

The Day of Heroism,
19 June 1986

"This Blood That Has Been Spilt Shall Never Be Forgotten!"

The following was prepared by the Information Bureau of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Day of Heroism in Peru:

Fifteen years ago, on 19 June 1986, the Peruvian government coldly murdered about 300 of the prisoners of war who had turned their places of confinement into "shining trenches of combat" to advance the People's War. These men and women comrades set a standard for persisting in revolutionary struggle by any means possible even in the clutches of the enemy; this is a new and higher standard that comrades held captive today in Peru and in other countries are upholding and implementing in many concrete ways. It is a testament to the enduring impact of what has been commemorated by Maoists and other revolutionaries around the world as the "Day of Heroism".

As the People's War in Peru, initiated in 1980, surged forward under the leadership of the Communist Party of Peru (PCP) and its Chairman Gonzalo, and especially after the success of the Party's policy of organising breakouts, most spectacularly a guerrilla attack on a local prison in Ayacucho that freed hundreds of prisoners, the reactionary regime adopted the policy of concentrating "sus-

pected terrorists" in Lima. But even behind bars these prisoners did not give up. They lived collectively, to the degree possible in these hell-holes, so as to better withstand the enemy's efforts to break their bodies and minds. They carried out political, ideological and physical training and produced art and handicrafts meant to support and spur on the People's War in Peru and revolution throughout the world.

One of the best-known of these was a magnificent multicoloured rug celebrating the founding of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, with the symbol of the globe breaking free of its chains. This tangible token of proletarian internationalist politics and indomitable Maoist spirit was smuggled out of the El Fronton island prison and taken along as part of a world tour in support of the People's War, amazing and inspiring the thousands in Asia, Europe and the Americas who saw it. The paintings, recorded revolutionary choral music and other artworks produced by the prisoners helped advance (and finance) the world-wide movement to support the People's War in Peru, and, along with the poems, songs, plays and other works created while in the clutches of the enemy, continue to play a role in the struggle today.

Rather than being taken "out of

combat" by their capture, these men and women kept striving to concretise the slogan "it's right to rebel" in every way they could. Most importantly, they found methods to use their collective strength and the government's inability to quench their raging spirits to expose the regime and call on the masses in their millions to support and wage more and more People's War. When it became clear that the authorities were about to try to "solve" this problem by desperate and bloody measures, involving transfers and killing, the inmates took over the country's main facilities for political prisoners, declaring: "We are going to resist. They will not transfer us out of here alive. We demand guarantees against the government's plans." On the high walls at El Fronton, they painted, in giant letters, "Finish Off the Great Leap with a Gold Seal", referring to the final phase of the Party's military campaign to win base areas and clearly situating their own actions in this context.

The government hypocritically pretended to negotiate with the prisoners, who had raised the reasonable demands that the government abide by a previous agreement to recognise them as "special prisoners" and not as "terrorist criminals", and that the transfers be abandoned. But soon the government carried out the massacres



Revolutionary prisoners in Canto Grande Prison, 1991.

it had long planned. It sent in its marines armed with heavy machine guns and anti-tank weapons, helicopter gunships and naval artillery. Prisoners at El Fronton held out through two days of hand-to-hand combat, using slings, home-made crossbows and a small handful of captured weapons. The inmates at Lurigancho kept the armed forces commandos and marines at bay for a full day; most of the prisoners were methodically murdered after the prison was recaptured. Fighters at the Callao women's prison also held off the enemy for about 24 hours, at the cost of several dead and many wounded.

As is well known, this despicable act by the regime backfired. It contributed to the exposure and isolation of the regime and helped to show millions that the People's War, under the leadership of the PCP, is the only way to resolve Peru's problems. In this sense, instead of the political defeat that the regime had sought to inflict on the People's War by "reasserting its authority" and demonstrating its infinite capacity for bloodshed, it was the prisoners who dealt a blow to Peruvian reaction and its imperialist backers.

But of course the enemy's thirst for the people's blood is never satisfied. In 1992, as the Fujimori government plotted another massacre in Canto Grande prison in Lima, prisoners seized the men's and women's cellblocks and demanded the establishment of a commission to oversee the planned transfers of prisoners and guarantee their lives. On 6 May, Fujimori sent in 500 elite troops with rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, dynamite satchels and plastic explosives, as well as a rocket-firing combat helicopter. When they were beaten back, the next day a thousand soldiers tried to storm the prison, once again in vain. Finally, on 9 May, the women and men prisoners summed up that they had fully accomplished their aims, and marched out arm in arm singing the *Internationale*. The cowardly reactionary beasts singled out and murdered many prisoners suspected of being leaders. Among these communist heroes several very important Party members fell.

Despite the difficulties suffered by the People's War after the capture of Chairman Gonzalo in September 1992, the People's War in Peru has never ceased. As part of this, prisoners there

have also kept fighting in the spirit expressed by Chairman Gonzalo in his historic 24 September 1992 speech. From inside a cage, where the government was attempting to humiliate him and the entire revolution before the press, he disparaged his imprisonment as simply "a bend in the road". He defiantly called for the People's War to continue, declaring, "Though the road is long, we shall travel it to the end. We will reach our goal and we will win. You will see it."

Later, a Right Opportunist Line arose, especially in the prisons, which betrayed this stand, the blood so generously shed by countless people's heroes and the legacy of the Day of Heroism, using Chairman Gonzalo's capture as an excuse to call for an end to the war. What can be said of the People's War as a whole also applies to the prisoners who have held out under the enemy's unrelenting attacks – their political and ideological line and unwavering determination are proving stronger than all the enemy's unlimited capacity for terror.

Important rebellions and other struggles against the regime's attempts to rob prisoners of their revolutionary morale, their humanity and their lives broke out in Peru in early 2000, and again earlier this year. Despite the recent change in government, the new regime is no less backed by, and beholden to, US imperialism than its predecessor, and the country's prisons are still teeming with thousands of revolutionaries held in the most brutal conditions. Above all, Chairman Gonzalo continues to be confined in a barbaric underground dungeon. A major component of our unstinting international support for the People's War in Peru is the struggle to break the isolation of Chairman Gonzalo, to force the government to allow his public presentation so that he can express his views freely; and also to defend the life of Comrade Feliciano, who took up the responsibilities of leadership after Chairman Gonzalo's imprisonment until he in turn was snatched by the enemy and placed in isolation in the same inhuman subterranean cells.

The last two decades have provided dramatic proof of the degree to which the People's War is bound up with the spirit and struggle of its captured fighters. Clearly struggles by captured revolutionaries are closely

linked with people's war, the highest form of class struggle, because the enemy tries to terrorise the people by subjecting its unarmed captives to every conceivable cruelty, while Maoist politics, outlook and class stand can enable them to make major contributions even in the most unfavourable circumstances.

This is being shown sharply by today's ongoing heroic battle by revolutionary prisoners in Turkey, including many members and supporters of the Communist Party of Turkey (Marxist-Leninist). In Turkey, too, prisoners turned their places of confinement into beacons, bastions and universities of revolution, and here, too, the imperialist-backed authorities have tried to drown those revolutionary flames with blood. So far, dozens of these imprisoned comrades have given their lives to resist being moved into isolation cells. Their morale is high, in large part because they understand that in attacking them in this way the government is seeking to deal a political and moral blow to the entire revolutionary movement and to the broad millions of masses who look to it, and because they see the links between their resistance today and the fight to advance the cause of people's war in that country.

In Nepal, also, the People's War has inevitably meant growing numbers of comrades crowded into prisons, and likewise the struggle behind the walls is inseparably linked to that outside. Recently the daring escape of six women prisoners, who dug a tunnel out of the Gorkha district prison so that they could successfully rejoin their guerrilla units, has delighted and inspired people on every continent.

As the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Peru said in its statement of June 1986, "The glorious death of these prisoners of war in battle is wrapped in the blood already spilt, and before it we communists, we fighters and sons and daughters of the people, pledge our unwavering commitment to follow their shining example, to advance the People's War in order to serve the world revolution until the inextinguishable light of communism dwells upon the whole earth under the unconquered and always verdant banners of Marx, Lenin and Mao, of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. Glory to the fallen heroes, long live the revolution!" ■