

# The False Path of "Urban

by P. Becker

**"Revolutionary war is a war of the masses."**

—Mao Tsetung

The situation in Western Europe continues to show new possibilities for genuine revolutionary struggle. The most recent outbreaks of mass revolutionary violence in both Great Britain and West Germany are both striking illustrations of this. But the lack of genuine vanguard parties based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought makes itself sharply felt there. The fight to construct genuine vanguard parties is of vital importance and requires that the revolutionary communists of these countries—and the international communist movement—develop a thorough critique of the ongoing revisionist and opportunist deviations which continue to plague the movement in these countries. In this light it is also useful and necessary to examine a peculiar variant of opportunism which cloaks itself as revolutionary and communist and even claims to be an opponent of revisionism—we are speaking here of the self-styled "urban guerrillas."

In the past year, a series of acts of sabotage and assassination were carried out in W. Europe, from the bombing of NATO pipelines and companies doing business with

South Africa to the most dramatic, the killing of a French general and a W. German arms manufacturer in winter 1985. At that same time, three groups involved in a number of these acts—the Red Army Faction (RAF) of W. Germany, the Communist Combat Cells (CCCs) of Belgium, and Direct Action of France—proclaimed the formation of a "West European guerrilla front," whose chief target they announced to be NATO.

Virtually all of these groups claim that they are "communist combatants," that their organisations are the vanguard of the class struggle, guided by Marxism-Leninism, and that their goal is revolution and communism. By carrying out armed actions as an integral part of their activity today, they have, they argue, decisively ruptured with the revisionism and reformism characterising the official W. European left. Moreover, their urban guerrilla warfare is said to be "the practical expression of genuine proletarian internationalism," as the Communist Combat Cells (CCCs) put it. "At a time when so many peoples of the world fight the monster, gun in hand, the revolutionaries in the metropolises have the duty to attack the front lines of the imperialist machine with the same

determination." (May, 1985) A number of these groups have recently begun to write of the necessity for a new communist international, and the "West European guerrilla front" is seen by some as a step in this direction.

Yet despite the very militant face of "the guerrilla in the metropole," this does not represent a genuinely revolutionary line. In fact, as the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* puts it: "In some countries small numbers of people have turned to terrorism, an ideology and political line which does not rely on the revolutionary masses and has no correct perspective of a revolutionary overthrow of imperialism. While these terrorist movements like to appear very 'revolutionary,' they have also incorporated, more often than not, a whole series of revisionist and reformist deviations such as 'the liberation struggle' in imperialist countries, the defence of the imperialist Soviet Union, and so forth. These movements share with economism the fundamental failure to grasp the centrality of raising the political consciousness of the masses and leading them in political struggle, as preparation for revolution."

The question of violence is not the central issue in criticising the "guer-

# the W. European Guerrilla''

rilla in the metropole'' theory, but whether that violence will be wielded only by a handful of individuals, however heroic and self-sacrificing, or by masses led in revolutionary warfare to shatter the imperialists' supposedly invincible armies and uproot the capitalist system. The sights of those who burn with impatience for the day when they can settle accounts with the bourgeoisie must be lifted even higher, beyond the mere thirst for revenge to the horizon of waging the armed struggle in order to advance mankind to a whole new epoch of human history. The problem with the "guerrilla in the metropole" theory is that they do not arm themselves and the masses with the weapon of the science of revolution. Whether or not they have gun in hand changes nothing of the reformist, nationalist and economist essence of their outlook. Their conception of the "guerrilla in the metropole" must be rejected not because they are "extremists" who "run too fast" or are "too out in front of the masses," but because they are not "out front" at all.

The strategy of urban guerrilla warfare is nothing but a new variant of a deviation which has arisen in various forms since the birth of revolutionary Marxism—*terrorism*.

The scientific use of this term has nothing in common with the shrill hypocritical scream of the imperialists, who preside over the biggest reign of terror in history and who try to turn this fact upside down and paint all armed opposition to them as itself savage terrorism. What Marxist-Leninists are referring to instead is a specific political line which substitutes the armed attacks of a relative handful for the revolutionary struggle of the masses, politically and ultimately militarily as well. Marx fought this in the form of "propaganda of the deed" advocated by Bakunin, Most, and others; and Lenin forged the Bolshevik Party and its line in part in struggle against the populist terrorism of the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) and later the Socialist Revolutionary Party.

The terrorist trend today shares much of the same roots—but it has its own features too. Born in the late 1960s and early 1970s, particularly the RAF in W. Germany and the Weather Underground in the U.S. set out to launch armed attacks in solidarity with and as material aid to the national liberation struggles raging then—a sort of rearguard action which they argued would one day go over to direct revolutionary war. They started out by bombing cor-

porations engaged in war crimes; later, groups like Italy's Red Brigades and Prima Linea (Front Line) added innovations like taking hostage and kneecapping (shooting in the knee) factory directors who were targets of a strike, executing judges who imprisoned revolutionaries, etc. Their activity peaked in 1978 when the RAF kidnapped and executed Hans Martin Schleyer, W. Germany's "boss of bosses," and the Red Brigades did the same with Aldo Moro, head of Italy's largest political party, the Christian Democrats. The bourgeoisie struck back ferociously. Within a few years, by the early 1980s, the ranks of the RAF, Prima Linea and the Red Brigades were decimated, with thousands imprisoned in Italy (including many whose connection with this activity was never proven). Thus the activity which broke out in 1984-85 spurred speculation throughout W. Europe about whether this was the last gasp of a dying trend or the birth of "a new generation of terrorists."

## Urban Guerrilla Warfare in the Metropoles: The Theory

The terrorist line argues that the carrying out of armed attacks on imperialist institutions and personnel is generally the principal and at any

rate an indispensable task of the revolutionary forces from the very inception of their activity. These armed attacks are at the centre of their strategy: "protracted people's war" (sic) in the imperialist countries, with its pivotal figure, the guerrilla in the metropole. This theory is said to be the product of summing up two particular developments: first, the failure of the West European Comintern parties (the French, Italian, British, etc., Communist Parties) to lead revolution with their so-called "two phase strategy" of political preparation followed by military insurrection (and their degeneration today into revisionist parties), and secondly, the victories of people's war in China, Vietnam and other national liberation struggles. The conclusion that the RAF draws from this summation is that "the revolutionary organisation of the proletariat cannot lead the revolution to victory if it is not at the same time military, if the communist party does not build the Red Army of the revolutionary classes at the same time"; or as the Red Brigades put it, "in the epoch of imperialism, political work must be carried out gun in hand."

The various groups differ somewhat in their emphasis on what the armed struggle accomplishes and how it figures in the theory of "protracted people's war," but these are differences in emphasis—almost all portray their battleplan as a war of attrition, a long war to wear down the enemy bit by bit. They consider that the strength of the bourgeoisies has grown so considerably in the twentieth century that now only drawn-out urban guerrilla warfare can successfully combat them. As the CCCs argue, "bourgeois power has developed immensely, forming mountains which must be moved by the revolutionary movement." The RAF elaborates, "Revolutionary development no longer takes place from general strikes going over to military insurrection, but from commando actions for building centres of resistance, for forming militias, for disorganising and demoralising the forces of oppression through small protracted wars to wear them down...." These armed actions of the guerrillas "demonstrate the

vulnerability of the regime," emboldening others to take up urban guerrilla warfare. As guerrilla attacks wear down the bourgeois repressive apparatus, they argue, it will grow increasingly weaker and demoralised, spurring even more people to take up the armed struggle. In such a way, the bourgeoisie's strength is whittled down, until eventually what the Red Brigades call "the balance of force" between the warring classes shifts decisively in favour of the proletariat, which thus finally defeats the bourgeoisie and institutes its rule.

### I. The Military Strategy

As a military strategy in the imperialist countries, there are two problems with this scenario: it won't work, and it's not revolutionary in the first place.

The terrorist arguments begin from a confusion of the military strategy for revolutionary war in the oppressed countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America with what is required in the imperialist countries. The terrorists argue that protracted people's war is applicable everywhere, and that this is a reflection of the fact that guerrilla warfare is necessary wherever the revolutionary forces begin from a militarily weak position and the reactionary forces from a strong position.

What happens when this is actually attempted in the imperialist countries is that the relative handfuls of the "urban guerrilla forces" place themselves on a military footing with a highly superior armed force which can be relatively rapidly brought down on their heads, in a situation where they have no way—and in fact do not really expect—to militarily mobilise the masses. They are thus isolated and smashed—as the terrorists have been repeatedly, even in situations where they have enjoyed some sympathy, as in Italy in the late 1970s.

That this is the case is a reflection of the differing conditions which make protracted people's war a generally applicable path in the oppressed countries, whilst efforts to transplant it to the imperialist countries distort it into a static and useless, even harmful, "model." In this sense, what the terrorists are try-

ing to implement is not really a military strategy of protracted people's war. For in the process of trying to carry out their transplant they are forced willy-nilly to divorce the military strategy of protracted people's war from the social conditions that make it appropriate to the oppressed nations, and in doing this, they are also forced to go up against the Marxist-Leninist method Mao Tsetung used to analyse these conditions and develop the military strategy in the first place, as well as the role of the revolutionary party in making that analysis and in politically and militarily guiding that struggle. What they wind up with is not people's war, but a perversion of it.

Take the RAF's characterisation of people's war quoted above: "small protracted wars to wear them (the bourgeoisie) down." To the RAF, guerrilla warfare is attractive because of the military effectiveness of small guerrilla bands. But what actually makes it appropriate in the oppressed countries is that it is a form of warfare which corresponds to the specific political, social and economic conditions there and on that basis can unleash *masses* in revolutionary war. Mao pointed to a number of factors, including that China's ruling classes were divided into warring fractions supported by different imperialists who were opposed to each other internationally, and that its central government was weak. Most importantly, however, he showed how China was a large semi-feudal and semi-colonial country where the imperialists reinforced feudal oppression, so that millions of peasants were in a revolutionary mood and burning to carry out agrarian revolution. These are among the principal factors why, in the oppressed countries, a revolutionary situation generally exists, though unevenly and with ebbs and flows. Given these conditions, the armed struggle in a country like China could, in connection with the agrarian revolution, establish areas where red political power reigned—red base areas where the land could be redistributed and social transformations begun even before nationwide seizure of power, giving a taste of the future to China's masses and unleashing millions to serve militari-

ly, economically and politically to advance the revolutionary war overall. Mao showed how these objective conditions enabled the Communist Party to lead the armed struggle, starting on the strategic defensive, building a Red Army step by step, which in coordination with the guerrillas would advance from the base areas in the countryside, and go over to the strategic offensive, to surround the cities and establish a revolutionary government. That his military strategy of protracted people's war led to victory was based on a correct political and economic analysis of the conditions in China and internationally—a reflection of the fact that military line is a concentrated expression of political line, and that the Party—which is above all the political vanguard—commands the gun, and not vice versa.

In the imperialist countries, on the other hand, it is a fact proved by both analysis and experience that revolutionary situations do not generally exist, but come only rarely. Here the bourgeoisies are able to use their global position of plunder to pacify large sections of the populace; the countries are, relative to the oppressed nations, highly integrated economic units, with strong central governments, where massive military strength can be quickly brought to bear. How can a strategy of a war of attrition possibly mobilise masses in revolutionary war here? How does "urban guerrilla war" politically unleash the proletariat in the way that rural guerrilla warfare unleashes the peasantry in the oppressed countries? The RAF in its early days wrote about areas controlled by the guerrillas where cops would be militarily prevented from entering and where social transformation could be begun; and the Red Brigades, while explicitly denying that "red base areas" could be militarily established in the imperialist countries, went on to describe "red political power" areas not much different from the RAF's. Both proved to be dangerous illusions. The urban guerrilla strategy cannot enable the masses to deal with incursions by the enemy's military forces, which in the op-

pressed countries are operating on alien turf, with stretched-out, vulnerable supply lines, and attempting to suppress masses who have gotten a taste of the future in base areas. Guerrilla warfare in "normal," non-revolutionary times, in the imperialist countries can do none of the principal things it does in oppressed countries, and attempts to launch it there in such times are generally doomed to remain isolated military attacks by relative handfuls.

Yet revolutionary situations do inevitably emerge in the imperialist countries, produced by the workings of the system itself. What is required of revolutionaries is to be in a position to seize on such situations to unleash the masses to wage genuine revolutionary warfare. Lenin analysed how these revolutionary situations thrust masses onto history's stage. The strategy of the party, he analysed and proved in practice, must be based on seizing hold of such upsurges, launching the insurrection and immediately taking the offensive, bringing significant forces rapidly to bear on the enemy so as to prevent it from gathering its initially far superior military strength, to "win victories day by day," retaining the offensive at least long enough to prepare conditions for then pushing through with civil war. Through this insurrectionary process a revolutionary regime can be established and thus serve as a genuine red base area for the civil war, however, unlike in the oppressed countries, the establishment of such a regime cannot be done bit by bit, but is concentrated into a relatively short period, which then is followed by all-out civil war, a contest of strength between the new-born revolutionary regime and the remaining areas of bourgeois control.

All this demands that the revolutionary forces carry out the most thorough political preparation and organisation beforehand, so that the advanced forces can be in a position to leap on such a moment. It is this basic scenario which can defeat the imperialists, because it is based on the actual dynamics of imperialist society and so can unleash *mass revolutionary warfare*—just as protracted people's war does in the oppressed countries. While no revolu-

tion will be a "carbon copy" of one which has gone before, and while, it is certainly true that many new features of the revolutionary struggle for power in the imperialist countries will undoubtedly emerge, it is still correct to stress, as the *Declaration of the RIM* does, that the October Road (as summarised above) remains the starting point for a genuine revolutionary strategy in these types of countries.

### **Perverting People's War**

The terrorists initially made some efforts to portray their perversion of people's war as the line of Mao Tsetung. The RAF, for instance, early on (before they abandoned Mao altogether) argued that "the lessons of Mao Tsetung on the armed struggle...constitute a *general line* which is sufficiently concrete to develop the path of armed struggle everywhere and in all cases where the class struggle is sharpening, in the ripening conditions of the capitalist formations." In fact, the military line of Mao Tsetung *does* have universal significance—and especially his demonstration of how a military line must grow out of a Marxist-Leninist political analysis so as to unleash war as a revolutionary war of the masses.

But the RAF has learned nothing of Mao's *line*. Instead they attempt to mechanically transplant a static *model*, in a way that Mao himself had to fight *against* in developing his military line. At one time, leading forces in the Chinese Communist Party had declared that the path of the Russian Revolution was universally valid and that the Chinese revolutionaries should "follow Lenin" and go for quick mass insurrection in the cities. The line of these self-styled "Chinese Bolsheviks" led not to a quick insurrection but to a quick smashing of the vanguard in the cities. It was also, like its terrorist counterpart today, reformist at its core: in the case of China, it led to ignoring the necessity and the means to mobilise the masses of peasants in carrying out agrarian revolution and warfare in the countryside. The Chinese Bolsheviks' line had nothing to do with Lenin's development of the path of insurrection and civil war in the imperialist countries,

just as the terrorist line has nothing to do with Mao's development of protracted people's war. Having started off by thoroughly perverting Mao's line on revolutionary war, it is not surprising that the RAF, like many of the other terrorist groupings, has long since jettisoned any reference to Mao.

### **The Bourgeoisie: "Too Powerful"...For Whom?**

The terrorists have also had to go directly up against Lenin's October Road of insurrection and civil war, which they have characterised as "outmoded." This has been done under the banner of the heightened strength and perspicacity of the bourgeoisie. The Red Brigades have devoted the most attention to this particular effort. They argue as follows: "insurrectionalism" "...does not take into account the changed conditions which make this path impossible today. This is due to a series of reasons: a) The system of bourgeois democracy has reached a mature level of consolidation...and is able to absorb the upsurges of even the most antagonistic class struggles in a complex and sophisticated circuit of political, economic and military mediations.... b) Preventive counter-revolution, as a constant policy, a now inherent structure, impedes every convergence between the proletarian interests and the revolutionary undertaking." (Or as the Spanish group GRAPO puts it, "The monopolies will not permit the proletariat to concentrate its forces nor to organise. Neither will they allow themselves to be surprised in the future by a general insurrection which erupts at a given moment....") "c) The integration into the imperialist chain...through the structural characteristics of the stage that multinational capital has reached, means that each member state incarnates these common interests or, even more, incorporates its own interests as part of reinforcing the entire chain...."

Thus the Red Brigades' three "too powerful's": the bourgeoisie is too strong, too smart and/or too united to "permit" the masses to get away with insurrection. As proof of this, the terrorists frequently point to the

experience of Germany in the 1930s: the Nazis smashed the German CP, they say, before the latter could get strong enough for insurrection—and a similar fate awaits those who try this path today.

Here the full poisonous fruit of the terrorists' philosophical outlook—subjective idealism—comes to bear and leaves the Red Brigades in awe of the bourgeoisie. This philosophical outlook considers that it is the ideas of individuals which determine reality. Thus it appears to exaggerate the role of the individual: the terrorists continually highlight the power of small bands of guerrillas, working independently of the masses and the objective conditions. But actually this outlook not only denigrates the masses' strength but that of the subjective forces too, for the latter play their full role exactly by leading and unleashing the masses, based on a grasp of the objective conditions.

Cut off and isolated by their outlook from this strength of the masses, the Red Brigades are left gaping impotently at the bourgeoisie's strength. They look at the relative stability of the W. European order, the imperialists' ability to survive the upsurges of the '60s and at the fact that they still have some reserves with which to pacify broad sections of the masses in the imperialist countries, and they conclude that these are results of "inherent structures" and "constant policies" of "preventive counter-revolution" capable of "blocking every convergence" between revolution and the masses. What they do not and cannot see with their subjectivism is that the temporary strength on which these policies has been based is even now being undermined, that the crisis the imperialists are enmeshed in now is deep and growing more acute, and that regardless of all their policies of "counter-revolutionary prevention" and so forth, the very workings of their system, including the dynamics driving them towards inter-imperialist world war, break down their ability to unite their ranks or "absorb even the most antagonistic of class struggles," as the Red Brigades put it, and will push millions onto history's stage offering perhaps un-

precedented opportunities for revolutionary advance, including in W. Europe. In short, the Red Brigades look at the bourgeoisie and see giants, but not that these giants have feet of clay, that the very augmentation of their power is based on heightened exploitation of the masses, including the drawing of millions more around the world into the ranks of their gravediggers, the international proletariat. (This point is related to their analysis of political economy which isolates the metropole from the periphery, dealt with in Section III.)

In any case, what makes "urban guerrilla warfare" a better response to dealing with the bourgeoisie's power and their "policies of counter-revolutionary prevention," etc., than "insurrectionalism"? Perhaps the Red Brigades think that "insurrectionalism" calls for the

*In the midst of the 1917 Revolution, the Bolshevik Party and the section of*



vanguard to lay itself on the tender mercies of the bourgeoisie by confining itself to parliamentary work and strictly legal organisation? If so, then they have been watching the revisionists and social-democrats too long and have forgotten (or more likely *chosen to ignore*) genuinely Leninist organisation. As the *Declaration of the RIM* states, "the backbone (of the party) must be organised on an illegal basis, (and) should be prepared to withstand the repression of the reactionaries who will never peacefully tolerate for long a genuine revolutionary party."

Furthermore, however efficient the bourgeoisie's surveillance and repression, the principal method for successfully combatting this is to mobilise the masses against it and to sink such deep roots among them that they can never be dug up—not

principally to hide and conserve the vanguard (and the RAF's description of the urban guerrilla "swimming like a fish in the sea of the masses" really means *hiding* in an ocean of anonymity). The real importance of strengthening the clandestine nature of the Party on a correct basis is to enable the vanguard to continue to organise and carry out active political preparation in order to hasten the time when the all-out assault can be launched.

#### Using Lenin to Defeat Leninism

Even though the terrorists have rejected the outlines of the path to revolution in the imperialist countries charted by Lenin, they have tried to use Lenin himself to justify this, arguing that Marxism is not a dogma, but a guide to action, that it must continually develop new

methods of struggle, etc. They quote frequently from Lenin's "On Guerrilla Warfare" to buttress this argument—in fact, it is almost certainly the work of Lenin most used by them, especially one key section:

"Marxism differs from all primitive forms of socialism by not binding the movement to any one particular form of struggle. It recognises the most varied forms of struggle; and it does not 'concoct' them, but only generalises, organises, gives conscious expression to those forms of struggle of the revolutionary classes which arise of themselves in the course of the movement. Absolutely hostile to all abstract formulas and to all doctrinaire recipes, Marxism demands an attentive attitude to the *mass* struggle in progress, which, as the movement develops, as the class-consciousness of the masses grows,

*millions were gripped by an insatiable thirst to read, to talk, to thrash out a plan for the future. And at their core was advanced proletarians who, as Stalin put it, had been "trained by Pravda."*



as economic and political crises become acute, continually gives rise to new and more varied methods of defence and attack. Marxism, therefore, positively does not reject any form of struggle." In this work Lenin goes on to urge the party to "organise guerrilla actions" and in general to polemicise against sections of the Bolshevik party who at that time condemned guerrilla warfare as "anarchist" and "terrorist."

"On Guerrilla Warfare" was written in mid-1906, in the wake of the mass armed uprising of December 1905 which almost overthrew the Russian government and was still reverberating throughout the country, while the masses were themselves organising armed resistance to the government's counter-attack, and the army was even bringing in artillery to shell various recalcitrant villages. How does Lenin's advocacy of guerrilla warfare in *those conditions* possibly aid the terrorists in advocating a *strategy* of guerrilla warfare in W. Europe today? Just who is "concocting" here? And talk about "dogmatic recipes"—for the terrorists, isolated acts of assassination and sabotage have been the highest form of struggle in the early '70s, the late '70s, and now the mid-'80s—and one can only imagine that when mass revolt explodes in W. Europe, they will come up with the creative innovation that the main form of struggle is...isolated acts of assassination and sabotage (just as, for example, the terrorists of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party actually did during the 1905 revolution in Russia).

What they have no understanding of at all is giving "an attentive attitude to the mass struggle in progress"; thus urban rebellions like the recent ones in Birmingham, Brixton, Frankfurt, etc., are greeted with silence by the terrorists whilst they content themselves with repeating by rote that since communists "positively do not reject any form of struggle," why should they reject urban guerrilla warfare?! In fact, the guerrilla warfare of the RAF, etc., has nothing in common with Lenin's instructive summation (later in that same work) that "guerrilla warfare is an inevitable form of struggle at a

time when the mass movement has actually reached the point of insurrection and when fairly large intervals occur between the 'big engagements' in the civil war."

Moreover, this continual invocation of Lenin's "Marxists positively do not reject any form of struggle" is sheer hypocrisy on the part of the terrorists. They *objectively* reject all forms of struggle *except* armed terror isolated from the masses. They say otherwise of course—in fact, the terrorists *say* almost anything. The CCCs, for instance, mention in passing how legal agitation and propaganda are also crucial and must develop "in dialectical unity" with their armed actions, and a number of terrorist groups routinely tack on a few phrases about Lenin's discussion of how agitation and propaganda, including a political newspaper, are critical for revolutionary work. The problem is none of them ever *do* any of this. And having put themselves on a military footing with the imperialists' repressive apparatus in a context and in a manner in which they cannot draw masses into their activity, how could they really ever expect to carry out such work—how could such promises remain anything but pious wishes?

A crucial point here is that the disagreements Marxist-Leninists have with the terrorists are not over any particular tactic or act, but over their relentless insistence on carrying out their activity regardless of its connection with the masses, particularly the advanced. In this respect there is a significant difference between the strategy and line of the RAF and Co. and that of groups like the Irish Republican Army (IRA)—for the latter represent, to a large degree, an extension of ongoing mass struggle. The IRA's military strategy of protracted warfare is a reflection of their political goal—to drive the British out of Ireland—and as such reflects the national character of that struggle. For these reasons it has been able to draw on continuing mass support. On the other hand, similar (on the surface) tactics take on a whole different meaning in the context of the imperialist countries: these bourgeoisies cannot be driven into

"leaving" their home base, but must be utterly smashed.

### Enlisting Rudyard Kipling

Let us return to the CCC's statement quoted earlier that "at a time when so many peoples of the world fight the monster gun in hand, the revolutionaries of the metropole have the duty to fight with the same determination." Yes—a thousand times correct. The problem is that for the CCCs and the rest of the terrorists this duty is realised by simply launching guerrilla attacks, regardless of the politics they represent. An exaggeration? Then let them explain how the armed actions of the RAF serve to advance world revolution, when the RAF's vision of the political goal which these actions serve is, by their own declarations, congruent with the bourgeois dictatorship of the Soviet Union?! To their comrades of the CCC, who consider the Soviet Union imperialist, the answer is obviously unimportant—striking NATO *in itself* is sufficient to constitute revolutionary internationalism, *regardless of the political goal this serves*.

And if the terrorists want to point to the actual material damage their actions do to the imperialists—to go beyond "mere verbal denunciation" and "really wound the beast," etc., as the RAF puts it—and thus aid struggles around the world, well, it is time they get serious about how this is really done. A lot of the claims made by the terrorists about the effects of armed struggle sound nice because they are true...about *real revolutionary war*. But what does this have to do with *their* activity? A day of revolt by masses in Birmingham does a hundred times more material damage to the imperialists than years of their urban guerrilla warfare—not to speak of the fact that the more important damage it inflicts is the political and ideological blows dealt to the bourgeoisie and all their claims to be a just and decent society, alongside of which the terrorists' acts pale.

A sort of bottom line of the terrorist argument is: if you *really* believed all your talk about unleashing revolutionary violence, then you would be doing it *right now*. The difference between this

line and Marxism-Leninism is that Marxism-Leninism can *win*. It is not simply an exhortation to do what makes you as an individual feel good. By treating the armed struggle as a *moral* duty abstracted from advancing the revolution, the terrorists give free rein to an individualist notion of revolutionary activity, as if the point of waging the armed struggle was to expunge one's personal guilt and purify oneself—Christian colonialist Rudyard Kipling's "white man's burden" with a left twist. This bottom line argument of the terrorists, like their line more generally, has a lot in common with anarchism, and particularly the anarchist argument versus the dictatorship of the proletariat: if you really believed in communism and doing away with the state, you'd do it right now on the morning of victory—which in every revolution so far (and for the foreseeable future) would just mean the revolutionary proletariat laying down its own weapons and ceasing the armed defence of its revolutionary power. Furthermore, what Marxist-Leninists are doing right now in preparing the masses politically, including in the course of revolutionary struggle, is key for unleashing *mass* revolutionary violence (more on which later).

### A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire

For decades now the revisionist and social-democratic parties of Europe have raised "the objective conditions" and having "the masses with them" as justification for smothering the flames of revolt among the more advanced minority under the inertia of the mainstream. And the terrorist trend has repeatedly proclaimed their disgust with this kowtowing to the mainstream. But disgust with this reformist orientation towards the masses does not obviate the need to base oneself on masses any more than disgust with the revisionists' "Marxist-Leninist parties" obviates the need for developing genuine vanguards based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought.

Arguing for the need for the vanguard to make an analysis of the objective conditions and base itself

on the revolutionary masses cannot be a call to wait for better days—on the contrary, such analysis poses all the more urgently the task of revolutionaries to find the ways to act as a real vanguard today and train the minority that is already politically awake so that in the context of the rapidly intensifying crisis of the imperialist system, they will be able to, as Lenin put it, place themselves at the head of the revolutionary army and lead the armed onslaught.

It is worth relooking at Mao Tsetung's famous formulation "a single spark can start a prairie fire." With this slogan, Mao emphasised the great potential for the Chinese Communist Party to unleash the awakening energy of millions of China's peasants in revolutionary war. Terrorists have invariably failed to do this because the forms of struggle they initiate and the politics they are based on are not designed to draw in and unleash advanced masses. In fact, what they have chosen as their central activity—acts such as assassination of government officials—*substitutes* the struggle of isolated handfuls for the revolutionary struggle of the masses.

These isolated actions have nothing in common with truly advanced revolutionary actions which sometimes even when starting with a small minority have played a crucial role in the revolutionary process. Consider Ireland in 1916, for instance, when a few hundred armed Irish revolutionaries marched on the government. In defending this against the charge of "putschism," Lenin pointed out how this grew out of a whole history of developing struggle in Ireland, and how it found an echo among the masses and could not be considered a putsch. But can the same be said about the W. European urban guerrillas? If they really and truly believed that their own actions too were a continuation of a whole history of struggle, for instance, in Italy, where they do make this claim, then why didn't they ever launch this kind of open public assault on the forces of order and try to rally mass support? The point isn't that they should or could have, but that this kind of activity is never discussed by them (and probably

never occurred to them), even while they were kidnapping and executing Moro himself, because igniting *mass* struggle is not what their line is all about. Their single sparks are not to light prairie fires, but to put beneath a glass and gaze at excitedly...till they flicker out.

### The Role of Armed Struggle

The carrying out of armed struggle as the conspiratorial activity of relative handfuls by the terrorists reveals their basic opposition to the real purpose of the armed struggle. Armed struggle is the inevitable and only means by which the power of the exploiting classes can be broken—political power does indeed grow out of the barrel of a gun. As Mao eloquently put it, "Some people ridicule us as advocates of the 'omnipotence of war.' Yes, we are advocates of the omnipotence of revolutionary war; that is good, not bad, that is Marxist.... Experience in the class struggle in the era of imperialism teaches us that it is only by the power of the gun that the working class and the labouring masses can defeat the armed bourgeoisie and landlords; in this sense, we may say that only with guns can the whole world be transformed."

The point of taking up the gun is to liberate the masses to transform the world—and it is impossible to separate the goal of this warfare from the way it is fought. As the *Declaration of the RIM* observes, "Revolutionary war... must be carried out as a key arena for training the revolutionary masses to be capable of wielding political power and transforming society." If not, if the very means of struggle used to smash down the bourgeoisie are separated from the goal of advancing the masses' capability to transform the world, how can there be any result but the substitution of a new group of exploiters for the old—a result which is only too familiar. Even if the terrorists' military strategy were somehow (perhaps with the aid of the Soviet Red Army?!) able to defeat the bourgeoisie, isn't this exactly where their line would lead?

Not basing the armed struggle on at least an advanced section of the masses means restricting it to the

practice of the vanguard alone—armed struggle is for “communist combattants,” whilst the masses are left to go about their own lesser forms of struggle. As the Spanish group GRAPO argues, “The political movement of the masses and guerrilla warfare are two complementary forms of the Movement of Popular Resistance which evolve in a parallel direction and in mutual relation,” and the Red Brigades argue that “the armed struggle is the *historical form* through which the *political content* of the *party's* activity manifests itself.” (their emphasis) Now it is certainly true that the vanguard will initially form the core of any revolutionary armed forces—but aren't these formulations a recipe for perpetuating the armed struggle as the activity of the vanguard *by itself*? And if the armed struggle is restricted like that, if the proletariat is left on the sidelines in the war, how is it suddenly going to be running society? In concluding its arguments against “insurrectionalism” the RAF shows just where they think the masses fit in to this scenario: “Only in the final stage of the struggle will mass actions (demonstrations, strikes, barricades) be decisive, first by providing support (which could be considerable) and then leading to the total disarmament of the oppressive apparatus.” “Providing *support*”!!—such is the role of the people in this perversion of “people's war”...support which the RAF feels compelled to add “could be considerable”! How very generous of our condescending heroes. Presumably the masses are to continue “providing support” while the RAF runs society for them too (benevolently, of course!).

Their conception of the armed struggle and the goal for which it is fought is completely opposed to a revolutionary strategy in *any* country, oppressor or oppressed. Mao, in opposing the “purely military viewpoint” rooted in somewhat similar perversions, described the tasks of the Red Army: “The significance of the tasks of the Chinese Red Army lies in the fact that it is an armed group for carrying out political tasks of a class nature....When the Red Army fights, it fights not merely for

the sake of fighting, but to agitate among the masses, to organise them, to arm them, and to help them establish political power; apart from such objectives, fighting loses its meaning, and the Red Army loses its meaning for existence.” (On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party.) Whatever their intentions, the RAF, CCCs, etc., do not and have never organised masses, armed them, educated them, or helped them establish political power—nor can they with a way of fighting which makes that impossible. They cannot even carry out the tasks of a real unit of a Red Army...much less those of a vanguard party. Isn't it the case that the Red Brigades, the RAF, etc., have truly lost their reason for existence?

### Terrorism and Revisionism

This separation of the goal for which the armed struggle is fought from the way in which it is conducted has coloured the evolution of the “urban guerrillas.” The contemporary European terrorist trend had its roots in the late '60s and was influenced by the climate and events of those times: by the national liberation wars, particularly in Vietnam, the Cultural Revolution in China, the urban upheavals exploding in Paris in 1968 and throughout Europe and the U.S., and by a repulsion against the official European left, which sought to smother the revolt and channel it into harmless byways. At that time broad forces looked to anyone and everyone who called for armed struggle against U.S. imperialism, ranging from revolutionary communists like Mao Tsetung to revolutionary nationalists like Amílcar Calbral or Franz Fanon, not to mention centrists like Ho Chi Minh.

In the terrorists' case, this initial motion away from revisionism never went much deeper. The RAF, for instance, summed up that “the importance of Mao Tsetung's contribution to revolutionary theory was that he showed that the revolution must be conducted from the beginning with military means”—and with this they took Mao's path-breaking analysis of protracted people's war and New Democratic Revolution and reduced it to simply picking up the gun,

thereby obliterating the key role of political line. That they considered this THE contribution of Mao also reduces to secondary importance Mao's analysis of the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union and the necessity to unleash mass revolutionary struggle to prevent this—which he did with the Cultural Revolution. Though they professed their admiration of the Cultural Revolution, their denigration of political line left them unable to grasp the heart of this unprecedented struggle of the masses to seize power in and transform all spheres of society. Nor did they understand that it was the product of a breakthrough by Mao in political understanding.

Not surprisingly then their initial criticisms of the Soviet Union were never based on an all-around understanding of the restoration of capitalism there and the lessons of this for continuing the revolution under socialism, and was limited instead to repulsion at its specific policies in the late '60s of collusion with the U.S. imperialists and refusal to aid the national liberation struggles. When a few years later the USSR began to more aggressively challenge the U.S., organising and funding, for example, the Cuban incursion into Angola and then invading Afghanistan themselves, the RAF regarded this as progress—after all, the Soviets were “standing up” to the U.S., weren't they? That they were standing up in order to establish their own imperialist domination was, for these forces, secondary.

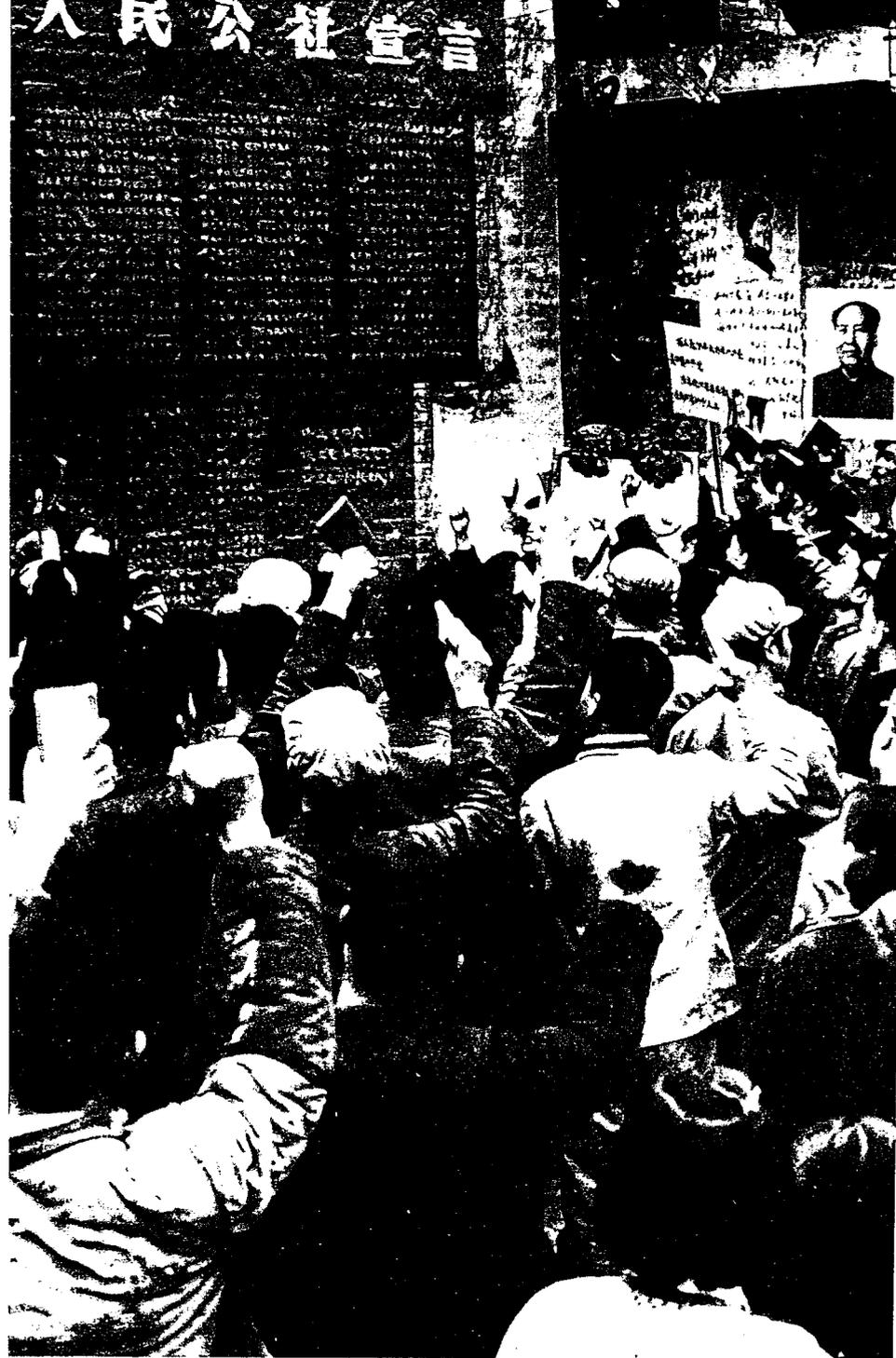
Just how secondary it is can be seen by the actions of the CCCs. In a recent polemic they wrote that “the CCCs do not distinguish themselves fundamentally from the rest of the political gamut by the armed struggle, but above all by their genuine Marxist-Leninist leadership, their truly revolutionary outlook. It is our political analysis that prescribes the armed struggle....” As for what this means, consider their act of uniting with the RAF in the West European guerrilla front. The CCCs have repeatedly described the Soviet Union as imperialist in their various communiqués and other public statements,

yet the RAF, whom they consider to be comrade Marxist-Leninists, *has for years considered the Soviet Union a socialist country*. And the CCCs want to assure us that what distinguishes their trend is not at all unity on terrorism, but unity on “their genuine Marxist-Leninist leadership, their truly revolutionary outlook.” What this is instead is authentic contempt for Marxism-Leninism and for the revolutionary goal for which they claim they are fighting—will it look like the Soviet Union or not?! Can anyone really treat seriously their claim to be making a revolutionary class analysis of their own country either?

The basic spirit guiding this outlook was encapsulated years ago by Uruguay’s Tupamaros (one of the original inspirations for the RAF, the Red Brigades, and others) in a phrase which is still bandied about in various forms: “words divide us, actions unite us.” In other words, “stop yakking and start shooting.” It’s a slogan that reactionary armies might be proud of—they need, in fact they require, ignorant soldiers. The proletariat doesn’t.

## II. Terrorism as Political Preparation

As a military strategy, the terrorists’ war of attrition in the imperialist countries is fundamentally flawed: it is not based on the actual motion and development of the imperialist countries or on the dynamics of the class struggle there—which requires an insurrectionary offensive against the imperialists—and it cannot unleash mass revolutionary war. It has no real perspective of defeating the bourgeois armed forces on the battlefield and smashing their state apparatus, nor of the masses implementing their own armed rule. But after 15 years of armed actions which have not resulted in any attrition whatsoever of the imperialists’ military strength, at least some of the inadequacy of their theory as a military strategy has impinged even on the terrorists’ outlook. What one finds in a survey of their literature is a shift in emphasis from urban guerrilla warfare as a military strategy to urban guerrilla warfare as the best means for politically bringing the



*The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China.*

masses over to revolutionary struggle.

Central to this claim, in the terrorist view, is the role of armed actions in destroying the aura of invincibility surrounding the imperialists in order to unleash the masses. As GRAPO puts it, “The armed actions give the masses confidence in their own strength, facilitate their organisation and demonstrate the vulnerability of the regime. They

thus eliminate the vestiges of fear and of terror which the regime tries to instill.” And the Red Brigades: “The problem is not transmitting communist consciousness to the multitudes, but demonstrating the necessity and possibility of the very existence of revolutionary politics; of the viability of the alternative plan for power, which immediately and directly confronts (independently of the objective conditions for

revolution) the State.”

What a profound discovery! The masses don't lack consciousness, only courage! All that is necessary now in the world of terrorist "revolution" is that the masses gain confidence, overcome their fear, and get on with it—how easy, how spontaneous, and how disgustingly conservative!

This is a vision of a change of power-holders, not communist revolution—for anyone who looks around W. Europe today and believes that the transformation of the *congé-payé* and *scala mobile*-infected consciousness of the masses is not a profound problem is fighting for something besides the kind of radical rupture required by proletarian revolution. These statements by GRAPO and the Red Brigades testify to the petty-bourgeois character of the terrorist line: perhaps they do indeed want the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, but they have no grasp of what is required for the proletariat to actually lead masses to seize control of and transform all spheres of society and advance to a whole new communist epoch of human history, where, as Mao put it, "all mankind voluntarily and consciously changes itself and the world"—a task which it is impossible to even begin without real leaps in consciousness.

### Condescending Saviours

The Red Brigades' phrase—"the problem is not transmitting communist consciousness to the multitudes"—poses as anti-elitist, as if Marxist-Leninists were some kind of modern-day Christs who thought they were dispensing god-given eternal truth to ignorant masses. Yet it actually reeks with elitist contempt for the masses' own ability to take up the science of revolution and remake the earth.

This outlook seals the wedlock of the terrorists with the outright reformists and economists. As Lenin acidly observed in the celebrated section of *What Is To Be Done?* on "What Is There in Common Between Terrorism and Economism," "The Economists and the present-day terrorists have one common root, namely, *the worship of spontaneity*.... At first sight, our asser-

tion may appear paradoxical, so great is the difference between those who stress the 'drab everyday struggle' and those who call for the most self-sacrificing struggle of individuals. But this is no paradox. The Economists and terrorists merely bow to different poles of spontaneity: the Economists bow to the spontaneity of the 'pure' working-class movement, while the terrorists bow to the spontaneity of the passionate indignation of intellectuals, who lack the ability or opportunity to link up the revolutionary struggle with the working class movement to form an integral whole. It is difficult indeed for those who have lost their belief, or who have never believed that this is possible, to find some outlet for their indignation and revolutionary energy other than terror." The Red Brigades' contentment with the present level of consciousness serves as justification for their own isolated activity. The terrorists start from a completely upside-down understanding of what the problem facing revolutionaries in W. Europe really is: that the vanguard forces are most definitely *lagging behind* what is demanded of them right now by the advanced masses there. Are there not millions around W. Europe today who have a burning need to grasp the nature of all the class forces shaping society, who need to be armed with an assessment of the different forces behind the major events in all spheres of society, political, cultural, scientific, economic, etc., so as to forge a class conscious force capable of leading through the complex process of armed insurrection and civil war to establish a real revolutionary government? And there are tens of thousands right now who could be trained in this way...if there were a force prepared to train them. What is demanded of revolutionaries is not that they retreat into isolated acts of sabotage and assassination, but that they raise *their own ability* to politically forge this class conscious section of proletarians, above all into a vanguard party itself.

### "Rivers of Ink"

As part of heaping abuse on the so-called "insurrectionist" strategy, the

terrorists continually deride the "little sects who issue their few hundred copies of their newspapers," "all the little M-L groups who make their dogmatism the best alibi for their own inactivity" (Red Brigades "second position"), "the rivers of ink aimed by all the little M-L parties in order to 'explain to the masses'," (Red Brigades) and they call instead not for "mere verbal denunciation" but for "real destruction of the enemies of the world proletariat" (RAF)—i.e., armed attacks.

Most sympathisers of the terrorist groups of W. Europe may actually have only seen in action this kind of dogmatic squabbling and patient evangelical activity of reformist sects, for the genuine Marxist-Leninist movement there has largely collapsed and had for years previously been rotting from within. But the terrorists are themselves manifestations of this same economist malady, only much more so—their derision reveals not mere ignorance of but opposition to genuine revolutionary activity. If they really want to go up against a worthy advocate of "directing rivers of ink towards... 'explaining to the masses,'" etc., someone who fervently advocated issuing not only hundreds but thousands of issues of a revolutionary newspaper, why don't they just come right out and launch their polemics against that person who for them is presumably the patron-saint of urging political preparation for insurrection and thus, for them, a stalwart of "mere verbal denunciation"—V.I. Lenin.

It was Lenin who fought the old terrorist rot of Narodism, who wrote *What Is To Be Done?* in order to orient the Bolshevik Party toward the task of *political preparation* of the advanced for proletarian revolution. There he argued that "the masses *cannot* be trained in political consciousness and revolutionary activity in any other way except by means of such exposures," referring to the necessity to carry on constant political agitation and propaganda on the burning issues of the day in all spheres of life. Lenin even said that, "In a word, the plan for an all-Russian political newspaper, far from representing the fruits of the

labour of armchair workers...is the most practical plan for immediate and all-round preparation of the uprising...."

Imagine that! A political newspaper—"rivers of ink" and "mere verbal denunciation" for our terrorists—as the "most practical plan" for the armed uprising! And yes, Lenin too certainly was attacked for leading a "sect" with their "several hundred revolutionary organisers" and their "half a dozen revolutionary papers appearing not more regularly than once a month," as he put it. (And to be utterly clear: of course the political line of such agitation and propaganda is key—the problem with the PCI, PCF, etc., is hardly that they issue rivers of ink but that their ink trains people in revisionism and reinforces the existing bourgeois outlook. That the Bolsheviks carried out altogether different training was proved quite well in 1917 by "the generation of workers trained in Pravda," as Stalin called them.)

There is also something to be said here about the terrorists' claim that their actions "eliminate fear" and impart courage and so forth. If GRAPO, the Red Brigades, etc., really believe that their activities do this, they might have at least learned better from their own experience. In the face of a wave of repression in the late '70s and early '80s in Italy, leading members of the Red Brigades, Prima Linea, etc., along with dozens of their cadre who had been arrested, betrayed their ranks and named names to the cops, leading to the round-up and imprisonment of many hundreds. Besides these "pentiti," hundreds of others publicly renounced revolutionary struggle altogether in exchange for more lenient treatment in prison; many of these today are collaborating with the revisionist PCI.

Some desertions and even collaboration are of course inevitable in the face of serious repression, but not the kind of mass phenomenon seen here. This tragic scene did not come about because these people had not seen their share of "armed actions demonstrating the vulnerability of the regime" and "eliminating the vestiges of fear," etc., but because this kind of train-

ing cannot arm people with the scientific understanding which alone imparts the strategic confidence required to resist torture and repression. For an example of this, let those Italian political prisoners who still long for revolution look to the heroism of the revolutionary prisoners of Peru, who have steadfastly resisted savage repression and who continue to hold high the red flag and to regard their time in prison as a period of preparation for returning to the frontlines—this courage is the product of a genuine proletarian line and ideology.

### Reformists with '38's

While most terrorist groups claim their actions politically bring masses over to a revolutionary position, one group in particular—a recent split off the Red Brigades sometimes referred to as "the second position"—presents this argument most sharply. They were recently expelled by the Red Brigades majority for rejecting "protracted people's war" as the military strategy for Italy and instead calling for a period of preparation for insurrection and civil war. Carrying out this preparation, they argue, requires that the vanguard "strike at the heart of the state," particularly at "key projects of the bourgeoisie," with armed actions which they view as "the decisive method for politically educating the masses." These actions are said to provoke a response from all the political forces in society, thus exposing their true class nature to the proletariat.

This development represents the break-up of the terrorist project on the shoals of reality—what Lenin referred to as Narodism (Russian terrorism) straining towards Marxism...but remaining mired in the outlook of terrorism (and the "second position's" "strike at the heart of the state" theory bears more than a superficial resemblance to the Narodnaya Volya's own "propaganda of the deed" and their slogan of "hit the centre.") Faced with their severe defeat and the outright desertion of the bulk of their cadre, and with no real advance for the terrorist project anywhere in Europe, the "second position" takes the dramatic step of rejecting

the strategy of urban guerrilla warfare as "protracted people's war" and then replaces it with...urban guerrilla warfare as pure "excitative terror."

They consider an outstanding example of this line to be their own kidnapping and execution of Italy's Christian Democratic Party chief Aldo Moro in 1978. Moro and his party were on the verge of agreeing to the "historic compromise" long sought by the PCI which would have brought it into the government and united all the bourgeois political parties against the proletariat, thereby, argue the brigatisti, handing it a historic defeat. Moro's assassination, they claim, thwarted this "national unity" project of the ruling class, exposed all the revisionist and social-democrat forces who came out to demand Moro's release, and overall advanced the proletariat's cause.

When the Red Brigades executed Moro in order to influence the composition of the Italian parliament, what they told the proletariat with their guns was that the real political content of "striking the heart of the state" was having one and not another political coalition in office. Isn't this the outlook of reformists with guns? Isn't there a reason why this kind of activity is a favoured method of bourgeois oppositions when their reformist activity is outlawed—why the bourgeois opposition in Nepal, or Aquino's followers in the Philippines or those of Bani-Sadr in Iran at times make terrorism their strategy?

And isn't it generally the case that such assassinations of bourgeois bigshots isolated from real revolutionary war only engenders a *liberal mood*, and objectively spreads the idea that their elimination might change things—thus, when capitalist society proceeds methodically onward, leaving people deflated and at best *waiting* for the next action. If the Red Brigades think that their communiqués printed by the Italian media at that time carrying indictments of Moro and Italian capitalism counter-acted this, then all that proves is that the Italian bourgeois media understands better than the brigatisti how what they did overshadowed anything they said.

Furthermore, consider the outlook on the state operative here: that the "heart of the state," which is what they claim to be striking, consists of the handful of its chiefs—and this is what is put in practice over and over by the terrorist trend when Direct Action kills their French general, the RAF their "boss of bosses", etc. And just what if somehow the terrorists could even get all the chiefs—would the state, minus its "heart," topple over dead? Or wouldn't it instead just reproduce a new generation of bourgeois chiefs, because its roots lay untouched? With their objective reduction of the "heart of the state" to its handful of leading figures the terrorists come very close to the *political line* on the state of the revisionists, with their "anti-monopoly coalitions," and so forth, which serves the revisionists' ambitions to replace "bad bourgeois leaders" with their own enlightened leadership—and maintain intact the relations of exploitation and the state that enforces them. Both of these outlooks obscure that the "heart of the state" is its repressive apparatus consisting of hundreds of thousands of armed men and the bureaucracy behind them based on and enforcing a system of class exploitation, and that to "strike at the heart of the state" requires mobilising masses in armed insurrection and civil war to smash this apparatus and root up the capitalist *system*—something the Red Brigades were not prepared to do in 1978 and will never prepare the masses to do with a line that narrows their sights to a handful of figures.

### Inciting, or Exciting, the Masses?

As for the value of these actions in "stimulating" a revolutionary mood among the masses—"exploding bombs in people's conscience," as a leader of the RAF once described it—Lenin replied to this theory of "excitative terror" in *What Is To Be Done?*

"Are there not enough outrages committed in Russian life that special 'excitants' have to be invented? On the other hand, is it not obvious that those who are not, and cannot be, roused to excitement

even by Russian tyranny will stand by 'twiddling their thumbs,' watching a handful of terrorists engage in single combat with the government? The fact of the matter is that the masses of the workers are roused to a high pitch of excitement by the abominations in Russian life, but we are unable to collect, if one may put it that way, and concentrate all these drops and streamlets of popular excitement, which are called forth by the conditions of Russian life to a far larger extent than we imagine, but which it is precisely necessary to combine into a *single gigantic torrent*." Are there any *fewer* outrages now than then, with famine, repression, murder, rape and war the daily lot of hundreds of millions already, and nuclear global war threatening?

What Meinhof's "exploding bombs in people's conscience" amounts to is just adding one more small "drop" to the general excitement. And by contenting themselves with this instead of finding the means to "concentrate all the drops and streamlets" into a "single gigantic torrent," the terrorists see no way to actually link up with and move forward the advanced masses who are *already acting* on the political stage in W. Europe. In fact they don't even see them at all: they are so satisfied to gaze at their own tiny droplets that they can't see the rivers and streams that so desperately need to be rechanneled—they look around W. Europe and conclude that really not much has been going on. When, for example, Hot Autumn '83 protests against NATO's deployment of cruise and Pershing II missiles were pouring throughout West Germany, the terrorists stayed aloof from the mass movement.

The Revolutionary Cells of W. Germany, a terrorist organisation which shares much in common with other "urban guerrillas" even though it makes no claim to being Marxist-Leninist, eventually provided an explanation for their own absence: they concluded that the movement was probably set in motion by the bourgeoisie itself and at any rate was dominated by bourgeois politics and totally under

the control of the official peace movement: "the sections of the peace movement which pinpointed and took up practically the relationship between armaments and imperialism always remained a minority," "the hope that the protest would be radicalised...did not materialise," and so "the old point that a movement does not allow criticism from within...must undoubtedly be made again and again." Thus the Revolutionary Cells conclude that "so long as a radical mass movement is not in sight," "the decisive means against the arms build-up are as always internal unrest and subversion of the foundation of power at the points where the most effective resistance can be carried out with small forces"—i.e., terrorism, in which "we determine our own moments."

Well of course the dominant politics remained bourgeois, of course the radical section was a minority—and what else does one expect of a mass movement involving millions in a non-revolutionary situation in imperialist W. Germany? It is more often than not the bourgeoisie themselves who drag people out of their daily routine and propel them into the political arena, and for their own ends—but once there what people do is by no means a settled question. On the other hand, if all the revolutionary forces threw down their shovels, quit the sandbox and went and played with themselves ("as always") like the Revolutionary Cells, how is that minority that was straining to raise the level of the fight to target the imperialists, that minority that the RCs are so disdainful of, that certainly consisted of thousands and thousands, how are they *ever going to play their role* and be unleashed by revolutionary politics *to lead millions* in a future revolutionary situation? The mass movement doesn't *determine* the role of the vanguard, but it does offer ground on which small numbers can unleash powerful forces—*when* they have the means for politically doing this. (See *AWTW* no. 2, "Hot Autumn") When they don't, when their line in fact opposes this, they are doomed to tail the mainstream or remain on

the sidelines—a position which the RCs contentedly took.

### Rejecting the Vanguard Party

The terrorists don't rely on the masses, they denigrate political preparation of the advanced, they downplay the need for an overall analysis of the objective situation since it is their own actions which they regard as key to all political development, they're content enough with the masses' consciousness and seek merely to excite them to revolution—with this programme, what need could they possibly have for a vanguard party? Of course claiming to be Marxist-Leninists, they naturally also claim that they are out to construct such a vanguard—the “party of communist combatants”—but when you really get down to it, if your programme is one of “demonstrating the vulnerability of the regime” through isolated acts of sabotage and assassination, what is the urgent need...and so they routinely postpone the party into the indefinite future.

And even if they did proclaim a party (which at least one group, Spain's GRAPO, says it is the armed unit of) what would it look like? The “second position” split from the Red Brigades even reached the point of saying that one of the Red Brigades' most critical errors had been to fail to realise that “with the Moro action the Red Brigades had assumed the role of the revolutionary party and after the Moro action we should have consciously raised ourselves to this level.” Such is the baptism by fire of a real vanguard party in the terrorists' eyes—kidnapping a bourgeois politician!

### III. Terrorism: Chauvinist and pro-Imperialist

The terrorists' rejection of the task of politically preparing and relying on the masses for proletarian revolution and all that entails—especially the downplaying of the role of the vanguard party and theory—and their bowing to spontaneity leaves them bowing spontaneously to the dominant bourgeois ideology on a whole range of key political issues,

a couple of which will be examined here.

### Euro-centrism vs. Proletarian Internationalism

In singling out NATO as their chief target, the W. European guerrillas analyse it as “the most advanced system of domination” of imperialism. They argue that NATO plays a decisive, strategic role in the “homogenisation” (sometimes “Americanisation”) of W. Europe. The high level of strategic integration achieved through NATO is, they say, for the purpose of intensifying repression against the European masses (some groups consider this the *principal* purpose of NATO) and for carrying out the imperialists' response to their deepening crisis: “generalised war” (the Red Brigades speak of inter-imperialist world war).

Central to this line is their view of the internationalisation or multinationalisation of the European states, put forward in one form or another by virtually all the groups. In “A Revolutionary Task, The International Fight,” in which Direct Action laid out some of the theoretical basis for the formation of the “W. European guerrilla front,” they state: “At both the market and the production level, Western Europe constitutes a single territory on which Multinational Capital projects, plans, realises and imposes its profit logic. All of Western Europe's production and market structures have in fact become multinationalised....More and more, the governments of the various national States are serving as mere screens for the internal struggles of Multinational Capital, each one of them forming an arena in which the interests of Multinational Capital coexist and compete.” Thus Direct Action draws together its indictment of the European bourgeoisies: “The role of Europe has been recast within the Atlantic alliance. It is both a *victim* (territory which is nuke-able in capital's game) and *executioner* (capital's instrument throughout the world)....”

This view of Direct Action bears a striking resemblance to the Chinese revisionists' Three Worlds

Theory, which puts the European countries in the Second World, midway between the First World superpowers and the Third World nations, and thus concludes that they are also “victims” of superpower aggression. In such a way Direct Action, like the Three Worlds Theory, obscures the bloody imperialist *essence* of the W. European nations, which for decades now have gorged themselves on the plunder of the world's peoples.

What Direct Action focuses on is the internationalisation of the capitalist circuits of accumulation *within* W. Europe—what they *omit* is the internationalisation of the circuits of accumulation at a global level, and especially between the various European countries and the oppressed nations, which are fundamentally relations of exploitation. These exploitative relations are still very much rooted in the various imperialist countries as separate national entities, with national states which defend the interests of its own home-based capitals. The terrorist trend cuts all this off and out of sight. The Red Brigades have published lengthy analyses of the political economy of Italy which treat it as an isolated entity, or at best functioning within a European framework (for instance, in their most famous work, *The Bee and the Communist*, which attempts to analyse the political economy of imperialism, they never even attempt to apply Lenin's *Imperialism*). By underplaying the actual material interests of the European powers in defending and extending their own share of the plunder of the oppressed nations, the terrorist trend winds up treating NATO as if it were principally an instrument of repression internally in Europe, or as if the U.S. imperialists were forcing the European powers into it against their real interests. Thus they propagate slogans like “W. Germany (Italy, etc.) Out of NATO,” promoting the outlook that the national interests of W. Germany, etc., are really being “betrayed” by the ruling bourgeoisies (or “Multinational Capital”) and would be better served by being outside rather than inside NATO. RAF even calls for a

war of "national liberation" in W. Germany!—(a view which is reinforced by their claim to have adopted the military strategy of national liberation wars in the oppressed countries).

And just what are these "national interests" of the W. German nation which the RAF wishes to liberate? Far from being betrayed by the W. German rulers, are they not very well represented by W. Germany's position in NATO—are not the interests of the German nation bound up with the defence of its decades-old plunder of the oppressed nations, which it is NATO's task to defend and extend against the threat of their imperialist rivals in the Soviet bloc? And where will such a formulation lead in an imperialist country like W. Germany, except that in the interests of the struggle against NATO and American hegemony, the proletariat must unite with at least those sections of the bourgeoisie who do resist the U.S. and uphold Germany's "real national interests"?

So it is that the RAF, which prides itself on its history of supporting national liberation struggles against imperialism, winds up simultaneously trying to defend W. Germany's "national interests"—which lie squarely with suppressing the national liberation movements. (Nor do the other terrorists fare any better. Direct Action from France, which is not formally part of NATO, in their communiqué on the assassination of General René Audran denounces "the change in orientation of the French armed forces, which have gone over from a position of defence of territory to one of 'advanced defense' directed at the socialist countries." And so Direct Action, which also prides itself on supporting national liberation, accepts the bourgeoisie's own characterisation of the French armed forces as having been mere "defenders of territory"!)

Missing the actual material interests driving the European powers, including into NATO, even those terrorists who speak of inter-imperialist world war miss the urgency of the moment, as well as the necessity of a relentless political struggle against the violent na-

tionalist passions which this dynamic gives rise to in those countries. They have no grasp that in the coming period when the contradictions of imperialism will explode into the clash of arms, the point will be not to save but to destroy the German (Italian, etc.) imperialist entity, not that the proletariat can better represent the fatherland but that it has no country.

The terrorist trend's reasoning behind its attacks on NATO converges neatly with that of the Soviet imperialists. The Soviets have repeatedly urged the Western European governments to consider whether their real national interests might not lie outside NATO and the Western bloc generally, pointing not too subtly at their latest nuclear war-fighting equipment, particularly the now more than 400 SS-20's which lie within minutes' striking distance of W. Europe (a threat which is doubtlessly a bit more thought-provoking to certain W. European bourgeoisies than the terrorists' own .38's.) So not only do the terrorists wind up objectively capitulating to their own fatherlands; they also outright defend or apologise for Soviet imperialism. The RAF and GRAPO hail the Soviet bloc as socialist, and Direct Action increasingly talks of the "socialist camp."

The Red Brigades have continued to denounce the Soviet Union as imperialist—but they target the U.S. as the "principal enemy," while the "second position" split hits the U.S. as "the most powerful and aggressive" imperialist. The latter goes on to argue that analysing the Soviet Union as imperialist "does not prevent us from taking into account the *concrete* world situation, from assessing both the *degree of aggressivity* of the imperialists and the *particularities* of their policies, and from realising that if the revolution wants to advance in a world divided into 'blocs,' it *can and must* exploit the contradictions produced by the functioning of the capitalist mode of production itself...." They conclude: "Anyone who in denouncing all the imperialists avoids undertaking one of the primary tasks of a true communist—that of exploiting all the contradictions which flow from the general dynamic of imperialism

in order to accelerate, advance and lead the world revolution—is an opportunist in deed."

So targeting all imperialism, instead of being a sworn duty of revolutionary internationalists, is now a hallmark of opportunists! These brigatisti have also now discovered a new "primary task of true communists"—exploiting *all* the contradictions of imperialism—which for them amounts to hitting one imperialist as "more aggressive," "more powerful," etc., activity which can have no other effect than lining up the masses in one imperialist camp as it goes down for battle against the other. Far from a "new primary task for true communists," this is very old and familiar treachery from the days of the Second International on down.

And if anyone who refuses to take up this "primary task of true communists" is an "opportunist in deed," one waits expectantly for the "Marxist-Leninists" of the Red Brigades to announce their posthumous granting of this title to Lenin—for he categorically refused to play this game. Lenin instead unceasingly trained the Bolshevik Party and the class-conscious proletarians in Russia in the outlook that, as he put it, the proletarian movement "will remain true to itself only if it joins neither one nor the other imperialist bourgeoisie, only if it says that the two sides are equally bad, and if it wishes the defeat of the imperialist bourgeoisie in every country" (Under a False Flag). He went on to argue that it did not matter which imperialist fired the first shot, nor in whose countries the enemy's troops were stationed, for the point was that inter-imperialist war was like a war between two slavemasters, one with 100 slaves, the other with 200, "for a more just distribution of the slaves." The only *practical* question which the Red Brigades can envision is: which slavemaster will they organise their followers to fight and die for.

Bowing to spontaneity, isolated by their failure to fundamentally rely on the revolutionary masses, the turning to some stronger power as "aid" in their fight is perhaps inevitable for the terrorist trend. And with their view of socialism gutted of

any vision of the masses consciously transforming all society, they have no problem seeking out the Soviet Union for such "aid."

So it is that the entire spectrum of W. European guerrillas, this vanguard of "communist combatants" who if it ever utters any self-criticism at all usually states half-boastfully that perhaps indeed they are running too far out front of the masses, winds up defending or apologising for the hideous betrayal of the world's first proletarian revolution, now a dictatorship of the new revisionist bourgeoisie. It is a sad state of affairs for those who years ago claimed to oppose the stale swamp of revisionism infesting W. Europe, who proclaimed their support for Mao Tsetung and the red flag flying over revolutionary China—and who have now degenerated more often than not into shock troops for Gorbachev and apologists for one or another faction of their own imperialist ruling class.

The lesson of the terrorists' experience is not that the armed struggle cannot be waged in the imperialist countries, but that there are no substitutes for proletarian revolution. The goal of communism—"all mankind voluntarily and consciously changing itself and the world"—makes imperative a conscious political revolution, with the masses themselves in their millions taking up not only the guns that will finally batter and break the military power of the imperialist states, but the understanding that will guide them to do this in a way that will not lead to the replacing of one imperialist exploiter with another. The crisis of the imperialist system is even today preparing the conditions for one of those rare opportunities in the imperialist countries when this may be possible—for days which will mark the future of the world. Whether revolutionaries will be in a position to seize the time, to actually launch revolutionary warfare, defeat the imperialists on the battlefield, and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in sections of Europe as part of the world revolution depends to no small degree on putting aside the old baggage which has for too long burdened those in the imperialist countries



*In the Chinese Communist Party's Yen-an command centre, Mao Tsetung placed great stress on the political education of cadres and soldiers.*

who seek revolution and making great leaps in preparation right now, above all in constructing vanguard Marxist-Leninist parties. Only in

such a way will the exceptional moments looming so near be seized, and not lost forever. □

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