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2006/32

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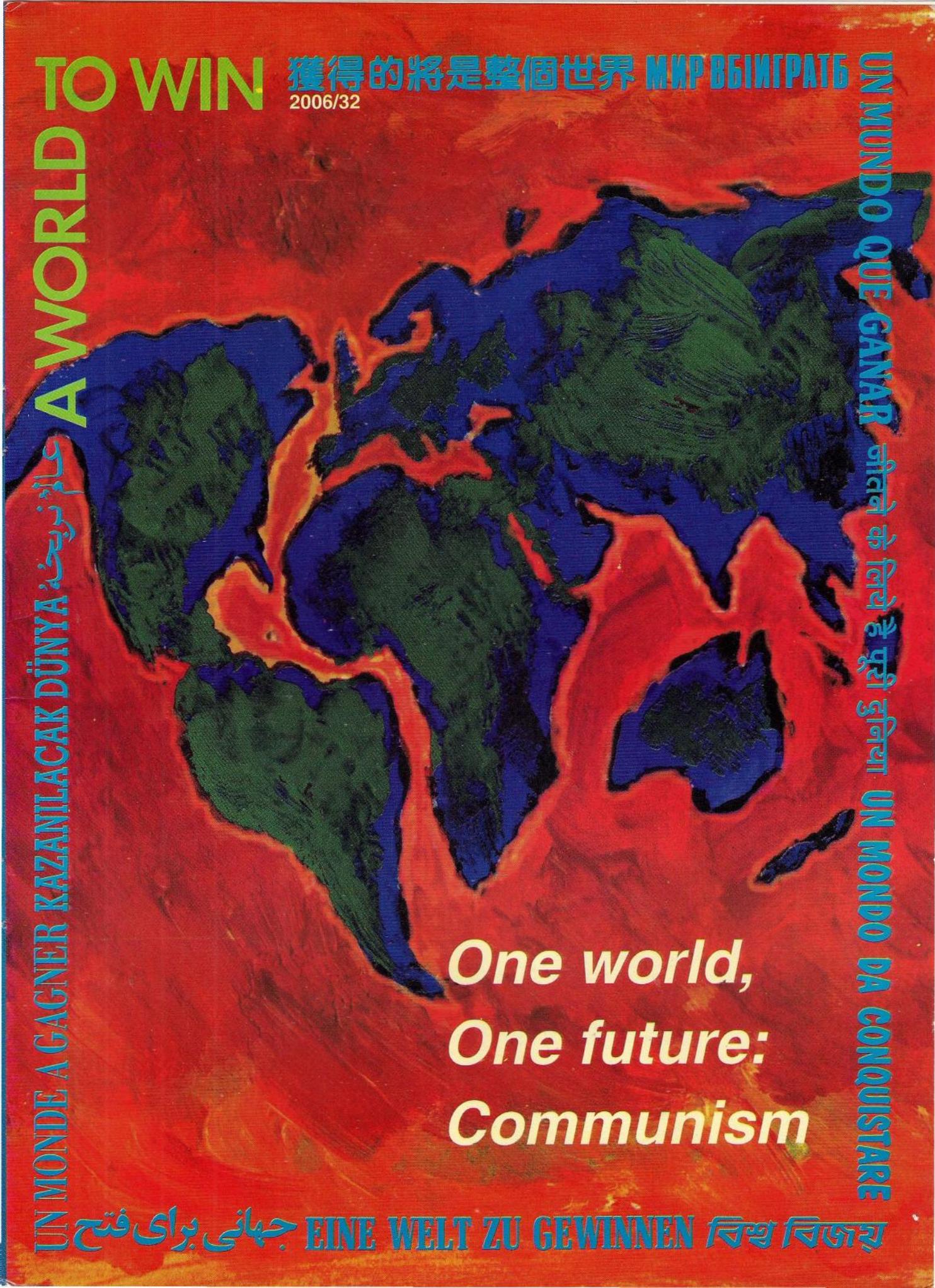
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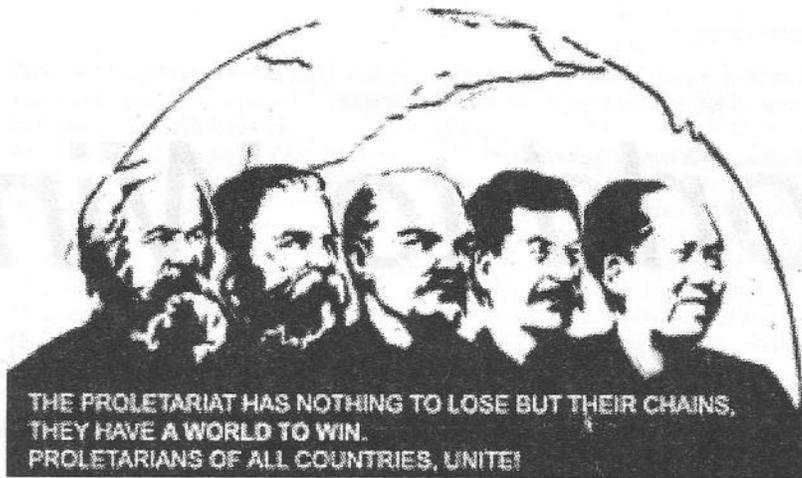
A WORLD

عالم نریخ UN MONDE A GAGNER KAZANILACAK DÜNYA

One world,
One future:
Communism

UN MONDE A GAGNER KAZANILACAK DÜNYA EINE WELT ZU GEWINNEN বিশ্ব বিজয়





2006/32

Nepal: Two States, Two Futures Collide

Nepal is perched on the brink of dramatic change. The old monarchy is tottering – what state system will replace it? The new Nepal led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) centred in the countryside confronts the old regime of landlords and bureaucrat capitalists centred in Kathmandu and beholden to imperialism and India. A photo essay shows one way the country's people are beginning to build a self-reliant society – a “road to the future” – as captured by a team of internationalist volunteers. An extract from a report from the Central Committee of the CPN (Maoist) presents how the party itself views recent developments.

Empire – Revolutionary Communism or “Communism” without Revolution?

In recent years Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt offered an unusually sweeping critique of the contemporary world addressing philosophy, economics, culture and other arenas. At the heart of their analysis is what the authors call “Empire” – a “post-imperialist” order. A Maoist response argues that though the work contains provocative insights, its core theses toss out key truths about the way the capitalism system actually functions today and dispense with the need for proletarian revolution.

The Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

Two Maoist leaders of parties of RIM speak out. The Secretary General of the Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan is interviewed by AWTW about the crucial need to uphold Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in that country's difficult political terrain. Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, looks at some of the ways the international communist movement has dealt with epistemology – how people come to know reality – and argues for the need to settle accounts with views that block or distort the search for truth, even uncomfortable truths that make

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A World to Win

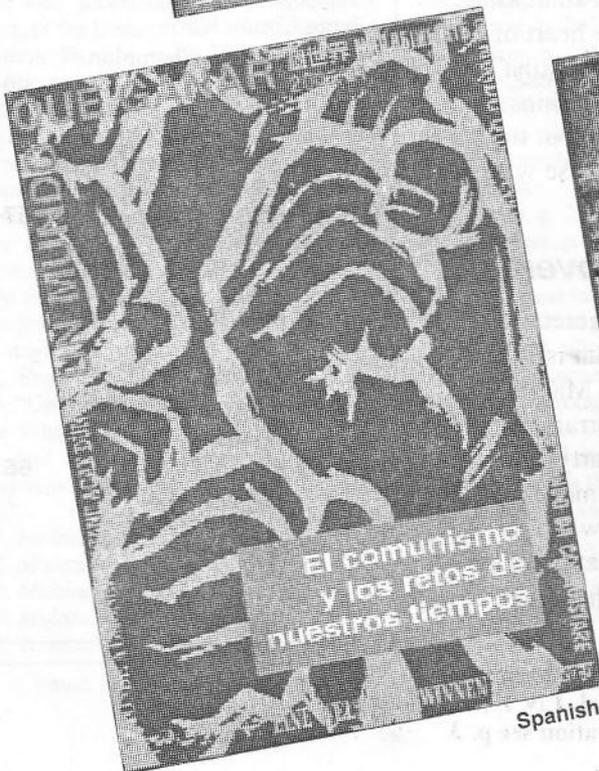
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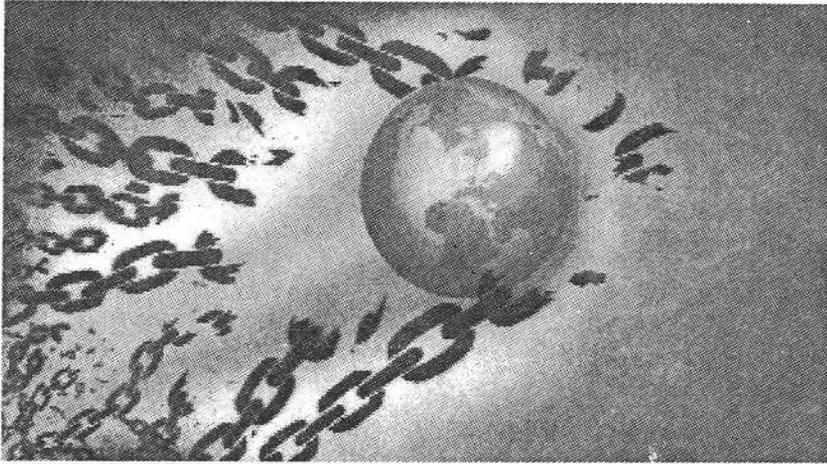
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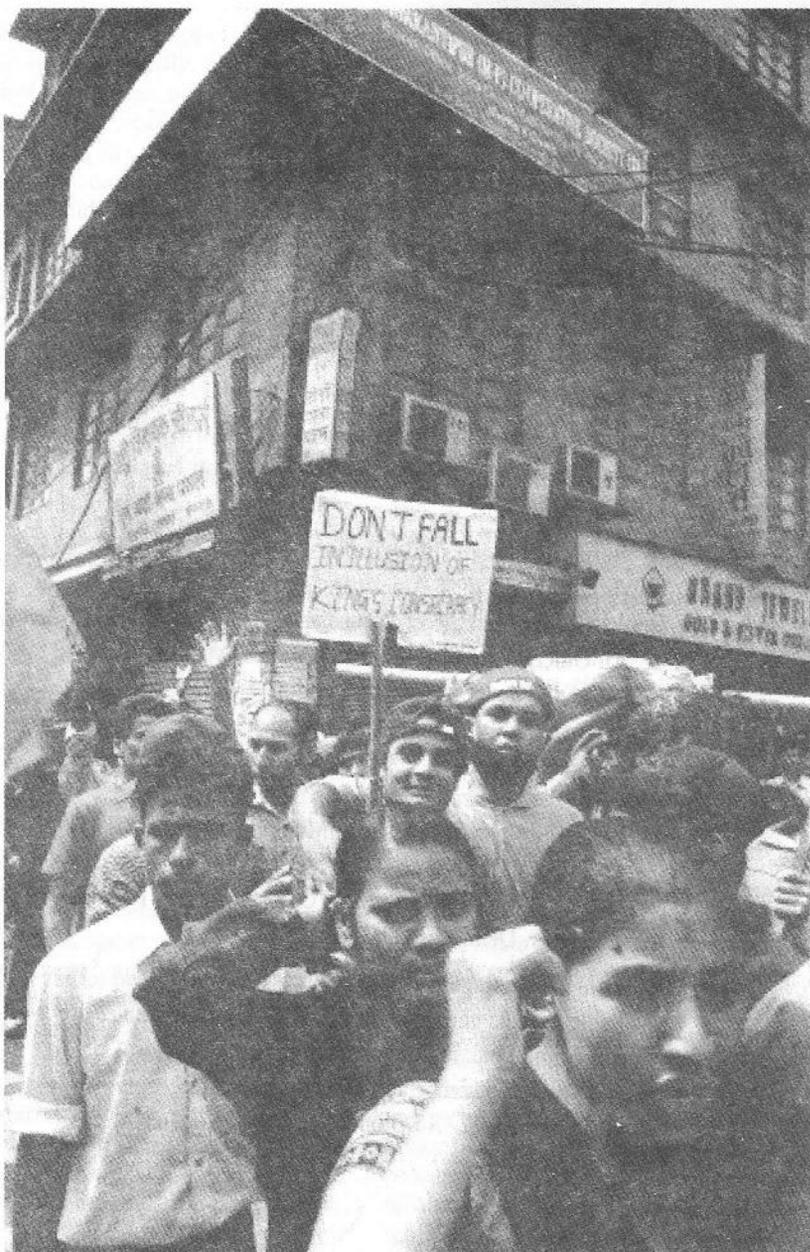
Journal

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Nepal:

Torrents of Revolt Engulf the Throne



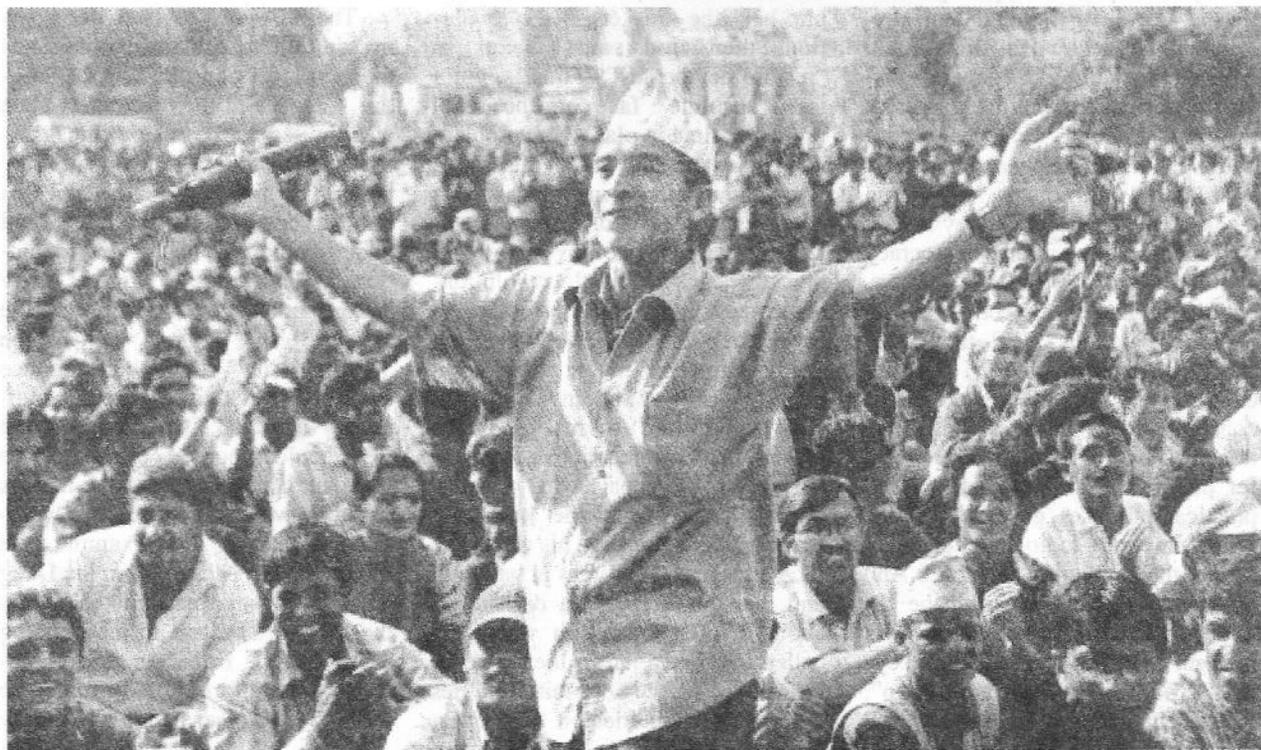
As we go to press in May 2006, it is impossible to predict what new twists and turns the revolution in Nepal will face in the coming months. In April, a massive three-week upsurge in the Kathmandu valley and other cities of Nepal has deeply shaken the ruling structures of the country and it is not at all sure that the monarchical regime will survive.

While it was the urban upsurge led by the parliamentary parties which came close to administering the coup de grace to King Gyanendra's regime, it was the decade-long people's war led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) that set the stage for the recent developments. Since February 2005 the king had ruled with absolute power after dissolving the parliament. The parliament had been composed of numerous political parties, some even calling themselves "Marxist-Leninist", which took turns occupying government ministries and squabbled bitterly amongst themselves. One guiding star united the parliament: opposition to the revolutionary war being waged in Nepal's countryside.

When Gyanendra dissolved the parliament in February 2005 and issued a nationwide clampdown (for example, even temporarily cutting off cellphone and internet service in the whole country), his agenda was openly announced. Ten years of Maoist revolution, the king said, had put the country "on the verge of a precipice". In effect he was seeking to unite the whole Nepalese ruling



Joyous dancing in the streets of Kathmandu after the retreat of the king.





Defying shoot-on-sight orders in the capital city.

class by force and concentrate the whole power of the kingdom on the overarching task of defeating the people's war.

So how did the international champions of democracy, in particular the US, British and Indian governments, react when this feudal monarch backed by his generals dismissed parliament, put the leaders of the parliamentary parties under house arrest and suspended what few civil liberties the country still had, in a naked royal coup? Did they invade the country "to restore democracy and the rule of law"? Did they boycott the regime or subject it to international sanctions? Did they even take Gyanendra to the UN Security Council for a simple resolution of condemnation? Of course not. They issued a few mild diplomatic regrets, for public consumption, but for all practical purposes gave the regime virtual impunity to go about trying to drown the revolution in blood. And not without reason – hadn't the US imperialists used this same approach in Peru, when they turned a blind eye to Fujimori's 1991 "auto-coup", which enabled his regime to deal

sharp blows to the people's war there, including through the arrest of its leader, Communist Party of Peru Chairman Gonzalo?

In truth, the plan of all the reactionaries and imperialists was simple: help the king crush the revolution, then find some means to "restore democracy" -- that is, put a less "absolute" face on the reactionary regime in place. The problem is that Gyanendra failed miserably. Even though the army unleashed a countrywide wave of terror, it was still unable to make any significant breakthroughs against the revolutionary forces. In the months after the royal coup the People's Liberation Army launched major attacks on heavily fortified enemy outposts, each containing scores of hand-picked, hardcore-reactionary soldiers of the Royal Nepal Army (RNA), fanatically loyal to the king and ready to die to preserve his rule. The PLA attacked with forces in battalion and division strength (a division is about 2,700 soldiers) in what was called the First Plan of the Strategic Offensive. After some initial battles with heavy casualties on both sides,

the military tide began to decisively turn. A major army base in Pili, in Western Nepal, was overrun in August 2005, with 159 RNA soldiers killed and 60 captured, and large amounts of ammunition seized.

The PLA grew to seven divisions, in addition to the many thousands more villagers enrolled in the militias. The rule of the reactionary state was limited to the major cities, district administrative centres and army bases. The hilly region of Nepal was almost completely liberated and under the control of the new revolutionary authorities led by the party and responsible to the people. While the flat fertile regions such as the Terai or Dang Valley which produce most of Nepal's grain were not completely liberated, in these areas the PLA could function openly in both large and small units and the masses could be widely mobilised in revolutionary activity. For example, the thousands of peasants from the Dang Valley who participated hiked up into the hills to take part in the building the "Martyrs' Road" in the revolutionary base area of Rolpa. The RNA, on the other hand, could only

venture out of their bases to terrorise the rural masses in heavy convoys.

The successes of the PLA and the inability of the reactionary regime to carry through its threat to decisively defeat the revolution intensified the crisis within the camp of the old state. A major development came when a 12-point memorandum was signed between the CPN(M) and the parliamentary parties, Seven Party Alliance (SPA), in November 2005. The agreement called for a united effort against the "autocratic monarchy" and the convening of a constituent assembly. The agreement caused something of a political earthquake in Nepal since, for the first time, the parliamentary parties were allied with the Maoists against the king. The US, in particular, vigorously denounced the 12-point memorandum and said that instead the king and the SPA must come to an agreement. Other reactionary forces, especially India, took a different attitude, hoping that the Seven Party Alliance

could pressure the CPN(M) to "rejoin the mainstream" and give up on the people's war.

Tension mounted throughout the country as the 6 April date for the nationwide general strike drew closer. In March 2006, the PLA paraded through a district capital, Gularia, in broad daylight, and also shot down a helicopter – the first time in South Asia Maoist forces had succeeded in knocking out this powerful counter-revolutionary weapon. Also, on the eve of the general strike the PLA successfully wiped out two key RNA outposts controlling the entry to the Kathmandu valley from both the east and the west. Mao Tsetung's description of "encircling the cities from the countryside" was palpable.

The CPN(M) agreed not to carry out military operations in the urban areas during the April general strike to avoid giving excuses to the regime to attack the masses. The Maoist support for the strike assured that there was 100 percent compliance with the

ban on transporting people and goods on the highways, which the PLA can control at will.

Within the cities the strike immediately took on proportions far beyond what the parties that had called for it expected or probably wished. Repeated clashes took place between demonstrators armed only with stones and vicious club-wielding police and soldiers. On some occasions bullets were used against the crowds. About two dozen demonstrators were killed and as many as 5,000 injured in the three-week period.

The slogans quickly outstripped the demands of the Seven Party Alliance. While the SPA had been careful not to call for an end to the monarchy, on the streets masses in their hundreds of thousands were chanting for the king's execution. Any sign with the word "royal" or "his majesty" was very likely to be destroyed. Under this avalanche of anti-monarchy sentiment the parliamentary parties themselves made

Young Maoist fighters in Saranbari, southwest of the capital.



half-hearted republican comments.

When it became clear that force alone would not break the movement, the Nepal ruling classes and their foreign backers scrambled to find a solution to the crisis. The US, UK, Indian and Chinese ambassadors made a joint call upon the king to lay down new rules: he was to immediately come to an agreement with the parliamentary parties. If not, US ambassador James Moriarty told the press, Gyanendra might have to leave the country "by helicopter". The "international community" put great pressure on the SPA to accept the king's offer to have the SPA name a new prime minister. However, the pressure in the street was too great for the SPA to dare to accept this proposal. Only when the King agreed to unconditionally reinstate the previous parliament did the SPA agree to call off the strike.

In the streets the people celebrated the retreat of the king. But in addition to jubilation, another incessant demand was heard: "Don't betray the people!" And the people have every reason to fear such a betrayal. The new Prime Minister Girija Koirala, a leader of the reactionary Nepal Congress Party who heads the interim government, only three years ago was working hand-in-glove with the tyrant Gyanendra to bring out the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) to wage a counter-insurgency campaign. The very first declaration of the new government made no mention at all of the country's central political issue -- the ongoing revolutionary war. Furthermore, one of the first acts of the nervous new government was to ban any demonstration in the centre of Kathmandu. And while the parliamentary parties agreed to convene some kind of constituent assembly, they started quickly running away from the demand to get rid of the monarchy completely and establish a republic.

US Ambassador Moriarty boasted that the "Bush administration's policy of promoting democracy worldwide" (!!) had been "brilliantly successful" in Nepal -- while the US and UK had backed the monarchy to the hilt for years and armed the Royal

Nepal Army even as it conducted a bloodbath in the countryside. According to Amnesty International, the Gyanendra regime piled up the worst record of disappearances in the world. Moriarty imperiously declared that there is "a useful role for the institution of the monarchy as a unifying factor". As for the CPN(M), Moriarty said they should be allowed to participate in the constituent assembly if they dissolve the PLA and renounce violence. Assistant US Secretary of State Richard Boucher voiced the goal of American policy: "I think we should work together as much as we can... to expunge the Maoists from Nepali society. I think it's very much the attitude of the governments in the region, including India."

The problem of the monarchy is a big one for the reactionary ruling class and its foreign backers. Up to now the monarchy, along with the RNA loyal to it, has been the pillar of the reactionary order. In the concrete conditions of Nepal it is not easy to "unplug" the king (who is considered a reincarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu) without the whole reactionary state apparatus coming apart—especially when the regime is being battered by revolutionary warfare. However, "Plan A", for Gyanendra to crush the revolution, has failed. If "Plan B", relying on the parliamentary parties with some kind of residual role for the king to defeat the revolution, also fails, perhaps "Plan C" of the imperialists and reactionaries may include a republic. One thing is certain: the enemies of the Nepal revolution will be working night and day using all kinds of carrots and all kinds of sticks in hopes of derailing the revolution and consolidating a new reactionary government.

At this writing, the new Koirala government has accepted an indefinite ceasefire with the CPN(M) and talks are scheduled at the highest level. The CPN(M), in its statement welcoming the first declaration of the new government, pointed out: "Having not spoken against mounting foreign intervention in the Nepalese politics, not mentioned anything about comprehensive

restructuring of the state, which mainly means, in the context of Nepal, the right of self determination for the [oppressed] nationalities, not even touched the question of national and regional autonomy and a federal state structure, not mentioned anything about necessity of land to the tiller and an independent economic policy, not mentioned anything about the need to respect the people's fundamental rights to education, health and employment, and nothing spoken about special right for the downtrodden castes [dalits, so-called "untouchables"] and women, it appears very clear that the fundamental problems the Nepalese people encounter day-to-day will not be solved by this Declaration."

The period ahead will be no less critical for the advance of the Nepalese revolution than the tumultuous days in April that won major concessions from the king. In reality, two states confront each other in Nepal -- the old semi-feudal, semi-colonial state connected to the whole world imperialist system, and the people's regime in Nepal's countryside where for more than ten years the scaffolding has been constructed of a new political system based on the strength of the People's Liberation Army and the mobilisation of the masses. In these vast areas it has already been possible to institute a new rule which has quickly improved the lives of the masses and already begun the arduous process of developing a different kind of social system that can develop in the direction of socialism and communism.

It is enough to consider a few key features of Nepalese society to see how liberating the transformations brought about by the people's war have been and to see what the imperialists and reactionaries are so determined to reverse. In the first place, the caste system has played a central role in Nepalese society for hundreds of years. Political power, land ownership, and higher education have been almost exclusively in the hands of high caste Hindus while the vast majority of the lower castes are locked into a life as peasants and labourers. In addition to enforcing

exploitation, the feudal superstructure has meant a life of humiliation for the lower castes who were forbidden even to enter the houses of the upper castes or drink water from the same wells. In the liberated countryside giant blows have been dealt to this hateful system. The lower castes walk with their head high and play a central role in all aspects of the new society, including exercising political power, together with enlightened elements and revolutionaries from the upper castes who have broken with the ideological chains of Brahmanism. Marriages between castes, the ultimate taboo of the caste system and virtually unheard of before the revolution, are more and more common. Closely linked to the caste system is the oppression of minority nationalities in Nepal. In fact, taken together, the minorities make up the majority of the Nepalese population. Under the reactionary system no rights were granted these peoples – no schooling in the local languages, no respect for indigenous culture and so forth. Great transformations have already taken place in this sphere as autonomous regions have been formed in the liberated base areas, bringing self-government to many oppressed nationalities.

Finally, the great changes in the condition of women speak volumes about the revolutionary transformation the people's war has introduced. Where arranged marriages between even children were widespread in the past, now strict prohibitions are placed against child marriage and in the liberated areas the party has been leading a tenacious fight to convince young women and men to marry at no younger than 18 for women and 21 for men. And while no doubt backward thinking remains, more and more women and men are marrying whom they want -- regardless of caste or nationality or the opinions of parents. Public drunkenness, once a scourge in the countryside and often connected with wife-beating, has been essentially eliminated. Previously women were usually illiterate and limited to the household. Today large numbers of women have joined the revolutionary armed

forces, making up approximately one-third of the PLA regular soldiers not to mention the widespread militias. Many of the commanders and political leaders are women as well.

All of these changes are, of course, basic democratic transformations and not yet the kind of changes that socialism could bring. But it is also a fact that under the rule of the reactionaries and dominated by the world imperialist system, these most basic democratic transformations have been impossible.

By way of comparison, in India, the "world's largest democracy" and a far more economically advanced country than Nepal, more than 90 percent of marriages, including among the educated urban dwellers, respect caste barriers. This is an illustration of why Mao stressed the need for a new-democratic revolution (NDR) led by the proletariat. He pointed out that the NDR is no longer part of the old bourgeois-democratic revolution but part of the new world proletarian revolution. From the initiation of the people's war the strategic goal of the party has been to fulfil the NDR and to proceed after that to the socialist revolution.

So at the present time two futures and two states in Nepal are colliding, the one based in the countryside representing new democracy and pointing to the socialist future, and the old Nepal enchained by imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism and subservient to Indian expansionism. Which new state power will be established and consolidated throughout the country is the central problem of the revolution and the focus of the very complex problems and sinuous path of the Nepalese revolution at this crucial juncture.

On one level the task of the revolution is the same as that when the war first began on 12 February 1996 with small forces but great revolutionary ambitions and Marxism-Leninism-Maoism as the party's compass to navigate the unknown and perilous waters. The reactionaries boasted they would snuff out the hardly armed incipient rebellion within 15 days! In order to initiate the revolutionary war Chairman

Prachanda and other leaders had first to refute the revisionist fallacy of MB Singh that Nepal's geopolitical situation locked between the giants of India and China made it impossible to sustain a people's war and to develop it to victory. The subsequent development of the people's war, with the exponential growth of the PLA both in quantity and quality, proved the correctness of the Maoists. But achieving and holding onto nationwide victory is still no easy matter, especially with the US, UK, India, indeed the whole consortium of reactionary states known as the "international community" determined to do everything necessary to block the emergence of a new-democratic Nepal. The relationship between advancing the revolution in Nepal in the face of reactionary encirclement and supporting the revolutionary struggle in the region and the world has gone from being just principle and theory to an immediate and burning problem.

There is no question but that the revolution in Nepal, like all great revolutions, will necessarily go through unexpected and unpredictable twists and turns. Today the party is faced with both new questions and new problems as the real possibilities as well as the challenges and difficulties of completing the new-democratic revolution take on sharper focus.

Millions of the oppressed people in Nepal have been fighting for a different future and put their hopes and dreams for a better future in the revolution. Throughout the South Asia in particular, many millions more are intensely watching the developments in Nepal unfold, sensing that the advance or setback of the revolution in the Himalayas will greatly influence the course of history in the region. Revolutionary communists in every country consider the Nepalese revolution their own and are determined to render every possible assistance to the revolution in Nepal and to oppose the foul plans of the imperialists and reactionaries to derail and/or defeat the revolution. ■

Excerpts from Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) CC Report

Political and Organisational Resolution

For the entire Central Committee Report (November, 2005) go to www.cpnm.org – AWTW

2 – On the evaluation of domestic situation and party tactics

a) The People's War that was initiated under the leadership of our party to resolve the contradiction of the Nepalese people with the state power of feudal, bureaucrat and comprador bourgeoisie class based on the coalition of feudalism and imperialism has brought forward, in the period of ten years, a wide-ranging change in the power balance of national politics. The old state has been wiped out from the entire rural area of country whilst national and regional autonomous republics and local powers, though in the primary stage of their development, have taken birth. These people's powers, in line with the specificity of Nepal, are advancing gradually towards the direction of forming central government of Federal People's Republic. The People's Liberation Army, entering into the stage of strategic offensive after it crossed the strategic defensive and equilibrium against the enemy's military strength, has already implemented its first plan. Today, this is the principal aspect of domestic situation.

b) When the ideological synthesis the second national conference of our

party had made and the political and military tactic it had put forward led the development of People's War to further intensification and qualitiveness, then the contradiction between the liberal and diehard sections of the old state also got intensified. The first explosion of that contradiction went off in the form of dreadful Narayanhiti Massacre. That massacre, in its essence, was the result of conspiracy, rebellion and victory acquired by the diehard section of the state under the leadership of obstinate feudal element against the liberal section and group. The fact that the massacre was deliberated mainly against the people's war and the achievement of historical mass movement in 1990 as well has been clear as daylight. Our party had then made a political analysis that there was support of foreign reactionary power mainly the US imperialism to the fake King Gyanendra and his feudal clique behind the massacre. Today, even when Gyanendra Shahi, through a coup has imposed autocratic monarchical military dictatorship in the country, the pressure that the US imperialism, which thinks of oneself as the supplier of democracy the world over, has been creating upon the parliamentary political parties to surrender before the autocratic monarchy justifies more brilliantly that our erstwhile analysis was correct. Realizing seriously the reality that the massacre was also targeted against the parlia-

mentarian parties participating in the old state, our party had immediately appealed the parliamentary parties and civil society and taken initiative for joint work and front against feudal autocracy. However, the appeal and initiative could not take a concrete form because of the class character, short sightedness and momentary interest of the major parliamentary parties. Today, after about four years, mainly after the royal coup of Feb 1, 2005, with the pressure of situation, the environment and possibility of building such an alliance has immensely increased and party is taking initiative to its capacity towards that direction.

c) To coordinate well the political and military intervention and use correctly the contradiction between different groups of the enemy has been an inseparable part of our tactic. Evaluating objectively the international balance of power and experience of the five years of people's war, the second national conference of our party took up a decision of all party conference, interim government and the election of constituent assembly as a political tactic. Before the positive impact of this tactic had reached to its climax, the Narayanhiti Massacre was staged and it brought about a huge change in the political scenario of the country. The party centre, developing its political tactic in the new situation, emphasised on the necessity of interim government, election of constituent assembly and



CPN(M) Chairman
Prachanda

institutionalised development of republic. In that very context, emphasising to enhance the movement unitedly in favour of constituent assembly and republic, party had furthered discussion with different parliamentary parties at the central level. Noteworthy to mention is that the then slogan of republic was neither a slogan of new democratic republic nor that of bourgeois parliamentary one. In fact and in essence, that slogan was the one of multiparty republic that by means of constituent assembly could bring about an extensive change in the state structure by addressing the problems related with class, nation, region and sex prevailing in the country. The summary of what kind of changes in the state structure the party has sought through constituent assembly has been clarified in the proposal the negotiation team had presented on behalf of the party. It is clear that the same slogan of republic was later spelled as democratic republic by adding a popular terminology the 'democratic'.

d) Now the slogan of interim government, election of the constituent assembly and democratic republic that our party, taking into account of the international and domestic balance of power, has formulated is a tactical slogan put forward for the forward-looking political way out. Remaining clear on the principle that the tactic must serve strategy, our party has viewed the democratic republic neither as the bourgeois parliamentary republic nor directly as the new democratic one. This republic with an extensive reorganisation of the state power as to resolve the problems related with class, nationality, region and sex prevailing in the country, would play a role of transitional multiparty republic. Certainly, the reactionary class and their parties will try to transform this republic into bourgeois parliamentary one, where as our party of the proletariat class will try to transform it into new democratic republic. How long will be the period of tran-

sition, is not a thing that can right now be ascertained. It is clear that it will depend upon the then national and international situation and state of power balance. As for now, this slogan has played and will play an important role to unite all the forces against the absolute monarchy dominant in the old state for it has been a common enemy for both revolutionary and parliamentary forces. Both of the understandings that the slogan of constituent assembly and democratic republic is a pure political and diplomatic manoeuvring to be never applied or as a strategic slogan to be never changed i.e. to be applied in any condition are wrong.

In the concrete condition of today, our party can establish its leadership in the movement only by going forward firmly, actively and responsibly in the question of organising interim government, electing constituent assembly and establishing democratic republic with extensive reorganisation in the state power and with the force of struggle by uniting entire republican forces against the feudal autocratic monarchy. After the collapse of the monarchy dominant in the old state, this slogan can play a role of forward-looking political way out for the peaceful resolution of civil war. This slogan addresses correctly the people's aspiration of change and peace for it can open up a door of peaceful resolution of civil war, and as a consequence can play a positive role for the preparation of insurrection too. So, party must take up active initiative unitedly to make this process reach to a logical conclusion.

e) The unilateral cease-fire that the centre had declared for three months has established party's conviction, sense of responsibility and sensitiveness towards democratic political way out and aspiration of peace of the masses of people from a new height. The heartily welcome and positive repercussion from all the political forces and the masses of all levels and sects, in and outside of the country that, along with forward-

looking political way out, aspire for peace has further inspired our party to go more responsibly ahead. Most important thing is that the cease-fire, tearing out Gyanendra Shahi's mask of peace, has made the war-mongering, criminal and autocratic look hidden within it naked and exposed before the broad masses and world community as well. Gyanendra Shahi, who has been unable to show his criminal face in the general assembly of United Nations, staging a drama of walking on foot within a high security cordon, is now entertaining his nearby people by uttering stupid things like 'something unwanted things are being done with foreign money in the country' with his sycophant officials. Even while requests are being made from the entire intelligentsia and broad masses in the country and from the UN to the world community to work in favour of peace and political way out, Gyanendra Shahi and his absolute feudal coterie, cowardly propagating that 'the ceasefire cannot be believed' has instructed the royal army at this time to be active in killing, arresting and torturing Maoist cadres and people all across the country. Also the fact that the motive hidden behind this was to stupidly cover up his absolute and bloodthirsty face by forcing us to call off cease-fire soon and, in turn, propagating all of this was a conspiracy has now been exposed before the entire Nepalese people and the world. Where as, our party is determined to accomplish its responsibility of forward-looking political way out and people's aspiration of peace without being provoked by the enemy.

Now, the feudal clique of national betrayer and people's traitor Gyanendra Shahi, hiding inside the mask of foreign intervention and nationalism, is going ahead towards the direction of unleashing a dreadful massacre against the real multiparty nationalism and democratic movement in Nepal. The situation is becoming so piercing that a danger

of big storm in the capital and big cities has been visualised in the near future. A time-bell is ringing for the history to take a big turn.

In this situation, our party of the proletariat, determining own tactic and reaching to the climax of its rigidity and flexibility, must be able to accomplish its role in the history. In the situation, which changes in moments, if the party of the proletariat, in a real sense, fails to build up a headquarters capable to take up any risky decision of whatever kind and party rank and army, which can implement that decision firmly with no condition, the storm not far away can wreck everything. That storm will not take note of any kind of dogma and insistence. Party engenders a danger of losing its credibility in the history if we cannot establish our control over the events by changing our moves immediately in line with the intense development of objective events. At this time, all the political parties in our country are entering into a major acid test of the history. The verdict of who will turn into ash and who will pass well in this acid test will take place very ruthlessly. Therefore, in this crucial moment it is necessary to have a strong unity for the party to keep oneself prepared fully.

e) Party must not and will not allow the historic truth falling in shadow that the main specificity of imperialism and proletarian revolution is the alliance of feudalism and imperialism. The economic, political and military assistance the ruling classes of US imperialism and Indian expansionism have granted to the royal army, subservient to the feudal palace, to oppress the democratic movement of the people has forcefully justified that historic fact in the Nepalese context also. Even after Feb 1, 2005, the pressure that the US imperialism has created upon the political parties for an agreement with the feudal monarchy sustaining with the support of pure royal army terror clarifies the depth of that

alliance.

Even while wide public opinion has been built up today in favour of constituent assembly election, it is clear that the pressure of foreign power centres is working from behind the failure of 7 political parties to abandon the collaborationist slogan of restoration of parliament. The slogan of reinstatement of parliament in the present condition of Nepal can act not only as a loophole for the parties to agree with the King but also as a weapon of the King to save himself at last stage. The reason behind continuing with such situation seems to be a phobia of imperialists and, to a great extent, parliamentary party leaders, that the Maoists might acquire upper hand when constituent assembly and republic is taken up directly. Here, they have been insisting the People's Liberation Army, under our party leadership, and weapons to be the main problem. One can easily understand the secret behind the saying that feudal and imperialist leaders cannot believe us until we come in peaceful politics by abandoning People's War, in other words, until we surrender, but the same kind of saying from the leaders of parliamentary parties, who talk of full democracy or republic, can be said ridiculous only.

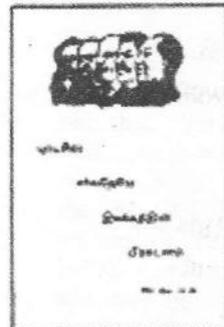
To shut eyes on the historical necessity of dissolving and disarming the royal army that has been defending absolute monarchy by booting down people's democratic movement and its achievement since 250 years, in general, and past six decades, in particular, becomes moving around feudalism and imperialism. In the history, no republic has been established ever without dissolving and defeating the army subservient to monarchy and Nepal cannot be an exception to it. In the context when our party, with a deep sense of responsibility towards people and the democracy, has been declaring to reorganise army according to the result that comes through

the election (peaceful) of constituent assembly under the supervision of UNO or any trustworthy international institution, the fact that the people's army is not an obstruction for peace and democracy but is a means of it is clear. While arriving at the latest cease-fire, party's sensitivity towards people's aspiration of peace and political way out has been further clear.

In spite of this, in the context of the imperialist exertion to materialise coalition between the absolute monarchy and parliamentary parties, Gyanendra Shahi's cruel and feudal obstinacy to crush down all with the strength of royal army and major parliamentary leaders' unclear, political indecision and collaborationist behaviour, our party must not and will not be trapped in a subjective illusion that republic will emerge through constituent assembly after the monarchy collapses with no trouble and easily. Unless the backbone of royal army is broken by raising people's war to a new height, unless a consolidated unity is developed in the party by developing its own ideology, policy, plan, program and command and unless people's power and people's relation is developed on the basis of people's education, to expect a change from others is wrong. Our party will not lag behind in the tactic of uniting all forces who can be united for a political way out, but while doing so will never deviate from the duty of firmly advancing our independent revolutionary initiative further. Grasping the reality that the development of people's war has made the possibility of forward-looking political way out strong, the whole party, People's Liberation Army and people's powers, and consolidating them, will be centralised to raise people's war to a new height. ■



1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.



18.



19.

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 Party [Italy]
- Proletarian Party of Purba Bangla (PBSP) [Bangladesh]
- Revolutionary Communist Group of Colombia
- Revolutionary Communist Party, USA



7.



17.

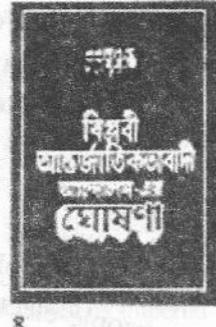


20.

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. Urdu, 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.



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16.



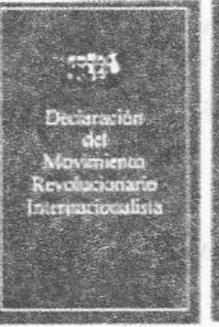
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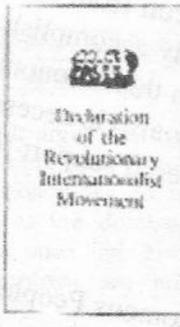
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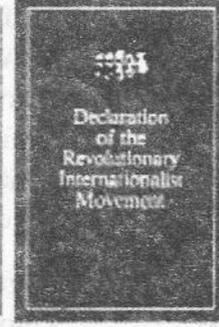
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10.

Nepal — International Teams Help

Magarat Autonomous People's
Republican Government, Nepal

June 22, 2005

To

The great people's war that has undertaken a great goal of building an independent and progressive new Nepal, free from exploitation and oppression of feudalism and imperialism, is running in its tenth year. Today, the people's war being waged under the leadership of Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the initiative of great Nepalese people, destroying local hegemony of the old state across the entire countryside of Nepal, has been not only challenging imperialism by building and practicing people's new power, but also is providing a forceful revolutionary message and new energy to the working masses the world over.

The revolution does not only destroy the old; rather, it simultaneously creates and builds a new also. Today, the colossal works of construction being carried out in an independent and creative initiative of lakhs* of people in the regions liberated by people's war is justifying this fact. There is insuppressible courage, energy and creation in the unity and labour of the masses that can shake the world. This is the real source of building a history. Encouraging activeness and participation of the masses observed in the construction of 91 km motorable road, the Martyr Road, which is being carried out under the initiative of people-elected Magarat Autonomous People's Republican Government in the main base area of people's war, is justifying the aforesaid fact.

Till now, about one lakh of people have used their direct labour of more than 10 lakh working days for the construction of that road. In addition to this, people's liberation army, mass organizations, different fronts and departments have been using their labour in this work. Almost 35 percent of the total length of the road has already been accomplished, while motors are running in the initial part of 14 km. In its essence, the work of building a motorable road has not only benefited to the transportation service of the masses in the main base area but also has become a fundamental particularity of Nepalese people's war changing people's life and it has also revealed proletarian receptive notion and sentiment, great unity of the labouring masses and internationalism.

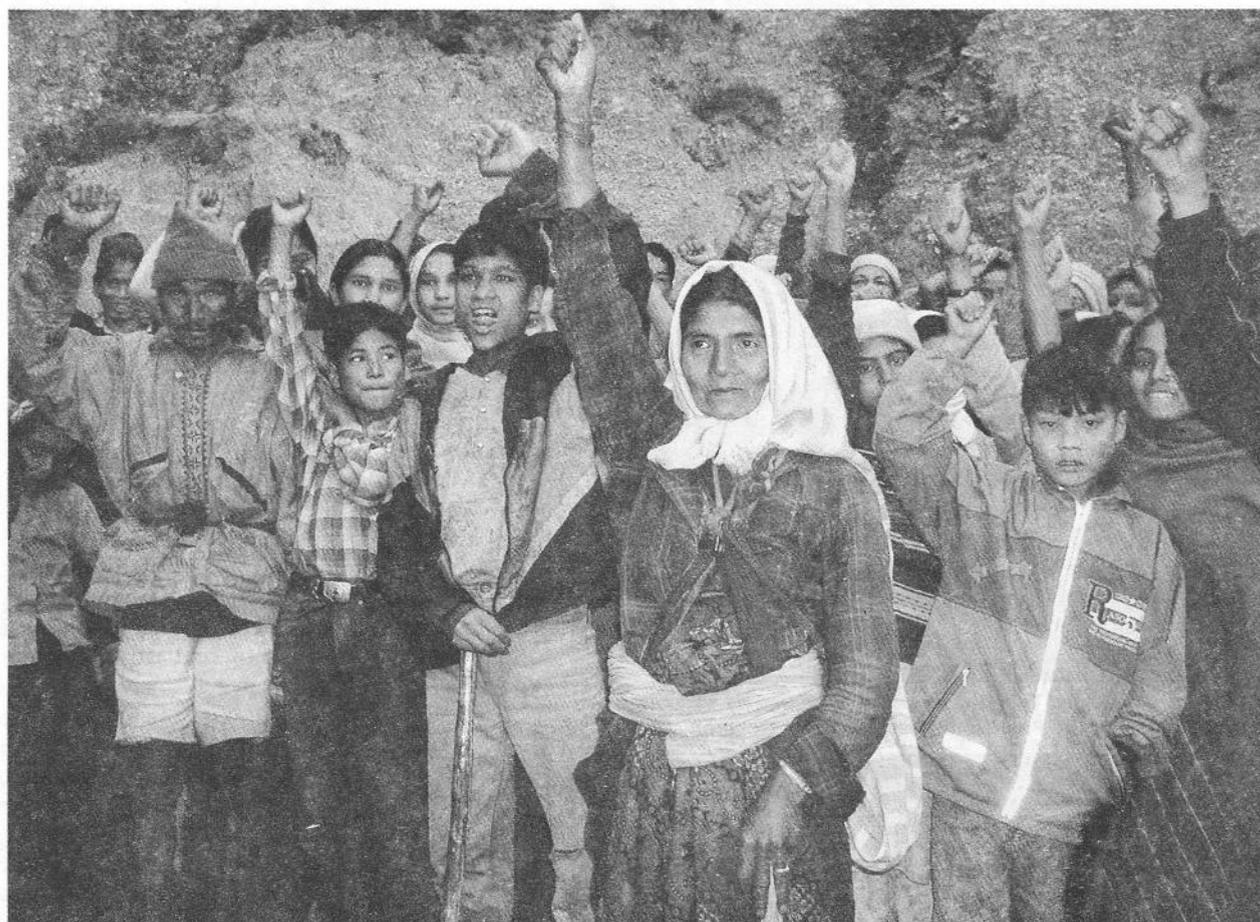
Definitely, it is very difficult from the viewpoint of physical labour, though not impossible, to successfully accomplish such a huge plan of construction. The assistance of not only the masses from this autonomous region, but that of entire nation and international community also is necessary for this. And so, we appeal all to provide all kinds of moral and material support for such a great task that has a far-reaching and historical significance.

Santosh Budha Magar

Head, Magarat Autonomous People's Republican Government, Nepal

*1 lakh = 100,000

Build a Road to the Future



People from the oppressed Magar national minority welcoming the brigade members.

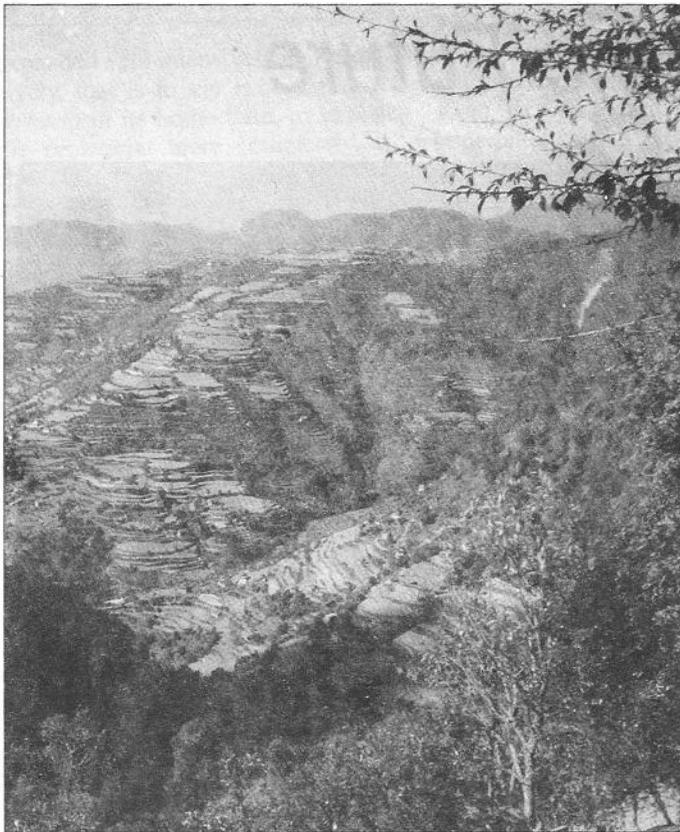
In response to the Call from the Margarat Revolutionary Regional Government, two teams have traveled to Nepal to take part alongside the Nepalese people to build the road. The following text is slightly edited and excerpted from a report from the first team. For the full text see aworldtowin.org. -AWTW

In November 2005, the first international road-building brigade, consisting of seven volunteers from Australia, Britain, Canada, Colombia, Germany and Norway arrived in the liberated Rolpa district in mid-western Nepal. We had travelled many thousands of miles to work side by side with the people to build a road as part of the efforts of the new revolutionary power there to forge a self-reliant economy, free of the chains of imperialist domination.

The brigade members were well aware that the regime of King Gyanendra, who dissolved parliament last year and centralised power in the hands of the feudal monarchy, was waging a vicious counter-insurgency war and

that we would have to cross army checkpoints to reach our destination. The regime has “distinguished” itself by compiling one of the worst records in the world for disappearances, extra-judicial executions, and other types of bloody repression. We also had some idea of the fierce determination of the Nepalese people to forge a new future, and were eager to see what they had achieved, and to work alongside them on this crucial project for the all-sided development of the autonomous region.

While the Himalayas are never all that far away in Nepal, this is not a journey made by many tourists. Anyone travelling into the liberated areas needs to cross a series of roving military check points, where almost anything can happen. Buses into the area are stopped, young soldiers carrying machine guns come inside and the passengers are forced out where their baggage is searched. Any Nepalese identified by the soldiers as Maoist – or a “suspected Maoist” – are taken away... to prison or sometimes just marched off into the countryside and executed on the spot. The soldiers stationed on the approach-



Terraced fields around Tilla Bazaar being improved by agricultural experts trained by the Provisional Revolutionary Government.



Tilla Bazaar (above and below), the town around the road project.



es to the liberated areas are the elite of the RNA, battle-hardened, crack troops equipped with the army's best weaponry. You can tell their elite character just from the way they look: not only meaner and more arrogant, but bigger, and better fed than the average soldiers. They also bear more than their share of responsibility for the horrors for which the regime has been repeatedly denounced by human rights groups around the world.

On our arrival to Tilla Bazaar, 250 people gathered to hear more about the brigade members, and to express their enthusiasm, and the brigaders told the attentive crowd what had motivated us to come so far. As we bedded down for our first night, we all shared a feeling that we were in for an experience unlike any we'd ever known before.

The area the brigade visited is part of the Magarat Autonomous Republic, which was declared in 2003 after the Royal Nepalese Army was driven out by the forces of the People's Liberation Army, led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). The Magars are one of a number of oppressed national minorities in Nepal. The founding of their new regional republic in one of the most advanced revolutionary base areas in Nepal is widely viewed in the country as a momentous event marking the end of centuries-long injustice suffered by the people there, and we saw many expressions of pride in this achievement.



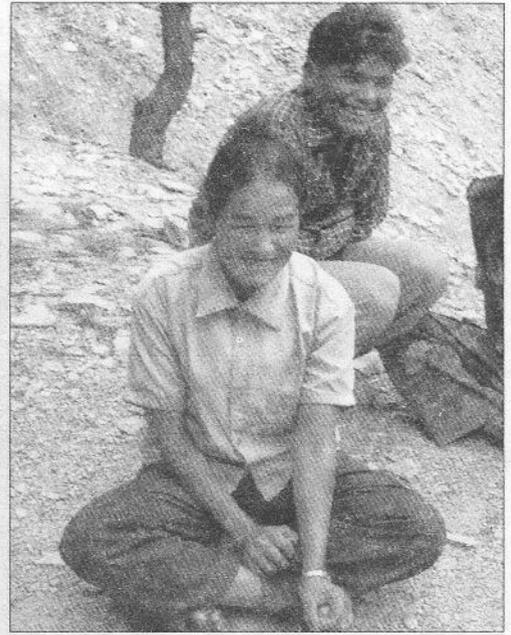
A work schedule was drawn up with the road organisers. It basically set out which sections of the road we were to work on and when, and with which group of people – families of people who'd fallen in the revolutionary war, local peasants, PLA members, etc. Time was also set aside for some discussion with the different groups. It was explained to the brigade members that the road building was not going on at full speed at that very moment, because it was harvest time. Completing the harvest successfully was crucial to people's livelihoods, especially over the coming winter months, so this had to be taken into account when mobilising volunteers. This was also why the revolutionary government requested each family to try to provide only one volunteer, so as to ensure the livelihood of the family as a whole.



The techniques used were like nothing we had ever seen. Upon reaching the road, some hundred people were hard at work. We first noticed gangs of young men hugging the hillsides with long steel crowbars labouring to remove large rocks to clear a passageway for the road. At first we were a bit sceptical: the rocks appeared much too large to yield to the youths' exertions. But the young men had had a lot of practice, and soon cries of joy rang out as a



Local road builders, some from the Magar nationality.



A political commissar and male comrade showed great enthusiasm throughout the team's stay.



ABOVE: Children enjoy cultural performance.
BELOW: Evening cultural performance.



giant rock was tumbled out of its age-old resting place.

At one point, perhaps inspired by the efforts of the newcomers, a young woman, Sapana, a nom de guerre which means "Dream", came up in a full-length red dress, and began to sing a haunting revolutionary melody. As the brigade members looked around, with the majestic mountains in the distance, terraced rice paddies along the hill sides, solitary pine trees piercing the clouds, the beautiful melody rising to the heavens, and people from so many parts of the world and so many different walks of life throwing heart and soul into our common efforts, for such a worthy cause, none of us could help but be deeply moved.

Some work techniques were particularly difficult. For example, one person didn't work a shovel, but two. A rope was tied just above the blade of the shovel, and just as the first person shoved the shovel deeply into the ground, the other person would lift on the rope to get the maximum amount of dirt out. It was very hard to get the timing right – if the person holding the rope jerked too soon, the person with the shovel got a little dirt hurled into their face (which brought more giggles), and if they didn't jerk soon enough the shovel wouldn't come out.



During one session the brigaders spoke with an older man of the Magar nationality, Lila Darpun, 65, from Corshavan. When we asked why he had come, he said, "We've come here for ourselves. We feel good about what we're doing. It will help us. Even though I'm very old, if I can just lift a few stones, I'll be very happy. As a young man I worked so hard, but this work is different, it's special."

The work was indeed physically demanding and many women took part too. When asked the same question, Ima Kumari, a 43-year old mother of three, explained, "I'm still illiterate. I don't know much about books. But I know that the road is a good thing. We're building a new country. It used to take days to get salt and clothes, but with the new road we can do it in hours."

The monarchy and some of the media have tried to slander the



ABOVE: PLA soldiers join with villagers passing stones hand-to-hand down the line.

BELOW: The two-person shoveling technique.

road-building effort as “forced labour”. They make lurid comparisons with the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia and generally play on “anti-totalitarian” stereotypes. But it was clear from watching and talking with the people who’d come to do their share that there was nothing at all “forced” about the inimitable combination of good humour and serious dedication with which they went about their work.



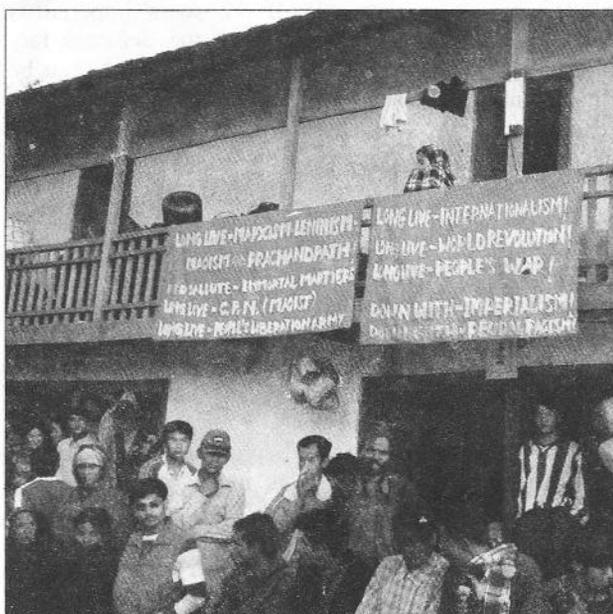
In any case, the effort to carve this road through this difficult terrain has struck a deep chord among the people here. Government after government had promised it would be built – but somehow the money never came through, or if it did, it just disappeared into the deep pockets of corrupt politicians. After all, who would benefit? Just some peasants in the hinterland – and that was hardly sufficient motivation for the Kathmandu elite to act. So what no Western-backed government ever managed to do, despite their hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign aid, now the people, mobilised by their new leaders, are doing themselves.





LEFT: Every uprooted tree brought cheers.

BELOW: Internationalist welcome.



The team were asked constantly about the situation in our own countries, especially about the woman question, and people took notes of what we said. The local people were also very eager to show us other new projects they were working on. There was a “model commune” and two “model schools” “not far away” – but “not far away” in the Nepalese countryside meant hours of walking, making a visit impossible in our short stay. They had also launched a big fish-breeding farm, a new thing in this part of the country, which was created with help from people living in a liberated area in another region where this was

a more common activity. We saw this and were very happy to be able to benefit from it quite directly – one brigadier said it was “the best fish I’ve ever tasted”, to the contentment of the new fish farmers.

We saw other new things that had been impossible under the old regime. When one of the brigadiers fell pretty ill one evening, our hosts travelled through the darkness to find a “barefoot doctor”, a young village man who had been trained under the new regime in the basics of medicine. He came at 4 in the morning, and gave the sick brigadier a drip feed, and stayed by his side till the next day when he was better. Under the old system, many, perhaps most of Nepal’s doctors choose to live in Kathmandu, where life is easier, and attend to the middle classes. But the new revolutionary regime has drawn on the experience of China under Mao to develop new health care policies aimed at serving the majority of Nepal’s people, the peasants in the countryside, and relies on mobilising them to solve their own needs....



The brigade members looked back on all this and felt a heightened sense of responsibility to strengthen solidarity with the struggle in Nepal – a revolution suddenly moved off the news pages and acquired faces, names, and voices. Those from the imperialist countries shuddered at the thought of what it means when their own governments, like Britain, provide weapons to the RNA. Were cluster bombs and bunker busters the next weapons to be used against the people we’d been with – for the “crime” of taking their destiny in their own hands and building up their own self-reliant economy and society? ■

Neither Imperialism nor Islam – Interview with Afghanistan Maoist Leader

The following is an excerpted interview conducted in winter 2006 with the General Secretary of the Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan, a participating party in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement. –AWTW

Q. When the Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan, the ruling parties calling themselves “communist” imposed a reactionary oppressive rule on the people. What challenges does this pose to genuine communists?

A. Their pseudo-communist claims have created incorrect perceptions about communism among the vast majority of the people. Right from the beginning of the uprising against the Soviet social-imperialists the subjective and objective conditions had a negative and destructive impact on the left movement, which caused it to make deeper deviations. These deviations of the left also contributed to the anti-communism in society, by further attributing communism to the crimes of the social-imperialists.

Anti-communism, as an international endeavour, tries its utmost to portray the defeat of the social-imperialists in Afghanistan as the defeat of communism. However, the Islamic anti-communism during the rule of the Jihadis and the Taleban could not dress up anti-communism any better than it was done by the social-imperialist puppets. This weakened anti-communism to some degree. But the subjective and objective factors, locally and internationally, are still heightening anti-communism. Consequently, the challenges facing the genuine communists are continually

arising, which requires them to patiently continue in principled struggle.

One of the challenges is that, along with the social-imperialists’ defeat, the left in the war of resistance was also defeated. These two realities help anti-communists deduce that communism has no place in Afghanistan, and this weighs heavily in the minds of sections of the people. The Islamic anti-communists specifically conclude and promote that Afghanistan is an Islamic society, and that communism, based on dialectical materialism against religion, has no place in that country.

To overcome this challenge a significant section of the left in Afghanistan adapted the theory under the guise of Islam, and made that part of their programme. Other sections, although they did not formally adopt this theory, widely practiced the same thing.

The present liquidationists conclude that Afghanistani society is very backward, and that for as long as backwardness is not dealt with, revolutionary communism has no chance.

Another challenge is the incorrect understanding of internationalism among communists. Anti-communists propagate communism as “an imported ideology”, so that people do not willingly accept it; the idea that communism can only be imposed on the people of Afghanistan by foreign powers still has shaky foundations in the society.

Another aspect of this challenge facing the genuine communists is the lack of a foreign government to support them, and, therefore, without such support, the difficulty of estab-

lishing themselves in Afghanistan.

Still another challenge is the accusation that communists are oppressive. As we know, the rule of the social-imperialist occupiers and their puppets was based on suppression of the masses. This oppression in communist disguise ultimately impacts on genuine communists, as the anti-communists try hard to generalise and attribute it to the genuine communists as well.

So, due to the reactionary oppressive rule of the social-imperialists and their puppets, the challenge facing the genuine communists can be summarised as follows: communism has no room in Afghanistan, unless it is imposed on the people by oppression and suppression or invasion and occupation, and even then it will not last long. As has been seen, this challenge is not absolutely specific to the situation in Afghanistan; genuine communists in other countries more or less face the same challenge internationally. As Afghanistan took the brunt of the Soviet social-imperialists and their native puppets, this challenge is more widespread and intense in Afghanistan than in other countries.

The only proper response to this challenge is to courageously take the programme of the genuine communists, that is the programme of the Communist Party (Maoist) of Afghanistan, among the masses in a principled way, so that people can distinguish genuine communists from social-imperialist puppets.

Q. How can the masses comprehend the differences between the revisionist social-imperialists’ programme and the programme pre-

sented by the genuine communists?

A. There are three key issues and two grounds requiring struggle:

1) Differences between Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and revisionism; differences between proletarian internationalism and social-imperialism.

2) Differences between new-democratic revolution and what the social-imperialists and revisionists practiced in Afghanistan and other places; differences between Maoist socialist revolution as well as the transition from socialism to communism from the Maoist perspective versus what the revisionists say and practice.

3) Differences between the Maoist people's war strategy, which is based on the mass line, versus revisionist parliamentary strategy, which is based on coups supported by the social-imperialists.

We need to differentiate ourselves from the revisionists, not only on the theoretical front, but also we need to distinguish ourselves from the revisionists in the implementation of our programme in practice. In other words, we must understand the importance of our struggle on both the theoretical and practical fronts. The Maoist movement in Afghanistan, along with the new-democratic movement, made a relatively clear demarcation between themselves and the revisionist social-imperialists in the 1960s. Although the movement could not mobilise the masses of peasants and that is why it collapsed, as pointed out by martyred Comrade Yari, it did establish bases among intellectuals, workers and the petite bourgeoisie in the cities.

During the resistance movement against the coup regime installed in April 1978, and in the war of resistance against the social-imperialist invaders, Maoist Sholaites militantly participated in the resistance and widely joined the masses. Unfortunately, overall, their participation in the mass movement was not based on correct principles. Even so, within the first few years of the war of resistance, people could see the dif-

ference between the revisionists and the Maoists, both in theory and practice, although not so clearly and decisively, because of the mistakes that the Maoists made.

Sections of the people still remember the struggle of the Maoists, and, despite its limitations, this can be relied upon to begin our initial activities among the masses; and the newly emerging communist movement, during the last twenty years, has used this opportunity. As a result of the Maoists' struggle in the past, sections of the masses distinguish the "Sholaites" from the "Khalqite-Parchamites". In other words, the challenges facing the genuine communists in implementing their programme, although quite widespread, are not absolute, there are relatively ready-made bases that can be relied upon. Our Party is a witness to this fact.

In addition, in the current situation, based on our Party activities and under the leadership of the Party, democratic organisations among the masses of people, among women, youth, trades unions, labourers and other sections of society can be used to establish wider links between the masses and the Party. By combining underground activities with open and semi-open work among the masses, we can take our programme among the masses to show them the differences between our programme and those imposed on them by the revisionists. To achieve this end, we need to find and utilise both illegal and legal channels through working relatively openly among the people.

The key issue is to remind ourselves that each and every activity carried out in any situation must serve the goal of preparing and initiating the peoples' war of resistance, which is the concrete form of people's war in the present situation of Afghanistan.

Q. After the Soviets the Taleban came to power... What is it that attracts people to Islam? How can the communists draw the people from the Islamists to their own side?

A. If we are to talk about the "Islamic mobilisation" that dates back to the 1960s, it was during this period that various political groups, with different ideological and political stances, relatively widely emerged on the scene. The communist movement (Maoism) was born then and the new-democratic movement stood tall; the revisionist party (Peoples Democratic Party), from which two factions emerged, "Khalq" and "Parcham", both tied to the Soviet social-imperialists, and other bourgeois-nationalist groups and political forces also appeared. Against this backdrop, the reactionary religious feudal forces reacted and organised a reactionary religious movement under the auspices of the Afghanistani government that was supported by the reactionary Arab regimes and regimes in the region that were supported by Western imperialism.

The prevalent feudal culture in society, the pseudo-communist pseudo-progressive claims put forward by the Russian puppet regime, and the Islamic regimes in the neighbouring countries of Iran and Pakistan, unconditionally supported by Western imperialists and reactionary Arab states, all and all, contributed to bringing the spontaneous war fronts of resistance increasingly under the influence of reactionary forces. The communist and revolutionary forces tailing the spontaneous movement prepared the ground for the Islamic forces to further influence the war of resistance against social-imperialism. That is how the Islamic forces, by prevailing in the war of resistance against social-imperialism, took over the government after the collapse of Najib's regime.

Islam was not the only factor bringing the Islamists into power.... The dramatic advances made by the Taleban, who evolved from a small force into a major power claiming to govern the entire country, was supported by three powerful imperialist/reactionary factors. The US and British imperialists not only worked behind the scenes to organise the

“Islamic mobilisation”, but also directly and indirectly supported them afterwards. So of the three major factors propelling the Taliban into power, only one of them was Islam. This factor, Islam, was mainly used by the Taliban against other Islamists, not so much against communists, to combat the “corruption and decadence” that was prevalent among other Islamists. This was to justify and legitimise the “war among Muslims”.

Overall, the reactionary Islamic forces are consolidated in the “Islamic Republic of Afghanistan” current and are supported by the US imperialists and their allies as foreign supporters of the regime. Therefore, what we see as the Taliban today cannot be taken as the main model of Islamism in Afghanistan. By looking at the other Islamic countries and around the world, one can see that anti-American pan-Islamism (the Al Qaeda type) does not constitute the major portion of the Islamists.

The numerous crimes committed by the “Jihadi” and “Taliban” Islamists during the “Islamic State” of “Jihadis” and the “Islamic Emirate” of the Taliban have indeed faded the old glory of Islam in the eyes of the masses. This situation alone provides a good opportunity for the communists to draw people from the Islamists onto their own side.

The prevalent feudal culture, in the absence of a powerful non-religious force, namely the communists, generates and regenerates masses that would support various shades of Islamists in an endless circle, or masses that would live a life indifferent to politics.

As far as the Islamism packaged in the Constitution is concerned, it is supported by the imperialist invaders, as well as by the reactionary Arab regimes and Islamists in the region, who march under the imperialists’ drum-beat. A large section of the feudal and bourgeois comprador classes is the main supporter of Islamism. Naturally, for as long as the dominance of semi-feudal, semi-colonial power is not challenged by a

national revolutionary war of resistance, they will continue to retain their mass base.

As far as Islamism in its specific Afghanistani form of the Taliban and global Al Qaeda is concerned, it involves some other factors as well. Suppressing this form of Islamism is an excuse for the American imperialists’ campaign.

In other words, the Taliban fights as part of an extensive international force. Naturally, this is an important factor drawing the masses onto the side of the Taliban. In fact, the lack of a strong revolutionary communist or even anti-American nationalist movement, including in Afghanistan, is the reason why the masses commit themselves to crazy Islamism, creating an oppressive reactionary religious movement that is used to justify the American imperialists exporting “progress and democracy”. If a strong revolutionary alternative existed in Afghanistan and in other Islamic countries, Islamism, mainly serving the invaders and their lackeys, would not have appeared in the form of the Taliban or Al Qaeda – and even if it did, it would not have been this powerful. In order to draw the masses away from them to their own side, the struggle of the Afghanistani communists must take the form of an international struggle. Such a struggle must be based on the context of resistance against the imperialist occupying invaders and their puppets, and it should be carried out at the global, regional and Afghanistani national level. For as long as we are unable to play a powerful role in the struggle against the invaders, the Taliban will always be able to utilise the anti-American sentiments of the masses to organise them for their own organisational interests.

Taliban Islamism has some serious problems. During their rule in the name of the “Islamic Emirates” they severely oppressed non-Pashtun people. That is why the Taliban’s Islamism is not supported by people of other nationalities. This lack of support for the Taliban among non-Pashtun people provides suitable

conditions to organise against the invaders and their lackeys. This does not mean we have no opportunity for organising the masses of people among the Pashtuns. Such an opportunity does exist, because the masses of Pashtun people have had their “fair share” of the Taliban’s oppression.

Communists in their struggle against Islamic theocracy can successfully utilise opportunities when there is a broad secular movement. This requires ideological struggle against idealism to propagate dialectical materialism. On another level this struggle should be carried out against Islamic politics and economics by propagating the principles of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist politics and economics. Without such a struggle the communist party cannot establish a mass base for itself. Indeed, we should be mindful of the nature of the struggle, which is protracted. But that does not mean we should negate such a struggle.... Islam in Afghanistan and other countries, such as Iran, is not a question of the religious belief of the masses. We are facing Islamic rule and we are struggling against an Islamic Republic. In our situation, Islamic politics is armed with the sword of anti-communism. Communists cannot ignore an all-around struggle against such an enemy that is armed with this sword.

Q. The U.S. imperialists have raised the banner of “democracy” in order to justify their aggression in Afghanistan and other places. How do you respond?

A. Our response is that the banner of democracy is a smokescreen to further their imperialist campaign. Our party has always insisted that in a country occupied by imperialists, peoples’ sovereignty is trampled on, people cannot exercise their democratic rights, not even at the semi-colonial level of democracy. At the same time, foreign imperialist invaders who deprive a country of its sovereignty cannot bring democracy. The hodgepodge of democracy that the American imperialists are offer-

ing the people of Afghanistan is used only to create the myth that the people have a voice in determining their future and their country's future.

Another important issue is that the clique ruling the US is trampling and violating the democratic civil rights of their own people, rights that have been established and practiced for years and years. They use terrorism as an excuse. Just as this excuse cannot justify trampling the bourgeois-democratic rights of the people in America, the invasion of a country by force is the cruellest act against the people of a country.

Aside from these general points, let's look at the nature of what the imperialists and their lackeys call democracy in Afghanistan. In the Afghanistani government, as reflected in the constitution, political parties, freedom of expression and freedom of the press, in short all civil and individual rights are restricted by Islam and Islamic Sharia [religious laws – AWIW], nothing is permitted beyond that and everything is illegal. In this aspect, the main difference between the current Islamic Republic regime and the Islamic Emirates regime of the Taleban is that the current regime is a multi-party Islamic regime, while the Taleban regime was a single-party Islamic regime. In this "Republic", freedom of expression, freedom of the press, communist beliefs and others, are not permitted. Some people like to call such a regime "Islamic democracy". But "Islamic democracy" is a misnomer, just like "Islamic Republic". Democracy makes sense only when there is a secular regime. Some theoreticians of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan say that in Afghanistan democracy is applied as a method, it is not an outlook. In other words, the outlook of Islamic Sharia cannot be modified by those who implement it. As a method, democracy is utilised to dress up the anti-democratic religious Islamic nature of the regime as being modern.

That is why our task is to widely expose the deceit of the occupying invaders that disguise themselves with so-called democracy. It is our

task to expose the exported pseudo-democracy widely and consistently. This must be done with the aim of preparing for a national revolutionary war of resistance against the invaders and their lackeys.

The majority of the people are not fooled by the exported democracy of the occupiers. As seen, the presidential election was a failure in itself, the majority of the people did not participate in that election. The failure of the provincial elections is even more clearly known to people, so much so that the imperialists and their lackeys even had to admit it.

We need to present our model of democracy, new-democracy, to the people and convince them that our democracy is superior to the "democracy" of the invaders. We must vigorously bring the strength of the earlier new-democratic regimes to the forefront, so that the masses of people can see that democracy does make a difference to their lives. We should show the masses that our democracy is far beyond the bourgeois democracy practiced in capitalist countries, let alone the pseudo-democracy of the semi-feudal, semi-colonial regime of Afghanistan.

Indeed, we cannot limit ourselves to propagating and agitating around new-democracy. We must vigorously defend the achievements of previous socialist revolutions, and that should be the focus of our propaganda and agitation. In our struggle, we must show that by implementing socialism, democracy can be far better in a socialist society than democracy in a capitalist imperialist system; we must emphasise the importance of the proletarian cultural revolution launched in China.

Q. Why has "frontism" – the tendency that communists bury their role in united fronts – been so strong in your country? What lessons can be learnt about the defeat of the communists in independently raising their flags in the war of resistance against the Soviet Union?

A. The Progressive Youth Organisa-

tion (PYO), the founding organisation of the communist movement in Afghanistan, had an erroneous understanding about underground work. The organisation, during its second meeting, held in October 1965, decided to publish two newspapers, one democratic and the other communist, to act as an unconditional organ for revolution. The communist newspaper was never published. However, the democratic newspaper, Sholeh Jawid, was applied for and was authorised for publication by the government's publishing office. Sholeh Jawid was banned by the government after publishing 11 issues. In publishing the newspaper, the organisation collaborated with two other leftist groups outside the organisation. But the organisation kept its programme secret from the groups, pretending that the Yari group and Mahmoudi group were both operating independently from each other. While the new-democratic movement grew exponentially, expanding throughout the country, the PYO continued to limit recruitment of its members from among supporters on an individual basis. The problem was not limited to the organisation keeping its programme secret; an even more serious problem was the outlook that existed, that a party and organised leadership was not necessary, that the mass movement sufficed. The PYO never discussed struggling for the formation of a communist party.

Sholaites were trained with this mentality, of not paying attention to organised work under the leadership of a centralised organisation; this outlook at different times and at different levels later on bequeathed the legacy of disorganisation and frontism in the movement after the April 1978 coup, and during the war against the Soviet social-imperialist invasion of Afghanistan.

"Sorkha" was the first left organisation that proposed frontism in the left movement. "Sorkha" proposed that there are too many differences in the movement to form the communist party, however, fighting against the coup regime was a common

ground among the left; the left can be united in fighting the regime. In fact, this proposal was to avoid the ideological and political struggle for establishing the communist party as the immediate task of the movement, procrastinating it to an unknown time. The proposal never got off the ground. The proposal was never implemented and no united front was formed among the left.

Later on frontism was officially and unofficially expanding in the movement.

The National Liberation Front of Sama and the Mujahedin Warriors Front of Rehayee were organised – both with an Islamic Republic as their perspective. This outlook not only tailed the spontaneous movement of the people against the coup regime, mainly with a religious tone, but also reflected the capitulationist line of the Islamic parties as well.

Sama as an organisation officially never claimed to be communist, and its internal programme was democratic. However, it openly... demanded an Islamic Republic.

The Revolutionary Group of the People of Afghanistan (later named Rehayee after its newspaper, in the Autumn of 1978) linked itself with the Chinese revisionist rulers, and negatively developed its economist line to revisionism. The Revolutionary Group of Afghanistan and Rehayee not only demanded an Islamic Republic but also proposed an Islamic revolution. Sama fought independently during the war of resistance against the social-imperialists in several regions for several years, but this was done under the disguise of an Islamic republic (a programme openly presented to the public). In some areas it sneaked in under the direct banner of the Islamic forces. Rehayee during the war of resistance, except in the coup, staged in Balahisar under the name of Mujahedin Warriors Front, fought throughout the country under the banner of an Islamic republic.

These two organisations, which deemed participation in the war of resistance an absolute necessity, not only liquidated democratic struggle, but also, at the same time, by fighting

under the banner of Islamism, gave up fighting for nationalism and secularism.

Most of the left organisations, despite the fact that they did not adopt a call for an Islamic republic in their programmes (some even pretending to work seriously for the formation of the Communist Party in Afghanistan), in practice disguised themselves as Islamic parties, never having the will or the power to fight independently.

That is how the left organisations as a whole not only gave up struggling independently during the war of resistance, but also gave up fighting for nationalist democracy and secularism as well.

Communists must play a leading role in the united front. Naturally, first and foremost that requires their independence within the united front. Without independence in the united front there can be no talks about the leadership of communists in a united front; with the acknowledgment that independence in the united front is not sufficient for leadership of the united front. When communists not only buried their role of leadership in the war fronts of resistance, but also buried their independence in the democratic and national struggle, obviously, as Comrade Avakian said, these communists are not communists and they cannot be considered democrats or nationalists.

The communists that were not communist and could not raise the independent banner of communism in the war of resistance against social-imperialism were defeated. They did not have the line to raise the banner of communism in the war; if some did that, it was only in words, they did not insist on it in their deeds. After the defeat, when the new communist movement reorganised into small groups, they were caught up in the ideological and political work to drive out confusion; they did not have the time and strength to participate in the war of resistance in order to raise the banner of communism independently in practice.

Once again we are facing the challenge of fighting independently against the occupying US imperialist

invaders, their allies, and their puppet regime; we need to respond to this challenge as soon as possible. To embrace this challenge we have the following to rely on:

1. The experience of the war against social-imperialism.

2. A Party that we did not have during the war against social-imperialism.

3. A militant Revolutionary Communist Party in the belly of the occupying beast, a great opportunity for Afghanistani Maoists to independently lead the masses of people. This opportunity did not exist during the war of resistance against social-imperialism.

4. The Taleban Islamists, who are fighting against the Americans and the Karzai regime, are yesterday's US men. Furthermore, during their reign they committed countless crimes against the people.

It is in this context that our Party raises the banner of the revolutionary war of resistance against the imperialist occupiers and their hand-picked regime. This is the war that the Maoists and the masses under their leadership should initiate and carry out. This is the war of resistance, that is, resistance against the aggressor and imperialist occupiers, as well as against their lackeys, in order to gain the independence of the country; it is not an Islamic Jihad. This war is a national war; it is not a religious war, specifically it is not an Islamic war against Christians. This is a peoples' war, that is, a war based on the popular classes, not on the feudal and bourgeois comprador exploiting and oppressing classes. In other words, this war is a war aimed at new-democratic revolution and socialist revolution.

At the present time we are preparing for such a war. Our hope is to complete the preparation stage successfully and as quickly as possible. With the support of the international communist movement, specifically with the support of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, Afghanistan Maoists will step forward with their independent banner. ■

Bob Avakian in a Discussion With Comrades

On Epistemology: On Knowing and Changing The World¹



“Everything that is actually true is good for the proletariat, all truths can help us get to communism.”

– Bob Avakian

The following is based on a discussion by Bob Avakian [Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA – AWTW] with some RCPUSA comrades on the subject of epistemology. Epistemology refers to a theory of knowledge, to an understanding of how people acquire knowledge, what is the nature of truth and how people come to know the truth. In what follows an effort has been made to retain the original character of what was said and how it was recorded: these were not prepared remarks by Chairman Avakian (or the other comrades) but are comments that were made in the course of a discussion, and what follows here is based on notes that were taken of that discussion.

Bob Avakian: It does focus up a lot of questions, this attitude toward the intellectuals. From the time of *Conquer the World* (CTW)² I have been bringing forward an epistemological rupture with a lot of the history of the ICM [International Communist Movement], including China and the GPCR [Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution],

which had this thing arguing that there is such a thing as proletarian truth and bourgeois truth – this was in a major circular³ put out by the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. In some polemics we wrote around the coup in China, we uncritically echoed this. Later on, we criticised ourselves for that. This rupture actually began with CTW. CTW was an epistemological break – we have to go for the truth, rather than hiding things, etc. – a whole approach of interrogating our whole history. That’s why it was taken as a breath of fresh air by some, while other people hated it, saying it reduced the history of the international communist movement and our banner of communism to a “tattered flag” – which was not the point at all. End to the Horror⁴ has a whole point that there is no such thing as class truth, but there is a methodology that lets you get at the truth more fully; the open letters to Sagan and Gould (and Isaac Asimov) wrestled with this more fully.⁵ Then there is the point I have been stressing by referring to, and expressing some agreement with, the argument of John Stuart Mill on contesting of ideas – on the importance of people being able to hear arguments not just as they are characterised by those who oppose them but as they are put forward by those who strongly believe in them. It is not that Mao never had any of this approach, but still what I have been bringing forward repre-

sents an epistemological break. Even though many people welcomed CTW on one level, it divided into two again, and that division became sharper as things went on. I was pursuing CTW where it was taking me, I didn’t have an a priori understanding [a priori here refers to forming conclusions in advance of investigating something]. There’s a logic to what I was pursuing in CTW – it takes you to a certain place, and if you resist that you go to another place. There’s been a clinging to this old way the communist movement has approached these questions, epitomised in class truth – this is still a real problem.

Your attitude towards intellectuals has to do with the philosophical question of what you think we’re trying to do, and what is it the proletariat represents. What is the “god-like position of the proletariat”, as I referred to it in “Strategic Questions”?⁶ On one level, you’re sort of sitting on a hill watching this procession go by of the development of humanity. Some of it you can see more dimly and some more clearly – you look at this whole sweep and then at a certain point this group called the proletariat emerges from within this set of social relations that can take it to a particular place, to a whole different world. But you shouldn’t reify the proletariat: Yes, it’s made up of real people, but it’s not a matter of individual proletarians but of the proletariat as a class, of

its position in society and of where its interests lie, in the most fundamental sense, as a class. On another level, looking at the sweep of history, you see the role of intellectuals as well. Are they basically making trouble for us? This is how some people see it – and this has been a definite tendency, and real problem, in the history of our movement.

But from the standpoint of a sweeping view of history, you look at this a different way. For example, there is this physicist Brian Greene who has written some books popularising questions of physics, and he speaks to this big contradiction the physicists can't yet resolve between relativity and quantum mechanics, so the question they're facing is: how do you get the next level of synthesis? What do we think of that – is that a big waste of time unless we can use that narrowly? Yes, people like this, people in these fields generally, need to be struggled with – but in a good way. If we were working in the right way in these spheres we'd be having a lot of good struggle with people around all kinds of questions, including questions arising in their work, but first of all we would be seriously engaging the work they are doing and the questions they are wrestling with. We would do this in a different way than it's often been done in the history of our movement. Is it important for what we're trying to accomplish, or should be trying to accomplish, whether these physicists understand more about the world? Yes. Do they need "loose reins" to accomplish this? Yes. Do we need to struggle with them? Yes. Do we need to have them come down and learn from the masses? Yes. But there is a legitimate part to the point that Bill Martin has made, in an introduction to a book that will be coming out soon – consisting of a conversation between him and me – the point that, yes, there are problems of intellectuals getting isolated in their ivory towers but at the same time there is a definite need for intellectuals to have the right atmosphere and space in which to do their work.⁷

Yes, we have to get down from

the mountain and get with the masses, but you have to go up to the mountain too or we won't do anything good. Stalin – some of his errors are his own, resulting to a large degree from his methodological problems, and some of it was carried forward from Lenin (I spoke to some of this in CTW).

That stuff [a narrow view] on intellectuals has pretty much been the conventional wisdom in our movement, including in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. But for a couple of decades there's been a clear motion of what I've been fighting for that's going in a different way. Do you recognise that, or do you reject that and go for something else? There are different lines and roads represented by this. XXX [a leading comrade in the RCP] said to me, one of the most important things is for you to do what you do; but I said at least as important is for you to do this too. We need a solid core united around the correct line – and if we don't have that, then it's not going to be good if people take a lot of initiative. If people are with this, we'll unleash a lot of stuff and it'll go in different directions, even funny directions, but we'll struggle and get somewhere.

How do you put your arms around the history of humanity? What about these indigenous people whose religion is so crucial to their sense of identity? Difficult – but we don't have a shot without this kind of outlook and methodology I'm arguing for. Without this, you're either going to uncritically tail this or brutally suppress it when it gets in the way. Mao had some sense of this. He sharply criticised the Soviet Union's policy of forcing people to raise pigs in the Muslim areas. But we need to go further with this. Mao's been dead for 30 years and Lenin 80 – what are we doing if we don't go beyond them?

This was a beginning rupture, an epistemological break, that was represented by CTW. The point is to change the world, and we need to understand reality. Darwin and Newton brought forth some under-

standing of reality. This has been shown to be limited and wrong in some ways, particularly in the case of Newton – Darwin was basically correct, and it's very important to uphold this, especially in the face of attacks on evolution by religious fundamentalists, but the understanding of evolution has progressed beyond Darwin. Yes, we don't want people in ivory towers, but Bill Martin's point on this [that intellectuals do need the setting in which to do their work] – we have to solve that contradiction. We have to put this problem to the masses. And if we don't solve it right, even after power has been seized and we're leading a socialist society, the people will overthrow us or sit aside when a bigger army comes in. Saddam Hussein is an example: he was an oppressor of the people, and while the people didn't overthrow him, they also didn't rise to defend him when a more powerful oppressor, the US imperialists, invaded to get rid of him. That will happen to us if we don't solve the real problems – including the day-to-day problems of the masses – in socialist society, but we have to lead the masses and even struggle with these intermediate strata by putting the contradictions to them. Here's how we're dealing with this, what's your criticism of that? As opposed to bringing out the army to suppress things. I'm no idealist – sometimes you do need the army – but it shouldn't be the first thing you reach for. You have to pose the contradictions and ask: what's your idea for how to solve this? Here people are going without health care, and how do we solve that without reproducing the same gross inequalities so that a few people can do their work in the sciences, and on the other hand so that people in the sciences aren't stopped from their work. Or what is your solution to dealing with imperialist encirclement of our socialist state? Here's the contradiction – let's wrangle with it. How do we handle this?

It's not like Mao didn't have a lot of that, but it's a little bit different way, what I'm putting forward. You trust the masses that if you put the

problems to them you can struggle with them, learn from them, lead them and win a big section of the masses as you do this. I don't want to be by myself on this road – that's no good, that won't take things where they need to go – I want more people on this road, enabling me to do work and doing work themselves. Many people here and people in our Party and more people beyond the Party can contribute to all this. This is a very good process. In response to a talk I gave, Elections, Democracy and Dictatorship, Resistance and Revolution,⁸ a professor, referring to my criticisms of Stalin and his methodology, and the need for us to do better than this, raised that it wouldn't have been such a problem if Stalin had had people around him who would challenge him; and this professor went on to put forward: "Here's my challenge – how would you do better than in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s and China in the GPCR?" And he elaborated on this: "Here's how I see the problem: people are going to start speaking out against you when you're in power, and pretty soon you're going to bring out the army and suppress them." This is an important point – a real contradiction – and there needs to be ongoing dialogue about that with people like this, and more generally. I believe we can find a good resolution to this contradiction – but it won't be easy, it will take real work and struggle, all the way through, to handle this correctly.

Here is a big problem: when the time comes, when there is a revolutionary situation, our material force has to be able to meet and defeat the imperialists, it has to be the leading force in doing that, so that we can get the solid core and then open things up. If you open up the basic question of socialism to an electoral contest, you'll sink the ship. We have to bring forward the material force to defeat the enemy and set the terms for the new society. Then we have to do all this other stuff, to "open the society up" and lead the masses in accordance with this – that's the whole point on the moving process of solid

core and elasticity. [This refers to the concept and approach of "a solid core with a lot of elasticity", which Chairman Avakian has been giving emphasis to – a principle he insists should be applied in socialist society as well as to the revolutionary process overall, aiming for the final goal of a communist world.]⁹

This question of "solid core with a lot of elasticity" is not something that's settled once and for all – the more solid core we get, in every situation, on every level, the more elasticity we should have. Can't have a solid core that has no elasticity with-in it. The core can't be so strong that everything is like a black hole and sucks in the light.

It is hard to do both sides of that. Look at this aspect of having the material force to defeat and then set the terms. This is like the movie "Remember the Titans" – the decision was made to integrate the high school in Virginia and the football team, and that the football coach was going to be Black. Then they struggled things out from there. It provided better terms than simply saying, "do you want this integration" – a lot of white people would have said "no"! If you have the ability to set the terms, it's more favourable. "No, in socialist society you can't have religion taught in schools – if you want to, you can talk to your kids about that on your own time. But they're going to come to the public school and learn science and history and a true approach to reality." How does that fit in with Catholics who can't be happy without the Pope? There's no Catholicism without the Pope. And that's a big contradiction. These are difficult contradictions, but we won't have a chance if we're not on this road. I wasn't being insincere in the talk on the dictatorship of the proletariat¹⁰ in saying some of these ideas I'm bringing forward are, at this point, posing contradictions and indicating an approach, not attempting at this point to give a complete answer to all these things. But this is the way I am convinced we have to go about this whole thing we are doing. Both because it takes us where we want to

go and because it's in line with our final goal of communism.

Engels' Anti-Dühring is very open about the fact that much of what was understood then would be surpassed and replaced by further understanding. This is the right orientation and approach – it is dialectical as well as materialist, it is not religious. The stuff from Newton is true on one level, but there's a larger reality he didn't grasp. This applies to us – there are many things that we don't understand, many things that will be discovered later that will surpass and replace some things we think are true now – but you have to go on this road to get there. It's a road with many divergent paths. How do you keep them all going in a good direction without being tightly in formation? The more you grasp that this is correct, the more you can have the solid core which enables you to do these things. This is about whether our communist project is going to have any viability and desirability, and on the positive side it is opening up further pathways to solving these contradictions, and providing a path for others.

Those are the roads and that's how I see it – are we going to get on this road, or not? Is this right what I'm saying? Is this how we should envision what we're all about? Or is it unrealistic, idealistic, nothing to do with the real world, not what we should aim for, not try to get there – are the people right who say, "you want to do this, but you can't"? Not only can we, it is the only way we can do what we need to do. You can't repeat the experience [of the proletarian revolution and socialist society]. You couldn't do the Paris Commune again to do the Soviet Union. Too much has gone on, even besides the propaganda of the bourgeoisie, people are not going to get inspired to do the same thing. They should recognise that in its time and place the inspiration was the main thing. The Chinese revolution was much better than what they had before and much better than what they have now in China. But it's not enough to inspire people to do that

again. And they shouldn't want to. Is what I'm arguing for a bunch of idealism? Or is it the only way we can go forward? What's the truth of this?

**Objective and Partisan:
Getting at the Truth**

BA continues: Some of this in the Feigon book on Mao¹¹, where Mao talks to his niece on reading the Bible – responding to her question about how to “inoculate” herself against it: “just go deeply into it and you’ll come out the other side”. Mao had some of this approach too, mixed in with other stuff. This has been there as an element: Mao had this aspect of not fearing to delve into things and seeking out the truth – perhaps he had this even more than Lenin – but then there’s still a question of “political truth” or “class truth” getting in the way of this. In the name of the masses – and even out of concern for the masses. Mao had great concern for the masses, but these things were contending in Mao too. “You don’t need any inoculation! Just go read it, you’ll come out the other side.” [There are] definitely correct things like that with Mao, but then there’s also some “proletarian class truth”, if not in the most narrow Stalinesque Lysenko way.¹²

A comrade: What about objective and partisan [that the outlook of the proletariat, of communists, is objective and partisan]?

BA: We should be able to get at the truth better than anybody. Our approach is not partisan in a utilitarian sense. We have an outlook and method that corresponds to a class that’s emerged in history in the broadest sense, and it can’t get itself out of this without overcoming all this stuff and transforming it all. This outlook corresponds to the proletariat’s interests, but not narrowly.

I’m reading this book on Iran and Mossadegh [All the Shah’s Men, by Stephen Kinzer].¹³ Most of the newspapers [in Iran at that time] were controlled by the CIA, they had this political mobilisation to oppose

Mossadegh, and with all these attacks on him, he did not move to suppress any of this. And I said, “what the fuck have I set us up for with this solid core and elasticity?!” [Laughs.] That’s why you don’t let go of the solid core, and why we’re different than Mossadegh.

The example of Brzezinski: On the tradition of autocracy in the Russian communist movement. I answered him, and said that the Russian Revolution negated all that.¹⁴ But when I thought about that more, I said that’s not a complete answer – he has a point here, and we have to acknowledge that the autocratic tradition seeped into the communist movement in some ways. I spoke to this in Two Great Humps.¹⁵

It is not “a clever device” when I say that reactionaries should be allowed to publish some books in socialist society – it is good to have these people interrogating us because we learn more about reality. It’s part of how we’re gonna learn and how the masses are gonna learn. It’s tricky – flying universities and misogynist hip-hop. [Another comrade in the discussion had raised earlier the examples of how hip-hop had emerged from the masses and was contradictory, and the example of the “flying universities” in Poland during the 1970s, which contained anti-regime lines and were suppressed.] If all you do is mobilise the masses to crush this, it’s the same as state repression in other forms. You can’t let misogyny run rampant and not challenge it and not suppress it in certain ways – but on the other hand, even just coming up with ways that masses oppose this is not always the way to do this. Flying universities – what to do? Let them go on in a certain way? Or shut them down? We have to know what they’re doing. You can’t be Mossadegh, you need a political police – you need to know about plots, real plots that will go on, to overthrow socialism – but you shouldn’t rely on state repression as the way to deal with opposition in every form, and sometimes you don’t even want your own people to go into these things, because then it’s not

really a free university because you’ve got your people in there and it can be chilling, so we have to think about it. But if we don’t have a lot of people proceeding from this outlook and methodology and applying themselves to this, people who have deeply internalised this kind of outlook, method and approach, we’ll never be able to handle it right. This is a different vision – it’s different than even the best of the GPCR – there is the other dimension that we need of ferment in society as I’ve been speaking about it, a different, an additional dimension to ferment in society, including intellectual ferment. This is not alien to Mao, but he didn’t develop this into a whole strategic approach.

In the Feigon book, he says Mao came up inside of the Soviet model, so to speak, and then Mao said no, we gotta break out of this whole way of building socialism. Mao was the first attempt in this. Then there is a whole other dimension as a strategic approach that incorporates things from the GPCR. It was and has been for a long time and acutely something I’ve had to fight for. What I’m calling for is really hard to do, but it’s the only way we can really do this. In the future, people will go further with everything that’s involved in getting to communism; but at this point, this is what we have to go through.

Even the best of the GPCR posed against this turns into its opposite. Revolution develops through stages and people get stuck – and things turn into their opposites and what’s advanced doesn’t remain advanced when there are new necessities posed that you have to break through on.

This approach will involve a tremendous struggle with the masses. When speaking to that professor’s question [how would you do better than in the Soviet Union and in China] I had to speak to this: there are masses who have been lorded over by people who know more than they do, and they’re not going to want to listen under socialism to people saying the new society is no good. I said: I don’t believe in tailing people just because they’ve been

oppressed. They're going to be leading society and we have to struggle with them over what this is all about. In order to do this, people have to understand how to make the distinction between voicing reactionary opinions and actively working to overthrow the whole socialist system; and even more fundamentally they have to know why it is important to make that distinction. He asked this question so I explored it as best I could. Because this is something that adds a whole strategic dimension and embodies but goes further than the GPCR; and if, in the name of upholding the GPCR, you resist the part that goes further – then you're opposing the whole thing.

It's a tricky contradiction that, on the one hand, we have to always go for the truth – and not for "political truth" or "class truth" – and, on the other hand, we have to know how to lead without giving up the core. In taking all this up, some people are veering to social-democracy and others refuse to recognise there's any problem here and don't even want to criticise Stalin. And, in this situation, you can convince yourself that if you criticise Stalin then you have someone to the left of you and someone to the right and then you must be correct(!) – as opposed to whether you're correct or not is based on whether it's true.

Objective and partisan is like this: If it's true, it should be part of advancing, getting us where we're going. If it's not true, it would get in the way. If it's true, even if it reveals the ugliest side of what we're about – if that black book thing were true we'd have to say how did that happen and how do we prevent that? – but the thing is, what matters is that whatever is true, we can encompass it and make it part of what we're all about, even when it's truths that reveal bad aspects of what we've done. [The "black book" refers to a book purporting to tell the "true story of communism" – and to attack it as a monstrous crime – it is a combination of slanders and lies mixed in with some references to actual shortcomings and errors in the experience

of socialist society so far.¹⁶]

That's the synthesis of partisan and objective. Either we actually believe the most fundamental truth about capitalism and communism is what it is – either we have a scientifically grounded understanding of why communism should and can replace capitalism, all over the world – or we don't, in which case we end up fearing truth.

We have to rupture more fully with instrumentalism – with notions of making reality an "instrument" of our objectives, of distorting reality to try to make it serve our ends, of "political truth". The dynamic of "truths that make us cringe" is part of what can be driving us forward. This can help call forth that ferment so that we can understand reality. This is scientific materialist objectivity. If you go deeply enough and understand that these contradictions now posed could lead to a different era based on the resolution of those contradictions, then you want to set in motion a dynamic where people are bringing out your shortcomings. Not that every mistake should be brought out in a way to overwhelm everything we're trying to do, but in a strategic sense [we should] welcome this and not try to manage it too much – you want that, the back and forth. On the web, there have been slanders and outright pig-type stuff in relation to me, which doesn't do any good for anybody trying to do good in the world, and this kind of harmful stuff should not be tolerated by anybody who does want to do good in the world. But there has also been political debate about my role as a leader and about communist leaders in general. This has generally been fairly low-level, but at least it has had some substance, and is it bad to have this kind of debate not only now but also under socialism? No, this is a good thing. Not only because people will be able to learn more in general, but we'll be able to learn more. What is coming forward? What are the ways that we have to go forward? What is the baggage that we have to cast off? If you get the epistemology, you really want this.

This is not just a tactical, but a strategic view flowing from this epistemological view of what this process should be – and we'll get where we need to go with this ferment. Not just tolerating this, but being enthusiastic – not about everything insulting, but generally. Do we think this is a good process, not only now but under the dictatorship of the proletariat? Or should we just stick with the seemingly safer path of what we've done before?

I'm talking about a new synthesis – a more thoroughly materialist epistemology. Lenin wrote *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* where he argued against these things [like "political truth", or "truth as an organising principle"] but sometimes the practical Lenin got in the way of the philosophical Lenin. The political exigencies that were imposed contributed to a situation where some of the way Lenin dealt with contradictions had an aspect of Stalin. There are many examples of this in *The Furies* [a book on the French and Russian revolutions by Arno Mayer].¹⁷ In some instances, the Bolsheviks had a kind of "Mafia" approach in some areas, especially during the civil war that followed the October 1917 Revolution. In some cases, when people would be organised by reactionaries to fight against the Bolsheviks, the Bolsheviks would retaliate broadly and without mercy. Or they would kill people not only for deserting the Red Army but even for dragging their feet in fighting the civil war. While sometimes in the midst of war, extreme measures may be necessary, overall this is not the way to deal with these contradictions. I addressed some of this in *Two Great Humps* – I read Lenin on this and thought, "this is not right". There's epistemological stuff bound up with all this as well.

**We Communists
Stand For Truth**

BA continues: I'm trying to set a framework for the whole approach to our project. Who's right: me, or peo-

ple who say, you can't avoid doing things the way that people have done it up to now? Some even say: "I wish you could, but I don't think you can." Is what I'm arguing for really a materialist way of approaching our project? Is this really what we have to go through now to get where we need to go? Is this, analogically, Einstein to Newton, or is it a bunch of nonsense – since Newtonian physics can describe the reality around us and has empirical evidence on its side? Is there in fact no other way to do what I'm arguing for, no other way to get to communism? Or is the other road really the reality of it?

Is what I'm arguing for just, at best, some interesting and intriguing ideas and provocative thinking – or is it really the way we have to approach things, as I've said?

Even more fundamentally, having to do with my point on communists having the most trouble admitting their mistakes – which has to do with no one else is trying to remake the world – but is it even important for us to try to get to the truth of things?¹⁸ Or are we politicians who are trying to achieve certain political objectives, and all that other stuff about getting to the truth is a bunch of petty-bourgeois nonsense, since we're about "getting to power"? It's a fundamental question of two roads here. One of the big questions is "are we really people who are trying to get to the truth, or is it really just a matter of 'truth is an organising principle'?" Lenin criticised this philosophically – "truth as an organising principle" – and you can criticise it to reject religion and opportunism which you don't find particularly useful, but you can end up doing this yourself in another form. Mao said we communists stand for truth – we should be scientific and honest. Is this a concern of ours? Or is our concern to just know enough truth to accomplish our objectives as we perceive them at a given time? Just enough truth to accomplish our objectives – even if we apply this not on the most narrow level and instead our approach is that the truth we need is what we need to get to the "four

alls". [The "four alls" refers to the achievement of the necessary conditions for communism. It refers to a statement by Marx that the dictatorship of the proletariat is the necessary transition to the abolition of all class distinctions, of all the production relations on which these class distinctions rest, of all the social relations that correspond to these production relations, and to the revolutionising of all the ideas that correspond to these relations.¹⁹]



A second comrade: Fundamental answer is that we're part of material reality and our stage or canvas is matter in motion – that's what we're trying to work with, work on. There is no such thing as determinate human nature. We are trying to transform things.

The question of falsifiability. This is a big critique of Marxism from the outside – that Marxism is not really a science, Marxists are not rigorous and don't follow scientific methods. One of the criteria of real science is that it's inherently falsifiable. Lot of confusion about what that means. Example of Karl Popper: Marxism is not really a science but a faith. [Stephen Jay] Gould's point on evolution as a fact. Is the theory of evolution inherently falsifiable? Yes. If you came up with something that challenged the whole framework, it would collapse. One of the strengths of evolution is that it's been open to falsification for a long time now but no one has been able to do it.

We communists have some foundational assumptions about the fundamental contradiction [of capitalism], etc. which are solidly established, but that doesn't mean that there's a lot that isn't going to change and evolve. Human knowledge develops and matter is never static. If we're dealing with matter in motion, there's a lot to learn – whatever field you're studying. There's a tremendous amount of cross-fertilisation between different spheres of science and knowledge. If you're looking at it [communism] as not being a reli-

gious faith, but a science, the truth matters for that. If we're trying to transform things, then we can't do it without a grasp of the truth. The only way we couldn't be concerned with the truth is if we want it to be a religion, or just reduce communism to a sort of code of ethics.

Is our thing a science? Very different than some code in the name of the masses.

A lot of people think that the reason for the evolution series²⁰ was an offensive by the Christian fascists against evolution. That was one reason – but on the other hand it is important for the communists and the masses to be trained in a basic understanding of how the life of the planet evolved.

This narrow-mindedness would be the death of us. It matters a lot that people understand the basic laws and so on of the transformation of matter.

BA: A lot of the things I've been struggling for in terms of methods of leadership is [against the notion] that when you get down to reality you can't do things this way. Partly because this is very messy. This is turbulent. To somehow open the gate to the truth is letting the sharks into the water. Well, we have our criticisms of Stalin and other people have theirs, and there is the reality of Lenin's statement that it takes ten pages of truth to answer one sentence of opportunism – that's gonna be true in the world for a long time. You don't always have ten pages that you can devote to answer a sentence of bullshit – you're at a disadvantage. People can pick out something and divorce it from the larger reality from which it arises. In China people went hungry and starved in the Great Leap Forward – but what's the larger context? Our enemies don't have to be materialist or dialectical and go into the reality and contradictions and necessity. We have an orientation of grasping what they were up against and then talking about how to do better in the context of that kind of reality. Other people won't do that. They'll come from their own class viewpoints – often ignorance combined with arrogance to make pro-

nouncements. This is messy. It isn't like we're all just talking in the realm of a bunch of scientists about evolution and what's true – creationists are not interested in getting at the truth. Other people have their own agendas and their own "political truths" – so to say "knock down the breakwater, let the sharks get in" makes things messy. So then the question is, is that really a better way to do it? Or should we swim behind the breakwater and head straight for the shore, keep your arms inside the boat. And there are sharks out there.

So methodologically and epistemologically and ideologically this is a question of what I'm fighting for versus the thing of "you can't do it that way". "It's not what we're about and we can't do it this way." Are we a bunch of instrumentalists? Do we want just enough truth so we can navigate narrowly to some notion of where we need to go? – which will end up the wrong place. Because your boat will get turned around with the wrong course. Philosophically you can't do it that way – you can't navigate reality that way to get to where you need to go. It's not the way reality is. We can't get there that way – and the "there" will not be the "there" that we want. That's the only communism there'll be – not a kingdom of great harmony, but turbulent. And for the same reason that's what I'm struggling for. If you don't see that, then you become what I fear our movement has been way too much: "why would we want to concern ourselves with that?"

The reason I'm raising this dimension is that it relates to the stereotype – but not simply the stereotype – of what we communists have been like. Right now I'm wrestling with Rawls' Theory of Justice. He insists that you cannot justify things on the basis that they serve the larger social good if it tramples on the needs and rights of individuals – if you proceed down that road you get to totalitarianism.

To me that's wrong – founded on idealism, not on a real, materialist understanding of society. But we have to wrestle with that, as in

GO&GS on the individual and the collective.²¹ There's more work to be done even in that sphere – not trampling on individuals just because it's in the interests of society as a whole.

In reply to those who attack Mao for sending intellectuals to the countryside, there is the correct point of, "look, nobody in China asked the peasants if they wanted to be in the countryside" – a very important point, but if that's the end of it, or the only point, you're back to what we've been too much. This is parallel to whether the truth should matter to us.

A third comrade: [In regard to] method and approach and sharks in choppy water. There is a lot of stuff out there which is not encompassed in our understanding at this point. And it often seems to present itself as irrelevant, a distraction, or a refutation of our understanding. And there is a question of fundamental orientation epistemologically. To how one is looking at that. And your [Chairman Avakian's] concept is attacking a lot of barriers to that. That is welcome. Look at the analysis of the 1980s. [This refers to the RCP's analysis that, during that period, there would be the outbreak of world war between: the imperialist bloc headed by the US and that headed by the Soviet Union, unless this world war were prevented by revolution in large and/or strategic enough areas of the world.] There is your insistence on examining what it was that we did [in terms of that analysis]. Or the self-criticism you [referring to Chairman Avakian] have made about underestimating the "information technology revolution" and [having missed] the relevance of that. [This refers to a self-critical observation by Chairman Avakian that in his book *For a Harvest of Dragons*, written in the early 1980s, that he was too dismissive of comments by revisionist leaders of the Soviet Union at that time about the great changes that were being brought about by the "information revolution".] Here was something coming from Soviet revisionists! But [though seeming]

irrelevant, in one context, all these different levels of reality are aspects of reality. Ignore them at your peril. There is a lot of resistance [to this approach] but the masses need to understand the world in all its dimensions. Mankind consciously transforming itself. It has to do with transforming all of material reality.... What is communism? And where do things go from there? Has to do with getting there. A materialist understanding of the world and the relation of humanity to it. We can't get there if you are picking the parts of reality which seem to matter. Marching along an economist and revisionist road, those other aspects of reality are unwelcome intrusions into that. It matters to understand material reality if you are really a communist and a materialist. To really understand Marxist economics, to comprehend the world now, to accurately reflect material reality.

A fourth comrade: On this question of the sharks. The heart of the question is can we handle the sharks. Can we handle the problems? If we can do it then why couldn't the masses? I remember a discussion of "End of a Stage/Beginning of a New Stage",²² where the tilt was: how much can we keep of Stalin? There was a lot of bad shit that happened under Stalin, and there were problems in the GPCR too. We have to look at that. You can't do it unless you sit in that "god-like position of the proletariat". But religious faith keeps us from looking at that. I came to that Nat Turner place on this: This is the slaves making history. We have to look at this in that light. It is valid for slaves to end slavery. People get uptight about looking at these things, but we will have to deal with this.... If we can't take this on now, how can we take it on when we have state power?

In the *Reaching/Flying* series, in the last instalment, it says there are two things we don't know how to do.²³ We don't yet know how to actually defeat the other side and seize power when the time comes, and we don't yet know how to actually with-

stand the much heavier repression that is coming. This is heavy. Is this the right way to go about things? Here's this idea that we can put this out to the masses. Is that the way to go? The solid core/elasticity dialectic. Can we withstand all this? People are going to do things in practice that you aren't going to have under your control. Is this the way to learn about and transform the world? Why do we need a poetic spirit, as the Chair has said? Why is it dangerous not to have one, and how is it related to an insatiable desire to know about and transform the world? Do you need the perspective of the "god-like position of the proletariat" and your [Chairman Avakian's] earlier point on looking at the parade of humanity walking by? If you don't do that, it's sentimental – phoney emotionalism as opposed to a grasp that the potential of people is what is being held back and chained in by this system.

I have often wondered about why the second to the last paragraph in Harvest of Dragons says what it does. ["In the final analysis, as Engels once expressed it, the proletariat must win its emancipation on the battlefield. But there is not only the question of winning in this sense but of how we win in the largest sense. One of the significant if perhaps subtle and often little-noticed ways in which the enemy, even in defeat, seeks to exact revenge on the revolution and sow the seed of its future undoing is in what he would force the revolutionaries to become in order to defeat him. It will come to this: we will have to face him in the trenches and defeat him amidst terrible destruction but we must not in the process annihilate the fundamental difference between the enemy and ourselves. Here the example of Marx is illuminating: he repeatedly fought at close quarters with the ideologists and apologists of the bourgeoisie but he never fought them on their terms or with their outlook; with Marx his method is as exhilarating as his goal is inspiring. We must be able to maintain our firmness of principles but at the same time our flexibility, our materialism and our dialectics, our realism and our romanticism, our

solemn sense of purpose and our sense of humour."]²⁴ Why would that be in there if it hasn't come to that? This is what the Chair "models" and challenges us on. That is not something off to the side of what we are doing, but integral to what we're doing.

**Embrace But Not Replace:
Sharks and Guppies**

BA: I have been reading this interview with Chomsky and Barsamian. At one point Barsamian says, I won't ask you what your politics has to do with your linguistics, and Chomsky says thanks. He sees them as completely separate, and he's been assaulted with an instrumentalist view – i.e. that the two should "have something to do with each other", in a mechanical sense. No doubt, there is a connection, but it's on a whole other level and not in some mechanical, reductionist, one-to-one sense.

In another discussion, speaking of human beings' capabilities with language, Chomsky asks whether we can conclude that the human competence for language is a product of evolution. Yes, he answers, but we can't say exactly how. Well, obviously, the point is not to leave it there, more will have to be learned scientifically about all this. But is this work on how humans acquire knowledge important to us? Yes.

What's involved is somewhat like doing art in a certain way. Here again we could say there are three models: First, the classical communist party trade--unionist economist approach of get the artists on the picket lines.²⁵ Second, let the artists be cogs and wheels in the machinery of the revolution. Or let them do art that serves the revolution, even if not in a narrow sense. Yes, let them do art that serves the revolution; but besides "model works" – which they developed in the Cultural Revolution in China and around which we also need to do better, and which require attention – we also need a third approach, or model: artists doing their art that does not narrowly serve

things. When I raised these contradictions with one artist – how would artists create art in a new society and yet not lose their connection with other artists, and with the masses of people – he raised the idea of artists living and working in co-operatives and, besides their art, also doing some things to contribute to society in other ways. This is worth thinking about, as one dimension of things. And of course people are going to have to get funded and the funders are going to have to combine funding for things that directly serve the revolution and things that do not directly serve it.

There's a role for people going off and you don't know what it's gonna lead to. We need art that directly relates to the struggle, art that is like the model works, and art where the artists go off and follow their impulse. That dimension in the arts and sciences – with that process going on of people being funded with a general idea of what they want to explore and you don't conclude it's wasted if sometimes they don't come up with anything. You have to recognize that part of the process is that some of this won't lead to anything. This actually relates to Lenin's point on communism springing from every pore of society, understood in the broadest sense. Yes [a young comrade who is studying science] should wage struggle regarding philosophy of science, and should struggle for MLM, including as a means to get more comprehensively to the truth. But it's also true that if someone discovers something about what happened the day before the Big Bang it is (a) interesting to know, and (b) not in a narrow way becomes part of the revolutionary process and the class struggle. Different classes will interpret things in different ways and seek to suppress things in different ways. (It's not just the proletariat that has sometimes sought to suppress science for political and ideological reasons – look at what Bush et al. are doing right now!!)

Look, the world actually is made up of matter in motion, and materialism and dialectics does correspond to

the way the world is and enables us to get more deeply to it. And therefore, discovering more about reality can be encompassed by and actually strengthens dialectical materialism; and when there are classes struggling over this, it becomes part of the class struggle in the ideological realm. The pursuit of knowledge should not be reduced to discovering things in order to wage struggle in the ideological realm, but the way it works is that you learn more about reality and if you correctly understand dialectical materialism whatever is learned, whatever truths are discovered, will reinforce, strengthen and enrich dialectical materialism and will inevitably become part of the class struggle – and even under communism part of the ideological struggle. Yes, part of it for that young comrade is waging the class struggle in that realm [of science and philosophy of science], but it's not limited to or reduced to that.

The second comrade: This gets back to how are we training people to think. What kind of people do we want to be in terms of fitting ourselves to rule? We talk about the masses searching for philosophy, [but] are we searching for philosophy? The Chair is trying to push the limits. The opposing approach is that "we have our kit", and he keeps upsetting that. How are we going to answer the questions posed by various intellectuals on whether we can really wield state power in this way? How are you going to handle this or that? Too often communists give facile answers. They rule things out of order and that gives rise to Orwells. Some questions come from the wrong place, but you can't determine that a priori. The waters are choppy, and there are sharks, but it turns out a lot are toothless guppies [a common pet fish kept by children – AWTW]. We have to train people including in relation to contradictions among the people. A sweeping view of "embraces but does not replace" means we look to learning from all these spheres. ["Embraces but does not replace" refers to a prin-

ciple formulated by Mao Tsetung that Marxism embraces but does not replace theories in physics, the arts, etc. This has been further developed and applied by Bob Avakian.²⁶] There is struggle over how the world actually develops: in a gradual way or through punctuations. Does this matter to us? How the universe is? It matters to how matter is in motion. We are part of matter. There are some principles underlying all matter in motion. And we need to understand these things through the sciences and arts [with] the correct approach, and not ruling things out of order. In the Soviet Union people were suppressed wrongly in relation to this. If this wrong line gets into power, this will happen. There is this point to the toothless guppies. But we can't tell the difference between sharks and toothless guppies if we don't go for the truth of things. There are a lot of ways the truth matters. Why were people shocked by statements by you [referring to Chairman Avakian] that not just in terms of our party but historically there has been a problem in the communist movement – that most of the time most communists are not communists! – and that if we don't rupture with certain things, then we won't be able to seize power – or do anything good with it if somehow we did seize power? If people are steeped in materialism, they would not be shocked by this and would be able to deal with this. We're not going to be able to manage and control the truth. It springs forward from matter. The truth is not scary.

BA: All that is very important. At the same time, if we don't understand what we are trying to take on with this method and approach I'm struggling for – if we don't grasp the principles involved in "solid core with a lot of elasticity" and related things – we will be drawn and quartered. It is going to be messy and difficult. It is going to be messy. It is also going to be exhilarating. It is going to mean that we really have to be communists and apply this on the highest level. I want to make very clear that if this

other kind of line holds sway and people come to power with that line, it is going to be very bad. You are right that strategically this is not frightening. I agree with the basic thrust of your comments, but maybe there is a secondary aspect in which this is a bit frightening. We shouldn't underestimate the difficulties. Within this is going to be a lot of tumult. The argument that you can't do this [the way I am proposing] is not without any basis in material reality.

But the more powerful material reality is that this can be done – this method and approach of solid core with a lot of elasticity, as I have been developing and fighting for it, can be carried out – and in fact this is the only way to do it, the only way we can get to communism.

Footnotes

1. Reprinted from *Observations on Art and Culture and Science and Philosophy*, by Bob Avakian (Insight Press, Chicago, IL, 2005.) First published in *Revolutionary Worker*, number 1,262 (19 December 2004).
2. Bob Avakian, "Conquer the World? The International Proletariat Must and Will", *Revolution*, number 50, December 1981.
3. "Circular of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party", 16 May 1966, in *Important Documents on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1970.
4. Bob Avakian, *A Horrible End, or An End to the Horror?*, RCP Publications, Chicago, 1984.
5. "Some Questions to Carl Sagan and Stephen Gould" and "More Questions to Carl Sagan, Stephen Gould, and Isaac Asimov" in Avakian, *Reflections, Sketches and Provocations: Essays and Commentary, 1981-1987*, RCP Publications, Chicago, 1990.
6. The section of "Strategic Questions", another talk by Bob Avakian, that discusses the "god-like position of the proletariat" has not been published. The concept is discussed in "Fighting Not Just for Revenge but to Emancipate All Humanity" from "Great Objectives and Grand Strategy" in *Revolutionary Worker (RW)* 1,140 (24 February 2002) and

"Holding Firmly to Basic Principles – But Not Being Bound by Convention or Superstition" from "Grasp Revolution, Promote Production: Questions of Outlook and Method, Some Points on the New Situation" in RW 1,186 (9 February 2003), available on-line at www.revcom.us. It is also discussed in another essay in this volume, "The 'God-like Position of the Proletariat', The Sweep of History". Excerpts from Strategic Questions appear in RW numbers 881 and 884-893 (November 1996 through February 1997), and in RW numbers 1,176-78 (24 November through 8 December 2002). They are available online at www.revcom.us.

7. Bill Martin is a social theorist and professor of philosophy at DePaul University, Chicago. His numerous books include: *Politics in the Impasse* (1996), *The Radical Project: Sartrean Investigations* (2001), and *Avant Rock* (2002). The book *Marxism and the Call of the Future: Conversations on Ethics, History, and Politics* by Bob Avakian and Bill Martin, Open Court Publishers, Chicago, 2005, had not yet been published at the time of this discussion.

8. Audio files of this talk are available on the web at www.bobavakian.net.

9. For more on this, see the talk by Bob Avakian, *Dictatorship and Democracy, and the Socialist Transition to Communism*. The full text of this talk is available online at www.revcom.us, and selections from this talk have been published in the *Revolutionary Worker* newspaper in issues 1,250-52, 1,254-55, 1,257-58 and 1,260.

10. This refers to the talk *Dictatorship and Democracy, and the Socialist Transition to Communism*, mentioned above.

11. Lee Feigon, *Mao, a Reinterpretation*, Ivan R. Dee Publishers, Chicago, 2002.

12. See "The Struggle in the Realm of Ideas" from *Dictatorship and Democracy, and the Socialist Transition to Communism*, *Revolutionary Worker* 1,250 (22 Aug 2004). [Lysenko was a Soviet agronomist who brought forward ideas that seemed pragmatically to promise an increase in agricultural production based on a wrong view of genetics, including the inheritance of acquired characteristics, and so were seized on by Stalin. The affair had serious negative consequences not only for the Soviet Union, but also within the international

communist movement – AWTW.]

13. Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, John Wiley & Son's, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey, 2003. Mossadegh was the head of a popular and popularly elected government in Iran, who was overthrown by the US government in 1953 through a CIA-led coup, working with and directing reactionary forces in Iran, and then putting the shah on the throne as the ruler of Iran. The rule of the shah, backed by and serving US imperialism, led to widespread popular opposition but also strengthened the hand of the reactionary fundamentalist Islamic forces in Iran, and in the late 1970s a popular uprising led to the overthrow of the Shah but unfortunately also to the rule of these reactionary religious fundamentalists.

14. Bob Avakian, *Phony Communism is Dead...Long Live Real Communism!*, Second Edition, RCP Publications, Chicago, 2004, pp. 55-74.

15. *Getting Over the Two Great Humps: Further Thoughts on Conquering the World* is a talk given by Bob Avakian in the late 1990s. Excerpts from this talk appeared in the *Revolutionary Worker* (RW) and are available online at www.revcom.us. The series "On Proletarian Democracy and Proletarian Dictatorship – A Radically Different View of Leading Society" appeared in RW number 1,214 through to 1,226 (5 October 2003 to 25 January 2004). The series "Getting Over the Hump" appeared in RW 927, 930, 932 and 936-940 (12 October, 2 November, 16 November and 14 December 1997 through to 18 January 1998). Two additional excerpts from this talk are "Materialism and Romanticism: Can We Do Without Myth" in RW 1,211 (24 August 2003) and "Re-reading George Jackson" in RW 968 (9 August 1998). All of these articles can be found online at www.revcom.us.

16. Stephane Courtois et al, *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*, Harvard University Press, 1999.

17. Arno J. Mayer, *The Furies: Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2000.

18. See "Moving Towards Communism", *Revolutionary Worker*, 1,260 (28 November 2004), from *Dictatorship &*

Democracy, and the Socialist Transition to Communism. The full text is available online at www.revcom.us.

19. For a fuller discussion of this see the talk by Bob Avakian, *Dictatorship and Democracy, and the Socialist Transition to Communism*.

20. Ardea Skybreak's series "The Science of Evolution" appeared in the *Revolutionary Worker* numbers 1,157, 1,159-1,160, 1,163-1,164, 1,170, 1,179-1,183, and 1,215--1,223 (30 June, 21-28 July, 18-25 August, 6 October, 15 December 2001 to 19 January 2003 and 12 October to 21 December 2004).

21. *Great Objectives and Grand Strategy* (GO&GS) is a talk by Bob Avakian at the end of the 1990s; excerpts from it have been published in the *Revolutionary Worker*, numbers 1,127-1,142 (18 November 2001 through to 10 March 2002). They are available online at www.revcom.us.

22. Bob Avakian, "The End of a Stage – The Beginning of a New Stage" (late 1989) in *Revolution* 60 (Fall 1990).

23. "Conclusion: The Challenges We Must Take Up", *Revolutionary Worker* 1,210 (17 August 2003). This is from the series *Reaching for the Heights and Flying Without a Safety Net*, a talk by Bob Avakian toward the end of 2002; excerpts from it appeared in the RW numbers 1,195-1,210 (20 April to 17 August 2003), available online at www.revcom.us.

24. Bob Avakian, *For a Harvest of Dragons: On the "Crisis of Marxism" and the Power of Marxism – Now More Than Ever*, RCP Publications, Chicago, 1983, p. 152.

25. This was a shorthand way of describing the orientation of the CPUSA, which was marked by a utilitarian and instrumentalist approach to art – focusing the attention of artists on the workers' movement in a narrow way, reification of the proletariat in art, and a view of art, and reality, that never really broke with radical democracy to embrace the two radical ruptures described by Marx.

26. See, for example, his discussion of this in *Dictatorship and Democracy, and the Socialist Transition to Communism*. ■

France's Proletarian Youth Erupt



Heralding the explosion of violent revolt, youth march in a town near Clichy, on 29 October in homage to two young men police left to be electrocuted in a power station. Their t-shirts read: "Dead-for no reason."

By T.A.

The following is based on a report by a supporter of the Revolutionary Communist Party, Canada (Organising Committee) who carried out political work among proletarian youth in the Paris region last November along with a few other comrades. —AWTW

In twenty nights of fighting from 27 October to 15 November 2005, thousands of French proletarian youth mounted the most important challenge to the status quo since the May 1968 revolt. Like all crises, as Lenin wrote, this one revealed a great deal about the nature of French society, the interests of its social classes and those represented by organised political forces, and the fault lines along which this society could break apart and be reorganised in a whole new way through revolution.

Background to the Revolt

France's cités, huge public housing complexes surrounding the suburbs of Paris, and most of France's large and medium-sized metropolises and even some small towns, were built during the post-Second World War economic boom. In addition to many workers from Spain and Portugal, company recruiters brought in whole villages of immigrants from French-dominated North Africa to work in factories, the construction industry and other jobs.

Most of the complexes are very large, some with thousands of families and as many as 20,000 inhabitants. Further, especially in Paris, Lyon and other large cities, vast urban areas are made up of cité after cité, with row after row of sets of

enormous blocks of concrete extending for many kilometres, as far as the eye can see. The French government calls poor neighbourhoods (which are often but not always synonymous with cités), "Sensitive Urban Areas". According to official data, 5 million people live in 751 of these areas, 1.4 million of them in Île-de-France, the region formed by the departments adjacent to Paris.

These buildings represented a big change for the better in the living conditions of many of their original inhabitants, who often came from rural areas. Until the 1970s, thousands of Arab immigrant workers, especially those with unskilled jobs in construction and other unstable employment, lived in shantytowns on the outskirts of Paris and other urban agglomerations. The quality of the public (and some private) apartment complexes in the cités was never good in the first place, since they were built as cheaply as possible. For instance, soundproofing and other amenities were virtually ignored. Over the decades, their elevators, plumbing and other facilities have gone from bad to horrible, especially in those inhabited by the poorest people.

Even in neighbourhoods inhabited by tens of thousands, non-residential buildings are kept to a minimum, and the people have no place to go, not even a library or a cinema. The situation is the same for the younger kids, who "entertain themselves by fighting, since no activities are planned for them", a girl from Seine-Saint-Denis said. Also, as was written in AWTW News Service, "A major complaint, heard everywhere in the suburbs, is that these housing complexes were deliberately located far from everything, from any place people might want to go, with public transportation only to where they're supposed to work and practically no

good way to get around at night – certainly not to Paris.... They call the cité a ghetto, not in the American sense of being inhabited almost exclusively by one or two nationalities but in the original sense of a place where certain people are forced to live and barely allowed to leave.” This situation, and also the high cost of public transportation, has created a feeling of frustration towards the transportation system; it’s no wonder that trains and buses were prime targets during the uprising.

These housing estates were multinational and in some cases majority French, but with the passing years most of the native white workers moved out of many of them. The character of some of the larger ones changed sharply with the collapse of France’s auto industry in the mid-1970s and the decline of French big industry in general, which led to changes in the configuration of the proletariat. In the Paris region and many other (but far from all) cités, the majority of families today are of Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian as well as black African and sometimes Turkish backgrounds. There are still families of French and other European origin and more recent Third World immigrants. But the youth involved in the November uprising were overwhelmingly second and sometimes third-generation French, part of the French proletariat, not only in terms of their primary language and their legal status as citizens, but also in terms of their position in French society and their outlook and aspirations. In many ways they are different, for instance, from the worst-off workers in France, the recent immigrants, mainly from central and West Africa, who are confined to cleaning and other very menial jobs and live in far more precarious and often dangerous conditions than exist in most public housing areas.

These youth are French, but they have never been treated as other French people. Whereas unlike recent immigrants it is French society that has shaped them, it shaped them in a very particular way. This has forged a large part of their identi-



Secondary school students boisterously take over the streets of Paris 17 March, 2006.

ty and outlook. Much of France’s working-class population came from Poland, Italy and Portugal; today their descendents are generally integrated into French society, distinguishable only by their last names. Most of the children of immigrants from France’s colonies have not been offered that option. By and large they don’t identify with the French system, the “Republic”, the way many other French do, and even if some of them would want to, they are always treated as foreigners by the rest of the population. As one young woman in a cité near Paris said, “It doesn’t matter if my friends and I were born in France; for most people, we’re blacks and Arabs.” The exclusion and segregation within French socie-

ty the youth feel are not separate from the humiliation and domination at the international level that people of their various countries of origin are also subjected to by the big imperialist powers. This factor certainly played a role in the subjective factors that incited them to massively rise up.

Unemployment among youth in general in France is a huge problem. In the suburbs, about 20 percent of the people are unemployed, twice the national average, and in some neighbourhoods, as many as 40 percent don’t have jobs. Employers often select candidates according to skin colour, ethnic origin (revealed by the family name) and address, as well as the other, more universal criteria.

There is a double frustration: it is very hard for cité youth to get any job, and if they do, it is likely to be one they don't want. Their parents endured terrible hardships in the hopes that their children would have a better life. Their children have little hope for any life they consider acceptable.

By 10 or 12 years old, many children want to flee from school as a place of oppression. They feel that school is useless and think, "Educated or not, we will end up in the same misery; so why bother studying?" Indeed, the young students can see proof all around them of how diplomas won't necessarily give them a better life. There are many people with university degrees in the cités who are unable to find a job in their chosen profession. Middle school (ages 12-15), in particular, in France, serves the purpose of tracking people into their future lives – higher education, technical programmes, jobs, or nothing at all. A lot of kids drop out when they reach 16 or even earlier, because there is no point in trying to go on. As a result, the average education level in the cités is low. Although there is some illiteracy among adults, there is almost none among youth.

Youth Identity in the Cités

The attitude of these youth toward religion is complex and layered, a question most are not willing to discuss with outsiders and seem to have contradictory feelings about. A great many youth identify with Islam, which is no surprise since they are stigmatised as Muslims no matter what their beliefs are. Yet as an Islamic official complained to *Le Monde* newspaper, "These youth are drop-outs, who have a really weak link with religion. When we tell them Salam aleykum, they answer bon soir."

They are clearly very influenced by the beliefs and values rooted in the social relations in the societies their parents came from. (In some cases, including people from the Caribbean, these societies are predominantly Christian.) This is partic-

ularly clear in the position of women. We found it very difficult to have discussions with women from the cités because they aren't allowed to hang out and talk to strangers. There is a general phenomenon of "big brothers" dictating the limits of acceptable social behaviour to their sisters (even older ones) and other women. Since it's a little less difficult for women to find a job, girls tend to be more assiduous in school than boys, and they don't usually have the same personal confrontations with the police. The situation is especially complicated for many women who feel an obligation to be what they consider loyal to their own community in the face of the racism and hypocritical concerns about the rights of women from official French society and yet are not at all happy with the role they are expected to play.

Islam has been suppressed by the French state in many ways until recently. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the fact that the authorities have permitted the construction of only a couple of mosques in a country with millions of practicing Muslims and more churches than congregations. But even if French politicians use anti-Islam rhetoric in their speeches and adopt racist politics under the guise of secularism, the government isn't really opposed to the propagation of religion; quite the contrary. It is seeking to maintain its control on the population by teaching imams to preach governmental Islam. Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria used to provide most of the suburbs' imams, but now quite a few are French, since the Ministry of the Interior created a school for Muslim clerics. In response to upheaval among the youth in recent years and especially now, the authorities are anxious to build more mosques as a way to both control and encourage Islamic institutions.

It does, however, seem very clear that these youth are not willing to submit to religious authority. During the November rebellion, the cité youth didn't listen at all when imams demanded the restoration of peace.

These youth have developed a sense of belonging to their cité and

department. For the media, the cités are places filled with animals, not people; for politicians, the cités and their inhabitants are a problem. For many youth, living in the proletarian suburbs is a matter of pride. Some youth have tattoos showing the number of their department, and you can often see the name of a particular cité spray-painted on a wall. Many areas have their own slang, often a badge of honour, although often a fatal flaw to the ears of a potential boss.

Mutual Hatred between Youth and Police

For many youth, the sharpest expression of this situation is the police, who don't even try to pretend that cité youth have any rights. The police consider any young male in a proletarian neighbourhood or with the "wrong" facial features fair game, but the youth are their special target. They constantly stop youth for identity checks, even if they've already seen the particular kids' papers many times before. This is a way to assert their authority and harass the youth. Often they humiliate them and worse, slap them around and occasionally seriously beat them. While the police make no secret of their racism, openly singling out Arabs and Africans for ID checks in central Paris, for instance, they tend to consider all youth from certain areas as the enemy. A group of any combination of young males in a car with department 93 plates stands a good chance of having the police ruin their evening. The police make life hard for them even in their own buildings. Often youth hang out in the lobbies or on the steps because there isn't anywhere else to go. It has recently been made illegal for three or more people to assemble in public areas of buildings. If the police do show up, they will have batons out, ready to punish the youth on the spot and maybe arrest them as well.

Police and youth do agree on one thing: the police do whatever they want in these suburbs. For example, in the middle of November the police beat a young man in La Courneuve in department 93 because he allegedly

insulted them. Two cops beat and kicked him; two others watched without saying anything and a fifth helped write a fake arrest report. The only thing special about this event was that a camera captured the scene and it was broadcast on television. However, even with this solid evidence against the police, all charges were dropped after a few days.

For all these reasons, the youth really hate the police, and that can be seen on the walls of the cités, where anti-police graffiti is very popular.

The Unfolding of the November Rebellion

The immediate background to the rebellion came with the intensified police harassment of youth signalled by the provocative declarations of Nicolas Sarkozy, the Interior Minister (and thus chief cop) who declared "war without mercy" against the racaille ("riffraff" or "low-class scum") in the suburbs. He told the press he would take a Kärcher, a high-pressure water hose most often used to wash dog excrement off sidewalks and streets, to "clean out" the cités.

The spark was the death of two teenagers in Clichy-sous-Bois, a usually quiet proletarian suburb north of Paris. On 27 October, the police chased Zyed Benna (17) and Bouna Traore (15) into a power substation where they were electrocuted. Only a few hours after the tragedy, dozens of angry youth burned 23 cars, a tank truck and a post office, and fought with the police.

In an attempt to calm the situation, the French authorities publicised their own version of the events. Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin assured the press that Zyed and Bouna were delinquents well known to the police and that they were trying to steal material from a construction site. These declarations had – in the end – the opposite effect, since they turned out to be false and were later withdrawn, fuelling popular mistrust of the government.

On 30 October, the police put the icing on the cake when they threw a canister of teargas in front of the

crowded improvised Clichy mosque on what practicing Muslims consider the holiest night of Ramadan. Once again, the reaction of police officials was provocative and insolent: they refused to apologise for anything and claimed that even if the teargas grenade was the same type used by riot police, nothing proved it was fired by the police.

In France, there are often small-scale somewhat violent disturbances, often involving burning cars, on Friday and Saturday night. However this time the daily fighting didn't stop after the weekend. In fact, it started to spread on Monday, 31 October, with the riots in nearby Montfermeil, also in department 93, where the municipal police garage was set on fire.

Starting from this point, the rebellion expanded to other departments for almost three weeks. More than 50 of metropolitan France's 96 departments were affected, nearly every urban area with the exception of Marseille. At the uprising's peak (the night of 6 November), 1,408 vehicles were burned (982 outside the Paris region), in 274 different towns. After 20 nights, about 9,000 vehicles had been set ablaze, hundreds of buildings destroyed and 126 policemen injured, although few seriously.

The overwhelming majority of the buildings attacked were governmental (police stations, town halls, law courts, fire stations, schools, post offices, public revenue offices, tax offices, social security offices, youth and leisure centres, deputies' offices, etc.) and relatively bigger businesses and property (factories, warehouses, car showrooms, shopping centres, banks, stores, supermarkets, fast food chains, media properties, etc.). As the French domestic intelligence service (Renseignements Généraux) wrote in its report, "Everything went as if confidence has been lost in institutions but also in the private sector as sources of desires, jobs and economic integration."

Even if the rebellion was spontaneous, it doesn't mean that the fighters were totally unorganised. The daring execution of some attacks – several small police stations

destroyed, groups of police ambushed, cars set on fire in the centre of Paris, stores torched in downtown Lyon, etc. – suggest the existence to some degree of small organised groups of fighters. Although the youth mostly avoided frontal battles with the police that they could not win, they waged what the authorities called "guerrilla warfare", ambushing police with Molotov cocktails, rocks and bottles filled with acid.

The State's repressive answer was quite naked. Thousands of policemen were called in as reinforcements in the "sensitive areas". In total, 2,888 rebels were arrested. A state of emergency was proclaimed on 8 November, when the government reactivated a law originally passed in 1955 to repress the anti-colonial insurrection in Algeria and then used in France itself in 1961 to stop a pro-independence demonstration of Algerian immigrants in Paris. At that time it was a pretext for a police riot against Arabs in which hundreds were chased down and murdered in the streets.

This time the state of emergency lasted three months and mainly three of its measures went into effect: the imposition of curfews in some areas, at the discretion of the local authorities, the permission for the police to raid residences at all hours, and the banning of gatherings that could create "social disorder".

On 8 November, Sarkozy also ordered the expulsion of all arrested foreigners, documented or not. This was part of an effort to politically and socially encircle the youth and portray them as a hostile foreign body to be cut out by radical measures.

A few cités were literally surrounded by police and residents forcibly confined to their apartments. In Evreux, north of Paris, police locked down an entire apartment complex of 18,000 people. Coming downstairs to walk a dog or even going out onto an apartment balcony to smoke a cigarette was forbidden from 10 pm to 5 am. In some urban areas, youth were officially banned from the streets, but unofficial curfews were far more widespread. Helicopters were sent to hover over

apartment buildings and intimidate residents.

On 12 November, to further this policy of isolating the suburban youth, all demonstrations and public political meetings were banned in Paris. That weekend police set up battle lines at suburban and Paris train stations, ready to use whatever means necessary to keep youth from pouring into the city centre, as had happened in Lyon. Despite the ban and the hordes of police everywhere, there were at least three illegal and necessarily brief demonstrations in crowded areas of the capital. They were initiated by the anti-AIDS civil disobedience organisation Act-Up and involved housing rights organisers, anti-racist campaigners, supporters of Palestine, and other political movement activists.

The repressive forces closely monitored internet and mobile phone communications, which played an important role for cité youth in contacting each other and the wider world. On 7 November, three internet bloggers were arrested for "inciting violent acts". Popular media-sponsored blog sites were censored and others shut down. It's also no surprise the French government supported the 2 December European Union bill, which makes it compulsory for phone and internet providers to keep a six-month record of every phone and e-mail communication for possible police consultation.

Ninety-eight vehicles were burned in the whole country on that night, which is in line with the daily average before 27 October, according to senior police officials. Just for the Île-de-France region, the average of burned cars in "normal times" is 100 during the week-end and 40 to 50 during weekdays, said Michel Gaudin, head of the National Police.

Taking Stock of the Rebellion

Arrest records and eyewitness accounts concur in emphasizing the young age of those involved. In the main courtroom in department 93 to the east of Paris, 42 percent of those arrested were under 18 and most of the others under 22. In the adjoining

department 94, 63 percent were minors. Many of those seen on the streets were as young as 12. We were told that in general, few young men over 25 took part. Some said these older youth were too worn down or cynical; others that they felt the movement was not serious and organised enough. Another explanation offered is that, although both groups have lost any hope in the future, the older ones are more or less resigned to their fate, while the younger ones have not yet accepted the situation and have more energy to fight against the system.

Most of those involved in the uprising were secondary school students, apprentices, temporary workers and others with no job security, and the unemployed. Very few girls and women took part in the fighting, although they played a prominent role in courthouse demonstrations and other support activities. While the rebellion was definitely centred on Arab and black youth, many white youth were involved. In areas where poverty affects more of the traditional French working class, such as in northern France, many of those arrested were of French origin.

It is very important to note that very few incidents of youth attacking ordinary people were reported, and from the media attention given to those few cases, it seems very unlikely that there were many more. Many youth say that during those three weeks there was very little of the fighting between youth of rival cités, too often seen in ordinary times, or between people of different national origins.

We learned a few things about the relationship between these youth and other people in the cités, including their parents. Although there are different classes and social strata in the cités, including public service employees, shopkeepers, professionals, small and especially would-be entrepreneurs, etc., the government's repeated calls for "responsible citizens" to come forward against the rebellion produced few takers. It seems very likely that more people in the cités opposed it than the handful shown on television, but during the

heat of things the prevailing mood of support kept that minority silent. Among the many people we talked to in the Paris suburbs, most supported the rebellion, but some criticised the tactic of burning cars, while many parents were worried about the danger to their children in fighting the state; the use of violence against the police and state institutions and symbols was not really a major source of controversy.

Another important point is that most youth we talked to did not see the end of the uprising as a defeat; they mostly considered it a truce. A young man in La Courneuve commented with humour, "We had to stop because there were no more cars left to burn. But we'll just wait some time until the insurance companies buy more cars, and then we'll start again."

The rebellion sparked similar actions on a much smaller scale in other European cities, including in Belgium and Germany, and also in French overseas departments like Guadeloupe. In fact, there were hundreds of thousands all around the world watching the rebel youth in France, happy to see cracks appearing in the too-peaceful imperialist citadels.

What the Crisis Revealed

The unity of France's ruling classes in the face of this rebellion was remarkable, especially in light of the bickering and electoral conflicts that break out among them again and again. The opposition Socialist Party rallied to defend the Interior Minister Sarkozy, and the revisionist Communist Party (PCF) refused to call for his removal, even though Sarkozy is the most widely hated politician in France, especially among many of the people that vote for these two parties. (In 2002, the vast majority of French voters felt obliged to "hold their nose" and vote for the Gaullist President Jacques Chirac to block the candidacy of the neo-fascist Le Pen – and as a result, they ended up with an Interior Minister who, as Le Pen complained, adopted his programme.) It also has

to be admitted that for many people thoroughly taken with reactionary positions, Sarkozy is their favourite political figure, for his aggressive style in contrast to the more consensual posture of most other politicians. The position of the entire "political class" was that the first priority was the restoration of "calm"; until then, politics as usual had to be suspended. The Socialist Party voted to support the state of emergency when it was first brought before parliament, and then voted against extending it only after the fighting was over.

The PCF declared that the youth were playing into the hands of Sarkozy, and even called for more police to be recruited and deployed.

Asked if the rioters were "victims or criminals", the PCF answered unequivocally: criminals. "Bad manners and violence are the work of a minority and are spoiling life in popular neighbourhoods", a PCF youth organisation statement said. "Police and judicial answers are necessary. But since 2002 [when the Right came back into office] the government has dismantled community police forces and reduced the number of police in the neighbourhoods. Sarkozy provokes violence because it serves his plans." Since many cités are in municipalities run by CP mayors, the revisionist party felt itself a target of the rebellion. The most daring CP figures, those to the left of the official

position, condemned "all violence", of the people and the police alike. The youth revolted in areas governed by the PCF, Socialists and rightist parties alike because none of the official parties make any difference in their lives.

France's relatively influential "far left" Trotskyist parties were no better. They also saw the rebellion as a disaster. Arlette Laguiller, the perennial presidential candidate of Lutte Ouvrière, said, "The workers have nothing to be happy about with this explosion, and not only because they are the main ones to suffer from it. Youth is the future. But what kind of future can be built by a disoriented youth?"

Leaflet from World People's Resistance Movement (France)

A courageous and necessary battle

Young rebels of the cités are waking

This is addressed to you, youth of the cités, all of you whom Sarkozy calls *racaille*, and to others in France as well, especially those who are listening to you.

Some people say you are going "too far". How far is "too far" in responding to the state's top cop when he announces his intention to "clean out with a power hose" a whole section of the people?

This is addressed to you the children of immigrant workers and lower section of workers of all nationalities, especially the people of the cités whose fathers carried concrete sacks to build the France we know today and whose mothers' tireless mops and brooms kept this country clean. This is addressed to you who are called "hoodlums" no matter what you do, whether working or kept out of work, and either way condemned to a life not much better than that of your parents, who endured so much hardship and humiliation in the hope that you would have it better.

We salute you who will never be content with the best the system has to offer you – like (Prime Minister Dominique) de Villepin's plan to allow you to leave school at 14 and work as "apprentices" for practically nothing in jobs no one wants. That would only officialise what exists today, when middle school, for most kids, is not a place for advancement but a place of selection where 14-year-olds are told their dreams are over? How far is "too far" in demanding that people be treated like human beings and allowed to

develop all that they are capable of, individually and collectively?

The truth is that France has seen far too many years of "calm" in the face of injustice and the kind of "peace" that comes from the oppressed accepting their fate. What's so good about quietly accepting the kind of life imposed on the great majority of people in France? The whole "political class" (ruling class and politicians) breathes easily when youth fight one another or take drugs and sink into hopelessness. In this rebellion the youth for the most part have not deliberately targeted ordinary people in the cités or anywhere else. Right now violence among the people is at a low point and the spirit of the youth is soaring. Youth are in revolt – not mindlessly or aimlessly, as official society charges, but against a very clear target – Sarkozy and the state he represents, the police and anything seen as representative of the prevailing social order. They are punching holes in the ghetto walls, bringing the whole country fresh air.

The youth deserve the support of all those who are crushed by the system and its republic, all those who tolerate the life they are given only because they see no alternative. This government has launched attack after attack on many sections of the people, including immigrants, the unemployed, strikers and others. There has been opposition, but not strong and bold enough. By standing up against the way things are

Some "leftist" activists claimed that the rebels should not be supported because they hit "wrong targets", and burned down schools. It's no surprise that youth burn down schools when you hear stories like this one, from a young Algerian woman: "Right now, I'm looking for a school training programme. I went to see a guidance counsellor. She suggested that I become a maid. I'm 17 and she tells me to become a maid – that's ridiculous!" In fact, even a union bureaucrat realised that "these actions are symbolic. A lot of trust is put in the school system, which is supposed to be a social elevator. To burn it down means that it doesn't work. [Youth] turn against it because

it deceived them."

Other more progressive leftists who should have known better were reluctant to support the movement because of its spontaneity and its lack of organisation. But there was a basic question of right and wrong involved, one side mainly right and the other all wrong. As the Provisional Organising Committee (Europe) of the World People's Resistance Movement (WPRM) wrote in a statement issued during the events: "It serves no purpose and is beside the point to dwell on the 'imperfections' of their rebellion. This is a spontaneous revolt of those at the very bottom who have taken the stage of history even though they

have not yet had the opportunity to fully develop their political understanding, establish their political leadership and define a strategic course. Of course they are making some mistakes and of course the cars parked on the streets of the *cités* are not the true enemy. But... it is their way – for now – of showing this system, and those who run it, that they do not intend to abide by the rules nor allow their voices to be silenced."

Talking about the street fighting, a young girl from Beaudottes said, "The youth found a good excuse to do this; they were waiting just for this. It's normal, they are seething with rage." Another youth in Garges

millions throughout France

and those who enforce this order, the youth show their potential as a revolutionary force in society if they stand together with all the people who hate that order – all the exploited, those determined to end the oppression of women, those who truly hate the Iraq war and other imperialist crimes in the world and who really want to save the earth from the profit system. The youth are creating the conditions for a different kind of thinking, where people don't accept things as they are, in France and the world, and a different kind of social movement than we have seen here in a long time. People all over the world are watching and finding encouragement for their own struggles to liberate themselves.

Not only Sarkozy, and not only the government, but the whole state and political class considers what the youth are doing a "disaster" and an intolerable challenge. They have declared curfews in a few places and imposed undeclared curfews against men young and not so young in whole towns and departments. They are issuing all kinds of threats against the people while hoping that flash balls (a kind of rubber bullet), CRS (riot police) clubs and the threat of mass deportations will be enough to make the youth lose heart. At the same time, they are educating the youth and everyone with eyes to see in a basic truth: the French republic is, in the end, a dictatorship that rests on the clubs of the police and ultimately, if necessary, the guns of the army. France is run by those who own

everything, the big capitalist class. They have the final say about everything, and in the end none of the people have any rights that can't be taken away.

To all of you others who share so much of what these youth feel, the working people of all nationalities and people of all walks of life, right now is the time to stand up for them and stop the government's attempts to encircle these kids with a reactionary consensus. Speak out for the youth and the justice of their cause – stop the government's attempts to crush them. Further, many millions of people in France will not tolerate mass deportations of people to punish them for rebelling. The government must not be allowed to carry through on this threat.

The youth's fury is righteous and needs to be channeled to building a revolutionary movement that can turn the power hose of the people's anger towards cleaning out Sarkozy, the state and all that is rotten in this society.

Revolutionaries of the world support wholeheartedly the rebellion in the *cités*. It's time the young rebels of France take their place in the ranks of the international revolutionary movement!

North, South, East, West, unite the people's struggles!

WPRM Europe: wprm@wprm.org www.wprm.org
and in France, email: mprm_France@yahoo.fr ■

put it this way: "Whenever we have a chance to screw up the police, we screw them up, because whenever they have a chance, they screw us up." Even if specific events sparked the uprising, the rebellion was much more than just an answer to them. It took only a week for the movement to spread from Clichy to every corner of France because it was based on dissatisfactions shared throughout the whole country by a lower section of the proletariat. Once again, even the Renseignements Généraux had to admit, "The cité youth have a strong sense of identity based not only on ethnic or geographic origin, but on their condition of social exclusion from French society." Further, the movement had a clear target: Interior Minister Sarkozy, the police, the state and the whole life and future capitalism offers these youth. The revolt wasn't directed at white people but mostly at symbols of the system and the state.

In fact, the youth's rebellion created a very tough situation for the French rulers. Contrary to what usually happens when social or labour movements are giving them trouble, this time the rulers were not in a position to play the "bargaining game". There were no leftist or revisionist parties, no submissive union, and no social services professionals that the State could use to control the rebels, precisely because of their status as social outcasts.

It's Right to Rebel!

When events like these happen, Maoists' starting point and basic stand is that "It's right to rebel".

The point is not that communists should tail these youth and support everything they think, but that they should learn from them and combine what is correct in their thinking with the scientific outlook of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and its understanding of the broader society and the world.

The perspective of building a new society where the oppressed will no longer be squashed but will be allowed to become masters of their own future requires an all-round

...and then a massive student rebellion in March 2006

Only a few months after the rage of France's banlieues burst into flames, another wave of protests by millions of university and secondary school students thrust the country's rulers into even deeper trouble. The target of this movement, which started in mid-January, was the proposed First Job Contract (CPE) law that would have allowed the firing of workers under 26 without cause or much notice during their first two years at any job. The government claimed this would help solve the crisis revealed by the November events by encourage hiring of ghetto youth.

Students were outraged that this law would officialize and worsen conditions many of them already find unacceptable. Already they often spend many months as ill-paid interns doing work regular employees used to perform, and years as temporary workers with minimal benefits. The average age at which French young people now get their first long-term job is 32. Rather than "equalizing opportunity", this law would have further widened the gap between different categories of workers and employees. It was also seen as part of a broader trend of reinforcing precariousness, the elimination of relative job security (never absolute) and other minimal requirements of life such as health care and subsidized housing. Like all European countries, France is shedding the "European social model", the social contract that bought the acquiescence of much of the working class since World War 2, no matter how difficult their lives have been anyway.

There were repeated demonstrations involving multinational crowds of many hundreds of thousands of people in many French cities, along with mass civil disobedience and some clashes with police. The atmosphere of great ferment and general craving for an alternative to the future offered by capitalism was reflected in the slogan "rêve général" (general dream, a play on the words grève générale, general strike). The movement's greatest strength was its broadness in two senses. It combined widespread support among much of French society with increasingly confrontational actions, and drew in youth of all sections of the working class as well as the middle classes.

In November, it was inconceivable that the government would back down at the hands of "the rabble", as Interior Minister Sarkozy called them. In the face of the spring movement, the unity of the political class cracked. First President Chirac approved the law, then he was forced to essentially abandon it.

change — a genuine revolution involving all those who have nothing to lose in the current society and who have the capacity to lead such an epic transformation.

In writing about the even more violent and chaotic peasant movement in China, Mao stressed that the question it posed for every political force was what attitude to take toward it: to oppose it; to mainly criticize it for its errors; or to support it, lead it and try to transform it by bringing out the relationship between this movement and revolutionary

goals that could unite the people. Most of the "far left" in France failed this test miserably, since their political vision prevents them from seeing any revolutionary seeds in this upsurge.

The revisionists and Trotskyists base themselves on the traditional French working class and especially those better-off workers (even if only relatively) who have found or at least feel they can realistically aspire to a more secure way of life. But their greatest loyalty is to the system itself — to some hope for an improved ver-

sion of the status quo (no matter how hopeless that may be these days), but basically nothing radically different from today's organisation of society in which an elite thinking class and its interests command society and the vast majority are condemned to work blindly and be ruled.

The fact is that these youth are no less part of the working class than the unionised workers in the public services and French industry. As the November events powerfully demonstrated to anyone who will not shut their eyes, no real revolution is conceivable in France and countries like it that does not have these proletarians and people like them at its core, with the potentially enormous power of their rage against the way things are. At the same time, such a revolution is also impossible if they cannot unite broad sections of the working class and the middle classes behind them in a revolutionary project aimed at a different kind of society. It is a fact that there is little hope for a tolerable life for these youth of the lower proletariat in France, and to some degree and in some ways, they know that. It is also a fact that the kind of life and future that French society and the capitalist system offer many more tens of millions of people is not what they would choose if they had a choice. The current feelings and ideas of these proletarian *cit * youth are contradictory, but many of them are correct. Their interests lie in a radical destruction of the prevailing social order and its replacement by a system that would do away not only with the current state, and the ruling class behind it, but the whole social order on a world scale. But it requires combining what Lenin called their raw elementary destructive force with a scientific outlook.

Clearly this poses questions about how the revolution can accumulate forces and succeed militarily against an enemy whose armed might is far greater than was deployed in November and whose social and ideological strength is based on the existing divisions in society and generations of tradition

and habit. Underlying this are even more strategic questions: What are the goals of the revolution? On whom must the revolutionary movement rely to be successful? Who are its friends and potential allies? How to challenge a bourgeois system that has such a powerful state apparatus as France's? How to conquer political power and organise the new proletarian rule without it being destroyed by a new bourgeoisie?

An extremely serious problem in the November events was the relationship between this section of the proletariat and other strata and classes. On the one hand, these youth saw themselves as fighting for themselves and their families and to some extent for all those who feel themselves to be (and are, in many ways) excluded from mainstream French society – even though France could not function without them. On the other hand, the ruling classes united against them and tried to isolate them from the middle class and other sections of the proletariat. This blockade had to be broken from both sides. Because there was no powerful effort to do that, it's impossible to tell how well it might have succeeded.

Actually, the government was not able, during these three weeks, to unite broad ranks of middle-class and better-off white workers against the rebellion, and not for lack of trying. It's hard to know what percentage of the middle strata of workers were supportive of these youth and how many were not hostile, but there were some positive indications. Certainly Sarkozy's attitude did not win him increased support among other French workers or much of the middle class. In fact, the uncompromising stand of these youth against the government seemed to have the potential to mobilise and unite the extremely widespread hatred for Sarkozy and the no less broad feelings of dissatisfaction and even revolt against what he represents – a system that offers increasingly little hope of meeting the broadest aspirations of the masses of people for a different life than what they endure today.

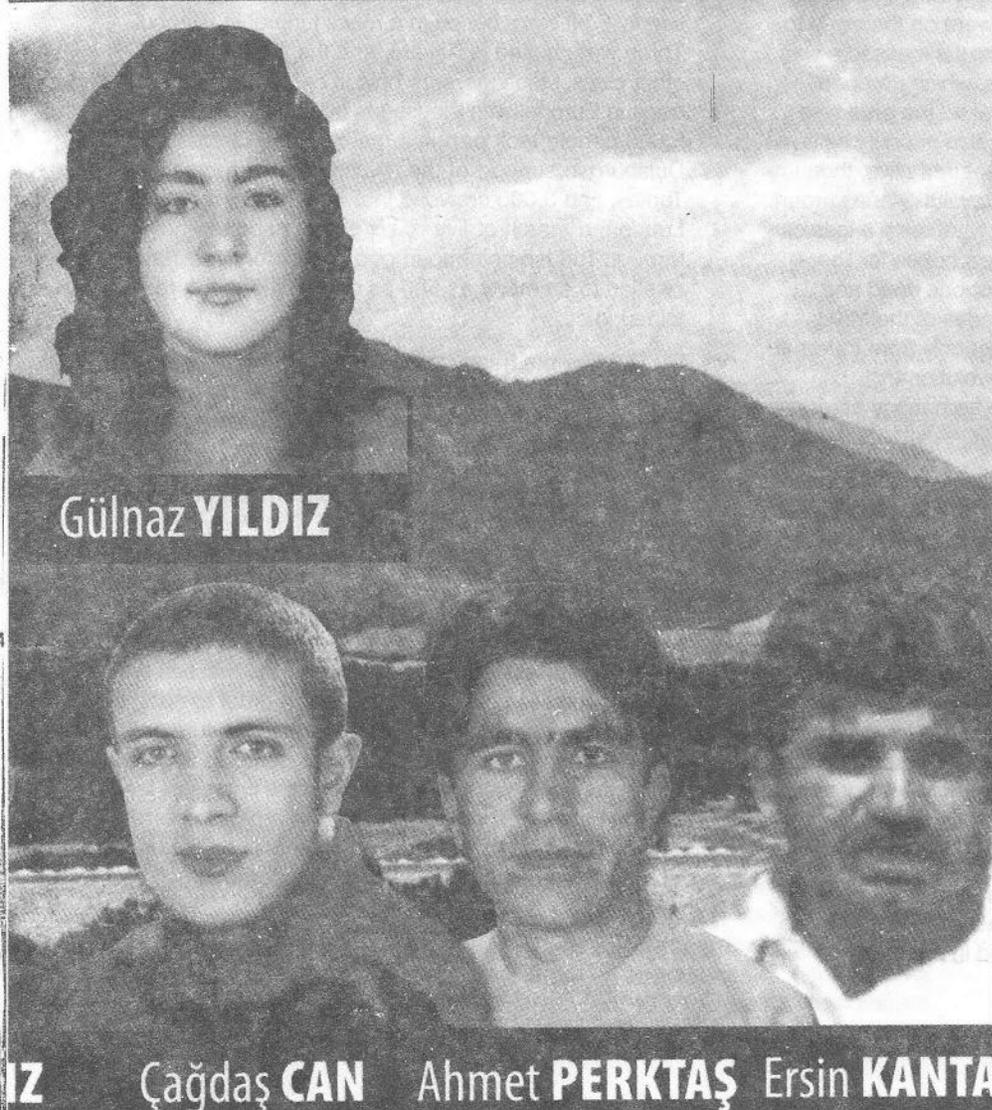
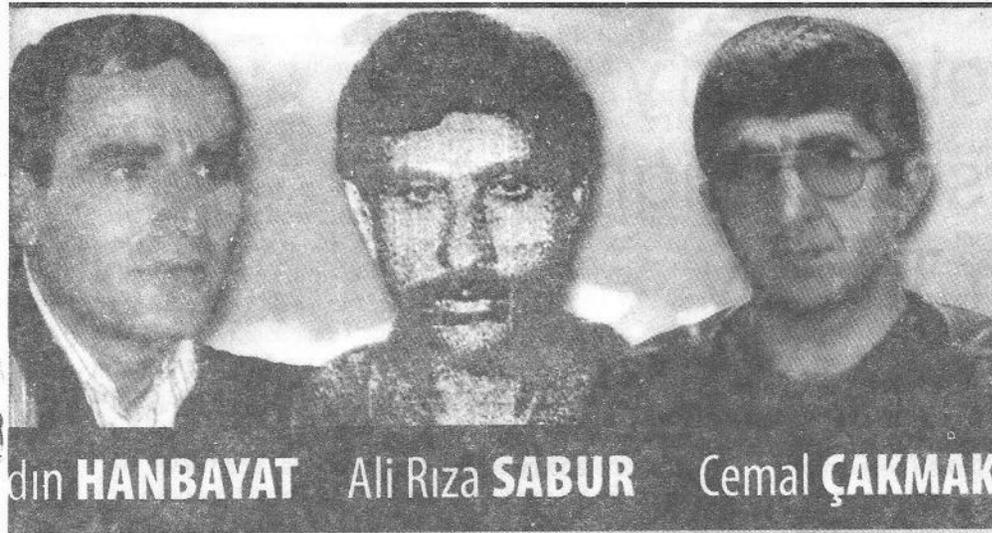
The few but very dramatic lightning demonstrations defying the state of emergency in November gave a glimpse of some possibilities. This is not to say that the movement should have switched over from fighting to demonstrating – such a switch would have blunted the power of the movement and therefore would not have been supported by the youth. But if the movement had taken up more overt forms of political expression, that might have helped challenge and narrow the political gap between these potentially revolutionary strata opposed to the system and the rest of their potential allies in society, thus contributing to changing the thinking and action of the most active young proletarian male fighters. Other forms of struggle could have developed alongside the fighting in the *cit s* and in support of that fighting, mobilising in particular youth from other strata and classes and more broadly, and including women of the *cit s* who were locked out of an active role. Some potentially very important forces, such as proletarian youth in the universities, who could have both helped bring a broader understanding to their class and helped call forth support from other quarters, were never brought to play any real role at all.

A Maoist communist party with the understanding we are talking about and some roots and organisational strength based on that is needed. We hope that a righteous frustration born of this rebellion, together with the understanding and help of the international communist movement, can make a difference in what happens next time. These events are unlikely to repeat themselves in the same way, but the underlying factors that produced this explosion are still gathering pressure. Indeed, only a few months later, a massive student and youth movement exploded against a new French labour law seen as intensifying social exclusion. ■

Cherish the Memory of

Alattin **ATEŞ**Berna **ÜNSAL**Okan **ÜNSAL**Cafer **CANGÖZ** AyBinali **GÜLER**Ökkeş **KARAOĞLU**İbrahim **AKDENİZ**Kenan **ÇAKICI**Dursun **TURGUT**Taylan **YILD**

our Fallen Comrades



*Seventeen
revolutionary
leaders of the
Maoist
Communist Party
of Turkey and
North Kurdistan
and fighters of
the People's
Liberation Army
massacred in
June 2005 .*

On the Massacre of 17 Revolutionary Leaders and Fighters in Turkey

On 16 June 2005, the Maoist Communist Party of Turkey and North Kurdistan (MKP) suffered a terrible blow when the armed forces of the Turkish government carried out a surprise attack on an encampment and killed 17 leading members of the Party and fighters of the People's Liberation Army, who were on their way to the MKP's Second Congress. The brutal massacre was carried out by US-made helicopters, which dropped bombs on the revolutionaries and raked the area with rapid-fire machine guns. The Party also strongly believes that a few of the comrades were captured alive, then tortured and executed in cold blood. Revolutionaries around the world are painfully familiar with what such a loss can mean to the vanguard of the people's hopes for liberation. Declarations denouncing the vicious deed and expressing solidarity with the comrades of the MKP poured in from around the world, not only from fraternal parties and organisations in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, but also from many other progressive organisations.

The Turkish government immediately boasted to the world's media that it had "finished off the Maoists with a single blow". It declared that there was no way that the MKP would be able to reorganise its forces and reconstitute itself as a revolutionary force.

In an international climate marked by the fierce anti-communist campaign being waged by the imperialists, who have gone all-out to declare that communism is dead, the Turkish rulers hoped to use this terrible blow to destroy any hopes that the masses might have that the MKP could recover, and followed up their military attack with a barrage of propaganda aimed at demoralizing the advanced forces.

The Party struck back, however, and seized on the widespread anger at this brutal massacre. The funerals of the 17 fallen comrades were held in a number of

cities, and thousands of people poured out onto the streets to mourn and to declare their determination that while the enemy can kill revolutionaries, it can never kill the hope for revolution. Seven of the revolutionaries were buried in Dersim in a joint funeral attended by thousands. Four were buried in a mass funeral in Istanbul. Three were buried in Ankara, and the three others in other cities. Meetings were held in half a dozen other cities in Europe, with thousands attending. On 25 June, 5,000 people took part in a march in the German city of Duisburg in support of the revolutionary struggle in Turkey, and 3,000 crowded into a memorial meeting. In London, a march of five or six dozen people winding through Turkish neighbourhood of Dalston/Hackney swelled to as many as 500 as people along the route joined in.

Despite the heavy loss, the Party was able to reconstitute a leadership structure and carry on its main activities.

Many revolutionaries and supporters in Turkey and around the world were seriously concerned at how such a massacre could have taken place. The Party itself felt that it needed to investigate to determine whether there might be some serious ideological, political and organisational problems that might have lowered the Party's vigilance. It conducted an in-depth months-long investigation and produced a public report to the masses on the particularities of what happened, in order to sharpen the understanding of the revolutionaries for future battles. Although this initial investigation identified serious mistakes, these were errors made in the course of leading the battle for liberation against a merciless enemy. The blood of the 17 leaders and fighters is on the hands of the class enemy, and shall never be forgotten.

—AWTW

Statement on the Murder of Maoist Comrades in Turkey

By the Committee of the
Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

On 16 June 2005, a group of 17 important leaders of the Maoist Communist Party [Turkey and North Kurdistan] and leading fighters in the revolutionary armed forces under its command, the People's Liberation Army, were ambushed and massacred by the Turkish armed forces in the area of Dersim in Turkish Kurdistan. Many thousands of people took part in militant funerals in Dersim, Ankara, Istanbul and other cities in Turkey. Memorial meetings were held in half a dozen European cities over the following days.

The Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement is grief-stricken and angered by the vicious killing of General Secretary Cafer Cangöz and 16 other comrades of the Maoist Communist Party [Turkey-North Kurdistan] (MKP) at the hands of the reactionary Turkish army.

Three attack helicopters and over a thousand soldiers participated in what was really just an airborne massacre completely disproportionate to the small guerrilla contingent defending the leading comrades. The helicopter gunships and bombs that struck down comrade Cangöz and the other comrades and the electronic devices used to locate them are among the most advanced weaponry in the world. This shows how low the ruling classes in Turkey are ready to go in dealing with the peoples of Turkey and their

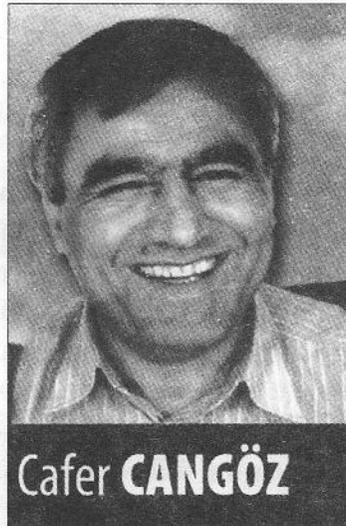
best daughters and sons. These brutal reactionaries and their imperialist masters have real fears because they know they are deeply hated by the workers, peasants, oppressed nationalities and revolutionary intellectuals and democratic forces throughout the country. Without the all-around support of world imperialism, especially the US and its military arsenal, the Turkish ruling class could not survive a single day.

General Secretary Cafer Cangöz and comrade Aydın Hanbayat, the Deputy General Secretary, along with the other comrades Okan Ünsal, Ali Rıza Sabur, Alattin Ates, Cemal Çakmak, Berna Sağılı Ünsal, Kenan Çakıcı, Okkes Karaoglu, Taylan Yıldız, İbrahim Akdeniz, Binali Güler, Dursun Turgut, Gülnaz Yıldız, Çağdas Can, Ahmet Perktas and Ersin Kantar were on their way to the location where the second congress of the MKP was to be convened when they were encircled and attacked by the Turkish army from land and air.

Comrade Cangöz was well known to the enemy. He struggled for decades for the liberation of the peoples of Turkey as part of the world proletarian revolution. He spent more than ten years in the Turkish dungeons. In prison he was a daring and inspiring model of resistance and defiance and was loved by the imprisoned revolutionaries and hated by the prison authorities. Even while imprisoned, this comrade paid a great deal of attention to the problems of the communist movement in Turkey and internationally. After his release from prison in 2002 he played a

key role in organising the founding congress of the MKP and in forging the political line adopted at that congress, an historic event which fought to consolidate a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist understanding in the party. Since the first congress, comrade Cangöz had been fighting to reorganise and strengthen the party and bring about a breakthrough in waging people's war.

Comrade Cangöz was a firm supporter of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement. Under his leadership the party strengthened its ties with the Movement even more and played a more vigorous role in



the international movement.

The loss of comrade Cangöz and the other senior comrades and fighters is a tragic loss to the revolution in Turkey and worldwide. But they did not die in vain. The fruits of their sacrifice and struggle will emerge from the seeds of proletarian revolution, which have been sown widely and deeply among the masses of all nationalities in Turkey and live on in their hearts and minds.

The enemy hoped to crush the MKP but the party, surrounded by the masses supporting it wholeheartedly, has begun the hard task of transforming grief and anger into scientific revolutionary plan. The enemy hoped to strike fear into the masses in Turkey, but already thousands are defying them by honouring the fallen comrades, in Dersim, Istanbul, Ankara and other cities in Turkey and Europe.

We call on all of the proletarian revolutionaries in Turkey to rally around the MKP in this time of great grief and difficulty, rise to the new challenges, take on new responsibilities and carry forward the work that our fallen comrades had begun.

The comrades in Turkey played an important role in forging RIM as the embryonic centre of the world's Maoist forces. One of the tasks of this centre is to help strengthen the Maoist parties and organisations. The Committee of RIM pledges to stand shoulder to shoulder with the MKP as the party struggles to overcome this loss step by step and achieve as soon as possible the breakthroughs in revolutionary struggle that the masses in Turkey so desperately need.

As Mao Tsetung put it, "Fight, fail, fight again, fail again, fight again . . . till their victory; that is the logic of the people." No matter how great the enemy's military might, the strength of the tens of millions of the oppressed and exploited masses in Turkey, once they are fully unleashed and organised in revolutionary struggle, will prove to be stronger. The ugly, vicious ruling classes of Turkey and their imperialist masters will ultimately be swept away by people's war, opening the door to a beautiful future in Turkey and all over the world, the communist world that comrade Cafer Cangöz and the other fallen heroes gave their lives to bring about.

24 June 2005

Announcement to the Regarding the Turkish Massacre

By the Maoist Communist Party (MKP) (Turkey and North Kurdistan)

(This report, excerpts of which are reprinted below, can be found in full on the AWTW web site: www.aworldtowin.org)

To the proletariat and the oppressed masses of the world and to our oppressed people of all nationalities in Turkey and North Kurdistan.

The massacre in Mercan was a big blow to our Party, the people of Turkey and North Kurdistan, the people of the world, and, therefore, a big blow to our international movement. Among the 17 fallen comrades were our leading cadres and delegates attending the Second Congress. This extremely important event and its exploitation by the enemy has been a matter of concern for our Party, people, the relatives of the martyrs and all revolutionary and democratic parties, groups and individuals. Our Party feels obliged and it is our duty to report on this massacre and to elaborate on it to the masses and the relations of the martyrs. We could not make any announcement prior to revolutionary and serious investigation. Now we can report on our preliminary investigations. In relation to our preliminary investigation we seriously evaluated the knowledge and reports of our Party, friendly organisational groups and individuals, as well as documents obtained from the enemy and other materials. Our preparations for the Congress and all documents obtained were seriously analysed.....

The enemy wants to liquidate our Party with big and serial operations. The first of

these was started in the second week of June 2005 against units in Dersim. Once the enemy understood that our units were in the Kinzir zone in Cemizgezek-Hozat in Dersim, they dropped bombs and carried out operations on all the possible routes our units could pass, but our units were able to get past them and changed the place. Just after that, the enemy launched a second operation in the Cerxat zone in Pertek. The third operation was from Erzincan to Ovacik towards Munzur and from there to Mamike and Hozat. They put ambushes on all the possible routes that the guerrillas could pass. Our units lost one comrade in one of the operations but did not lose any in the others. The enemy carried out constant operations, and told collaborators and the families of collaborators who were killed that there was only one unit left and that they can finish the terrorists if they help them. Later on there was a clash in the Arman zone, where a Cobra helicopter was used, which could have been a second tragedy for our units.

These operations were carried out alongside propaganda against our Party and against the guerrillas that they had surrounded. This propaganda was aimed at isolating our fighters from the masses. Because of the crucial support in this difficult time of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, fraternal parties, conscious advanced people, our comrades, supporters and revolutionary organisations, we were able to successfully overcome the enemy's attacks.

The enemy's aims were not accomplished,

Revolutionary Masses Fascist Regime's in Mercan

as Party activities continued ceaselessly and new fighters joined the guerrillas.

The incident [the massacre of the 17 comrades] was not an ordinary military mistake; on the contrary, it is the result of our organisational ideological-political mistakes. Our main aim is to overcome these mistakes and prevent new losses and to change our course to the benefit of the revolution and our Party. Our Party is trying to do these tasks. Our Party will investigate the incident from all aspects, including ideological-political and organisational causes and will announce the evaluation to the people and draw the necessary lessons from it and go in the direction of the revolution and persist in the people's war. This incident has produced important lessons for Turkey-North Kurdistan and for the world revolutionary movement. That is the secret of lessons that cannot be defeated. We believe that the new generations of revolutionaries will grow with those lessons and will win.

The 17 comrades incident has had a big impact on the broad masses. The task is to turn this suffering into an organisational force. Support from revolutionary organisations, the international communist movement, oppressed people and our own supporters, who have united with our Party, are the source of increased morale. Our comrades must have joint actions with other revolutionary groups on a common base. We would like to thank once more all friends and brothers, sisters and comrades from our international class, and once again we express our sorrow to our martyrs' families.

Since the incident some people have used reactionary propaganda, which has come from the intelligence organisation called JITEM, with the aim of furthering their own political and organisational interests. We have to remind them that this kind of orientation and understanding makes the enemy's work easier, and our friends must heal the revolutionary people's unity and must mobilise for these tasks....

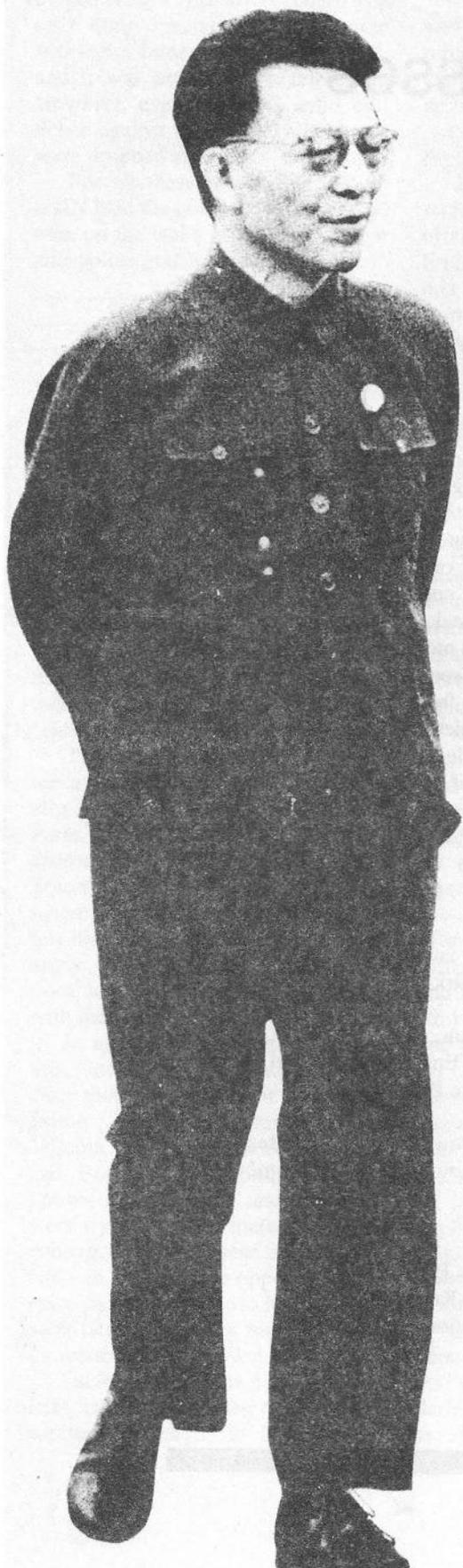
The masses, especially our supporters, demand retaliation from us for the 17 comrades. But we are determined to prepare ourselves for the people's war, which is going to set fire to the base of the worst system. We will win the future and march with people's war, united under the leadership of the Party, with Kaypakkaya's line under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. People's war will win.

The 17 Comrades are Immortal! Down with the Fascist Turkish Republic State!

For Real Liberation, Continue the Revolution to the End and Fight until Victory! Long Live People's War!

Long Live our Struggle for Independence, People's Democracy and Communism!
September 2005

Maoist Community Party (MKP)
(Turkey and North Kurdistan)
Congress Organisational Committee ■



Chang Chun-chiao (1917-2005)

At the Head of the Masses,
In the Enemy's Dungeons –

An Unrelenting Champion of Communism

This article was first published on 16 May 2005 by *A World to Win News Service*.

Zhang Chunqiao (formerly spelled Chang Chun-chiao), one of the most outstanding revolutionary leaders of the late twentieth century, has died. He was 88.

Zhang was a leader of the so-called “Gang of Four”, along with Jiang Qing (Chiang Ching), the wife of Mao Zedong. It should really be called “the gang of five”, since they were Mao’s closest followers in the leadership of the Communist Party of China. They were arrested a month after Mao’s death in 1976 as part of a military coup through which Mao’s opponents in the party seized power, put a violent end to the Cultural Revolution Mao led against them, and overthrew socialism.

The official Chinese Xinhua News Agency bulletin issued 10 May said that Zhang died 21 April. His death was kept secret for nearly three weeks, perhaps to lessen the danger that it would occasion a fresh round of pro-Mao disturbances. At the very least, the delay indicates a fearful indecision and contradicts the official idea that his figure had lost all its power.

The “Four” were convicted in 1981 for what China’s People’s Daily now summarises as “the excesses of the Cultural Revolution” and “trying to seize power after the death of Mao”. Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao were sentenced to death (later commuted to life in prison), while their co-defendants Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen, who caved in at that trial, received 20-year terms. Jiang died in prison in unclear circumstances in 1991, after 15 years in isolation. Wang was released in 1998 and later died, while Yao, also released nearly a decade ago, is said to be alive. So much secrecy surrounded Zhang’s imprisonment and subsequent location and conditions that until the recent announcement, most of the world thought he had died in 1998. According to the terse Xinhua com-



A defiant Chang Chun-chiao at his trial, 1981.

munique, he was released from prison in January of that year “for medical reasons”.

At the trial, Zhang, already reportedly ill with cancer, refused to co-operate in any way with the authorities or even to speak at all, except to reject the indictments. His lethal glare at the judges was unforgettable to all those who saw the television footage, his eyes piercing through a face outlined by a greying but sharply defined, defiantly jutting beard.

Jiang powerfully defended herself and Mao’s line. Zhang’s support for Jiang and contempt for their captors was unmistakable. In response to the accusations, Jiang shot back that there was nothing wrong in overthrowing the party leaders working to take China back to capitalism. Those who were now persecuting her and many thousands of other revolutionaries, she said, were not in a position to complain that they had lost their leadership jobs. Looking back today, it is even more striking that regardless of any “excesses” and mistakes in the Cultural Revolution, the difference between the revolutionary headquarters that led the

mass debates and struggles that drew many millions of people into political life during the Mao years and the regime that overthrew this socialism and later carried out the Tienanmen Square massacre to terrorise the people and silence all dissent is like the difference between night and day.

One of the major specific charges against the Four was that they had tried, from Beijing, to organise an armed rebellion in Shanghai against the coup in a bid to rally resistance throughout the country. Zhang had been the party leader there. Although the authorities were able to forestall the attempt in Shanghai, in part because of the vacillation of those who were to spearhead it locally, there was armed resistance in many cities for several months until the army, arrests and executions put an end to it.

The military coup was ostensibly led by Hua Guofeng, who was named Mao’s successor as head of the party while Mao was still alive. But the real head of the counter-revolution was Deng Xiaoping, the leader of “the capitalist-roaders” against whom Mao had aimed the Cultural Revolution. Deng quickly dumped

Hua and openly reversed China’s course, taking it overnight from a socialist country where “serve the people” was the basis for all decisions to one guided by the watchword “to get rich is glorious”.

Deng put China fully on the capitalist road to where it is today. Before his coup, China’s working people were increasingly becoming the masters of all society, beginning to be drawn into administering power at every level and deciding the country’s future course, studying, debating and fearlessly criticising those in authority and each other. Afterwards, China’s cities were turned into sweatshops, where twenty-first-century machinery enslaves hundreds of millions of people in nineteenth-century conditions.³ Despite the hardships, the people are left still unable to ensure the well-being of their families or even to be free of the fear of unemployment – a situation abolished within a few years after the Chinese revolution, more than a half century earlier. Now millions toil their whole lives away not to create the conditions for the emancipation of humankind but to further enrich the capitalists of the imperialist countries and their local subcontractors. The peasants, still the vast majority, fall ever deeper into poverty and humiliation, groaning under the weight of taxes and often robbed of their land. Rural development is gutted as resources are looted from the countryside to develop the cities. Even the middle classes are subject to the tyranny of corporate magnates and party despots and deprived of meaningful lives.

The filthy rich, inside and outside the party, dine and preen in their gleaming skyscrapers overlooking slums, while officials brag to the media about their skills in “beggar management” – making the hungry invisible by sending the police to beat them off the streets. The whole country is awash with newly unleashed diseases and social plagues revived after decades of obliteration, such as drug addiction, prostitution and the killing of female babies.⁴



Chiang Ching

China took a leap into the future with the 1949 victory of the long revolutionary war to overthrow the representatives of the foreign powers and the feudal big shots and monopolist businessmen in league with them who had ruled China. Socialism made the factories and other big production units into the property of the people, and over the next decades and with much struggle the peasants developed collective ownership of agriculture. But Mao, studying this experience and that of the Soviet Union before, including what he analysed as the restoration of capitalism after Stalin's death, saw that socialist ownership was not enough — and it was certainly not guaranteed. In the USSR and already to an alarming degree in China, a new capitalist class, a new bourgeoisie, had arisen within the communist party itself. For them, now that they were in power, the revolution had gone far enough. Mao believed instead that if the revolution did not move forward, it was in great danger from these new would-be overlords.

In 1966, as these two trends locked in battle, Mao blew the struggle out of the confines of the top leadership by calling on party members and the people to "Bombard the headquarters". This was a call to crit-



During the Cultural Revolution Mao's works as well as Marxist-Leninist classics were distributed in all the main languages to the various Chinese nationalities.

icise and overthrow those party leaders trying to take China down the capitalist road, to take the initiative in creating socialist new things that could move society further in a revolutionary direction, and to study Marxism to get a deeper understanding of the difference between Marxism and revisionism so that increasing numbers of people would play a greater role in running the society. Jiang Qing and Zhang

Chunqiao were part of the national leadership core of this unprecedented "revolution within the revolution". While the party was in a perilous condition and some of its leaders had to be overthrown, the complex struggles of the Cultural Revolution needed to be guided and summed up and the party rebuilt in the course of this, or else the triumph of the capitalist-roaders could not be prevented.

Zhang was a Shanghai journalist

who had joined the party in the late 1930s. He fought as a guerrilla fighter behind enemy lines in the war against the Japanese occupation. After liberation, he became a party official in that city. In 1967, as the Cultural Revolution surged forward, he led an earthshaking event known as the January Storm. After months of fierce debate to clarify the issues, rebels from Shanghai's factories, as well as the neighbourhoods and schools, threw out the old city administration, a stronghold of the capitalist-roaders. Led by revolutionary party members, at first they tried to establish the Shanghai Commune. This was based on the model of the 1871 Paris Commune, the first, short-lived working class revolution, where there was no professional army and all officials were elected and subject to immediate recall at any time. Marx called the Paris Commune the world's first example of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the rule of the working class.

Mao hailed this uprising, a turning point in the Cultural Revolution. The working people had stormed onto the political stage. However, after studying the situation, he pointed out that a commune was not a powerful enough way for the proletariat to rule under existing circumstances. Unlike the situation in which Marx envisioned socialism would arise, China was surrounded by an imperialist-dominated world and could not do without a standing army. Likewise, it could not do without a stable government – a dictatorship over those who wanted to overthrow it – and a leading party based on the most advanced class to lead the masses of people in exercising that dictatorship. Otherwise, representatives of the old society would take advantage of the existing inequalities in society, and their connections and privileges and the superior abilities they had developed on that basis, to get back into power.

Mao suggested that the rebels set up something that had already arisen

elsewhere in a beginning way, a city-wide three-in-one combination of representatives of the rebel organisations, revolutionary party leaders and People's Liberation Army. In this way, as Mao later explained, the masses of people, having exposed what Mao called "the dark side" of the party, would "seize power in an all-around way and from below". By late 1968, revolutionary committees based on similar principles had been set up throughout China.

This was not a magic solution. In fact, after a decade of struggle, the army China couldn't do without eventually arrested Mao's followers, and the capitalist-roaders who took over the party put an abrupt end to the revolution and imposed their own dictatorship. Mao's authority, too, was not enough. He was to warn, not long before he died, that afterwards some people would try to use some of his words to set up a disguised capitalist regime, while others would use different quotations to arouse the people against them. The Maoists understood that there was still much fighting ahead and a lot of work to do.

Zhang became one of the party's highest leaders as the Cultural Revolution continued and moved through different phases and circumstances. He helped lead the complicated battles that kept the capitalist-roaders out of power while working to dig up the soil – the social conditions remaining from the old society – they were grounded in and drew their strength from. As part of that, on the basis of the study and reflection on Chinese and world experience and the problems at hand under Mao's leadership, he made major contributions to working out the Maoist understanding of socialism.

In 1975, as the struggle was reaching a new peak, he published *On Exercising the All-Around Dictatorship of the Proletariat*,¹ a short but dense text that had an explosive political effect. It analysed the contradictory nature of socialism,

the way it is characterised by the contention of elements of the old society and the new. Zhang developed Mao's understanding of socialism as a society in transition. First of all, he wrote, socialist ownership had not been completely attained, especially in the countryside, and it could be easily lost. Secondly, the relations between people in production also had to undergo constant transformation – in other words, working people had to be increasingly drawn into the management of production and, even more importantly, into the administration of the whole society, including deciding the key questions of what production is for and all the major aspects of the aims and organisation of society. Further, the relations of distribution also had to change, so that step-by-step society could begin to leave behind the principle of paying people according to their work. While this principle meant liberation from exploitation it also represented a situation that still perpetuates major and potentially oppressive inequalities, because people do not have equal abilities or needs. Instead, over time society must move toward creating the material and moral conditions for everyone to contribute as much as they can – to fully realise their potential collectively and individually – and receive according to what they need.

Without constant struggle to advance in all the relations between people and not just ownership, and struggle in the realm of culture and ideas against the outlook and habits inherited from the old society, socialist ownership would be turned into a hollow shell within which the old relationships, instead of being gradually overcome, would be perpetuated and brought back with a vengeance.

The most important clash in socialist society is within the party itself, between those promoting ideas and policies representing the interests of a new bourgeoisie, and the representatives of the proletariat, the working class that cannot free itself

without revolutionising all relations among people throughout the globe. This becomes concentrated in a struggle between two ideological and political lines within the party, two clashing outlooks and sets of aims, strategies and policies that would take society in opposite directions.

"The class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the class struggle between the different political forces, and the class struggle in the ideological sphere [ideas] between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat will continue to be long and tortuous and at times will even become very acute", Zhang wrote. "Even when all the landlords and capitalists of the old generation have died, such class struggles will by no means come to a stop, and a bourgeois restoration may still occur if people like Lin Biao come to power." The reference to people like Lin Biao, a capitalist-roader who had died a few years earlier, was meant very specifically as a warning about Deng Xiaoping. As Mao sharply pointed out the year after this essay appeared, shortly before his own death, "You are making the socialist revolution and yet you don't know where the bourgeoisie is. It is right in the Communist Party – those in power taking the capitalist road."

The solution, Zhang wrote, was this: "Historical experience shows us that whether the proletariat can triumph over the bourgeoisie and whether China will turn revisionist, hinges on whether we can persevere in exercising all-around dictatorship over the bourgeoisie in all spheres and at all stages of the revolution." This means, he said, quoting Marx, continuing step-by-step toward "the abolition of class distinctions generally, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, and to the revolutionising of all the ideas that result from these social relations."

"The only way to attain this

goal", he concluded, "is to exercise all-round dictatorship over the bourgeoisie and carry the continued revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat through to the end, until the above-mentioned four ills are banished from the earth so that it will be impossible for the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes to exist or for new ones to arise; we must definitely not call a halt along the path of the transition."

Much of what this means in terms of concrete political, social and economic policies was spelled out in great detail in a textbook written by a team that Zhang led. Rooted in and developing Mao's understanding of the contradictions in socialist society, the "Shanghai textbook"² is a unique and rich examination of the political economy of socialism. It rescues and applies the Marxist understanding that economics is, in the end, about the relations not between things but between people. The authors addressed their work to "the youth fighting on the front lines in the countryside and factories... To better engage in combat, to become politically fit more quickly, the youth must study some political economy."

This work is a fine example of what the Cultural Revolution was all about: rousing the masses of people to fight for the highest goals of humanity, advancing the science of Marxism by striving for a better comprehension of what is correct in it and discarding some wrong ideas from the past, finding ways to broadly popularise key points and making a deep understanding the property of as many people from among the masses as possible. It is also a breathtaking example of dialectical materialism – rigorously materialist in its examination of the reasons for the division of people into antagonistic classes and how, concretely, to overcome that division, and no less rigorously dialectical in its understanding of the contradictoriness and motion of all things. In economic terms alone, the Maoist policies were at least as effective in promoting

growth as the capitalist policies that replaced them, if not more so. Moreover, growth under socialism moved China in a completely opposite direction, in terms of creating the conditions for human emancipation instead of perpetuating slavery to capital and its representatives.

The Shanghai textbook underwent several editions while its authors struggled to improve their understanding as the back-and-forth political battle with the capitalist-roaders approached a showdown. The new capitalist ruling class banned the book and confiscated all the copies at the printer as soon as they took power.

The amount of abuse – and lies – the Western and Chinese media heaped on Zhang when he died is testament to his revolutionary stature. The accusations against him were sharpest from those who were the targets of the Cultural Revolution. That revolution represents the highest peak humanity has achieved so far. The Maoist evaluation of Zhang's life and work is based on our understanding of why the Cultural Revolution was absolutely necessary, and of the aims of the dictatorship of the proletariat it served. Those who believe that there is some other path to the emancipation of humanity need to present reasoned arguments and not just slander.

The fact that socialism was overthrown in China does not necessarily prove that this was the result of mistakes. As the Chinese revolutionaries pointed out during this last battle, in past centuries the rising capitalist class staged many revolutions against feudalism and was thrown back again and again until it finally triumphed. For the proletariat, the first revolutionary class in history that does not aim to substitute one exploiting class for another and which cannot succeed until "the four ills are banished from the earth", the road can only involve twists and turns, victories and defeats, as the world's people rebel again and again against the chains on humani-

ty's potential, until they finally shatter them once and for all.

"There is no royal road to science", the Shanghai textbook quotes Marx, "and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summits." It goes on, "The revolutionary leaders of the proletariat devoted their entire lives to founding and developing Marxist theory. Following their shining examples and diligently reading works by Marx, Lenin and Chairman Mao, we should struggle to study and master this Marxist theoretical weapon for the socialist revolution and socialist construction, and for the achievement of communism worldwide."

Footnotes

1. On Exercising the All-Around Dictatorship of the Proletariat was reprinted in *A World to Win* 1989/14, soon to be available at www.aworld-to-win.org. For more on the Cultural Revolution and the issues involved see *AWTW* 1986/7 and 1993/19.
2. The Shanghai textbook was published in English as *Maoist Economics and the Revolutionary Road to Communism*, Edited with an Introduction and Afterword by Raymond Lotta, Banner Press, New York, 1995, and is available from *AWTW*, 27 Old Gloucester St, London WC1N 3XX, UK, for 12£.
3. For instance, among many other similar examples, the National Labor

Committee cites the Huffy bicycle factory where 93-hour, 7-day weeks are the norm. (www.nlcnet.org)

4. There was little female infanticide before the one child per family rule was introduced in 1979. In the 1980s the births of 115-118 boys were reported for every 100 girls. (Sten Johansson and Olga Nygen, "The Missing Girls of China: A New Demographic Account," *Population and Development Review*, 17/1 (March 1991), pp 40-41. In 2002, the ratio was more than 116 male births registered for every 100 females, reported John Gittings in the *UK Guardian* (13 May 2002), although he says this is now due to the abortion of female fetuses as well as the killing of female babies. ■

Poster from the Cultural Revolution.



A Sober Look at the Situation of the Peru Revolution and Its Needs

The trial of Abimael Guzman (Chairman Gonzalo) and 23 other accused leaders of the Communist Party of Peru (PCP) for "aggravated terrorism against the state" that began in September 2005 is continuing as of this writing, May 2006. Yet according to both the government and the defence, there has never been any doubt that its only purpose is to have Peru's current civilian courts confirm the convictions decreed, in most of the cases, by hooded military officers acting in great haste and secret in 1992. In advance of this new trial, various officials promised that the 70-year-old main defendant would never leave prison alive. The candidates in Peru's current presidential electoral campaign seem to be competing as to who can pledge the worst fate for the imprisoned PCP leadership.

This is nothing but a flagrant act of revenge by the protectors of the old order. A mass upsurge, especially one on the scale of the revolutionary war in Peru that began in 1980, cannot be labelled terrorism. No one who believes in justice can accept this attempt by the US-backed Peruvian government to punish Chairman Gonzalo and others for having waged a people's war, an armed struggle deeply rooted in and reliant upon the country's scorned, poorest masses. That is what this trial and the inevitable sentencing are about, no matter what the current views of the defendants may be, and that must be opposed.

This frenzied lust for vengeance has a calculated political purpose: The conditions for the vast majority of Peru's people are still desperate and outbursts of mass anger and even violence show that they have not become resigned to their fate. The waning of the people's war cannot be explained mainly by any change in their circumstances. It's not hard to understand why the country's rulers want to crush and criminalise the

very idea of mass armed rebellion and revolutionary change.

In the years since Chairman Gonzalo's arrest in 1992, the people's war has suffered very serious setbacks. The level and geographic extent of the fighting has declined dramatically, especially since the late 1990s. It is not clear how many if any Open People's Committees – the revolutionary political power of the peasants the party established in the countryside during the high tide of the people's war – and how many clandestine People's Committees survive.

In December 2005, around dates when the PCP historically carried out major military operations, for the first time in several years there were successful ambushes of police patrols in the Huallaga jungle and Ayacucho. The first area has been considered a stronghold of PCP forces that seek a "political solution" to end the war – and threatened armed action to force the government to grant amnesty as a "way out" of the conflict.¹ The second has been considered a focus of those who have sought to continue the war. Were these attacks coordinated, as the authorities claim? Since both actions were carried out in the name of Chairman Gonzalo, it is very difficult to understand which of these two contradictory political goals they were meant to serve. There have been no major political statements clarifying the party's political orientation for years.

What makes this situation all the more complicated is that Chairman Gonzalo's conduct in the course of this current trial has added even greater weight to the serious and concurring evidence from many different sources over the years that he is very likely to have been the source of the call to end the war. How the PCP faced this situation has been central to the development of the current state of affairs.

Chairman Gonzalo was captured in September 1992, as the people's

war seemed to be surging forward. But an even greater blow to the party was yet to come. In October 1993, Peru's US-backed strongman Alberto Fujimori triumphantly announced that Abimael Guzman had written him a letter asking for negotiations to end the people's war. Afterwards he released a video of the chairman and Elena Iparraguirre (a top party leader known as Comrade Miriam, Chairman Gonzalo's companion) reading the letters. Still photos showed the two flanked by other prisoners, some known to be prominent leaders as well.

The party's Central Committee, comprising those party leaders remaining free, rejected this call as a "Right Opportunist Line" (ROL). "What goes against principles cannot be accepted," the party said, adding, "It is an international communist norm that one cannot lead from inside prison." But they said more than that: The whole thing was a "hoax" concocted by the regime in collaboration with the US and a "black grouplet" of renegade imprisoned (and now expelled) party members. The idea that Chairman Gonzalo could be associated with it was a "plot", part of US-sponsored "low intensity warfare" against the people's war.² The man who looked like Gonzalo, the party told people, was an actor.

Any revolutionary party would risk being shattered if its chair tried to reverse previous positions touching on basic questions of orientation and strategic concepts and advocated abandoning the revolutionary war. This was even more the case for the PCP. At the core of the party's historical identity was the concept of *jefatura*, the idea that Gonzalo was more than the chairman of the party's Central Committee, a *jefe* (literally chief, but here meant to designate a special category of leader) who played a role not only through the party but over and above it. Party

members swore their unconditional subordination to him personally. Now the man who had led the launching and development of the people's war seemed to be telling the party to struggle for a peace accord with the Fujimori government to bring the war to an end. In return for such an agreement, it was argued, the party should dissolve the People's Committees, and disband the army led by the party.

The Central Committee's "solution" to the problem, the idea that it was all a "hoax", might have seemed like the only way out to those leaders determined not to surrender. But in fact, this idea turned out to be a trap. It worked against the party's ability to persist in the people's war for two reasons. First, because, if there was certainly unclarity at the beginning as to the circumstances of the call for peace accords, there was never real evidence that it was a "hoax". How could continuing the war be sustained on the basis of telling party members to shut their eyes as Chairman Gonzalo's call for peace accords seemed more and more likely to be the reality? Second, this approach tried to avoid the problem of analysing and defeating the arguments being given for why it was necessary to end the people's war.

Chairman Gonzalo and the Peace Accords

The strongest argument for the "hoax" idea was that the calls for peace accords really did go against what Chairman Gonzalo had previously stood for. Shortly after his capture, when put in an animal cage to be presented to the media and a howling pack of police and other reactionaries, he mocked their triumphalism. The arrest was nothing more than a "bend in the road" of the people's war, he said, shouting to be heard over the roaring motors of a hovering military helicopter. He called for the party to persist.³ Was it really true, however, that Chairman Gonzalo could never change his thinking and come to a different conclusion? Increasingly, the declared impossibility that such a thing could happen became the main line of rea-

soning. Tautologically (a circular form of argument in which the conclusion is taken as the starting point), any evidence to the contrary was discredited because given this impossibility, it couldn't possibly be true.

When the video came out, it was natural not just to accept it without examination, given its source. Then Chairman Gonzalo's relatives abroad reported that the Fujimori regime, for its own reasons, had let him and Iparraguirre telephone them and argue at length for why he believed that the peace accords were necessary. This could not be ignored or dismissed with the circular contention that since the relatives became supporters of the peace accords, they must have invented the phone calls to justify their stand.

The same reasoning was used to reject a political interpretation of an event that for many people turned the possibility that Chairman Gonzalo was behind the ROL into a strong probability: the "about face" of Margie Clavo (known as Comrade Nancy), a member of PCP's central leadership who along with Oscar Ramirez (Comrade Feliciano, who assumed party leadership after Gonzalo's capture), was a key leader of the opposition to the peace accords line. When she was briefly hauled before the media in handcuffs after her arrest in 1995, she was defiant, shouting "Persist, persist, persist!" in the people's war. Yet six months later she appeared on television again, telling an interviewer that she had been taken to talk to Chairman Gonzalo and that he had convinced her of the necessity of the accords. She had agreed to this broadcast, she said, so that she could make public self-criticism for her role in leading the Central Committee to persist in the war instead of immediately accepting Chairman Gonzalo's appeal.⁴

Ramirez, captured in 1999, was put in a cell next to Chairman Gonzalo. He also said that Gonzalo argued with him for the peace accords line, although Ramirez's conclusion was not the same as Clavo's. In a letter to Peru's president and in court in May 2004, he said he had decided that Peru's present

"democracy is the best system" and that it had been wrong to launch a revolutionary war in the first place, criticising Chairman Gonzalo more for that rather than for calling a halt to it.⁵ Comrade Artemio, who succeeded Feliciano as party leader and head of the forces that wanted to persist in the war, later turned into a staunch supporter of the ROL even though he remained free. He said that Chairman Gonzalo had talked to him from prison, over a radio transceiver provided to Gonzalo by the authorities, and won him to seeing that the war had to be brought to an end.⁶ Artemio was reported to have explained that no one can claim that he and others had not tried to maintain the people's war, even though it was impossible.

All these party leaders had several things in common. When they had one understanding of the possibility and need of continuing the war, they acted bravely in defence of revolution, and when they were convinced of a different understanding, they acted differently. When the call to end the people's war first came out, they argued that the call attributed to Chairman Gonzalo was a hoax and that the war could and should continue and that that was his real position. After speaking to him, they concluded that the war could not and should not continue because that was Gonzalo's real position after all. (The important difference is that Ramirez [Feliciano] became a self-described anti-communist, while the others continued to argue in the name of Maoism.) Chairman Gonzalo's personal involvement in the ROL is the most likely explanation of why the party's entire known central leadership turned against the continuation of the people's war.

Although they pale in comparison with what the actions of these party leaders have told us, there are other indications relating to public and private statements by prominent figures and others, including Iparraguirre's mother (who has had regular contact with her daughter and at times Chairman Gonzalo since 1993) and Gonzalo's lawyer Manuel Fajardo, who has visited him often since 2000. Alfredo Crespo, the

lawyer who defended Chairman Gonzalo before a military tribunal in 1992 and was punished with almost 14 years in prison in retaliation, joined Gonzalo's defence team in December 2005, shortly after he was released. He explained, "I have decided to accept the defence of Dr Abimael Guzman because Shining Path, also known as the Communist Party of Peru, now has a new political line. It stands for national reconciliation and a political solution to the problems derived from the war."⁷

What is remarkable is not the ever-accumulating body of facts but the stubbornness with which they have been continually dismissed by some people.

Chairman Gonzalo's recent courtroom appearances do not contradict his role in arguing for a Peace Accord. At the televised opening session of his second trial in 2004, a public event witnessed by more than a hundred journalists, Chairman Gonzalo embraced all but one of his co-defendants, including Clavo – all publicly identified with the peace accords line. (The exception was Ramirez.) Then he led them in standing together, raising their fist and chanting, slowly and deliberately, while the authorities frantically tried to restore order, "Long live the Communist Party of Peru! Glory to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism! Glory to the Peruvian people! Long live the heroes of the people's war!"

Nothing in these chants is inconsistent with the ROL. This courtroom gesture, which a leader of Chairman Gonzalo's calibre must have carefully thought out in advance, could not have contrasted more with the cage speech he gave in far more difficult circumstances. He failed to utter the one word that would have demarcated between the two lines in the party, the word "Persist!", the word that Clavo had once shouted when she had only seconds to make her views known.⁸

His stand at his current trial is no different. Although this time independent filming has been prohibited to avoid letting Chairman Gonzalo create another fiasco for the regime, a continuous audio feed is available to journalists. There have been many

reporters in the courtroom itself on key occasions, although after nine months the media in general is no longer covering it much. Chairman Gonzalo's courtroom strategy, his two lawyers have explained, is to refuse to recognise the legitimacy of this trial, maintain silence, await the inevitable conviction, and hope for an appeal before the Inter-American Human Rights Court in Costa Rica, which previously contested the legality of the military tribunal that sentenced Chairman Gonzalo to life in prison right after his arrest.⁹ If Chairman Gonzalo were opposed to the call for peace accords, he could certainly have seized the opportunity of the trial to denounce and dissociate himself from the other defendants. In the past, no one has been able to stop him when he wanted to speak. The man who managed to get his word out to the world even when caged is still communicating.

The Peace Accords Line and the Central Committee

Actually, the strongest indication that the ROL was not just something cooked up by the American and Peruvian intelligence services but that Chairman Gonzalo was behind it was the line itself and the documents that argued for it. They did not put forward a crude rejection of Maoism, revolution or the necessity for people's war. Instead, they marshalled philosophical, historical and political arguments, purporting to uphold and apply the principles of what the PCP called Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, Gonzalo Thought to the very real problems the party was facing.

They referred to two kinds of issues. The first was the objective situation. Even before Chairman Gonzalo was taken prisoner, the PCP had begun grappling with a changing international situation in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet bloc, which, these documents concluded, marked a "strategic ebb of the world revolution". Further, there were theoretical and practical problems in terms of how – and under what conditions – the people's war could hold on to its achievements, in the face of some set-

backs, and advance beyond the level it had attained so far. There was the question of Yankee interference and even invasion – and whether this might provide the opportunity to broaden the united front and advance to the countrywide seizure of political power. There was also debate about how much semi-feudalism remained a factor.¹⁰ In short, there was a recognised urgent need to reassess the objective situation and its consequences for the future course of the people's war. Chairman Gonzalo's capture came at a time when the revolution faced a crossroads.

The second kind of argument advanced by these documents was the "problem of leadership": Chairman Gonzalo had been snatched up and much of the rest of the party's long-standing central leadership was dead or in prison. It was said that there were no leaders who could replace him in the needed timeframe to solve the first category of problems. The ROL's conclusion was that for many reasons, chief among them the unfavourable international situation and above all the "problem of leadership", the people's war could not continue. Any attempt to do so would only lead to the destruction of the party, and given the circumstances, even if the people's war could hold out it would eventually become a "war without perspective" – with no clear goal or possibility of seizing nationwide political power – and disintegrate into scattered "roving rebel bands". By entering into negotiations to call off the people's war now, the argument went, the party could save itself from destruction at the hands of the enemy and endure to relaunch the armed struggle under more favourable conditions in the future.¹¹

This was not the empty ranting of a police agency. It represented a coherent line. The questions it posed had to be analysed and answered. No matter who first propounded it, this line could take hold among party members because it offered answers – although wrong answers – to crucial questions thrust forward by life itself. The revolutionaries needed to start out by identifying, analysing and refuting these arguments on the

level of political line, that is, as ideas to be examined and found correct or incorrect reflections of reality. This included an objective (not wishful) assessment of the balance of forces to determine whether or not it was in fact possible to persist in the people's war and whether or not, in the concrete conditions prevailing at that time, entering negotiations was a viable way for the party to gain time to rebound or, in fact, a death trap.

Shortly after the call for a peace agreement arose, the Committee of the RIM (CoRIM), the leading body of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, examined the available information and documents in an attempt to understand and guide RIM in taking part in a momentous line struggle that would not only determine the future of the revolution in Peru but have great consequences for RIM and the international communist movement. The Committee argued, "In these circumstances, it is incumbent upon RIM not only to continue its support for the People's War in Peru but also to join this two-line struggle: to undertake the necessary investigation, study, discussion and struggle to achieve a correct and comprehensive understanding of all the questions involved and on that basis render the most powerful support to the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist line and the comrades carrying it forward in Peru." It established criteria for evaluating the call for peace negotiations: "Do they serve the task of seizing political power through revolutionary warfare" and "safeguard the 'fundamental interests of the people' referred to by Mao, that is, the essential core of the people's power and the revolutionary armed forces?" After an intense process of investigation, evaluation and struggle, RIM adopted a position that the call for peace accords should be opposed and that a two-line struggle should be waged against the Right Opportunist Line in Peru and internationally. Regarding the role of the PCP chairman, it said, "It is important to continue to try to determine Chairman Gonzalo's current views. The key question, however, is the line, not the author." Furthermore, the Call said that those who had advo-

cated the ROL should "repudiate this line... and retake the revolutionary road."¹²

As part of this process CoRIM had also asked the Union of Iran Communists – the predecessor of the Communist Party of Iran (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) – to write a major analysis and criticism of the peace accord arguments. That document concluded: "The people's war is far from over. Partial defeat is not absolute defeat." The only way to preserve the achievements of the people's war and solve the party's problems was to persevere in it. It raised a clear warning: a people's war, once launched, could not be turned on and off like a water spigot, including because the reactionaries themselves would use this to crush the revolutionary forces.¹³

The importance – and courage – of the firm stand against the call to end the revolutionary war taken by the remaining PCP leadership cannot be overestimated. The ROL was very wrong in arguing that the most important thing of all was to save the party. In return, it was willing to surrender the red political power that Gonzalo had called the "bone marrow" of the revolution because of the way it brought about the conscious involvement of the masses, and to dissolve the people's army, without which, as Mao said, "the people have nothing" to defend their interests or even their lives. Such a step would objectively mean betrayal of the hopes and sacrifices of the masses who had taken up the people's war, those who supported it and those around the world who looked to it. This discrediting of Maoism would have led to a far worse setback and demoralisation than would have been produced by defeat alone. If it did this, instead of leaving a precious legacy the party would turn into an obstacle for the present and future generations of revolutionaries to push aside – even if the reactionaries didn't tear it apart and kill as many of its members as they could.

However, it was not at all inevitable that the only choice was between glorious or inglorious defeat. One thing at stake was a point

of basic orientation: whether or not to persist in fighting for the revolutionary interests of the masses, in line with communist objectives, which meant figuring out how to continue that under new and very difficult conditions. But this stand, however basic, had to be grounded in something more than moral commitment. In the end, as the actions of PCP leaders have told us, people act on the basis of how they understand things, what they think is possible and necessary.

The enormity of the problem can't be denied: the leadership which had been responsible for developing the line and strategy for the revolution could no longer do so with a correct orientation, and instead was apparently calling for a reversal of the whole strategic direction and principles they had been basing themselves on. But the difficulty of what was required didn't make it any less necessary. Of course, those remaining had to work out the answers to burning questions step by step and as required over time. To do that, it really wasn't possible to say, "OK, our chairman has left our side, so let's re-examine everything we ever believed before we do anything else." Maybe this is what the revolutionaries thought they were avoiding with the "hoax" line. They had to persist, and figuring out how to do that was as necessary as breathing. But even if Chairman Gonzalo had turned out not to be behind the call to end the people's war, it would not have been true that, as the Persist forces claimed, the thinking and line developed under his leadership to that point was sufficient to lead the people's war to victory. Further, over time it would become impossible to persist in the people's war without a review of the party's line and practice – and theory and experience internationally – to find the roots of the ROL and formulate new analyses and strategic concepts. In other words, without making the breakthroughs in theory and practice ceaselessly required for the advance of this and any revolution.

This would have been very hard for anyone, and perhaps the remain-

ing party leaders did not feel up to the task – especially since they were probably up against their party's chairman. But what else could they do but use their heads and their grasp of Maoism and play a real leadership role as best they could? Communist leaders are not born. Leadership involves talents acquired in many different ways and takes time to develop. But it is fundamentally a matter of ideological and political line (orientation and method). It means wielding Maoism to lead the party in seeking to understand the world and change it. Ironically, the only way to refute the thesis that the remaining party leaders were incapable of continuing without Chairman Gonzalo was for them and new leaders who came forward to rise to the occasion, raising their level as party leaders on all fronts, including tackling and beginning to resolve the line questions involved. It should also be pointed out that the ROL's charge that the remaining leaders were "incompetent" was particularly cruel when it was the ROL itself that was the biggest obstacle placed in the path of the revolution and those trying to lead it forward.

The "hoax" conception was tightly linked to and in fact became a vehicle for a particular conception of political struggle in a communist party. The CC adopted an attitude of trying to persevere through practice alone ("smash the ROL through people's war") and ignore the specific content of the ROL beyond generally denouncing it as "black vomit". Although the February 1994 PCP CC statement said "pay attention to the two-line struggle", it argued that the stand of the ROL had put its members "outside the party by their own free will", as if there were no ROL inside the party itself and no real need to wage two-line struggle against it. To take up and attempt to refute the ROL's arguments, some maintained, would mean falling for the enemy's trap and giving credence to the hoax. Two-line struggle, it was said, should be waged among revolutionaries. The ROL and its "black heads" only needed to be "crushed" physically. PCP supporters abroad spread the attitude that the most seri-

ous problem was not the peace accords line but those who refused to accept the "hoax" theory.

One of the most vociferous proponents of this approach was the Peruvian journalist Luis Arce Borja. At the time RIM was adopting its position "Rally to the Defense of Our Red Flag Flying in Peru" and calling for a vigorous two-line struggle against the proposal for seeking a peace accord, Arce Borja launched a frantic attack on RIM and its Committee which, for a while, confused some of the friends and supporters of the PCP. Arce criticized RIM's understanding of the two-line struggle in the PCP. He wrote, "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"¹⁴. In reply, an article in *A World to Win* magazine pointed out that two-line struggle is a permanent feature of all communist parties, even though it has "high tides and low tides" in different periods, as a reflection of the existence of the contending classes in society and the resulting clash between ideas. What's more, such two-line struggle "is absolutely necessary to educate and transform the outlook of party members and the masses."¹⁵ Arce reacted to this polemic by even more rabidly casting RIM and any others who refused to accept the "hoax" thesis into the camp of Fujimori and the imperialists.

Arce is on record upholding this position regarding the "hoax" through June 2004. Suddenly, during the trial in November of that year, the great defender of the faith against all "doubt" was assailed by doubts. A year later, Arce explodes. Chairman Gonzalo is a "traitor" and has been since October 1993! He wrote the peace letters after all. But this journalist lets slip not a word of explanation or even mention of his previous position. The fault, Arce squeals, lies with RIM for not having denounced Guzman back then and for calling for his defence from the Peruvian state

ever since!¹⁶

Unwilling to confront the task of waging the necessary two-line struggle, the Persist forces were only digging themselves deeper and deeper into a pit. Especially if Chairman Gonzalo was the head of the ROL, but even if he were not, it was not the case that this line represented deliberate betrayal and conscious treason of the kind committed by someone who, for example, informs on comrades to save their own life. It could represent a horrible mistake, meant to save the revolution even while objectively leading to its death, a wrong understanding and a wrong line — which would not negate what was correct in the line associated with Gonzalo previously, nor the disastrously harmful nature of the ROL. The main question in determining whether a political line is right or wrong is not one of subjective intent — whether or not its proponents want revolution. Political lines need to be examined in terms of what they call for and carry out, and where that would lead, no matter what some people might want. At any rate, no matter who put it forward and why, the ROL had to be taken on as a line and refuted as such.

A major two-line struggle against the ROL's political line and the orientation and method behind it and the beginning of a clear-eyed summation of the experience of the past period and the situation faced by the party and the revolution could lead to at least an initial idea of how to move forward. This would mean trying to work out how persevering in the people's war could be linked to and serve the building up of revolutionary strength and both hastening and awaiting a change in the international and national situation, as Mao said during a difficult period in the Chinese people's war, when country-wide political power could be seized as a base area for the world proletarian revolution.

There is no guarantee that if the Central Committee had taken this approach, the people's war would have been able to advance or even hold out. First, there was no getting around the terrible fact that the bulk of the party's leadership had taken a

wrong road. Second, this was taking place on the stage of difficult objective conditions as well. But it is particularly tragic that despite the wrong assessment of the CC, there was a sharp two-line struggle – waged by only one side, the ROL. By acting as if nothing had happened – as if the ROL were not real, as if its emergence did not reflect real questions, and as if Chairman Gonzalo could not possibly have anything to do with it, the “hoax” line and the associated conception of two-line struggle led those who wanted to persist to act on the basis of an analysis and plan increasingly out of accord with reality. No matter what other problems they faced, the “hoax” line made a bad situation even harder to resolve in a positive direction.

The experience of the people’s war in Peru and the issues and lines involved need to be thoroughly studied. The great achievement in launching and carrying forward the People’s War and the subsequent setback constitute a very important experience of the Maoist movement in the period since the overthrow of socialism in China. This experience, in both its grandeur and its pain, are part of the common heritage of the whole international communist movement and especially RIM. A materialist examination of the whole complex affair, including the roles of all who took part in it, is necessary not only for the re-orientation and rebuilding of the PCP by the genuine Maoist forces in Peru but concerns all those who take seriously their responsibility to lead revolution in other countries and on a world scale. It is necessary to continue to defend the imprisoned Chairman Gonzalo and others who initiated and led forward this great uprising of the oppressed even if it is not possible to uphold their current political positions. Ideological and political assistance must be extended to those in Peru who seek to overcome the setback of the revolution. Nothing is more despicable than those who, seeing the value of their “capital” diminish, seek to cut their losses and look for new investments.

There are many aspects of political and ideological line that emerged

in the course of the People’s War and the two-line struggle in the PCP that need to be studied, understood and debated more thoroughly. New advances in Peru will come in conjunction with and as part of the transformations and advances that are required of the international communist movement as a whole.

Footnotes

1. Huallaga Regional Committee and main PCP leader after 1999 Comrade Artemio. See La Republica transcription of radio interview, 16 April 2004, and its own interview with him, 28 August 2004. Also the British Channel 4 TV interview broadcast 7 January 2004.
2. CC statements of 7 October 1993 and February 1994. A World to Win magazine no. 21.
3. Cage speech, AWTW no. 18.
4. Later it was disclosed that the television programme had been made in cooperation with Fujimori’s right-hand man Vladimiro Montesinos, who supervised the filming. In fact, it seemed that Clavo had been following a previously-agreed script when she spoke. This is not surprising, given that the regime and Clavo had come to a temporary agreement in pursuit of different ends.
5. A copy of this unpublished letter sent abroad by a reliable source. Its content was substantially repeated in a 10 April 2003 written interview in Caretas magazine.
6. La Republica interview, 28 August 2004. After the fall of the Fujimori government in 2000, documents putting forward the ROL concluded that because the CC members remaining free had refused to take up the call to negotiate with Fujimori directly, a peace accord was no longer possible. Nevertheless, the immediate goal remained forcing the regime to accept a “political solution”, including amnesty for most prisoners and those like Artemio with a price on their heads. After carrying out an implicit ceasefire with the government for several years, in 2004 Artemio announced his forces would return to armed struggle if “a political solution to the war” were not achieved in six months.
7. Agenciaperu.com, 18 December 2005. He has confirmed this stand in private letters as well.
8. If some revolutionary-minded people abroad took Chairman Gonzalo’s chants as proof that he was opposed to the peace accord line all along, it is because they have not understood the real terms of the two-line struggle in the PCP – that it has not been between some people who opposed revolution and others who condemned it, but between two currents of thought that both claimed the mantle of Maoism, even though they called for opposite policies. This is why lines have to be studied before Marxism can be distinguished from revisionism.
9. Radio Programas Peru interview with

Manual Fajardo, Gonzalo’s attorney, broadcast 17 October 2005. This approach was confirmed in letters received in April 2006 by prominent supporters of the International Emergency Committee to Defend the Life of Abimael Guzman (IEC) abroad, signed by Crespo and Iparraguirre, who repeated her references, written in other correspondence and statements over the years, to “the strategic turn and the political solution that we had been proposing since ‘92”.

10. This was discussed at the party Central Committee’s Third Plenum in 1992. In addition to mentioning other political, military and theoretical problems the party was facing, the Third Plenum report reflects the heavy toll taken by the prison massacre of previously captured party leaders in May 1992. The main document is unpublished (some shorter documents are available at www.redsun.org). But Chairman Gonzalo alluded to some main points in his cage speech, particularly the question of whether or not the war had exhausted the potential of anti-feudal revolution and had to go over to a national liberation struggle.

11. The foundational ROL document, purportedly a transcription of a speech given in prison by Chairman Gonzalo, “Take Up and Fight for the New Decision and the New Definition” (Asumir). There are several slightly different transcripts circulating. An early, relatively short version which appeared in a Lima daily in January 1993 was reprinted as a background document for studying the line struggle in Peru in AWTW no. 23.

12. “Rally to the Defence of Our Red Flag Flying in Peru”, AWTW no. 21. Also see the 11-point programme of the peace accord forces, reprinted as reference material in that same issue.

13. “It’s Right to Rebel”, AWTW no. 21. This document was first circulated internally in RIM as part of the process of investigation and study. It was published in October 1995 along with the aforementioned Call “Rally to the Defense of the Our Red Flag Flying in Peru”.

14. “Trappist Monks Turn Into Village Charlatans: Another Summersault of the Circus Acrobats of RIM”, El Diario Internacional, March 1995. About half of this article, including its main points, was reprinted as reference material in AWTW no. 22.

15. “An Initial Reply to Arce Borja: On the Maoist Conception of Two-Line Struggle,” AWTW no. 22.

16. “The Red Guards of Political Trafficking”, EDI, January 2006. Note that Arce Borja’s only constants are hatred for RIM and very special venom for Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, a founding party of RIM. Also see “Peru: The Remnants of a Betrayed Revolution”. ■

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On *Empire*: Revolutionary Communism or “Communism” without Revolution?

Empire

By Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri
Harvard University Press,
Cambridge,
Massachusetts, 2000

Multitude

By Michael Hardt
and Antonio Negri
Penguin Press,
New York, 2004

Debating Empire

Edited by
Gopal Balakrishnan
Verso,
London, 2003

By K. J. A.

Rarely has the basic thesis of a book been so quickly and profoundly refuted by the developments of life itself as has been the case with Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's book *Empire*. After all, Negri and Hardt paint a description of a world in which imperialism has been surpassed by a new global system, which they refer to as “Empire”. But no sooner had Negri and Hardt baptised this new “imperial” order when the common features of imperialism, and US imperialism in particular, reasserted themselves so insistently and so brutally. War on terrorism, war on Iraq, war on the world, not from a stateless “imperial” entity but very much in the interests of, and under the direction of, US imperialism. After the Iraq war exploded so many of *Empire's* premises, Negri and Hardt published a sequel, *Multitude*, which attempted to address some questions of the post-11 September world, but without really re-examining their central theses.

Why then the attraction of these books? Negri and Hardt claim to have discovered a fundamental transformation in society, and they draw on a wide range of examples of different aspects of social life and human society to make their case. This new stage, which they call “Empire”, is, they say, a society in transition away from the imperialist system. In particular, the authors examine the different aspects of what has come to be called “globalisation”, which they consider evidence of how the world is advancing to communism – toward the disappear-

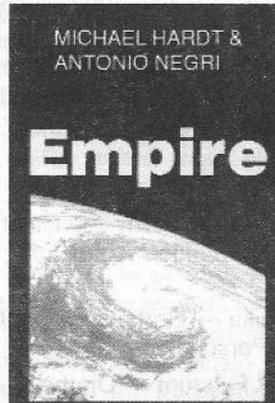
ance of nation-states, when humanity will be self-organising and self-administrating.

The authors give voice to the feelings of millions that conditions exist for humanity to go forward to somewhere different, where society need not be organised on the capitalist principles of greed and piracy. This is captured in the conclusion to *Multitude*: “We can already recognise that today time is split between a present that is already dead and a future that is already living – and the yawning abyss between them is becoming enormous.” The possibility of organising human society on a wholly different basis reasserts itself constantly, and this possibility is expressed not only in political aspirations and struggles but also in every sphere of social life (art and culture, methods of scientific inquiry, philosophy, and so forth). The striving for communism is real, although it can be more or less conscious. Lenin referred to this as communism springing from a thousand

pores. It is no wonder that, because Negri and Hardt try to give expression to this tendency, their work will find a certain echo.

The problem with this picture is that society cannot just spontaneously transform from the class society of today to the communist society of tomorrow. Those who are currently on top of human society will do and do everything in their power, including unleashing massive bloodshed, to maintain the existing capitalist system.

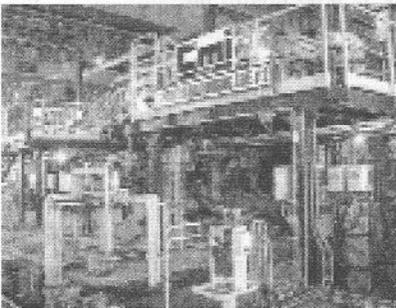
Empire fails to put centre stage the need for that which they say is “already dead” – imperialism, reaction and its ideological manifestations – to be definitively destroyed and buried. The authors end up far too often justifying and extolling the world, not as it can be, but as it is “already living” – which in reality is still shackled and scarred by private ownership, class divisions, the cleavage into oppressor and oppressed countries and all of the other horrors and injustices of the contemporary





ABOVE: Young men dig coal by primitive means in Jharkhand, a very backward area of India, where tribals mainly eke out a living on small tracts of land or by gathering products in the forest.

BELOW: Coexisting with this is a nearby Tata Steel plant, one of the largest and most modern industrial concerns in India.



social order. In short, they want communism without the difficulties, sacrifices and uncertainties of revolution. We will see later that Negri and Hardt's vision of communism doesn't really go beyond the limits of the present system, which is perhaps why they are ready to cry victory when the battle has yet to be waged.

We will see that, in every sphere, the outlook of Negri and Hardt is the worship of spontaneity, the belief that

social processes will by themselves lead to favourable results, thus downplaying the role of people as the conscious factor in reorienting social development. Indeed, the construction of Negri and Hardt's theory is itself a lesson in spontaneity: it represents the tailing after intellectual currents of the last several decades. In particular, the authors embrace the writings of various postmodernists and borrow heavily from their concepts and vocabulary. Negri and Hardt continually refer to the contemporary world as "postmodern", but they do not want to consider themselves "postmodernists". The authors write that, "However confusedly or unconsciously, they [the postmodernists] indicate the passage toward the constitution of Empire." Negri and Hardt take what they consider to be the confused or unconscious work of the postmodernists as the building

blocks of their ideological system.

Marxism of the twenty-first century must be attentive to all of the discoveries and debates of contemporary society (just as Marx and Engels were in developing the ideology of the proletariat in the nineteenth). Marxism must engage, dissect, criticise what is wrong and absorb all aspects of what is correct from the most varied of sources. But what Negri and Hardt do is something quite different. They are making the "confusion" of postmodernism more conscious and systematic and they argue that this new ideology corresponds to the material changes in the way society is organised – to which they give the name "Empire".

I. Imperialism or "Empire"?

In this review we will not try to comment on all the vast array of sub-

jects touched on in *Empire* or follow the authors' numerous and often thought-provoking detours. Rather we will try to focus on the essential theses of *Empire*. We will leave it to others to address the many philosophical and cultural arguments of *Empire*, and here we will deal with these only to the degree that they are unavoidable in discussing Negri and Hardt's understanding of the contemporary world's socio-economic system.

The main thesis of *Empire* is that capitalism has entered a new epoch, beyond imperialism, in which the basic analysis that Lenin made of the imperialist epoch no longer applies. In particular, the role of the nation-state has declined tremendously in importance. "Empire" is the world after imperialism has, in the authors' view, completely imposed capitalist relations throughout the world, leaving no region or area untouched. The processes of production and communication have linked together the whole world in a way unimaginable previously. New forms of labour are emerging, which result in new class transformations. The countryside of the world has undergone dramatic changes.

Much of the above is, of course, true. The world has undergone tremendous transformation in the half century since the end of the Second World War and the three decades since the death of Mao Tsetung. Since the collapse of the USSR (which we should never forget had become an imperialist country no less subject to the laws of imperialism than all others), intra-capitalist rivalry, the push toward war, has given way to the tendency of the imperialists to form an "operating fraternity of thieves" (to borrow Marx's description in *Capital*) in which their particular and contradictory interests are at the present time mainly subordinated to their common need to preserve and protect the conditions of this thievery.

The authors argue that "what used to be conflict or competition among several imperialist powers has, in important respects, been replaced by the idea of a single power that over-determines them all,



The slums of New York city.

structures them in a unitary way, and treats them under one common notion of right that is decidedly post-colonial and post-imperialist. This is really the point of departure for our study of *Empire*: a new notion of right, or rather, a new inscription of authority and a new design of production of norms and new instruments of coercion that guarantee contracts and resolve conflicts",² and "Empire is not a weak echo of modern imperialism but a fundamentally new form of rule."³

The present imperialist system has no centre or centres, the authors argue. It is a system that is now engulfing the whole world "seamlessly" and obliterating all the distinctions in its way. In general, *Empire* is considered not only a higher form of capitalism beyond imperialism, but also a historical advance over the earlier imperialist epoch: "we judged *Empire* less bad or better than the previous paradigm from the standpoint of the multitude".⁴

The authors maintain that sovereignty has been "deterritorialised". By this they mean that the system of government and control is no longer linked to a specific national formation or state system. Here, as elsewhere, they take real phenomena, such as the increased migration of

people, the fluidity of capital, the development of international institutions such as the United Nations, etc., but don't recognise that these features are growing up within a world structure dominated by imperialist nation-states. "It might appear as if the United States were the new Rome...[but] Any such territorial conception of imperial space, however, is continually destabilised by the fundamental flexibility, mobility and deterritorialisation at the core of the imperial apparatus."⁵ However, what "appears" is also, in this case at least, what exists. To quote one reviewer, "The actually existing United States constantly threatens to emerge from the pages of *Empire* like the face in the nightmare, and has to be perpetually repressed."⁶

While the authors do not try to make the absurd argument that the US has been totally free from imperialism, they do argue that imperialism was an essentially European phenomenon, as opposed to Lenin's view that it emerged mainly out of the process of the growth and concentration of capital into monopoly.⁷ Lenin, of course, always considered the US an imperialist country and never fell into the error of arguing that because the US possessed far fewer colonies it was any less "impe-

rialist" than Britain or France, for example. Since the Second World War, the formerly colonial countries were granted formal independence but remained enslaved to the world imperialist system in the form of neo-colonialism. Millions of people around the world know very well that US imperialism is all too real.

The driving force behind the United States' evolution is, in Negri

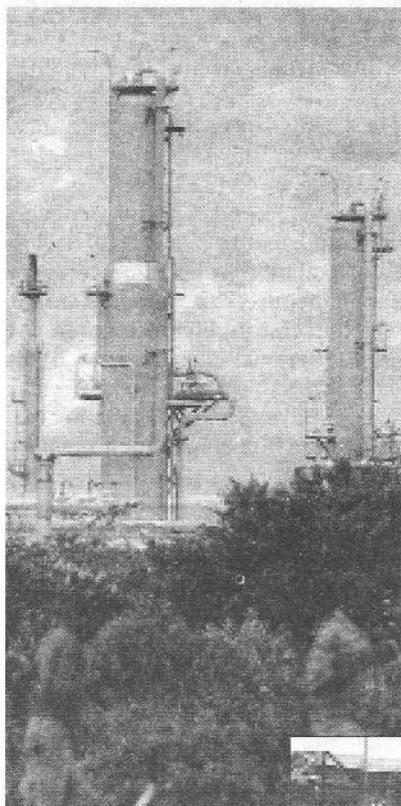
and Hardt's eyes, not the logic of capitalism, with its incessant compulsion to expand and reproduce on an ever-intensifying scale. Instead, they believe that its dynamics are explained by particular features of the US, linked to its history as it expanded westward across the North American continent from its origins on the Atlantic coast. They argue that this "democratic expansive tendency implicit in the notion of network power must be distinguished from other, purely expansionist and imperialist forms of expansion".⁸

The authors go on to heap praise on Woodrow Wilson's "internationalist ideology of peace as an expansion of the constitutional conception of network power" and specifically contrast him with the "imperialist" tendencies represented by Theodore Roosevelt.⁹ How much importance should we give to the particular coat of paint with which Wilson tried to beautify US imperialist interests in entering the First World War? In fact Negri and Hardt do a lot of fawning over the United States and attach great importance to what the US rulers say about themselves. It is perhaps worthwhile to remind Negri and Hardt that imperialist demagogic justification for their crimes is as old as imperialism itself. The Belgians tried

to justify their brutal acquisition of the Congo in the late nineteenth century as a fight against Arab slavery! Japan sought to liberate Asia from the rule of Europeans under the banner of Asia for Asians, etc., etc. This reminds us of Marx's statement that while "every shopkeeper is very well able to distinguish between what somebody professes to be and what he really is, our historians have not yet won even this trivial insight. They take every epoch at its word and believe that everything it imagines about itself is true."¹⁰

To Negri and Hardt, the US's long march to world hegemony is *not* something that is inherent in the capitalist system itself, and not essentially the same as what drove Britain, France, Germany or the USSR, as each of these states also strove to establish its own imperialist empire. The authors treat us to a never-never land in which US imperialism no longer exists, indeed never fully existed, where the Vietnam War was not the defining event of a whole period of world relations in the 1960s, but rather an aberration, a "last gasp" of European-style imperialism, in which somehow the US had become entangled "when it had strayed the farthest from its original constitutional project".¹¹

The conclusion is that "the coming Empire is not American and the United States is not its centre. The fundamental principle of Empire as we have described it throughout this book is that its power has no actual and localisable terrain or centre".¹² At the time of this review, in 2006, when the US has been on an accelerated world-wide rampage since 11 September 2001, such a description seems almost ridiculous. The world system indeed does have a centre, or actually several centres, but among which the US is overwhelmingly dominant. Certainly new international institutions have emerged that, to a certain extent, can provide a kind of "governance" to the world in which the various imperialist powers cooperate and to some degree "mediate" the conflicts between the imperialist states and the local ruling classes of the countries they feed upon



Dense islands of high-tech imperialist-sponsored production co-exist and prey on the most backward, impoverished conditions in the oppressed nations. Above: Shell is the single largest oil producer in Nigeria.



RIGHT: Slum in the capital of Lagos, where 1 room sleeps 6-10 people, waste and excreta goes directly into the water and only occasionally is there electricity.

and dominate. But first we should point out that these institutions in no way represent a passage to a stateless world, rather they serve to preserve and give order to the existing world system of states with all of the inequality and relations of dominance that we see around us. Furthermore, events have underscored the limitations of any of these institutions to transcend the sovereignty of the US itself.

The United Nations is given great attention by Negri and Hardt. Indeed they begin their argument with an analysis of the UN "not as an end in itself but rather as a real historical lever that pushed forward the transition to a properly global system".¹³ Certainly it can be said that the world needs institutions that can take into account the needs of humanity as a whole. This can be seen in the need for a sensible management and protection of natural resources, such as fisheries, and of bio-diversity or the even more glaring need for the allocation of human resources on the basis of needs, such as in response to epidemics or the overcoming of the gross inequalities between different regions of the world. But we can see from countless examples that the world has become more lopsided and unequal, not less, and that the common resources of mankind are increasingly endangered, such as by the very real threat of global warming. And the UN's self-proclaimed central mission of preventing armed conflicts between states has not slowed down imperialist aggression and war. Instead of representing "transitions to a properly global system" of the future, the UN and similar institutions are important pillars in *maintaining the world as it is*, and, in that sense, are not at all transitions to the future but rather obstacles to reaching it.

When we look at the concrete reality of the United Nations we see that it is not an institution sitting above the actually existing relations of power between states. When Negri and Hardt discuss the UN as an institution they leave out its bedrock element, that five countries have a veto in the Security Council, the only UN

body able to authorise (or legitimise after the fact) the recourse to force and war. Further, we have seen that even among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, all vetoes are not equal. Even though three of these countries opposed the US war against Iraq, and even though the Secretary General of the UN Kofi Annan was to declare (albeit two years later) that the war against Iraq was "illegal" from the point of view of the UN Charter, France, China and the USSR could not, and did not, prevent the US and Britain from going to war essentially alone and against the will of the great majority of world states (not to mention the overwhelming opposition of the masses in Britain and a huge opposition movement in the US itself). The UN is both a vehicle for facilitating the "operating fraternity of thieves" as well as an arena for dispute among the thieves themselves. But, as the Iraq war proved, it can only reflect and cannot in any fundamental way over-rule or supersede the actual geo-political realities in the contemporary world.

Empire was written in the period between the first Gulf War (1991, when Bush senior was president of the US) and the Kosovo war that began in 1998, in other words, during the "Clinton" era. While the main trends of US imperialism, which would later form the basis of the Bush II programme, were already beginning to take form during the Clinton period, they had not yet made the "leap" that took place after 11 September 2001. Still, even in the rosy years of the 1990s there exists plenty of evidence (ex-Yugoslavia, Congo, etc.) to refute Negri and Hardt's contention that, "the idea of peace is at the basis of the development and expansion of Empire."¹⁴ Of course, these authors cannot be expected to predict the future, but any theory that claims to be scientific, which claims to actually reflect the world as it is and to understand the laws determining its motion, is obligated to interrogate itself based on how well the actual unfolding of events validate or call into question its underlying assumptions. So Negri

and Hardt were obligated in their later work, *Multitude*, to revisit the thesis of *Empire*.

True, in *Multitude*, "a general global civil war"¹⁵ has replaced the authors' earlier claim of peace as the basis of *Empire*. Unfortunately, Negri and Hardt avoid any real self-interrogation, especially on the founding principle of their theory, the surpassing of the imperialist epoch by something higher.

In *Multitude* the authors argue: "One could say at least since the early 1990s, US foreign policy and military engagement have straddled imperialist and imperial logics.... The United States acts as a national power along the lines of the modern European imperialist states. On the other hand, each US military engagement and the orientation of its foreign policy in general also carry simultaneously an imperial logic, which is cast in reference not to any limited national interest but to all the interests of humanity as a whole... We should not simply regard, in other words, the humanitarian and universalistic rhetoric of US diplomacy and military actions as facades designed to mask the fundamental logic of national interests. Instead we should also recognise them both as equally real: two competing logics that run through one single military political apparatus. In some conflicts, such as Kosovo, the imperial humanitarian logic may be dominant, and in others such as Afghanistan, the national, imperialist logic appears primary, while in still others, such as Iraq, the two are mixed almost indistinguishably. Both logics, in any case, in different doses and guises, run through all of these conflicts."¹⁶

"We should not get caught up in the tired debates about globalisation and nation-states as if the two were necessarily incompatible. Our argument instead is that national ideologies, functionaries, and administrators increasingly find that in order to pursue their strategic objectives they cannot act and think strictly in national terms without consideration of the rest of the globe. The administration of *Empire* does not require the negation of national administrators.

On the other hand, today imperial administration is conducted largely by the structures and personnel of the dominant nation-states."¹⁷

Thus, we see Negri and Hardt's concession to reality: the post-11 September war on the world by the US is at least partially powered by an "imperialist logic" even if other conflicts, such as Kosovo, are mainly a reflection of "imperial humanitarian logic". "Imperial" administration will be conducted by "structures and personnel of the dominant nation-states". And again we see the authors' undue concern with the US ruling class' *explanation* of their actions rather than really analysing the driving force behind them.

Negri and Hardt's discovery of the common interests of the imperialist powers is really nothing new at all. Nor has it ever been true that any major imperialist power could act "without consideration of the rest of the globe". They can and do consider the situation of the whole globe now and in the past, but they continue to do so through the prism of their own national (imperialist) interests and not from the abstract level of "Empire" that Negri and Hardt are postulating. To the extent that the imperialists do act in concert, for example the European imperialists through the vehicle of the European Union, they reflect not some global interest standing above states and classes but rather their common interests both in their competition with the US and lesser rivals (such as Japan) and as oppressor nations dominating much of the rest of the world (the "Third World").

II. What is Capitalism?

What Pushes Imperialism Forward?

In order to understand why Negri and Hardt can arrive at such a fundamentally wrong picture of today's geo-politics, it is necessary to look more deeply at how they understand capitalism itself. While Negri and Hardt offer some useful observations concerning features of contemporary society, they fail to understand the actual material underpinnings of capitalism and are, thus, at a loss to

explain how capitalism is developing and what is pushing it forward.

First of all, it needs to be reaffirmed that despite the still important differences that exist between different countries and regions, there is an imperialist world system, which is indeed *capitalist* and as such is still governed by the basic laws that Marx and Engels discovered. Certainly the world has undergone great changes since Marx laid out the workings of capitalism so systematically in *Capital*. Lenin, in particular, showed how capitalism had entered a new era of monopoly capitalism, or imperialism, and since Lenin's time further great changes have occurred and will continue to occur. But Lenin's achievement was to analyse the era of capitalism on the basis of the laws discovered by Marx. This was not out of some dogmatic loyalty to Marx's teachings but rather because these laws, in a fundamental sense, continued to govern how capitalist society moves and develops.

It is an admirable undertaking to seek to comprehend the contemporary economic system and if, in the course of these efforts, previous understandings even by giants like Marx and Engels are proven to be incomplete or even wrong, those who are fighting to change the world should unhesitatingly recognise the truth. But we are not convinced that "the Marx and Engels of the internet age" (as Negri and Hardt are referred to on the back cover of *Empire*) have really succeeded in discovering a more correct explanation for capitalist society and its development. On the contrary, their departure from the fundamental framework established by Marx and Engels has led them into a morass of confusion.

Forces and Relations of Production

Hidden away in *Empire* is an observation that, were it true, would shake to its very foundation the Marxist understanding of political economy and, with it, our understanding of the revolutionary process through which one social system is replaced by another. Negri and Hardt write, "Postmodernisation and the

passage to Empire involve a real convergence of the realms that used to be designated by base and superstructure.... In this context the distinctions that define the central categories of political economy tend to blur. Production becomes indistinguishable from reproduction; *the productive forces merge with the relations of production....*"¹⁸

To understand this we should briefly review what Marxists mean by the terms forces of production and relations of production. *Forces of production* include land, machinery, technology and, most importantly, the productive classes themselves and their ingenuity and creativity. The way in which human beings are organised to use these forces of production and distribute their product is referred to as the *relations of production*. Here we are speaking of the system of ownership of the means of production, the division of labour in society, and the way in which the products of society are distributed to its various members. In general, the relations of production correspond to the level of the forces of production and together constitute the *economic base* of society. For example, in medieval Europe the feudal system based on landlordism and serfdom corresponded more or less with the capacity to produce – the knowledge, techniques and instruments of production – which existed at that time. There was not yet a material basis and a corresponding social need for the existence of a large class of labourers who were "free" from a relation to the land and forced to sell their labour power to the capitalists.

Every economic base (that is, the forces and relations of production) gives rise to a "superstructure" – institutions, culture, ideas and a state – which corresponds to the given economic base and enables it to go forward. To return to the example of the European feudal system, we can see how it gave rise to institutions, such as the Catholic Church, which corresponded to the feudal economic base. Generally speaking, productive forces undergo development both gradually and through spurts, which bring them more and more sharply

into contradiction with the relations of production. It is this basic contradiction that calls forth revolution. When tools need to speak, they do so through men, Mao Tsetung wrote. This revolution will take place necessarily in the superstructure, and notably through the seizure of political power, which will enable new relations of production to be developed and the economic base to leap forward. In very broad strokes this is what the bourgeois or capitalist revolutions accomplished in the past and what the communist revolution will do in the future.¹⁹

The brilliance of Marx and Engels was to have shown, even at a time when capitalism was at a considerably lower level of development, that the forces of production, the growth of modern industry, science and a proletariat, were being increasingly restrained or "fettered" by the private ownership of the means of production and the capitalist commodity system in which the ability of the labourer to produce is itself turned into a commodity to be bought and sold and "consumed" (that is, used to create commodities through capitalist production). Marx and Engels put it this way:

"Only then [with the communist revolution] will the separate individuals be liberated from the various national and local barriers, be brought into practical connections with the material and intellectual production of the whole world and be put in a position to acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole world (the creations of man). *All-round* dependence, this natural form of the *world-historical* co-operation of individuals, will be transformed by the communist revolution into the control and conscious mastery of these powers, which, born of the action of men on one another, have till now overawed and governed men as powers completely alien to them."²⁰

Thus, we can see two fundamentally opposed visions of how ultimately a communist society will be achieved. For Marx and Engels the realisation of human potential can only come about by *revolution*, by

the transformation of the existing social conditions.

Negri and Hardt argue otherwise, that the relations of production, far from being a fetter on the further development of the productive forces, are themselves "fusing" with the productive forces. (This is linked to the authors' understanding of "immaterial labour", which we return to later.) Negri and Hardt argue that, because the labour process requires the co-operation of individuals, there is no longer any useful distinction (or contradiction) between production itself and the way society is organised to carry out production. They argue that contemporary society, which they call "Empire", is self-organising through networks large and small in particular countries and on a world scale. But the self-organisation of society can only exist under communism when humanity really is in a position to organise itself consciously and collectively. But there are obstacles to this today, in particular the very real capitalist relations of production, that production takes place within a framework of commodity exchange and specifically the exploitation of the labour power of the producers. Society is restrained, deformed, and crippled by the existing capitalist relations. Yes, the potential for a different kind of society is constantly expressing itself, but it is only *potential* as long as capitalism remains intact. While one could applaud Negri and Hardt for extolling the capacity of human beings, they seem willing to settle for only the pale shadow of that potential. The conflict between the tremendous forces of production, which we must remember includes most importantly the revolutionary class itself, and an antiquated system based on exploiting the international proletariat, has in no way disappeared. On the contrary, it is precisely this contradiction that is crying out to be resolved through proletarian revolution on a world scale.

There has been a phenomenal growth in productive capacities and scientific knowledge. Marx and Engels' vision of being able to provide for the needs of all humanity is

clearly vindicated. Yet, at the same time, the gap between wealth and poverty has increased to a degree never before seen in human history. If Marx and Engels were only able to postulate an era of commonly shared abundance, today the potential to realise it re-emerges from every corner. A shift of only a few per cent of the world's food resources would effectively eliminate starvation and malnutrition. How simple it should be to put a stop to the deaths of fifty thousand children daily from preventable diseases, whose main cause is poor drinking water, or to solve the homelessness that is rampant in the very shadows of the skyscrapers in New York and London as well as Mumbai and São Paulo. The inability to solve even such relatively simple problems is due to the way humanity is organised. In light of the inability of society to organise itself to meet even these simple needs, talking about "society as subject" covers over the task of making revolution.

What Propels What?

Negri and Hardt's rejection of Marxist political economy goes hand-in-hand with *Empire's* inability to explain why capitalism is compelled forward to always produce on a greater and greater scale. In particular, it is the competition of different capitals that commands them all to "expand or die", and this gives rise to a spiral process through which capital increases its value, concentrates by gobbling up or merging with its competitors and seeks ever greater sources of labour to exploit and markets to conquer. None of this occurs smoothly, of course, and the spiral process of accumulation takes place through the "anarchy of production" and leads to periodic disorder, crisis and upheaval. Imperialism or monopoly capitalism modifies but does not negate these fundamental processes. Indeed, it actually *heightens* the competition between capitals in the form of giant multi-national firms and imperialist powers and transforms the whole world into their sphere of competition and makes war, including world war, its ultimate

vehicle for destroying its competitors and creating the conditions for expanded accumulation.²²

It is this constant and relentless drive to maximise profit that drives capitalism to exploit more and more labour power (proletarians) more and more thoroughly, constantly transforming the whole productive process and socialising it on a massive scale, and it is this working of the capitalist system that pushes the proletarians to resistance and creates the material basis for revolution. This basic process has always been complex and multi-sided, and is even more so in the conditions of the twenty-first century. But Negri and Hardt reverse this dynamic. It is the struggle of the proletariat, in their view, that has "pushed" the capitalists to the transformation they call "Empire".

Negri and Hardt argue that, "Theories of the passages to and beyond imperialism that privilege the pure critique of the dynamics of capital risk undervaluing the power of the real efficient motor that drives capitalist development from its deepest core: the movements and struggles of the proletariat."²³ In fact the danger is not whether to restrict our analysis to a "pure critique", since genuine Marxists have always recognised the importance of studying and understanding diverse social phenomenon, and certainly the struggle of the proletariat and the oppressed peoples is most definitely an important factor in influencing how the dynamics of capital develop. But we do insist that it is the internal dynamic of capital itself that is the principal motor pushing it both to expand into new spheres and to intensify exploitation where it is already present. Negri and Hardt's inverted theory even goes so far as to argue that the maintenance and strengthening of US hegemony in the period since 1970 "was actually sustained by the antagonistic power of the US proletariat.... capital had to confront and respond to the new production of subjectivity of the proletariat."²⁴

This kind of non-materialist understanding also reflects an inability to understand capitalist crisis. "Capitalist crisis, as Marx tells us, is

a situation that requires capital to undergo a general devaluation and a profound rearrangement of the relations of production as a result of the downward pressure that the proletariat puts on the rate of profit. In other words, capitalist crisis is not simply a function of capital's own dynamic but is caused directly by proletarian conflict." In other words, according to Negri and Hardt, capitalist crisis is mainly a result of the struggles of the proletariat – which is *not at all* what Marx "tells us", although it must be admitted that this is one misconception that is widely held among self-professed Marxists. In his great work *Anti-Dühring*, Engels went to considerable length to refute the "under-consumptionist" theory of crisis, pointing out that the under-consumption of the masses was a feature of *all forms* of class society, yet, it is only under capitalism that crisis appears. Engels described a "crisis of over-production", in that production would expand at a faster rate than markets. Engels put it this way:

"The enormous expansive force of modern industry, compared with which that of gases is mere child's play, appears to us now as a *necessity* for expansion, both qualitative and quantitative, that laughs at all resistance. Such resistance is offered by consumption, by sales, by the markets for the products of modern industry. But the capacity for extension, extensive and intensive, of the markets is primarily governed by quite different laws that work much less energetically. The extension of the markets cannot keep pace with the extension of production. The collision becomes inevitable, and this cannot produce any real solution so long as it does not break in pieces the capitalist mode of production..."²⁵

It is true that capitalist crisis cannot be reduced to purely economic factors alone, and in the era of imperialism, when capitalism mainly is centred in imperialist states, many geo-political considerations also play their role in the accumulation process, including the rivalry between imperialist powers, the resistance struggles in the oppressed nations and the struggle of the prole-

tariat in the imperialist citadels themselves – all of these factors interact on each other. But this does not negate the basic *materialist* understanding upon which Marx constructed his theory and the laws he discovered of capitalism, which push it toward over-production, as the citation from Engels so powerfully presents it.²⁶ While the actual working out of the different tendencies is complex and mitigated by many factors, it still holds true today.²⁷ Instead, Negri and Hardt are arguing in a convoluted way that the proletariat's struggles are both the cause of crisis, and, paradoxically, rescue capitalism (or at least the present centre of the capitalist system, the US).

Luxemburg's Theory Resuscitated

Negri and Hardt resuscitate the theses of Rosa Luxemburg on imperialism. Luxemburg argued that since the proletariat could never "buy back" the product of its own labour, the only way the capitalist system could prosper was through trade with ("outside") non-capitalist regions or sectors, which alone could allow the capitalist system to realise the value (through sale) produced by the exploitation of the proletariat in the imperialist countries. She postulated that imperialism would reach an insurmountable crisis when capital had transformed the whole world.

Negri and Hardt are arguing that imperialism has indeed accomplished this world transformation and the result is a whole new stage of capitalism, beyond imperialism. They argue that, "Capital no longer looks outside but rather inside its domain, and its expansion is thus intensive rather than extensive."²⁸ And "postmodernisation is the economic process that emerges when mechanical and industrial technologies have expanded to invest the entire world, when the modernisation process is complete, and when the formal subsumption of the non-capitalist environment has reached its limit."²⁹ To this we say wrong, and wrong again.

Wrong because capitalism at every stage of its development has

expanded *both* intensively and extensively, that is to say it continues to develop in its home base, to exploit the proletariat more completely, to accumulate more and more capital *and* it continues to seek new areas of domination. Further, what is “outside” to one capitalist (or imperialist power) may well be “inside” to another, such as when the US pushes into markets and territories in Africa previously dominated by European imperialist powers. Wrong again because while capitalism has indeed transformed more and more of the non-capitalist world in its image, this process is by no means complete.

Let's look a little harder at the thesis of Negri and Hardt. They don't literally argue that there are no longer any different states, but rather that their significance is dying out and that real sovereignty has passed to the amorphous and “seamless” Empire. The authors grant the US a special role in this world system, but they see it as if this is just the shell reflecting the old imperialist world while real sovereignty (or the capacity to govern) has shifted to the amorphous “Empire”, which is everywhere and nowhere in the whole world at once. Here also the descriptions of Negri and Hardt have some important aspects that “ring true” to the reader. Some functions previously the sole domain of specific states have been delegated to international organisations such as the World Trade Organisation. There is an ever-increasing degree of interconnection not only in circuits of capitalist production but also in all spheres of cultural and intellectual life. Certainly the international nature of the proletarian revolution, while always fundamental, now screams out more and more loudly and demands that the revolutionary process in given countries pay full heed to its imperatives. In these respects the internet world feels light-years beyond most of the twentieth century, to say nothing of Marx's time. Is it possible that the world is now, or could become, a single feasting ground for a single, non-territorial capital?

No, such a world will not come about (and unlike Negri and Hardt

we have a hard time seeing how such a nightmare would, if it were to come about, be “not as bad as” the present imperialist system). The same basic features of capital that push it to expand also mean that capital can exist only in competition and conflict with other capitals. As Marx put it, capital can exist only as many capitals. The tendency for capital to concentrate, to grow larger and larger and swallow up those capitals which “lose out” in competition does not eliminate this competition but actually intensifies it and places it on a higher level where huge capitalist groups compete with each other and muster whole states in their service. It is this never-ending war of capitals among themselves that makes capitalism unable to rest content with its current profits and drives it to exploit ever more proletarians more and more thoroughly. Even if by some quirk of history such a single worldwide capital could, for a moment, come into being, it would surely be flung apart into disparate pieces.³⁰

A Single Sovereignty?

Sovereignty, or the capacity of a state to govern and rule free of external control, has always been linked to a specific territory and population. Certainly the imperialist powers continually trample on the sovereignty of other states and peoples. In the colonial period this was by brazen annexation and theft. In the more recent period it has taken many forms of direct and indirect aggression and interference. International institutions have granted themselves the right to dictate essential questions of policy that are normally the prerogative of a sovereign power. For example, the International Monetary Fund can tell many countries in Africa to drastically slash already meagre health and education services, the World Trade Organisation can insist that patent laws be brought into conformity with the US conception of intellectual property and, thus, outlaw the production of generic drugs, and a country can be told what kind of weapons it is allowed to develop.

As any observer can easily recog-

nise, the “disappearance of sovereignty” is a decidedly uneven affair. It is certainly clear that the US has no intention of losing even one iota of its sovereignty, and it has consistently fought any and all measures that would restrict it. One example is its refusal to participate in the Hague's International War Crimes Tribunal for fear that one day some of its own torturers could be tried there. The US has even brazenly opposed the Kyoto treaty aimed at reducing carbon gas emissions, partly because of US interests in remaining the world's largest polluter but also because of the US allergy to anything that even smells like a restriction on its sovereignty. So while sovereignty of many countries has been impeded and eroded, this is not true for the most “sovereign” of all, the US.

When we look at the contemporary world what we actually see is not the disappearance of imperialism or the emergence of a single homogeneous world empire free of conflict and rivalry among sovereign imperialist states. Rather we see the increased socialisation of production on a world scale, which is indeed knitting ever closer connections and ties between all of the different actors in the productive process and in human society generally. But this very socialisation stands in sharp and antagonistic conflict with the still existing capitalist relations of ownership, distribution and organisation of production, which is reflected by the still central role of states in enforcing these relations, and most importantly, that strongest of states, US imperialism.

III. National Liberation and the State

Negri and Hardt correctly stress the interconnectedness of today's world, in the productive process, in the movement of peoples, and the communication of ideas. They argue against a frozen view of the world that would deny the transformative power of the capitalist system. While imperialism most certainly does retard the productive forces in the countries it dominates, it does so as part of constantly transforming each

society that it touches.

World capitalism must continually expand its markets and transform more and more human labour into labour power – that specific form of commodity that can be purchased and sold. But capitalism cannot and does not do this evenly and certainly not equitably. Capital can and does make use of, incorporate and strengthen various backward features of pre-capitalist society, even as it continues its march to more extensively and more intensively exploit its markets.

Negri and Hardt correctly point out that, “relations of production, which were developed in the dominant countries, were never realised in the same form in the subordinated regions of the global economy”,³¹ but they still grossly under-estimate and even obliterate the fundamental divide in the world, between oppressor and oppressed nations. They write: “the classical theories of imperialism and anti-imperialism lost whatever explanatory powers they had”.³² In fact, Mao Tsetung showed very clearly in his analysis of pre-revolutionary China that the previous feudal system had been undermined and transformed by the penetration of imperialism into China, which is why he called the system “semi-feudal”. He argued, and it has been shown to be the case, that imperialism does not completely, thoroughly and “democratically” transform the countries it penetrates.

But what imperialism does do is, in a certain sense, become “internal” to the countries it dominates.³³ They correctly note the tendency for the interpenetration of the first and third worlds where the latter “enters into the First, established itself at the heart as ghetto, favela, always again produced and reproduced. In turn, the First World is transferred to the Third in the form of stock exchanges and banks, transnational corporations and icy skyscrapers of money and command.”³⁴ This reality of an interpenetrating world is often ignored and sometimes even denied by those who see imperialism only as an external force blocking the internal development of the nation. In fact,

capital has extremely contradictory effects on the countries it penetrates – it can and must integrate them into the overall world circuits of production and exchange, and by incorporating more and more regions of the world into its dynamic of expand or die, imperialism does fuel growth and development in these countries. But again this occurs while it continues and, in fact, deepens the “divide” in the world between the oppressed and oppressor countries.

Negri and Hardt negate this fundamental truth when they declare, “Through the decentralisation of production and the consolidation of the world market, the international divisions and flows of labour and capital have fractured and multiplied so that it is no longer possible to demarcate large geographical zones as centre and periphery, North and South.... This is not to say that the United States and Brazil, Britain and India are now identical territories in terms of capitalist production and circulation but that that between them are no differences of nature, only differences of degree.”³⁵ So here the authors’ correct observations of the interpenetration of different societies (“they clearly infuse one another”) are used to wipe out one of the most important “differences of nature” that exist, precisely the difference between oppressed and oppressor nations and states. Anticipating objections, the authors argue against “any nostalgia for the powers of the nation state or resurrect any politics that celebrates the nation.”³⁶ But the limits of nation and nationalism must not be used to argue against the still very real task of liberating nations (and whose basis for exploding in struggle can be seen to be intensifying, not diminishing, in the contemporary world).³⁷

Imperialism and Pre-capitalist Modes of Production

Negri and Hardt argue that it is impossible for the oppressed nations to “re-create the conditions of the past and develop as the dominant capitalist countries once did. Even the dominant countries are now

dependent on the global system; and the interactions of the world market have resulted in a generalised disarticulation of all economies. Increasingly, any attempt at isolation or separation will mean only a more brutal kind of domination by the global system, a reduction to powerlessness and poverty.”³⁸

Here again Negri and Hardt make some correct observations but then take them to some incorrect and decidedly non-revolutionary conclusions. Yes, it is a dangerous delusion (and a not very revolutionary one at that) to wish to “recreate” the conditions under which capitalism first developed in the West.³⁹ However, this does not change the fact that a *qualitative* difference remains between the developed capitalist states and the countries of the neo-colonial world, not only in terms of their relative level of development⁴⁰ but also specifically in the existence of a national market, linkages between industry and agriculture and various branches of what goes into a national economy. Overcoming this giant and growing gulf in the world between the small number of wealthy states and the bulk of the world population remains a tremendous task before human society as a whole.

In a world dominated by imperialism, any country or group of countries that make revolution must of necessity take up the difficult struggle to “de-link” the country from the world imperialist system. This is necessary for several reasons: in the case of the oppressed countries, their development has been stunted, perverted and channelled to the particular (subordinate) role that each has in the world imperialist system. The liberation of the people requires that this form of national bondage be decisively dug up. In this sense, national liberation does correspond to the interests of the great majority of the masses in the oppressed countries. Furthermore, the requirements of aiding the world revolution cannot be fulfilled if a country is at the mercy of the imperialist powers or their supranational institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank. It is sufficient to

look at how the imperialists have bullied or overthrown even reactionary regimes that, for various reasons, have not gone along completely with the dominant imperialist programme to see what is in store for a genuine revolutionary regime. In the case of the imperialist countries as well, a genuine socialist revolution requires a "de-linking" if these countries are to withstand the sabotage and attack of remaining imperialist states and also since it is inconceivable that a genuine socialist society could be built on an edifice of exploitation and oppression of other nations.

Here Negri and Hardt are pointing to a real problem: it will be difficult, very difficult, for any country, especially one that has been dominated and oppressed by imperialism, to avoid being reduced to "powerlessness and poverty" if it embarks on a revolutionary path. Indeed, overcoming "powerlessness and poverty" will be one of the great tasks and challenges of the revolution. But what conclusion can we draw from *Empire*? Only that the current situation is inevitable, that it is better not to even attempt national liberation, and that if there is any future liberation to be had it can only come when the whole world capitalist system is transformed (the choice of the word "transformed" is deliberate since the authors don't believe it can be or needs to be "overthrown"). Despite Negri and Hardt's insistence that *Empire* can be attacked from "any point" on the globe, their whole thesis leads right back to a euro-centric conception in which any real social change can only take place first and decisively in the advanced countries, which, despite the authors' objections, we will continue to call imperialist.

The struggle in the imperialist countries will play a very important role in the world-wide struggle to move from one epoch of human society to another. It is neither possible nor liberating to postulate a world revolutionary process in which revolution is limited to the Third World and the proletariat and the oppressed masses of the imperialist citadels are at best relatively passive supporters of a revolutionary process essentially

alien to themselves.⁴¹ But the importance of stressing the truly international dimension of the struggle for world communism and the crucial role that must be played in both the oppressed and the oppressor countries must never be distorted to deny the possibility of revolutionary breakthrough in one or a group of countries, which in turn will call forward revolutionary struggle in *both* kinds of countries. If we are to make revolution it is very likely that that revolution will be made in one or several countries first. And wherever the proletarian revolution triumphs it will inevitably face hostility from that part of the world in which the old system of exploitation is still dominant.

What Negri and Hardt are correctly pointing to are the real limits of the process of building a parallel economic system in a capitalist world. The biological reality that human beings are a single species has, in our epoch, been joined by the social reality that humanity is a coherent whole even if, at present, it is divided into classes and nations. It is impossible that production, science and culture can in any fundamental sense be divided into different camps.⁴² If it is true that in our historical epoch the existence of socialist states surrounded by an imperialist world is likely to remain a feature, this can only be understood as one phase and one form of the struggle between the world proletariat and world imperialism. Peaceful coexistence has definite limits: it can never be a fundamental strategy, and one system will ultimately triumph over the other.⁴³ This is not only because of the aggressive nature of the imperialists (and certainly not because of the will of the socialist countries), rather it is a reflection of this very indivisibility of humanity. If, in addition, this has always been true in a fundamental sense – and recognised by Marx and Engels with their call for workers of all countries to unite and fight for a whole new world – today this "commonness" of humanity is felt much more palpably by broader sections of the masses the world over. Modern communications, production methods and migra-

tory flux do, as *Empire* argues, mean that, even in the most remote corners of the earth, people are far more interconnected in a thousand ways. And it is also true that the existence of modern means of production has created new needs – people in the remote areas also want access to the products of modern life, their share in the common product of humanity, and full access to the world community of men and women. Poverty, as Marx pointed out, is relative to the existence of socially and historically determined wants and needs. A revolutionary movement that is only able to feed the belly of the hungry will ultimately fail if it is not able to, step-by-step, help fill the desire of people to learn, communicate, and struggle to transform all aspects of social life. It is true that the poor peasantry and others, those most inclined to a revolutionary urge, are often also the section of the masses most excluded from this global process. But this exclusion cannot be made a principle, and still less can ignorance and exclusion be used as a building block of a new society. First, such an approach would immediately narrow the base of the supporters of the revolution and drive the middle classes and the intelligentsia, whose co-operation is needed, into the enemy camp. Furthermore, such an approach would make a mockery of the goal of fitting the proletariat to rule the earth and training the masses of people to increasingly master the affairs of state. Pol Pot's Cambodia can serve as a frightening reminder of where this kind of nationalism leads.⁴⁴

So there must be a determined fight to "de-link" the oppressed countries from the world imperialist system (through new-democratic revolution and socialism), and history has shown that it is possible for the result of this to be other than "powerlessness and poverty", at least in the situation of a large socialist country (or a smaller country in relation to a larger socialist country or bloc). A triumphant socialist revolution in an advanced country will also face just as daunting problems in building an economic system without the exploitation of the oppressed coun-

tries and peoples and without the economic entanglements with its previous imperialist trading partners.⁴⁵ However, the authors are pointing to the real limits of building a "parallel economy" in a world still dominated by capitalism. Socialist states must be, in all senses, real "base areas" of the world proletarian revolution, where the masses are already transforming society and working to build a communist future. But they must never lose sight of the fact that the communist future can exist only on a world scale and that the socialist states are locked in a fierce and protracted fight with world imperialism exactly over the future of humanity and the world. Like any base area in the course of a war, the survival and flourishing of socialist states is ultimately both dependent on, and subordinate to, the overall progress of the world-wide struggle against capitalism.⁴⁶

The barrier of imperialist relations to progress and development has to be seen in relation to the potential of the productive forces that capitalism has brought into being – productive forces that grew up, it must be stressed, in connection with the plunder of the oppressed countries. The apologists for imperialism often argue that the people of the oppressed countries should be thankful to the West for its civilising and modernising mission. Some reactionary US political figures have even tried to justify slavery in the US by this standard! This is to be partly answered, of course, by pointing out how the development of capitalism in the West, from its earliest moments right down to today, has always had as a pillar the looting it could obtain from the less developed countries and regions of the world. But this is only half the answer, and the less important half at that. This same process of accumulation and development to which the oppressed countries have contributed so dearly, has also created the science, production techniques, and, increasingly, the proletarian class itself, which makes a different organisation of society possible and necessary on the whole planet. It is against this possi-

bility, which is straining to come into being, that the barriers of capitalism must be examined.

**National Liberation –
Still a Task of the Proletariat**

In one of the most insightful passages of *Empire*, perhaps in anticipation of the attacks that the negation of "nation" will surely solicit, the authors argue: "*the nation is progressive strictly as a fortified line of defence against more powerful external forces.* As much as these walls may appear progressive in their protective function against external domination, they can easily play an inverse role with respect to the interior they protect."⁴⁷

Their discussion of black nationalism in the US points to the positive role this struggle has played, while also correctly pointing out that "the progressive elements are accompanied inevitably by their reactionary shadows... (eclipsing class differences, for example) or when it designates one segment of the community (such as Afro-American men) as de facto representatives of the whole..."⁴⁸

"With national 'liberation' and the construction of the nation-state, all of the oppressive functions of modern sovereignty inevitably blossom in full force." "The revolution (in the colonial countries) is thus offered up, hand and feet bound to the new bourgeoisie. It is a February revolution,⁴⁹ one might say, that should be followed by an October. But the calendar has gone crazy: October never comes, the revolutionaries get bogged down in 'realism', and modernisation ends up lost in the hierarchies of the world market...the liberated countries find themselves subordinated in the international economic order." Or, as they put it later, "*the state is the poisoned gift of national liberation*".⁵⁰

The above passage is accurate as a summation of the course that the great majority of "national liberation" struggles have travelled, especially if one is to (mis)understand "national liberation" to consist principally of the struggle for formal

independence. In Africa, for example, the whole period of de-colonialisation beginning in the 1950s and really only ending with the replacement of the apartheid regime in South Africa in 1994, was accompanied by the ideology of nationalism. In many of these struggles a more radical current attempted to cast the struggle in Marxist-Leninist (and even sometimes Maoist) terms, sometimes presenting this kind of "national liberation" struggle as a prologue to a further socialist stage. In these countries what became consolidated was a bourgeois regime, oppressing the masses of people and bound hand-to-foot to the world imperialist system. Indeed, "October never comes".

But here again we see the difference between what people may imagine themselves to be, whatever banner they raise to justify their action, and *what class relations people actually represent.* Indeed, a great problem with many of the variants of revolutionary nationalism is that they confound Marxism and nationalism and inevitably obscure the central question in every revolutionary process, specifically the question of which class is leading and what kind of society will be brought into being. The Maoist understanding of new-democratic revolution is of a bourgeois-democratic revolution of a new type, led by the proletariat and aiming not at the creation of a capitalist society led by the bourgeoisie but opening the way forward to a socialist society led by the proletariat. For no struggle for proletarian revolution can succeed without fighting against every aspect of inequality and domination. The proletariat takes up the *task* of freeing the nation, yet never sees its *goal* in such a limited light. Ironically, history has shown that those whose goal has been limited to the liberation of the nation and whose ideology has been nationalist are fundamentally unequal to fulfilling the real tasks of national liberation. For example, be it Cuba's dependency first on sugar cane and now on tourism or Mozambique's dependency on exporting migrant labour to South Africa, we see that the task of

freeing these societies from the grip of world imperialism is far from accomplished. This is because any attempt to preside over a functioning capitalist economy must inevitably reach an accommodation (the "realism" Negri and Hardt refer to) with the world imperialist system. This economic dynamic will create a bourgeoisie even where one does not yet exist, as we have seen in country after country.

It is only when the task of the liberation of the nation and the subsequent reconstruction of the nation is clearly and decisively subordinated to the transformation of the whole world that the resolve and strength to travel a different path can be found. But this different path also requires a *state*, the leadership of society and the material strength to overcome external and internal opposition to this path. In fact, the liberation of nations, shattering the grip of imperialism, is just as necessary today as it was forty years ago. And this struggle will play a very important role, if and to the extent that it is *subordinated* to the ideology and programme of the proletariat and the latter's world historic emancipatory task.

It is noteworthy that in this section of *Empire* the authors do not even mention the outstanding case where national liberation struggle did indeed lead to "October", that is to the socialist revolution, and here we are speaking of the Chinese Revolution where Mao Tsetung conducted the long struggle against feudalism, imperialism and bureaucrat capitalism not as an end in itself but as a necessary prologue to the socialist revolution. The danger that the necessary task of national liberation will blind the revolutionaries to the goal of communism (assuming that such a goal was there in the first place⁵¹), that "October will never come", is real indeed. But real danger cannot be used as an excuse for failing to undertake a necessary if perilous journey. The proletariat must dare to take up the task of leading national liberation, of uniting the great majority of the population, including the national bourgeois elements (open and disguised) whose

programme is really only to set up an independent bourgeois system *while refusing to relinquish the leadership of the revolution to such forces* and taking the necessary measures to assure that the masses of people are more and more involved in carrying out a revolutionary process that does lead in the direction of socialism and ultimately communism.

Mao did take up the challenge of "de-linking" China from the hostile imperialist world and actually built a socialist society that was very much an "autonomous economic structure" not dependent on the imperialist system or the world market. Elsewhere *Empire's* authors refer to Mao's China as essentially a "modernisation" project.⁵² In reality, the communist revolutionaries in China were indeed building a whole different kind of society, quite the opposite of the capitalist system that had emerged in Europe and elsewhere. True, the Chinese revolution gave an important emphasis to uprooting the pre-capitalist remnants in the countryside and to building up an industrial base and other features of modern life. But Mao never lost sight of the goal of classless society and the dynamic role of people in the struggle to reach this society, unlike the revisionists, such as Deng Xiaoping, in the Communist Party of China who did in fact see modernisation as an end in itself and who seized power from the revolutionaries following Mao's death under the banner of accomplishing the "four modernisations".⁵³

The Continuing Importance of the Peasantry and the Agrarian Question

In *Multitude* Negri and Hardt take up the question of the transformation that capitalism has wrought in agriculture in the Third World. Their subtitle, "Twilight of the Peasant World", reveals their basic thesis – the disappearance of the peasantry, which they define "as those who labour on their own land, produce primarily for their own consumption, are partially integrated and subordinated within a larger economic sys-

tem and either own or have access to the necessary land and equipment".⁵⁴ Of course, with the peasantry defined in this narrow way, their conclusion is inescapable.

The authors correctly refer to the important analysis Mao made based on the differentiation of the peasantry, specifically into poor, middle and rich peasants. In the course of the polarisation of the peasantry between the poor and landless on one side and the rich peasants who employ others on the other, the middle peasants, who alone really meet Negri and Hardt's definition of the peasantry as self-sufficient producers, "all but vanish in the process".⁵⁵ The authors point out that "Mao's political focus turned toward the peasantry – not toward the peasants *as they were* but toward the peasants *as they could be*."⁵⁶

Mao had indeed analysed that the workings of imperialism had forever changed the Chinese countryside and, in particular, the class differentiation among the peasantry. But he also understood that this process was taking place within a context in which foreign imperialism was hampering China from emerging as a full-scale capitalist society, hence the need for China to undergo a bourgeois-democratic revolution, but of a new type, led by the proletariat and opening the pathway to socialism. Mao was certainly not a "peasant revolutionary", as the modern Soviet revisionists or Enver Hoxha portrayed him. As Negri and Hardt correctly point out, "the final victory of the peasant revolution is the end of the peasantry".⁵⁷ Mao did, of course, embark on a process of collectivisation of agriculture in China with the long-term perspective of reducing step-by-step the differences between worker and peasant and town and countryside as part of the overall progression of the socialist revolution. But the authors lose sight of the extremely important – and revolutionary – step that was taken in China with the redistribution of the land. Yes, the goal was the socialist transformation of China's countryside, but this would not be developed in a straight path out of the differentiation (or the partial proletarianisation) of

large sections of the peasantry in the old society. To go forward to the socialist future, it was first necessary to resolve the "old" land problem in a revolutionary way by giving land title to the peasantry. In this way the enthusiasm of the peasantry was unleashed to tear up the reactionary system, which had been enslaving them for centuries, and so the old feudal relations in the countryside were decisively shattered. But this revolutionary measure was a double-edged sword, for it also opened the door for capitalism and the process of differentiation of the peasantry, into rich and poor, with the inevitable result of land becoming concentrated in the hands of a rich peasantry or capitalist farmers and the majority being reduced to landlessness. (And indeed in the first years after land reform it was possible to see such a capitalist or rich peasant economy rapidly developing in China.)

For Mao, giving "land to the tiller" was not an end in itself, rather it was the necessary step to lead to the voluntary co-operation of the peasantry. Only in this way could the enthusiasm of the masses for collectivisation be fully unleashed and could its *voluntary nature* be assured. This differed greatly, for example, from the revisionist model of Cuba in which the old sugar estates were simply transformed into new revisionist state capitalist farms where, while the conditions of the agricultural workers certainly improved, there was ultimately no fundamental change in their relations of wage slavery.

Negri and Hardt are correct when they say that the traditional peasantry is being transformed, but they are wrong when they write as if the need for agrarian revolution has disappeared in a great number of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It is certainly true that, in the period since Mao's analysis of the Chinese countryside, the penetration of imperialism has continued to transform the rural class relations in many Third World countries.⁵⁸ But it should be understood that this does not happen in a one-dimensional way: while capitalism is dissolving

some aspects of pre-capitalist relations it can also incorporate and reinforce other aspects.

In India, for example, in some aspects the caste system is as strong in Punjab, one of the most capitalistically developed agricultural areas in the country, as in much more backward areas. And, in fact, modern capitalist agriculture can and does profit from medieval practices such as caste. The fact that capitalism *tends* toward the dissolution of the peasantry is not the same thing as saying that it *has* eliminated the peasantry or the striving of the poor and landless peasants (the "semi-proletarians") for a *bourgeois* solution, that is, becoming small landholders. There are many *tendencies* of capitalism that are held in check by other, countervailing tendencies and geo-political realities. For example, capital also has a tendency to support and rely on existing reactionary authority, as we see in imperialism's support for feudal sheikhs in the Gulf as long as oil flows freely, and this runs contrary to capitalism's other tendencies to remake the world in its image. Generally speaking, in the Third World it is only on the basis of a bourgeois-democratic solution to the land question ("land to the tiller") that it is possible to advance toward the truly proletarian-socialist future, which will, indeed, mean the gradual elimination of the peasantry as a class. But to act as if capitalism has already eliminated the peasantry and peasant aspirations would be to try to build a new society on a foundation of sand.

In Brazil, today, as few as 20 per cent of the people make their livelihood through agriculture. But it can also be seen that the movement of the landless is the most important struggle in that country against the reactionary regime and has drawn widespread support from the masses in the urban areas as well. Negri and Hardt explain this support by saying that the particularities of the peasantry have been dissolved into the general mass or "multitude" of the Brazilian producers. But there is another, more correct explanation: the agrarian question in Brazil still concentrates and typifies to a large

degree the "new-democratic revolution" against imperialism and feudalism, which is still to be accomplished in that country, involving the vast majority of the population as well as the landless.

IV. Law of Value and "Immaterial Labour"

Central to the thesis of *Empire*, and a subject that is returned to in more length in *Multitude*, is the argument that "immaterial labour" is now the determining form of labour on the earth. The authors see this as a question of quality, not quantity, proposing a parallel to the role of industrial labour in the nineteenth century, which, although dwarfed quantitatively by agricultural labour, came to characterise the whole epoch and transform the way other forms of labour, such as agriculture and artisan labour, took place. They argue that today immaterial labour, in other words, labour that is not producing material objects, is dominating and colouring other forms of labour that continue to exist (industrial and agricultural).

Here again, there is a reason why the observations and arguments of Negri and Hardt "ring true" to many people. It is indeed a fact that an important, and rapidly increasing, sphere of production comprises various forms of "immaterial labour", such as creating computer software. Not only is this sphere itself very important to contemporary capitalism (and we know that a number of the largest and most dynamic corporations today are in this sphere, Microsoft being the archetypical example), but the advance of computerisation does affect the quality of work in many spheres and the way in which people interact in the productive process. This also has an effect on class relations. For example, journalists generally turn in their stories on computer files, thus eliminating the need for traditional typesetters of a previous generation. The authors also argue that computerisation and the advance in communications (internet, etc.) have led to production being carried out in "networks" – rel-

actively flexible and loose linkages between people that do not require a rigid hierarchical control.

The problem is that Negri and Hardt try to use their understanding of “immaterial labour” to argue that the very concept of “exchange value” no longer has any meaning. Marx and Engels formulated the “labour theory of value” to explain how different commodities are exchanged – why an ounce of gold is worth more than a litre of milk, for example. In brief, they demonstrated that, on the whole, the price for any given commodity will tend to revolve around its exchange value, which represents the “socially necessary labour time” that went into producing that commodity. Negri and Hardt argue that immaterial labour has eliminated the concept of exchange value as representing congealed labour time. Indeed, their understanding of immaterial labour leads them to cast out other pillars of Marxist political economy as well, which are vital to an understanding of capitalism today.

Negri and Hardt argue that many spheres of immaterial production can only take place as part of a collective process that cannot be reduced to simply the activity of exploiting labour power. Negri and Hardt argue that Marx’s conception of variable capital is outmoded, because the labour process does not require capital to “orchestrate production”: “Today productivity, wealth, and the creation of social surplus take the form of co-operative interactivity through linguistic, communicational, and affective networks. In the expression of its own creative energies, immaterial labour thus seems to provide the potential for a kind of spontaneous and elementary communism.”⁶⁰ They go on to say, “The foundation of the classic modern conception of private property is thus to a certain extent dissolved in the postmodern mode of production.”⁶¹ Or as they state in *Multitude*, “Our innovative and creative capacities are always greater than our productive labour – productive, that is, of capital. At this point we can recognise that this bio-political production is on the one hand

immeasurable, because it cannot be quantified in fixed units of time; and, on, the other hand, always excessive with respect to the value that capital can extract from it because capital can never capture all of life. This is why we have to revise Marx’s notion of the relation between labour and value in capitalist production.”⁶²

Let’s look again at the question of language to shed light on what Negri and Hardt are arguing. It is true that the development of language involves all of society and that this cannot be reduced to a product that is a direct application of labour power purchased and organised by the capitalist class. For Negri and Hardt, “immaterial production”, such as the creation of language, is exploited by the capitalist class, not through the buying and selling of commodities and labour power, but by “*the expropriation of the common*”.⁶³ Language itself is not a commodity, it has no “value” in a Marxist sense, or more precisely, it has no “exchange value”. Of course, language is one of the most important and constantly developing assets of society but, as these writers correctly recognise, it does not develop mainly through commodity relations, through the purchase and sale of commodities, including labour power itself. Language has existed as long as human beings have existed, and long after commodity production and exchange value are buried people will continue to develop language and literature. But when the development of language takes place within capitalist society, this central feature of human society *cannot escape from the whole social environment of commodity production* that permeates all of society. When language is transformed into a commodity – for example, when the ability to speak English raises the level of the exchange value of a person’s labour power (that is to say, their salary), when English medium schools thrive both as a source of profit and a means of class differentiation in many countries, when dictionaries or works of culture and art that codify the developments of language that the masses have produced are exchanged on the market place, these social products do indeed become

commodities that are privately appropriated, that are bought and sold, and that are subject to the law of value. The mechanism through which capitalism exploits is none other than the system of commodity production; outside of this framework of buying and selling, to speak of capitalist exploitation has no real scientific meaning.

The great concern of the imperialists for “intellectual property rights” shows that the “shell” of bourgeois relations has to be shattered by the conscious and forceful act of the proletariat and that these relations will not just spontaneously dissolve into cyberspace. The absurdity of private ownership stands out all the more sharply in so far as the productive process itself, even restrained and channelled by capitalism, does require an ever increasing interaction of people and ideas in a given society and throughout the world, as *Empire* forcefully argues. This is why it is so important for the capitalists to appropriate, regulate, channel and “commodify” the understanding and development that does come forward from among the masses.

In software production it is true, as the authors point out, that the direct and indirect interaction of countless actors are the building blocks on which products are created. This is particularly evident in the “open source” movement, which refers to the efforts of computer engineers and others to fight so that all source code for software lies in the public domain and is not subject to copyright. Even, or perhaps especially, the wealth of experience of software users, their complaints, the solutions they find to bugs, and so forth, all become part of the collective process that goes into software production. Negri and Hardt consider this “spontaneous communism”, but what it mainly shows is that the shell of capitalism throttles the capacity of the people to produce, and that whatever spontaneous and creative channels and networks people create to carry out production and scientific experiment and investigation will generally be brought under the wing of the capitalists, or risk being suffocated altogether.

In the world today it is only the capitalist who is in a position to transform the products of people's labour and initiative into a saleable product, and as long as capitalism does exist products that cannot be profitably sold will not be produced. For example, one of the great crimes of capitalism is how little of the world's resources are directed toward the prevention and cure of malaria, a disease that kills millions every year, while billions of dollars have been spent researching and marketing Viagra, an expensive medication to increase sexual performance in men. As long as the profit system continues to dominate society these kinds of misallocations of human resources are inevitable, and promising avenues to fulfil real social needs will not be pursued.

Capitalism is certainly theft, but it is a particular kind of theft, a particular mode of production. This mode of production does mean, yes, hiring different kinds of people ("variable capital") and organising their efforts and expropriating the product of the collective efforts. The "exchange value" of these commodities around which their actual sale price gravitates is indeed essentially determined by the law of value, by the amount of "socially necessary labour time" that goes into their production, or if we want to rephrase this, to take into account Negri and Hardt's reasonable argument that much of what ends in the capitalist product is not a direct result of capital's investment, we can say that the exchange value also includes that amount of socially necessary labour time that goes into appropriating, privatising, systematising, packaging and marketing the product that may well have been produced or exist outside of the capitalist relationship, construed in the strictest sense.

To give an example, drinking water in a mountain community is not a commodity, it is not bought and sold, it is just there to be consumed, it has no exchange value but only *use value*. If a capitalist enterprise sets up a factory to bottle this pure water and sell it to city dwellers, the exchange value of the water will be determined

only by the costs involved in setting up the factory, the labour power employed in the bottling process, shipping and transportation and additional costs, such as administration and advertising. So pure drinking water with no exchange value is transformed into a commodity in accordance with the law of value. And why cannot city dwellers simply organise themselves and their mountain-dwelling sisters and brothers to deliver the pure water to those that need it? The simple answer is capitalism – the capitalists own and control the transportation and distribution facilities, they alone have the capital necessary to build the bottling plant, and they alone can mobilize and control the labour power necessary to carry out the whole process. So, even if everyone had an "equal right" to the mountain water, we can see that it is only the capitalist class that can avail itself of this right. And to carry this a step further, if some men and women of good will were to band together to form a kind of co-operative water supply, they could only succeed in this venture to the extent that they themselves *became capitalists*, and any efforts they made to ignore or violate the law of value, for example, by giving it away to the poor and needy, would be smashed by the infamous "invisible hand" of the capitalist market. Indeed, repeated co-operative efforts in country after country have shown that the only choice is to join the band or be crushed.

Let us look further at Negri and Hardt's software producers and their argument that "value" is being produced and expropriated even though exchange value has been eliminated, since it is this alleged disappearance of exchange value that is at the heart of their re-definition of capitalist exploitation. But source code used in computer programming, however brilliant and however useful, can only make a profit for the capitalist if and when it is transformed into a marketable commodity, that is, something that will be exchanged for money, either by an enterprising venture capitalist or a software giant. And indeed this is something that happens every day. It is worth noting

that even if Microsoft and some other software giants have ferociously opposed the "open source" movement (making the source code freely available to the public), other huge capitalist groups, such as Sun Computers, have found ways to make massive profits precisely through "appropriating" the creative work of others. These products cannot escape from the workings of capitalism and its market; generally speaking, if no firm finds a way to directly or indirectly profit from a product, even the most useful of applications is likely to be sidelined and forgotten.

Certainly Negri and Hardt are correct in calling attention to the fact that an increasingly important section of the world economy is selling *services* and not *goods*. But the important thing to stress is that services, also, do not escape from the law of value: they are exchanged (sold) at a price that reflects that amount of socially necessary labour time⁶⁴ that has gone into producing them. Without the expertise and knowledge to use it (which is overwhelmingly monopolised and organised and *sold* by the capitalist class) source code is meaningless gibberish and is no more equally available to the masses than the "equal right" of all to spend their holidays on the French Riviera.

It is true that much creative collaboration takes place through informal "networks" (for example, discussion groups on the internet), but it is not true that these networks somehow escape from the social reality of private ownership and private appropriation, or the division of labour in capitalist society. Negri and Hardt are unable to see the hand of capital orchestrating the symphony even if some of the musicians believe that they are only following their spontaneous inclinations. The "centre" does indeed exist, and the autonomy of the actors is hemmed in and ultimately directed by a capitalist system and a capitalist class that very much functions according to the "law of value" that these writers would like to define out of existence.

The authors explicitly reject any continued distinction between use

value⁶⁵ and exchange value, but it is the law of value that still inexorably governs capitalist society, determining prices, wages, profits and investments, etc., through a complex mechanism that Marx devoted his three volumes of *Capital* to illuminating. In fact, this contradiction, which Marx discovered at the level of the commodity and which he then traces throughout his study of the capitalist economy, is very much at the heart of Marx's whole world-view and approach, his materialism. One would have hoped that "discoveries" of such immense importance – the withering away of the distinction between use value and exchange value and between the forces and relations of production – would have been methodically presented and argued for and not just asserted. Negri and Hardt fail to offer an explanation of how the capitalist system functions without the regulation of the law of value and what gives the system its coherence and determines its motion.

In fact, while important features have arisen, the basic laws of capitalism that grow out of commodity production and the conversion of the labourer him or herself into a commodity have not been superseded. It is certainly not always the case that technical innovation is the direct result of the capitalist organisation of work and research. But it is the case that as long as capitalism is master over society, human creativity will be channelled and subordinated to the needs of capital and, to a great degree, suppressed when those needs are not served. Again, what we are seeing is consistent with and a further development of the basic situation that Lenin analysed in *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism*: the material conditions for socialism and communism are being further created by the workings of capitalism itself, including and even especially as it grows into the stage of monopoly capitalism, imperialism, but the productive potential of society is coming ever more sharply into conflict with the way capitalism organises society, the relations of production, which act as a "fetter"; a brake, on the ability of

mankind to produce and transform the world. For every ounce of "creative energy" revealed by contemporary capitalism, which Negri & Hardt would like to call Empire, far more such energy is stifled. The problem is not, as the authors argue, "to revise Marx's notion of the relation between labour and value in capitalist production". The task is for society to go beyond the era in which commodity production still dominates, in which the capacity of humanity to produce is itself reduced to a commodity (labour power).

A Muddled Class Analysis

At one point in *Multitude* Negri and Hardt spell out in a bit more detail who exactly they are talking about in the sphere of "immaterial production": among others, "food servers, salespersons, computer engineers, teachers and health workers".⁶⁶ Two points come to mind here. First, the obvious, that they blur the distinction between the proletariat and the middle classes (McDonalds hamburger chain employees who work for minimum wage are put in the same category as computer engineers, who are a privileged strata in all countries). This kind of class analysis is not new. Factors such as income level and the role in the social division of labour are obliterated. For example, nothing is more stratified than a modern Western hospital. Not only are income levels vastly, unimaginably, different between cleaners and brain surgeons, the distinctions between mental and manual labour, between those who decide and those who carry out orders, are extremely pronounced. From the point of view of class analysis, there is little value to lumping all hospital employees together into the single category of "health workers". If we are to have a clear idea who the motive forces of revolution are likely to be and what policies should be adopted to assure the support or neutrality of others, and to identify where we can expect stubborn resistance and opposition and what transformations are required in order to eliminate classes and reach a classless society, it is necessary to have an

accurate class analysis.

Any class analysis must continue to give great importance to the division Lenin analysed between the mass of the proletariat and the labour aristocracy. (The labour aristocracy is that section of the proletariat which is "bribed" with the super-profits the imperialists are able to extract from the proletariat and the masses in the oppressed countries.) Negri and Hardt claim that in the period "of the decline of imperialisms" that they date from 1970, "the imperialist advantages of any national working class had begun to wither away".⁶⁷ Even a rudimentary study of contemporary imperialist society shows that such advantages do indeed exist, that this bribery affects whole sections of the population and not a mere handful, and that, taken as a whole, these strata serve as a social base for imperialism and reaction. As for teachers and doctors, their conditions of work and life (their role in the division of labour and their share in distribution) make them more a part of a diverse middle class or classes regardless of how many trade unions they may have. Negri and Hardt are correct to speak to a kind of "convergence" between the struggle of the proletariat in the West and those in the oppressed countries, which took place in the upsurges of the 1960s and 1970s, and to criticise "Third Worldist" theories, which said "the primary contradiction and antagonism of the international capitalist system is between the capital of the First world and the labour of the Third. The potential for revolution thus resides squarely and exclusively in the Third World."⁶⁸ But building the real international unity of the proletariat cannot be done by ignoring the great gap in the world between the oppressor and oppressed countries or refusing to see that this reality has influenced the class structure of the imperialist countries.

Rather than the "dematerialisation" of the proletariat – its conversion into the non-class "multitude" – it should be considered whether the actual phenomenon the authors are describing of the rise of immaterial labour reflects the proletarianisation

or partial proletarianisation of the service industries and even some of the more privileged occupations. For example, the US restaurant chain McDonalds became a vast network of small factories producing hamburgers on an industrial scale with the most modern techniques, and in many Western countries the massive consumption of fast food is central to the survival of the work force or, to put it in economic terms, the reproduction of labour power (what the authors would prefer to call "bio-production").⁶⁹ Those people working in McDonalds have little in common with an accountant and far more in common with workers on a factory assembly line, including the tyranny of the foreman and the time clock.

The authors write, "The universality of human creativity, the synthesis of freedom, desire, and living labour, is that it takes place in the non-place of the postmodern relations of production. Empire is the non-place of world production where labour is exploited."⁷⁰ The "post-modern relations of production" thus take place everywhere and nowhere. To buttress their argument, they call attention to such labour practices as flexible hours and to the fact that many of those involved in "immaterial labour" take their work home with them, so to speak. For example, an advertising consultant might be thinking of a new slogan at any time of the day or night. Or consider how the growth of the internet has made it possible for much secretarial work to be outsourced to people working at home or even on the other side of the world.

The role of the individual in the division of labour of society and their share of the distribution of the social product (that is to say, their income) will have a great effect on the actual relations these kinds of situations really represent and how the person perceives these. There can be little doubt that a typist working hours a day inputting repetitive material into a computer will quite easily sense the difference between the time spent working for the capitalist and his or her hours of leisure, and will not share Negri and Hardt's conclusion

that "the temporal unity of labour as the basic measure of value today makes no sense."⁷¹ To not sense the difference between the time of exploitation and life itself, unfortunately, is the privilege of a tiny stratum whose role in the social division of labour gives them the responsibility for creativity, working with ideas, developing culture and so forth. It is true that the material conditions have been created where Marx's metaphor of the future communist person who will divide the day between productive labour, reading and fishing for pleasure may seem right at hand. However, this possibility, so alluringly dangled, can never be realised for the masses of people under capitalism, but only by digging up and destroying the laws of capitalism that Negri and Hardt have declared dysfunctional a bit too prematurely.

A Guaranteed Social Wage

The confusion of the authors and their ultimately non-revolutionary vision is shown in their discussion of the fight for a "social wage". It is also true that large numbers of people in society contribute to the production of value without having a direct wage relationship with the capitalist. Progressive feminist theoreticians have long stressed that, for example, the rearing of children plays a central role in the reproduction of the labouring classes and is thus a form of unpaid labour. Similarly, in a number of countries small-scale, non-capitalist production provides the sustenance for the family (and hence the reproduction) of the labourer, making it possible for the capitalist employer to pay less than the actual value of the labour power he is purchasing.⁷² This very true reality does not negate the basic functioning of capitalism. Rather it shows that when capitalism dominates a society, other relations are subsumed and shaped by it. The solution to this can be none other than the abolition of capitalism itself.

Negri and Hardt polemicise with those who would reduce the proletariat to the industrial workers and who especially dismiss the poor and

the unemployed. They argue that all of the masses are included in the process of production of value, whether or not they work ("the social division between the employed and the unemployed is becoming ever more blurred"⁷³). There is a great deal of truth in the authors' observations and their criticism of trade unionists (and the latter's attitude toward the poor and also toward masses in the "global south").

An interesting passage in *Empire* denounces what Negri and Hardt call "the dominant stream of the Marxist tradition, which has always hated the poor, precisely for their being 'free as birds', for being immune to the discipline of the factory and the discipline necessary for the construction of socialism."⁷⁴ It is in fact true that the revisionist and social-democratic currents in the "Marxist tradition" have had such deviations. William Z Foster, a leader of the Communist Party, USA for much of its early history, denounced the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) for being based on an "unstable" section of the workers.⁷⁵ Although we do not share Negri and Hardt's near worship of the IWW's anarcho-syndicalism, it is a fact that the IWW played an important role in building up a revolutionary section of the proletariat in the US during the period around the First World War, and the organisation it built among garment workers, migrant farm workers and lumberjacks played a more revolutionary role than the narrow-minded trade unions that appealed so much to Foster. But the vision of the proletariat as having a stake in the stability of the capitalist system cannot be laid at the doorstep of Marx and Engels themselves, who described a proletariat uprooted from one industry or country and hurled into the capitalist profit machine for only as long as it was beneficial to the capitalist class. Marx and Engels stressed that the working class "had nothing to lose but its chains". And Engel's description of the working class in England has nothing in common with the labour aristocrat viewpoint that dominates the "labour movement" here.

Negri and Hardt's political econ-

omy leads them to the programmatic demand that they find so revolutionary of a "guaranteed income for all". Some feminists with logic similar to that of Negri and Hardt have raised demands for the remuneration of housework by the capitalist class. Actually, these kinds of demands are at once both profoundly utopian and reformist. Utopian because as long as the law of value is still in command of society, which is the case, however much Negri and Hardt deny it, it is impossible to guarantee a decent living wage outside the conditions of commodity production. Reformist because such demands do not challenge the capitalist system. In many European countries such a guaranteed income exists (albeit in poverty-stricken conditions) and everyone, with the important exception of "illegal" immigrants, is eligible. Capitalism can continue to function with the "guaranteed income", and when the capitalists are faced with demographic decline they are even willing at times to provide significant financial incentives for women to return to their traditional role as "breeders".⁷⁶

Our authors fail to recognise that as long as capitalism exists, as long as labour power itself is a commodity and these commodities are exchanged through the medium of money, that is, they are bought and sold, labour power itself will be determined by the law of value. This is why social democratic reformers, once at the helm of the capitalist system, can do little else other than "manage" the smooth functioning of capitalism. The dynamic of capitalism itself will punish any who deviates from its dictates, and its laws will reassert themselves independent of anyone's will.⁷⁷ The masses can never be free as long as capitalism exists. Rather than focus the energy of the people on the utopian and reformist goal of a "universal wage", we must resurrect and hold high Marx's stirring call for "the abolition of the wage system" itself instead of the reformist slogan of "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work".⁷⁸ Marx was calling for society to go beyond

the whole capitalist era in which human beings can only interact through the buying and selling of commodities and in which the capacity of the masses to produce is itself reduced to a commodity to be purchased and used by the capitalists. Negri and Hardt are not alone – far too many "Marxists" themselves have often lost sight of what a revolutionary vision this really is and how radical a rupture it represents from the world we live in.

V. Democracy, Anarchy and Communism

Negri and Hardt declare that, "The task is to discover a way in common, involving men, women, workers, migrants, the poor, and all the elements of the multitude, to administer the legacy of humanity and direct the future production of food, material goods, knowledge, information, and all other forms of wealth."⁷⁹ True, and well put. We suspect, however, that many readers may find Negri and Hardt's sweeping vision incongruous with the rather petty scale of the political solutions they propose. First and foremost, they eliminate the central vehicle for solving the problems of society, namely *revolution*. In our epoch, this can only mean revolution in the interests of the great majority, led by the proletariat, to seize the helm of society, establish its own state, and use it to step-by-step create the material and ideological conditions in which humanity as a whole will be able to "administer the legacy of humanity and direct the future production".

The central political question in distinguishing revolutionary communism from different political programmes has always been the question of the state. It is not surprising that it is in the understanding of the state that the fundamentally non-revolutionary programme of Negri and Hardt stands out. The US "constitutional project" earns lyrical praise in both *Empire* and *Multitude*. And their suggestions for an international order are reflected in admiring the International Criminal Court "which

more than any other institution indicates the possibility of a global system of justice that serves to protect the rights of all equally" or in the ode to the European Union, which is specifically considered a model for a "new global constitution".⁸⁰

Perhaps our readers will need little convincing of the non-revolutionary nature of Negri and Hardt's political proposals. But in order to better understand *why* these authors seem unable to go beyond timid suggestions for readjusting existing international institutions it is necessary to look more closely at what their vision of "communism" really is.

Democracy and Class Rule

We saw in *Empire*'s treatment of "immaterial labour" that an interlocking existence of "networks" of individuals stretching all over the globe and touching all of the important domains of human activity reveals a "spontaneous tendency toward communism". In other passages they refer to networks in which there are countless nodes but no centre.⁸¹ Their vision of the future communist society is that, somehow, the masses will be self-governing, without the intermediary of any central institutions. This is linked very much to their political conception developed in *Empire* and even more in *Multitude* that the goal is "democracy", whose definition of "the rule of everyone by everyone" the authors borrow from eighteenth-century revolutionaries.

It is beyond the scope of this article to go into depth on the basic Marxist understanding of democracy and the state, which holds that any state is based on the rule (dictatorship) of one class over another and that, therefore, "the rule of everyone by everyone" is a deception that covers over the real class nature of the bourgeois-democratic state.⁸²

In the passage of *Multitude* with the revealing subtitle "Back to the Eighteenth Century" (meaning the era of the original ideologues of the political system of democracy), the authors acknowledge that in the

democracy promoted by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison (key leaders of the American Revolution and founders of the US political system) "everyone" was restricted to white, male property owners. But Negri and Hardt see all "modern revolutions" as simply an extension of "everyone" to encompass broader and broader sections of the population. While it is true that bourgeois democracy has evolved so that today women and propertyless men have also been granted universal suffrage, the *class reality* of the bourgeois state remains essentially the same. Negri and Hardt confound the bourgeois and socialist revolution when they write, "One can read the history of modern revolutions as a halting and uneven but nonetheless real progression toward the realisation of the absolute concept of democracy."⁸³

There is a fundamental difference between the revolutions led by the bourgeoisie, such as the French and US revolutions, and those led by the proletariat – the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution and the Chinese Revolution. In refusing to recognise this distinction Negri and Hardt are falling into the same error made by social-democrats and revisionists for 150 years. Marx stressed that all "previous revolutions" (meaning the bourgeois or "modern revolutions" to use Negri and Hardt's terms) only perfected the state, while the necessity is to smash it. Engels specifically calls on his readers to look at the Paris Commune if they want to see the "dictatorship of the proletariat" in action. But revisionists and social-democrats have insisted on the *continuity* of the bourgeois and socialist revolution, obliterating their class content. The goal of the proletarian revolution is not the "extension" of democracy but rather the *surpassing* of democracy, that is, the withering away of the state itself.⁸⁴

This "absolute concept of democracy" is linked to Negri and Hardt's worship of the "spontaneous communism" in the networks of immaterial labour. "The vast majority of our political, economic, affective, linguistic, and productive interactions

are always based on democratic relations...the civil processes of democratic exchange, communication and co-operation that we develop and transform each day."⁸⁵ This is really a muddle, but it does help reveal the underlying basis of their thinking. First, the "democratic exchange" referred to above, especially when we are talking about economic and "productive interactions", really means nothing other than the *free exchange of commodities*. In other words, under capitalism goods and services are constantly and spontaneously bought and sold on the sacred "free market". Negri and Hardt are unable to see *beyond* a society based on the principle of free exchange and instead *idealise* this "democratic exchange" as the highest social goal. This is undoubtedly why they approvingly cite Spinoza holding that "other forms of government are distortions or limitations of human society whereas democracy is its natural fulfilment."⁸⁶

In reality, Negri and Hardt's political philosophy is better defined as anarchist or anarcho-communist. It does not really rupture with the idea of bourgeois economists and philosophers that if every individual pursues his or her own individual interests, through these competing and conflicting interests the collective interests of society will ultimately triumph. No doubt Negri and Hardt would strenuously object to any suggestion that the networks they describe are, in fact, being orchestrated by the "invisible hand" of the market, yet, as we have already seen, this is very much the case.

Negri and Hardt propose that human society should take hold of its own legacy and direct future production, but they are completely lost as to *how* this might be accomplished and on what basis such regulation could take place. To believe that society will organise itself spontaneously is to negate the tremendous transformation that is required if society is to go beyond the purchase and sale of commodities (and the central fact that under capitalism labour power itself becomes a com-

modity to be bought and sold). This is because the idealised "spontaneous communism" of Negri and Hardt really is just the theoretical projection of the class position of the small commodity producer (including the producers of "immaterial" commodities who are so central to Negri and Hardt's analysis). In other words, it appears to the small producer, or petite bourgeoisie, that the problems of the world can be solved "if only" the restrictions and impediments to the "equal exchange of equal values" (such as monopoly or special privileges) are eliminated. The political expression of this is Negri and Hardt's "absolute concept of democracy" referred to earlier. They have ruled exchange value to be an obsolete category, but the reality is that there is no other basis, no other regulatory mechanism, that can govern the exchanges between individuals, economic sectors, "networks", and whole countries except *exchange value* as long as commodity production prevails. Ultimately their refusal to recognise the continuing regulatory role of the law of value in contemporary society means to bow down before it and to abandon the world historic task of *transcending* the law of value, which will come about, not through the spontaneous evolution of capitalism, but through the struggle to overthrow it.

Certainly a revolutionary transformation of the socio-economic system will require dethroning the law of value from its commanding heights and step-by-step transforming the material and social conditions that prevent it from being eliminated altogether. For example, in revolutionary China under Mao, *use value* and not exchange value fundamentally decided where state investments were to be allocated. Whether a factory would produce pharmaceuticals or cosmetics was not determined on the basis of return on investment as it is in capitalist society (and as in China today, for that matter). Even in those areas, such as the distribution of income, where the law of value dominated, important steps were made to limit this, for instance, keeping housing

priced very cheaply, well below its actual exchange value. But the ability to restrain the law of value came precisely from the fact that a *proletarian state* existed that could and did consciously plan the economy, necessarily taking into account the law of value, but not allowing the law of value to dictate and reign supreme. Without such conscious control over the productive apparatus, if things are allowed to take their spontaneous course, then the “invisible hand” of the law of value will orchestrate the “networks” of producers and all the horrible features of capitalism would return – along with a bourgeois state to enforce these horrors.

It is undoubtedly true that state control alone does not by any means assure that a society will truly be transformed in a socialist direction. The state can itself become the enforcer and organiser of the law of value, as we saw in the earlier example of the Cuban state’s role in maintaining sugar production as the centre of the national economy. Revisionist state capitalism in the USSR and other countries of the former East bloc proved in living colour that mere state ownership is not a guarantee of anything revolutionary. Nor can we agree with the social-democratic critics of Negri and Hardt, who berate them for failing to see the state as a necessary instrument of “reform”, by which these critics mean the existing, *bourgeois* state.⁸⁷

Withering Away of the State... Under Capitalism!

Marxists have long held that the future communist society would come from the “withering away of the state” when the conditions that require the existence of such a state, that is class society, have been overcome. Negri and Hardt’s peculiar contribution is to suggest that the withering away of the state can take place....under capitalism! There is no longer any need or basis for the proletariat to wield state power.

In their discussion of the oppressed countries Negri and Hardt argue that the masses can, at best, hope for a modest reform in their

conditions thanks to an alliance between progressive forces in the advanced countries and reform governments like Lula da Silva’s government in Brazil. Even when Negri and Hardt speak of revolutionary forces, their constant point of reference is the EZLN, better known as the “Zapatistas” of Mexico. The authors correctly sense the difference between the EZLN and the revolutionary projects led by Marxist-Leninist-Maoists now and in the past. They approvingly recall that for the Zapatistas, the “goal has never been to defeat the state and claim sovereign authority but rather to change the world without taking power.”⁸⁸ It is interesting to note that while some Marxist-Leninist-Maoist forces have difficulty seeing the reformist nature of the EZLN and forces like them, Negri and Hardt are quick to draw the links between Lula and Subcommandante Marcos, recognising that whether the struggle is violent or non-violent, the essential point is that no seizure of political power should be attempted and that instead the world should be changed gradually and step-by-step.

Maoists have raised the slogan that “without state power, all is illusion”. Negri and Hardt’s idealism leads them to invert this reality. Essentially they argue that no petty reform, no utopian pipe dream and no demagogy from the governors should be dismissed, everything should be taken at its face value. In their upside-down world-view, nothing is illusion, *except* the state power of the ruling classes, which will somehow magically dissolve as the multitude fights for “real democracy”. As for the state power of the proletariat, for Negri and Hardt it is best not even attempted. In this article we will not enter into the vital discussion of the experience of proletarian political revolution of the twentieth century, but we will reaffirm that despite the mistakes and shortcomings of this experience, some of which were serious or even tragic, these were mistakes and shortcomings in the process of tremendous and heroic efforts to bring into being a world without exploitation and oppression.

The mistakes of the proletariat in exercising political power pale in comparison to the much greater mistake that would result from following Negri and Hardt, which is to *negate* the fight for political power.

Yes, human society is full of promise. The ability of the masses to produce, to create, to consciously master society is constantly reasserting itself in a thousand domains. But the conflict between the capacity of humanity and its current form of organisation, which is based upon capitalist exploitation, is growing sharper. The contradictions and developments of contemporary society push it in the direction of a communist future. But this transformation is neither inevitable nor automatic and will never take place without revolution. The guardians of the old and outmoded, the beneficiaries of human exploitation, control very real institutions – governments, armies and prisons among many others – which protect and enforce capitalist exploitation. To call for “communism” while arguing against a determined struggle to smash these existing reactionary institutions is worse than an illusion, it is a deception.

Communism is possible, necessary and indeed achieving it through world proletarian revolution is the pressing task of human society. The future is bright, but only if we seize it.

Footnotes

1. Perhaps this is partially to be explained by respect for Toni Negri as a victim of political repression in Italy (resulting from his role in the Italian extra-parliamentary left movement of the late 1960s and 1970s).
2. *Empire*, p. 9.
3. *Empire*, p. 146.
4. *Empire*, p. 354.
5. *Empire*, p. 347 (emphasis added).
6. Tom Mertes p. 147 in the collection *Debating Empire*.
7. See especially V.I. Lenin’s *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.
8. *Empire*, p. 166.
9. *Empire*, p. 174. US President Woodrow Wilson led the US into the First World War and called for the establishment of the League of Nations in its aftermath. US President Theodore Roosevelt fought Spain for possession of

Cuba and the Philippines in 1898 and is associated generally with US "gunboat diplomacy" in Latin America.

10. Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, Part One, Lawrence and Wishart, 1970, p. 67.

11. *Empire*, p. 179.

12. *Empire*, p. 384.

13. *Empire*, p. 5.

14. *Empire*, p. 167.

15. *Multitude*, p. 5.

16. *Multitude*, pp. 59-60.

17. *Multitude*, p. 60.

18. *Multitude*, p. 385 (emphasis added).

One point that we will only note in passing here is that Negri and Hardt also reject what they call the "dialectic", which they usually attribute to Hegel. But materialist dialectics are the foundation of the Marxist understanding as well, and the contradictions dismissed with the wave of a pen between the base and superstructure and the forces and relations of production are central to this understanding.

19. We will see later in this article that Negri and Hardt forthrightly oppose the "seizure of power" by the masses. In denying the contradiction between the forces and relations of production they are developing their theoretical justification for this non-revolutionary conclusion.

20. *The German Ideology*, p. 55.

21. We will show later that Negri and Hardt's vision of communist society is not at all the same as that of Marx and Engels and is really an anarchist version of bourgeois democracy.

22. See Raymond Lotta's *America in Decline*, Banner Press, Chicago, 1984. Lotta provides a lucid exposition of how the laws of capitalism continue to operate in the epoch of imperialism. He demonstrates the centrality of the anarchy of capitalist production and shows how capital can exist only as many capitals and that this propels the whole process of capitalist accumulation forward.

23. *Empire*, p. 234.

24. *Empire*, p. 269.

25. "Anti-Dühring III", *Marx & Engels Reader*, p. 630.

26. In fact, Negri and Hardt, like many in the communist movement, play fast and loose with the word "crisis" in a way that loses its particular meaning and instead refers to the permanent state of contemporary capitalism. Crisis flows from and is a particularly sharp expression of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism, between private appropriation and socialised production, but it is not *equivalent* to that contradiction. Even in a period of "non-crisis" (i.e. vigorous capitalist

expansion) the injustices and irrationality of the capitalist mode of production are glaring.

27. In analysing imperialist crisis, it is Negri and Hardt who are slipping into "purely economic factors". They analyse the capitalist crisis as beginning in the 1970s without any reference to the fact that the Soviet Union had become an imperialist superpower, and, at that time, was mounting a world-wide challenge against US imperialism.

28. *Empire*, p. 272.

29. *Empire*, p. 272.

30. To understand this better we only have to look at those countries that were socialist in name but capitalist in fact – the USSR under the rule of Khrushchev and Brezhnev, or the reversal of socialism in China since the death of Mao Tsetung. In both of these cases differing, competing capitalist interests emerged. Although the whole of the new bourgeoisie shared a common need to exploit the labour of the proletariat they could not and do not do so in a harmonious way. It is not as if a single undifferentiated "bureaucracy" can smoothly exploit the rest of society. The restoration of capitalism also means the restoration of intense competition, dislocation and crisis. Some sections of the new ruling class flourish at the expense of others. And when the final fig leaf of socialism was dropped altogether and the USSR was dissolved, it was not possible for the new bourgeoisie to rule as a single capitalist entity, but rather it divided into rival bands of legal and illegal (mafia) capitalists. And it cannot be otherwise.

31. *Empire*, p. 248.

32. *Empire*, p. 251.

33. Bob Avakian, in his discussion in the early 1980s of Mao's conception of "principal contradiction", argues that it is not correct to see imperialism as an external enemy in the oppressed countries as it has become "internal" to these countries. See Bob Avakian, *On the Principal Contradiction and More on the Principal Contradiction*, www.revcom.us.

34. *Empire*, p. 254.

35. *Empire*, p. 335.

36. *Empire*, p. 336.

37. Later we will see that Negri and Hardt wish to claim for themselves the banner of democracy, but when it comes to the liberation of the oppressed nations they are negating even the most elementary of democratic demands. In an earlier passage, the authors seem to refute themselves, arguing that this does not just involve a question of "development": India or Nigeria are not in the position of France or England of the nineteenth cen-

tury, "in radically different and even divergent situations – of domination and subordination" and "the economies of the so-called developed countries are defined not only by certain quantitative factors or by their internal structures, but also and more important by their dominant position in the global system." (p. 282 italics in the original.)

38. *Empire*, p. 284, in examining "underdevelopment" theories of the 1970s.

39. Marx showed very vividly how the "rosy dawn of capitalism" was integrally bound up with the slave trade, the spoliation of the original inhabitants of the Americas and the economic destruction of much of Asia.

40. Singapore, for example, has a standard of living equal to the US or Europe. But it is a not an internally coherent, economically developed nation state. It has developed as an appendage to the imperialist powers, and profits from backwardness in the region.

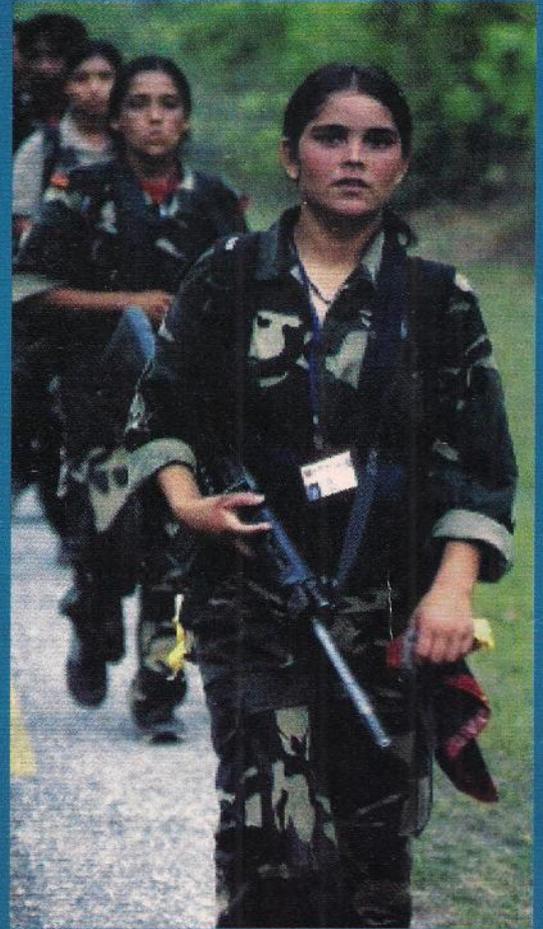
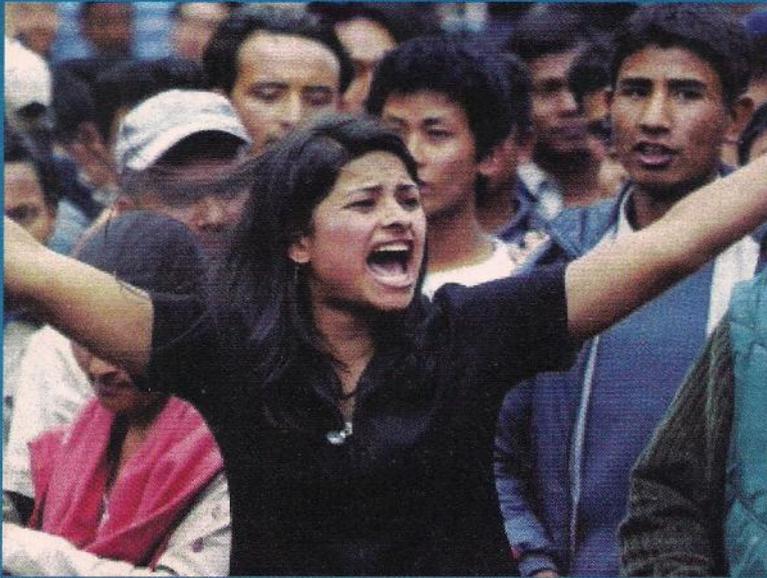
41. This kind of understanding has been widespread in the international communist movement. It is particularly associated with Lin Piao's work *Long Live the Victory of People's War* in which he describes the world revolutionary process as one of encircling the "cities" of Europe, North America and Japan from the "countryside" of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

42. After the Second World War Stalin stressed the existence of two opposing camps, one socialist and the other imperialist, and the process of world revolution was looked at essentially as the triumph of one camp over the other. When modern revisionists took over in the Soviet Union this thesis served as a useful fig-leaf for their social-imperialist ambitions – revolution was no longer necessary and a "non-capitalist path of development" was possible by a country linking itself to the USSR. But even Mao and the revolutionary communists tended to adopt the "two camps" view to a certain extent, sometimes acting as if it were possible and desirable to hermetically seal off the socialist camp from the influences of the capitalist world.

43. Unfortunately the defeat of the first wave of proletarian revolution ending with the overthrow of socialism in China after the death of Mao proves that it is not at all "inevitable" that at any point in world history the socialist system will prevail over world imperialism.

44. See AWTW 1999/25. Philip Short's biography, *Pol Pot; Anatomy of a Nightmare*, (Henry Hold and Co., New York, 2004). also provides valuable insights in this respect.

45. This is another reason why it is non-revolutionary to promise the masses in the advanced countries an immediate rise in their living standard in the event of proletarian revolution. Besides the obvious unlikelihood of seizing the productive forces completely intact, if an immediate increase in living standards became the yardstick by which the new regime measured its success it would be pushed to restore relations of domination with other countries.
46. See the discussion of socialist states as "base areas" in Bob Avakian's *Conquer the World and Advancing the World Proletarian Revolution*, www.revcom.us.
47. *Empire*, p. 106 (italics in original).
48. *Empire*, p. 108.
49. This is referring to the revolution in February 1917 that replaced the Tsar and instituted a bourgeois republic, overthrown in turn by the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917.
50. *Empire*, pp. 133-34 (italics in original).
51. Mao and the revolutionaries grouped around him argued that the capitalist-roaders in China did not really share the goal of socialist and communist society and in reality were bourgeois-democrats seeking to liberate the country *without* uprooting the capitalist system and never ruptured with this ideology. Objectively the programme and outlook of Deng Xiao-ping were restricted to accomplishing the first democratic stage of the revolution, which Mao saw as only a first step. The same can be said of many others who professed to be communists, such as the leader of the Vietnamese revolution, Ho Chi-minh. The phenomenon of "bourgeois democrats becoming capitalist-roaders" is an objective one, reflecting the two different stages of the revolution and the radical rupture with bourgeois ideology that the communist revolution represents. While no one can say in advance what role any specific leader might play in the future, the fact that leaders will emerge who seek to limit the revolution to its bourgeois-democratic stage is inevitable.
52. *Empire*, p. 248.
53. "On the General Program of Work for the Whole Party and the Whole Nation" in *And Mao Mao Makes 5*, edited by Raymond Lotta, Banner Press, Chicago, 1978.
54. *Multitude*, p. 116.
55. *Multitude*, p. 117.
56. *Multitude*, p. 124.
57. *Multitude*, p. 124.
58. Ironically, the most rapid growth of capitalism in recent decades has taken place in China after the restoration of capitalism following the death of Mao and the coup d'état that took place against his successors. This shows that the Chinese revolution, especially digging up the semi-feudal system in agriculture, had indeed "cleared the way" of the obstacles that stood in the way of the rapid development of capitalism. It also explains why people like Deng Xiaoping who overthrew socialism in China had been willing to unite with Mao and the genuine communists in the earlier democratic stage of the revolution.
59. Marxists consider "variable capital" to be the part of capital that is invested in the wages of workers, for the purchase of labour power, that is, the ability, measured in time, of the labourer to produce commodities.
60. *Empire*, p. 294.
61. *Empire*, p. 302.
62. *Multitude*, p. 146.
63. *Multitude*, p. 150.
64. It is important not to understand this in a narrow sense. Marx stressed that the "socially necessary labour time" also involves "compound labour", that is, the labour of other producers that goes into raising the value of a given producer. Hence, the value of the work of a software engineer includes the work of others who make it possible for that person to be trained and exercise that occupation, for example, the domestic servants of a software code writer in Bangalore, India or day care centres in San Jose, California.
65. *Empire*, p. 209.
66. *Empire*, p. 114.
67. *Empire*, p. 263.
68. *Empire*, p. 264.
69. It is estimated that half of all meals eaten in Los Angeles and London are not prepared in the home. A high percentage of these meals are purchased in "fast food" chains.
70. *Empire*, p. 210.
71. *Multitude*, p. 145.
72. Marxists hold that the value of labour power is equal to the "socially necessary labour time" that goes into producing the labourer and allowing the labourer to raise another generation. If the capitalist can take advantage of specific circumstances, such as a large pool of "surplus" labour, he will readily pay less wages, even if it means that the labourer cannot ensure the survival and well-being of his family.
73. *Multitude*, p. 131.
74. *Empire*, p. 158.
75. See Foster's *History of the Communist Party USA*.
76. The reactionary character of these pro-natality measures (in France and Italy, for example) can be seen even more sharply when one considers that they are taking place at the same time that many imperialist countries are taking strong measures to stop immigration flows from the Third World.
77. Severe economic dislocations will result if the capitalist law of value is not adhered to. For example, a country that really tried to provide a generous "guaranteed social wage" would find its currency collapsing. The existence of the laws of capitalism gives force to the arguments of "realism" from ruling class spokesmen of both the right and the left.
78. Marx, *Wages, Price and Profit*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976, p. 55.
79. *Multitude*, p. 310.
80. *Multitude*, pp. 276 and 296.
81. *Empire*, p. 299. They also try to portray the Internet as an example of such a centreless network. But, in fact, the internet backbone is controlled by the US government (with the explicit agreement of the "international community").
82. See Lenin, *The State and Revolution*.
83. *Multitude*, p. 241. Note their chapter heading, "The New Science of Democracy: Madison and Lenin".
84. Bob Avakian has made an exhaustive and path-breaking study of the relation between democracy and communist revolution. See in particular Bob Avakian, *Democracy: Can't We do Better than That?*, Banner Press, Chicago, 1986; "Democracy: More than Ever We Can and Must Do Better than That" AWTW 1992/17; and his talk "Dictatorship and Democracy, and the Socialist Transition to Communism" www.revcom.us
85. *Multitude*, p. 311.
86. *Multitude*, p. 311. Baruch Spinoza was an important thinker of the early Enlightenment in Holland. It was quite understandable, even revolutionary in the seventeenth century, that Spinoza saw democracy as the natural human condition. It is quite another thing to repeat this contention now when humanity is poised to go beyond a socio-economic system based on the exchange of commodities.
87. A theme in several articles in the collection *Debating Empire*, edited by Gopal Balakrishnan, the most egregious example being the article by Timothy Brennan, "The Italian Ideology".
88. *Multitude*, p. 85. ■



NEPAL:
Torrents of revolt engulf the throne

