the war actually began, but would at least in this instance prove to be workable. As we will see, the much bigger gamble involved not the number of troops they would need to topple Saddam’s regime, but what it would take to consolidate their control over the country once Baghdad was taken.

The Assault: 19 Days to Baghdad

On 20 March 2004 at 5:34 AM local time in Baghdad, US and UK forces attempted to kill Saddam Hussein and other top members of the Iraqi regime with the above-mentioned series of missile and bombing attacks. Shortly thereafter the US-led coalition began large-scale ground operations.

The “decapitation” strike failed to achieve its goal and on the night of 21-22 March more air strikes were carried out. On that night alone the

number of sea- and air-launched cruise missiles used was three times greater than the number launched throughout the entire 1991 Gulf War. Compared to "Desert Storm" (the 1991 Gulf War) where in 43 days 283 Tomahawk cruise missiles were used, in "Operation Iraqi Freedom" somewhere around 1,000 Tomahawk cruise missiles and several thousand smart bombs were launched or dropped in just the first 15 days. In the campaign as a whole US and allied aircraft conducted about 41,000 sorties, of which 20,000 were strikes. Approximately 20,000 guided munitions were dropped, almost 70 per cent of all bombs dropped. In contrast only around 7 per cent of all bombs dropped in the 1991 Gulf War were guided

munitions.

On Day 5 the US-invaders had reached an Nasiriyah, a city of about 500,000 people, about a third of the 500 kilometre distance between the Kuwaiti border and Baghdad, and were pushing forward. By Day 10 the US forces attacking along the western route were gathering between Najaf and Karbala and preparing to attack Iraq's last major line of defence before Baghdad. To the east the 1st MEF was advancing, but had not reached quite as far north. At this point the US was reporting just 28 Americans dead, 16 missing in action and 107 wounded. On Day 15 elements of the US 3rd Infantry Division (3rd ID, part of the US V Corps) had pushed through the Karbala Gap and were attacking

Baghdad Airport. By Day 20 the battle against US Army forces who had attacked Baghdad from the south and southwest had shifted to central Baghdad, while on the eastern side of the city the 1st Marine Division (part of the 1 MEF attacking from the south-east and east) crossed the Diyala River and captured the Rasheed Air Base in the eastern part of Baghdad. The next day, 9 April, units of the 1st Marine Division, moving through Baghdad from the east, linked up with the US 3rd ID, holding positions in the central city. This was the day that US soldiers tore down a statue of Saddam Hussein in a scene staged for television and shown non-stop around the world in an effort to convince world public opinion that

The Masses vs. High-Tech Weapons: The Defeat

While the imperialists trumpet the superiority of their high-tech weapons and rely on them to carry out their stand-off attacks and generally intimidate the masses, at least one battle during the invasion demonstrated that this "superiority" is not always what it is made out to be. On the night of 23 March the US Army ordered the 11th Attack Helicopter Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division to attack and destroy the armour and artillery of the Medina Division of the Republican Guard. Thirty-one AH-64D Apache attack helicopters – the most advanced attack helicopters in the US inventory – were expected to carry out what the US military calls a "deep-attack" and complete this mission. In the first Gulf War the Apache, costing over \$20 million apiece, had been used to great effectiveness against Iraqi armour. These aircraft were credited with destroying hundreds of Iraqi tanks and armoured personnel carriers. But on the night of 23 March something very different happened, throwing into question the viability of the

Army's helicopter deep-attack doctrine as a whole.

The 31 Apaches of the 11 AHR began lifting off from Objective RAMS at 1:15 in the morning. This was over two hours later than originally planned and would mean that they would not be accompanied by a protective force of fighter-bombers as is usually the case. This delay was mainly a result of problems in refuelling the aircraft at the temporary refuelling station that the US had set up in the desert. During take-off one of the Apaches became disorientated in the cloud of sand and dust that a helicopter causes in the Iraqi desert and crashed. The rest then set out to find and engage the Medina Division's 2nd Armoured Brigade, which they believed they had located through aerial surveillance. They were confident in their mission and felt safe since the US had been able to destroy most of Iraq's anti-aircraft defences. Given the US's complete air superiority and large-scale deployment of aerial surveillance of various types, any time Iraqi anti-aircraft radar was

turned on the US was usually able to locate and attack it relatively quickly. But as the Apaches travelled north, the US battle summary reports that all of the lights in the area, including in the cities of Al Haswah and Al Iskandariyah, blinked out for approximately two seconds. Immediately after that "the sky erupted".

All 30 Apaches came under intensive rifle and light machine-gun fire. One was shot down and its two pilots captured. But more significantly all 29 other Apaches were hit and the entire regiment was forced to break off the attack and return to base. There it was determined that on average each aircraft had suffered 15-20 bullet holes. One had a total of 29 holes. It took 30 days to return the entire regiment to full operational capability.

The tactic employed against the American attack was simple but effective. Knowing that it is standard US practice to precede ground forces with large-scale air attacks with planes followed by helicopters, soldiers and civilians in an entire area covering a number of square

the imperialist invaders were being welcomed as "liberators". By Day 26, 14 April, Saddam had fled Baghdad, and his regime along with its military had essentially collapsed, and US-led forces had pretty much consolidated their control over Baghdad and over most of Tikrit, the last major bastion of organised resistance by Iraqi armed forces.

In 19 days the US-led invaders captured Baghdad and after 26 days they had achieved their essential goal of toppling the Saddam regime and ending all organised resistance by the regime's military (both regular and irregular forces). Everything had certainly not gone according to plan (more on this point below), but it is a material fact that in three and a half weeks they had succeeded in

advancing over 500 kilometres and had militarily defeated the Iraqi Army along the way. The US claims that in this operation it suffered 109 killed in action and 545 wounded (of which 119 returned to duty within 72 hours). Iraqi military casualties are estimated to be between 10,000 and 20,000 soldiers killed, with perhaps twice that number wounded. Beyond this basic fact, a determined defence of Baghdad, which Saddam had promised and many had expected, did not materialise. All of this raises very sharply a number of questions: why did the Iraqi military fall apart so quickly; was the relatively rapid defeat of the Saddam regime evidence that there is some truth to the claims being made by the US imperialists that their high-tech

weapons have fundamentally changed the nature of warfare; have the imperialists, and in particular the US, become so strong that nothing can defeat them; and if they can be defeated what will it take to do it?

Why and How the US Won so Quickly at so Little Initial Cost

"War is the continuation of politics.' In this sense war itself is a political action... But war has its own particular characteristics and in this sense it cannot be equated with politics in general. 'War is the continuation of politics by other... means.'... It can therefore be said that politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed." (Mao Tsetung, "On Protracted

of the 11th Attack Helicopter Regiment

kilometres were mobilised and told to expect a formation of US helicopters coming from the south some time that night. The US believes that the blinking lights were a signal to commence firing. By firing in a predetermined direction or quadrant the object was not to hit a specific helicopter (which is relatively difficult even if they are flying at low altitude), but rather to create a wall of bullets the helicopters would fly into.

To quote the US analysis, "...the Iraqi air defence 'system' was arguably not vulnerable to traditional [methods of US attack: since these] could not realistically suppress several hundred Iraqis distributed throughout a densely populated urban area firing small arms and light air defence artillery... They [the Iraqi defenders] developed a simple, yet sophisticated air defence 'system' virtually impossible to detect and suppress... US forces are very effective at destroying air defence radars that radiate and missile/gun systems, [so] the Iraqis avoided using these as cornerstones

in their network. Rather than using radar, the Iraqis appear to have relied on ground observers who reported on cellular phones and low-power radios. Finally, flickering the city lights warned the shooters to be prepared to engage. Rather than relying on easily targetable missile or gun systems, the Iraqis' main weapon systems were the small arms widely distributed among the general population. With rudimentary training on where to shoot (at the apex over power lines), even paramilitary troops could contribute to an air defence engagement area... Once the fight started, the fires were so dispersed and distributed among populated areas that they were virtually impossible to suppress. Consequently, the Iraqis executed an air defence operation in which the early warning and tracking systems operated below the US ability to detect and destroy; equally important, the Iraqis distributed their air defence weapons so widely that they could not be tracked or suppressed; and they decentralised their command and control so that it could not

be effectively disrupted. The Iraqis, in this instance at least, used the decade between the wars to develop tactics that produced a highly survivable and effective air defence capability...."

In other words, by relying on and mobilising the masses, the Iraqis found a "low tech" way to defeat what the US Army considers one of its most advanced and powerful weapon systems. The consequences of this incident were much greater than just the embarrassment of losing an Apache to fire coming mainly from lightly armed peasants in Iraq. This defeat resulted in the US military having to fundamentally review its entire attack helicopter doctrine. The result: the \$14 billion programme to build the Comanche, a "stealth" attack helicopter designed to evade radar defences, was promptly cancelled since it dawned on the Pentagon that the masses in Iraq had used no radar at all. ■



Officers and fighters of the 8th Route Army during the People's War Mao led against Japanese occupation. On the blackboard — "We are arming our understanding with Marxist-Leninist theory."



Vietnam, 1966. Guerrillas build traps in the jungle against US soliders.

War", *Selected Works*, Vol. II, pp. 152-3.)

To more fundamentally understand the war in Iraq, its course of development and its outcome, we have to start by understanding the politics of which it was a continuation. For the US imperialists (and the other imperialists allied with them) this was a war of colonial conquest — a reactionary war that is a key element of a long-planned offensive to reorganise the entire Middle East, Gulf region and Central Asia (the "Greater Middle East" as they call it) firmly under the control of US imperialism. The "Greater Middle East" project is itself a central element of the US imperialists' drive for world hegemony. It is essentially an attempt to seize the historic opportunity presented by the collapse of the social-imperialist Soviet Union (a once socialist country turned imperialist) and its bloc and cement for decades to come the US's current position as the dominant imperialist power in the world. The strategy and tactics the imperialists applied in this war are a continuation of these politics. Their reliance on massive firepower and the enormous number of civilian casualties this produces, the need for



Masses in Raucana, just outside Lima, Peru, dig trenches to stop police and military vehicles. 1995.

huge quantities of munitions and high-tech weapons, their necessity to seek quick victory and their blatant lies about their motives and goals are all expressions of their politics – their basic class position and the interests and goals that flow from this.

For the Iraqi people the struggle against the US-led invasion was (and is) a just struggle against imperialist aggression and domination. The most serious obstacle it faced in waging this struggle was the Saddam regime ruling over it and the fundamental comprador character of that regime. Comprador means that it represents the interests of reactionary exploiters and oppressors who themselves serve and are dependent upon foreign capital – on imperialism – for their position, even though they may have conflicts with one or more imperialist regimes at any given moment. As this war again showed, more often than not such regimes cannot and will not mobilise the masses of people to wage a determined struggle against imperialist aggression, and certainly not one that relies on the conscious fighting desire and spirit of the masses of people as its basic strength. These types of regimes

represent the interests of a tiny minority that is oppressing and exploiting the vast majority for their own interests and those of the imperialists on whom they are economically dependent. They cannot truly mobilise and arm the broad masses to fight imperialist domination and aggression without endangering their own grip on the population. But it is exactly the mobilisation of the broad masses to fight in their own interests that is crucial in waging a just war against a powerful reactionary enemy. As Mao wrote in “On Protracted War”, “The richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of people.” (*Selected Works*, Vol. II, p. 186).

The imperialists tried to rally the masses in the imperialist countries – including their own soldiers – with lies and demagoguery about “weapons of mass destruction”, “international law” and the “liberation” of Iraq, etc., combined with appeals to imperialist chauvinism. The latter was and is being applied in extremely large doses, especially in the US itself. Thus, while in Europe the ruling classes were issuing dire warnings about “anti-Americanism” and the “danger” of calling the US

“imperialist”, the US ruling class and its mouth pieces were openly proclaiming that indeed the US should dominate the world. They even went so far as to publicly discuss how the time had come for the US to openly pursue an admitted “imperialist” foreign policy (though they weren’t using the word imperialism in the Leninist sense), and how “benign” US world hegemony is the best and only way to “civilise” and “democratise” the world.

Saddam hoped that by political and diplomatic manoeuvring, aligning himself with Russia and the west European imperialists – particularly France and Germany – he could delay and ultimately prevent the invasion. After all, he knew full well that there were no weapons of mass destruction.⁸ This strategy required a lot of bluster about the massive casualties that would be inflicted on the invading forces, raising the spectre of political upheaval throughout the Middle East and other parts of the world, including talk about turning Baghdad into another “Stalingrad”, etc. *In fact in the lead-up to the invasion no large-scale mobilisation of the population or all-around preparations for waging a protracted war of resistance in Iraq ever took place.* The armed forces were deployed, some defensive measures were taken and the so-called Saddam Feddayim and Baath Party militia (irregular forces drawn mainly from regime supporters) were mobilised, but the broad masses as a whole were not actively drawn into the preparations for the struggle or the fighting itself. In retrospect it is clear that Saddam and his regime had no real outlook or plans for actually trying to defeat an invasion and occupation. Their entire strategy revolved around their diplomatic manoeuvres aimed at somehow stopping an attack from happening.

The fundamental class character of every state structure – whether it serves the interests of a minority of exploiters or the interests of the majority in their struggle against the foundations and consequences of class society – has a decisive impact on the nature and structure of its

armed forces. The armed forces of Saddam's comprador regime were principally tasked with suppressing the masses and pursuing the regime's regional aspirations in the context and under the overall domination of imperialist power relations. Of necessity these overall political and social relations were reflected in relations between the officers and soldiers in the Iraqi armed forces themselves and overall played an important role in determining the morale and fighting spirit of the basic soldiers. It was thus unavoidable that the reactionary nature of the regime and its long history of crimes against the people could only serve to weaken the Iraqi armed forces' capacity to wage the kind of determined struggle that would be necessary to resist the coming invasion.

Despite this fundamental weakness imposed upon them, in many instances the Iraqi soldiers fought with determination and bravery against the US-led invaders. But, along with the fact that the broad masses were never mobilised to support them in the struggle, they were saddled with military leaders who for the most part were incompetent and often cowardly. In a comprador regime the officer corps is not only loyal to the ruling class, but is also made up of people who – especially the higher one goes in the hierarchy – have close political ties, and often even family ties to the regime itself. Their level of competency in military affairs is secondary⁹ and their ability and desire to wage a determined life-and-death struggle under difficult conditions are in most cases non-existent. Such handicaps in a war with an enemy possessing greater economic and military power are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to overcome.

"Unquestionably, victory or defeat in a war is determined mainly by the military, political, economic and natural conditions on both sides. But not by these alone. It is also determined by each side's subjective ability in directing the war. In his endeavour to win a war, a military

strategist cannot overstep the limitations imposed by the material conditions; within these limitations, however, he can and must strive for victory. The stage of action for a military strategist is built upon objective material conditions, but on that stage he can direct the performance of many a drama, full of sound and colour, power and grandeur." (Mao Tsetung, "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War", *Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 238)

In terms of technology, advanced weapons, overall military strength and economic power the US and its allies were clearly superior to Iraq. Does that mean that Iraq was under all circumstances predestined to lose the war, that there was no room left on "the stage of action" to "strive for victory"? And in a broader sense, does it mean that a small country like Iraq can never defeat a powerful opponent like the USA? Despite the initial success of the US-led coalition in Iraq the answer to both these questions is very clearly no. A closer look at the invasion of Iraq and its aftermath helps to illustrate this.

**US Dependence on Advanced
Weapons and Massive Logistics:
A Two-edged Sword**

One of the US's most important strengths is its huge quantity of heavy and advanced weapons: armour, artillery, missiles, rockets, aircraft, satellite surveillance, communications, radar, etc. All of this provides the US military with tremendous firepower and especially with a deadly stand-off capability: the ability to concentrate fire on targets accurately at great distances and out of range of the opponent. This is an expression of the fact that, as Mao pointed out, while strategically imperialism and all reactionaries are "paper tigers", tactically they are "real tigers which can devour people".

The US military is especially noted for considering warfare to be chiefly a logistical problem – the idea that the key to winning lies principally in overwhelming the enemy with so much firepower that

the opposing forces are simply crushed. This approach reflects both the material position of the US – its tremendous technological and industrial strength – and the class position and outlook of its rulers and officer corps – seeing weapons and not people as decisive. It is, therefore, no wonder that the concept "amateurs study tactics, while professionals study logistics" is a widely held belief within the US officer corps.

Of course no armed force can exist or function without taking logistics into consideration, but the US army's approach to this question has historically taken on almost perverse proportions. For example, one study estimated that in Vietnam the US forces expended between 30,000 and 50,000 rifle and light machine gun rounds for every liberation fighter it claimed to have killed. And since their claims for the number of casualties they were able to inflict were notoriously exaggerated the actual amount of ammunition used was probably much higher! In 2004 the US Army is predicting it will need a total of 1.5 to 1.7 billion rounds of rifle ammunition. This significantly exceeds the current production capacity of US government-owned ammunition factories, necessitating large-scale outside purchases from other manufacturers and even other countries, with Israel being the largest outside supplier.

But this reliance on advanced weaponry, massive firepower, etc., also means that an imperialist army like that of the US is dependent on a logistics support system of equivalent dimensions. All the advanced arms and equipment must be maintained and repaired. When it fights, the US Army consumes supplies of all types at a tremendous rate. As one example, in preparing the attack on Iraq the US war planners "estimated a daily fuel requirement approaching 2 million gallons [7.57 million litres] through about day 14, when they expected the total requirement to exceed that amount" (*On Point*). Over the 26 days of "Operation Iraqi Freedom"

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Peru:

Another Revenge Trial for Chairman Gonzalo

Do the people of Peru have to accept the way the US and the country's ruling classes want them to live, or do they have the right to rebel? That, in essence, is what is at stake in the trial for Chairman Gonzalo (Abimael Guzman) and other accused leaders of the Communist Party of Peru, set for February 2005 as we go to press. These men and women are being persecuted for waging a people's war, regardless of the present attitude of any of the defendants, and that must be opposed.

In 1980, the PCP began an armed uprising in Peru's countryside that won the support of millions and grew into a revolutionary civil war. They fought what Mao called a people's war because its aim is to bring the masses to power and make them the masters of their own destiny, and therefore its strategy and tactics are based on relying on the people.

Most have been jailed for more than a dozen years already, and some of them for as long as 16. Under international pressure and a ruling from the Inter-American Human Rights Court, two years ago the Peruvian Supreme Court overturned their original convictions on vague charges of "terrorism" by military tribunals run by hooded officers. Instead of releasing these defendants, the government held them with no legal justification until new laws could be passed and new accusations formulated. Many underwent second trials before a new special "anti-terrorist" court, this time with civilian judges. The state failed to obtain all the convictions it wanted — in the

case of Chairman Gonzalo and 17 others, the second trial in November 2004 was aborted. Now, in a new attempt to justify the continuing incarceration of these prisoners, they are being tried for "terrorism" a third time.

The head of the Anti-Terrorism Court, Pablo Talavera, boasted he would quickly settle the fate of all approximately 1,500 revolutionaries facing new trials, and that this trial of the Party leadership would be their last. Unlike previous courtroom appearances, it will combine the outstanding charges against all those accused of being Party leaders in one single "megatrial" which, he said, would be as brief as possible. The proceedings are to be held in the military prison at the Callao naval base near Lima where Chairman Gonzalo has long been held in an underground cell. It will be open to the public, Talavera said, but with "the restrictions allowed by law". In Chairman Gonzalo's last trial, this meant that attendance was limited to family members and the press. After the first day, cameras and sound recording were forbidden, contrary to usual practice.

That trial ended in chaos. Some 250 Peruvian and international journalists crowded into the press section behind a glass partition in the back of the courtroom. As the defendants, sitting together, talked among themselves and went before the judge one at a time to discuss who would represent them, reporters tapped on the glass and asked Chairman Gonzalo to turn and face the cameras. He did so repeatedly, raising his fist. Amid a

rising hubbub, the chief judge made an effort to re-establish his control and told the press to leave. They ignored him. The judge ordered the police to clear the court, but at first they failed to respond. Chairman Gonzalo and most of the other defendants stood up, turned their backs to the judge, raised their fists and chanted, "Long live the Communist Party of Peru! Glory to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism! Glory to the Peruvian People! Long live the People's Heroes of the People's War!" This could be plainly seen and heard on television coverage shown in Peru and around the world. The presiding judge himself was drowned out by the chanting. The three-magistrate panel left the courtroom hanging their heads, while the defendants marched out smiling, their heads high.

A furious Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo went on television the following evening to assail the presiding judge. He threatened "summary trials", raising the spectre of the 1992 secret, snap tribunals. The presiding judge refused to heed calls to withdraw so that the case could continue without him. When the trial was reconvened five days later, it was the other two judges who resigned, unexpectedly, each bitterly denouncing the others. By law the trial had to be called off.

The minor nature of the charges against Chairman Gonzalo and the others (using a Lima private school for logistical and financial support of Party activities) contrasted with the decades-long sentences they carried that would have kept the 70-year-old

Gonzalo and other defendants in jail for their lifetimes. The evidence is not very solid, according to some sources. It seems plausible that infighting within Peru's ruling classes about whether or not to hold this particular trial played a role in its collapse. Toledo supporters and opposition politicians descended into an orgy of vicious mutual attacks over whom to blame for what they considered a humiliating outcome. Disciplinary proceedings were undertaken against all three judges. Talavera announced that he would take over personally, with a new plan.

The authorities began further punishment of the accused without waiting for a conviction. Manuel Fajardo, Chairman Gonzalo's lawyer, said in a newspaper interview that after three years of weekly meetings with his client he was no longer allowed direct contact. In violation of previous court orders, Fajardo was forbidden to speak with his client except through a glass separation in a special booth, making confidential trial preparations impossible. He said Chairman Gonzalo is not allowed a radio, television or newspapers. Elena Iparraguirre (known as Comrade Miriam), Chairman Gonzalo's wife who had been in an adjacent cell, was transferred to the Chorrillos women's prison. There she is also kept isolated from other inmates. Family visits have been halted. Specifically, this means Iparraguirre's mother, who visited the two of them.

The fear of a resurgence of revolutionary war is a major factor in the vengeful attitude of the Peruvian people's enemies. Even the form of the proceedings, what Fajardo called an illegal "court of exception" instead of the regular judicial system, bears this out. This is not just an attempt to impose a historical verdict on the People's War. Its very timely purpose is to foster demoralisation among revolutionary-minded people in Peru and elsewhere. While the ruling classes used to blame the disruption of the People's War for the people's disastrous conditions, extreme poverty has reached record

levels in the absence of much fighting in the last several years. Toledo, whose election was supposed to bring about dramatic change after the discredited, more openly dictatorial Fujimori, is now the most unpopular government head in Latin America. Infighting within the ruling classes is rocking the whole political set-up. To a large extent because of the experience of the People's War, the regime and the US are determined that this political instability not find a revolutionary outlet and spread.

Most of the defendants who took part in the November 2004 courtroom action led by Chairman Gonzalo have been publicly associated with a line arising from within the Party which concluded that because of his capture it was impossible to continue the revolutionary war. The people's war had to be put off to the hazy and indefinite future and instead, this line argued, the PCP should disband the army under its leadership and the People's Committees where the peasants held political power in much of the countryside, and enter peace negotiations with the government to obtain freedom for prisoners of war, amnesty and "national reconciliation".

The only one who did not join in chanting the slogans was Oscar Ramirez, known as Comrade Feliciano. Ramirez took up leadership of the Central Committee following Chairman Gonzalo's arrest until his own imprisonment in 1999. Now very different but concurring sources report that he has turned against revolution completely. He has been quoted attacking the Party, the People's War from the day it began, and the communist project in general.

Background to This Trial

A year after Chairman Gonzalo was arrested in 1992, the government released a video assertedly showing him and Iparraguirre signing a letter calling for negotiations to end the people's war. Documents attributed to him arguing for this position began circulating. The Party's Central Committee denounced it as a right

opportunist line and pledged to carry forward the war. They also denounced the Peruvian regime for fabricating what they called a "hoax".

The Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, which had mobilised a world campaign to "Move Heaven and Earth to Defend the Life of Chairman Gonzalo" after the capture, called for a careful examination of the two lines — the PCP's line historically and the proposed new line — in light of historical experience of revolutionary wars and negotiations, and Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. All revolutions involve temporary retreats and compromises and several have entered into negotiations with positive results, the Committee pointed out. The question here was not whether revolutionaries should ever make compromises, but what kinds of compromises were being offered, for what aim and under what circumstances. "Do the proposed negotiations serve the task of seizing political power through revolutionary warfare, regardless of what stages or turns this warfare may go through", the Committee asked, "or are they aimed at returning to the pre-war situation of 1980?"

CoRIM commissioned the Leading Committee of the Union of Communists of Iran — the predecessor of the Communist Party of Iran (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) — to write a thorough assessment of *Asumir*, the main document putting forward the right opportunist line. The polemic looked at the experience of the communist movement internationally to dispute the claim that the People's War in Peru could not solve the problem of leadership without Chairman Gonzalo. It also analysed how setbacks can be overcome through the course of persisting in people's war, and warned that a revolutionary war is different than reactionary wars. Although a revolutionary war might go through ups and downs and even temporary cease-fires, fundamentally it cannot be turned on and off like a faucet because "once the war is launched, either you destroy [the enemy and his

state] or get destroyed... Anything contrary to this is a dangerous illusion." Attempting to halt the war would "turn a military defeat" (Chairman Gonzalo's capture) "into a political defeat".

On the basis of examining the two positions, CoRIM came to the conclusion, "Objectively and irrespective of the intentions of those who are arguing for it, the call for negotiations to reach a peace accord and the arguments, or rationalisations put forward in defence and elaboration of this call, do not represent a necessary and justified compromise but rather a compromise of the fundamental interests of the people and an abandonment of the People's War and the revolutionary road."

The RIM Committee called upon Maoists throughout the world to "Rally to the Defence of Our Red Flag Flying in Peru" by defending the People's War and the PCP Central Committee and fully engaging in the two-line struggle, both as a key part of supporting those in the party who resolved to persevere in the war and because of the serious implications for the world movement. "Let this furnace of two-line struggle also serve as a great school of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, revealing the difference between real and sham Marxism, and helping revolutionaries around the world to understand the necessities of the hour and to fulfil them," it concluded. The RIM parties later voted to endorse the Committee's call.

However, some people with varying degrees of connection to PCP opposed this approach and criticised the Committee for not endorsing the "hoax" idea instead. One of the most vociferous was Luis Arce Borja, a long-time PCP ally now in exile, who labelled the right opportunist line nothing but a "police plot" ("a montage set up by the Peruvian regime and American imperialism"). Further, he said, "To hold that the 'peace agreement' is part of a process of internal conflict within the PCP portrays it as an organisation corroded by a scandalous division, an organisation divided and undermined and on the very

verge of destruction. This point of view is similar to that of the die-hard enemies of the revolution."

A reply to Arce Borja in *A World to Win* magazine, "On the Maoist Conception of Two-Line Struggle", explained that every party exists in class society (even after socialism, until communism when the need for a party itself will disappear). Contending ideas inevitably reflect the outlooks of the contending classes, not necessarily in an immediate way but ultimately. Although there are "high tides and low tides," there is always a two-line struggle between ideas representing the proletariat's mission of moving toward ending the division of humanity into classes and other ideas that represent stopping short of that. Without a clash of ideas in its midst a communist party cannot hope to lead revolution, let alone transform the old society. Contrary to the way people like Arce see it, this kind of struggle in the party can't be prevented. Especially when events bring life-and-death issues to the fore, major questions of programme and ideology on which the success of the revolution depends come into sharp focus and have to be fought out by leading debate, polemics and other forms. Further, and also contrary to Arce-type views, this is not necessarily a sign of weakness at all, or even simply a way to rid the party of wrong ideas, but a process that can bring leaps in the party's understanding. In that sense, it is a source of greater strength and the motor driving forward the party's development — its outlook and line, and the understanding and ability of its members as well as of the people.

When people in a communist party put forward ideas, policies and strategic directions that objectively represent the outlook and interests of the exploiting classes, they seldom openly attack Marxism or even cease using Maoist rhetoric. The documents of the right opportunist line contain the slogan "Glory to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism" but represent a fundamental change of direction for the Party. That's why "revealing the difference between

real and sham Marxism" requires paying attention to key issues and basic principles, and why two-line struggle is the only solution to the problem of revisionism in the party on every level.

The Peruvian ruling classes rejected the 1993 call for a peaceful settlement of the war. At the end of the 1990s the right opportunist line began to treat the call for negotiations as a dead issue, blaming the PCP Central Committee for continuing a war they saw as hopeless instead of negotiating a settlement at the height of its strength. But the most important reason for the sharp fall-off in fighting has not been the enemy's military success or even the arrests of Party leaders and cadre, as painful as these have been. Rather it is because of the widespread demobilisation of many Party members, fighters and supporters among the masses due to the desertion of many party leaders and cadres to the right opportunist line.

The Peruvian revolution has provided the international proletariat tremendous experience during both its peaks and difficult moments. In opposing today's reactionary revenge trials and supporting the past, present and future of the People's War in Peru and everywhere, revolutionaries will need to take up all the issues that experience posed, including the two-line struggle. When looked at and synthesised from a dialectical materialist point of view, the basis exists for overcoming the defeats and making even greater advances in Peru and around the world.

(Documents by the RIM Committee, the PCP Central Committee, the Iranian polemic and the basic documents of the right opportunist line were printed in *A World to Win* 1995/21. "On the Maoist Conception of Two-Line Struggle" and the document by Arce Borja came out in *A World to Win* 1996/22. They are available online at www.awtw.org).

Communism and the Challenge of our Times

In the last few years the pace of world history has accelerated. On the one hand, the US imperialists have embarked on a world-wide crusade, promised to last for a generation, whose purpose is to violently hammer into place an even more brutal version of the imperialist order that sucks the life out of the great majority of people throughout the world. Yet this very imperialist system and the intensified measures to prop it up and enforce it are themselves giving rise to powerful new waves of discontent, struggle and revolution. It is in this spirit that the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement has emphasised that we are entering a turbulent period full of both great dangers for the people of the world but also great opportunities. A chance to achieve new breakthroughs in the fight to construct a whole different kind of world, where class distinctions themselves have been surpassed and the full talent and energy of humanity is unleashed so that it can consciously transform itself and the world. No one living today will see the full flowering of the future communist society, but what women and men do today, what they live and die for, is of crucial importance for the subsequent course of history.

The vision of a communist society is not a new one. Ever since Marx and Engels first put the struggle for a communist world on a scientific footing a tremendous drama has taken place in which millions of men and women have fought to destroy the old world and bring a new one into its place. Great vic-

tories were won, such as the fleeting but glorious months of the Paris Commune in 1871, the October Revolution and the decades of building and defending a socialist state in the USSR, and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in Mao's China, which was the furthest advance yet in the fight for the classless communist future. But we know that the world imperialist system, backed by the reactionary forces in general and the weight of thousands of years of class exploitation and accompanying ideas and institutions, is a very formidable opponent. The first great efforts to carve out the communist future were defeated, and even today we are still suffering from the shocking loss of revolutionary China in 1976 when the revisionists in the Communist Party of China seized power after Mao's death and, with astonishing speed, restored the capitalist system in all its ugliness.

The question posed is whether the communist ideology, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, will succeed in fusing with the new rising tide of revolution and ultimately be able to focus the fury of the masses on the task of shattering the political power of the ruling classes and constructing a new kind of power based on and in the interests of the immense majority of people. However much they struggle and sacrifice, without this leadership the masses will flounder, be betrayed and ultimately defeated. In one form or another the old system of exploitation will continue unless and until it is consciously targeted



and defeated by a revolutionary force armed with the most advanced understanding of society and a clear scientific vision of how to go about transforming it. Hence the need for a communist vanguard in each country and a communist international of a new type on a world scale. And hence the need for the revolutionary science of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism itself to advance.

In the almost thirty years since the death of Mao the world has undergone important changes. The ideological terrain today is much different than it was during the Cultural Revolution and the birth of the Maoist movement internationally. New generations are coming forward in the fight against imperialism and reaction who have no real understanding of the whole sweep of the communist movement, of the great heights it reached and upon what rocks it temporarily crashed. The changes in the world as well as the experience in class struggle pose new questions that our science must address concerning strategy and tactics, class alliances, military line and dialectical materialism itself.

Communist ideology advances amidst a turbulent process. New understandings must overcome the inertia of past ways of looking at things, and correct and incorrect viewpoints must be sorted out. The ideas that derive from different realms of humanity's experience will be further tested and developed in the course of changing the world. This whole process is marked by what communists refer to as the two-line struggle, and through it the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) itself has and will continue to be tempered and strengthened. RIM has called for a wide discussion and debate inside and outside its ranks over the most vital problems facing the communist revolutionaries today, such as the problem of summing up the experience of exercising proletarian dictatorship (USSR and China), understanding the dynamics of how the imperialist system works, analysing the socio-economic developments that are taking place in different countries and understanding their implication for revolutionary strategy, as well as

(Continued to p. 50)



Above: Karl Marx.
Right: Paris
Commune, 1871.



A WORLD TO WIN 2005/31



Peasants join the
revolutionary army,
Russia, 1918.

Below: Lenin.





During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China big character posters flourished everywhere.

Mao Tsetung elaborated many theses on a whole series of vital questions of revolution. But Maoism is not just the sum total of Mao's great contributions. It is the comprehensive and all-round development of Marxism-Leninism to a new and higher stage. Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is an integral whole; it is the ideology of the proletariat synthesized and developed to new stages, from Marxism to Marxism-Leninism to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, by Karl Marx, V.I. Lenin and Mao Tsetung, on the basis of the experience of the proletariat and mankind in class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment. It is the invincible weapon which enables the proletariat to understand the world and change it through revolution. Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is a universally applicable, living and scientific ideology, constantly developing and being further enriched through its application in making revolution as well as through the advance of human knowledge generally. Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is the enemy of all forms of revisionism and dogmatism. It is all-powerful because it is true.





1.



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3.



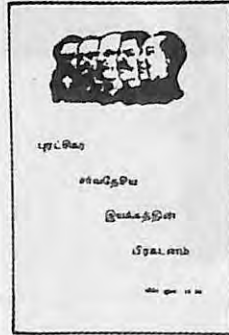
4.



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Signatories of the Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement and Participating Organisations in RIM:

- Ceylon Communist Party (Maoist)
- Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan
- Communist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist-Leninist) [BSD(ML)]
- Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (Naxalbari)
- Communist Party of Iran (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist)
- Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
- Communist Party of Peru
- Maoist Communist Party [Turkey and North Kurdistan]
- Maoist Communist Centre of India
- Maoist Communist Party [Italy]
- Proletarian Party of Purba Bangla (PBSP) [Bangladesh]
- Revolutionary Communist Group of Colombia
- Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

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

The Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement has been printed in over 20 languages. Not shown here: Gujarati, Nepalese, Japanese and Kannada.

1. Punjabi 2. Italian 3. Farsi 4. Hindi 5. French
6. Chinese 7. Malayalam 8. Bengali 9. Créole
10. German 11. English (U.S.) 12. English (Indian)
13. Spanish (Spain) 14. Spanish (U.S.)
15. Spanish (Peru) 16. Spanish (Colombia) 17. Turkish
18. Tamil 19. Arabic 20. Danish 21. Kurdish



Chairman Prachanda,
Communist Party of
Nepal (Maoist)

Woman comrade gives rousing talk to masses in western Nepal.





The Naxalbari upsurge in India began in 1967 under the leadership of Charu Mazumdar (above right) and shook the country and the region with its "spring thunder".

The emergence of new conditions has often been used as an excuse to negate fundamental principles of Marxism under the signboard of its "creative development". At the same time, it is incorrect and just as damaging to abandon the Marxist critical spirit, to fail to sum up the shortcomings as well as the successes of the proletariat, and to rest content with upholding or reclaiming positions considered correct in the past. Such an approach would make Marxism-Leninism-Maoism brittle and unable to withstand the attacks of the enemy and incapable of leading new advances in the class struggle – and suffocate its revolutionary essence.

In fact, history has shown that real creative developments of Marxism (and not phony revisionist distortions) have always been inseparably linked with a fierce struggle to defend and uphold basic principles of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

— From the Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement



Siraj Sikder — founder of the Proletarian Party of Purba Bangla (PBSP).



Akram Yari — one of the early leaders of the communist movement in Afghanistan, killed by the revisionist pro-Soviet government.



ABOVE: Comrades in Turkey's prisons. INSET: Ibrahim Kaypakkaya, founder of the Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist (TKP/ML) in 1972.



Mao Tsetung greeting N. Sanmugathasan (co-convenor of RIM founding press conference and founder of Ceylon Communist Party [Maoist]) at Tienanmen Square in the 1960s.



BELOW: A group of Sarbedaran fighters near Amol, 1981.



Drawing of captured Communist Party of Peru Chairman Gonzalo from IEC meeting in Germany.



Communist Party guerrillas in the mountains of Ayacucho, Peru in the 1980s.



Cancun, Mexico, anti-globalisation protest.

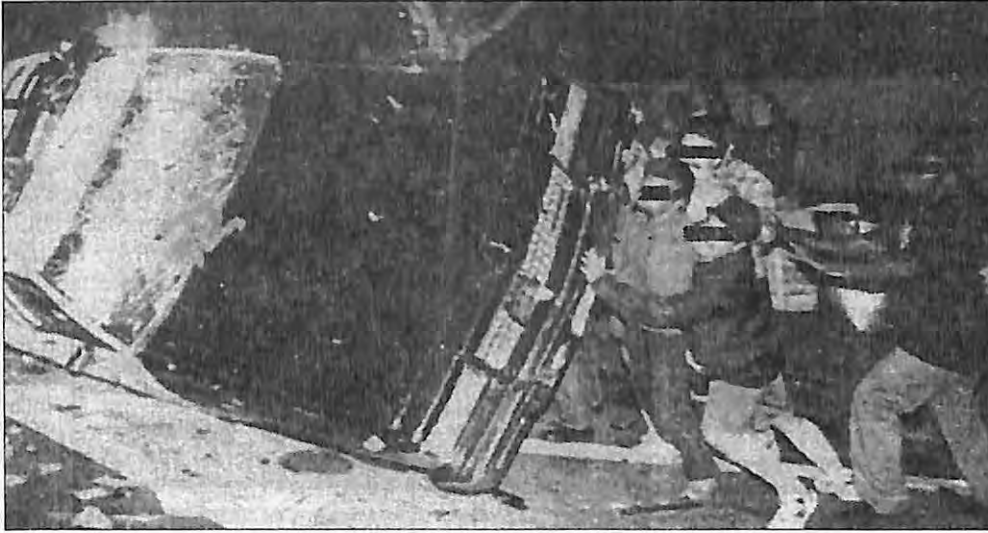


Colombia – World People's Resistance Movement.

other important questions. We hope that our magazine can play a role in helping to provide a forum for these crucial discussions and debates and we invite our readership to contribute to them.

The Revolutionary Internationalist Movement has developed as the embryonic centre of the world's Maoist forces, by those who were able to withstand the loss of socialist China and subsequent betrayal and demoralisation that decimated most of the previous Maoist movement. RIM and the parties

and organisations making it up have achieved a great deal in the past twenty years since its formation. But in an important sense these achievements are but a prelude to meeting the much greater challenges and opportunities that are rapidly developing today. RIM cannot stand still; it must, on the basis of raising its collective and unified understanding of our ideology, advance further in its goal of building a communist international of a new type, and it must unite with all of the genuine Maoist forces the world over in this



Los Angeles rebellion, 1992



Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA



Berlin, May Day, 2001



Genoa, Italy, 2001

process as well as reaching out to revolutionary activists who are yet to be won to the liberating truth of communist ideology.

Communism remains the only hope for humanity to escape from the enslaving division of society into classes. But this lofty hope can only be realised through struggle, hard struggle, in every sphere. The international communist movement has brought forth legions of heroes who have braved imprisonment, torture and death in the face of the

enemy. Now the international communist movement must show the same courage in its merciless self-examination and its determination that its ideology remain vibrant, capable of comprehending ever more fully the rich complexity of human society and class struggle, able to reach out, learn from and unite with millions of others while fighting tenaciously to uphold, apply and win others to the ideology of liberation. ■

Iraq

Continued from p. 38.

(OIF) the US V Corps alone transported and consumed a total of 54 million gallons (204 million litres) of fuel for ground vehicles and aircraft, 4,859 tons of ammunition, 26.6 million bottles of water and 14.7 million MRE's (Meals Ready to Eat – army field rations).

To put this in some historical context, during the entire four years of the First World War the Allies used only a total of 40 million gallons of fuel – which at that time prompted Winston Churchill to comment that the war had been won “on a sea of oil”. In the Second World War the entire consumption of all US forces in Europe never exceeded 800,000 gallons a day. During “OIF” just to maintain fuel supplies for its tanks and other vehicles, along with its helicopters, the US forces needed to establish a whole series of refuelling stations along their line of march toward Baghdad. The 1st MEF even deployed a portable pipeline extending 240 kilometres northward from the border with Kuwait. This logistics undertaking was so enormous that according to the authors of *On Point* systematic planning for it began in autumn of 2001.

Obviously the hundreds of kilometres of mostly unsecured supply lines on which the US forces depended were extremely vulnerable. There were not too many options in terms of choosing lines of march northwards toward Baghdad. This was especially true given the size and weight of the US's armoured vehicles, heavy weapons and supply trucks. The major highways running north/south were clearly of strategic importance. *Yet the Iraqi forces did not prepare a systematic effort at attacking this weakness.*

The US commanders reported “persistent” attacks along their lines of communication and there is the famous incident when the 507th Maintenance Company made a wrong turn and suffered heavy casualties (the incident in which Private Jessica Lynch was injured and captured). But the problem was

that although these attacks caused some temporary difficulties for the US forces, most of these attacks were relatively ineffective (as seen by the small number of casualties they caused) and it is simply a fact that this weakness was not really exploited to the extent possible.¹⁰ For example, hardly any of the major highway bridges between Kuwait and Baghdad (and none within Baghdad for that matter) were destroyed in order to slow down the US advance. Some were wired with explosives. Of these, most were never triggered. On a few others explosives were set off, but not enough to cause major damage. In most cases there were no demolition preparations at all. This is an expression of the fact that there was no serious plan – or will – to resist the invasion on the part of the Iraqi leadership.¹¹

Of course the US was expecting that most or all of these bridges would be destroyed and had moved a large part of its portable bridging assets to the Gulf region in advance of the invasion, ready to be moved forward rapidly. So knocking down the major bridges would not altogether have prevented the invaders from crossing the rivers and gorges they spanned. But it would have significantly slowed their advance and made large-scale re-supply more difficult since the portable bridges the US uses are less capable of bearing heavy loads in comparison with Iraqi highway bridges. Most importantly, the delays caused by destroying these bridges would have given the defending forces precious time to prepare defences, reorganise and move into position to attack and harass all along the line of the US advance and especially the lines of communication, which were growing longer and more exposed with every passing day.

Here another important principle outlined by Mao was largely ignored, namely that of “drawing the enemy in deep”. Mao pointed out that in defending the base areas, and later China as a whole, there was no point in trying to stop a powerful enemy at the border. Rather it was much more

advantageous to draw him deeply into liberated territory where he is surrounded by the masses, forced to depend on and defend long lines of communication, and where the enemy puts himself in a position where his flanks and rear area are vulnerable. A similar approach could have been adopted in Iraq. Instead, although there were some attacks in the rear and along the lines of communication, the main thing the Iraqi forces did as the US columns approached was to attempt to meet them head-on. This was doomed to failure. *On Point* quotes one US general as saying, “We did not predict that they were going to come out of the cities and expose themselves to up-armoured vehicles and armoured formations without similar protection.” It goes on to summarise this aspect of the battle as follows: “More surprising, these irregular forces chose to come out of the relatively safe urban areas to engage coalition armoured forces out in the open... Even more surprising, the paramilitaries chose to attack the lead armoured forces in waves rather than waiting for the soft-skinned, logistics convoys that would follow. Because the paramilitary forces were essentially untrained, if dedicated, their tactics were suicidal in that they literally ran, and drove, to their deaths.”

From a strategic point of view, attacking the supply lines of an invading imperialist force is a key element in any successful resistance, especially in a situation where the resistance forces are waging a just struggle, know the local terrain and generally have the support of the local population. The deeper the invaders move into the country they are attacking, the longer their lines of supply and communication and generally speaking the harder these are to defend. This was certainly true in the Soviet Union during the Second World War, when the German army's advance had brought it to the gates of Moscow and the city centre in Stalingrad, and the corresponding lines of supply stretched out over 1,200 kilometres and more. The territory being

occupied encompassed thousands of square kilometres. In this vast area, hundreds of thousands of Soviet soldiers carried out partisan warfare, destroying supply convoys, railroads and bridges and attacking and harassing the invading German army at every opportunity. This played an important role in finally turning the tide, so that the Soviet forces could go from the strategic defensive to the offensive and drive the German army out. The fact that very little of this kind of fighting took place in Iraq during the invasion greatly weakened the resistance to the US-led invasion.

This is all the more true when one realises that, according to the authors of *On Point*, although the US did move tremendous quantities of fuel, ammunition, water and other supplies into Iraq to support its invasion force, *during the entire operation almost no spare parts were delivered to US forces in the field. To keep things moving US units cannibalised their own equipment, took parts from abandoned or captured Iraqi equipment or even bought parts from local Iraqis.*¹² Many US unit commanders reported being only one or at most two weeks away from having to reduce or even cease offensive operations due to lack of spare parts and the corresponding inability to maintain their heavy vehicles, artillery and other equipment.

**Lack of Preparation, Training
and Leadership and the
Breakdown of the Iraqi Army**

Of course this does not mean that they would have not been able to overcome this problem over time. But if the Iraqi forces had been better able to take advantage of this US weakness the effect on the overall military/political dynamic might have had an important impact on the overall outcome. A significant slowdown would have given the Iraqi forces an important opportunity to re-group, re-supply, etc.

The mismatch between the attacking US-led forces and the defending Iraqi forces had numerous facets. In addition to all the dis-

advantages already discussed, the Iraqi forces were so poorly trained that to a large extent it was an army that couldn't shoot straight. Unfortunately, the following example shows that this statement is no exaggeration.

In the year before the war began, large sections of the Iraqi army had engaged in little target practice, or in some cases none at all. In the previously cited US Army War College study, *Toppling Saddam: Iraq and American Military Transformation*, it is noted that:

"Most Iraqi fighters had fired little or no live ammunition in the year prior to the war; some had never fired their weapons at all. The 2nd Division of the Iraqi Regular Army, for example, had no live fire training in the twelve months prior to the war. The 3rd Division held a single live fire exercise in which each soldier fired *four rounds* of ammunition. None of the soldiers in the 11th Division's 3rd Battalion had fired their weapons in the past year. Even the Baghdad Republican Guard division held only a single live fire exercise with just ten rounds for every soldier in the year leading up to the war. By contrast, a typical US infantry unit might fire 2,500 rounds or more of ammunition per soldier in an average year; for units preparing to enter combat that figure would be much higher. The typical American infantryman might thus have had over 250 times as much target practice as even the best Iraqis."

This lack of basic marksmanship skills¹³ had disastrous effects on the ability of the Iraqi defenders to inflict damage on the invading forces. The War College study goes on to remark:

"Against the 3ID's 3rd Brigade in Baghdad, Iraqi paramilitaries attained a hit rate of under ten per cent for the RPGs fired at ranges of under 500 meters. At Objective Montgomery¹⁴ west of Baghdad, an elite Republican Guard tank battalion fired at least 16 T-72 main gun rounds at ranges of 800-1000 meters at tank-sized targets with full flank exposure – with zero hits at what amounted to point-blank range for

weapons of this calibre... Similar results are reported by American and British combatants throughout the theatre of war, and across all Iraqi weapon types employed in OIF."

Generally speaking, reports of the fighting seem to confirm that not only were the regular forces of the Iraqi Army poorly equipped and trained, but their morale was very low as well. The unit cohesion of the regular Iraqi forces often broke down rather quickly when the US-led attack struck with full force. Sustained or accurate air attacks often resulted in soldiers deserting their posts in large numbers and putting up little or no fight against the advancing invader ground forces. This was in many if not most cases preceded by the commanding officers deserting first, leaving the rank and file soldiers with no leadership. The entire Iraqi northern front essentially collapsed as a result of sustained aerial bombardments and officer defections. Although no major ground attack was mounted by the imperialist forces, thousands and thousands of Iraqi soldiers were seen on television having discarded their uniforms and weapons and walking back toward Baghdad and points south.

The number of Iraqi prisoners the US and its allies took was in the thousands and not the tens of thousands they had expected before the invasion began. Iraqi military killed and wounded were somewhere between twenty and forty thousand. Thus, there is no other way to account for the rest of the estimated 280,000 to 350,000 soldiers who made up the pre-invasion Iraqi regular forces other than to conclude – they went home. By most accounts the bulk of the fighting was carried out by the irregular forces (Baath Party militia and Saddam Fedayeem). According to US summations, these forces fought with tenacity and bravery, but were poorly equipped, trained and led. The War College summary contains the following descriptions:

"And combat motivation, while very weak in the Iraqi Regular Army and some Republican Guard units,

was stronger elsewhere – and especially among paramilitary fighters in Iraqi cities. In fact, paramilitary combat motivation bordered on the suicidal in 2003. In Nasiriyah, Samawah, Basra, Najaf, Baghdad, and elsewhere, Iraqi paramilitaries executed repeated frontal assaults against American armoured vehicles using civilian sport utility vehicles, pickup trucks, minivans, and even bicycles. In Samawah, Iraqi SUVs rammed American armoured vehicles. Even after initial waves of such kamikaze chargers were mowed down, others followed.”

And further:

“Much of the close combat in OIF took the form of Iraqi paramilitaries charging Coalition armoured vehicles on the outskirts of Iraqi cities using unarmoured civilian vehicles. These were typically simple frontal assaults, fully exposed, with no apparent attempt to co-ordinate movement with suppressive fire, use terrain for cover, or employ smoke or other obscurants. Moreover, they were usually directed at Coalition heavy armoured units; Iraqi paramilitaries appear to have systematically avoided softer-skinned command or logistical elements in order to seek out Coalition tanks and infantry fighting vehicles.”¹⁵

These descriptions are themselves painful enough, but the absolute lack of serious and systematic preparation for a war that the whole world saw coming the better part of a year in advance was further demonstrated by the failure on the part of the Iraqi leadership to prepare to wage urban warfare (or as the US military calls it MOUT – Military Operations on Urban Terrain). One of the things the US imperialists feared the most going into the invasion was the possibility that they might be forced to engage in sustained combat operations in urban areas. Their own pre-war manoeuvres had led them to the conclusion that sustained urban combat in which they were forced to dismount from their armoured vehicles to attack dug-in defenders and clear buildings would result in *at least* one casualty among their own forces for every defender killed.

Thus, they had every expectation that such sustained combat in Baghdad and Iraq’s other major cities could easily result in thousands of killed and wounded among their own forces.¹⁶

One of the things that engaging imperialist forces in urban combat does (and this is true of close quarters combat in general) is that it eliminates the advantage that stand-off weapons give the imperialists. At close quarters they cannot easily employ artillery, air support, missiles, etc. When they are forced into a situation where they lose these advantages, the morale and fighting spirit of US and other imperialist troops can quickly decline. For example, when one US unit was subjected to a night of ambushes and close-range combat on the way to Baghdad its commanding officer was quoted in *On Point* as saying that this had “traumatised everyone”. In the words of Lieutenant Colonel Terry Ferrel, “We do own the night, but we also train to own the night with stand-off. When you have the guys crawling up beside your tank and you are using the 9 mil [Beretta 9 mm pistol] or stepping off to draw an AK to shoot somebody, your average tank crew does not train to do that.”

For the reasons already stated, this did not happen much in Iraq in 2003. But it could have happened and the course and even the result of that war could have been dramatically different, if for instance the US-led forces had become bogged down in a siege of Baghdad and Iraq’s other major cities, taking large numbers of casualties and having their lines of supply being repeatedly and effectively hit by guerrillas operating along their vast supply lines.

In a scenario where a determined resistance was inspiring protest against the invasion throughout the Middle East and around the world – including in the US itself – both the military as well as the political cost of continuing the campaign would have risen dramatically. The outcome of such a course of events could have potentially been very different from that which actually occurred. The corrupt and reactionary character of

Saddam’s regime stood firmly in the way of such a scenario, and there was no organised revolutionary vanguard capable of stepping into this void to provide the political, organisational and military leadership that was necessary for bringing about a radically different result. But even a more cohesive and determined non-revolutionary regime might have been able to do at least some of the things necessary to have prolonged the conflict. This point is not lost on the more astute imperialist observers. The War College summary makes the following observation about what the course of the conflict might have been like if the Iraqi forces had been better prepared and led:

“The result could well have been an extended stalemate, with Coalition forces pinned down in static sieges across Iraq, beset by partisan warfare against overstrained, over-stretched lines of communications, and facing a steady loss of lives to guerrilla actions against patrols and garrisons even without an assault on a city centre... this could have produced a very long war.”

Seeking to prolong the conflict so as to be able to neutralise to the greatest extent possible the strengths of an imperialist army, exacerbate and utilise its internal contradictions and create space and time to mobilise the strengths of a genuinely anti-imperialist or revolutionary army and mass resistance is a key factor in defeating the kind of imperialist aggression represented by “Operation Iraqi Freedom”. *A World to Win News Service* made the following summation in light of the collapse of the defence of Baghdad:

“The Iraqi regime was unable to make use of these favourable factors to put up the kind of fight that would have really put a stick in the spokes of the US war chariot and rallied the people of the region and the world to their defence. The Iraqi military was dependent on oil sales and arms purchases from the imperialists. Its economy had been crippled by 12 years of imperialist-imposed sanctions and the people impoverished and exhausted. Yet the Iraq regime had a more fundamental flaw that

assured its ultimate failure. It was a reactionary regime that had ruled over the peoples of Iraq with an iron fist. The only chance of defeating the US was through a lengthy people's war, a war that mobilised the entire population and relied upon it, and used a strategy and tactics that could neutralise the advantages of the US. From such a perspective, the importance of the battle for Baghdad was not that the whole war would be decided by it. The question was how the battle there, which the Iraqi forces could not avoid even if it was not the most favourable terrain for people's war, would set the stage for a protracted struggle by the people throughout the country against the occupiers and spark even more support from the people in every country, especially the bordering countries in the Middle East. Given this context, even if the city ultimately were to fall, a fierce and heroic battle would have made it possible to continue the war. This was what people throughout the world hoped for, only to have these hopes dashed by Saddam Hussein once again."¹⁷

Footnotes

1. The effects of this economic blockade on Iraq's civilian population were so devastating that one UN official, Denis Halliday, who headed the UN's Iraq programme, resigned in protest in 1998, calling them "genocidal". UNICEF's Executive Director, Carole Bellamy, held a 1999 press conference to announce the release of a "Situation Analysis of Women and Children in Iraq", providing a detailed account of how these economic sanctions contributed to the "excess deaths" of over 500,000 Iraqi children under age five.

2. It has been widely documented that by the mid- to late-1990s Iraq had destroyed all of its so-called weapons of mass destruction and essentially dismantled the programmes designed to produce such weapons. The UN weapons inspections confirmed this. Nevertheless, while as a result of Iraqi compliance with the UN's disarmament demands France, China and Russia were prepared to lift the economic sanctions on Iraq, the US refused to allow this. This was an essential part of the US's long-range plans to bring about "regime change" in Iraq (read install a compliant pro-US government, gain control over Iraq's oil resources and re-make Iraq as a US base for reorganising the entire Middle East).

3. *On Point*, a study of "Operation Iraqi Freedom" (OIF) that was commissioned by

the leadership of the US Army and written by US officers, openly declares that the decade of attacks and sanctions against Iraq were nothing less than preparation for the open war against Iraq: "While combat operations began on 17 March 2003, preparations for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM began on 1 March 1991 – the day after the first Gulf War ended. In the broadest context, OIF marks the latest chapter in the continuous US involvement in the Middle East and Southwest Asia theatre. America's national security is directly tied to the region's stability and prosperity. As such, the nation has been applying the elements of national power – diplomacy, information, military action, and economics – to reach this elusive goal. From enforcing sanctions and international inspections, to protecting the Kurds and Muslims, to responding to Iraqi violations of the no-fly zones, the military has been a central element of the US policy toward Iraq since the end of DESERT STORM." In fact, throughout almost the entire 1990s the US military had spent hundreds of millions of dollars building new bases and other infrastructure and pre-positioning thousands of tonnes of weapons and supplies in the Gulf in preparation for "Operation Iraqi Freedom".

4. After all, for years the US imperialists thought they could actually win the war in Vietnam. They believed that by applying increasing amounts of massive firepower along with a campaign of terror and assassination aimed at the resistance forces there, they would be able to carry the day militarily. They completely miscalculated the ability of the masses in both southern and northern Vietnam to endure the hardships necessary to wage a protracted struggle against them. And they miscalculated the extent to which they would become politically exposed and isolated in public opinion around the world, including in their own homeland (and, it should be added, within their own armed forces on the ground).

5. The US Army study *On Point* states: "Planners thought it possible that the combination of effects from Tomahawk missiles, air attacks, ground attacks, and robust information operations would either render the regime irrelevant or cause it to collapse very early in the fight – in effect, like a balloon pops when poked."

6. Not only did all 50 of these attacks fail, but it turned out that the bunker in which Saddam was supposedly staying that night did not even exist. While not killing any of the Iraqi leadership these attacks did kill dozens of Iraqi civilians.

7. The imperialist military generally use the term "force multiplier" to refer to weapons, intelligence and communication systems that give its forces more effective fire power or striking force than just their numeric strength alone would normally suggest.

8. Some imperialist commentators, and especially those in the countries taking part

in the invasion, claimed that Saddam's supposed refusal to co-operate with the UN weapons inspectors was definitive proof that he had something to hide. The facts show something quite different. After being caught in the mid-1990s trying to conceal weapons from the inspectors, Iraq destroyed all its weapons and production facilities that were in violation of UN resolutions. This was widely documented before the war by former inspectors, especially by Scott Ritter, who had served as an officer in the US Marines in the 1991 Gulf War. Ritter along with others also made public that the US had used the UN inspections to spy on Iraq (including illegally installing advanced eavesdropping equipment) and that the information thereby gained was used to develop targets and plans for attacking Iraq. Saddam was well aware that the US would never agree to declare his regime in conformity with the UN resolutions and lift the sanctions as long as he remained in power. Any further inspections would only be used to gather intelligence for the coming invasion. Nevertheless, in the run-up to the war and under tremendous international pressure, Iraq agreed to let the inspectors back into the country and give them almost unlimited access. Saddam's strategy of depending on the US's imperialist rivals to prevent an invasion was, in light of the world balance of power following the collapse of the Soviet Union, really nothing more than grasping for straws, albeit – given his class position – the only option he felt he had.

9. Here there is a clear contrast to an imperialist army where the level of professionalism in the officer corps is in most cases much higher. The ensemble of imperialist relations and everything they entail, including both advanced means of production and the ability to carry out bribery of significant sections of the population, mean that the material and social basis of the regime in an imperialist country are much stronger and broader than in an oppressed country dominated by imperialism and a comprador regime. This allows the imperialists to broaden the ranks of their officer corps and use more objective criteria in selecting even the top-level commanders of their armed forces. Of course even here political reliability remains the main criterion.

10. Even so, as the US forces quickly advanced toward Baghdad and their supply lines became more extended, the level of attacks on these lines became a growing problem. To deal with this threat the US commanders deployed elements of the 82nd and 101st Airborne divisions that up until that point had been held as a strategic reserve and used them to secure the US lines of supply. Within a few days of this deployment the level of attacks dropped significantly and ceased to be a major problem for them.

11. A study of "OIF" by the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College entitled *Toppling Saddam: Iraq and American Military Transformation* states:

"The Coalition advance was obviously premised on its ability to use a series of key bridges over the Euphrates River. The towns at these crossings were in fact major battlefields in the war, as the Iraqis apparently understood their importance and sought to contest the bridge sites. Yet few of these bridges were wired for demolition, and even fewer were actually destroyed. At Nasiriyah, the Iraqis fought a week-long battle for a city whose military importance turned on its bridges – yet the Iraqis made no systematic effort to destroy them."

12. "The theatre did not do as well with repair parts. Generals Christianson, Kratzer, and Stultz all agree that the parts distribution system never worked, despite heroic efforts. More than enough parts reached the theatre and were duly processed, but almost none reached the intended customers during the fighting. Forward, the troops made do by cannibalising broken-down equipment and towing what they could not repair. So, as the force moved north toward Baghdad with adequate fuel, water, and food, its ability to sustain an adequate maintenance readiness rate began to suffer. Fortunately, major combat operations ended before the failure of the parts distribution system affected operations in a meaningful way."
(On Point)

13. Of course it cannot be expected that it would be possible to expend the huge amounts of ammunition in training that the US or other imperialist armies do. Nevertheless, it is both necessary and possible to carry out such training while being more economical with available resources and at the same employing additional methods that allow the substitution for at least some amounts of live ammunition while still improving proficiency.

14. The US battle plan contained a series of predetermined objectives along their route to Baghdad that they intended to seize and control. The US V Corps' plan of attack had 13 such objectives extending from near the border with Kuwait all the way to just north of Baghdad. "Objective Montgomery", the second to last of these objectives, was located just west of the city. *On Point* describes this encounter as follows: "April 4, 2003. A full-strength Iraqi T-72 battalion from the Hammurabi Republican Guard division, with about a battalion of artillery in direct support, was dug in along the crest of a berm astride Highway 10... creating a natural kill sack along the Highway 10 approach route... some 1,000 meters from the nearest Iraqi positions... Irrigation ditches alongside the highway prevented easy off-road movement, canalising any attack from the front and enabling most of the defenders to engage a road-bound attack from the flank. At about 1500 hours on April 4, Troop A ("Apache") of the 3-7 US Cavalry drove directly into the kill sack, in column formation, along the expected Highway 10 approach route..."

"The Americans spotted the Iraqis as they opened fire. At least 16 rounds of 125mm T-

72 main gun fire were observed. None hit. American return fire then wiped out most of the battalion in less than ten minutes, whereupon Apache Troop pulled back and American aircraft and artillery barraged the position to neutralise the Iraqis' dismounted infantry and destroy its supporting artillery..."

"If the Iraqis were ever going to fight a battle on their own terms, this should have been it. They enjoyed a numerical advantage of almost 2:1 in armoured vehicles and nearly 3:1 in tanks. They were in prepared defensive positions of their own choosing," on highly advantageous ground, and we attacked them frontally without extensive air support from precisely the direction they expected, driving straight into a prepared kill sack. Yet the Iraqis failed to inflict any losses before losing their entire battalion and all of its supporting artillery to an advance by a single US cavalry troop."

15. As a general point, although it is certainly true that the US battle summaries are written from the viewpoint of an imperialist military – and at times are blatantly self-serving – nevertheless the ones written after the events often contain important observations and insights. In addition, there is the overall point about knowing both oneself and the enemy, so it is important to try to understand their point of view and approach. Given the actual speed with which Baghdad was taken and the low number of casualties suffered by the invaders, much of what is summarised is probably true or at least contains a lot of truth. Finally, up to this point this author is not aware of any post-war summations written by those taking part in the resistance to the invasion. These would, of course, be very helpful if they were able to shed more light on this important subject.

16. The US War College analysis pays a lot of attention to this question. Again, while it is written from a bourgeois perspective and almost completely ignores or negates the role of the broad masses in combating imperialist aggression and invasion, it nevertheless contains a number of important insights and reveals quite a bit about the bourgeois view of this question as a whole. For that reason it is cited here at some length:

"Perhaps the most serious Iraqi shortcoming was their systematic failure to exploit the military potential of urban terrain. Cities offer a natural source of cover and concealment, they canalise attacks, they facilitate barrier construction, they pose difficult problems of intermingling and collateral damage avoidance, and they make effective employment of stand-off precision weapons much harder..."

"Yet the Republican Guard and Iraqi Regular Army systematically avoided major cities, deploying instead in rural areas and suburban outskirts. They appear to have been deliberately denied access to major city centres by the Iraqi high command..."

"The great majority of the true urban combat in OIF was against lightly armed

irregular paramilitaries, who fought mostly on the tactical offensive, sallying out into the open to charge Coalition armoured vehicles. Not only did the paramilitaries lack the heavy weapons or armour protection of Iraq's large mechanised formations, they also forfeited the tactical potential of urban terrain by taking the offensive in exposed, unprepared frontal assaults.

"More conventional Special Republican Guard (SRG) units deployed some heavy weapons, especially in Baghdad, but these were a tiny fraction of the total available to the Iraqi military. And even the SRG failed systematically to make effective use of urban terrain for their employment. The SRG's prepared positions were almost entirely outdoors, typically in shallow foxholes dug along the roadside or in simple sandbag emplacements on building roofs or at intersections. SRG tanks were often simply parked in the open at major intersections, with no effort at cover or concealment. Practically no buildings received the interior preparations that would be normal for urban warfare in Western practice, such as interior barricades, wall reinforcement, loophole construction, or wire entanglements. Outdoor obstacles, barriers, or minefields were almost completely absent..."

"The Iraqis' shortcomings left them extremely vulnerable to the Coalition's technological and training advantages. For example, the Regular Army, Republican Guard, and Special Republican Guard's inability to exploit complex terrain for cover and concealment left them exposed to the full weight of Coalition stand-off precision strikes... Against such an armada, failure to secure cover and concealment can be lethal to hundreds of combatants in just minutes; the Iraqis' exposure enabled the Coalition to annihilate whole formations at safe distances, and persuaded many Iraqis to abandon weapons lest they suffer the same fate.

"But while precision weapons are tremendously lethal against exposed targets, they are much less so against opponents who exploit terrain for cover and concealment... Most important, though, a skilled urban defender could not have been broken by an all-mounted assault of the sort waged in Baghdad and Basra. The Iraqis of 2003 were exposed and could thus often be slaughtered in the open even within the city centre without the attacker dismounting from its armoured vehicles. By contrast, a defender who exploited the natural potential of urban terrain by remaining in cover to fire from within buildings, who prepared those buildings for maximum cover and concealment, used barriers and obstacles to canalise attacks into prepared ambushes, and who used covered retreat routes to slip away for subsequent engagements a couple of blocks away, would have been a much tougher target. Historically, it has been impossible to destroy such urban defenders without supporting armoured advances with

dismounted infantry who can enter buildings to clear rooms, kill concealed defenders, and hold the building interiors to prevent their reoccupation by defenders... unless such defenders are cleared before the armoured vehicles advance, the vehicles' weaker roof, rear, and flank armour risks easier penetration from bypassed but unseen defenders. Working together, skilled dismounted infantry and supporting armour can clear urban terrain, but they cannot do so cheaply if the defender makes the most of that terrain: even with skilled attackers, and even with armoured support, dismounted building clearance against skilled defenders has typically been very costly. Recent exercises by the U.S. Marine Corps have suggested that against skilled urban defenders, even well-trained attackers might expect little better than a 1:1 loss exchange ratio (LER), a 1:1 LER against multiple thousands of Iraqi urban defenders would have produced thousands of friendly casualties and a much costlier outcome for OIF, even given the technological advantages of the Abrams and the Challenger [tanks]."

17. One of the main conclusions of the War College study is that it might be very difficult for the US to repeat what happened in Iraq:

"But because both technology and a major skill imbalance are required, the same Coalition skills and equipment would probably not produce comparable results against a more skilled opponent. In particular, the troop level required to destroy a skilled force the size of Saddam's military could well have exceeded that available in 2003, and the costs required could well have been significantly higher.

"This is because skilled militaries can survive stand-off precision engagement and compel close combat on terms unfavourable to us, and because such close combat, even with modern technology, is inherently dangerous and labour intensive when waged against a skilled opponent. To survive stand-off precision and wage close combat effectively, however, requires high tactical proficiency and an ability to exploit complex terrain for cover and concealment. The Iraqis in 2003 were anything but highly proficient. Their poor training and leadership produced a combination of mistakes, ill-prepared fighting positions, poor marksmanship, and flawed dispositions that left them fatally exposed to Coalition technologies at all ranges. This in turn enabled a relatively small Coalition force to prevail in a short, relatively low-cost campaign — but it would be a mistake to assume similar outcomes against better prepared opponents." ■

Epilogue:

The War Since Saddam's Fall

By Yolando Regis

The US had a very specific political goal when it set out to invade Iraq: "regime change". That meant not just the defeat and removal of Saddam Hussein, but the installation of a sustainable neo-colonial government. The invasion succeeded, but the occupation proved to be a different kind of war. The people of Iraq have prevented the US from achieving its goal.

US President Bush proclaimed an end to the "major fighting" in Iraq on 1 May 2003 beneath a banner reading, "Mission accomplished". That turned out to be a fantasy. In fact, the US's whole plan turned out to be based on a daydream. Attempting to refute General Shinseki's estimate that several hundred thousand troops would be needed to occupy Iraq, US Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz told the American Congress, "I am reasonably certain that they will greet us as liberators, and that will

help us to keep requirements down."

The original war plan drawn up by the Pentagon called for US troop strength in Iraq to be reduced down to 50,000 by the end of 2003. When by December of that year it became apparent that this was utterly unrealistic, a new plan scheduled reductions in 2004. Yet by early 2005, the US has little choice but to increase its forces to 150,000 — more than the original number of invading troops. "Plan A — what the US actually did — failed, and Plan B — the adaptations since the end of 'major combat' — hasn't worked either, so far," explained an American advisor to the Iraqi Ministry of Defence.¹

Some of the first resistance fighting broke out in Falluja on 1 May 2003, when youth tossed grenades into a compound occupied by American soldiers who had twice fired on crowds of demonstrators. By April of the next year, Falluja was the scene of a major battle. Thousands of US soldiers tried and failed to storm into the town. That same month also saw an uprising led by Moqtada al-Sadr in Najaf. For the first time since they invaded, US troops found themselves compelled to fight at close quarters in these two cities and the slums of Baghdad. Attacks on occupation forces reached 90 a day.

Some six months later, US troops again assaulted Falluja, this time successfully taking it, not so much by their ability in house-to-house fighting as their capacity to simply shell and bomb indiscriminately until no building was left undamaged. In a sense the US was able to fight the way it wanted to in Falluja, since it was able to surround the city over a long period of time, concentrate troops and firepower and seize the initiative. The city, a rebel stronghold, was destroyed, but US commanders may not have achieved the decisive engagement they sought. A claim by one American commander that the destruction of Falluja had "broken the back of the insurgency" was contested by another commander only a month later. The initiative the US had enjoyed in that city was denied it in the following weeks as guerrilla forces unexpectedly and



An arrested Iraqi man seated with others in a Bradley armoured vehicle argues with US soldiers during clashes between US troops and insurgents in Baghdad, July 2004.

successfully staged a major attack in Mosul in the north, a city of as many as two million, Iraq's third largest, declared pacified only a few weeks earlier. The guerrillas also unleashed an offensive throughout the so-called Sunni triangle marked by Samarra to the north of Baghdad, Ramadi to the west and the capital itself, and in the towns south of Baghdad on the highways leading to Najaf and Kerbala.

The price the US paid for the assault on Falluja alone was almost as high as during the invasion itself: 71 soldiers killed and almost 500 more wounded seriously enough to require evacuation.²

To judge by casualty figures, very few Iraqi soldiers fought alongside the GIs in Falluja. In Mosul, as soon as the first shots were fired, many of the Iraqi police and even their commander joined the resistance, and the rest went home. Only 20 per cent stayed. Then, in late December, a bomb blew apart a mess hall in the US base in Mosul, with 80 casualties, including 22 dead. American authorities believed that this attack would not have been possible without

extensive, well-organised support for the guerrillas among the Iraqi National Guard at the base. The US's dream of the "Iraqisation" of the occupation was in danger of collapse. This may be the biggest casualty of the war in this period.

By December 2004, US military authorities stopped giving out figures about the number of attacks on their forces. One prominent military expert and former Pentagon official, Anthony Cordesman, believes there are "some 1,600 to 3,000 incidents and attack attempts a month".³

"The ferocity with which this war is being waged by both sides is escalating," said a former Defence Intelligence Agency analyst. "It is not just that the number of incidents are increasing. The war looks to be changing in character."⁴ Only a few weeks after the attack on the Mosul base, another incident also strongly shook the confidence of the occupiers, according to newspaper reports. A Bradley Fighting Vehicle – one of the US's most advanced ground war machines, a heavily armoured monster weighing almost 25 tonnes empty – was blown apart

by a roadside bomb, killing all seven soldiers aboard. This attack took place in Baghdad itself.

The guerrilla actions are still for the most part confined to ambushes of US convoys and patrols, and rocket assaults on US bases. According to the US military, explosions, especially bombs, as well as mortar shells and artillery – rather than gunfire – account for 80 per cent of the American dead. This indicates, they say, the effectiveness of body armour against bullets as well as the nature of the fighting, in which pitched battles between the occupiers and the resistance are the exception. Ambushes have become far more widespread, frequent and powerful. US forces have been limited in their ability to leave their bases (even to travel to the Baghdad airport, considered one of the most dangerous routes in the country). They are unable to concentrate their forces as they wish and are facing difficulties in distributing supplies.

The vulnerability of the US's reliance on logistics, which is discussed in the accompanying article ("The Fall of Saddam's Regime and



Fighters in Najaf.

Demonstrators clash with British troops in Basra.



Its Lessons for the Future”), has been dramatically demonstrated. Many of the major roadways tying the capital to nearby cities have become death traps for US convoys. Although more precise figures haven’t come out, it seems that a large percentage of US casualties comes from military convoys, rather than attacks on bases or US patrols, often in armoured vehicles. There has been at least one widely-known incident in which American soldiers have refused orders to drive their vehicles on a mission. Many lorries, as well as about three-quarters of the Humvees, the jeep-like vehicles that are the mainstay of transport and patrols, are not armoured, and therefore very vulnerable. The reason is that US military doctrine expected these cars and trucks to be used behind the lines, in relatively safe areas under American control. When US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was challenged about the shortage of armoured vehicles, he answered “You go to war with the army you

have, not the one you want." But of course when Rumsfeld and the rest went to war, they thought they had the army they needed to win it. Contrary to their expectations, they found themselves fighting guerrillas who had the support of a very large part of the population, and it turned out that attacks can happen anywhere there are Iraqis.

The US has found itself in a position that does have some things in common with Mao's description of "drawing the enemy in deep", surrounded by the people, fighting on internal lines and forced to defend the roads on which their military strength depends to a large degree. Because there are no front lines in this war, there are no rear areas on which American forces can depend for their logistical bases and other needs. Attacks on US convoys have become so serious that the US Air Force is moving not only food, water, spare parts and medical supplies but even trucks and other vehicles by air. "Taking the trucks off the most dangerous routes where we have the most trouble has become the goal", a US general told reporters in December.⁵ US commanders now recognise that the road transport that provides the lifeblood of the US's hi-tech way of fighting is also a point of great vulnerability.

This situation is related to another major point made in the accompanying article, about how US doctrine seeks to use material wealth and technological strength to minimise the number of soldiers in the field. The US's political goal of reconfiguring the world is based, so far, at least, on being able to do so with a relatively small but very rich military, which requires not tying up too many soldiers in Iraq. This was the motivation behind Rumsfeld's plan to win this war "on the cheap", quickly and with a restricted number of soldiers, even while spending lots of money and lives. Some military and political figures in US ruling circles are convinced that this has been the US's key mistake. Zbigniew Brezinski, a former National Security Advisor and one of the most prominent critics of the Bush-

Rumsfeld war plan within US ruling circles, warns of "a massive disproportion between objectives, which are unrealistic, and means, which are limited". In other words, he says, the US cannot hope to win without half a million troops. "The problem, in my judgement, is how to avoid failure", because he does not believe that the US can commit that many troops to Iraq in light of its broader objectives.⁶

But the Bush gang is as united around Rumsfeld's doctrine as ever, and as determined to "carry out its plan for Iraq. Bush has made his support for Rumsfeld crystal clear in public statements. In an attempt to signal an end to the debate in ruling class circles, Rumsfeld reportedly held a meeting with the Armed Forces Joint Chiefs of Staffs shortly after the 2004 elections and told them that the US is committed to staying in Iraq. At the same time, Bush and Rumsfeld are also preparing for the possibility of an even wider war. US journalist Seymour Hersh reported that US Special Forces teams are in Iran doing "black reconnaissance", selecting targets for possible future air strikes against Iran's military infrastructure just as they did against Saddam.⁷ This does not mean that the US is now seeking to invade Iran, or that it is necessarily next on some already-prepared hit list. They seem to hope that the Islamic Republic of Iran could be toppled by something short of a US invasion, such as massive air strikes to destroy Iran's military infrastructure, through a US-backed Israeli attack or more directly by US air power, or some combination of both. Some top reactionaries argue that while the US has its hands full in Iraq, in the long run it cannot hope to stabilise its rule there without bringing Iran under more direct US control. Whatever the US is hoping, an invasion at some point in the future is not out of the question. Once any military action is unleashed, the consequences are unpredictable, and the US may find itself being drawn in even deeper once again. The US's extreme ambition in the region and the world is one of the most volatile potential

sources of vulnerability for the US empire.

The US's "coalition" talk is little heard lately, as the Netherlands, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Ukraine are withdrawing or preparing to withdraw their contingents from Iraq. Poland, once proudly pointed to in Washington as a symbol of pro-US "new Europe", cut its forces by a third and is not making any commitments beyond the coming months. This required additional troops from the UK to fill the gap, drawing Britain deeper into a war that is more discredited at home than ever amid fresh exposures of British torture of captured Iraqis. Further, no other country, including Italy – the US/UK's main ally – is regularly involved in combat operations. In some countries, like Japan and South Korea that have sent symbolic contingents public opinion is so against the war that the troops are deliberately kept away from the fighting and are probably a liability in military terms. The war's capacity for provoking political disorder among the people in the countries that have become Bush allies is another vulnerability whose potential has only been barely glimpsed in the streets.

The US's own troops are another prospective great weakness for the men who sent them to fight this unjust war. The question of demoralisation and even resistance among US soldiers is too vast to examine here except in passing. US Army recruitment has begun to decline, not the usual pattern in wartime. About 40 per cent of the US's troop strength in Iraq is not professional soldiers but members of the National Guard or Army Reserves. Recruitment for these units fell by 30 per cent in the last months of 2004, and the mood among them was especially bleak. In quotes from a leaked memo to the Pentagon, the commander of the US Army Reserve called his troops a "broken" force.⁸ There have been several thousand desertions, including a few cases where soldiers have risked making their opposition to the war very public. One of the groups taking part in the New York protests

during the Republican National Convention in September 2004 was Iraqi Veterans Against the War.

The torture at Abu Ghraib and other US concentration camps has given the world the most vivid visual expressions of what the US is doing in Iraq. The systematic use of torture has another side as well: it reveals the degree to which the occupiers are unable to get co-operation from the occupied. Above all, they are unable to get military intelligence on their enemies. Cordesman writes of the "remarkable lack of facts" about the Iraqi resistance as one of the main problems facing American forces. At the same time, the resistance is able to penetrate everywhere there are Iraqis, even, US commanders fear, in high places in the puppet government and Iraqi National Guard.

While some supporters of the war might like to imagine an occupation without torture, that is impossible, because torture is at the heart of imposing the occupier's will on an unwilling populace. During the recent siege of Falluja, the US claimed that they didn't know what was going on in the city because they had no sources of intelligence there. There was much hypocrisy in that claim, since the US military kept out the Red Crescent, unescorted journalists (especially Arabs) and anyone else who could report on what the US was doing to the city's people. But, really, the idea that there could be a city of hundreds of thousands without a single active snitch for several months tells you almost everything you need to know about the nature of this war and the strengths and weaknesses of the two sides locked in combat. As more than one journalist has noted, the puppet police don't dare go out on the street without full face masks, while guerrillas carrying mortars and other conspicuous weapons in the streets and setting up ambushes along busy thoroughfares display their faces openly.

The location of the political middle among Iraqis has shifted over the last 20 months. This is above all thanks to the way the US has trampled on Iraq and its people as a whole

in its attempts to put down a resistance that certainly started out small and still does not command large armed forces (active resistance fighters number in the tens of thousands, according to some reactionary estimates, and they are clearly not in a single army). The "wait-and-see" attitude toward the US among some of the Iraqi population, largely a result of the reactionary nature of Saddam's regime, has largely evaporated, at least in the non-Kurdish areas. Even most of those who consider themselves somewhat neutral toward the resistance hate the Americans.⁹

The long and short of the problem for the US is how to rule Iraq – what kind of coalition of old and new ruling class forces could lead to a stable US puppet government with enough armed power of its own to enable most US troops to move on to other conquests. The Bush government's hesitations and vacillations about who to put in power and the rancorous debates among various imperialist thinkers reflect the fact that there are no good choices. The US at first planned to keep Saddam's state more or less intact after his downfall, hoping it would do their bidding. Then, perhaps fearing disloyalty, they dissolved the Iraqi army and announced a programme of "be-Baathisation". After that they turned around once again and set out to rebuild Saddam's army using the old officer corps – and just as they feared, these forces proved problematic at best.

The Iraqi guerrilla resistance has fought much better against the US than Saddam's army did. The US itself has been removing any remaining illusions that Iraqis can ever hope to have their national dignity and their own country without war, and the war they have been increasingly waging has taught them more about how to fight this kind of enemy. In fact, this war has taught anyone who cares to see it a great deal about the contradictory nature of imperialist armed power and the occupiers' real and growing disadvantages.

Yet it has shown the Iraqi resist-

ance's weaknesses as well. The Iraqi resistance involves a wide variety of class forces including ex-Baathists, Islamic fundamentalists, progressive Iraqi nationalists, some traditional feudal leaders and so forth. We are not in a position to attempt a thorough analysis of these different forces and the role and relative weight they are playing in the resistance. One decisive weakness is the lack of a genuine proletarian force guided by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism that plays an important role in the resistance. The fact that the resistance is being led by non-proletarian forces is reflected in the character of the war they are waging and the tactics they employ. The kidnapping of progressive aid workers (such as the "two Simonas" from Italy) or the beheading of Nepali construction workers work against the interests of the Iraqi people and especially their ability to win support from and build unity with the masses of all countries. Contrast this with Mao's well-known practice concerning the good treatment even of captured enemy soldiers, a policy that is being followed today by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in the course of the People's War in that country. A correct policy like this leads to the further isolation of the enemy and the disintegration of its forces.

The Saddam regime relied on two kinds of appeals to resist the invasion. One was a vague and weak patriotism in words that hid capitulationism to the imperialists in deeds or at best an inability to fight them effectively, as the accompanying article demonstrates. The other appeal was to religious sentiments, which despite the Baathist party's secular origins, first was brought to the fore during the 1991 Gulf War when the regime added the slogan *allahu akbar* ("god is great") to the Iraqi flag, and which grew in prominence. These sentiments are clearly strong in today's Iraqi resistance.

The experience of this war has all too plainly demonstrated that religion cannot unite the people against the US but will divide them (Shia

against Sunni, Moslems against Christians, believers against communists and other atheists, etc.).

US official attempts to discredit the resistance as a Sunni movement against the Shia majority, cannot explain the level and ambit. of the fighting. As the so-called elections approached in January – elections held by order of the US, organised by the US and under rules set by the US – four of Iraq's 18 provinces were to a large extent out of control. These provinces (Baghdad and the country to the west and north of the capital, except Kurdistan) represent 40-50 percent of the country's population, even if within these areas fighting is often concentrated in Sunni neighbourhoods right now. Also, UK forces in Basra and other Shia areas came under renewed attack in January, and while the south is quieter at the moment than the north, it was the scene of an intense rebellion against the occupation under al-Sadr, whose issues are still unresolved. But it does seem true that the problem of uniting the people across religious and ethnic lines is one of the most serious challenges the resistance faces. Further, the religious forces have not sought to liberate women to take part in this great battle, but to shackle them. This outlook cannot guide the war to victory. In fact, Iraq's Islamic leaders are representatives of oppressive and backward relations, the semi-feudal, clan and patriarchal relations that helped make it vulnerable to imperialist domination in the first place.

As for patriotism, the war has been dividing Iraq into two camps, shameless bootlickers for the Americans, and those with some national self-respect. But even real patriotism, too, is not enough. Iraqi nationalism has, for instance, always been associated with the oppression of Kurds. It cannot help bring Kurdish fighters out of their confusion and into the field against the US. Nor can it fully bring into play one of the Iraqi resistance's most potentially powerful weapons – the fact that people throughout the Middle East see the anti-US war in Iraq as their fight, just as they also

see Iraq and Palestine as two fronts of the same war. The entire region, including non-Arab Iran, is likely to undergo upheaval exactly because of US efforts to bring the area more directly under its heel. Even more, the fact that the whole region is a key focal point of contradictions in today's world creates a particular link between the fate of Iraq's people and that of the people of the whole planet. In many countries a budding recognition of this has been demonstrated in the streets. It has already played a role, in a very beginning way, in affecting the political stage the US is fighting this war on, including among American troops who, whether they know it or not, have been sent to kill and die by their worst enemies.

"You fight your way, I'll fight mine" – this famous statement by Mao Tsetung expresses in a concentrated fashion the fact that the strategy and tactics applied in warfare will ultimately concentrate the goals for which one is fighting. For the people's side, there are no shortcuts or magic weapons. Fundamentally, fighting "our way" means relying on and mobilising the masses of people to consciously fight in their own interests. It means adopting strategy and tactics that reflect and express the fact that revolutionary armed struggle ultimately serves the interests of the vast majority of humanity in liberating themselves and advancing to classless society. These strategic goals determine the means used to achieve them. The justness of this cause and the tremendous enthusiasm of the masses, their creativity and ability to sacrifice when they grasp their own objective class interests, provide the political and material basis for revolutionary warfare to isolate the enemy politically and militarily and, thus, persist in and prevail through protracted struggle in which a powerful enemy can be worn down – and in the end defeated – over a relatively long period of time.

As the first phase of the war in Iraq showed, due to its reactionary class nature the Saddam regime was not only incapable of employing such

methods, but in fact stood in complete opposition to them. As long as that regime was in power it was impossible for the Iraqi people to prevail over the imperialist invasion and occupation. Since then, the Iraqi resistance has made astonishing progress but the problem of correct leadership remains.

A confidential December 2004 report written by the departing CIA station chief in Baghdad asserts that maintaining the present situation – in other words, the present level of warfare – is the best alternative the US can hope for at this point – but it is not the only alternative. Even the most mendacious American officials no longer dare claim that any end to this war with "mission accomplished" is in sight. Optimistic imperialist figures, those among Bush's inner circle, talk about four years; others ten or twenty.

This stalemating of the world's number one oppressor and would-be ruler has been a source of joy and an antidote to pessimistic ideas about what can be accomplished in the fight against imperialism today. But the US has not been driven out or even dealt decisive blows, so it has not yet become impossible for the US to continue this horror. How long that can last depends on developments in Iraq and in the world, in some combination that can't be foreseen now. The accompanying article brought out how Saddam's military strategy squandered the potential strength that could have been drawn on in a real war of resistance against the invasion. That lesson should be applied to today's anti-occupation resistance: which political understanding, goals and outlook leads will determine whether or not the people are fighting with one hand tied behind their back and whether their fight will constitute a step toward their liberation.

Footnotes

1. Retired US Army Colonel Raoul Alcalá, quoted in the *Washington Post*, 2 December 2004.

2. Although body armour and the wealth to be able to provide the finest medical care to the wounded have played a major role in reducing the number of US dead in this war

and creating lopsided battlefield death figures, these factors have also meant an extraordinarily high number of seriously wounded survivors on the US side, including a high percentage of amputees. From a military point of view, these are all casualties.

3. Anthony H. Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, *International Herald Tribune*, 28 December 2004. Cordesman is the author of *The Iraqi War: Strategy, Tactics and Military Lessons*, an important military summation of the first part of this war. Also in December 2004, the US stopped giving out the city where US soldiers were killed in many cases. By reporting casualties as occurring in Al-Anbar province, for instance, the US government has made it hard to determine how much fighting has been continuing in Falluja.

4. Jeffrey White, now of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, *Washington Post*, 2 December.

5. *International Herald Tribune*, 15 December. The article quotes military officials as saying that they face about a hundred deaths and injuries a month in convoy ambushes.

6. *Al Jazeera*, 27 December 2004.

7. See "The Coming Wars", *The New Yorker*, 24 January 2005. "Next we're going to have the Iranian campaign. We've declared war, and the bad guys, wherever they are, are the enemy" – a "former high-level intelligence official" told the reporter. One undeniable fact that seems to confirm Hersh's claims is that the more the Islamic Republic of Iran co-operates with UN arms control inspectors, the more openly bellicose the US is becoming toward that regime. Sound familiar? However, especially given the stalemate in Iraq, this doesn't mean that the US is necessarily preparing for a large-scale ground invasion. "The neocons [Bushite neoconservatives like Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and their assistants] are saying that negotiations are a

bad deal", Hersh quotes a UN International Atomic Energy Agency official as saying, "and that the only thing the Iranians understand is pressure. And that they need to be whacked." Hersh believes that the US is seeking an arrangement with Iran, but that it considers force "a vital bargaining tool." He even speculates that some of the revelations about US preparations (including information given to him) are part of a campaign to pressure the Islamic Republic. But he also says that the US is formulating contingency plans for a land invasion of Iran from Iraq; Afghanistan and US bases in Central Asia.

8. Lieutenant General James Helmly, cited on BBC, 6 January 2005.

9. Among other sources for reporting on what ordinary Iraqis think, see www.dahrjamailliraq.com/weblog/ ■

Malaya

Continued from p. 13

Chin Peng's reasons for joining the CPM rather than the Kuomintang (which also had a sizeable presence in British Malaya) were largely influenced by the rapidly moving chain of events in China itself at that time. This is understandable given the highly segregated nature of Malayan society then, in which there was very little interaction among the different nationalities. It was widely felt (particularly by the Chinese communities up and down Peninsula Malaya and Singapore) that the Kuomintang in China (under Chiang Kai-shek) was offering little or no resistance to Japan's invasion of China. Indeed, Chin Peng says that he had even mulled over the idea of going to China to join the war of resistance against Japan. As events turned out, while he was still a school student, he became increasingly involved in the CPM-initiated and led "Anti-Enemy Backing-up Society", which was

meant to build up following and support for the anti-Japanese war effort in Malaya.

Chin Peng's account of the CPM's anti-Japanese war and the treachery of the nefarious secret police-agent, Lai Te, make gripping reading, but despite the treachery, it is here, during this period, that one is truly able to appreciate the Party members' and supporters' enormous contribution to the "liberation of Malaya". What now appears so striking is the fact that Lai Te, throughout the Anti-Japanese War, repeatedly betrayed his Party's Central Committee members to Japanese military intelligence, and yet no senior CPM member thought of questioning his (Lai Te's) directives. But the Party's ready capitulation to Britain following this war raises fundamental questions about its understanding of revolution, as well as about its proletarian class character. Lack of ideological-political clarity in the Party leadership (in a turbulent world then) gave rise to its blindness as to what its central task was even then: waging a

war of national liberation and accomplishing the tasks of the new-democratic revolution. This was so even after Lai Te was exposed and eliminated. The CPM deemed that a war of national liberation from British rule was untenable and hence unnecessary from 1945 till 1948. Hence, the Party continued to hold that "legal" labour organising and the building of mass organisations was the only option that would enable it to maintain its open and legal existence. It followed Lai Te's line without Lai Te.

In around May 1948, when the CPM leadership, by then led by Chin Peng, decided to "go underground" and carry out armed struggle against British rule, it did so because it felt compelled to do so rather than with a clear communist understanding that the proletariat must seize political power through armed force, and that the only justification for the existence of a communist party is to serve this objective and place the class (the proletariat) it leads in power. Nothing in *My Side of History* brings this central task of a proletari-

an party to the fore. Yet the crying need of the hour is letting the reader understand why, and how, the revolutionary attempt at, not only national liberation, but also transformation of society in Malaya came to be ended, indeed abandoned, so that future liberation fighters can learn to avoid pitfalls and surmount difficulties. One cannot but conclude that this is an abandonment on the part of the CPM leadership of its responsibility for the generations to come. Coming from a person of Chin Peng's stature, moreover, this great absence of communist ideology – and the failure to apply the science of revolution to dissect the complexities of a nation of different nationalities with different languages and diverse cultures as well as social classes and strata and to arm the masses of people to better grasp its methodology – is all the more disappointing.

**Negation of Socialist
Experience in
Revolutionary China**

“If China's leadership is usurped by revisionists in the future, the Marxist-Leninists of all countries should resolutely expose and fight them and help the working class and the masses of China to combat such revisionism.” – Mao Tsetung, 1965.

In the years following the death of Chairman Mao and the defeat of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, that is, with the arrest of the four principal leaders of the proletarian revolutionary headquarters, Chiang Ching, Chang Chun-chao, Wang Hung-wen and Yao Wen-yuan, very little was heard from the CPM on China, and on learning from the revolutionary experience there. What the CPM did do was hail Hua Kuo-feng as a “wise leader”, which signalled at best the Party's confusion on the two roads – capitalism versus socialism – in China, and indicated serious weaknesses in its grasp of what was then called Marxism - Leninism - Mao Tsetung Thought, and particularly on the lessons from the GPCR about continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and

class struggle throughout the socialist period. Indeed, virtually nothing was heard about China and the struggle against modern revisionism from then on.

Even as late as in 1998, the new CPM Chairman, Abdullah CD, makes hardly any mention of the international situation in any period. His wife, Suraini, makes some remarks about “Socialist China” in her defence of revisionist China, that is, since Mao's passing. This is in her attack on a former CPM Chairman, Musa Ahmad.

Musa Ahmad was actually an anti-British Malay nationalist in post-war Malaya who later joined the CPM prior to the Emergency. He was also a prominent leader of the CPM-led Malayan Peasant Front. Musa was later sent to China by the Party in the difficult years when the MNLA suffered some military setbacks in the late 1950s. In October 1980, Musa decided to quit the Party and return to Malaya. He later went on to denounce communism, the Party and the armed struggle.

Suraini went on to claim in her book that Musa had supported the so-called “Gang of Four”, led by Chiang Ching, “when the Great Cultural Revolution exploded”, and that Musa was “encouraged” by the Four in his “despicable anti-PKM [CPM] activities”. Here, one gathers that the CPM considered revisionist China to be socialist (pp. 180-186) in 1999 since Suraini alleges that Musa had “slandered the Communist Party of China and socialist China”.

**Chin Peng on the Great
Proletarian Cultural Revolution**

Official statements of the CPM had been full of praise for the Cultural Revolution in China at the time it was being waged. On 1 June 1968, that is, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the beginning of the anti-British national liberation war, and on 25 April 1970, on the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the Party, the CPM issued statements, rallying the Malayan people to vigorously unfold a revolutionary movement to support the

MNLA efforts to carry out the armed struggle against imperialist puppet rule. These Party statements hailed the GPCR. Indeed, in the course of an analysis of China's new relations with Malaya, in 1974 the CPM declared, “After being tempered in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, socialist China has become stronger than ever before. Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line and revolutionary line on foreign affairs have won great victories. China has achieved brilliant success in socialist revolution and construction. As an impregnable revolutionary bastion, China is now making an increasingly important contribution to world revolution” (cited in *Broadsheet*, China Policy Study Group, Britain, August 1974).

The Cultural Revolution in China was often described as having stirred the very soul of the Chinese nation and revolutionary-minded people the world over. What was at stake then was the very existence of not only a liberated segment of humanity, but indeed a red beacon for the downtrodden of the earth, yearning for a better world. Chin Peng reveals little of his activities while he was in China from 1959 till 1989, including during the GPCR period. No one living in China then could have remained untouched by the tumultuous events, and this was apparently the case with Chin Peng too. Yet in his recollections, how little does he write about the Cultural Revolution! He and other CPM leaders based in China then had met with Chairman Mao Tsetung during the early stages of the Cultural Revolution. Chin Peng informs that Mao in 1967 not only asked him about how the party-to-party talks (between the CPM and the CPC) had gone, but also “significantly wanted to talk to us about the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution”. Yet Chin Peng does not say what Mao told him about the GPCR, and what his views were then. He remarks only that, “I quickly gained the impression Mao had become quite isolated from his party's leadership” (p. 447). It is clear from this remark and his observation that the CPC Cultural Revolution Committee

led by Kang Sheng had become more powerful than the Chou En-lai-led Party Central Committee Secretariat that he saw that Mao had become politically, if not ideologically, estranged from the likes of Chou En-lai and Deng Xiao-ping.

Chin Peng then speaks of "an overflow of madness from the Cultural Revolution" influencing his party (p. 468). This is how he saw the Cultural Revolution in China: not as laying bare the internal contradictions of a socialist society and openly engaging in open debates and struggle that would determine the future course of development in China, that is, whether or not China would continue along the socialist revolutionary road or take the capitalist road and restore capitalism, not as a life-and-death titanic struggle over the general line of the Communist Party in the socialist period, but as "turmoil" and "madness".

Chin Peng argues that the "overflow of madness from the Cultural Revolution... saw waves of paranoia surging through our four camps" in the Malayan-Thai border region. Thus, for Chin Peng the GPCR represented not the unleashing of the masses to boldly debate the life-and-death questions of society and state, not the masses increasing their ability to distinguish the correct, that is, the proletarian, from the incorrect bourgeois political line (in the socialist transition period) and daring to question authority when it is taking the capitalist road, but simply as factional fights, "paranoia", "emotion" and "madness", just as all reactionaries (including revisionists) as well as the imperialist powers and their media, would have the world believe.

As schools and colleges were sporadically closed during a large part of the Cultural Revolution years, Chin Peng was mainly concerned with the school education of his and other CPM leaders' children then residing in China. He was running around trying to arrange night schools for the children of senior Party leaders in Hunan province from where the CPM broadcast *Suara Revolusi*. Chin Peng tells us now that he was "caught up in the

quagmire of the Cultural Revolution".

On school and university students going to factories and the collective farms in the countryside to learn from the workers and peasants, he is silent in *My Side of History*. What does this tell us about the CPM leadership's understanding of China's youth passionately involving themselves in the affairs of the (proletarian) state and immersing themselves in class struggle? Obviously Chin Peng was greatly troubled by the "turmoil" attendant on the intense struggles of the day in China, but had he been paying heed to Chairman Mao's call for remoulding the world outlook of the youth and students through direct participation in productive labour and the class struggle? How much of Mao's insistence that while its task was to overthrow the capitalist-roaders, the goal of the Cultural Revolution was to bring about a change in the world outlook of the masses of the people, had actually sunk in on the CPM leadership stationed in revolutionary China then?

How then does Chin Peng view post-Mao China and Deng Xiao-ping's Four Modernisations? "...It was also during 1978 that Deng launched his monumentally ambitious 'Four Modernisations' campaign which looked to stunning advances for China in agriculture, industry, science and technology and defence." Not a word here about Mao's criticism of Deng's view that, "black cat or white cat, as long as it catches the mice it's a good cat" — meaning that anything that raised production was good, which amounted to a pragmatic recipe for liquidating the fight for revolution and thus restoring capitalism. On looking back, the CPM leadership's failure to expose and fight the capitalist road taken by Deng and his clique and its refusal to help the working class and the masses of the Chinese people combat revisionism should come as no surprise. What it entailed was turning away from the CPM's bounden internationalist duty so earnestly exhorted by Mao of communists the world over.

The CPM, it is now quite apparent, must have viewed the life-and-death struggle between the proletarian revolutionary headquarters led by Mao and the so-called "Gang of Four" on the one hand, and the whole alliance of revisionists and capitalist-roaders (Chou En-lai, Deng Xiao-ping, Li Hsien-nian, Yeh Ching-ying and Hua Kuo-feng) on the other, in a somewhat centrist light to say the least. Without such centrism on the vital two-line struggle it would not have been possible for the Party to move rightward, become revisionist and really fall apart so soon after the death of Mao Tsetung.

Failure to grasp the centrality of the two-line struggle means failure to grasp Mao's teaching that contradictions are found everywhere, including in even a truly communist party. And moreover that the two aspects of the principal contradiction in a proletarian party in contention are the reactionary bourgeois line and the revolutionary proletarian line, representing the capitalist road and the socialist road throughout the entire period of socialism. This failure to understand the "kernel of dialectics" means ignoring the centrality of Marxist philosophy in a party's life. Inevitably this has led to revisionism, and indeed, open abandonment of revolution and acceptance of the status quo.

Centrism: the Prelude to Revisionism and Abandonment of Revolution

What does the CPM leadership's about-turn on the GPCR tell us?

It seems clear that pragmatism and centrism must have prevailed in the leadership of the CPM even during the years when the Party was supposed to have cleansed itself of erroneous and right-opportunist influences and "established a proletarian revolutionary line" since 1961. The CPM leadership felt that it needed a safe "rear" to function, and revolutionary China provided this "rear". The CPM accordingly supported China's every move, through every twist and turn of events, during the high tide as well as the low, but it

is very questionable as to how much its leadership really grasped the issues of line that they commented on or how firmly they upheld proletarian internationalism, or how much they were instead proceeding from their own more narrow interests. This becomes clear soon after Mao's death, when the dust settled following the arrest and imprisonment of the leaders of the proletarian revolutionary headquarters (the so-called Gang of Four), led by Chiang Ching and Chang Chun-chiao. Did the CPM "dare to go against the tide" when China's revisionist leaders seized power and betrayed the revolution and socialism? How could one explain the CPM leadership's adherence to proletarian internationalism when it failed to come to the aid of the masses in China by denouncing the triumph of the capitalist-roaders and the restoration of capitalism? As a matter of fact, the CPM leadership welcomed the victory of the "unrepentant" capitalist-roaders and their assumption of power. The CPM's centrism on the many issues pertaining to the struggle between the reactionary bourgeois line and the proletarian revolutionary line in China, between the socialist road and the capitalist road, between nationalism and internationalism, inevitably led in this new situation to the abandonment of the revolutionary line and of the armed struggle in Malaya too.

Chin Peng's leadership reveals slavishness in the CPM. Slavishness in regards to the Party's international relations with the Communist Party of China also meant slavishness within the Party, which stifled the life-blood of the Party and obstructed the lively political debate and two-line struggle essential to revitalising the dynamism of the Party organisation at various levels. Such is the Maoist view on the life of a communist party. Failure to grasp this really means failure to understand in a deep-going way that contradictions are present everywhere; it means failure to truly understand the law of dialectics and apply it to the workings of a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party. The monolithic view of a com-

munist party that prevailed under Chin Peng's leadership of the CPM, hence, turned its membership from fearless and lively revolutionary fighters into slavish followers of the Party leadership. The Party members' ability to distinguish between revolution and reformism, between internationalism and nationalism, corroded, and the revolutionary spark that had originally impelled the Party forward gradually extinguished. Hence, a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party could rapidly change to a revisionist party, communist in name, but bourgeois in essence.

Inner-Party Struggle, Factions and Splits

In the early 1970s, just as the CPM's guerrilla army was making progress in its advances southwards from its south Thailand border camps, there broke out accusations and charges of treason and espionage in the base camps. A large number of Party members, including some Central Committee (CC) members, were charged with treason or accused of being police spies, and were executed in the base camps in southern Thailand. Chin Peng relates these events, particularly mentioning the names of some of his old comrades from the anti-Japanese war and the anti-British colonial war with a great deal of sorrow. Though he is not convinced of the accusations (against so many of his Party members and old comrades), he does not take any responsibility for these events.

Two of the camps in West Betong and Sadao (in southern Thailand) close to the Malayan border even broke away from the CPM and formed separate parties: the CPM Marxist/Leninist and the CPM (Revolutionary Faction). Both these factions considered the CC led by Chin Peng to be "revisionist" but nothing emerges from Chin Peng's *My Side of History* concerning the central questions of ideology and the basic political line for the new-democratic revolution in Malaya. Indeed, the only hint about the ideological-political line of these factions in the

book is a reference to their surrender to the Thai authorities in 1987, only two years before Chin Peng signed a "peace agreement" with the Malaysian and Thai regimes, bringing the armed struggle to an end.

In a healthy, vibrant communist party different ideas and lines clash, leading to one prevailing over the other and thereby enabling the advance of the party as a whole. The monolithic understanding on party unity prevalent in the CPM, however, led to fear in expressing dissenting views and hence covered up the existence of different ideas concerning the application of a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist line on new-democratic revolution and people's war in Malaya. In the event of some successful operation by the enemy(ies), such as the capture of some cadres or the disruption of communication lines between guerrilla fighters and underground supporters, suspicion of infiltration by enemy spies by senior Party cadres and CC members in the headquarters of the Party led to trials (without appeals) and executions. This in turn led to further accusations and counter-accusations between the camps the CC directly controlled and those it did not.

Could these developments have obscured the emergence of opposing lines and line struggle in the Party, reflecting long-held views (counter to those of the CC), doubts concerning the armed struggle and the new-democratic revolution and the attendant pent-up dissatisfactions concerning the Party leadership's style of work intermingled with opposition to the then campaign to "weed out and eliminate" enemy agents taking place? Chin Peng seems to admit this when he says that the problems were "deep-set". But he does not reveal anything more about this.

Deng's Betrayal of Fraternal Parties

As Chin Peng relates, Deng Xiaoping had been "encouraging" him to "seek avenues for a peace accord" with the reactionary bureaucrat-capitalist regime of Malaysia since 1981.

In the same year Deng summoned Chin Peng to his office and bluntly told him to wind down the *Suara Revolusi* radio operations in southern China. Chin Peng had no option but to comply. Earlier that year Deng had ordered the Communist Party of Thailand's (CPT) Voice of the Free Thai People to shut down its radio station.

Deng's reason for these measures was that China needed to seek accommodation with imperialism and all the client states of imperialism in south-east Asia, the US-led band of Western imperialism in particular. This stood in stark contrast to Mao's continued and firm support for revolutionary struggles around the world, even at the time that, under his leadership, China had begun to "open up to the West".

As the US's imperialist rival, the Soviet Union, backed Vietnam, which had invaded and occupied Cambodia in 1978, Deng considered that China needed to align herself with the US and other Western imperialist powers. This was in accordance with Deng's Three Worlds Theory, which saw the Soviet Union as a threat to China, and presented the view that Soviet hegemony and expansion of its might and influence world-wide alone was the real threat to world peace, and which subordinated everything to the anti-Soviet struggle. Thus, improvement of relations with pro-US Thailand and other neo/semi-colonial states in the region, such as Malaysia, was important for China's military support for the Khmer Rouge of Cambodia, as the eastern part of Thailand served as a conduit for Chinese arms delivery. Against this highly volatile political scenario and fast-moving events, the pro-Peking (Beijing) communist parties carrying out armed struggle in south-east Asia, such as the CPM, the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) and the Burma Communist Party (BCP), became mere pawns in the power struggle between the rival imperialist blocs, and of less and less importance to China's new revisionist rulers.

These developments were taking

place against a backdrop of the regrouping of truly revolutionary communist Maoist forces around the world. The Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM), founded in 1984 on defence of the revolutionary contributions of Mao, defiantly upheld the GPCR in China and set out to beat back the revisionist wind then blowing across the communist world and raise the red banner of revolutionary internationalism. Deng's capitalist road was subjected to all-out attacks, and revisionism in China exposed. Moreover a powerful People's War was initiated in Peru. Soon after that, in 1993, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism was adopted by RIM as the new, third and higher stage of the science of revolution. But owing to the continuing grip of right-opportunism/revisionism in the communist parties in south-east Asia, including the CPM, the ideological and political break-through that the masses need to forge a genuine revolutionary vanguard there, even today, remains at the very top of the agenda of everyone dreaming of a world free of oppression and exploitation.

Conclusion

The importance of the international dimension – the previous existence of a real socialist society in China as a beacon for the world proletariat – cannot be overemphasised. For the communist movement in south-east Asia this is even surer given the proximity of China and the close support and internationalism extended to the communist parties in the south-east Asian countries materially, as well as morally and politically. Clarity of thought concerning the dynamics of the changes that took place in China during the GPCR period and afterwards is vital to an understanding of what socialism is and what it is not. It is likewise essential to understand not only the concept of class struggle in society as a whole but also its reflection within the communist party in the form of line struggle. Failure to grasp this means failure to grasp the essence of Marxism.

The communist parties in south-east Asia in general and Malaysia in particular are among the parties that failed to grasp this vital point. Their inability to put attention to the key questions of political and ideological line and the two-line struggle at the heart of their parties' life inevitably left them powerless to fend off the heavy hand of the past, the dead weight of millennia of class society, and left them easy prey to various forms of bourgeois ideology. Thus it was that the blow that finished off the revolutionary armed struggle in Malaya came not on the field of battle against the hated enemy, but from the hands of the Party leadership itself. This is sobering testimony to the power of political and ideological line, a lesson for future generations of revolutionaries that Chen Ping teaches us by what our Chinese comrades used to call "negative example".

Footnotes

1. The country of Malaya was situated in south-east Asia between Thailand and Indonesia and was made up of 11 states, including the peninsula of Malaya and Singapore. Since 1963, the former British territories in Borneo, Sabah and Sarawak have been merged with Malaya to form the Federation of Malaysia. This was an arrangement made by the British colonialists to forestall the Borneo territories from falling into the hands of the then radical anti-colonialist, nationalist Republic of Indonesia. The overall imperialist domination of these territories was thus maintained. The right of national self-determination for the people of Sabah and Sarawak was denied. The left wing in general, and the Communist Party of Malaya in particular, never accepted the imperialist concept of Malaysia.

2. Malaysia is populated by a number of different nationalities/ ethnic groups: Malays, Chinese, Indians, a variety of aboriginal tribes (broadly known as Orang Asli), Thais, Sri Lankans and many other nationalities from various parts of Asia.

3. Most of the Indians were previously dispossessed small peasants brought over to Malaya by the British from the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu as indentured labourers. These workers formed the bulk of the labour force in the British-owned plantations in Malaya. ■

Nepal

Continued from p. 9

The strategic offensive is the final stage in the overall development of the People's War, during which the Party prepares to seize political power. This stage is clearly very important, and also very sensitive. The advance by the people's power towards the seizure of country-wide political power inevitably brings with it the heightening danger of expansionist and imperialist intervention. The strategic offensive starkly confronts the enemy with the immediate prospect of a life-and-death battle to protect its hell of injustice, the reactionary system.

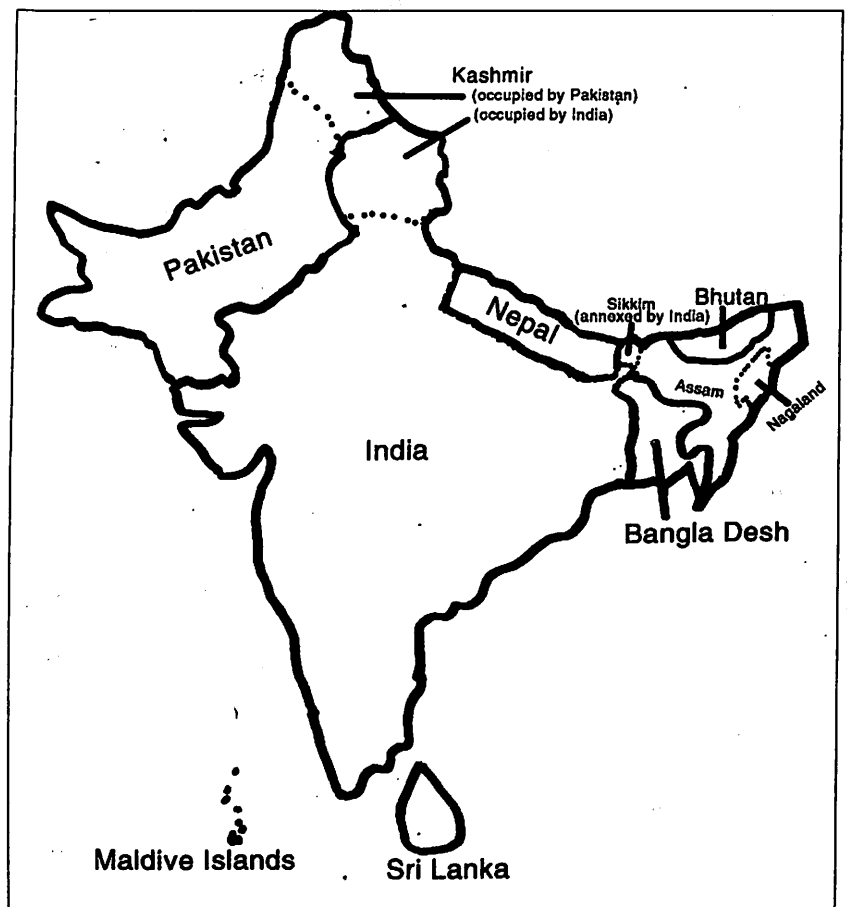
As the Party implements the first phase plan of the strategic offensive, the signs are already visible that the imperialists and expansionists are stepping up their efforts to prevent and suppress the people's victory. In complete violation of the principle against interfering in the internal conflicts of sovereign countries, US imperialism has already increased its open military support to the Nepalese regime to 40 million dollars last year from 32 million dollars in the previous year. In addition to this regular assistance, the US has provided the regime with one million dollars to initiate immediate actions against the Maoists. By the end of September 2004, a cargo plane filled with American weapons had landed in Kathmandu. The US has tried to justify its violation of international laws against internal interference with gangster logic, arguing that the Maoists are destroying democracy, violating human rights, destroying the country's economic infrastructure, attacking American interests, forcing the people to fight the Royal Army, using people as human shields and turning Nepal into a sanctuary for "terrorists". Some US officials have even branded the CPN(M) "terrorist". This is outrageous hypocrisy, coming from a government that has, to take just its most recent war crime, according to the British medical journal *The Lancet*, slaughtered over 100,000 civilians in

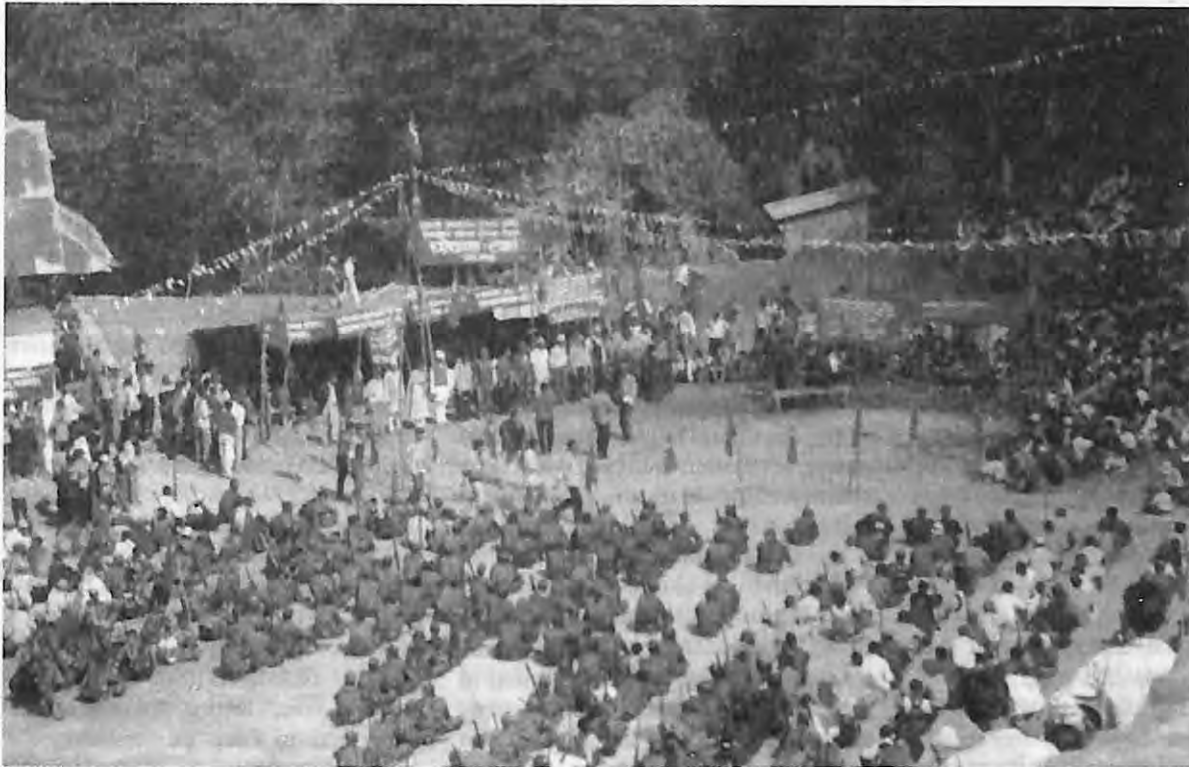
Iraq in its vicious quest for oil and global hegemony. Some of their charges are laughable: they and their Nepalese puppets made a huge cry about how the Maoists "abducted" 1,000 poor peasants – and then went on to complain that these peasants were provided land seized from the landlords! The imperialists and their agents complain that the Maoists are preventing the students from getting an education – yet it is the Royal Army that has turned schools throughout the country into military barracks, evicting the students in the process. Some forces have concocted arguments that the people are "caught between two fires", between the armed forces of the monarchy and the armed forces of the Maoists. These people have eyes, yet fail to see the indisputable sight of the broad masses of the people throughout the entire countryside rising up to exercise red political power. (The CPN[M] International Department has released an eight-hour documentary video showing many dozens of revolutionary events throughout the country involving tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of

ordinary people. This provides powerful testimony to how the people themselves are taking their destiny into their own hands. The video offers a vivid refutation of the flimsy reactionary propaganda spread by the US State Department and other reactionaries.)

As it enters the strategic offensive, the People's War will also confront the increasing threat of intervention by India. Shortly after the Party declared the strategic offensive, the Prime Minister appointed by the monarch Gyanendra Shah visited India, which committed itself to providing whatever the Nepalese monarchy needed to defeat the People's War, including military hardware, financial support and Indian armed forces.

The imperialists are working hard to co-ordinate efforts against the People's War. Army officers from different countries, including Sri Lanka, India and Britain, gathered at the end of September 2004 in Kathmandu. Nepal's location between India and China also makes it a ground of contention. None of the main forces want to see another's domination lead





A mass meeting in 2002.

to superseding its own political, economic and military interests, so even as they co-operate there is also contention amongst them. This could be seen, for instance, when a Bulgarian airline chartered by the US to deliver a consignment of weapons to fight the Maoists was stopped and held in India for five days. This episode was hidden by the Indian authorities, while the US denied the nature of the cargo. On the one hand, these are lies and deceptions to hoodwink the people of Nepal and the world about what they are doing, especially in the face of the growing solidarity of the revolutionary masses across the world, the growing popularity of the People's War and the growing desire for revolution world-wide, while they are also expressions of mutual mistrust and inter-imperialist-expansionist contradictions. Nevertheless, despite their differences and contradictions, they are united on their fascist agenda to suppress the People's War and defeat the Nepalese proletariat. This shows the gravity of the stage on which the People's War is being fought.

The importance of the stage can be

seen from other angles too. The proletariat has suffered a severe setback in Peru, especially since the People's War there had reached the stage of strategic equilibrium at that time. Despite whatever vital questions of ideological as well as political line existed within the Communist Party of Peru (PCP), the revolution had tremendous possibilities for success had Party Chairman Gonzalo and the bulk of the PCP's central leadership not been captured. This blow resulted from the reactionary efforts of the CIA and its flunkey the Peruvian secret police Dincote, combined with low intensity warfare. The CPN(M) has attempted to analyse and learn from this experience, including how the PCP handled the issue of the transition to the strategic offensive in theory and practice. Overall this has been a challenging experience for the proletariat to learn from and apply to lead the Nepalese revolution to victory.

Having witnessed these historical complexities in our international movement in the past, and synthesising the experience of the tumultuous revolutionary war in Nepal itself, the historic Central Committee Plenum

adopted the document presented by CPN(M) Chairman Prachanda and concluded that, "Any right or 'left' subjectivism or confusion seen in this context will impact negatively on the overall People's War." The document emphasised raising the Party's political and ideological understanding to the heights of the People's War to meet the challenges posed before the proletariat, and further stated, "the importance of maintaining uniformity in understanding and spirit about the theoretical conception of the strategic offensive, the objective as well as the subjective conditions to enter this stage, and the general outline of future development, remain several times higher in comparison with previous years."

Some Particular Questions on the Strategic Offensive

The document of the Plenum has laid out a theoretical outline in which it is stated that the principle of the strategic offensive developed by Mao Tsetung remains intact in the context of the protracted people's war. But in order to bring the

revolution success the Maoists should be free to apply this creatively. Comrade Prachanda said in the document, "Comrade Mao Tsetung developed the basic principle of the strategic offensive as well as its meaning, importance and definition within the protracted people's war. In spite of the same theoretical premises developed by Mao Tsetung, in the context of today's twenty-first century, it is not possible to use them mechanically."

The CPN(M)'s vision of strategic offensive has also been developed in conjunction with its vision of the synthesis of military line, adopted at the second historic national Party conference, which discussed the "Development of Democracy in the Twenty-first Century". Having summarised the experiences of five years of vigorous People's War, the CPN(M) adopted the theoretical premise that in order to make revolution in the twenty-first century, the Maoist revolutionary party should combine the fundamental characteristics of both military strategies of people's war – the strategy of protracted people's war and the strategy of insurrection. The CPN(M) drew the conclusion that in every stage of development – such as from the strategic defensive to strategic equilibrium and to strategic offensive, while there is certainly a qualitative change, still, in the present national and international context of the balance of power, the strategic offensive should not be understood as a stage immediately aimed at insurrection. The situation of armed insurrection can be understood as a process of developing through sub-stages, such as the initiation, continuation and development of the offensive, and also depends, in particular, on the development of the war and the national and international situation.

On the basis of this summation, the Party has prepared to seize the opportunity if at any time an armed uprising or insurrection to seize nation-wide power becomes possible. And the Party, since the historic second National Conference, has

explained that such an insurrection may happen at any time. The essence of this summation points to the need to 'develop the People's War intensively, to further organise and mobilise the masses of people broadly and effectively, to analyse the national and international contradictions more dialectically, and to be prepared to take a forceful initiative at any moment if possibilities could lead an uprising to accomplish revolution. Without the degeneration and destruction of the reactionary armed forces, as the backbone of the enemy's state power, revolution is impossible in any country. This kind of degeneration combined with a relatively favourable international situation will certainly give birth to revolution, provided that the Maoist revolutionaries are prepared. Hence, the basic element of strategic importance for revolution in the present world could be summarised as the fragmentation of the enemy's military force, and the emergence of a relatively favourable international situation, combined with the powerful leadership of the proletarian vanguard – a Maoist party in the respective countries that is inseparably fused with the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM). The fragmentation or degeneration of the reactionary forces largely depends on the subjective strength of the Maoist revolutionaries.

In the international communist movement there is also a view that once the people's war enters strategic equilibrium from the strategic defensive or enters the strategic offensive from equilibrium, it cannot or should not in any circumstances revert backwards from the position it has developed. Obviously, there is a question about how much this view deals with living facts if, for example, at the global level it keeps setting out strategy and tactics based on being in the world strategic offensive even after the world's revolutionary movement has been put back on the defensive following the reversal of socialism in Stalin's Russia and Maoist China.

Having made a breakthrough in its own understanding, the CPN(M) went

on to say in this document, "To continue analysing strategic offensive even after the revolution in the world and the country itself has faced a serious defeat can only be termed a mockery. Our Party has already made its position clear in the course of explaining strategic equilibrium in the past. Definitely, we must always be cautious about being swayed by subjective impatience to change the strategic stage based on the influence of a few events or victories and defeats. But if a big change takes place in the situation because of particular national or international reasons or if the People's War suffers big setbacks one after another, the Party, based on an objective analysis of the situation, must be prepared to build up plans to defend and develop the achievements of the revolution by going back to the strategic defensive from the stage of the offensive." Hence, it would not be dialectical to keep on repeating the slogan "strategic offensive of the world revolution" or of the revolution in a particular country if the revolutionaries suffer a severe setback due to imperialist and domestic repression. It is true that the severe repression and ruthless plunder by the imperialists and their puppets compels the masses of people to resist and rise up to a certain degree, but in the absence of subjective strength – an organised vanguard party at the core to lead revolutionary war, tackling ideological, political and military issues in the context of new challenges, and masses of people willing to overthrow the system – such resistance and uprising alone will not enable the stage of strategic offensive to persist forever. The correct Maoist understanding is to define the revolutionary situation according to the objective conditions and to return even to the strategic defensive from the offensive if necessary and to reunite and reorganise the struggle to attain the lost position with the aim of achieving victory.

**Constituent Assembly:
Revolutionary or Reformist?**

The last two issues of *A World To Win* discussed the CPN(M) demands

concerning a constituent assembly (see *AWTW* issues 29 and 30). Debate over the last three years about whether the election of a constituent assembly is essential to resolve the crisis of the reactionary system has now become the central agenda of the whole country. Apart from the CPN(M), which considers this a tactical agenda, from the feudal autocrats, such as the RPP (Rastriya Prajatantra Party – National Democratic Party), to the diehard revisionists, such as the United Marxist-Leninists (UML) leadership, the parliamentary parties have begun to advocate the need to elect a constituent assembly. This change in the minds of the revisionists and reactionaries did not come about because they are voluntarily showing their willingness to see the Nepalese people become sovereign, but because the great People's War has forced them to accept a political demand of the people for a political solution. It is clear that even if they are indeed really willing to participate in electing a constituent assembly, their agendas focus on safeguarding bourgeois interests, not the interests of the Nepalese people. The feudal reactionaries have clarified this by making it a condition that a constitutional monarchy be included in any new constitution and that control of the army be left in the hands of the feudal monarchy. For their part, the revisionists stand on the old 1990 constitution and want to make some cosmetic reforms in the system by asserting the right of the bourgeois Parliament over the army. Hence, the general points made by Chairman Prachanda in his article "Constituent Assembly: Revolutionary or Reformist?" in analysing the demand for a constituent assembly during the 1990s movement are still of great relevance today.

In reference to the constituent assembly, this article analysed that three main trends have been visible in Nepal. One trend, represented by the feudals – the RPP and pro-US elements – wants to drag the political situation backward to the medieval feudal autocracy. A second trend wants to keep the country at the

status quo by electing a constituent assembly. This trend is represented by a pro-Indian Nepali Congress faction and the ossified royal "communist" UML leadership. Neither of these reactionary factions wants to see the Nepalese people become powerful, sovereign, and stand up as a vanguard of the world proletarian revolution. The third and main force in Nepal, the CPN(M), upholds elections to a constituent assembly as a tactical policy. What is indisputable is that, whether or not elections to a constituent assembly are held, the people desire a revolutionary, not a regressive, outcome.

During the struggle over the constituent assembly, the feudal fundamentalists and imperialist forces have played several tricks to avert any risk of empowering the people, including by fomenting factions among the parliamentary parties and pressuring the parliamentary parties to support or at least unite with the moribund feudal King. The struggle has revealed the inability of the parliamentarians to lead the country forward, due to their dependence on the imperialists and their clinging to the monarchy. This has led them even to take action against any of their own cadres who come out in opposition to imperialist and expansionist intervention in Nepalese politics.

As for the monarchy, the feudal "royal assassin" Gyanendra, acting as a pawn of US imperialism, has now appointed as Prime Minister the same man, Deuba, that he had previously fired and treated as too "inept" to hold the post! In these circumstances, the content of the government is very much like the previous governments that held dialogue with the Party but failed to make a breakthrough whenever political issues came onto the table. Negotiations with no perspective of political resolution then become meaningless. This is why CPN(M) Chairman Prachanda stated, referring to the historic Plenum document, "Out of deep concern for the situation and [the regime's] expressed ferocity, the document has abrogated the meaningless and

purposeless hullabaloo of negotiations with the flunkies (so-called government) of the feudal palace.... the document has clarified that negotiations could be held not with the flunkies of the old state but with the master himself..., centring on the issue of making the Nepalese people a fully sovereign power."

On Rectification and Working Style

Unless the contradiction between line and practice is resolved, a revolutionary party cannot make revolution. In general, line refers to the guiding principles of a particular Party or organisation based on a particular theory, ideology and politics. Similarly, practice requires an organisation that is developed in order to apply the line. Along with the enrichment and development of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in the course of analysing contradictions, synthesizing experience and applying this to the concrete reality of people's war to make revolution, a party's revolutionary line always demands a revolutionary organisation capable of meeting the needs of the revolutionary struggle. The dialectical relations, the contradictions between line and practice, affect each other. For instance, if the organisation is not prepared based on the revolutionary line, then the revolutionary line will tend to be dragged down to the existing level of organisation – that means practice. Dragging the revolutionary line down to the existing organisational level means dragging both the line and organisation further backwards, towards reformism and revisionism.

As Bob Avakian, Chairman of the RCPUSA recently observed, "The problem is that most of the time most communists not communists." This is related to the problem that arises among many Party leaders and cadres either to lower their sights away from crucial issues of line or to grasp only the parts of a thing and not the whole. At the same time, even during wartime, there is the possibility of opportunism developing and eventually becoming predom-

ant within a Party so these weeds need to be combed out politically and ideologically to preserve the Party's militant revolutionary line and spirit.

Bearing in mind the all-encompassing importance of the need to rectify the Party's working style, Chairman Prachanda has stressed the complete transformation of the Party's ideological, political, organisational, cultural and working style and the need to lift all this to a new height. In an interview with the *Janadesh* weekly published on 21 September 2004, Chairman Prachanda said, "The principal decisions of the historic Plenum of the Central Committee of the Party can be understood in four main points, based on their specificity and importance. First, in order to meet the imperialist economic, political, strategic as well as cultural challenges in the twenty-first century, the decisions have been taken to make an ideological synthesis focused on developing all three component parts of Marxism - Leninism - Maoism: philosophy, political economy and scientific socialism. Second, in the context of the changed new situation, the struggle that the Party has been waging against imperialism has been decided to be focused against Indian expansionism from the viewpoint of strategy and tactics. Third, having defined the old feudal state as a national-capitulationist state, the decision has been taken to launch a strategic offensive against it. And fourth is the decision to carry out a massive rectification campaign with a concrete policy, plan and programme, aiming at strengthening the Party and the movement from the viewpoint of ideology, organisation, culture as well as working style."

The first three decisions are clearly the most historic the CPN(M) has ever made in the country's history, and the fourth decision is to make the organisation an objective material force to accomplish those decisions. Here it is important to note from the history of the CPN(M) that the rectification process has never been merely a particular phase or an activity that is isolated from the Party's political and military plan and

programme, and the Party gives constant attention to the application and development of the "four preparations".

Once again, based on the history of the vigorous class war led by the proletariat in Nepal, it has been powerfully shown that a Party or organisation developed in a certain period to meet a certain level of contradictions will not be sufficient to fulfil the task of resolving contradictions as the situation changes and develops. In order to meet newly developed contradictions, the ideological, political, organisational, cultural and functional capability of the Party and movement needs to be developed to the level of the new challenges.

What are those challenges the Party must meet in the coming days? The answer lies in the development of the concrete situation, including not least of all the threat of external intervention. As the People's War develops to new heights, the moves of the Indian regime have become an important factor hindering progress in Nepal. The Indian regime has beefed up its military assistance to the feudal regime, it has been openly threatening to launch a military attack against the Nepalese revolution, and it has arrested more than a dozen CPN(M) leaders in different parts of India, including leading comrades Kiran and Gaurav, along with more than 80 other Maoist leaders and cadres.

The danger of direct US intervention is also growing. In this context, the historic Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPN(M) has taken the decision to fight any imperialist intervention with total war, including by developing tunnel warfare. The difficulty and hardship involved in waging such warfare and the need to do this in such a way as to safeguard the Nepalese revolution and serve the world proletarian revolution is another factor demanding that the Party raise its ideological, political and military level to new heights. [See *A World To Win* 1986/6 for an article on tunnel warfare in Vietnam.]

Furthermore, the impact of a

mass life-and-death war in any country brings about fragmentation and degeneration within the reactionary system. The reactionary state is a conglomeration of competing reactionary interests, and once a revolutionary war becomes a major force in a country, it is bound to fragment and decay.

Revolutionary war is also inevitably accompanied by ideological, political and organisational struggle within the Party, in other words, two-line struggle. Two-line struggle within the Party is the direct reflection of the class struggle in the society. Hundreds of experiences throughout the country, both negative and positive, need to be summarised, hundreds of flowers blooming in the glow of the new political power need to be nurtured, while hundreds of weeds growing within the revolutionary superstructure need to be uprooted - in essence, the Party needs to sweep its rectification broom through every corner, ideological, political, organisational and cultural. As Mao said, where the broom does not reach, the dust does not go away by itself. For instance, as power is seized, big changes are made, meaning new contradictions emerge and certain mistakes become inevitable - in this situation charges and counter-charges become possible, for example between different areas or different fields of work, or between military and political leaders. As the Party advances towards state power, some may become more concerned about their individual rights while declining to take individual responsibility. There are also tendencies to confuse or conflate strategy and tactics, taking one for the other, and reducing the long-term to the short-term, for instance demanding freedom in a certain realm while failing to take into account the related necessity. These kinds of contradictions emerge and ferment in any living Party, demanding rectification time and again.

Without rectification, without preparing ideologically, politically, organisationally and culturally to bring each individual and the organisation as a whole to a higher

stage of understanding, it will not be possible to meet new challenges. Continuing to develop our MLM heritage is the only way it will be possible to be flexible in tactics while remaining firm in strategy, rapidly adapting tactics to the moves of the enemy so as to require it to change its strategy, foiling the strategy and tactics of the enemy one after another, so that in the course of the war the people strengthen their ability to sweep away, like an army of Hercules, the dung of imperialist ideology, politics, military and cultural domination and in their place establish a revolutionary economic base and political superstructure.

The Party has thus emphasised the importance of rectification, and thereby given the whole Party, Army, mass organisations, and the broad masses of people a mighty impetus to advance along the great path – which the CPN(M) calls Prachanda Path – which now demands taking the strategic offensive against the enemy. Further, the importance of rectification and transformation of the Party as a whole is a key area where the Party has been grappling to develop its ideas, to enrich MLM and to contribute to debate and discussion within the international communist movement on the burning questions of today. These include the need to launch the offensive to accomplish new-democratic revolution, to safeguard the nascent revolution, having learnt from past experiences, even from counter-revolutions; to erect a sea of people armed ideologically, politically, militarily and culturally; to safeguard the people's right to rebel, to ensure that the revolutionary armed forces who, thus far in the class struggle under socialism internally, have remained confined to their barracks as professional soldiers, continue to serve the people even after the establishment of socialism so as to prevent the revolutionary state from changing once again into a reactionary state; and to dismiss the old ideas that one should not criticise leaders and to establish the Maoist principle that it is right to "bombard the bourgeois head-

quarters", and to continue the revolution throughout the socialist period and serve the world proletarian revolution in order to bring the whole world to communism. Rectification of the Party concentrated on such issues truly brings unity not only ideologically, politically and organisationally but also in feelings, in people's hearts, and ultimately helps lead society in the direction of the withering away of the Party, the Army, classes, and thus the state itself.

On the New Situation and Ideological Synthesis

Having summarised twenty years of experience, the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) has analysed that, "The twenty years of our Movement has, as noted above, also been a period of twenty years of turmoil internationally. The high tide of revolution of the 1960s and early 70s had retreated on a world scale, but the underlying exploitation and class antagonisms never ceased to sharpen. In the year 2000 our Movement was correctly able to call attention to an 'emerging new wave of world proletarian revolution'. Since then, the aftermath of 11 September 2001 has revealed the dramatic intensification of a whole range of contradictions on a world scale, and most notably the contradiction between the oppressed peoples and nations and imperialism led by the US, in a way not seen for decades... Important transformations have gone on, even in the short twenty-year life of our Movement, in both the imperialist citadels and in the oppressed nations as well. Our Marxist-Leninist-Maoist science provides the tools and viewpoint to understand such phenomena as the growth of megacities, 'globalisation', changes in class structure and the implications for revolutionary strategy and tactics."

Chairman Prachanda of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) has summarized the major tendencies of the world as follows: the re-establishment of the capitalist system in the previous socialist countries,

the disintegration of the social-imperialist USSR and the emergence of the US as the world's sole superpower and its unleashing of a war juggernaut against the oppressed nations and peoples of the world represents the major trend in the world today. Likewise, the unprecedented development of communications technology and its world-wide impact, the monopoly of finance capital and its dominance over industrial capital, and the control of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation over finance capital, the ruthless oppression and exploitation of the people of the Third World countries through "globalisation", "liberalisation" and "privatisation", are all general characteristics of the present situation. Furthermore, the unrestrained and arbitrary character of the fascistic military attacks on national liberation movements and democratic and communist movements by imperialism and the setback suffered by the proletariat in Peru also manifest major tendencies in today's world. A sharp manifestation of the principal contradiction in the world between imperialism, mainly US imperialism, and the oppressed nations and people, has been the wave of global resistance that met the imperialist attacks in Afghanistan and Iraq following the 11 September incident in the United States. The large-scale resistance to the imperialist war in Iraq shook the world and showed the great unity of the masses of people as they rose under a single unified call – to oppose the war. This reflected the emerging new tide of world revolution, as described by RIM.

Today, the Maoist revolutionaries have shouldered the historic responsibility of providing correct ideological-political leadership to the masses to transform such uprisings to create a new wave of world proletarian revolution. In this context, Chairman Prachanda has stressed the development of all three component parts of MLM, refuting post-modernist confusion and the imperialist economic theory of "globalisation", "liberalisation" and "privatisa-

tion”, thus bringing MLM to new heights. Furthermore, history has also demanded a ruthless struggle against right and “left” opportunism as well as revisionism in the international communist movement. While fighting against the rightist tendencies of opportunism and revisionism, Maoist revolutionaries have to be alert not to fall into dogmatic parochialism; they must be persistent in applying MLM with creativity and liveliness. Today, the ongoing People’s War in Nepal has contributed to pushing forward ideological and political debate in the international communist movement concerning the theoretical premises to guide the revolutionaries today, in the twenty-first century, breaking with tendencies to just repeat the strategy and tactics of the revolutions of the twentieth century. In this context, the CPN(M) has also contributed to the ideological debate on some vital questions, such as the question of the “development of democracy in the twenty-first century”. Hence, the CPN(M) has also hailed the debate being called for by RIM, building on the ideological-political debate coming mainly from the Maoist parties, including the RCPUSA, PCP and CPN(M).

Chairman Prachanda said in this document, “Unless the proletariat intervenes ideologically in the present situation in a lively way, it will not be possible for a powerful revolution against imperialism to advance. So long as the proletariat remains unable to assume the historic responsibility to lead the masses effectively against imperialism by making an ideological synthesis, the masses will remain in danger of falling prey to various religious fundamentalisms, national parochialism and individual terrorism.”

The Dialectics of the Struggle Against External Intervention

Given the intensity of the political intervention and military threats by the imperialists and expansionists and the national-capitulationist nature of the feudal and comprador-bureaucrat capitalist regime, an

imperialist or expansionist war against the revolution seems extremely likely. As CPN(M) Chairman Prachanda has outlined in the historic Plenum document, “In the present era of imperialism and proletarian revolution, it is clear that to conceive of any people’s revolution that faces no foreign imperialist intervention and succeeds without fighting imperialism is sheer idealism. Without confronting Indian expansionist intervention and without achieving victory over it, it is impossible to imagine the success of the Nepalese People’s War.”

This possibility of Indian expansionist intervention was foreseen by the Party long ago and has been highlighted repeatedly since then. In the Unity Congress of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) held in December 1991, out of four basic contradictions identified in Nepalese society – the contradiction between feudalism and the masses of Nepalese people; the contradiction between imperialism, mainly Indian imperialism, and the Nepalese people; the contradiction between comprador and bureaucrat capitalism and the masses of Nepalese people; and the contradiction between the Nepalese bourgeoisie and proletariat – the principal contradiction was characterised as “the contradiction between the Nepalese masses of people and the domestic reactionary state made up of feudals, bureaucrats and the comprador capitalist class protected by Indian expansionism.” The Party’s characterisation was based on a comprehensive analysis of the country’s history, political development and economic characteristics. Focusing on the struggle against Indian expansionism, the Party’s second national convention put forward the concept of a South Asian Soviet Federation of the twenty-first century.

In an oppressed country like Nepal, the Party has focused on leading the struggle against national oppression and for national liberation and new-democracy internally and externally, which means against the domestic enemy internally and against imperialism and expansion-

ism externally. It links them in an inseparable way throughout the entire phase of new-democratic revolution, as a point of strategic importance. Based on this general line, particular policies were adopted to isolate the main enemy from secondary opponents, so as to centre the attacks on the imperialist and expansionist puppets and running dogs of Nepal who control the state apparatus. During the initial five years this orientation allowed the People’s War to sink deep roots among the oppressed masses across the country. Frightened by the explosive development of the People’s War and by the support it won from the justice-loving broad masses in Nepal and around the world, and by the rapid growth in the popularity of the Party, both at home and abroad, the imperialists, expansionists and feudal fundamentalists perpetrated the Royal Palace carnage in a bid to resolve the internal crisis. The Maoists adhered to their general and particular line and continued to concentrate their attacks on the Nepali feudal Royal Palace and its imperialist master, US imperialism.

The US imperialists provided the moribund regime in Nepal certain military hardware, such as weapons and ammunition, training for the Royal Nepalese Army, and financial and moral support. This support has increased to the level of direct involvement in guiding the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) to fight against the Maoists and in designing fortified military barracks. Yet the Beni attack by the revolutionary forces in the central region of Nepal exposed that the strategy and tactics of US imperialism had failed both politically and militarily. In Beni the RNA forces had been given more sophisticated weaponry than usually available, and the army barracks had been reinforced with a system of layered fortifications. One army unit was engaged in construction activities, in an effort to win the “hearts and minds” of the local people and undercut their support for the People’s War. The attack by the PLA breached the multi-layered fortifications and involved the massive participation of the people,

thus dealing a sharp setback to the US plans. US imperialism's reverses in Nepal at the very time that it has been pushed onto the defensive on the international political front, having fallen into the quagmire of war in Iraq, has led it to push forward Indian expansionism and British imperialism to deal with the Maoist-led revolution.

As for the European Union, the essence of its policy does not differ from the US, that is, both of them want to stop the Maoist revolution and stop the Nepalese people from becoming sovereign. In form, however, their tactics differ. For instance, US policy holds the Royal Army's terrorist atrocities to be legitimate, because for the US imperialists post-arrest killings and disappearances, torture, rape, and burning and bombing villages are all just "collateral damage". The European Union argues, on the other hand, that the Royal Army's "human rights violations" are leading to its further isolation from the masses. According to both British and EU policy, the king should remain as the constitutional monarch, there should be a coalition government formed from among the parliamentary parties, the government should hold parliamentary elections, and the elected government should hold discussions with the Maoist Party in order to bring them into the "political mainstream". The goal of this illusory programme is to prevent the Nepalese people from taking power; it represents a honey-coated attempt to convince the Nepalese people to capitulate to the feudals and comprador-bureaucrat capitalists.

As for the Indian expansionists, they will never allow the Nepalese people to become powerful economically and politically. They would, perhaps, even allow the Maoists to seize political power if they thought they could be subjected to Indian control and hegemony. But India's ruling elites have failed in their diplomatic efforts to coerce the Maoist revolutionaries on the question of the handover of sovereign power to the Nepalese people. These reactionaries then began to arrest Maoist revolutionaries rampantly

across India and to hand them over to the feudals of Nepal. This included the arrest of Comrades Kiran, Matrika Prasad Yadav, Suresh Ale Magar, as well as 11 other Maoist revolutionaries, including six Central Committee members, in the city of Patna in the state of Bihar. The Indian state has also been holding Comrade Gaurav in prison since 2003, denying him the basic rights of political prisoners and threatening to hand him over to the Nepalese authorities.

Under the influence of the European Union, especially the United Kingdom, the Indian expansionists have ordered the parliamentary parties not to quarrel with the feudal king. India has been providing weapons, including helicopters, to the Nepalese regime. Their philosophy is based on the Nehru Doctrine of bringing Nepal under India's security umbrella, through Sikkimisation or Bhutanisation. (Sikkim was annexed to India outright and Bhutan, while formally independent, is in reality completely controlled by India.) When the Maoist revolutionary governments of the three surrounding districts of the Kathmandu valley imposed a blockade on the capital in August, the Indian regime quickly organised to drop food supplies by air to Kathmandu.

Will India really attack Nepal? History has proved time and again that India has acted with impunity to suppress the Nepalese revolutionary movement. In the 1950s, India sent its army to suppress a revolutionary peasant uprising in western Nepal, which had gained great momentum under the leadership of Bhim Dutta Panta. Similarly, India sent its army deep into the Gorkha district in the 1980s and into Kathmandu in the 1990s without consulting or even informing the Nepalese regime. The national-capitulationist regime, which has been ruling Nepal with India's blessings, accepted all these national humiliations, and it has already agreed to allow the Indian army to protect the Chure range in interior Nepal. This has great importance, because the Chure range divides off almost 15 percent of

Nepal, containing the fertile plains, and stands on the path of all the gateways of the east-west highway linking different parts of the country.

Further, in addition to the economic, political and cultural interests of India's rulers in Nepal, they have also become extremely worried about the direct influence of the Nepalese revolution among the harshly oppressed Indian people. The spectre of a Maoist revolution in this geopolitically sensitive area weighs heavily in India's strategic thinking about invading Nepal. Even if the Indian regime takes such a risky move, it will not be easy for it to sustain such an invasion for long. Three major factors – internal and external – condition this: first is the strength of the Maoist and revolutionary forces and the national liberation movements in Nepal; second, the existence of Maoist revolutionaries and national liberation movements in India and South Asia as a whole; and third, the growing support for the People's War and the growing desire for revolution among the masses the world over.

Externally, the Indian regime had a bitter lesson when it attempted to intervene militarily against the Tamil fighters of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) in Sri Lanka. While the Indian army had some support from among Sinhalese people who hoped it would bring peace, the LTTE gave a big slap to the Indian invaders, who had to flee after a humiliating defeat. But the situation India would face in Nepal would in most ways be much more unfavourable than in Sri Lanka, chiefly because the revolutionary war is led by a Maoist line. Except for a handful of Nepalese reactionaries, the entire Nepalese population opposes Indian hegemony. The Maoist revolutionaries have been aware from the very beginning of the need to prepare for fighting a war on the scale of Vietnam. If such a war breaks out in Nepal, the handful of feudal and national-capitulationist reactionaries will be isolated from the masses of the whole country, and the revolutionary, democratic and patriotic forces will unite even more

broadly under the leadership of the Party to fight Indian intervention.

Moreover, a just war led by the Maoists would find support and be embraced by the broad masses of Indian people too. Maoist revolutionaries have been leading People's War aimed at overthrowing the semi-feudal semi-colonial Indian state and to accomplish new-democratic revolution. The growing unity of the Maoist revolutionaries and the advancing process of uniting the Maoists in India would pose a serious threat to any long-term Indian intervention. There are also strong national liberation movements in Kashmir in the north and Assam and Nagaland in the north-east of India. An invasion of its much smaller neighbour by India's army would only sharpen these contradictions. Attacking Nepal could well quickly lead to an intensification of infighting and fragmentation within the Indian regime itself. Also of concern to India's rulers are the more than 60,000 Nepalese soldiers in the Gurkha Rifle regiments in India's army. They would certainly think seriously if an Indian army of occupation began to kill their parents and elders and brothers and sisters in the poverty-stricken Himalayan kingdom. Nor would the more than 8 million Nepalese people living in India be so easy for the Indian regime to control as it attacked their country. Of these various factors, the first one – the internal factor – is decisive. But despite these potential weaknesses, the Indian regime may still find that from its reactionary perspective it has no choice but to invade Nepal.

Nepal, which used to be considered a "wild-potato" between the two hard rocks of China and India, is now threatening to turn into a keg of dynamite that could explode reactionary power relations in the region and give a big push forward to the world proletarian revolution. For such a war would inevitably be met with a wave of revolutionary resistance not only in Nepal, but across the South Asian region as a whole. Many factors have been fuelling the growth of revolutionary sentiment across South Asia: the masses already

smoulder in fury at imperialist domination and plunder; the Indian ruling class already acts as a regional gendarme and wages unjust wars of suppression against the people of Kashmir in the north and Assam in the north-east of India, and support an unjust war in Sri Lanka against the Tamil people; there is their military intervention in the Maldives, their territorial encroachment and suppression of the Bangladeshi people, their annexation of Sikkim and domination of Bhutan, and many other crimes. The revolutionary struggle under the leadership of Maoist revolutionaries in India from Bihar to Andhra Pradesh, the fight to strengthen the revolutionary forces in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the growing revolutionary consciousness in Pakistan, the establishment of the Maoist Communist Party in Bhutan and on top of that the establishment of red political power in Nepal, which is developing as a base area for world proletarian revolution – all this is strengthening the subjective forces in the region. In this situation, it is likely that either the Maoist revolutionary resistance and the People's War will thwart an imperialist or interventionist war, or such a war, if launched, will lead to the outbreak of a more massive revolutionary war of resistance that will eventually bring about the complete emancipation of the whole region. In the South Asia region, the main trend today is already towards revolution. The tremendous challenge that lies before the Maoist revolutionaries in the region and the world today is to get prepared ideologically, politically and organisationally to seize the revolutionary opportunities that the sharpening contradictions may well bring, to defend the Nepalese revolution and to use this to advance the cause of revolution throughout the region and the world to the maximum possible.

Great Possibilities and Grave Challenges

The great communist philosopher Karl Marx said that every great revolution engenders a great counter-

revolution – and this revolutionary war is indeed raising serious new challenges for the revolutionaries. While there is a very real possibility of seizing country-wide political power at any time given the relatively very favourable objective conditions and the development of the subjective strength of the Maoist revolutionaries in Nepal, there are also clear signs of a rising tide of revolutionary resistance and even people's war across South Asia and the world over. The major enemy of the oppressed people of the world, US imperialism, is falling onto the political defensive bit by bit and has become thoroughly isolated from the masses world-wide in the course of its military assaults on Afghanistan and Iraq. The reactionary classes of Nepal have repeatedly failed to heal their internal rifts because of their class interests and imperialist domination. In this context, great possibilities are on the horizon. There are also great challenges before the revolutionaries, not least of all the looming threat of an invasion by one of the largest armies in the world, the Indian army, with the backing of US imperialism and its allies.

Today, with the prospect of the country-wide seizure of power in Nepal visible on the horizon, the Maoist revolutionaries the world over have a duty to support their comrades in Nepal in every way possible, including by rising to lead the fight against imperialism in their own countries as part of the world revolution. Such support will not only help to make Nepal a red base area of world proletarian revolution, but will help make Maoism the indisputable guide of world revolution and make a giant contribution to the advance towards a society free of exploitation and oppression – world communism. ■

Saramago

Continued from p. 16

cause he was a writer and a foreigner, but it didn't apply the same criteria to the International Monetary Fund, which could interfere as much as it liked without offending any law. In Chiapas, where he visited a refugee camp and went to a military base near an indigenous village, he denounced the Acteal massacre, in which a military commando slaughtered 45 Indian peasants sympathetic to the Zapatistas as they attended mass on the previous Christmas Eve.

Saramago is especially good at creating living portraits of his protagonists. They are unique and sometimes unusual individuals, and also completely believable, typifying characteristics of different social classes. He clearly knows people very well, in all their richness and complexity. His descriptions of the common people are clear-eyed – sometimes to the point of sarcasm at their weaknesses – but not condescending or superficial. He is most definitely writing about ideas and employs a signature style in which sentences run for many pages and the punctuation hinders a too literal interpretation. Many of his scenes and subjects are more than a little surreal. But his characters are real, complex and unforgettable, whether he is writing about the exploitation of southern Portugal's rural workers and their struggle against exploitation during Salazar's fascist regime, or the imaginary eighteenth-century labourer and peasant Baltasar and Blimunda, or lyrically celebrating Jesus' passionate love for the honest prostitute Mary Magdalene and their defiance of what would later be called Christian morality in the resolutely atheist and hilarious *Gospel According to Jesus Christ*.

He is also brilliant in the unmasking of contexts and of institutions, from the Church to Portugal itself, which is sometimes all but openly his subject. In *The Stone Raft*, the entire Iberian peninsula breaks off from Europe and drifts through the Atlantic. *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis* revisits the eponymous

character created by the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa. Pessoa wrote poems under the name Reis, creating him as a character and using him as a persona through which he could speak indirectly. Saramago imagines that Reis lived on for a year after the author who invented him died. He narrates an anguished relationship between an intellectual cut-off from the world around him, including the people high and low, and a hotel maid whose communist brother is organising an uprising among the sailors. By borrowing Reis' persona, Saramago can both identify with and distance himself from him, while the spectre of the country's national poet tells us Saramago is writing about all of Portugal. The novel is filled with ghosts and fantastical occurrences, but it is a strongly realistic portrait of Lisbon and Portuguese society as well, and of course his descriptions of the 1920s, like his descriptions of the eighteenth century and the time of Christ, are written with today's world in mind.

In *Blindness*, sometimes described as science fiction, all of the inhabitants of a city and, as far as they know, the world, are suddenly struck blind, except for the wife of a no less sightless ophthalmologist. Through her eyes we see society descend into chaos and violence, where old hierarchies fall and very different notions of what kind of new world to build contend. Just as Blimunda sees more deeply than others, in *Blindness* this woman sees and begins to understand when everyone around her becomes blind. This indicates Saramago's fascination with and ability to portray strong women characters, a central feature in his work. But Saramago is also concerned about the effect of self-awareness on those who possess it (this woman contrasts with Reis, who is paralysed by it) and their relationships with those around them and society as a whole. A reviewer once wrote that Saramago seems to be speaking to us from another reality, one that only he can see. Actually, he may consider that like Blimunda and the nameless woman protagonist in *Blindness*, imagination can pierce

social conventions and see the underlying realities on which they are based. At any rate, even at his most imaginative, his allegiance is to what he considers a coldly realistic view of the world. As an aside in his latest book, *The Double*, he reminds us that the imagination is a "mysterious, enigmatic skill it took us human beings so much hard work to invent". In a 2002 interview about the book he published that year, *The Cave*, he said, "We invent a sort of reality for its own sake. We think this so-called reality we invent is not only the only reality that exists, but the only reality we want."

Different people have written different things about what Saramago is getting at. Is he saying that people can awaken and change this reality that weighs so heavily on them and so often crushes them? In *Baltasar & Blimunda*, as in some of Saramago's other novels, a pessimistic note and a hint of romanticism contend. His protagonists are crushed by history, but they also dream of soaring above it. In *The Cave*, he revisits Plato's allegory of the cave (in this case, a combination shopping centre and headquarters for an evil empire), sketching a critique of the way the capitalist machine grinds up individuals who don't fit in. Here there seems to be a certain despair and perhaps the idea that humanity can at best return to previous practices and not overcome today's conditions through a passage to higher stages. But Saramago is clear on two things: that the world people live in, with all the awful things in it, is not inevitable, but one people have made, and that people, especially those oppressed by this world, are not reconciled to it and long for another one, even though they don't always know it. Whether or not that world changes is up to nobody but them. ■

The World Social Forum

In January of 2004, the annual edition of the World Social Forum (WSF) took place in Mumbai, India. At the same time another activity called Mumbai Resistance 2004 was organised nearby with a clear anti-imperialist orientation. WSF drew tens of thousands of people from India and around the world. The holding of such an event sparked controversy among the Maoist forces as to the correct policy to adopt for activities such as that of the WSF.

In advance of the holding of the WSF and Mumbai Resistance (MR), the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (CoRIM) circulated a private letter to RIM participants. It was also given as a matter of courtesy to comrades outside of RIM who had been involved in the organisation of Mumbai Resistance, including forces connected with *People's March*, a monthly Maoist magazine from India.

At the WSF and the Mumbai Resistance events, supporters of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement from several countries were active. CoRIM also encouraged the World People's Resistance Movement (WPRM) to be active in relation to the WSF and MR, and several articles appeared in the *A World to Win News Service* after these events.

In the course of discussing the various reactions of different forces in the Indian Marxist-Leninist movement in their June 2004 issue, *People's March (PM)* launches sharp criticism of the analysis and approach taken by the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement to the WSF/MR-2004.¹ Although the above-mentioned letter from CoRIM to activists involved in the WSF/MR-2004 events was never intended to be published², since *PM* chose to quote

from it and develop a rather lengthy polemic on this subject it seems useful to publish for our readers the original CoRIM letter along with *PM's* criticism, both of which are reprinted following this response to *PM*. (*A World to Win* follows the principle of publishing the articles we are criticising to the degree possible and not merely quoting from them, to give readers an objective view of both sides.)

In responding in brief to *People's March*, we will follow their own organisation of their criticisms into three distinct parts.

I. Participation

CoRIM did, indeed, call on communist forces to participate in the WSF to the extent possible as well as in Mumbai Resistance. We have still seen no convincing argument as to why such participation is incorrect. The argument that CoRIM views the WSF as "an anti-imperialist organisation" is clearly contradicted in the very letter that *PM* polemicises against. But even without being anti-imperialist there can be no doubt that the WSF meeting drew many thousands of anti-imperialist-minded people from around the world, and was thus an arena that demanded the intervention of communists. For example, the mass organisations associated with the Communist Party of the Philippines were very visible in the WSF and are a leading force in the International League of People's Struggle, which was also one of the sponsors of Mumbai Resistance 2004.

There are many arenas in which leadership is in the hands of opponents of proletarian revolution, and yet it is possible, and in fact sometimes absolutely necessary, for genuine communist forces to take

part in different ways. From the days of Marx and Engels to the present, communists have participated in trade unions, co-operatives, cultural associations, organisational committees for political campaigns, etc. – the list is endless. And while a great deal of rightism and revisionism have accompanied such work over the history of the international communist movement (ICM), no serious revolutionary movement *in any country* can avoid intervening in diverse forms and organisations. So the question of the leadership of an organisation alone cannot answer the question of whether or not it is correct for communists to participate in a given political event.

Further, it should be stressed here that the participation that CoRIM called for, and organised, in the WSF did not involve participating in the leadership of the WSF. It involved attending the WSF and using it as a platform, to the degree possible, to put forward a resolute position in opposition to imperialism and in support of the people's struggles, including revolutionary struggles for political power such as the People's War being waged in Nepal. When there is a gathering of many thousands of people from around the world, the majority of whom have come to oppose the injustices of the world imperialist system, it is correct and necessary that communists use every possible means to address these masses. Whether the possibilities of using such a platform are great or small is also a matter of struggle.

The fact of the matter is that tens of thousands of leaflets with a revolutionary orientation were distributed at the WSF by forces associated with RIM. Wasn't this a good thing?

Most of the participants at the

and Communist Tactics

WSF were not there because they were being misled by the leadership of the WSF. A great many of the participants very likely had no clear idea of who the leaders of the WSF are and what their programme is. The WSF and its regional forums, such as the European Social Forum, have drawn all sorts of political forces, a great many of whom can be correctly categorised as progressive organisations. Certainly the “mass” of participants are, for the most part, opposed to imperialist globalisation and war. It is this turbulent diversity that *PM* refers to disparagingly as a “frivolous” “cacophony of dissent”, which is actually one of the *positive* factors making it possible and necessary for genuine communists to intervene in this arena. There are undoubtedly all sorts of anti-people elements within this “cacophony”, but there is also a basis for communists to make their own voice heard, and heard clearly, in such an atmosphere.

PM's charge that CoRIM's view that it is possible to participate in the WSF implies that there is no role for alternative programmes, such as Mumbai Resistance, also does not hold. It is often the case that there is a very useful role to be played by contingents within demonstrations or forums organised along more revolutionary or anti-imperialist lines, as we have seen repeatedly in the massive demonstrations against globalisation which, by the way, are often led by many of the very same forces involved in the WSF. Participating in the forums and activities of the WSF in no way precludes the value of organising separate events around a clear anti-imperialist line. In fact, the tens of thousands of leaflets distributed by forces around RIM at the WSF itself, all *included calls to*

participate in Mumbai Resistance. What is wrong with this? It is true, but tautological, to argue that the possibility of putting forward a revolutionary viewpoint will be greater in forums organised by revolutionaries. The problem arises when one concludes that there is no value in speaking on platforms organised by non-revolutionaries or, on some occasions, even by counter-revolutionaries. In fact it is the counter-revolutionaries and the reformists who most want to keep genuine communists out of forums such as the WSF – why should we make their task easier?

II. Class Analysis of the WSF

As has already been mentioned, the *PM* article accuses CoRIM of viewing the WSF as an “anti-imperialist organisation”. A reading of our letter in its entirety should be enough to dispel that idea. The central proposition of *PM* is that the character of any organisation is “determined by its leadership” and, since the WSF leadership is “pro-imperialist”, according to *PM* the WSF then becomes nothing more than a “safety valve” to channel the anger of the masses into directions harmless to the imperialist system.

First of all, it is not really correct to say that Attac and *Le Monde Diplomatique*, groups that are close to or in the leadership of WSF and that are singled out in the *PM* article, are “ruling-class social democrats”. While they are social-democratic in their ideological and political orientation, they are not part of the state structures or the major social-democratic and revisionist parties in Europe. It is not accurate to argue, as the *PM* article does, that *Le Monde Diplomatique*, for example, is really

not opposed to the US imperialist offensive. In fact, that publication regularly exposes and opposes US imperialist moves. However, *Le Monde Diplomatique* does this while staying within the framework of the world imperialist system, looking instead for an illusory solution of how the injustices of imperialism can be mitigated without overthrowing the imperialist system itself. As the CoRIM letter points out, they tend to see the European imperialists, if not as a force for progress, at least as a counter-weight to the US that needs to be allied with and utilised.

How should we see this? It is the leading line of any organisation that is ultimately decisive in determining its character, but matters are not quite as simple as our comrades in *PM* present them.³ There is also the important contradiction between the leadership and the organisations and masses participating in the WSF. It is worthy of note that Arundhati Roy was one of the principal figures at the WSF and that she participated in MR-2004 as well. Furthermore, it is difficult to consider the WSF in the same light as one might judge a political party. The question involved is whether to participate in a particular event, in this case the forums and discussions of the WSF itself. In this sense whether to participate in WSF is more like making a political decision about whether to participate in a mass demonstration or some similar political action. The line of the leaders of such a demonstration or event is important, but it is also very important to know what sections of the masses are being mobilised and around what demands. With the logic of *PM*, communists would have had to refrain from participating in many or most of the important political

actions that have taken place in the West in the last few years against imperialist globalisation, the Iraq war and other crimes of imperialism. Most of these actions were also led by forces, in many cases the same forces involved with the WSF, who could be considered “pro-imperialist” by *PM*’s criteria. And indeed, in all such demonstrations there is usually a question – one that is often not so easy to answer – as to what tactics should be applied with regards to the official sponsors of such actions. The communist and other advanced forces help the masses distinguish the political programme and line of the different class forces involved in leading (or misleading) popular movements. In general it is in the course of uniting the people around a correct platform and in focusing their struggle against the state power of the enemy that it is most possible to expose the alien class forces and establish the leadership of the genuine communist forces.

As for *PM*’s claims that the WSF must be seen mainly as “a safety valve” for the imperialist system, it is certainly true that some of the leaders or financial backers of the WSF do see it in exactly that way. But what is more to the point is that however people may deceive themselves, or others, *any* political programme that is not linked to the fight for proletarian political power will ultimately become a “safety valve” for the reactionary system, even if it does not begin as one. History has shown this time and again and in country after country. Social-democrats and revisionists are produced batch after batch, and very often from among individuals and forces that start out as vigorous opponents of the reactionary system – Lula’s Workers Party of Brazil, much of whose founding core came from the previous Maoist movement, being a case in point. Within the opposition movements there will always be two poles, one that reflects compromise and accommodation with the existing system and the other that seeks to abolish the reactionary system itself.

Can we conclude that the com-

munists need not participate in the different struggles, movements and forums involving the masses that they do not lead? Such a policy will only *ensure* that such movements and forums are, or become, “safety valves” for the reactionary system.

Nowhere is *PM*’s confusion more evident than in the way it tries to distinguish the armed struggles led by forces such as the armed social-democrats of the EZLN in Mexico (the Zapatistas) and the armed revisionists of the FARC in Columbia from the kind of generally unarmed social-democrat and revisionist forces playing a leading role in the WSF. Whether one pressures the existing state structures through a single dramatic armed action followed by a decade of seeking a negotiated participation in the reactionary state machinery, as the EZLN has done, or whether one tries more consistently to advance one’s goals through strikes or elections, as some WFS leaders have done, is really not a fundamental distinction. Revolutionaries, reformists and counter-revolutionaries alike can use violence or relatively peaceful forms of struggle, such as negotiations, strikes or gheraoes (mass encirclements). What fundamentally distinguishes one from another is what line, what strategy, and what objectives are followed by a political grouping and the different tactics that flow from this. It is reversing cause and effect to focus on the armed or unarmed nature of a given political force and then try on that basis to extrapolate its political nature. *PM* would do better to take the EZLN at its word when it repeatedly insists that its goal is *not* to capture political power. And they should also ask themselves why the forces that make up the WSF, and in particular *Le Monde Diplomatique*, are such unreserved admirers of the EZLN. The fact that the EZLN has guns is really not to the point.

III. On the Question of Ideology and the Independent Role of Communists

As for the ideological dimension

raised in the *PM* article, we refer the reader to our original and much distorted letter. We do indeed believe that in the anti-imperialist struggle there will be and needs to be unity with people with different ideologies, including “post-modernism”, just as there needs to be unity with believers in religion and other forms of non-proletarian ideology who are active in the struggle against the common enemy. In a different part of its article, *PM* argues for unity with Islamist forces (and not only believers in Islam) who are “fighting imperialism”. Why such indulgence in relation to one form of non-proletarian ideology and such a sectarian view toward another? Making a rejection of “post-modernism” a prerequisite for unity in what should be a united front effort like Mumbai Resistance can only lead to unnecessary divisiveness.

Furthermore, as our original letter made quite clear, there is a danger of forgetting the role of communists in presenting and fighting for their ideology and instead looking for some sort of “united front” or “anti-imperialist” ideology. Such a search is both illusory and dangerous. Every united front will be composed of different classes, each with their respective world outlook. Again, we find it strange that *PM* wants to take CoRIM to task for not wanting to make the fight against post-modernism part of the platform for fighting against imperialism, while MR itself has adopted some central ideological and political conceptions common to post-modernism. How else are we to understand sentences like that published on the MR-2004 website referring to “...the valiant battles of the indigenous and tribal peoples of the Chiapas, Nepal, Columbia, Philippines, India, Peru, Turkey and elsewhere for assertion of their identity and command over resources in their respective habitats/territories.” Frankly, this is undisguised post-modernist “identity politics”. And this ideological conciliation with “identity politics” goes hand in hand with the political blurring of the waters between people’s wars led by

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a proletarian party and the (very occasionally) armed theatre of Sub-comandante Marcos of EZLN. Clearly the leaders of Mumbai Resistance 2004 and *People's March* are trying to "have their cake and eat it too". Better to clearly admit that different ideologies are contending within the movement of opposition to globalisation and encourage the communist forces to take up their necessary independent ideological work.

Footnotes

1. The *People's March* article actually refers to "CoRIM/RCP, USA". *PM's* amalgam between CoRIM and the RCP, USA surprises us. To our knowledge, the RCP, USA was not involved in either WSF or MR-2004, and the articles in the RCP, USA newspaper, the *Revolutionary Worker*, referred to in the *PM* article, were clearly labelled from *A World to Win News Service*, which is used by many publications, including, on occasion, *People's March* itself.

2. The *PM* article says that the CoRIM letter was "posted on the internet". We are not aware of such a posting, which, if it did indeed take place, was done without CoRIM's authorisation.

3. Actually *PM* refers to "the leadership" of any organisation and not the line. While the question of leadership and line are closely intertwined, it is in our opinion more correct to focus on the question of political and ideological line. ■

*To comrades involved with the
World Social Forum and Mumbai
Resistance 2004*

8 December 2003

Dear Comrades,

The Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (CoRIM) has followed with great interest the plans that forces of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) in South Asia and elsewhere have developed for the upcoming World Social Forum (WSF) and, in conjunction with the WSF, Mumbai Resistance 2004. We applaud the initiative taken by the Communist Party of India Marxist-Leninist (People's War) [CPIML(PW)] and others to strive to assure the presence of a sharp anti-imperialist line through sponsoring Mumbai Resistance 2004. At the same time, the Committee has some disagreements about how the WSF is being approached, at least on a tactical level. Since the World Social Forum is an international phenomenon with a certain degree of influence in a number of the countries in which our Movement is working or in which we have contact, we need to get a deeper understanding of what the WSF represents and what strategy and tactics our Movement should adopt in relation to it. And since comrades from several different countries, including outside the South Asia region, will be participating in the Mumbai activities, it is best that our Movement unite as strongly as possible around a common appre-

ciation of these events and a correct policy.

For those comrades who are not familiar with the WSF a short history is in order. The World Social Forum grew out of a conference first held in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre in 2001. Although no political parties were openly involved in the organisation of the WSF, in fact the Workers Party of Brazil, which controlled the regional government of Porto Alegre, was heavily involved in supporting the forum. It also involved a wide variety of social movements and non-government organisations (NGOs) in Brazil, some of which have been involved in various forms of militant struggle, such as the Landless Workers Movement (Movimento Sin Terra or MST in the original Portuguese), which has a long history of leading land seizures and even some armed self-defence against the violence of the exploiting classes, while at the same time channelling the discontent of the landless masses into an ultimately non-revolutionary direction. Outside of Brazil the WSF was initially promoted by a section of the European left, for example those grouped around the influential journal *Le Monde Diplomatique* and the organisation known as Attac, which has been growing quickly in Europe and is associated with the anti-globalisation mass mobilisations. In particular, the organisers of the WSF have tried to identify with and attract those forces that have emerged to oppose "globalisation".

At the first Porto Alegre meeting and since then a wide section of

organised and unorganised forces have attended. The format of the WSF has been to have large numbers of panel discussions and seminars as well as one or more large demonstrations during their programmes.

After the large response to the Porto Alegre forum, the organisers decided to turn the WSF into a yearly event, and two other programmes were subsequently held in the Brazilian city. In addition, regional "social forums" have come forward in affiliation with the WSF. In Europe, in particular, the European Social Forum (ESF) has drawn tens of thousands of activists and others to participate in debates and discussions as well as in large demonstrations. Recently the ESF was held in France. Last year, the ESF held in Italy, immediately before the Iraq war, again attracted large numbers and was used as an occasion to express their opposition to US war plans.

As the WSF grew in size and scope from year to year, the involvement, direct and indirect, of major reactionary political forces has also grown step by step. The Brazilian Workers Party itself has come to nation-wide power with the election of Lula da Silva as president of the country. Lula's victory was a result of agreeing to "play by the rules" established by the World Bank and other imperialist institutions. Lula has agreed to make sure that Brazil meets its debt payments, that the private property of the imperialists and the reactionary classes are respected, and that land seizures are stopped. Because of these reactionary policies, Lula's rule has already been marked by great disappointment among sections of the left movement in Brazil. When the newly elected President Lula addressed the WSF 2003 meeting in Porto Alegre, there was a great deal of opposition from among many of the forces that attended, who considered Lula's policy a betrayal. Social-democratic officials of the European governments also took part in Porto Alegre in 2002 and 2003.

Similarly, in Europe the ESF has involved not only groups such as Attac but also a wide variety of major

bourgeois political parties and a whole host of left social-democratic and revisionist forces, such as many varieties of Trotskyites, etc. The Paris ESF meeting was reportedly largely funded, for example, by different levels of the French government. This has led to contradictions of different degrees of intensity between the ESF organisers and consistently anti-imperialist and revolutionary elements who have been participating in the programme.

What can be said in general about the WSF and its related regional "social forums"? On the one hand, the leadership and organisational control of the WSF is in the hands of forces who are not fundamentally opposed to the world system of imperialism and reaction. While many of these forces do oppose particular outrages of the imperialists and their world institutions, they are promoting the illusion that through the pressure of the people and dialogue a just international economic and social system can be brought about without revolution. While these forces oppose the current US imperialist drive for unquestioned world hegemony, they do not oppose the imperialist system itself. Their organisational principles, for example, exclude "those who would take human life for political ends", a position that does not prevent them from accepting the direct or indirect support of certain reactionary states, such as France or Brazil, whose police and army have shown in countless ways that they can and do "take human life" to maintain and preserve the rule of the exploiting classes.

On the other hand, it is also clear that the slogans and activity of the WSF and its affiliates have attracted large numbers of activists and progressive-minded people, mainly from the middle classes, who are outraged by the growing inequalities and injustices in the world, who are furious at US imperialism and want to oppose it in an effective way. Most of these forces are young and have little or no exposure to a proletarian revolutionary point of view. These individuals and forces are hungrily

looking for a solution to the problems of the world, and it is very important that we reach as many as possible of them with our scientific understanding of the source of the problems in the imperialist system and our solution of world proletarian revolution. Also, many of them want to act. Although many of these forces have different degrees of contradiction and opposition to the main leaders of the WSF, it is also clear that these forces still consider the WSF an important arena in which they can learn and interact with others from different countries and express a united and international opposition to the policies of imperialism.

This contradictory reality of the WSF makes it difficult to establish and apply a correct Marxist-Leninist-Maoist (MLM) line of uniting all who can be united in the struggle against imperialism and reaction, while exposing and isolating the misleaders of the masses. It will require that we follow Mao's instruction of being "firm in principle, flexible in tactics", apply the mass line, and avoid both right and "left" errors.

To return to the Mumbai programme and especially Mumbai Resistance 2004. Again, we salute the fact that comrades were quick to grasp the significance of WSF and have taken action to ensure that a strong anti-imperialist "pole" is present. The basic analysis that Mumbai Resistance (MR) has of the opportunist leadership of the WSF is in our view mainly correct. But we do have serious reservations about the tactics and approach MR-2004 is developing in relation to the WSF.

The original call issued 10 November stated, "MR-2004 is *not an anti-WSF programme*, but one with the clear and sharp focus that the WSF fails to provide and is committed to building a strong and genuine anti-imperialist movement. It seeks to unite those who are genuinely opposed to imperialist globalisation and wars of aggression. Through a process of sharing experiences and analysing imperialist strategies, MR-2004 aims at developing a perspective that will unite all struggling forces irrespective of the

forms of struggle they may choose to take the movement forward to confront and ultimately defeat imperialism.” [Emphasis in the original.] We feel the basic orientation contained in the above passage is correct and should be adhered to.

However, other information material from MR-2004 makes this correct orientation seem less clear, for example, on the MR-2004 web site most of the text is devoted to exposing the WSF. It is very difficult to reconcile this text with the correct approach that MR-2004 “is not an anti-WSF programme”. We think that it is inevitable that anyone reading this text will conclude that MR-2004 is indeed opposed to the WSF, a kind of boycott. Furthermore, we were informed that a position had been taken that no participant in MR-2004 should take part in any WSF activity without “denouncing” the WSF. Our feeling is that if representatives of the genuine anti-imperialist pole are able to participate in WSF activities they should do so. The main focus of their participation should be to put forward the need for resolute struggle, clearly targeting the imperialist enemy. In this context, it is correct to point out the limitations of the dominant line of the WSF without making this the focus of their intervention.

We can examine how, for example, the MR-2004 text one-sidedly denounces the slogan “another world is possible”. This slogan of the WSF has been widely adopted and popularised around the world. This is because it addresses the deep desires of the masses for an end to the injustices of the present imperialist-dominated world. It is true that, by itself, such a slogan is inadequate. In the hands of the opportunist leaders of the WSF, “another world is possible” means “another world is possible *without* the overthrow of imperialism and reaction”. Our task should be to unite with the sentiment of the masses that another world is indeed possible and at the same time show that other world can be none other than a socialist world brought about through the revolutionary struggle. Almost any correct slogan

can be used by opportunists. We have seen even in the international communist movement that slogans for communism and the dictatorship of the proletariat have been used to mask a real policy of capitulation or restoration of capitalism. This does not mean, however, that we ever for a moment abandon these slogans to the opportunists!

It is very important that forces representing the proletarian point of view are present in the WSF to the greatest possible degree. There is no doubt that the opportunists will try to prevent a clear anti-imperialist and revolutionary line from being presented from the stage and so forth. But we should not make their work easier for them. If we make our main tactic a direct assault on the WSF we risk isolating ourselves from the large numbers of progressive intellectuals and activists who will be participating in the WSF.

We should use every possible avenue and tactic to connect with the masses who will be attending the WSF from around the world, presenting a thorough and consistent anti-imperialist viewpoint, and contrast our genuine revolutionary solutions to the non-solutions that the opportunists are presenting. We should be seeking to participate in official WSF seminars and debates wherever possible, and where this is not possible speaking from the floor as well as organising other activities. We do not know the plans of MR-2004, but we hope that programmes are organised by MR-2004 and/or other genuine anti-imperialist forces that can be vehicles to attract and reach forces that are participating in the WSF. For example, a forum organised in support of the People’s War in Nepal should attract important sections of those involved in the WSF. Again, ~~doing~~ this will require artfully combining flexible tactics with our strategic orientation. Even when we have important criticisms to make, there are different ways to make them. Sometimes it is necessary to directly denounce a person or a policy. At other times it is more correct to emphasise our position positively and let the masses

themselves draw the distinction between our understanding and that of the misleaders.

We should use the Mumbai activities as an occasion to promote and build the World People’s Resistance Movement (WPRM). The fact that some activists from WPRM from different areas of the world will be present should be a good opportunity to present our vision of the WPRM of “North, South, East and West – Unite the People’s Struggles.” At the present time WPRM has been focusing on opposing the US occupation of Iraq (and more generally the US rampage conducted under the signboard of the “war on terrorism”) and support for the People’s War in Nepal (including the specific focus of fighting for the liberation of Comrade Gaurav [a Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) leader held in an Indian prison]). These are important issues to be raised in Mumbai and also a way to show concretely the kind of organisation we are trying to develop with WPRM. Attention should be given to collecting names and addresses of advanced forces who are coming from different countries.

Another point that we should pay attention to is playing our independent role as Marxist-Leninist-Maoists in relation to the different programmes that are scheduled for Mumbai. It is particularly important that adequate copies of our journal and MLM literature in general be present and distributed as widely as possible through tables and other means. It will be important to have at least some comrades prepared to speak directly as Marxist-Leninist-Maoists.

While we should try to develop mass organisations, including those we are leading such as WPRM, or playing an active role such as in MR-2004, we should be careful not to see these organisations as substituting for our independent communist work. In fact, this represents combining “two into one” – collapsing the task of uniting a broader force of anti-imperialists with the task of promoting our own MLM ideology. In this respect we can see some problems

with formulations used in the MR-2004 web site text referred to above, for example in the passage where it refers to "the valiant battles of the indigenous and tribal peoples of the Chiapas, Nepal, Columbia, Philippines, India, Peru, Turkey and elsewhere for assertion of their identity and command over resources in their respective habitats/territories". While this is clearly a laudable effort to unite with the positive sentiment of many of the forces and activists in the social movements who have been supporting the "struggles of the indigenous and tribal peoples", this is not a fundamentally correct characterisation of the Maoist-led people's wars, and it is not particularly helpful to lump together the Maoist people's wars with opportunist and revisionist struggles led by the EZLN in Mexico (Chiapas) or the FARC in Columbia. Similarly, it is not correct for an organisation such as MR-2004 to polemicise against "post-modernism". Waging struggle on the philosophical front is indeed important, and it is a weakness of the genuine MLM forces that far too little has been done to this point. But if we make rejection of "post-modernism" a requirement for joint action, as the MR-2004 text seems to imply, we will be unnecessarily cutting ourselves off from many pro-

gressive people who define themselves as "post-modernists". Groups such as WPRM or MR-2004 are not effective vehicles for carrying out struggle on the philosophical front, but they should be a vehicle for enabling the communist forces to interact and influence broad sections of progressive-minded people and in this sense opening the way for us to carry out our independent communist work, especially the propagation of the stand, viewpoint and method of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

Comrades, we are well aware of the limitations in our own understanding of the WSF and especially the concrete programme that it is preparing for Mumbai in January, nor are we well informed as to the specific plans for MR-2004. We cannot and will not try to propose specific tactics for dealing with these events. But we do feel the points that we have addressed in this letter are important for our Movement to act in a united way and to maximise the gains that can be achieved in Mumbai in relation to both the WSF and MR-2004. We hope the comrades involved in these actions will give serious attention to the points we have raised.

Our communist salute and best wishes,
Committee of the Revolutionary
Internationalist Movement ■

The

By *People's March*

The following section, which is the principal section we are responding to, is excerpted from a much longer article which appeared in June 2004. The full article can be found on the People's March website at the following address:
www.peoplesmarch.com

— AWTW'

The central aspect of this trend is to see the WSF as basically an anti-imperialist force, notwithstanding all its lacunae.

In the initial stages of the MR many a liberal intellectual and organisation considered the alternative programme as a splittist effort — i.e. dividing the anti-imperialist camp. But after they were given to understand the character of WSF, many of the genuine forces either left the WSF and joined the MR, or at least attended both. As time proceeded towards the build-up of MR the splittist accusation completely disappeared, and it grew to be an event with serious political ramifications gaining popularity daily — not just in India but also world-wide. By the time of the programme, those for participation from the Indian M-L circles had been reduced to a handful; and even outright revisionists, like Liberation, found it difficult to play much of a role (though their names were as prominent as that of the CPI and CPM initially [referring to the revisionist Communist Party of India and Communist Party of India (Marxist), respectively, AWTW]) due to opposition from the rank-and-file. Even the CPM was put so much on the defensive (again because of opposition from cadre) that the PB member, Yechuri, had to write a defensive article in their organ, *People's Democracy* (dated 28 Dec

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Participation Trend & CoRIM Stand

2003), accepting NGOs as "safety valves" but sought participation in the WSF in order to struggle against the incorrect views. MR initiated a process of re-thinking amongst many, and brought a sharp polarisation between the real anti-imperialist forces and those that are apologists of imperialism.

So, while in India, the exposures of MR acted to effectively keep many of the genuine forces away from the WSF and bring them a step forward in building a genuine anti-imperialist movement; from abroad the tendency was more for participation. Surprisingly, it was the CoRIM that was one of the most assertive on this; and it was the RCP, USA's *Revolutionary Worker* (22 Feb and 14 March 2004 issues), that went to such an extent as putting WSF and MR on an equal plane, thereby, in effect, negating the need for an ideological and political struggle against the WSF through an alternative programme to counter its reactionary leadership and its diversionary rôle of it being a "safety valve" to diffuse the growing discontent. In fact the glowing report of the WSF in the *RW* was on the same plane as reports in the liberal/revisionist magazines and newspapers like *Frontline*, etc. The CPI(ML) Liberation's organ went one step beyond the *RW* articles, where in its February issue (in the article entitled "*Voices against War & WTO*") it completely ignored the existence of MR and only gave a report on the WSF. Even the bourgeois media were forced to take cognisance of both, but not the revisionists of Liberation.

Neither reports (Liberation & *RW*) have any serious criticism of the reactionary and hypocritical role of the WSF leadership, or the frivolous atmosphere present there. In fact in

Mumbai, there were reports that at the very site itself, a section of the media stated that the WSF was non-serious and frivolous, and in that MR was a big contrast. There were quite a few speakers at the WSF who openly praised the merits of globalisation, asserted how globalisation would improve the lot of the dalits and other sections of the Indian people, and such reactionary trash. But this was not visible to *RW* and Liberation.

Liberation is of course an outright revisionist organisation and one does not expect better than to hob-nob with reactionaries – be it the ruling-class parties of the CPI/CPM or the imperialist-funded NGOs. In fact, a year earlier (5 Jan 2003), at a convention against globalisation in Hyderabad of seven "left" parliamentary parties, the Liberation Party's secretary, Dipankar Bhattachajee, was enraptured by the unity of such forces against globalisation, ignoring the West Bengal government's role in implementing all diktats of the IMF/World Bank/WTO. In the Feb 2004 Liberation report there is a glowing account of the WSF with no critical comment whatsoever. Similar reports were seen by liberal journalists in the main-line media, but at least they also took cognisance of MR. While totally ignoring MR they saw nothing wrong in playing up reactionaries in their report like Joseph Stiglitz (economic advisor in the Clinton administration).

But one would have expected better from the RIM, which normally goes into great details on the question of political standpoint. Unfortunately that was not so in this case. The one-sided reporting in *RW* comes from the political approach of the CoRIM and reflected in its open letter, dated 8 December 2004,

entitled "To comrades involved with the World Social Forum and Mumbai Resistance-2004", circulated through the net.

There are three aspects to this "letter". First is the question of participation in the WSF. The second is the class analysis of the WSF and the third is the ideological and political question vis-à-vis WSF.

I. Question of Participation

This "letter" clearly states that participation is very much necessary in WSF, and in a big way. If that is so then what was the need for MR? If all forces are to be used to create an "impact" in WSF, there would be no question of organising an alternative event. Yet it adopts a sort of eclectic approach praising the MR initiative as well (with criticisms). This is not understandable for, if all should participate in the WSF, the logical corollary would be not to hold an alternative event.

The letter in fact says: "It is very important that forces representing the proletarian point of view are present in the WSF to the greatest possible degree. There is no doubt that the opportunists will try to prevent a clear anti-imperialist and revolutionary line from being presented from the stage and so forth. But we should not make their work easier for them." The "letter" adds that, "We should be seeking to participate in official WSF seminars and debates wherever possible and where this is not possible speaking from the floor as well as organising other activities." With such a high level of proposed involvement where would there be any necessity to hold an alternative event. So, in essence, the CoRIM was opposed to the MR programme advocating instead participation in the WSF, though it does not say so

openly. This approach is also clear that when the *RW* reports both equally positively, it is apparent that in its view the MR had no specific political role to play in developing an anti-imperialist pole within the anti-globalisation movement. Such an approach is not surprising as a year back the *RW* also praised the 2003 WSF, in fact putting it on equal plane with the militant demonstrations at Davos (see *RW* 1186, 9 February 2003).

In fact, in its style of reporting the *RW* gives the impression that political polarisation was being done by WPRM's propaganda in both events. The letter also gives the impression that it is the WPRM that is to politically intervene in both as it sets various tasks for it. It says "We should use the Mumbai activities as an occasion to promote and build the WPRM". This is also a misrepresentation of the facts, as the WPRM (South Asia) was a constituent of MR not the WSF – in fact it was one of the initial initiators of MR.

So, in essence, what the CoRIM is saying (without actually putting it in so many words) is that the MR was unnecessary and the goals it set could well have been achieved by big involvement in the WSF by WPRM, which should give attention to "collecting names and addresses of advanced forces who are coming from different countries".

As Lenin once said that left sectarianism and right opportunism are but two sides of the same coin. Here, in the CoRIM approach, both are in evidence. The attitude of the CoRIM to the WSF has an element of rightism, while the exclusivist role assigned to the WPRM is sectarian. There is no approach here to unite with other ideological and political forces in a joint anti-imperialist struggle, while seeking to win over the *advanced forces that are coming from different countries*. In fact the only task set in the entire "letter" is to win over others, either by *collecting names and addresses* or by propagating MLM through WPRM; this is a narrow sectarian approach towards the UF. Actually the two tasks mentioned here is only one

aspect of the work, the other is to unite with other progressives in a joint struggle against imperialism, particularly the US. (and not through tailism on the WSF platform). It was through MR in fact that both tasks were achieved. Essentially MR acted to win over the anti-imperialist sections and seeks to consolidate them, in India, into a tactical united front of revolutionary, anti-imperialist and progressive forces; while the Maoist parties, CCOMPOSA, etc, sought to carry the political line of MLM and people's war as widely as possible. Also many revolutionary mass organisations were present that were close to MLM ideology and had the opportunity to propagate their views. CoRIM suggests only doing the latter task (that too only through the WPRM, ignoring the other non-RIM revolutionary forces) and not the former.

II. CoRIM's Class Analysis of WSF

On this it appears that the CoRIM has some illusions regarding the class character of the WSF in general and NGOs in particular. In fact even the social democrats are not shown as ruling class elements; the entire analysis gives an anti-imperialist role to ruling class social-democrats, NGOs and the WSF. This is politically and ideologically wrong. To prove the credentials of the WSF it does not even properly delve into its history thereby even misrepresenting facts. In the "letter", the genesis of WSF is traced to 2001 Porto Allegre conference. This is factually wrong as has been already shown earlier. Apart from this the concept of WSF has its genesis in responses to the growing crisis in the form of the UN instituting corporate responsibility, the Manila Social Forum etc. The formation of WSF was first declared in the UN's social summit in June-2000.

Regarding the class character of the leadership of the WSF the "letter" says, that: "The basic analysis that MR has of the opportunist leadership of the WSF is in our view mainly correct. But we do have serious reservations about the tactics and

approach MR-2004 is developing in relation to the WSF."

Firstly the MR has never defined the WSF leadership as merely "opportunist". The understanding behind the MR is that the leadership is pro-imperialist, that "basically channelises dissent into avenues acceptable to the big capitalist powers". So the class character of the leadership of the (imperialist-funded) NGOs and the ruling class social democrats is pro-imperialist, not mere opportunists. But nowhere, either in the letter or in the *RW* articles, does this class analysis come across. In fact the "letter" gives the impression that they are some sort of progressive force.

See what it says on the very first page: "Outside of Brazil the WSF was initially promoted by a section of the European left, for example those grouped around the influential journal *Le Monde Diplomatique* and the organisation known as ATTAC which has been growing quickly in Europe and is associated with the anti-globalisation mass mobilisations. In particular, the organisers of the WSF have tried to identify with and attract those forces that have emerged to oppose "globalisation"."

Here there is no political exposure as to the class character of the so-called "European left", ATTAC, etc, and gives the impression that they are all progressive forces. Also the last sentence quoted above gives the "organisers of WSF" a clean chit, making out that they are actually anti-globalisation as they have "have tried to identify with and attract those forces that have emerged to oppose globalisation".

In addition, ATTAC is made to look like some force opposed to globalisation. But what is the reality? ATTAC is close to the ruling-class social-democratic party of France, who has in fact accepted the concept of "Tobin Tax" put forth by ATTAC. Also ATTAC aggressively opposes any form of violence that has occurred at the anti-globalisation demonstrations.

Here, the "letter" does no class analysis of forces like these, just a positive statement that these organ-

isations have been growing quickly in Europe. Even regarding the Brazilian Party the criticism is mild, when in fact Lula has implemented IMF/WB policies with more efficiency than that of his predecessor.

Also regarding the NGOs there is not a word about their widespread presence in the WSF, nor about their imperialist funding and the role they play in sabotaging the revolutionary movement. In fact in the entire "letter" there is not a single word on the NGOs, nor on the funds received by the WSF from the Ford Foundation, Oxfam, etc.; on the contrary, in the report in *RW* they try and go out of their way to prove the anti-imperialist credentials of these organisers, when they say that the "WSF organisers refused to serve Coke and Pepsi and used Linux instead of Microsoft computer software products". Why this silence on the NGO factor? Why the positive presentation of ruling class social democrats from Europe? Why the attempt to whitewash the "organisers" of the WSF? And when this is coupled with glowing reports on the WSF – both in 2003 and 2004 – by the *RW* and the call for maximum participation, the overall picture that is given is that the WSF and its leadership are an anti-imperialist force (not a safety valve) with which we must unite. This is a serious flaw in the line and understanding of an important on-going movement. It must be clear that no anti-imperialist front can be built with imperialist-funded NGOs or ruling-class social democrats.

Elsewhere in the "letter" the CoRIM calls the leaders of the WSF as "opportunists", "misleaders of the masses", and though they "...are not fundamentally opposed to the world system of imperialism and reaction" they see them as forces who "do oppose particular outrages of the imperialists and their world institutions". The CoRIM further adds that "While these forces oppose the current US imperialist drive for unquestioned world hegemony they do not oppose the imperialist system itself". All such arguments may apply to the bulk of the organisations

that are participants of the WSF and may be confused, but it is incorrect to see the leadership of WSF in the same light. It is the class analysis of the leadership that determines the class character of the organisation and one's approach and tactics towards the WSF. As the CoRIM is not prepared to see the leadership of the WSF (whether the social-democratic leaders or the top brass of the NGOs) as props/apologists of imperialism, but as mere "opportunists", "misleaders", etc. it is quite natural that they have a positive approach to the WSF.

This is particularly alarming when the CoRIM condemns (or at least downplays) armed struggles against the US and its puppets, if they are led by Islamic forces and even dismisses the armed struggles in Columbia, Mexico, etc., which are not led by Maoists as that of "armed revisionists". Yet, an organisation in which its leadership is vehemently opposed to any form of violence, which is rabidly anti-communist and is led by pro-imperialist organisations and individuals, is praised!!! While dismissing the armed struggles that are not on MLM lines the CoRIM fails to see its anti-US content and thereby adopts a sectarian approach to them. On the other hand, by not seeing the pro-imperialist nature of the WSF leadership and its role as a "safety valve" to diffuse the discontent of the masses, it adopts a positive approach to it, amounting to tailist and rightist politics. As is normally the case, left sectarianism and rightism go hand-in-glove. *For revolutionaries to win over the masses who attend the WSF, it first and foremost requires a correct understanding to what it really is and its role in the anti-imperialist movement, whatever may be the tactics we use in approaching it.*

III. Question of Ideology

The CoRIM "letter" complains that the MR devoted too much effort in "exposing the WSF". Firstly, if the WSF was not exposed for what it is, the very reason for an alternative programme would vanish. Besides,

without exposing the WSF how is it possible to convince the people that it is diverting them from the path of struggle, is not opposing imperialism as such, and therefore the need to come out and join the MR. If the MR programme existed without such an event going on simultaneously it would not have been necessary to focus exposure on the WSF. But the very reason for holding MR, that too across the road from WSF, was because the WSF was taking place. Unless the masses understood the need for an alternative event, they would merely consider it as splittist, superfluous and like splitting hairs. *There was need for them to understand that there was a fundamental difference between the WSF and the MR, only then could there be validity for an alternative programme, that too on the same topic.* So, one had to oppose WSF; and rally people for MR. But of course, unlike the boycottists of the ND/SOC, the approach would be that of exposure of the WSF, and an attack on imperialism. Target imperialism, expose the WSF – that was the essence of the MR approach.

Further the "letter" says that there should not have been an attack on the slogan "Another World is Possible" and also post-modernism from the MR platform.

Regarding the slogan "Another World is Possible", however popular it may be, that is one of the means of duping the masses. Unless this subterfuge was exposed it was not possible to convince the masses of an alternative. Of course the method by which it needs to be done should be creative and not dogmatic – on that we have no difference with CoRIM. We think the MR was quite apt in saying that the only other possible world is that built on self-reliance, moving towards socialism. There was nothing dogmatic about it.

On the question of post-modernism we cannot understand the "letter" saying "it is not correct for an organisation such as MR-2004 to polemicise against post-modernism". Why not? The "letter" gives no reasons, but gives the impression that such an attack on the philosophical

front is the sole prerogative of the Party, and MR, WPRM, etc should only open the way "for us to carry out our independent communist work, especially the propagation of the stand, viewpoint and method of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism". Post-modernism should, in fact, be attacked thoroughly from all fronts, whether by left-leaning Marxist intellectuals or by any organisation that is capable of doing so, including the Maoist party. In fact many a good critique on post-modernism has come from the non-Maoist camp. This, after all, is the philosophical base of the NGO culture and numerous other progressives, which is basically an all-round attack on Marxism (though its ability to grow lay in the setback of communism and the lack of answers at that time from the communist revolutionaries to various evils of the prevailing imperialist system). But, having said that, nowhere did MR make an attack on post-modernism a criteria for joining, as claimed by the

CoRIM "letter". This is a distortion of the reality. What is the problem of a free debate on the subject? After all, does not the WSF eulogise the factor of free debate, as some goal in itself (rather than a means to an end). It is quite inconceivable to understand why this point is raised in the first place by the CoRIM, as such a restricted approach of allowing attacks on post-modernism from only an MLM platform, only helps allow post-modernism unhindered sway over vast sections of the progressives. On the questions posed by the post-modernists, like "power & bureaucracy", ethnic questions, culture and architecture, feminism, sub-alteran studies, etc., etc., there must be concrete answers from the broad Marxist camp, and they should not be just wished away, or kept as the prerogative of some supposed Maoist pundits.

So, whether it is the slogan "Another World is Possible" or the question of post-modernism or it is

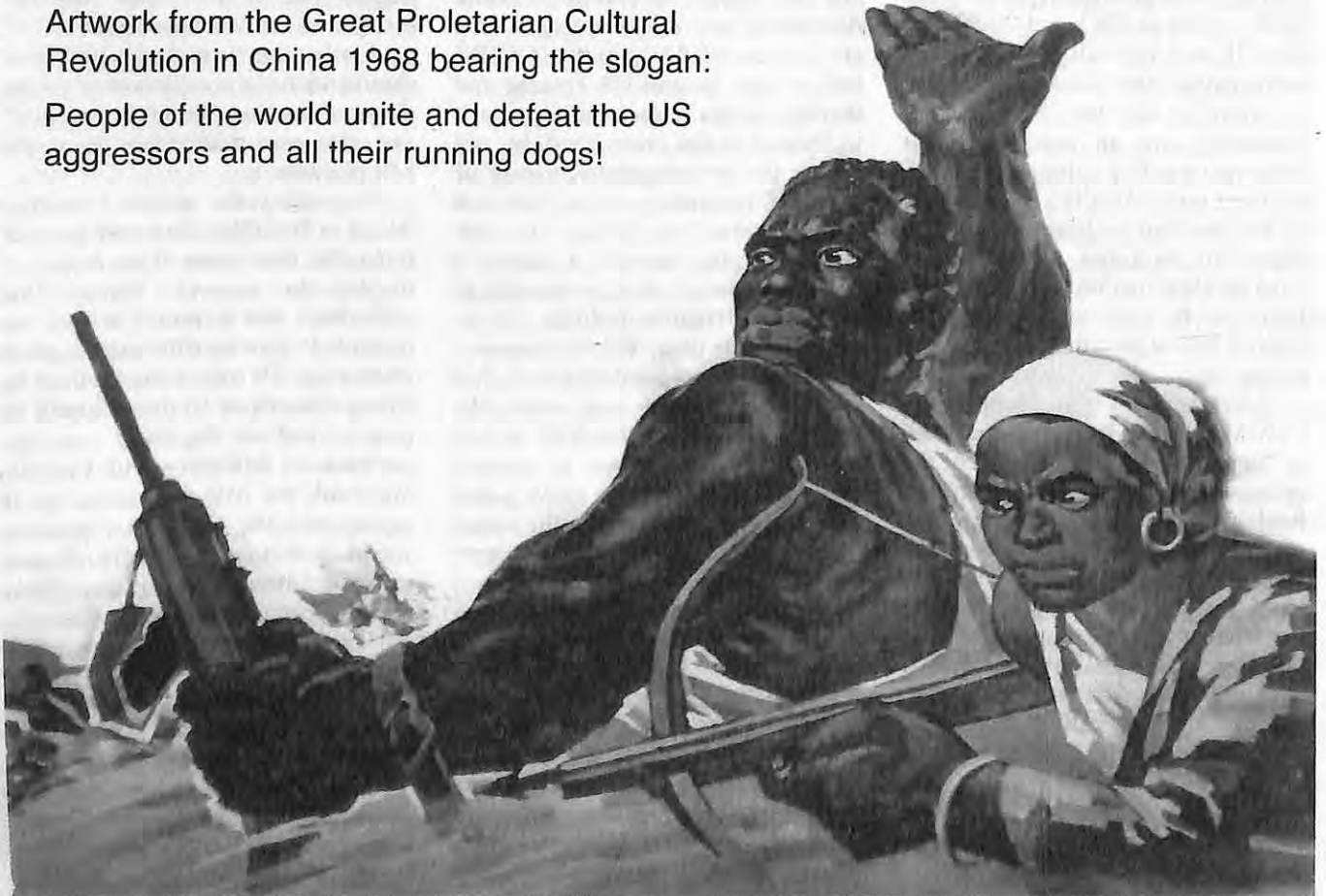
the question of much of the other political/ideological reformism being promoted by the leadership of the WSF, all must be exposed, widely (though creatively, not in formula style repetition of Marxist "truths"), if at all the sincere elements within these are to be won, to at least a genuine anti-imperialist programme, or even to MLM itself.

The essence of what the CoRIM is saying is reduce the exposure of the WSF to a minimum, by not attacking its central slogan, or the question of post-modernism, or by saying that the MR over-did it. But, without exposure there would be no real political intervention; and just asserting general truths of MLM away from what is going on at the spot would be a meaningless exercise. ■

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Artwork from the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China 1968 bearing the slogan:

People of the world unite and defeat the US aggressors and all their running dogs!



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