

REVOLUTION

More
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Fall 1994

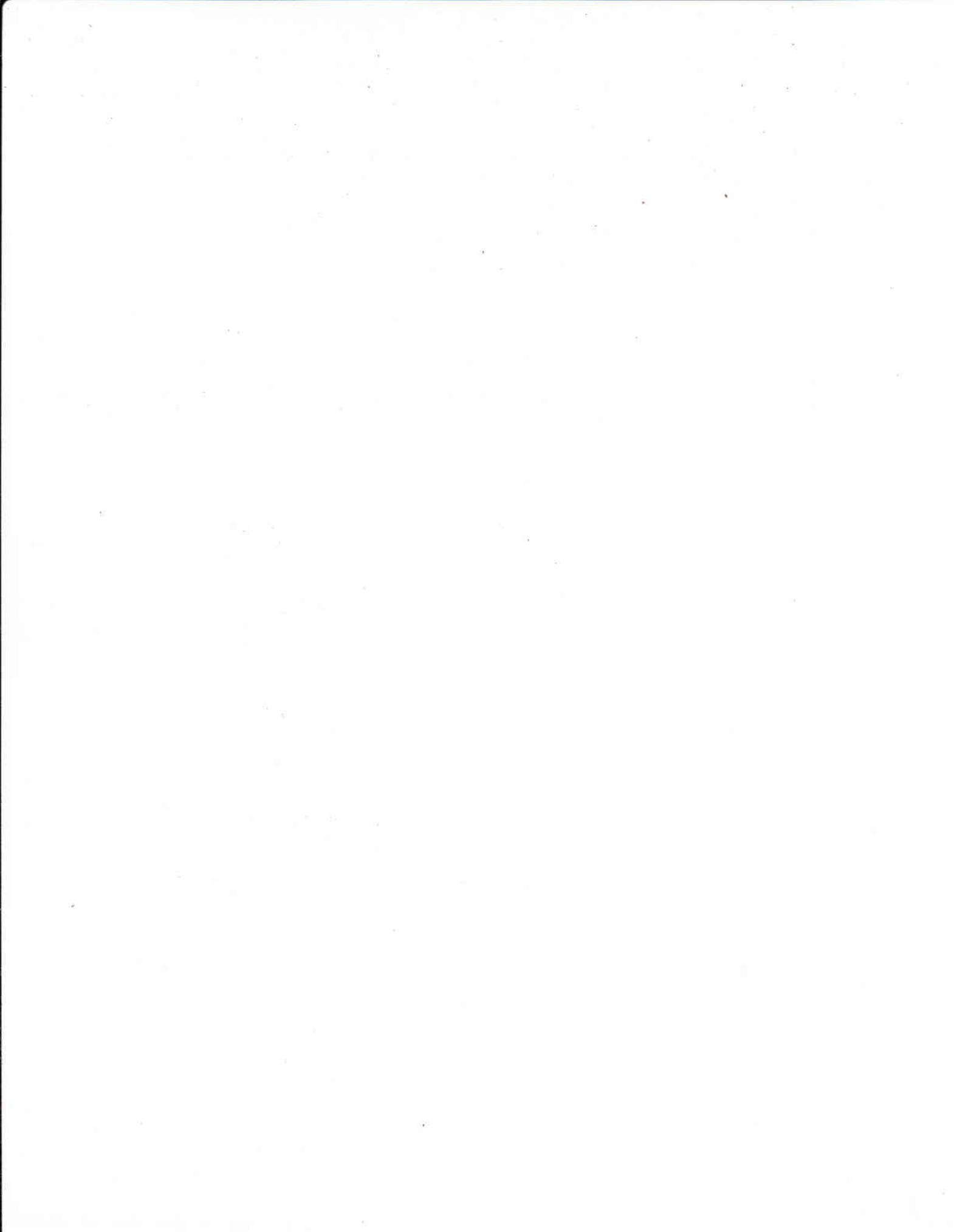
**The October Revolution and the
Military Leadership of Lenin**

**The Yankee Hand Behind
the Crisis in Peru**

**Breaking ALL Tradition's Chains:
Revolutionary Communism and
Women's Liberation**

Part II of an Interview with Mary Lou Greenberg

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Contents

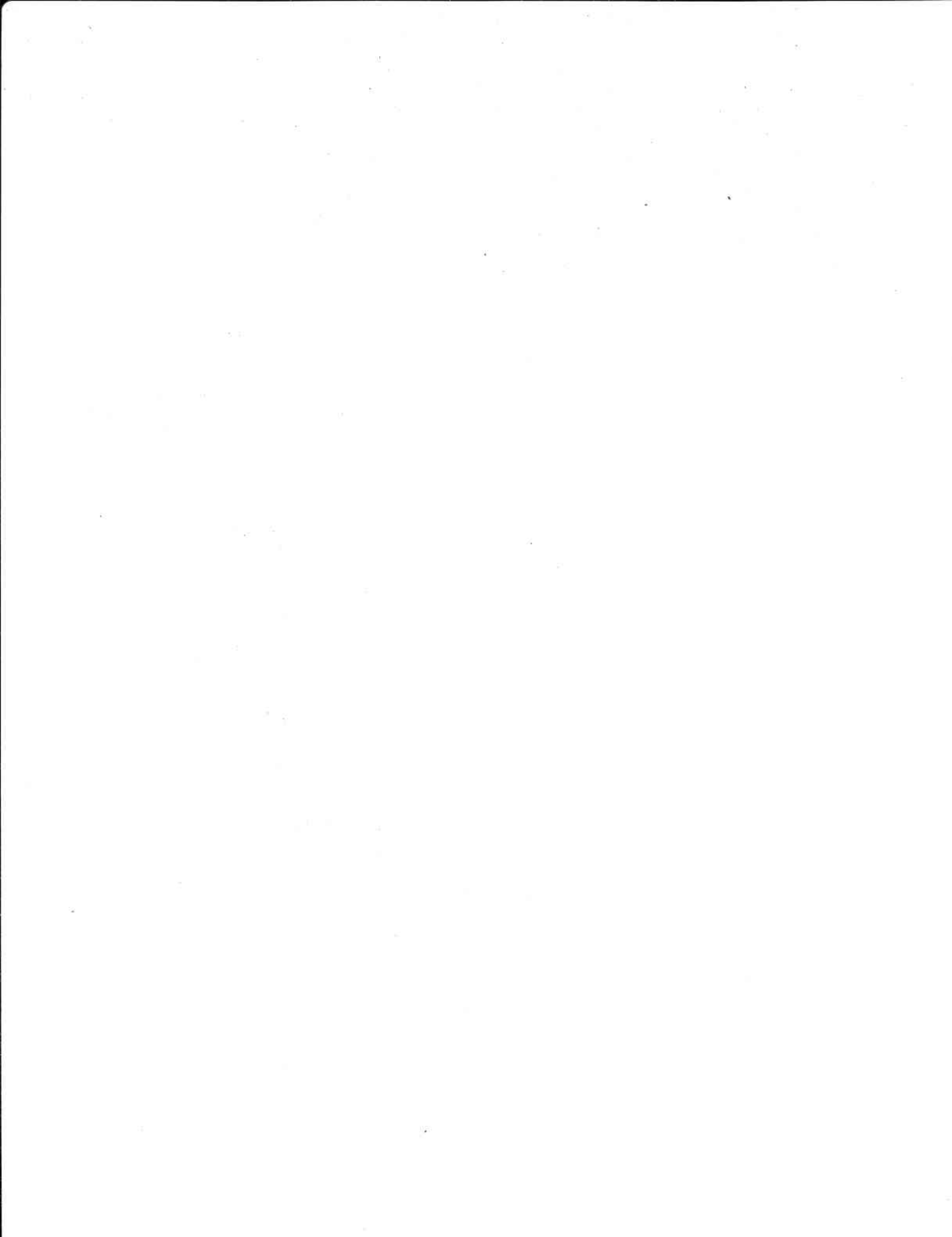
- The October Revolution and the Military
Leadership of Lenin
by Toby Preparado 3
- The Yankee Hand Behind the Crisis in Peru
by Raymond Lotta 29
- Breaking ALL Tradition's Chains:
Revolutionary Communism and
Women's Liberation
Part II of an Interview with
Mary Lou Greenberg 45

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The October Revolution and the Military Leadership of Lenin

by Toby Preparado

Introduction

In October 1917¹ the proletariat of Russia rose up in arms, defeated the army of their oppressors, and overthrew the capitalist state. This proletariat, led by its vanguard communist party the Bolsheviks, then went on to fight and win a grueling three-year civil war. The proletariat not only defeated and shattered the counter-revolutionary armed forces arising from within the country, but also drove out the invading armies of 14 different imperialist powers, including the United States. They founded the world's first proletarian state, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. For nearly 40 epoch years after that victory the proletariat used that state to support revolution around the world and to build a socialist society within the former Russian empire — all this as a first step to a communist world free of poverty, humiliation, war and the division of humanity into exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed.

There are many tales to tell of that revolution, and certainly various angles to analyze and lessons to draw. This article, however, will focus on an aspect that lies at the very center of the matter but is not so often discussed — and when it is discussed is often shrouded in mythology and wishful thinking.

The question: how did the proletariat, starting with no army, militarily defeat the professional, battle-hardened army of the Provisional Government? What were its military strategy and tactics? What struggles did it have to undergo to prepare itself for this enormous task? And what lessons, if any, does all this hold for revolution in today's imperialist countries?

The mythology pushed by the bourgeoisie and its academic defenders on this point is a vicious one which runs like this: Lenin and the Bolsheviks

This manuscript was submitted for publication in Revolution by an author who is a long-time student of the line of the Revolutionary Communist Party. The author's narrative and conclusions contribute to an important arena of debate and discussion in the revolutionary movement.

stepped into a chaotic situation in which no one really held power, and used a section of the army to carry off a coup, installing themselves in power behind the backs, as it were, of the exhausted Russian people. Some on the left often counterpose the straight-up distortions of the bourgeoisie with wishful thinking of their own. They paint a picture in which the Bolsheviks, through adroit and persistent political work, won an overwhelming majority of the masses (including large sections of the army) and finally carried off an almost bloodless revolution.

Both versions cover over the most essential aspect of the October Revolution: the mobilization of the proletarian masses into an army which defeated the standing army of the state power, beginning with an audacious armed mass insurrection.

This insurrection did not materialize out of nowhere. To understand how it came about we must set the stage and briefly review the events leading up to it. In 1914, Russia had entered World War I against Germany and on the side of England and France. As with all the imperialist powers at the time, the Russian ruling class expected an early victory; spirits were high as the troops marched off, and the revolutionary high tide of just a few years earlier seemed to recede.

Instead of early victory, however, the war brought mass slaughter, famine, and military stalemate. By late 1916 the Russian ruling class had begun to split over conduct of the war, while the proletarians in Petrograd and Moscow (Russia's largest and most industrial cities) gave the first hints of rebellion. In February of 1917 the mass discontent burst through the fissures of ruling class crisis: a hunger demonstration in Petrograd snowballed into armed clashes involving most of the population, and in a few short days the Tsar of the Russian Empire had been overthrown, replaced by a provisional government.

Once the masses had burst out, the ruling class had a very difficult time bottling them back up. The people had come into the streets for specific reasons, and beyond that had developed embryonic institutions of power: soviets, or councils, that demanded some sort of say-so in many different spheres of life, from choosing officers in the army to the imposition of discipline in the factories. Lenin labeled the existence of the old state power, side-by-side with the still very weak embryos of a new power, as a condition of *dual power*.

In addition, the war — which had occasioned the crisis in the first place — was not resolved; the new provisional government, led by Alexander Kerensky, committed itself to continuing to field an army in alliance with England and France.

Russia had been a peculiar mix of imperialism and feudalism; it had never gone through a bourgeois-democratic revolution,² and feudal (rather than capitalist) relations still dominated the countryside. Prior to February, all left-wing parties, including the Bolsheviks led by Lenin, had agreed that the first stage of the revolution would have as its goal the destruction of feudal relations and the establishment of a bourgeois-democratic republic. After February, all left-wing parties *except* the Bolsheviks agreed that the time had come to settle in for a long period of consolidating that bourgeois-democratic republic.

Lenin had waged quite a struggle *within* the Bolsheviks to win them to the view that, with February, the revolution's first stage had been essentially accomplished, and that the further demands of the masses could only be satisfied by moving directly to a socialist revolution. As a result, the Bolsheviks devoted the months immediately after February to winning the masses to take this next step into the future.

Political Forces of the February Revolution

The other major political forces all opposed the Bolsheviks in this. Who were they?

The *Provisional Government*, led for most of this period by Alexander Kerensky and containing (at various times and in various forms) the major bourgeois political parties, actually held the power in Russia. It continued to prosecute the war and to carry out repression in both the countryside and cities. The Provisional Government aimed to enlist the other parties to put an end to the period of mass activism and settle things down into a business-as-usual government on the model of its imperialist allies.

The *Menshevik* party had long claimed to be socialist; in reality, its goal was to represent a section of the workers and urban middle class within a capitalist parliament. Aiming, in essence, to establish themselves as a junior partner in the new imperialist setup, they opposed any move to with-

draw from the war and supported the Provisional Government. In the immediate aftermath of February, when many workers had been overwhelmed by what Lenin called a "petty-bourgeois wave" of euphoria over the prospects for the new government and confusion over the war, the Mensheviks maintained a majority in the workers' soviets. They had influence among officers in the army as well.

The *Socialist-Revolutionaries* (or S-Rs) were neither socialist nor revolutionary, but instead represented the interests of the middle and upper strata of peasants; their program demanded partition of the land among the peasantry and they had great support in the countryside. In the main they allied with the Mensheviks to oppose the Bolsheviks and revolution, though a more radical section, the *Left S-Rs*, would split off in October to temporarily ally with the Bolsheviks.

The Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, based themselves on the proletariat of Russia; even during the Menshevik heyday of early 1917, they retained significant support in the proletariat and among the rank-and-file soldiers.

To further understand the setting, the reader must know that in July a section of the revolutionary workers of Petrograd, in alliance with rebellious rank-and-file soldiers (who were fed up with the war, infuriated by the Provisional Government's announcement of a new offensive, and provoked by assaults by reactionaries), had mounted armed demonstrations and skirmishes. At that point, the Bolsheviks summed up that the masses did not have the strength to really make a serious attempt at seizing power. While standing with the masses, the Bolsheviks had essentially organized them in a more or less orderly retreat.

In the wake of the July Days, the government issued a warrant for Lenin's arrest, forcing him underground. Reactionaries ran wild against the proletariat. But the Bolsheviks withstood the repression and the crisis continued unabated; among bedrock proletarians, a conviction set in that the Provisional Government would not peacefully give in to pressure and that another revolution was necessary. By August, the Bolsheviks had rebounded.

At that same time, a section of the Russian ruling class had lost patience with Kerensky's inability to consolidate power and crush the proletariat once and for all. They turned to a general of the Russian

army, Kornilov, to overthrow the Provisional Government in a coup and institute direct military rule. In late August the Kornilovites began a march on Petrograd. Thrown into a panic by Kornilov's march and fighting for its very survival, the Provisional Government agreed to lift the ban on the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks, for their part, had analyzed the likely result of a Kornilov coup: not only the removal of the (reactionary) Provisional Government but, more importantly, a leap toward the total crushing of the revolution and the masses. So the Bolsheviks mobilized the masses to take defense of the city against Kornilov into their own hands.

Proletarians, in league with revolutionary-minded soldiers, dug trenches and built fortifications around the city, and drilled with arms in preparation for battle. Agitators were dispatched to infiltrate Kornilov's troops. Faced with a city in arms, Kornilov's support in the ruling class rapidly melted away. Beset by problems in his own ranks, Kornilov's forces were decisively rebuffed and he was arrested. This was the scene in the beginning of September.

Lenin Struggles for the Offensive

The defeat of Kornilov awakened the people to the serious threat of violent suppression of the revolution. Moreover, it put the gun on the agenda; the armed strength of the masses had proven necessary to defeat Kornilov's attempted coup. Proletarians had gained vital experience in aspects of military struggle. Revolutionary warfare itself more became the currency of the day. Many now believed that a final trial of strength was in the offing. People were increasingly fed up with the vacillations of the Provisional Government. The sentiment grew that only a revolutionary regime — a soviet government, replacing the Provisional Government — could and would deal with the painful running sores of war and hunger.

The Menshevik-SR coalition had been severely shaken by the specter of proletarian power on display in the Kornilov revolt. But rather than give in to the mass sentiment for a purely soviet government, they quickly moved to strike a new deal with Kerensky's still-standing Provisional Government. While this went on the army command began making moves that prefigured a possible surrender of

Petrograd to the Germans, in order to let the German army crush the revolutionary movement.

Weighing all these factors and more, Lenin concluded in early September that the time was finally ripe for the Bolsheviks to launch an insurrection. In "Marxism and Insurrection" he laid out the requirements for a successful insurrection:

To be successful, insurrection must rely not upon conspiracy and not upon a party, but upon the advanced class. That is the first point. Insurrection must rely upon a revolutionary upsurge of the people. That is the second point. Insurrection must rely upon that turning-point in the history of the growing revolution when the activity of the advanced ranks of the people is at its height, and when the vacillations in the ranks of the enemy and in the ranks of the weak, half-hearted and irresolute friends of the revolution are strongest. That is the third point. . . . Once these conditions exist, however, to refuse to treat insurrection as an art is a betrayal of Marxism and a betrayal of the revolution.

(Lenin, "Marxism and Insurrection," *Collected Works*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 22-23, [hereafter referred to as *LCW*])

These conditions, Lenin argued, existed now and made a determined offensive necessary. He contrasted the current situation to that of July. Then, Lenin argued, the Bolsheviks had lacked the support of a majority of the proletariat; now, following the July repression and the Kornilov revolt, and in the midst of further Menshevik-SR sellout, the majority of the proletariat in the key cities of Moscow and Petrograd had shifted to the Bolshevik line and were ready to fight for it. The peasantry — the vast majority of Russian society — had surged into revolt on a scale far beyond that of July. Before, Lenin wrote, there had been no "vacillation on any serious political scale among our enemies and among the irresolute petty bourgeoisie," now there was tremendous wavering and disarray in the enemy ranks. Finally, Lenin had doubted in July that the proletariat had the necessary will to retain power even if they had somehow won it; now there was a savageness . . . a fierce hatred both of the Kerenskys and of the Tseretellis and Chernovs [Menshevik and SR politicians]. ("Marxism and Insurrection," *LCW* XXVI, p. 24.)

The period of exposure, mass demonstrations, and working to win the masses and gathering political strength had ended. The Party had to recognize this, rupture with these tactics, and go over to immediate preparation for armed seizure of power.

But opposing lines contended in the party leadership. Lev Kamenev, a leading Bolshevik, argued for waiting until the upcoming Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, set for mid-to-late October. He proposed that the Bolsheviks use this congress to push for a coalition government with the Mensheviks and SRs, a government which would then supervise elections for a Constituent Assembly (an elected legislature). Kamenev considered talk of an insurrection not only premature but damaging, and said that it could only be considered in the event of another reactionary onslaught similar to Kornilov's.

Kamenev, along with another leading party figure, Grigory Zinoviev, argued that the Bolsheviks were too isolated to attempt an insurrection. The vast petty bourgeoisie, which included the peasantry as well as the middle classes in the city, had united against the Kornilov coup. Kamenev and Zinoviev argued that this urban strata would swing the other way if the Bolsheviks alone called for an offensive against the Provisional Government. During the Kornilov revolt, the Bolsheviks were allied with the Mensheviks, the SRs and even some of the Kerensky forces; now the revolution would battle against those forces, as well as the hard-core rightists. To further make their case, they pointed to a drop-off in participation in the soviets and interpreted this to mean that the Bolshevik base was in a passive and apathetic mood.

Kamenev and Zinoviev further argued against Lenin's view of the international situation. Lenin maintained that a Bolshevik-led government could either settle peace with Germany in short order, or else win the masses for a really revolutionary defense. And if Germany fought on, Lenin reasoned, this could run into serious opposition from the German masses and might well hasten revolution in Germany itself! To refuse to launch an insurrection in such a setting, stated Lenin, could seriously retard the European revolution and would amount to a betrayal of the world proletariat. A victory, on the other hand, would light up the world.

Kamenev and Zinoviev replied that the soldiers who supported the Bolsheviks did so because they

desired peace. If Germany continued its war against Russia, these soldiers would melt away and leave the new Soviet regime defenseless. The international proletariat was not yet in action; better to wait awhile, they said, and see what happened. While there was some basis for their arguments, Kamenev and Zinoviev were seizing on secondary backward aspects in the situation and using them to demagogically distort the overall picture and essence of the matter: that the proletariat finally had the opportunity to seize power and had better take it while the opening existed.

Lenin took on these arguments in meetings and articles. He pointed out that the mass support for the Bolsheviks rested on their pledge to deal with the immediate problems of the war, the famine and land, and to put an end to vacillation and compromise; on what would the Bolsheviks stand if they now adopted a program of compromise and delay? As for the argument that “the masses are not in a mood that would drive them into the streets,” Lenin pointed out first: “that a firm party line, its unyielding resolve, is *also* a mood-creating factor, particularly at the sharpest revolutionary moments.” (“Letter to Comrades,” *LCW*, XXVI, p. 209), and second: “among the class-conscious workers [there is] a definite unwillingness to go out into the streets *only* for demonstrations, *only* for partial struggles, since a general and not a partial struggle is in the air, while the hopelessness of individual strikes, demonstrations and acts to influence the authorities has been seen and is fully realized.”

Lenin’s letter demonstrates the application of dialectics. The surface phenomena — including the decline in mass participation in political activity, the possibility of further German offensives, and so on — were not the heart of the dispute. The interpretation was. Lenin detected the unbearable pressure beneath the surface and saw how determined action by the vanguard could detonate the latent energy of the masses and, in Marx’s memorable phrase, spring all of official society into the air.

Making the Transition

On the night of October 10-11 the Bolshevik Central Committee finally resolved the struggle and voted 10-2 to set the course for armed insurrection.

The Central Committee took this decision amid a rapidly fracturing social order. Kerensky had ordered the removal of the fleet from Petrograd. The masses feared that Kerensky was planning to allow the German army to take the city and then crush the revolutionary movement there. They resisted accordingly. The garrison units made it known that they would refuse any orders to evacuate Petrograd, and the soviets — over the opposition of the Menshevik and S-R leadership — voted to back the garrison committee. Moreover, the soviets moved to form a “revolutionary defense committee” to resist German attack (and implicitly to oppose further treachery by the Kerensky government). The garrison and the soviets were now in virtual open mutiny against the government — such a state could not last long and could ultimately only be settled by force of arms.

All this did not mean, however, that the Bolsheviks had a sure shot for insurrection. Important problems still had to be solved, and quickly.

First, military preparations for insurrection were lacking. The masses had demonstrated with arms in hand during July and had repelled Kornilov’s coup in August. But insurrection requires another level altogether: developing an offensive strategy for seizing power, figuring out the main forces that would strike blows, where they would strike, etc. Even more, it means welding the masses organizationally to function as an army, to wage war. This is qualitatively higher than even the mass armed defense of a city — it is a leap of the highest magnitude. And to effect this the party had to move from the sphere of dealing with political problems to the related but qualitatively different military sphere.

As early as September 27, Lenin had written to I. T. Smilga on the need to:

[C]reate a secret committee of absolutely trustworthy military men, discuss matters thoroughly with them, collect (and personally verify) the most precise data on the composition and the location of troops near and in Petrograd, the transfer of troops from Finland to Petrograd, the movement of the fleet, etc.

If we fail to do this, we may turn out to be consummate idiots, the owners of beautiful resolutions and of Soviets, but no power. (*LCW*, XXVI, p. 7)

In addition, the Bolsheviks still had to determine the best moment to strike as well as the transition

to the beginning acts of the insurrection. How does the insurrection concretely go down: how are the masses called into action, under what slogans, who actually seizes the power?

On this point, struggle again erupted within the Bolshevik leadership. One line envisioned launching the insurrection only during or after the coming All-Russian Congress of Soviets. In this scenario the Congress would declare itself the power, and present the Provisional Government with a demand to step aside. Then, when the Government refused, the inevitable clash between the Government army and the people's forces would take place as a defense of a power already declared by a formally elected body. This would have the added advantage of calling the masses to arms in the name of the soviets rather than the Bolshevik Party alone; this way, according to this argument, the insurrection stood a better chance of winning the majority of the proletariat, the garrison, and other class forces to the insurrection.

This course no doubt seemed safer than an immediate, all-out offensive mounted under the direct leadership of the party to transfer power to the soviets. Perhaps it possessed the seductive attraction of allowing people to fight the already familiar "last war" — that is, it drew as its lesson from the Kornilov incident the value of being able to cast military action in a defensive light, and then went for a plan that seemed to promise a chance to repeat that kind of configuration.

Some important factors strengthened this line. Significant numbers of garrison organizers and committees were stating that the soldiers would come out for a defense of the soviets, but not an insurrection. Since many Bolsheviks — though not Lenin — saw the garrison soldiers as the key striking force in seizing power, the defensive orientation above won support in the party.

In addition, the Bolsheviks had been gaining dramatically in every election. Why not then wait for the All-Russian Congress of Soviets to allow them to take power "officially," rather than alienating the middle classes with a move that could appear preemptive, undemocratic and illegitimate?³

Lenin, by contrast, argued for the offensive, for launching an insurrection as soon as possible and by all means before the meeting of the Congress.

He argued that the Congress would represent not just the proletariat, but other classes besides; not

just the revolutionary cities, but also the more passive provinces; not just the advanced, but also the more average among the masses (especially since the Mensheviks and SRs had swung their efforts into a massive turnout). Such a body could not be relied upon for decisive action; rather than trying to shift responsibility, the Bolsheviks would do far better to lead the class-conscious workers in seizing power and presenting it to the Congress. The worst possible scenario would be to restrain the masses for the sake of the Congress, only to have the Congress itself then vacillate over the seizure of power. If the soviets weren't pushed to seize power by the revolution, they would very likely be pushed into their grave by the counterrevolution.

Writing in late September, Lenin had argued that "[t]o wait for the Congress of Soviets would be utter idiocy, for it would mean losing weeks at a time when weeks and even days decide everything. It would mean faint-heartedly renouncing power, for on Nov. 1-2 it will have become impossible to take power (both politically and technically, since the Cossacks⁴ would be mobilized for the days of insurrection so foolishly 'appointed')." ("The Crisis Has Matured," *LCW*, XXVI, p. 83)

Relying on the Masses

On October 1 Lenin reiterated the point in a letter to the Central Committee and the local Moscow and Petrograd party organizations:

The Bolsheviks have no right to wait for the Congress of Soviets, they must take power at once. By so doing they will save the world revolution (for otherwise there is danger of a deal between the imperialists of all countries, who . . . will be more accommodating to each other and will unite against us), the Russian revolution (otherwise a wave of real anarchy may become stronger than we are) and the lives of hundreds of thousands of people at the front.

Delay is criminal. To wait for the Congress of Soviets would be a childish game of formalities, a disgraceful game of formalities, and a betrayal of the revolution.

(*LCW*, XXVI, pp. 140-41)

In sum, the “waiting” line would virtually announce the date of insurrection to the enemy and allow them time to move their forces into position for a preemptive strike. It would take the air out of the masses at a time when they were demanding action, telling them instead to politick for yet another conference.

As for the garrison, while attaching great importance to the soldiers, Lenin more than any other Bolshevik rested his faith on the Red Guard⁵ and the armed masses generally. In the above letter, for instance, Lenin insisted that:

The most important thing is to select a core of selfless workers, especially the youth, who are ready to die rather than retreat or give up a position. They must be formed into special detachments beforehand to occupy the telephone exchange, the telegraph office, and most important of all, the bridges. (LCW, XXVI, p. 141)

There are several important points in the above passage. First is Lenin’s stress on the proletarian youth (rather than the garrison soldiers) as the key forces. Beyond that, the importance attached to the bridges further reflected Lenin’s strategic orientation to the masses of workers. He saw the key strategic task of the opening phase of the insurrection as bringing up the masses of workers into battle, while denying the enemy the ability to marshal its reserves. The insurrection had to be started by the hard-core, ready-to-die youth; however, to succeed it would need to draw in the masses of proletarians as quickly as humanly possible. The main proletarian districts of the city were connected by bridges to the city as a whole; hence Lenin wanted the hard-core to focus on militarily securing these crucial points, and thereby aiding the insurrection’s ability to bring the masses into the battle.

As for the telephone exchange and telegraph office, Lenin viewed their seizure as crucial to driving a spike into the enemy’s ability to marshal and deploy troops. Together this added up to Lenin’s often-stated insistence on bringing overwhelming numbers of masses into military action against the enemy, and denying to the enemy, as much as possible, the ability to bring up its reserves. But this entire plan could only be realized through the fiercest and most audacious of tactical offensives.

In “Advice of an Onlooker,” written a week later, Lenin began by noting Marx’s insistence that insur-

rection is an art, and then elaborated on the rules of this art:

- (1) Never play with insurrection, but when beginning it realize firmly that you must go all the way.
- (2) Concentrate a great superiority of forces at the decisive point and at the decisive moment, otherwise the enemy, who has the advantage of better preparation and organization, will destroy the insurgents.
- (3) Once the insurrection has begun, you must act with the greatest determination, and by all means, without fail, take the offensive. The defensive is the death of every armed rising.
- (4) You must try to take the enemy by surprise and seize the moment when his forces are scattered.
- (5) You must strive for daily successes, however small (one might say hourly in the case of a town), and at all costs retain moral superiority.

Marx summed up the lessons of all revolutions in respect to armed uprising in the words of “Danton, the greatest master of revolutionary policy yet known: *de l’audace, l’audace’ encore de l’audace.*”⁶

As for the tactical plans and the importance of the masses, Lenin went on to call for:

The *most determined* elements (our “shock forces” and *young workers*, as well as the best of the sailors) must be formed into small detachments to occupy all the important points and to take part everywhere in all important operations, for example: to encircle and cut off Petrograd; to seize it by a combined attack of the sailors, the workers, and the troops, a task which requires triple audacity; to form detachments from the best workers, armed with rifles and bombs, for the purpose of attacking and surrounding the enemy’s centres (the officers’ schools, the telegraph office, the telephone exchange, etc.). Their watchword must be: “*Better die to a man than let the enemy pass!*”

(“Advice of an Onlooker,” LCW, XXVI, pp. 80-81)

To carry through this orientation would require a grueling race from behind. By contrast, waiting for the Congress of Soviets to declare power and then relying essentially on the garrison troops to defend it seemed to solve these questions in a more famil-

iar and less difficult way. In essence, the Bolsheviks would just have to keep doing what they had been doing: gaining influence among the troops, exposing and outmaneuvering the compromisers, and eventually rolling over the Provisional Government. Certainly they had developed those tasks into a high art by that time.

Lenin's plan to immediately begin insurrection and seize power before the Congress, and his reliance on the ability of the masses of class-conscious proletarians (along with, but not hinging everything on, the best of the soldiers and sailors) to strike against the army and defeat it militarily — this required a drastic rupture, a leap into the unknown and the unprecedented. Everything that had been won up until then would be risked; but only this line and orientation could win everything.

Getting on Military Footing

But how to win this race from behind? How to forge and lead at least the rudiments of an army out of the masses? These were big questions, obviously, and the Bolsheviks proceeded on several different fronts to answer them. The answers included: the further development of Red Guard units among the workers; the formation of the Revolutionary Military Committee; further work of the Bolshevik Military Organization (the Bolshevik forces assigned to work among the garrison troops and some Red Guards); and — the key — developing the ability of the party itself to lead in this sphere.

To begin with the Red Guard. Beginning with the February uprising, masses of workers throughout the city had formed up into Red Guard detachments. These began as informal militias to keep order in proletarian neighborhoods and defend the gains at the factory level. And while they had come together at the call of the Soviets during the Kornilov revolt, they remained decentralized and loosely organized. An insurrection, however, required centralized military organization that could mobilize proletarians on a citywide basis.

One important measure in dealing with this was a conference of the Vyborg Red Guard organizations, held on October 7. Vyborg was a proletarian district of Petrograd where the Bolshevik line and

organization had sunk its deepest roots. It had long been a Bolshevik stronghold — the party leading committee of Vyborg district⁷ had played a key role in the February Revolution, taking the reins when the city leadership was arrested. In the months since, the party's strength had grown geometrically. Moreover, proletarians and revolutionary soldiers throughout the city looked first to Vyborg for the revolutionary response to any new turn of events. So it was logical for the Bolsheviks to rely on Vyborg to spearhead what had to be a citywide move to a higher level of mass military organization.

Though centered in Vyborg, the October 7 conference passed regulations for Red Guard organization all the way up to the city level. Each factory was directed to develop a factory Red Guard committee. Each factory committee was to be subordinate then to a committee in the district in which it was located. On the district level, staffs were to be formed. The district staff — a new and very important development in centralization — was to take in representatives of the district soviet, the ranks of the Red Guards themselves, the Bolshevik Military Organization, and the soon-to-be-created General Staff of the Petrograd Red Guard. The district staff, in turn, was to obey the General Staff of the Petrograd Red Guard. This provided a full skeletal structure from factory to city level. The newly-formed Vyborg district staff threw itself into action, firming up its ranks and beginning to build for a city-wide Red Guard conference set for later in the month, designed to spread the Vyborg model.

A few days later, on October 12, in the wake of the garrison crisis, the Petrograd Soviet adopted regulations for the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC), which, as events developed, turned out to become another source for the insurrectional army. Originally, however, the MRC was charged with determining the minimum forces necessary to defend the capital, maintaining communications with the Baltic fleet and the garrison, keeping an exact record of the strength of the garrison, arming the workers, and maintaining revolutionary discipline.

Most important of all, though, was the work to prepare the party to play the backbone and leading role in forging the army. The Central Committee set up secret staffs in all the districts during this period to prepare the insurrection. The staffs con-

sisted of the BMO leader in each district, the chief of the Red Guard, and the chair of the district soviet (if the chair was a Bolshevik). The district staffs "set to work to inspect the Red Guard in their respective districts: they took note of the buildings and strongholds which were to be captured during the insurrection and enrolled commanders for the revolutionary detachments from among the non-commissioned officers and junior officers in the army." (*History of the Civil War in the USSR*, Vol. II, 1942, p. 177 — hereafter referred to as *HCW*)

Lenin, meanwhile, personally met with various Bolsheviks to discuss and nail down plans for Moscow and Petrograd. One leading BMO cadre, N. Podvoisky, later recalled a discussion with Lenin: Lenin had first struggled against the orientation among some BMO cadre who focused almost exclusively on the garrison, while giving little attention to the armed workers. The allure of a "ready-made" army (even if "ready-made" by the class enemy) proved powerful when faced with the task of creating one out of the class-conscious workers.

"Never before," Podvoisky wrote, "despite the experience of 1905, had I realized how much an armed insurrection is organizationally connected with arming of the widest section of the working class." (*Petrograd Reminiscences*, p. 38)

To bank everything on winning over the soldiers, as some in the BMO proposed, could only lead to politically tailing behind the sentiments of the garrison, instead of relying on the most revolutionary masses. Such a line would seriously hamper (or more likely prevent altogether) taking the offensive. Indeed, Alexander Rabinowitch, in *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, writes of the October 18 conference of the garrison called by the Soviet, at which the question of the day quickly became the stand towards the insurrection. Most delegates to the conference declared against the Provisional Government and in favor of transfer of power to the soviets. But the main trend also opposed an insurrection not directly organized by the soviets — that is, it opposed military action directly initiated by the Bolsheviks and it envisioned a new government made up as a coalition of the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and S-Rs. This would have amounted to handing veto power over insurrection to its Menshevik and SR opponents.

Lenin also struggled with the cadres to really *thoroughly* prepare militarily for the coming events.

Podvoisky recalled discussing a certain Red Guard commander as "excellent," whereupon Lenin raised a few questions:

"You say he is an excellent man? Would he give his head for the revolution? And what are his military qualifications? Can he shoot, from a revolver, say? And could he handle a cannon if it were necessary? Could he bring up something essential in a car, in case of need? Can he drive a car? And then, do your Red Guard commanders know anything about the tactics of street fighting?"

It appeared that I knew nothing about any one of the commanders from that point of view. [Lenin] stood up, placed his fingers in his waistcoat pockets and shook his head reproachfully.

"Ai-ai-ai, and that's the chairman of the Military Organization! How are you going to lead an insurrection if you don't know what your commanders are like? It is not enough for them to be good agitators, . . . excellent organizers of the masses. Insurrection is not a meeting to hear reports, insurrection is an action with arms in hand."

(*Petrograd Reminiscences*, p. 35)

Meanwhile, events moved rapidly. On October 19 the Provisional Government, emboldened by a public letter from Kamenev and Zinoviev opposing the insurrection(!),⁸ began to concretely prepare for a clampdown. Armored cars mounted with machine-guns positioned themselves in front of the Winter Palace (the government headquarters); reinforced patrols of cadets cruised the city streets; the order went out to arrest the agitators in the barracks. That night the high chiefs of the military divided the capital into special districts and laid plans for occupation of key points, including the Soviet headquarters at the Smolny Institute.

But the preparations of the party and the Red Guard also moved ahead. On October 21, in the face of what was shaping up to be a massive reactionary demonstration the next day, the Vyborg District Red Guard ordered some factory units to go on full alert. On the 23rd, the Vyborg Red Guard staff sent a secret order to all units to maintain themselves in full fighting readiness and to stay at the factories.

A worker at the Vulkan Factory, F. A. Ugarov, wrote that "after the 'Day of the Soviet' [an October 21 counter-demonstration called in support of the Soviets], the mood of the workers was intensified . . . An order from the staff of the Red Guard was received to prepare the Red Guard for action. The bolts of rifles clicked. In the yard of the factory they fitted the trucks with sheet armor and mounted machine guns. The factory ceased to be a factory and became an armed camp."

(Red Guards and Workers' Militias in the Russian Revolution, Rex A. Wade, Stanford, California, 1984, p. 193)

Another worker, N. Dmitriev, recalled that in the last days before the revolution some armed workers did not leave the factory but slept there instead, with their guns, turning the factory cafeteria into a barracks. In fact at a number of plants in Vyborg the Red Guard went on "barracks status." This development was emblematic of the overall transition of the Red Guard from a loosely organized militia to a disciplined armed force on a war footing.

Following the October 7 Vyborg Red Guard conference, a number of other districts had held similar meetings and had begun to restructure their Red Guards. And when the Bolsheviks achieved a majority in the Petrograd Soviet, the Soviet itself actively began to help set up a citywide Red Guard organization. The Central Komendatura, a subordinate organ of the Soviet,

set about the tasks of supervising the organization and training of Red Guard units, procuring arms, and preparing for a general, citywide Red Guard conference. To facilitate these tasks, toward mid-October it set up a general section — a chancellery, in effect — and an arms section to oversee the acquisition and distribution of arms. There was also an informally established section for ties with the districts, which used a system of messengers rather than relying on the telephones.

(Wade, pp. 153-54)

On October 22, the citywide Red Guard conference brought together 100 delegates representing somewhere between 12,000 and 20,000 Red Guardsmen. The conference adopted new regulations that

defined the task of the "workers' Red Guard" as the organization of the armed strength of the proletariat for struggle against counterrevolution and defense of the revolution, . . . limited membership to workers recommended by a socialist party, factory committee or trade union, and . . . laid heavy stress upon the need for discipline and made provisions for punishment by comradely judgment of those who violated discipline. They placed the Red Guard at the disposal of the Petrograd Soviet, directly subordinate to the General Staff . . .

(Wade, pp. 155-56)

The conference made provisions for organization ranging from the basic fighting unit consisting of 13 members on up to battalion level, which could number 600 fighters, including machine gun, artillery, and communications units. The BMO provided instructors, many of them former soldiers expelled from the army for Bolshevik agitation during the July Days; thus, the government's efforts to "cleanse" the army had had the unintended effect of providing instructors for the armed workers!

The conference qualitatively raised the level of functioning and organization of the Red Guard and no doubt concretely prepared them for the insurrection now just hours away. The Bolsheviks had taken advantage of some unusually open conditions and their consistent work in the Red Guards to mold the organized nucleus of a people's army — and to do it at a time when the government was moving in an increasingly repressive way.

The overall point here is crucial: the proletariat could not have defeated the bourgeois army with just an aroused people, even if armed and tempered through struggle. The proletariat would and did need its own army to meet and decisively defeat the enemy in battle. The measures described above, which had to be fought for by the Bolsheviks, went a long way towards bringing that army into the field.

Winning the Troops

While Lenin relied overwhelmingly on the masses of proletarians, organized into Red Guard units, he nonetheless attached great importance to win-

ning over or neutralizing as many government troops as possible before the uprising.

The Bolsheviks had politically organized among the troops from the very beginning of World War I. This extremely dangerous underground work included encouraging fraternization between the Russian soldiers and those of the hostile imperialist powers; agitating to reveal the true class interests of the majority of the soldiers (peasants) in the army; distribution of the Bolshevik-led newspaper aimed at soldiers; and developing Bolshevik cells where possible. The government practice of punishing civilian Bolshevik organizers by sending them off to the front had often boomeranged, creating new revolutionaries through the political work of the Bolshevik so drafted.

As the war went on, and particularly as the Russian army suffered severe defeats, the government army began to disintegrate as a unified and disciplined fighting force. This intensified during and after the February Revolution, when political turmoil erupted within the army itself. Since then the Provisional Government had fought to restore discipline and again send the army off against the Germans, while the Bolsheviks sought to increasingly widen the gulf between the majority of soldiers and the government, and develop revolutionaries out of the soldiers.

The attention to work among the troops grew crucial as the time for insurrection approached. On October 21 the Military Revolutionary Committee (the MRC) began to dispatch commissars to the garrison units. In what amounted to a direct challenge to the army command, these commissars called on the troops to obey only those orders approved by the MRC. If approved by the soldiers, such an initiative would help win at least their neutrality in event of an uprising (though it could not and would not prevent the use of loyal and reliable troops for preemptive strikes against the masses and their leaders).

The barracks went into an uproar; debate and struggle greeted the arriving commissars in almost every unit and went on virtually nonstop. As demand for these commissars/agitators grew, the MRC pressed into service every force it could find: early arrivals for the Congress of Soviets, Bolshevik cadres just sprung from jail, radical rank-and-file troops, etc. The political struggle waged among the troops could not in itself substitute for the need to

defeat the government army in battle. But it could and did render some of the government forces unreliable and at least ripe for further Bolshevik agitation, and actually won some key units to participate in the insurrection on the side of the Bolsheviks.

The Government Strikes

Meanwhile, the government itself was feverishly attempting to move loyal troops into the city. On the afternoon of the 23rd, Kerensky secretly met with his top commanders. Thinking that the insurrection would be timed to begin with the convening of the Congress of Soviets set for the 25th, the commanders agreed to a preemptive strike on the 24th. They moved to initiate criminal proceedings against the MRC, to arrest the Bolsheviks freed since the July uprising (including Lenin), and to shut down the Bolshevik newspapers *Rabochy Put* and *Soldat*.

The next morning Kerensky and the Provisional Government went on the offensive. The Soviet headquarters at Smolny began receiving reports of alarming troop movements on the city outskirts and of Kerensky's frantic attempts to mobilize loyal troops. At dawn a force of military cadets and officers occupied the Trud printing press, seizing that day's copies of *Rabochy Put* and *Soldat*.

Cadet patrols began to systematically lift the bridges over the Neva River in order to isolate the workers' districts from the center of the city. (This would be similar to a military blockade of an urban ghetto during a revolutionary crisis in the U.S.) The cadet patrols also moved through the city in a show of strength, attempting to disperse the knots of people now gathering on street corners.

In response, the MRC ordered the regimental committees and commissars to bring their regiments to battle readiness and await further instruction. The headquarters staff of the Red Guard was ordered to dispatch 1,500 to 2,000 workers to the Smolny. Others were to occupy the key positions in their districts, organize the protection of the factories, and detail forces for seizing government offices. The Litovsky Guards, an army unit now led by the Bolsheviks, retook the Trud printing press at 11 a.m.

The Central Committee members, with Lenin absent, now gathered at Smolny. They decided to

consolidate forces and to seize some key points. They stopped short, however, of calling the masses into the streets for an offensive insurrection aimed at overthrowing the government. In effect, this amounted to a strategy of gradually seizing the most powerful positions to prevent a government coup, and then holding firm until the Congress convened.⁹

The masses, however, were moving. By early afternoon on the 24th, armed workers and soldiers streamed towards Smolny to ask for orders. More important, the masses mounted resistance to government efforts to close the bridges. The Red Guard and other armed workers rushed to the bridges, remembering July when the government had succeeded in shutting the bridges, and at some bridges the massed crowd itself disarmed the cadets and escorted them back to their barracks.

Again, Vyborg took the lead. The Vyborg Red Guards, according to one witness, "on their own initiative . . . took possession of Liteiny, Sampsonievsky and Grenadersky Bridges." (*Petrograd Reminiscences*, p. 359) One commissar sent by the MRC to the Liteiny Bridge found it already secured with a sapper unit loyal to the Bolsheviks at one end and the Red Guard at the other. The bridges connecting Vyborg to the city were quickly swung open by Red Guards from the Renault Works and the Parviainen Works. The Red Guards from the Benz Works went out to capture a bridge on an armored car which they themselves had repaired.

Kerensky continued to run into difficulties. A number of troops, while not necessarily supporting insurrection, hesitated to come into the city and fire on garrison soldiers and workers. Local forces supporting the MRC prevented other troops from moving on the rails, and something of a standoff developed in these places.

Kerensky did, however, bolster the defenses of the Winter Palace with loyal troops and cadets. As long as that held, the Provisional Government could still credibly claim to be in power. It could then serve as a rallying point for the loyal troops being rushed in from outside Petrograd.

By 5 p.m. on the 24th the MRC took control of the central telegraph office, as well as other key communications and transportation points. At this point most of the soldiers were staying in their barracks, joining neither side. The main action was

being carried by Red Guards, along with individual army units firmly influenced by the Bolsheviks.

To the Offensive

What is the picture as evening approaches on October 24? The masses have begun to militarily seize a number of vital points, but have not yet directly moved to overthrow the Provisional Government. Lenin, along with some city and district level party leaders, is calling for direct insurrection. Most of the garrison has stayed in the barracks. Virtually every Red Guard unit, along with many other unorganized but often armed workers, has poured into the streets, demanding to fight.

The Provisional Government, faced with this, is simultaneously fracturing¹⁰ and summoning loyal troops from around the country to crush the Petrograd uprising.

In sum, the decisive clash had been joined, but the masses had not yet been given the decisive leadership necessary to seize power. The differing lines on defense vs. offense were still contending.¹¹

Throughout the 24th Lenin sent messages from his hideout urging the party to the offensive. "Comrades," his last note, written at 6 p.m., began,

I am writing these lines on the evening of the 24th. The situation is critical in the extreme. In fact it is now absolutely clear that to delay the uprising would be fatal.

With all my might I urge comrades to realize that everything now hangs by a thread; that we are confronted by problems which are not to be solved by conferences or congresses (even congresses of soviets), but exclusively by peoples, by the masses, by the struggle of the armed people.

The bourgeois onslaught of the Kornilovites and the removal of Verkhovskiy show that we must not wait. We must at all costs, this very evening, this very night, arrest the government, having first disarmed the officer cadets (defeating them, if they resist), and so on.

We must not wait! We may lose everything! . . .

Who must take power?

That is not important at present. Let the Military Revolutionary Committee do it, or some other institution . . .

The seizure of power is the task of the uprising; its political purpose will become clear after the seizure.

It would be a disaster, or a sheer formality, to await the wavering vote of October 25 [i.e., the Congress of Soviets]. The people have the right and are in duty bound to decide such questions not by a vote, but by force . . .

The government is tottering. It must be given the deathblow at all costs.

To delay action is fatal.

(“Letter to Central Committee Members,”
LCW, XXVI, pp. 234-235)

A few hours later Lenin decided on his own to go to Smolny and, taking his bodyguard with him, arrived near midnight on the 24th.

What was Lenin fighting for in specific, and why so fiercely, so insistently, so tenaciously? What were the stakes?

Whether by intention or just the pull of habit and spontaneity, there was a tremendous tendency for the Bolshevik leadership to seize some vital spots, set up defense of the proletarian neighborhoods, and await the convening of the Congress of Soviets. While perhaps temporarily hindering the ability of the government to suppress and wipe out the revolution, this line would have inevitably resulted in a siege or stalemate. The government would have remained in the Winter Palace, promising negotiations and mediation, playing for time until it had rallied its forces back into battle.

Throughout the events of the 24th the people had the initiative; but delay could have shifted the momentum to the government. And the actions of the revolutionary forces still had yet to bring forth the sheer numbers of people that would have to be militarily activated for the seizure of power. To put it another way, both sides — the government, with its established army, and the people, who were forging their armed forces in the heat of battle — were in a race to bring up reserves. For the people, reserves meant the vast masses who could only be activated by the real prospect of power and the armed battle for it. For the government, this meant the still-loyal troops that they could command. It is important to remember that the established army had the advantages of organization, discipline and habitual authority: they were, after all, an army. This is why Lenin correctly insisted that delay would be fatal. To

defeat such an army required a relentless offensive which hit enemy forces while they were scattered and cut off from each other, and in so doing would bring much broader masses into the fight.

With Lenin’s midnight arrival at Smolny the offensive began in earnest. The seizure of vital points of the city of Petrograd proceeded swiftly and methodically. At 1:25 a.m. the General Post Office fell to a unit of Red Guards from Vyborg and the Baltic shipyards, soldiers of the Kexholm Regiment and a detachment of sailors. At 2 a.m. two strong detachments made up of Red Guards and soldiers captured the Nikolayevsky and Baltic Railway stations. This was critical if the insurgents were to prevent the arrival of government reinforcements from out of town. When resistance was attempted at the telegraph office of the Nikolayevsky station, the railwaymen Red Guards joined the detachment, cleared the office of counter-revolutionaries and put the ringleaders under arrest. The railway depot and the workshops near the American Bridge were also captured and put under guard. At roughly the same time other revolutionary detachments captured the city’s electric power station.

At about 3 a.m. revolutionary soldiers in the Pavlovsky Regiment threw a cordon across key streets near the Winter Palace, and held up a carload of cadets leaving the Palace to seek assistance. At 3:30, after sharp struggle aboard ship, the crew of the Aurora dropped anchor at the Nikolayevsky Bridge and occupied it for the insurgents, reopening it to traffic and dispersing the cadets who had been guarding it.

At 6 a.m. a detachment of 40 men from the Marine Guards in conjunction with men from the Kexholm Regiment (again) penetrated the State Bank by way of the guardroom and occupied it. Throughout the early morning the MRC directed forces to every vital center and key tactical point. The number of these attacks and their spread-out character made it difficult for the government to know where or how to defend against them, at least right away. And the ways in which the rebels targeted the government’s capacity to communicate and to move troops and supplies set the enemy reeling and helped to keep the initiative in the people’s hands.

The initiative in war is life-or-death. Mao has written that:

The initiative means an army's freedom of action. Freedom of action is the very life of an army and once it is lost, the army is close to defeat or destruction.

(Mao Tsetung, "On Protracted War," *Six Essays on Military Affairs*, p. 282)

Even a force inferior in arms can, through seizing the initiative, force its better-armed enemy into a passive position. One main way to gain the initiative is through surprise, and despite the clashes of October 24, the government forces were evidently not prepared when the Bolsheviks went over to the offensive and launched fierce attacks on a number of vital government positions.

The insurgents grabbed the initiative through boldness and surprise; they not only crippled the enemy's ability to crush the insurrection, but they created space for much broader masses of people to come into action, to become part of the "armed people."

By mid-morning the remaining government strongholds were the Winter Palace and the Headquarters of the Petrograd Military Area. Kerensky fled the city under U.S. and British protection to rally loyal troops; meanwhile workers flooded into the streets. At 10 a.m., the MRC issued the following manifesto to the citizens of Russia:

The Provisional Government has been overthrown. State power has been transferred to the organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies — the Military Revolutionary Committee — which is at the head of the Petrograd proletariat and garrison.

The success of the cause for which the people have been fighting — the immediate offer of a democratic peace, the abolition of landlordism, the institution of workers' control of industry and the formation of a Soviet government — is ensured.

Long live the workers', soldiers'
and peasants' revolution.

It was signed by Lenin and telegraphed immediately to all the industrial centers; this in turn sparked further risings. Lenin now pressed hard for offensive action to seize the Winter Palace and arrest the Provisional Government.

Attack on the Winter Palace

Red Guard units, along with revolutionary soldiers and sailors, now converged on the Winter Palace. The government defenders inside attempted several sorties against the insurgents, hoping to break out, but were quickly driven back. They then settled into defense, aiming to hold out until government troops arrived from the front.

The defenders had managed to maintain a single telegraph line to the outside, undiscovered by the revolutionaries. Using this line, they scoured the country for cooperative troops and found a number of regiments ready to move to defend the old Provisional Government. Again, a race against time — could the defenders bring up their reserves in time to save the Palace, begin to take back the initiative and reverse the momentum? Or would the revolutionaries first bring forward the people in a "gigantic superiority of forces," as Lenin had written, to defeat the defenders and set up a regime to fully mobilize the people for the revolution?

Despite Lenin's stress on moving quickly against the Palace, it proved difficult to mount the final offensive. A seige, rather than a direct attack, began to develop that afternoon. Left to that, a seige situation could become quite dangerous for the revolutionaries: there would be a strong tendency towards inertia, towards settling in and waiting it out, while the government took advantage of the stalemate to bring up its reserves and rally a counter-revolution. And in fact the Palace defenders used the delay to set up massive barricades and fortified machine gun emplacements, while the insurgent troops watched from the Palace Square.

What caused the delay? Antonov, a Bolshevik leader in the MRC, later attributed it to unexpected snags in mobilization, faulty organization and unforeseen minor hassles. Podvoisky ascribed it to a hope of avoiding unnecessary bloodshed, a desire to see the Palace capitulate without a fight. Whatever the principal cause, the reactionaries took advantage of it.

On the other hand, as masses streamed to the Palace, Lenin's hoped-for "gigantic superiority of forces" began to take shape. As late afternoon turned to evening, Red Guard units began to sally forth against the palace, usually to be captured and disarmed as they burst in. At 5 p.m. the defenders refused the first in a series of surrender ultimatums

from the MRC. By 6:30 the Headquarters of the Petrograd Military Area fell to the revolutionaries, thus drawing the noose on the Palace tighter still. The streets of the city were now totally in the hands of the revolution. John Reed¹² noted that on his way to the Winter Palace patrols at the corners "stopped all passersby — and the composition of these patrols was interesting, for in command of the regular troops was invariably a Red Guard." (Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, International Publishers, New York, 1967, p. 99)

Inside the Palace demoralization set in among the defenders. Government artillery troops from Pavlovsk had been summoned to come to the aid of the Winter Palace. Rather than panic at their approach, however, Red Guards hid in the entrances of the houses on the streets on which the artillery moved toward the Palace. They waited until the artillery drew even to them, then rushed and disarmed them, capturing the heavy guns and training them on the Palace. The superior armaments of the enemy were being seized by the daring of the insurgents, and turned against their owners.

Between 6 and 8 p.m. several hundred soldiers left the Palace. Nevertheless the Provisional Government held out, relying on a well-armed force of 850 soldiers and hoping to withstand the siege until reinforcements arrived. Still the streams of Red Guards and armed workers and soldiers flowed toward the Palace. Skirmishes occurred with increasing frequency, but the open square in front of the Palace rendered the attackers vulnerable. Only a major and concentrated assault, bringing to bear all the strength of the revolutionaries, would take the Palace.

Finally, at 11 p.m., the battleship Aurora and the Fortress of Peter and Paul (both in revolutionary hands) began firing artillery salvos on the Palace. "Simultaneously with the artillery salvos, the rifle and machine gun fire on both sides increased in intensity. The forces of the MRC attacked from the side of the Palace Square. This attack, however, was repulsed, and only a small group of about 50 daring Red Guards succeeded in breaking through the barricades to the main gates of the palace, where they were surrounded by cadets and disarmed." (HCW, p. 282)

Meanwhile new government reinforcements were advancing on Petrograd. The soldiers of the

Northern Front had been mobilized by Kerensky. They had been told that the garrison's resistance to the government attempts to redeploy them was a mere ruse to avoid hazardous duty, and to shift the burden onto those already at the front. But as the Northern Front soldiers moved to the city, the revolutionary headquarters dispatched agitators to meet them. The agitators explained the situation, and as news of the military successes of the insurgents spread through the ranks, the soldiers began to refuse orders; the advance slowed to a halt. Even the Cossacks proved reluctant: after a day of meetings in Petrograd, and faced with the victories of the revolutionaries and the government's evident weakness, the three regiments assigned to Petrograd adopted a neutral position.

Back at the Palace the insurgents continued their sorties against the defenders, gradually gaining ground under severe fire; some finally penetrated the Palace itself without getting seized. At last, a little after 1 in the morning, the signal for the necessary and massive assault rang out, and a human torrent surged through the Palace gates and porches and into the building. The proletariat had, after all, brought its "gigantic superiority of forces into play," and once in play had fought the battle as a battle of quick decision. By 2 a.m. the Palace had fallen.

Reed noted that "in the light that streamed out of the Winter Palace windows, I could see that the first 200 or 300 men were Red Guards, with only a few scattered soldiers." (Reed, p. 99) He also observed that the party's commissars, who had raced about throughout the entire day preparing the offensive and rallying the revolutionary forces, now took care to exercise discipline in the Winter Palace, acting to stop looting and indiscriminate acts of revenge. Someone once observed that there is a crowd waiting to burst out of every army — in this case, the commissars of the Bolshevik party had forged a "crowd" into a courageous and disciplined army, one which had risen to take the offensive and defeat the seasoned troops of the established army in a two-day insurrection.

Consolidating Power

Lenin had wanted the Provisional Government broken before the Congress opened, but the delay in

storming the Winter Palace made that impossible. At 10:40 p.m., with the battle still undecided, the Congress convened.

Undecided or not, the insurrection had, as Lenin predicted, presented the Congress with a massive historical phenomenon to deal with, to which it had to reply "yes" or "no." Without the insurrection preceding it, the Congress would likely have debated until either Kerensky or the extreme Right had secured power by enduring the crisis, blunting the masses' initiative and rallying enough loyal troops to finally retake the city. But thanks to the masses' action, the parties at the Congress wouldn't have the option of deliberating whether the proletariat should seize power, but only what stand they were to take towards that new power.

The Mensheviks denounced the insurrection and called for a walkout from the Congress and support for the Provisional Government. And a large section in fact did walk out with the avowed purpose of marching to the Winter Palace to protest the use of violence against the government. (The marchers quietly turned back, however, when faced with a detachment of revolutionary sailors.)

The Menshevik-Internationalists pushed for political negotiations between all socialist parties to "end the current crisis." They hoped to render the results of the insurrection invalid (or at least subject to negotiation) and perhaps even forestall the storming of the Winter Palace.

The Left S-Rs, however, still hoped to see a coalition government of Mensheviks, Bolsheviks and S-Rs. They chose to stay at the Congress and in the soon-to-be-declared new government. They stayed in part to carry out their strategy for a broader coalition and in part because their social base in the city had taken an enthusiastic part in the uprising.

But most importantly the Left S-R stance reflected the aroused middle peasantry. Representing this core social base, the Left S-Rs saw in the insurrectionary power a vehicle through which to realize their basic immediate demands for land. Lenin's adoption of the Left S-R program of land to the tiller further firmed up this view among them. They therefore supported the new Soviet power, while hoping to bring in other representatives of the middle classes to mitigate the proletariat's power in the future government.

Finally, as the Winter Palace fell at 2 a.m., and after rejecting yet another Menshevik-Internation-

alist bid for negotiations, the Congress adopted the historic proclamation "To All Workers, Soldiers, and Peasants." The new power had come into being!

The manifesto proclaimed that "[b]acked by the will of the vast majority of the workers, soldiers and peasants, backed by the victorious uprising of the workers and the garrison which has taken place in Petrograd, the Congress takes power into its own hands." (*LCW*, XXVI, p. 247) The manifesto went on to state the new power's stance towards the most pressing issues of the day: the war, famine and land.

These stances were elaborated the next day and were crucial to consolidating what had been won and preparing to push out and expand the new power. The Congress moved to vest all power in the soviets, to abolish capital punishment at the front, and to release all revolutionary prisoners and members of the rural land committees.¹³ The Congress also ordered Kerensky's arrest.

On the question of peace, the new Soviet government called for immediate negotiations for "an immediate peace without annexations (i.e., without the seizure of foreign lands, or the forcible incorporation of foreign nations) and without indemnities." (*HCW*, II, p. 313) It went on to offer to negotiate without conditions. At the same time, the new power declared that all secret diplomacy would cease and the secret treaties between the imperialist powers would be published. It ended by calling for an immediate three-month armistice.

Next Lenin put forward the decree on land. The property of the landlords was abolished without compensation and the landed estates, along with church lands, were put at the disposal of the land committees in the countryside.

These two decrees in particular — on peace and land — provided the basis for the urban-based proletariat to make allies of the peasantry. At one stroke the proletarian power had moved to solve the most agonizing problems of the people. But the Congress passed other important measures as well — democratizing the army, instituting workers' control of industry, and upholding the right of the oppressed nations of the Russian empire (nearly 50% of the population) to self-determination. The Congress finished its business by setting up the form of Soviet government — a workers' and peasants' government to be known as the Council

of People's Commissars. A 101-member Central Executive Committee, made up of a majority of Bolsheviks and including Left S-Rs, Menshevik-Internationalists and a few others, was elected. All this was accomplished by 5:15 in the morning on October 27.

The next day witnessed continued wrangling over the composition of the new regime, with the Mensheviks and S-Rs demanding concessions and participation. The day also saw the beginning organization of the counter-revolution, in the form of the Committee for Salvation. That evening at the Congress representatives of the reformist parties of the left all rose to oppose the new regime to no avail. Then Reed describes the scene:

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

(Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, p. 126)

Finishing the Insurrection

But the insurrection was not yet complete. Kerensky, having fled Petrograd, had been able to hook up with General Krasnov. Krasnov commanded some twelve Cossack squadrons (numbering about 1,000 men), some light artillery, an armored train and armored car. On October 27 these troops seized the town of Tsarskoye Selo, roughly twelve miles north of Petrograd and home to a garrison of 20,000 soldiers. From there they prepared an assault on Petrograd, to be coordinated with reactionary uprisings inside the city.

The effect of the news of Krasnov's move galvanized Petrograd still further. On the one hand, emboldened reactionaries began to coordinate efforts with Krasnov. The officer cadets in training mobilized to take over the telephone exchange, rally the reactionary forces in the city, and generally attempt an uprising against Soviet power. But the

main thing was the way in which revolutionary Petrograd mobilized for the front.

A tense atmosphere prevailed in the working-class districts of Petrograd in those days. The workers flocked to the district headquarters to enrol in the Red Guard . . .

One after another columns of armed worker volunteers marched down the Bolshoi Sampsonievsky Prospect, in the Vyborg District, carrying red banners and streamers on which fighting slogans had been hastily inscribed. . . The rooms [where the Red Guards met] were noisy and crowded. Here the newly elected officers received their credentials. Men without arms were supplied with rifles and those who were badly clothed received equipment. Military instructors formed detachment after detachment which . . . marched off to Tsarskoye Selo Station, to be dispatched forthwith to Pulkovo. The workers of the Pipe Works, Simens-Halske and Possel's came straight from their work to the commandant requesting that they be given arms and sent to the firing line. During the day 3,000 rifles were issued, and still workers came pouring in. There were not enough rifles to go around, so the workers took picks and shovels and went off to dig trenches.

(*HCW*, II, p. 366)

The picture in Petrograd during those days had two typical scenes. One was the bloody battles taking place in the streets, as the Red Guards went into battle against the diehard reactionaries still putting up sharp resistance. The newly organized forces of the proletariat had to contend with the well-trained and desperate officer trainees of the Tsarist Army; by the night of October 29, after numerous very bloody battles around the city, this revolt was definitively crushed, badly hurting the chances of Krasnov and Kerensky.

The other emblematic scene was that of detachments of the newly formed proletarian army marching through the streets, moving towards the battle at Pulkovo Heights. While Krasnov dug in and tried to win the garrison to his side, the Petrograd Soviet had been sending agitators and organizers to the soldiers of the garrison. The soldiers resisted the attempts of their officers to swing them into action on the side of Krasnov, and instead maintained

neutrality. Thus the stage was set for the insurrection's finishing battle on October 30, between the proletarian forces and Krasnov's men.

By the morning of October 30, ten thousand poorly armed and inexperienced Red Guard had assembled on Pulkovo Heights and begun a charge on the Cossacks.

The Cossacks had a superiority in artillery which, handled by experienced gunners commanded by officers, inflicted heavy losses on the Red troops. Many of the workers were under artillery fire for the first time in their lives. In the midst of the fighting the commanders taught these young soldiers how to take cover. The Red Guards hugged the ground and the shrapnel burst over their heads. The enemy artillery put up a barrage behind which the Cossacks prepared to advance.

But the Red Guards did not flinch. Cheers were heard, rising in volume and again the Red Guards rose and charged. (HCW, II, p. 383)

Reed recounts it like this:

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

[Reed, p. 126]

Indeed, from the Red headquarters in Smolny came the order to all regiments to take the offensive against counter-revolutionary troops and to arrest Kerensky. The proletariat had seized power on its "home turf," the cities; this was a tremendous accomplishment. But it would have counted for little had they not been able to march out, engage the enemy and successfully fight in the countryside.

Pulkovo Heights crowned the insurrection and marked the transition to the 3 and a half year civil war that would follow — fought first against Kerensky and then against the counter-revolutionary forces backed up by the troops of 14 different imperialist powers. (This Civil War is itself a crucial period of revolutionary military history, but is beyond the scope of this article.¹⁴)

Conclusion

Even while affirming the "October Road" of urban insurrection followed by civil war for the imperialist countries, Bob Avakian has stressed the conditional character of the lessons of the 1917 revolution.¹⁵ It cannot be adopted wholesale as a model for contemporary imperialist countries, even though its essential features — the pattern of simultaneous urban insurrections led by a vanguard party followed by nationwide civil war — certainly remain valid.

In the first place, and most obviously, conditions have changed in the last 75 years! Moreover — and this is no less important — military science itself has changed since the time of Lenin. Mao Tsetung developed proletarian military science to a qualitatively higher level through the course of twenty-two years of civil war in China, and his doctrine of People's War now defines this aspect of revolutionary theory. Today you must base yourself on Mao's development and enrichment of the thinking on these questions to correctly understand and apply the lessons of 1917.¹⁶

It would be wrong and very damaging — it could only lead to endlessly postponing the insurrection and effectively betraying the revolution — to expect anything like a replay of the events in Russia today in imperialist countries like the USA. Ninety percent of the people supported the February Revolution and a majority of the proletariat in the key cities of Moscow and Petrograd supported the insurrection in October from the beginning. This flowed from the fact that Russia was still in many respects a backward country, with a Tsar and the vast majority of its population peasants. So the opening stage of the revolution was a bourgeois-democratic one, against feudalism, and therefore in

the immediate interests of the vast majority of society (including most sections of Russia's powerful bourgeoisie and vast petty-bourgeoisie).

Even during the next, socialist stage of the revolution — which came onto the agenda virtually at the same time as the initial victorious thrust in February — the proletariat could still adopt and spearhead the essentially bourgeois-democratic demands of the peasantry for land. Indeed, of all classes only the proletariat had the will and interests to lead these demands in the most thorough-going way possible, and hence it solidified its absolutely crucial alliance with the peasantry. And even though the 90% that fought the Tsar in February had divided into two sections of the people after the October insurrection, in certain ways February had broken things open in a potentially very favorable way for the Bolsheviks.

Unlike Russia of 1917, most modern imperialist countries are highly parasitical and highly developed; their revolutions against feudalism have long since been completed and in most there is little, if any, peasantry to speak of. And while the working class may make up the majority in most of these countries, it is most typically split between a section of workers who have for decades led lives close to those of the middle classes (in terms of income, petty property ownership such as houses, and outlook) and a very sizeable real proletariat — that is, a section of workers whose life conditions make them the genuine class descendants of the proletarian hard-core in Petrograd. In most imperialist countries today this real proletariat, and the party leading it, would be faced with forging an alliance with other sizeable sections of the population, including millions of those workers who, over the decades, have become bourgeoisified in their outlook and conditions of life.

So it would be extremely unlikely that anything like 90% of the people would support the initial thrust against the power, as happened in February of 1917. On the other hand, why would it be necessary for a majority of even the working class in most imperialist countries to support the insurrection at its beginning strokes? In conditions of social upheaval and turmoil, when every section of the population would be looking for radical solutions to problems that had become unbearable, could a hard-core (though still mass) section of the proletariat

strike at the power and burst the lid open on the masses broadly (including somewhat better-off sections of the working class)? Imagine the effect of such a move, backing up with guns and armed power a program that could speak to the needs of potential allies in all sections of the people — especially if the proletariat and its party had been carrying out work and struggle on various fronts, through the period leading up to insurrection and in the insurrection itself, to win over (or neutralize) as much of these strata as possible and to involve them in active struggle against the system. In such a situation, with such an orientation and the necessary preparatory work, what started as an insurrection supported by a minority of the population (though a minority based on real mass sentiment and action and relying on the basic proletariat) could have a real chance at victory.

Of course, there are minorities and minorities. A successful insurrection would have to rely on the masses, and these masses would have to have been organized and tempered to at least a certain degree under the banner of the proletariat and its vanguard. While not expecting the beginning support of 90% of the population as a whole, or even of the proletariat, the revolution would need areas where its line, outlook and organization had hegemony: where what it says, goes. These areas would play an important role in creating public opinion and marshalling forces during the period of preparation before a revolutionary situation, and would also play a critical (if different) role on the eve of insurrection, a role analogous to that of Vyborg in Petrograd.

Much is often made of the rather protracted period of dual power that occurred in Russia between February and October. This refers to the ability — at certain times — of workers' and/or peasants' soviets or soldiers' committees to pass and to a degree enforce decrees — even though real power continued to reside with the official state apparatus. Lenin regarded this situation as highly extraordinary and temporary, one that would pass out of existence soon — either through proletarian revolution or bourgeois counterrevolution. But the Bolsheviks took advantage of the unique opportunities afforded by this situation to arm the masses and to develop a base within the army.

Contemporary revolutionaries in imperialist countries should not count on the existence of such oppor-

tunities on anything approximating the scale of Russia and the oppressed nations which later formed the Soviet Union in 1917. The Russian empire, though imperialist, was still quite backward and weak in many respects. As noted earlier, it had not yet completed the bourgeois-democratic revolution and was considerably weakened by taking the brunt of three years of a grueling war. Moreover, after February their British and French allies insisted that they continue the war — at a time when each day of war further infuriated the already-aroused Russian masses.

While severe crisis in the government and a certain weakening of authority would definitely be necessary for an insurrection in a contemporary advanced capitalist country like the USA, and while some writers have plausibly projected a “crazy, patchwork quilt of severe repression and anarchy” in conditions of extreme crisis,¹⁷ it would still be much more likely that the crisis would be greatly telescoped, compared to February-October 1918 and in particular that the regime would retain a great deal more of its repressive capacity than the interim regime in Russia did — indeed, qualitatively more. One or another powerful section of a more experienced and articulated ruling class would likely move to decisively resolve the crisis. (That is not to say that there would be no opportunities for forms of dual power — a crucial point that will be addressed further below.)

A further difference concerns the amount of armed conflict likely in the buildup to all-out insurrection. First off, and contrary to some modern retelling of the 1917 epic, it was not as if the entire period building up to October was only one of politically maneuvering to win the masses. Armed clashes occurred in the July rising and then in the battle against Kornilov, and these were critical to the preparation of the masses to go all-out in October.

On the other hand — and this is connected both with the likely greater repressive force of a modern imperialist government faced with a revolutionary challenge in its home country as well as with the possibility of armed clashes between the people and right-wing vigilantes or government-sponsored death squads, for example — it is very likely that the component of armed conflict prior to the insurrection would be significantly higher in a modern revolutionary situation. Guns are a fact of everyday life in many modern metropolises, and pogroms and

murderous mob attacks are becoming more so (for a sharp example of the latter, look at contemporary Germany).

The presence of such activity in the buildup prior to insurrection would present particular challenges, as well as opportunities, for a revolutionary force. During the period of militant mass struggle before a revolutionary situation, the vanguard would have to be ready to lead the people in their own defense. In defending themselves, the people would learn lessons and develop capacities for future battles. And even if the ruling class were to move to military occupation of the people's neighborhoods (an “option” which every imperialist state actively plans and prepares for), the revolutionary forces would still have to lead the people in their defense and in the process turn a bad thing into a good thing by learning even more valuable lessons for fighting a future revolution.

On the other hand, despite the differences, the October experience — insurrection followed by civil war — remains a basic and general model for the seizure of power in imperialist countries such as the U.S. Moreover, there is a great deal to learn and apply from the particular experience of the insurrectionary days themselves.

First, as Lenin put it, the “insurrection must rely . . . upon the advanced class. . . Insurrection must rely upon revolutionary upsurge of the people.” This obviously means that revolutionaries cannot just jump off into insurrection without significant mass support, and Lenin paid extremely close attention to analyzing the forms of mass activity, assessing the masses' mood, etc.

But there is a further meaning here as well. During the days building up to the insurrection, Lenin above all insisted on relying upon the advanced proletarians as the key fighting force. This went against the various short-cuts that were being proposed, in particular relying on the revolutionary and progressive sections of the troops. An insurrection in an imperialist country would have to be able to bring forward masses of proletarians to actively fight, and would have to do so with the perspective of rapidly *organizing* them into a revolutionary army. *Secondarily, on the basis of fighting and administering defeats to the imperialist army*, such an insurrection would need an active orientation toward and plan for disintegrating that army and winning over as much of its rank-and-file as possible.

In this respect the experience of the Red Guards is also rich. The history of many revolutionary or potentially revolutionary situations argues that the masses will spontaneously form self-defense organizations of one form or another. Many proletarians who want to fight but may not be otherwise "politically active" will join such forms.

The Bolshevik experience with the Red Guard would indicate that first, these organizations should be paid important attention and should be actively built upon, but second, that their spontaneous level of military capability would not suffice for an insurrection: the revolutionary forces would have to find the ways when conditions developed to raise the level of such organizations and make them part of the process of forging something qualitatively higher: a people's army. This would take leadership and struggle and would also require a certain level of military expertise. In 1917 the latter was supplied by revolutionary soldiers and veterans, but to count on this sort of contingency re-occurring would be a serious lapse into wishful thinking.

Further, the mobilization and organization of the masses into a people's army could not be done only, or even mainly, through transforming such mass self-defense organizations into something higher. As people increasingly organize to defend themselves even in the buildup to a revolutionary situation, there would be masses who would need to be organized into fighting units, which would be incorporated into the people's army as the seizure of power comes on the agenda and as the fight for power unfolds.

But could a revolutionary force in a modern imperialist country count on the spontaneous emergence of a Red Guard-like formation at the right time? And who exactly would play the role played by the battle-hardened veterans of 1917 if a revolutionary situation were to develop in the absence of a major imperialist war?

These questions are difficult. A serious revolutionary force in a modern imperialist country would have to take up the task of organizing the masses in defense of the people during the period of militant mass struggle before a revolutionary situation. It could not afford to wait for that to occur spontaneously, or it may wait forever, or such forms as do develop could easily fall under the sway of revision-

ists or reformists.¹⁸ Further, the vanguard would have to rely on the masses tempered and developed in these struggles to play a pivotal role when conditions ripened to an all-out revolutionary situation; they would be the core of the people's army coming into being. Whether a mass formation like the Red Guard emerges or not, the vanguard would have to have worked to forge a hard core that could be the backbone of a people's army coming into being in the event of a revolutionary situation. The point is that the vanguard could not rely upon the emergence of such a form nor, in the event that something like that did emerge, could it rely on such organizations themselves to spontaneously develop a core capable of leading to that next step.

Related to this is a very important point: how to win over the troops — or rather those troops sympathetic or potentially sympathetic to the revolution. One line in the Bolshevik leadership based their opposition to an offensive action at least in part on the reluctance of even the more revolutionary sections of the troops to support such a move. Lenin had insisted in summing up the unsuccessful 1905 Revolution, however, that an actual fight with the troops would be necessary to win sections over. In the case of Petrograd in 1917, this meant that the armed proletarians had to take the lead and the offensive in order to bring the sympathetic but wavering troops over. It meant, once again, that there was a need to actually fight against and administer defeats to the reactionary forces on the battlefield in order to disintegrate them and win over broader ranks from among them; and in the event the Red Guards actually led and did most of the fighting against the reactionary troops.

The Bolsheviks had an extraordinary level of organization among the troops at that time. While revolutionaries today should definitely not base their vision of insurrection on anything approaching that level of support and organization, they can still learn from it. After all, during the Vietnam war there was significant disintegration of the U.S. army and political work by revolutionaries and progressives played an important role in that — if auxiliary to the armed struggle of the Vietnamese people!¹⁹ In Russia, work among the troops went on from the beginning of the war, three years before 1917, and proved invaluable when conditions took a leap. But while such a long period to carry on this

work is of course favorable it is by no means indispensable — in any event, the basic principle of carrying out political work among the imperialist troops, in various forms and in accordance with differing conditions, would remain an important, if secondary, part of preparing for and then carrying out an armed insurrection in a modern imperialist country.

To return to the question of dual power, today's revolutionaries in imperialist countries could not passively await the emergence of institutions like the soviets, nor could they bank on a protracted period of ruling class "collapse" in which the proletariat more or less "peacefully" develops the embryos of its own power. Instead, they would have to find the ways to develop forms of this during the telescoped period leading up to insurrection. This would almost certainly require furious struggle to "carve out" such political space.

To take one critical example: revolutionaries would need areas in which, on the eve of insurrection and during the insurrection itself, they could draft people into the emerging people's army. The role played by Vyborg — from which the Bolsheviks drew the backbone of the proletarian army that spearheaded October — perhaps has much to teach in this regard. The Bolsheviks had laid deep roots in Vyborg for years, and they found ways to lead the proletariat in contending for power in Vyborg in the entire period leading up to the insurrection. This proved crucial to finally mounting the armed struggle. Similarly, the Bolsheviks' political strongholds in certain key factories bore direct military fruit in October, when Red workers converted these factories into barracks on the eve of insurrection: when members of factory militias and Red Guards moved from returning home at night to living together in barracks, a major leap from an irregular armed force to an army ready to seriously contest for power was taken.

As noted earlier, however, these sorts of strongholds and political base areas would have to be built up through arduous struggle against the bourgeoisie during a period of militant mass struggle before a revolutionary situation developed. The vanguard could not realistically forge the kinds of tight organizational links and experience in struggle overnight and out of nothing. Looked at positively, one or two strong political base areas could

have a decisive effect citywide. The acute class consciousness and strong organization in Vyborg enabled that one area to act as a template, or model, in many respects for other parts of the city in which a huge leap did have to be made overnight and out of very little in the way of organized forces.

Finally, Lenin's military thinking itself offers great lessons. Lenin stressed the offensive, keeping the initiative, winning battles daily and even hourly to keep the momentum in the people's hands. 1917 shows that it takes a battle against spontaneity to do this. Any insurrectionary leaders would have to resist the temptation to seize the most sympathetic areas and dig in; that would mean death for the revolution, either by strangulation or sudden attack. The party in such a situation would have to wage struggle to win people to carry the attack to the enemy, and that would require important ideological, political and organizational work in the whole period beforehand to help prepare the people for that task, as Bob Avakian stresses in his book *Could We Really Win?*

One writer had defined war as, "a contest where the relative superiority or inferiority in capacity to wage war is tested in actual battle, and where the original pattern of strength vs. weakness changes in the course of war."²⁰ Lenin's dynamic offensive tactics aimed to increase the proletariat's capacity to wage war and to decrease that of the bourgeoisie. For instance, Lenin stressed seizing the communications centers; this was specifically in order to cripple the enemy's ability to coordinate its defense and to bring up its reserves (this point was evidently lost on the Moscow insurgents of 1917, who in the early stages occupied some of the enemy's communications facilities but neglected to stop the communications themselves). Communications in a modern imperialist country would pose different types of problems, beyond the scope of this article: the point to draw from Lenin in this example is his orientation during insurrection of actively destroying the enemy's capacity to wage war while simultaneously building up that of the newly born people's army.

Likewise, Lenin emphasized seizing the bridges connecting the proletarian areas with the center city; the objective here was not to passively sit and wait, but to ensure conditions for the broadest possible masses to surge into the fray and to take the battle to the enemy. The march out of the city to

smash the enemy forces at Pulkovo Heights showed the same orientation. Lenin's tactics brought the proletariat's strengths to bear against the bourgeoisie's weaknesses in the course of actual battle in order to destroy the foe's capacity to wage war against the proletariat.

Put another way, the October revolution demonstrates an inevitable race between the proletariat and bourgeoisie to "bring up the reserves." The reserves of the proletariat, of course, were the broadest masses, some who might even have originally opposed the revolution, but who would join the fight once they saw that there was a real force waging the battle with a real chance at winning. For the bourgeoisie, the reserves were its other troops backing up the normal keepers of order. Specifically, the point of Lenin's tactics was to bring as many masses as possible into the battle while denying the enemy his reserves. As such, those tactics not only worked in 1917, but — though forms would certainly vary in any future conflict — retain universal lessons and remain to be applied.

Notes

1. Before the 1917 Revolution, Russia worked on a different calendar than the Gregorian calendar, in use in the Western world, 11 days behind Europe, the Americas and most parts of Asia and Africa. The October Revolution — which took place between October 24 and 27 on the Russian calendar — actually was going on in early November according to the modern calendar. After the Revolution this was changed. For this article, we will use the old Russian dates.
2. A bourgeois-democratic revolution is a revolution against feudalism led by the rising capitalist (or bourgeois) class, resulting in a bourgeois-democratic republic; such revolutions occurred for example in England in the 1600s, and in the U.S. and France at the end of the 1700s. These revolutions were historically progressive not for any "eternal ideals" that they professed, as is so often claimed, but only because they impelled the further development of capitalism, with its mighty productive forces — most especially the world proletariat. Once established, the increas-

ing socialization of production runs up against the fetters of its character as the privately-owned profit-producing property of a relative handful; polarization of society into the proletariat and the bourgeoisie gives rise to furious class struggle and revolution, and the protracted historical process through which the proletariat finally ends the division of humanity into antagonistic classes.

As to the feudal relations in the countryside, which were so important in the Russian Revolution (and in most revolutions today in the oppressed nations which make up the vast majority of the world): feudal relations in agriculture are typified by landlords using a near-monopoly of the land to exploit a dependent and often legally subjugated peasantry; they are typified by stagnating agricultural production and backward social institutions. Capitalist relations in agriculture more typically witness the landowner working his own land and/or exploiting wage workers; these relations much more dynamically develop the productive forces than does feudalism (though the rule of the market still distorts the production and utilization of agriculture under capitalism).

3. Russia, it should be noted, had had very little tradition of democratic elections — the machinery had not been as highly developed into a system of deception and suppression as it has in modern imperialist countries, and the Bolsheviks to a certain extent had to participate in and could utilize some electoral forms. Lenin, as the following debate shows, never conceived of such participation as anything more than a secondary or auxiliary form of struggle and certainly had little patience for arguments that would delay and in fact suffocate the genuine initiative of the masses in the name of what amounted to bourgeois politicking.
4. The Cossacks were an ethnic group which over the centuries had been developed into an arm of suppression of the Tsar, for particular use in mob tactics against the revolutionary masses.
5. The Red Guard were organizations of armed proletarians which came together during and shortly after the February Revolution. Their role will be dealt with more in depth later in this article.

6. Audacity, audacity, yet more audacity.
7. In speaking of a district here, we mean something on the order of a large section of the city — something roughly like Watts in LA or Spanish Harlem in New York.
8. Kamenev and Zinoviev published their letter in a centrist newspaper arguing against any idea of “our Party initiating armed demonstrations of any kind in the immediate future,” in a way that plainly implied that the Bolsheviks were about to move. This gave the government an excuse to carry out repression. Lenin replied with what John Reed called “one of the most audacious pieces of political propoganda the world has ever seen,” his “Letter to Comrades.” This letter took on and devastated the by-now familiar arguments from a dozen different angles and in the process deepened the political and military thinking guiding the insurrection.
9. This was reflected in that day’s editorial in the reopened *Rabochy Put*, which pointed attention to the opening of the Soviet Congress but did not call for an uprising.
10. Kerensky had run into an unexpected shock in the “pre-parliament,” a semi-representative body with a Menshevik/S-R majority. Kerensky went there on October 24 to plead for an endorsement of his anti-Bolshevik measures. But the Left S-Rs and Menshevik Internationalists (the left wings of the respective parties) opposed Kerensky, frankly telling him that there was no way to defeat the masses in a test of strength at this point. Instead they raised a call for a new government composed of all the socialist parties, pledged to pursue a policy of immediate peace, land to the peasants and democratization of the army. The Mensheviks and S-Rs as a whole swung to this view; they assessed that military suppression would either lose outright to the Bolsheviks and give them unchallenged power, or else the Kornilovites would take the reins. In that event the new power would likely sweep up everyone associated with the soviets, be they Bolshevik, Menshevik or S-R. So the forces of the Provisional Government effectively split in the face of imminent insurrection.
11. At this point those differing lines found spokesmen in Lenin, on the one hand, and Leon Trot-

sky on the other. Trotsky had been an influential opportunist leader during the years leading up to 1917, but in May of that year had applied to join the Bolsheviks. He stayed with the Bolsheviks through the Civil War and early years of the revolution, then later developed a rather full-blown line standing in opposition to the revolution’s further advance. It is interesting to read the account of Rabinowich, who is sympathetic to Trotsky and believes that the Bolsheviks won in part because they did not take the offensive as quickly as Lenin wanted them to; he writes that:

Between October 21 and 23, Lenin had rejoiced in the MRC’s successes in the struggle with the Petrograd Military District for control of the Petrograd garrison. But, unlike Trotsky, he viewed these triumphs not as part of the gradual subversion of the Provisional Government’s authority which, if all went well, might culminate in a relatively painless transfer of power to the soviets at the Congress of Soviets, but merely as the prelude to a popular armed uprising. And each passing day simply confirmed his long-held conviction that the prospects for creating a Bolshevik-dominated government would be maximized if power were seized by force at once; waiting for the congress, he felt, would simply allow the government more time to ready its forces and would needlessly risk the creation by an indecisive congress of, at best, a wishy-washy all-socialist coalition government. After learning of the last-minute cancellation of the [reactionary] cossack procession [on the 21st] . . . Lenin wrote to Sverdlov: “The calling-off of the cossack demonstration is a gigantic triumph! Take to the attack with all forces and complete victory will be ours in a few days.” (Rabinowich, pp. 263-64)

12. John Reed was a revolutionary American journalist who wrote the classic eyewitness account of the revolution, *Ten Days That Shook the World*. Inspired by his experience, Reed became a communist and worked to form the first communist party in the U.S. before his early death in 1920 at the age of 33.
13. Beginning in late Spring, peasants had organized themselves into rural land committees

and had taken to seizing the estates of feudal lords. In response, the Kerensky government had thrown many of the land committee members into jail.

14. The interested reader is referred to the two-volume *History of the Civil War in the USSR*, published in the Soviet Union in the mid-1930s, under the leadership of Stalin. (This book is out of print and rare, but occasional copies can be found. If you see one, snatch it!)
15. For more on this point of what to learn from the October Revolution and how the international communist movement has historically been held back by a dogmatic and ultimately reformist interpretation of this road, see *Horrible End or an End to the Horror*, by Bob Avakian, (1984); *Charting the Uncharted Course*, by the RCP, USA; and Bob Avakian's articles "Eye on the Prize" (*Revolution*, Fall/Winter 1989, number 58), "Making New Leaps in Preparing For Revolution" (*Revolution*, Spring 1990, number 59) and "Questions for These Times: An Interview with Bob Avakian" (*Revolution*, Winter/ Spring 1986, number 54).
16. A full discussion of Mao's development of proletarian military science is beyond the scope of this article. But Mao's works on this — as collected in his *Selected Military Writings* — must be studied by any serious student of this sphere.

In December 1993, on the 100th anniversary of Mao's birth, the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement published "Long Live Marxism-Leninism-Maoism!," which gives a comprehensive overview of Mao's development of proletarian ideology to a new and higher stage: Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. As part of that, this statement contains an important, concise

summary of Mao's development and enrichment of proletarian military science.

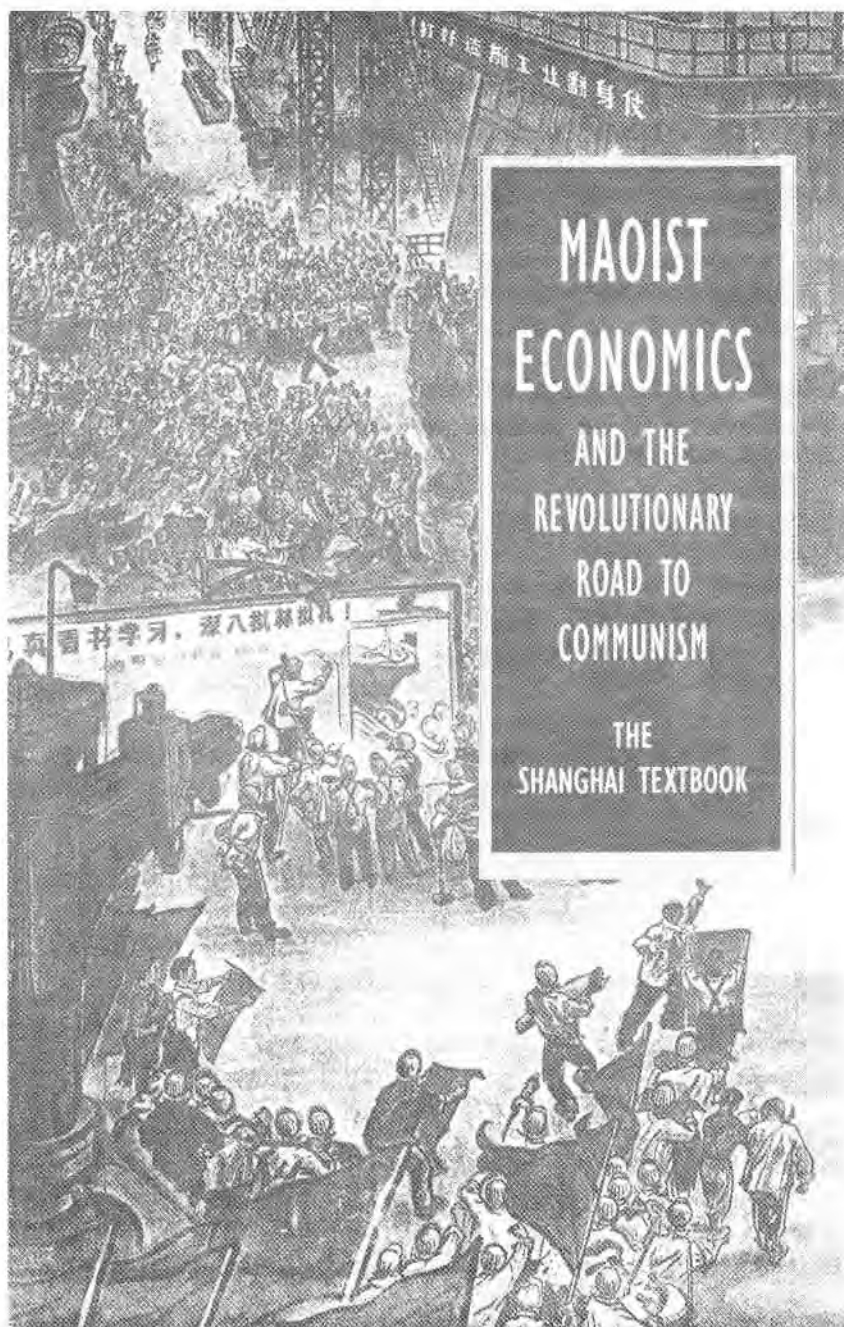
Finally, Bob Avakian's *Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions* devotes a chapter to "Revolutionary War and Military Line" and forms an excellent introduction to the Marxist treatment of military doctrine and Mao's contributions in particular.

17. See M. Upshaw, "Considerations on a Possible Revolutionary Situation in the United States," *Revolution*, Winter/Spring 1987, p. 46. As to the possibility of such crisis, despite attempts at projecting an invulnerable image, the U.S. ruling class has experienced extremely severe crises in its recent history; former U.S. Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford remarked in his memoirs that in the period between the Tet Offensive in late January, 1968, and the urban rebellions following the assassination of Martin Luther King in April, the government was reeling, unable to take the initiative, forced to respond on a day-to-day, hour-to-hour basis to events that had escaped their control.
18. At the same time, Red Guard-like organizations could spontaneously arise. In that event, if the vanguard had already been taking up the task of organizing the people in their own defense as part of preparing for revolution, it would be in a better position to lead spontaneous forms in a revolutionary, as opposed to reformist, direction.
19. See Nick Jackson, "When John Wayne Went Out of Focus: GI Rebellion and Military Disintegration in Vietnam," *Revolution*, Spring 1988.
20. See S. J. Leonard, *Just War, Unjust War: An Historical Survey*, Hannibal Press, San Francisco, [no date]. Leonard's discussion of urban warfare and insurrection is insightful and provocative.

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and Afterword
by Raymond Lotta**



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The Yankee Hand Behind The Crisis in Peru

by Raymond Lotta

There is an imperialism dominating us, U.S. imperialism. This is something real and everyone knows it! Where has this led us? Here and now to the worst crisis in our entire history, a crisis the like of which has never been endured by our people.

– Abimael Guzman (Chairman Gonzalo),
head of the Communist Party of Peru,
in a statement after his capture.

INTRODUCTION

There is no way to understand why the world is the way it is, and why it can only be changed through the most radical of means, without understanding that there is a system under which all of humanity lives. That system is imperialism. Imperialism is a worldwide system of production and exchange based on exploitation and oppression. One of its key features is that a handful of rich capitalist countries control the economic lifeblood and economic destinies of the oppressed nations, where the vast majority of humanity lives. Hunger in Africa; environmental devastation in the Amazon; high-tech sweat shops in Mexico and East Asia producing computer chips and Nikes for export; hundreds of thousands of people in India driven from their lands by World Bank-financed water and dam projects — these are some of the workings, these are some of the results, of imperialism.

Imperialism penetrates, exploits, and dominates the Third World through a variety of means: investments in factories, loans to governments, foreign

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aid, technology, weapons sales, training of government and military personnel, and out-and-out force. Since imperialism's relationship to the masses of the oppressed nations can only lead to suffering, it needs a repressive neocolonial state to keep people down. The bottom line for imperialism is profit and control.

Poverty cannot be ended in the oppressed nations until imperialism is overthrown. The oppression of women, the ever-widening gulf in social and economic conditions between the countryside and the cities, and destruction of the environment can only be tackled and solved when imperialism and its domestic props are first overthrown.

Imperialism always gives rise to resistance. But in Peru there is a struggle and a movement, led by the Communist Party of Peru (known as Shining Path in the media) and fueled by decades of oppression and exploitation, that is aiming at nothing less than the complete and total defeat and ouster of imperialism in Peru. And it has a chance to win. This is exactly and genocidally what the government of Alberto Fujimori, armed and financed by its U.S. masters, is committed to preventing.

This essay examines imperialism's grip on Peru, its effects on economic development, and the misery imperialism's domination has brought to the people of Peru.

I. IMPERIALISM'S CONTROL OF THE HEARTBEAT OF PERU'S ECONOMY

The economic structure of the oppressed nations is shaped mainly by forces external to them: what is produced, exported and imported, financed, etc., reflects first and foremost their subordination, and not principally the internal requirements and interrelations of different sectors. They answer to the "heartbeat" of the imperialist countries.

— Raymond Lotta,
America in Decline

Peru: Dominated and Dependent

We start with a basic fact. Imperialism controls the economy of Peru — its natural resources, industry, banking and finance, and exports. The specific forms

of that control have undergone shifts and changes. But imperialism has never lost its grip over Peru. At times, this dominance has been almost total. Take mining. From the early 1920s up until 1970 three or four American firms owned and ran most of Peru's copper and iron-ore industry as though it were their own territory. Today, Peru is basically being run by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

When we speak of the effects of imperialist economic domination over Peru, we are basically talking about two interrelated factors: (1) the consequences of Peru's particular position in the imperialist world economy — its role as an exporter of mineral and agricultural goods and importer of industrial goods, its extreme sensitivity to world market conditions and prices; and (2) the impact of the activities and decisions of multinational corporations, imperialist governments, and international financial agencies on the economy of Peru.

These are very basic issues. What is grown and eaten in Peru has everything to do with the needs of imperialist agroindustry. Where and how people live, and why the population of Lima, Peru's capital, has grown uncontrollably, have everything to do with the investment priorities of U.S. multinational corporations. Why Peru faces its worst cholera epidemic of the century has everything to do with Peru's dependency on foreign debt and the social policy measures it must take to repay it.

What can be said overall about imperialism and economic and social development in Peru? The short answer: imperialism has made the Peruvian economy reliant on the export of mineral and agricultural goods, limited its industrial base, widened the gap between city and countryside, and contributed to one of the world's most unequal distributions of income. A shorter answer: imperialist-dominated development has led to dependency, distortion, and poverty. Only a revolution can change this situation, only a revolution that strikes at imperialism and its local allies — the kind of revolution being led by the Communist Party of Peru.

Mining for Imperialism: Enclave Development

Peru is one of the world's great mineral producers. But for whom is it producing these minerals? The statistics are mind-boggling. At the beginning of

The IMF Story: Imperialist Institution, Imperialist Agenda

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is an institution that is almost invisible to the populations of the imperialist countries. Yet it influences the lives of hundreds of millions of people in some 60 Third World countries where IMF-sponsored austerity measures (cuts in wages and social spending) are now in effect.

The IMF and the World Bank like to portray themselves as neutral agencies concerned with technical issues of economic development and monetary stability. But these are imperialist institutions with an imperialist agenda.

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the IMF and World Bank were founded in 1944 at the initiative of the United States. They were part of the global game plan of U.S. imperialism. The U.S. was preparing to reorganize and dominate the world economy and forge a bloc of imperialist powers. The IMF was set up to deal with more short-term monetary and payments issues between countries; the World Bank, which initially played a role in the reconstruction of Western Europe, was mainly set up to undertake long-term development projects (like dams and road construction) in the Third World. For U.S. imperialism, the IMF had a particular role to play in Latin America, the main focus of U.S. investment in the Third World in the post-war period.

The managing director of the IMF is always a West European; the president of the World Bank is always a North American. The U.S. has effectively had the power to veto any decision the IMF takes.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the IMF lent funds to many Third World countries. But starting in the

1970s, its functions widened. A debt crisis had broken out in the Third World. The IMF's mission was to protect the interests of the banks and to protect the world financial system from collapse. To achieve these ends, it had to coordinate policy between governments and banking institutions.

Its chief weapons have been "conditionality" and "structural adjustment." Conditionality means that if these countries agree to "put their houses in order" (so that they can repay their debt), they can stretch out their debt payments and receive new investment and loans. Adjustment means that government spending, wages, trade, money, and industrial policies are to be geared to paying back the banks.

To meet these demands these countries have to earn more on the world market; and that means cutting back on domestic spending, exporting more, and making their exports cheaper (by reducing costs and lowering the value of their currencies). And they are forced to open their economies up even more to foreign investors. The IMF sets financial targets that these countries have to meet and monitors their "progress."

The IMF's power over economic and social policy is enormous, and local governments become little more than overseers for it. In cities like Cairo (Egypt), Sao Paulo (Brazil), Caracas (Venezuela), and Khartoum (Sudan) during the late 1970s and 1980s, the urban poor rose up in rebellion against IMF-sponsored cuts in government spending on education and health care and against the removal of subsidies on basic foods and transportation. Developmental economics now has a term to describe this kind of disorder: the "IMF riot."

the 1970s, Peru produced just over 200,000 tons of copper; but only 3,000 tons stayed in the country, the rest being shipped to the United States, Western Europe and Japan; 95 percent of its iron ore was sold overseas. 1990: and still, just about all of Peru's mineral output is exported. In short, Peru has geared much of its economic development to producing something that it itself is not consuming. This is an important feature of what is called *enclave development*.

Enclave development is one consequence of imperialist domination in the Third World. Enclave

development occurs when one sector of the economy is completely integrated with and linked to the world economy and activities located outside the country. The enclave is a foreign-dominated export sector. It accounts for a large share of the total economic activity of the country in statistical income terms. But it does not really generate much benefit for the economy as a whole. The mining industry in Peru is in many ways an extension of the economies of the advanced capitalist countries. It has been developed to serve both the global economic needs and activities of multinational cor-

porations and the strategic positioning of the imperialist powers.

The fact that the minerals mined in Peru are exported is just one side of the enclave problem. There's also the problem of what mining does or doesn't do for the rest of the economy. Mining on the scale that takes place in Peru requires massive investment in equipment and technology. But the multinational corporations that control the global mining industry operate in a certain way. They supply most of the equipment, technology, and technical know-how that their Peruvian and other Third World subsidiaries require from outside the country. (When the Peruvian government took over some mining operations, it still had to purchase equipment from abroad.)

So here is a major economic distortion. On the one hand, investment capital is focused in mining; on the other hand, because the technical and processing needs of mining are met from abroad, mining tends to develop in relative isolation from the rest of Peru's economy. Mining has not helped Peru to build up its own ability to produce technology. It has not stimulated a significant demand for industrial products within Peru. Even much of the refining of Peru's copper and iron ore has gone on overseas. Peru's dependency on the imperialist countries remains.

Mining poses another problem for economic and social development. While it demands a sizable investment in equipment and technology, it doesn't demand much labor. About 10 percent of Peru's industrial labor force was working in mining in the 1970s. In the 1980s, only 2 percent of the total labor force was working in mining.

The growth of an industry which occupies a central place in Peru's economy has done little to give people jobs. It has, however, had a profound effect on the social structure of the areas surrounding the mines. It has drawn a labor force out of peasant communities and in the process transformed these communities. It has created company towns. It has caused a migration of workers from countryside to mine to city.

The environmental damage caused by the mining industry is a subject for a book. During the first half of this century, the biggest mining company, the American-owned Cerro de Pasco, built a network of roads, railroads, smelters, dams, hydroelec-

tric plants in the central highlands of Peru. It took an awful toll on the region's ecosystem. Since the end of World War 2, minerals have been extracted by "openpit" methods. This involves earth removal on a vast scale and mechanical and chemical treatment of ores. These techniques have led to extensive soil, water, and air contamination.

And what of the massive profits generated by transnational mining operations in Peru? Have they provided a substantial basis for developing or industrializing Peru's economy? The story is that much of the profit produced in mining has, like the minerals themselves, been exported. During the 1950-70 period, U.S. mining companies invested \$284 million in Peru; but they returned \$790 million to the U.S. from their Peruvian operations. Which means the outflow of funds was three times greater than the inflow.

The mining industry has not been an engine of growth for Peru's economy as a whole. Its "spin-off" effects have been quite limited, both in terms of the sort of investment and the amount of employment it has promoted. Mining's main contribution to the Peruvian economy has been as a source of foreign exchange (money earned from selling minerals on the world market). These earnings are used to make foreign purchases and repay debt. But mineral export sales are subject to fluctuations in world market demand and price. In the 1950s growth was quite high, and growth continued through the mid-1970s. But in the early 1980s, raw materials prices crashed to their lowest level since the 1930s. Mining's growth nearly stopped on account of the price drop and the drying up of foreign investment.

Peru is very much a captive to external forces. A socialist revolution will break this dependency. It will not only put the masses in control of the country's resources, but will completely alter the focus on mining. It will emphasize agriculture and food self-sufficiency first and foremost and develop industry in a way that serves these goals and promotes all-around development.

Agriculture: How Imperialism Undermines Food Self-Sufficiency

For the past 40 years agricultural production has stagnated in Peru. About two Peruvians in five work in agriculture, but it contributes only about

10 percent of national income. Food production for domestic consumption has not kept up with population. The availability of potatoes, sweet potatoes, and taro, which have been part of the traditional Peruvian diet, has declined sharply. Peru's 22 million people depend on food imports and food aid from the imperialist countries. At the heart of the poverty in Peru's countryside and the decline of agriculture is the system of land ownership and distribution. The vast majority of peasants have little or no land, and the Peruvian state, which imperialism props up with its aid and which it works through, defends the interests of the landowning elite.

But imperialism has profoundly contributed to Peru's food and agricultural crisis in three major ways:

- (1) through the agricultural export policies of the U.S. government and the international activities of American agribusiness (companies producing, processing, and marketing food goods, and supplying fertilizer, seed, tractors, and agricultural raw materials) in Peru;
- (2) the effects of the lopsided expansion of mining and urban manufacturing; and
- (3) by the lending policies of banks and the IMF, which discourage government support and subsidies to small peasant agriculture.

Here we will concentrate on the first factor.

In the mid 1950s, the U.S. passed the Food for Peace bill. Third World countries were granted loans with which to buy food from the U.S. The idea was motivated not by a desire to feed people but by the need to find markets for U.S. grain and to use food as a political weapon. At the same time, American companies were given low-interest loans and other subsidies to expand their operations in these countries. With more factories employing more workers in these countries, there would be a bigger market for U.S. grain.

What effects did this have on Peru? Here was the situation the U.S. grain export program was helping to create: Rather than supporting and expanding production of traditional food staples, like potatoes and barley, in the food-producing areas of Peru's agricultural highlands (where much of Peru's poor and small land-owning peasantry lives), successive governments in Peru have found it easi-

er to import cheap wheat and other food that became available under these U.S. programs. Peru's ruling class has seen food imports as a way to feed a growing and potentially threatening urban working population. And for American and other foreign firms, the availability of cheap food enables them to keep wages lower for their workers, since they would not have to spend as much on their consumption.

In the 1960-85 period, the government was importing huge amounts of wheat, maize (for poultry feed), milk and vegetable oil. By the 1970s, one-third of Peru's food needs were met by imports. Grain imports almost tripled in this period, while domestic wheat production was discouraged and declined. These food imports were handled and processed by a few multinational firms. In this way, the supply of several basic urban food products came to be controlled by a few large agro-industries (both foreign-owned as well as some local-owned but with international connections).

The multinational firms importing and milling low-cost wheat were out to make profit, not feed people. In fact, the dramatic expansion of milling capacity in 1965-75 had very little to do with growth in domestic demand for wheat for human consumption. But it had a lot to do with the rapid growth of the poultry industry, which was dominated by North American firms, and its demand for animal feed. Were people benefiting from this arrangement? In the 1960s and 1970s, Peru's poultry industry was selling much of its product overseas.

Seeking to maximize profits, the milling firms concentrated on producing food items for middle-class consumption. Many of these goods, like cookies, pasta, and crackers, have a high wheat content. This forced the Peruvian government to import still more wheat and subsidize its selling price to meet urban demand.

Processed milk also became a major item of urban consumption. This industry has been controlled by Nestle and Carnation. With government cooperation, Carnation pressured and induced farmers in several areas that had been growing corn and potatoes for their own food to convert into commercial milk producers. They became completely dependent on Carnation for their livelihood. But when prices declined, many were ruined and forced

to abandon their land altogether. Other than the milk that is supplied locally, the evaporated milk industry relies on imported inputs like feed mixtures, preservatives, and even tin for the cans. And, so, whether the urban population has been able to drink milk depends very much on whether the government subsidizes the dairy industry's import requirements.

In the last 40 years, government credits and agricultural investment in Peru have been focused on the coastal areas. These areas produce industrial and export crops. At various times, as much as one-third of Peru's cereal acreage has been cultivated for export. The more fertile valleys of the highlands have been developed. In the 1970s and 1980s, investment also went into the Amazon jungle areas (for cattle-raising, lumbering, and fruit-growing). Foreign capital has been involved in many of these projects: as direct investors; as suppliers of tractors for large-scale and mechanized agriculture; and as providers of engineering and finance.

But traditional agriculture has been neglected. The resulting decline in productivity, the inability of peasant producers to compete against imported foodstuffs and food produced by agro-industry in Peru, and the lure of jobs and cheap food in the cities have produced a tidal wave of migration to the cities. This has put more pressure on the food system and increased Peru's need for imports—imports which have become more costly. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the price of wheat on the world market had risen considerably. By 1986, Peru was even importing that most basic and traditional of staples: the potato! Meanwhile, by 1980 in the poor zones of the southern highlands peasants have been living on as little 400 calories a day.

One obscene illustration of how the world capitalist market is part of Peru's food problem is the fish industry. Fish would be a cheap and full source of protein for much of the population. But during the 1980s, 80 percent of Peru's fish catch was exported: processed into fish oil and into fish meal for the advanced capitalist countries where it is used as animal fodder and fertilizer.

These are the workings of imperialism. Peru has tended to replace consumption of traditional peasant foods with imported food that can't be grown on native soils. 500 years ago the territory of what is now Peru fed perhaps 9 million people, primarily

engaged in farming, and generated surpluses. In the 1990s, Peru has never been further away from food self-sufficiency.

Dependent Industrialization

In the 1950s and early 1960s, Peru's economy underwent a major structural change. U.S. corporations invested heavily in manufacturing. Some of this investment went into the refining of sugar, the processing of fishmeal, and the treatment of ores destined for export. But most of the investment went into the manufacture of consumer goods (initially food and clothing) that had previously been imported. Manufacturing emerged as the most dynamic sector of Peru's economy. International corporations gained a dominant position. But the industrialization promoted by imperialist capital in Peru, as in other oppressed nations, has certain features which distort development. Let's see why.

First. Manufacturing relies heavily on imported equipment. The plants owned by the multinationals obtain capital goods (equipment and technology) from their home countries or on the world market. The larger Peruvian-owned enterprises use and import similar equipment. Peru's industrial base is distorted; the development of a capital goods sector is not pushed forward. Furthermore, to pay for imported industrial equipment, Peru has to export mineral and agricultural goods. When its exports slow down, industrial performance is affected.

Second. Production in multinational operations tends to be highly mechanized. One of the ways in which imperialism is able to obtain superprofits in the Third World is to combine relatively advanced technology with cheap labor. The multinationals are concerned with expanding output, not with expanding jobs. And, so, while manufacturing output increased 6-fold in Peru between 1950 and 1975, manufacturing jobs only doubled in that period. At the same time, because this technology is advanced and specialized, it cannot be widely used or adapted outside the multinational operations. Peru does not develop a technology appropriate to its concrete conditions.

Three. A considerable amount of the surplus produced in Peru is not available for investment and development. Multinationals in Peru transfer

profits and earnings out of Peru for investment elsewhere; they increase or cut back investment in Peru in response to local and international conditions. Foreign corporations are interested in maximizing profits on a global scale, not in the economic development of the host country.

Four. The expansion of manufacturing has worsened the lopsidedness and inequality of regional growth. Manufacturing is the single largest production sector of Peru's economy. Yet it is overwhelmingly concentrated in Lima and a few coastal cities: 45 percent of Peru's gross domestic product was produced in Lima and Callao (the nearby seaport) in the 1980s. There are many reasons for this regional concentration. Multinational firms need to be operating in a developed environment (roads, power supplies); they are mainly producing goods for the high-income minority of the population which lives in the cities; for political reasons, they prefer the safety of the cities; and there can be no rational-economic planning where profit is the name of the game.

Why is urban geographic concentration a bad thing? Because it drains resources from the rural areas, making life even more miserable there. Because people flock to Lima in search of livelihood and housing which it cannot provide. Lima grows bloated. Shantytowns and poverty spread. Peru has grown poorer.

This dependent and distorted development has also reinforced the extreme concentration and unequal distribution of wealth. In the mid-1980s, the richest 20 percent of the population received over 50 percent of total income, while the bottom 20 percent received less than 5 percent (and the bottom 40 percent received 7 percent).

Dependency in Perspective

The imperialists argue that if they didn't invest in and trade with the oppressed nations, if they didn't send aid to them, that these countries would stay backward. Does imperialism promote development in the Third World? It does. But imperialism develops these countries on the basis of exploitation and in order to exploit them further and serve its needs. This process stands in contradiction to the development of a self-reliant and balanced national econo-

my and to the needs of the broad population. And it leads to acute crisis and enormous suffering.

The point is that development must take place on different foundations and according to different criteria — not profit, not the market, but human and social need. But for that to happen, there must be revolution. In Peru, where imperialist-led development has produced one of this century's most savage economic and social crises, such a revolution is underway.

II. THE CIA, THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND, AND PERU'S COCAINE FIX

Peru produces about two-thirds of the world's supply of coca, the leaf that is processed into cocaine. The media and government put out a story about the drug trade and the so-called "war on drugs." The way it is told is that big-time Colombian and Bolivian drug lords run the show. With their laboratories sealed away in jungles, with their private airfields, squads of hit-men, money launderers, and smuggling and distribution networks that lead right into the streets of Harlem — they are said to be a world unto themselves. And right at the coca source, the Shining Path revolutionaries of Peru are accused of running a protection and extortion racket, raking in millions from the drug bosses to finance terrorism.

The story wouldn't be complete without heroes. Fighting the scourge of drugs are brave Latin American governments, like the Alberto Fujimori regime of Peru, that dare to stand up to drug lords and terrorists. And, of course, there is the United States government, which spares no effort to stop the production and inflow of drugs.

This story-line is not only pure fantasy— it turns reality upside-down. Imperialism promotes, controls, and benefits from the drug trade. And its lackey regimes are part of the operation.

The Coca Pyramid and the CIA

At ground level, this is what comes into view. The vast majority of coca producers are poor peasants

living on the edge of starvation in the Upper Huallaga River valley of Peru in the eastern Andes mountains. Coca cultivation has done nothing to keep them from being poor. But as we look closer and upward, we begin to see that the coca economy is a source of big profits to others: absentee plantation owners and the commercial drug cartels. And as we follow the trails out of the coca valleys, we see that the Peruvian state and armed forces are deeply entangled in and corrupted by the narco-economy.

A major player must be introduced. He is Vladimir Montesinos. He is President Fujimori's personal lawyer and unofficial national security adviser. Montesinos was a former lawyer and front-man for Peruvian and Colombian drug lords. And these ties have never been broken. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has acknowledged that Montesinos has promoted policies and government appointments to benefit narcotics trafficking. Montesinos has enormous power. He personally selected the new Armed Forces Command when Fujimori came to office, including its chief of staff (who earned a promotion for his massacres against pro-Shining Path peasants). *U.S. News and World Report* describes him as the effective arbiter of governmental affairs after Fujimori's self-coup of April 1992.

The drug trade and these kinds of military-drug connections have helped finance the Peruvian government's vicious war against the poor and oppressed of Peru and their revolutionary leadership, the Communist Party of Peru (known as the Shining Path). But what's especially telling — and here we look upward to yet another level, to the controlling level — is that Montesinos has long-standing ties to the CIA. He was, according to ex-military figures and journalists in Peru, recruited in the 1970s, and he began working closely with the agency again in 1990, getting finance and training for intelligence operations.

Not only does this tell us something about the CIA's hand in the coup launched by Fujimori in April of 1992, which led to an even more vicious campaign against Shining Path and the masses. It also shows a relationship between the drug trade and U.S. influence over political and military affairs in Peru.

Coca, the IMF, and Free-Market Economics

This CIA-Peruvian military connection reveals that the U.S. and Peruvian governments have ties to and stakes in the drug trade. And, as was learned through the Vietnam and Central American wars, the CIA has a history of utilizing the drug trade to help finance U.S. government counterinsurgency operations and a history of allying with drug operatives to help organize these counterinsurgency operations. But there is a larger economic connection between imperialism and what we will call the "narco-economy."

Coca production and the drug trade have for some time played an important role in the Peruvian, Bolivian, and Colombian economies. But in Peru, especially during the last 10 years, the narco-economy has grown by leaps and bounds. It has become *part of the foundation of the Peruvian economy*. The coca economy (including cultivation, processing, and distribution) is probably the most vigorous element of the national economy.

When Fujimori came to power, he made it clear that repaying Peru's debt would be his government's number one economic priority. How is debt repaid? The chief way is through export earnings. A country must produce commodities that it can profitably sell on the world market. The dollars it earns are then used to repay the Western banks. Since the late 1970s, more than 50 percent of Peru's export earnings have been going towards debt repayment. But there are two big problems. The world economy is in a depressed state, so this makes it hard for the debtor countries to obtain sufficient export earnings. And the Peruvian economy is on the verge of collapse, unable to generate growth or employment.

Enter the drug trade and the narco-economy. By the early 1980s, coca replaced copper as Peru's major source of foreign exchange (the foreign dollars and other currencies obtained through foreign trade).

It has been estimated that coca production nets Peru anywhere from \$750 million to \$1.5 billion a year. This is about half the value of Peru's legal exports. Small wonder that an economy virtually flat on its back can so dependably repay its debt to international financial institutions. But how has this come to be? We have to look to international economic forces and pressures. Because imperialis-

m's fingerprints are all over the functioning of the narco-economy.

The imperialist devastation of agriculture forces people into the coca economy

One of the IMF's standard "reforms" is to open up Third World countries even more to imperialist penetration and control. The IMF demands that the government get rid of rules or restrictions that make it harder for the imperialists to build their factories, buy property, take out profits, or sell goods. Fujimori obliged his masters; after all, some of his key advisers are directly on the IMF payroll!

As one example, he removed tariffs (taxes) on imported food goods. These tariffs and controls gave some protection to Peruvian agricultural producers. Now agricultural goods produced abroad could more easily enter the Peruvian market and undersell some of what a peasant might produce. This drove more peasants under. At the same time, the IMF demanded an end to relatively cheap credit or financial support for farmers. This was done and farmers were squeezed further. Meanwhile, the IMF demanded wage and salary cuts and massive cuts in government employment. Fujimori obliged again. People had less money to spend, and this hurt agricultural production, because people couldn't afford to buy what they used to.

As a consequence of all this, many small producers could simply no longer afford to farm. And for some of them, the farmland was no longer theirs to be farmed. You see, the IMF, in the name of free market principles, also pushes for privatization of land — put anything and all up for sale. Fujimori reversed some land laws and policies that had enabled some peasants to scratch out a living from small patches of land. Now many peasants found themselves landless.

The overall effect of these policy measures and economic pressures has been to bolster the narco-economy. The "adjustment program" pushed the economy into recession. Vast numbers of impoverished peasants, now joined by increasing numbers of the urban poor, have been forced to seek livelihoods in the coca-producing areas. It is estimated that 200,000 families (or 1 million people) are directly involved as producers, with another

500,000 people indirectly linked to the drug trade. Children are dropping out of school to become "workers" who trample coca leaves (after the coca leaf is harvested it must be squashed in order to be turned into paste). The amount of land that is being used for coca production is estimated to be growing at a rate of 10 percent a year. All this is the outcome of imperialist-sponsored "adjustment" and "reform."

At the orders of the IMF, Peru's rulers are squeezing the masses and reorganizing the economy in imperialism's interests. The economy is being ruined and devastated. For the Peruvian government, the coca economy is a kind of safety valve. Coca provides employment and income for sections of the agrarian population that have no other means to survive. Coca is also a lucrative source of capital for the Peruvian elite. Real estate and other investments have been financed with it.

The banking system is "reformed" to serve the narco-economy

To a certain degree, the narco-economy is uncontrolled. But imperialism uses and profits from it. And it has actually acted to bring the narco-economy into the workings of the "legitimate" economy. Two key banking reforms urged on the Fujimori government by the World Bank and IMF in 1990 and 1991 have directly aided the financial operations of the narco-economy.

The first reform guaranteed secrecy of bank accounts. This is simple enough. No government interference and no meddling in private financial transactions; the origins and uses of deposit funds are nobody's business. How convenient for the drug trade to have a banking system that respects privacy!

The second reform was yet another triumph of free-market economics. It removed restrictions on the flow of foreign money held in bank accounts in and out of Peru. This has allowed narco-dollars (money obtained in the global drug trade) to be more easily washed of their cocaine connections, to be "laundered." They can be deposited and transferred into overseas bank accounts. And much of this money comes back because the Peruvian government will pay high interest on dollars.

Narco-dollars have been recycled and integrated

into the national banking system in another way. Drug dollars flood into an unofficial currency market that operates right out of the streets of Lima. There is a huge reservoir of dollars seeking buyers. This is quite useful for the Peruvian authorities. The central bank of Peru has a ready-made source of foreign exchange. It sends its representatives to buy dollars in this "dollar street market." This has been going on for years. But it has grown and become standard operating practice under Fujimori. In the spring of 1992, the central bank was purchasing, on average, about \$6 million per day from the money changers! Many of these dollars are then used to repay international creditors.

In short, the narco-trade services the Peruvian debt. Or to put it another way: the IMF is actually the biggest drug launderer in the world!

The Savage and Counterrevolutionary Role of U.S. "Antidrug" Policies

The United States government officially condemns the drug trade. But this is public posturing of the most hypocritical sort. U.S. aid to Peru and the "antidrug" agreement signed between Fujimori and the U.S. government in May 1991 actually strengthen the hold of coca. In two ways:

First, the U.S. has tied economic (and military) aid to Peru to the adoption of IMF reform policies. But these are the same policies that have buoyed up and rationalized the narco-economy and driven tens, maybe hundreds, of thousands into coca production.

Second, the 1991 agreement and other "antidrug" measures have treated coca cultivation as, first and foremost, a military question. The "war on drugs" is a war on the people, a cover for counterinsurgency. When and where the U.S. has attempted to curb the narco-economy, it has done so mainly on the level of interdiction and destruction of crop lands. The U.S.'s "eradication" programs (destruction of coca croplands) are ineffectual and cruel. With the social and economic crisis as deep as it is, people just move on to new areas to cultivate coca, or face starvation. And these measures are ecocidal, because the use of toxic chemicals to carry out this eradication threatens environmental damage.

The U.S. has offered little in the way of finance for crop substitution or investment in improvement

of roads, etc. that would be required to lower transport expenses so that alternate crops could be marketed at reasonable cost. It's kind of like in the U.S., where jail, not medical treatment or job creation, is the main way the drug problem is dealt with. And since 1987, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the State Department have pressed Peru (and Colombia and Bolivia) to set up secret courts presided over by anonymous judges, courts in which the most minimal rights are denied defendants. It is a cover for fascistic counterinsurgency.

Crop substitution is aimed at encouraging peasants to shift out of coca production into coffee, rice, or cocoa. On the surface, this approach makes sense. But it won't and can't work under the existing political and world-economic conditions. The reason is that world market prices for these substitute commodities have plummeted; shifting into these lines will do little to raise the incomes of peasants. And the urban and rural exploiting classes which run society will control and benefit from any such programs — this is the history of agrarian reform in Peru and Latin America. Organizing agriculture for export, and allowing the imperialist world economy to determine what gets produced and where it is shipped for profit, is not the path to agricultural self-sufficiency.

Which brings us back to Shining Path, the Communist Party of Peru. Shining Path is accused of being in cahoots with the drug trade, using terror to enforce and profit from it. But the real deal is that Shining Path offers the only real program for solving the land, food, and drug problem. They are setting out, and mobilizing masses, to reorient agriculture based on the needs of the poor. That means breaking the grip of all urban and rural exploiting classes and shattering their state power. It means breaking with the world economy.

The embryo of this new society exists in the liberated base areas. Land confiscated from landlords is distributed to poor peasants. At the same time, collective planting and harvesting and irrigation projects are organized; seed exchange is promoted; merchant profits on fertilizer are limited; tools and clothes are produced. In coca areas, peasants are encouraged to cut their dependence on coca and receive support to do so.

The U.S. has no program or intention to trans-

form the drug economy. What it has is a pretext, "the war on drugs," to do something else. That is, to carry out a vicious and genocidal counterinsurgency in zones where the People's War is gaining ground. Under the banner of stopping drugs and terrorism, the U.S. is financing and directing from behind the scenes a war of unspeakable savagery against the rural poor and their vanguard: the only force that can offer a way out of the misery and suffering facing the Peruvian people.

III. THE WORST CRISIS OF THE CENTURY

Peru is facing the worst crisis in its history. It is a crisis that ranks among the worst that has been experienced by any country in this century. Peru's gross domestic product fell by about 25 percent between 1988 and 1991. Four out of five members of the labor force are either unemployed or underemployed. Agriculture has been in steep decline since 1987. In 1989, the inflation rate was 3000 percent! With manufacturing, mining, and agriculture in depression, coca cultivation has emerged as the most dynamic sector of the economy. More than half of Peru's population lives in absolute poverty (unable to cover basic needs) and about a third of the population lives in extreme poverty (unable to satisfy minimum nourishment requirements).

Consider this: more than a million children have stopped going to school because their families need them to earn money to survive (the country has about 6 million people of school age). One child in four in the highlands dies before age five; one child in six in Lima dies before age five. Tuberculosis and cholera epidemics broke out in 1991 and 1992. Peru is a society facing economic collapse and social breakdown.

The significance of this crisis is twofold. On the one hand, this crisis is the outcome of imperialist domination. It is the product of a structure and process of development and growth that are conditioned by imperialism. The dominance of U.S. imperialism means that by the late 1960s, three U.S. companies controlled 75 percent of Peru's mining industry, or that in the 1970s and 1980s several U.S. banks held most of Peru's debt. It means that

the government of Alberto Fujimori would not survive without political, economic and military support from the U.S. It means Green Beret firebases in Peru's jungle.

People ask what the problem is in Peru, and the answer is: imperialism and its local economic and political allies.

Peru has seen all manner of regimes and developmental programs come and go: military reformers (the generals in power from 1968 to 1980), civilian populists (the García regime of 1985-90), and, now, a champion of the free market (Fujimori). But the basic class relations in Peruvian society have remained intact: economic and political power are concentrated in the hands of large private and state industrial and financial capital and capitalist and semifeudal landowning interests.

The basic character of the Peruvian state remains intact: a ruling alliance of foreign (mostly U.S.) capital and Peru's elite. The basic patterns of Peru's dependency and subordination in the world economy remain intact: Peru's development answers to the heartbeat of the imperialist countries.

Unless and until foreign domination is decisively broken, and the economic and social structure completely recast, the people of Peru will suffer through crisis and more crisis. That is the first point. On the other hand, this economic and social crisis has merged with a larger crisis. In 1980, a revolutionary people's war was launched by the Communist Party of Peru (known as Shining Path). Twelve years later the revolution is now challenging the very foundations and existence of imperialist rule in Peru.

The central fact of political life is that the Peruvian government is fighting for its life. The crisis in Peruvian society has created more fertile ground for the revolution. Peasants without land and urban shantytown dwellers without water turn to this movement.

What defines the situation in Peru today is not simply that the economy and institutions of society are collapsing but that a parallel and new power is arising. In the liberated zones of the countryside, an agriculture that meets basic needs is being developed; a viable alternative to coca cultivation is offered. The people's war and the measures taken by the government to crush it have intensified the

overall crisis in society. But the victory of this people's war and the establishment of workers' and peasants' rule is the only way out, the only real solution, to this crisis. That is the most important point.

The Making and Unfolding of the Crisis

In the mid-1970s Peru entered a historical crisis from which it has yet to emerge. To understand and trace the origins of the crisis, we have to understand that Peru, like other Third World economies dominated by imperialism, has followed a particular path of development.

There was a huge inflow of U.S. mining and manufacturing capital into Peru in the 1950s and 1960s. The economy grew, but not in a balanced, integrated, self-sustaining way. Peru's manufacturing sector depends on the import of industrial inputs (machines and partly finished goods), most of which come from the United States. Peru's traditional agricultural sector has long been neglected, while the population of the cities has grown rapidly. Much of Peru's food needs are met through imports.

The Peruvian state must defend the interests of the few and repress the many. So military equipment has been another major import item. To pay for its industrial, food, and arms imports, Peru has had to sell mineral, agricultural, and fish products on the world market. But starting in the 1970s, world economic conditions grew unfavorable. Inflation was running rampant in the advanced capitalist countries. The prices of the industrial goods Peru imported soared. More serious, in 1974-75 the world economy was struck by the worst downturn since the end of World War 2. The demand on world markets for Peru's exports declined. Peru was now importing more and exporting less.

In the early 1970s the military government embarked on several major investment projects to increase Peru's production and export abilities. This required more imported equipment and technology. Peru's foreign exchange reserves (the dollars earned through international trade) were evaporating. To compensate for the situation, Peru borrowed heavily. Big U.S. banks like Chase Manhattan and Manufacturers Hanover saw a chance

to profit and financed many of these projects. Peru's growth came to rely increasingly on loans from foreign banks.

In 1975-76 Peru was hit by a serious recession. The government had a big deficit and was in hock to foreign creditors. Foreign debt had doubled between 1973 and 1976. New loans needed to keep the economy afloat. In 1976 a delegation of six U.S. banks came to Peru and arranged a rescue package in exchange for greater control over the economy; in 1978 the IMF granted Peru financial relief as the price for accepting an austerity program that included consumer price increases. Riots broke out in Lima.

The events of the mid-1970s mark the first stage of Peru's economic crisis; they also mark the beginning of a process of mass impoverishment that has continued to this day.

The crisis entered a second stage in 1982-83. For a brief time between 1979 and 1981, Peru benefited from a rise in copper and silver prices; it was able to attract new loans. But by 1982 the world economy sank into another recession. The export earnings of many Third World countries, including Peru, plummeted. All of Latin America was now engulfed in a debt crisis. Mexico was near financial collapse. The big U.S. banks that had done most of this lending were hesitant to extend any more money (some of these banks were skating on thin ice). But the Peruvian government desperately needed financial assistance.

In 1982, Peru signed a new agreement with the IMF. Peru would make the repayment of debt its top priority. Conveniently, Peru's newly appointed prime minister, Fernando Schwalb, had worked for the IMF from 1969 to 1976. The economy was squeezed to repay the debt — so severely in fact that in 1983 Peru lunged into one of the most severe recessions in the history of Latin America. A fifth of Peru's industrial workers had lost their jobs by 1984.

Since 1983, Peru has basically been negotiating one refinancing agreement after another with U.S. banks and the International Monetary Fund, which is dominated by the U.S. Most of the new money it has received has gone right back to pay its lenders. Much of what it earns on the world market goes into the coffers of its creditors.

This is the "debt trap." In the early 1980s, *Peru was siphoning off about 50 percent of its export earnings to service its debt.*

To put this incredible drain of resources from the oppressed nations in perspective, think about this: after World War 1 Germany's punishing reparation payments amounted to about 15 percent of its export earnings. The economy and the masses were being strangulated. Between 1977 and 1985, the average income of Peruvians fell by 20 percent.

In 1985 Alan García came to power. He promised to put growth and people first and to limit Peru's debt repayments to 10 percent of its export earnings. This was grandstanding of the most demagogic sort. There was a brief interlude of government spending and wage increases. But by 1988 García had to introduce an anti-inflation plan. In all its essentials, it was no different from what the IMF advocated. The economy needed new inflows of foreign capital. As for García's stand on the debt, during his regime Peru was actually paying out about 20 percent of its export earnings to the foreign banks; in fact, Peru was paying out more to service its debt than it was receiving as new investment and new loans. As for García's avowed commitment to the poor, the share of income going to property owners (profits, interest, rent) rose to its highest level in the 1980s under his regime. The crisis deepened. In late 1989 and early 1990 García opened discussions with the IMF. He left office having given the military a free hand to carry out its genocide against the Shining Path and any and all who resisted the regime. The stage was set for Alberto Fujimori.

The "Fujishock" Pushes Society to the Brink

Ten days after he was elected president in 1990, Alberto Fujimori imposed a brutal "stabilization" plan. The stated goal was to wipe out inflation and make the economy more efficient and competitive. The actual purpose was twofold. First, to squeeze the economy so that debt could be repaid. This has translated into about \$45 million that Peru is paying out each and every day to international (mainly U.S.) banks. Second, to restructure the economy. This means wiping out sections of national capital that are less efficient and more oriented to the domestic market. It means making it easier for multinational firms to penetrate and grab up resources and enterprises in Peru and to more pro-

fitably exploit Peru's labor force. And it means integrating the economy more into the international economic system.

This stabilization program has been harsher than any other carried out in the Third World. Wages were frozen, while controls on food prices were lifted; the cost of food shot up 300 percent in a single month. The real value of workers' earnings fell by 30 to 50 percent during the first year of the "shock therapy." It has been estimated that low-income households now need to have at least three people working just to survive. The decline in purchasing power has led to a situation where 80 percent of the population is suffering from undernourishment. The national labor law was rewritten to limit the right to strike and to allow for tens of thousands of layoffs. Government-financed social programs were phased out. The cholera epidemic (see box on page 42) is a sad illustration of how the population has grown more vulnerable to disease. All the while, the economic authorities have been working in close coordination with U.S. financial and IMF advisors (some of whom are running the day-to-day affairs of Peru's ministries).

Following this initial "stabilization" phase, the government moved to open up the economy. It put several large government-owned mining, fishing, power companies and others up for sale at bargain basement prices to foreign bidders. The director of the commission overseeing the sell-off happens to be a consultant at, yes . . . the World Bank. Much of the protection that small and medium-size industry had against foreign competition was done away with. A wave of bankruptcies followed.

The government's agricultural policies created tremendous hardships for small farmers. Credit was channeled to the largest and most productive agricultural enterprises and holdings, pressure was put on small landowners to sell their land, food imports flooded the domestic market. All this has contributed to the ruining of traditional agriculture. Famine is an ever-present danger.

There is a logic to this madness. Again, the Peruvian economy is being restructured. Production is being redirected ever more to export. The forced lowering of wages increases profitability. And foreign capital is enabled to take advantage of the situation. We saw how even the cocaine trade has its function: it has become a principal source of dollars with which

How the IMF Helped Cause the Cholera Epidemic in Peru

Early in 1991, cases of cholera were reported just north of Lima. This was the first outbreak of the disease in Peru since the 1880s (and in Latin America since the early 1900s). Cholera is an acute, infectious, and often fatal disease characterized by diarrhea, vomiting, and collapse. Within days the disease spread to other cities along Peru's coast, including Lima, and hit ferociously in the rural and jungle areas. In 1991 the disease claimed 2,500 lives. What was now an epidemic spread to parts of Brazil, Ecuador, and Bolivia. In Peru, some 500,000 cases of cholera were officially recorded between early 1991 and the start of 1993. The World Health Organization estimates that it will take at least ten years to wipe out cholera in Peru.

Why this epidemic would appear now in Peru is no accident. For years, one government after another has neglected the health care needs of Peru's rapidly expanding population. Unsanitary water is a principal carrier of the disease. But little attention has been paid to water and sewage treatment facilities for the poor. In the rural areas in the mid-1980s, fewer than one family in five had access to services for public drinking water, and almost 90 percent had no access to any type of sewage system. Hospital and clinic facilities are sorely wanting. In the jungle areas, there are hardly any means to transport the sick to hospitals (cholera can be easily treated, but it must be treated quickly). Peru's grinding poverty and the rapid deterioration of the country's infrastructure since the early 1980s lie at the source of this epidemic.

But the IMF and the governments of Alan García (1985-90) and Alberto Fujimori (beginning

in 1990) bear a particular responsibility for the toll the disease has taken. In 1988 García introduced austerity measures that sped up the decline of the country's health and educational facilities. Then came the "Fujishock."

In August 1990 Fujimori imposed an IMF-sponsored adjustment program. The IMF requires the elimination of "price distortions." This means allowing prices to reach their "natural" market levels and doing away with government subsidies that keep basic food prices low. Fujimori complied. Overnight there was a 30-fold increase in the price of cooking oil, a 34-fold increase in the price of home fuel, and similar increases in the price of wood and basic consumer goods. As a result, large numbers of the poor (and now many middle-class households) could no longer afford to buy treated water, or to buy fuel (or even wood) with which to boil water to make it safe to drink or bathe in; many could no longer afford to cook their food; and the poorest of the poor could not even afford to buy soap.

In these conditions, people were more susceptible to diarrheal diseases. Meanwhile, cutbacks in government spending (at IMF urging) for public health forced public hospitals to raise fees in order to recover their costs. The result was that growing numbers of the population could no longer afford to pay for health services. And a 1990 freeze on nurses' wages (wage freezes are another IMF "reform") compounded the collapse of the health system.

In short, the economic policies imposed on Peru by the IMF had a direct and deadly connection to the worst cholera epidemic in Latin America in the 20th century.

the government can pay back its debt and the military can line its pockets and purchase weapons.

Fujimori has been recognized and rewarded for his efforts. He was brought to Washington and given more military aid to deal with Shining Path, and in 1992, the international financial community began talking about renegotiating some of Peru's \$21 billion debt.

But the IMF medicine is not curing the patient. Peru continues to stagger. The world economy is stagnating, and Peru is competing with other Third World countries for a declining share of the world market.

Prices for Peru's chief mineral and agricultural exports fell in 1990 and 1991. These international factors and the wreckage caused by IMF adjustment have increased the demand for loans. Manufacturing was operating at less than 50 percent capacity during the first half of 1992 and the economy declined by 2 percent over the year. Investment capital has been channeled into speculation in real estate and foreign bank accounts. Corruption, especially that linked to the lucrative drug trade, is a major growth industry. The economic crisis continues to worsen and with this has come further social disintegration.

The terrible price exacted by crisis and adjustment and the failure of civil society to meet basic needs can be seen in the expansion of the "informal" and shantytown economy. Poverty in the countryside has driven millions into the cities over the last 40 years. Around Lima, new squatter cities began to grow up on desert dunes, on land set aside for urban development, or previously farmed. The economic system could not provide sufficient jobs in the cities for the new migrants. So they worked "informally" (with no wage contracts or social security) as street vendors or in small-scale "informal" factories producing clothing or parts for large industries. Mostly it was family-organized activity.

With the onset of crisis in the mid-1970s, the informal sector grew enormously. By 1984 about 65 percent of the workforce was engaged in this alternative economy; 200,000 children(!) were working on the streets of Lima. The 1990 austerity measures drove more people into the survival activities of the informal economy. But the informal economy is not growing in step with those entering it, and earnings within it fall. At the same time, the IMF calculates that these desperate survival mechanisms can be used to fill in for the social programs it has dismantled.

In April of 1992, with economic collapse a real possibility and the people's war led by Shining Path rapidly gaining ground, Fujimori and the military dissolved the government and took emergency powers. The main purpose of the coup was to strengthen the hand of the military in carrying out its genocide against the people's war. But it was also aimed at providing the political conditions to carry through with the vicious austerity program. With the United States providing financial and political support, Peru has been repaying debts to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Implementing repression and austerity to the liking of its international sponsors, the Fujimori government is now in line for new credits from private multinational banks. How revealing when a top officer of the Newmont Corporation, a U.S.-based mining transnational corporation with interests in Peru's gold mines, blurts out to *The New York Times*: "We are moving into boom times here. The day Guzman was caught, the country was different." Which could be translated as wishful thinking with a genocidal subtext.

In 1993, Peru posted a 5 percent rate of growth. This was a rebound from previous years of decline, and a growth rate higher than that of any other Latin American country in 1993. This in itself tells us nothing. After all, in 1986, Peru also recorded the continent's highest rate of growth . . . only to be followed a year later by a severe economic contraction. Most of this growth was fueled by an inflow of imperialist investment. What has been going on? The government, as already mentioned, has been auctioning off any and everything to the highest bidder — from gold mines, to the railroad that takes tourists to the Inca ruins, to Peruvian citizenship (which can be purchased for \$25,000). The proceeds of these sales are going towards debt repayment. Hundreds of millions of investment dollars have poured into mines and television stations, fishing companies and airlines. An oil rush is on, and foreign investors are buying up fields and drilling rights. The new foreign investment code enacted by Fujimori is the most liberal in the Western hemisphere. It allows profits to be immediately taken out of the country with no restrictions, erases the distinction between foreign and national capital, and provides for international (read: imperialist) arbitration of commercial disputes. Peru's national economy, dominated as it has been by imperialism, is being subjected to yet another round of imperialist plunder — and on the cheap.

Given the near collapse conditions of Peru's economy over the last 5 years, a modest inflow of capital (it remains relatively small), combined with the horrific downpressing of wages and working conditions, has given some stimulus to the economy. A spurt of growth in the context of stagnation, distortion, and foreign dependence . . . and certainly no fundamental change in the lives of the masses: poverty is deepening throughout the country, 80 percent of the active working population remains unemployed or underemployed, the coca economy continues to expand as the rural poor seek sustenance, and the shantytown populations grow more desperate.

CONCLUSION

This essay has aimed to show that U.S. imperialism is the chief controlling force of Peru's economic

development and the chief beneficiary of the savage oppression that is daily life for the masses of Peru. Other imperialists, notably the West Europeans and the Japanese, are also heavily involved in Peru. But the U.S. is the key political-economic-military player. When the U.S. sends military aid to Peru, when its media paints the struggle led by Shining Path as a holocaust in the making, when teams of U.S. bankers design debt management plans — it is U.S. imperialist domination that is being served and safeguarded. But this reality is hidden from the masses of people.

Today U.S. domination over Peru faces its greatest challenge ever: the Maoist people's war led by Shining Path. When we see how imperialism really works — how the economic, social and political order it imposes on Peru, and so many other countries, brings nothing but misery to the masses of people — we understand that this whole structure must be torn up by the roots. And we understand better why the Shining Path revolution offers the only real solution to the people of Peru and an inspiration to people the world over.

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Breaking ALL Tradition's Chains: Revolutionary Communism and Women's Liberation

Part II of an Interview with Mary Lou Greenberg

In the first part of this interview, which appeared in Revolution Spring 1992, Mary Lou Greenberg recounted and analyzed the struggle to transform relations between men and women in Maoist China. She also took up the question of women taking up arms in revolutionary struggle and discussed the revolutionary communist distinction between reactionary and revolutionary violence. In this part, she gets into the experience of revolutionary China in transforming the traditional family and goes on to discuss how the revolutionary proletariat views social relations – especially relations between men and women – and human behavior generally, and how proletarian power will make possible the transformation of these relations. As part of this, she goes deeply into the RCP's position on homosexuality and addresses many questions that have been raised about it.

Q: OK. It's good to talk about transforming the sphere of art, which has always been sort of a "sacred sphere." But throughout society, there is no sphere more "sacred" than the family. How was that viewed in revolutionary China, during the era when Mao Tsetung led? What's your view toward that?

A: The family as we know it arose on the basis of class society as an institution tied to the preservation and inheritance of private property. It has been an institution for preserving male right, for preserving male dominance over women, and for passing on his property and his genes. It really concentrates property relations, because it views women and children as the property of men.

Now, what we are talking about in revolutionary society, and what they were taking steps to do in China, was to move, through repeated revolutions like the Cultural Revolution and ongoing struggles as well, to real communism, to classless society. To finally get rid of situations where some institutions or people would be dominators over others. Instead, the goal is to unleash people politically to transform these relations so that we can truly reach a society of freely associating indi-

viduals who cooperate and work together on a comradely basis. And in the family that means doing away with the domination of the husband, the father.

We don't see the family as some sort of sacred thing. It arose at a certain period of history, based on the underlying level of production. And it will go out of existence at some point. But if you tried to abolish the family immediately, you'd run up against some contradictions that can't be solved overnight. You'd still have kids being born, you'd still have women giving birth (at least in the foreseeable future). Spontaneously, it would still fall principally to women to raise the children and take care of the whole function of reproducing the next generation. To get out of that situation we have to go through a period of repeated struggles to revolutionize society, in which the family will go through a number of transformations, before people can finally move beyond it.

To get there we have to transform the family so that the functions traditionally assumed by the wife and mother are increasingly taken on by the larger society – are socialized. But until that happens, until society reaches the point where it can provide the things that the family does now (such as child-rearing and providing food and shelter for individuals) and the family is replaced by something new and more liberating, then relations within the family have to become based on equal participation and equal responsibility for men and women. They have to be transformed.

One thing they said in China was that “women no longer sew on buttons.” In other words, men take care of their own personal needs. For example, you wouldn't think of having someone else brush your own teeth for you, would you? So why is it that men assume women will sew on their buttons, iron their shirts, and do many other things for them as well? And why should men hold the main power within the family? All this has to be struggled over and changed as a very important element in ongoing revolution.

This principle also applies to raising children. We want to get to a situation where chil-

dren are not dominated by the parents at home and the teacher at school – or else utterly neglected – but where the children themselves are politically led and unleashed to play a role in their own education and the revolutionization of all society. In China we saw a tremendous amount of self-reliance, cooperation, and real revolutionary enthusiasm among even very small children in nurseries and kindergartens. They would rely on each other for very basic things like putting on coats or tying shoelaces; rather than going to the teacher, they'd go to other kids, learning self-reliance and cooperation at an early age.

Q: There were childcare centers, though, right?

A: Absolutely. The childcare centers were very important, and absolutely necessary if women were to be released from household drudgery and looking after children day after day. The society paid a lot of attention to assisting mothers. Women factory workers, for instance, received 56 days paid maternity leave; nursing mothers could take 40 to 60 minutes twice a day to breast-feed their infants in nurseries right on the factory grounds. Along with nurseries for infants, there were child care centers for older children in the neighborhoods and factory districts. I just wanted to emphasize that to set up childcare centers without attacking traditional social relations and ideas in the ideological and cultural spheres isn't going to solve the problem.

Let me add here that in any revolutionary society we're going to struggle against the traditional notion that woman's social worth is determined principally through her relationship with some man or whether she has children. Women will not be made to feel defensive if they choose to have no children or not get married. Better and safer birth control will be developed, and abortion on demand and without apology or guilt will be a reality.

When we were in China – and again, this is before the coup in 1976 overthrew the revolutionaries, and the phony communists seized power – contraception and birth control were promoted primarily as ways of enabling women

to play a fuller role in society overall, and not mainly as a mean to slow population growth, as they are in China today. Family planning was seen as a political and social question in revolutionary China, not a strictly personal matter. At the same time as women and men were encouraged to limit their children, there was no coercion as exists today in China. Under socialism, a woman has to be able to control her own reproduction, to make her own decisions about childbearing. Otherwise, the fact that women bear children could be used to oppress women once again, as it has been under slavery, feudalism, and capitalism.

Q: *But back to the family itself – it sounds like you’re saying that there will be struggle waged within an institution permeated by male supremacy as part of eliminating male supremacy? Sort of like still having a state after you’ve made revolution, even though the . . .*

A: . . . purpose of the state is to get to a point where there will not be a state. Exactly. At the same time, I can see a situation developing pretty rapidly where there will be new forms of living together, new cooperative units. Many non-traditional living units exist today, although, under capitalism, they all assume to one degree or another the functions of the traditional nuclear family – that is, a unit for social control necessary for the functioning of class society. Under socialism, the family will be just one unit of social organization among many. It would not be the sole or necessarily even the principal ongoing social connection for an individual. There’ll be groups in the workplace and in the community that people participate in and gain cultural, intellectual, and emotional nourishment from.

Q: *Let me ask you this. How do you foresee love between men and women under socialism?*

A: I think that the basis for love and for personal relationships is going to be a lot different than

it is now. The basis for people being attracted to each other will be different. It’s not going to be based on superficial appearance or some *Playboy/Playgirl* standard of beauty, or on money. A lot of marriages and unions are based on that now – for most women, you need to be with someone in order to survive economically. But in the future, people will come together in the struggle to create a new society, and on the basis of getting to know one another in the course of that struggle, getting to know each other intellectually, culturally, politically, mutual attraction is going to develop and they’re going to fall in love. By and large, there will be different standards then; people will look for different things in companions and they’ll view love and companionship differently. Love won’t be a way to seek some kind of shelter from a heartless, brutal society – and this shelter, remember, more often than not turns into more of a prison than a shelter for women.

It will become a further way to contribute to the advance of revolution and the building of the new society. And love relationships generally won’t be something to keep off separate from everything else, where whatever happens is “nobody else’s business,” because that can only reinforce male domination and drag society backward towards capitalism and its type of relations. Instead, we’re going to treat these as social questions. What goes on in the family is the concern of society because it affects society, particularly the liberation of women, and women have to be supported in their struggle for liberation in every sphere.

Q: *A lot of people see this vision that you’ve talked about, and they see what the Party is doing in the struggles of today to bring this about, and yet have raised questions about the Party’s position on homosexuality. That position is as follows, quoting here from the Party’s New Programme:*

As for homosexuality, this too, is perpetuated and fostered by the decay of capitalism, especially as it sinks into deeper crisis.

What goes on in the family is the concern of society because it affects society, particularly the liberation of women

This is particularly the case because of the distorted, oppressive man-woman relations capitalism promotes. Once the proletariat is in power, no one will be discriminated against in jobs, housing and the like merely on the basis of being homosexual. But at the same time education will be conducted throughout society on the ideology behind homosexuality and its material roots in exploiting society, and struggle will be waged to eliminate it and reform homosexuals.

I think this would be a good time to get into that and try to sort through that.

A: I'm glad to have this opportunity to get into this, both because it's important in its own right and, even more, because it's an opportunity to get into just how the revolutionary proletariat sees social relations – especially relations between men and women – and human behavior generally.

Now as anyone who follows our press or works in some of the various movements knows, our line on this is very controversial. In fact, it's been under attack. Part of the way that this comes down is that some people say that any analysis or discussion of homosexuality is “off limits,” that any questioning or criticism is inherently “homophobic.” This attitude is harmful to the whole revolutionary process which must include lively, principled debate on all critical issues.

Some who raise criticisms of us don't know what our position is. That's one thing, and to them we say: let's talk, you know? But there are some people who outright spread lies and slanders for opportunist reasons; some of these people have many ideological and political differences with revolutionary communism but they raise the issue of homosexuality because they think they can “get over” with it and isolate the Party from honest progressive and radical forces. They don't want debate or dis-

cussion – matter of fact, they say that this question cannot be discussed or debated! – they seem mainly to want to injure our Party. There have been attempts, for example, in the National Lawyers Guild, to deny people associated with our Party legal defense against government attacks – because of our position on homosexuality. We have to ask, and people need to get clear on, whose interests and whose agenda this kind of thing serves most of all? Does it serve people striving to get free, and yes having disagreements among themselves over what that means, or does it serve the government, which is striving to suppress and divide people?

At the same time, we do welcome criticism, debate, and struggle from people who differ with us on this question, or any other question in our Programme, for that matter. It helps us to get more deeply into our views with more people, to learn more from others, and to struggle more over how

people can really win liberation, and what the content of liberation is. So as I said, I welcome the chance to get into this in some depth.

One reason this issue is so sharp today is that the oppression of women has gotten very intense. People are up against the fact that, as our Programme also says, the relations between men and women in this society “perfectly mirror the economic relations – exploitation.” And this has tremendously intensified since 1980 when the Programme was written. You could even say that back in 1980 if someone had come out and predicted the kind of stuff that went down in the 80's, they'd have been accused of engaging in science fiction. But one result of that is that people are increasingly fighting back, and very urgently seeking out solutions.

Sometimes in this context people see homosexuality, especially lesbianism, as an alternative to the dominant relations and values of the suppression and subordination of women. Some people even say that this subverts those

The revolutionary process must include lively, principled debate on all critical issues . . . the attitude that any analysis or discussion of homosexuality is “off limits” is harmful. . . .

dominant relations. But in our view homosexual relations don't fundamentally break with this or offer a revolutionary solution to the oppressive male-dominated sexual relations of bourgeois society. Instead, they reflect, and ultimately they reinforce, those relations.

We feel that all human social behavior, including the supposedly private sphere of sexuality, should be open to discussion and debate using the standard I mentioned earlier: that is, to what extent do various ideas and practices contribute to doing away with the oppressive conditions and divisions in society? If we really want to do away with all oppression, then there can be no sphere of life that's "off limits" to discussion and debate because there's no sphere of life that exists independent of classes and class struggle. In other words, particularly in the context of the huge question of ending the oppression of women, the question is "debatable" – and must be debated and struggled over.

And we have a method to do this with. We analyze all behavior, including sexual behavior, as rooted in given historical conditions. Any behavior has a past historical development and a current material basis. If things are ripped out of this context, if social behavior is reduced to individual motivation or viewed apart from its material basis, it can't be understood correctly. To understand any phenomenon, we have to analyze it using this historical materialist approach. Sexuality and sexual relations in particular must be open to this kind of analysis, discussion, and criticism because this sphere is a major arena in which women are bitterly oppressed.

Q: *But why should the Party care what people do in their private lives?*

A: As you know, the Party stands for thoroughgoing revolution, for uprooting all oppression and exploitation. Certain things help move that struggle forward and certain things don't. Because all behavior is both a product of society and in turn reacts back on society, there can be no strictly private spheres of behavior. That's why all behavior and ideas must be open to

struggle, debate, and transformation if you want to get rid of all oppression.

Let's take a look at "private lives" anyway. There are an awful lot of very oppressive relations that get concentrated in what people sometimes call their private lives. We had a letter some time back in our newspaper from a man who was trying to break with using pornography [see the *Revolutionary Worker*, #648 – ed.], and part of that process was people struggling with him to see that there were real social relations of power and exploitation of other people bound up in his use of pornography. He was trying to rationalize this as a personal preference, or harmless indulgence, or even as a favor to his wife – but it wasn't that at all, it was a reflection and a furthering of the relations of the domination of women by men. That example is actually pretty rich and can apply somewhat broadly. See, he was trying to break with this porno, but he was also digging at the ideology and thinking behind his use of it, and he was trying to understand and lay bare the social relations that were underneath those "personal" ideas of his. And I'd presume that he's doing all that in some measure because people are struggling with him.

Now we don't plan on having bedroom police in the new society, and people do need some room to breathe, so to speak. But we do envision that, one, certain clearly oppressive practices like pornography will be suppressed and, two, that there will be an atmosphere where every social relation involving the family and involving relations between men and women will be up for debate and struggle and, most of all, transformation. In our view, the relations and thinking bound up with homosexuality will be a matter of debating and criticizing and explaining and helping people to get at – and to break with – the ideology behind it. I'll speak to some of that more in depth shortly.

Q: *But what about the attacks coming down today on homosexuals? Some people feel that in this climate any questioning or criticism feeds into this.*

A: First of all, those who've worked with us and have followed our press know that we stand

firmly against harassment, discrimination, and all forms of attack on gays and lesbians. Such persecution is wrong for all kinds of reasons, not the least of which that these attacks are important parts of the ruling class' attempts to re-fasten the straitjacket of "traditional family values" – that is, patriarchy straight-up – and reactionary traditional values generally even more firmly onto the people.

The *Revolutionary Worker*, for example, has run articles denouncing the veto of a gay rights bill in California by Governor Pete Wilson and upholding the militant protests by gays and lesbians that erupted in response.

We've denounced the Bowers-Hardwick Supreme Court decision which upheld sodomy laws. The *RW* has exposed and opposed the pogromist atmosphere whipped up around AIDS and has carried articles on actions by ACTUP and other groups.

As I've discussed in this interview, because we see the oppression of women as a profound faultline of revolution, we are absolutely opposed to traditional values and traditional morality, and we stand and work for the most radical ruptures in social relations. The right-wing attacks on homosexuality have nothing to do with our criticisms. They say homosexuality is destructive to traditional morality and the nuclear family; we say that it actually goes along with and reinforces those relations. To get back to the question then, I don't see how vigorous and healthy struggle over what it's going to take to actually emancipate women can do anything but blast a hole in the oppressive climate that the powers-that-be are working to create.

Q: *Some people say that homosexuality, as well as heterosexuality, is something people are just born with. So why make an issue over something innate in people?*

A: This is a really important question and one that gets at one of the differences between Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and other world outlooks. We don't think that human behavior, including sexual behavior, is essentially something that is "innate" or genetically or biologically determined. Human behavior, including sexual behavior, is a profoundly *social* phenomenon. We're against biological determinism, that is, the belief that one's genetic makeup is the principal factor in determining behavior. Behavior, including sexuality, is principally and overwhelmingly a product of socialization, how we're influenced and trained, however unconscious we

may be of it, by societal norms and expectations – and by the kinds of choices we make in responding to those expectations. This is true even of something like "maternal instinct," which some people claim is inherent for women.

Like all behavior, homosexuality is principally not a genetic question, not a question of "being born that way." The sex drive is biological, but how it expresses itself is socially and historically determined. Sexual practices occur

in a particular time and place in class society, and there is no intrinsic naturalness or moralness in any sexual practice – no matter what the fundamentalists or moral majority-ites say.

Sexual orientation generally represents a response to social influences and an ideological choice. Gay and lesbian orientation represents choices, choices that have differing content. They are choices to opt out of the dominant heterosexual relations which are permeated with patriarchal relations and male right. While they choose to opt out of these dominant relations, homosexual relations don't fundamentally break with the overall oppression of women and patriarchal relations in society. As I mentioned earlier, we look at all human behavior in terms of whether or not it advances the struggle to overcome the oppressive conditions and divisions in society, of which a major one is the

If social behavior is reduced to individual motivation or viewed apart from its material basis, it can't be understood correctly. Sexuality, and sexual relations in particular, must be open to this kind of analysis, discussion, and criticism because this sphere is a major arena in which women are bitterly oppressed.

oppression of women. And homosexuality doesn't push that struggle forward. It ends up standing in the way.

Q: *But how?*

A: First, much of the practice of male homosexuality reflects and concentrates the male supremacy that exists. We have a very good article in the Spring 1988 issue of *Revolution* magazine which goes into this, and I'm not going to reiterate it all here. But at one point in this article it asks what it means, in a society in which male supremacy and misogyny – woman-hating – are such integral elements of its whole operation, what does it mean in this situation for a section of society to regard a sexual relationship with a woman as repellent, or at the very least unfulfilling? To quote from that article: "To say the least, this is a culturally loaded phenomenon and by no means an individual choice." In other words, it both reflects the dominant misogyny and it reacts back on society by helping to reinforce anti-woman attitudes.

At the same time, the male homosexual scene is generally marked by the same misogynous attitudes as heterosexual relations at large, if in sometimes different – and even exaggerated – form. The phenomenon of drag – now widely tolerated and even approved in the movement – contains a real anti-woman edge to it, sort of like whites performing in "blackface." And generally the relations between men do contain the same kinds of dominator or predatory dynamics as between men and women, where the less powerful male is forced into the "female" role.

Q: *But isn't lesbianism a different question?*

A: Lesbianism does have to be looked at somewhat differently. There is often an element of resistance involved in lesbian relationships that represents a refusal to put up with a lot of the shit that women have to take from men in their personal lives in this society. But still and all these relationships cannot get away from the dominant social relations and in the main they cannot help but end up reproducing those relations,

sometimes in virtually the same form. For example, I read in *Ms.* magazine some months back of a study showing that the occurrence of battery in lesbian relationships almost approaches the rate of that in heterosexual relationships.

Beyond that there is also an element of misandry involved – the idea that men are basically hopeless, that it's in their nature to be dominators. To an extent, the statement being made there is that this social relation between men and women is too hard to transform. It's too ingrained, it's too complex. There's too much tradition behind it. And so we'll try to get around it instead of hitting it head-on and fighting to transform it. This goes along with an overall view that it is either not necessary or not possible (or both) to actually transform social relations, between men and women and in all other spheres, in order to put an end to all oppression.

Politically this can tie in with and reinforce reformism. That is, a view that revolution is impossible or too far off or even undesirable and that we cannot fundamentally change things, so the only thing possible is to opt out of the dominant social relations, "patch up" the existing relations with some "personal solutions." And then the struggles that you do take on end up getting pulled towards defending that illusory space you think you've carved out, while leaving the system as a whole untouched.

Obviously that's not the view of the revolutionary proletariat. We don't say that male supremacy or male supremacist thinking is innate in men anymore than racism is innate in white people, or that it's human nature to be selfish. Yes, these backward ideas and ugly practices exist – I mean they permeate society, they infect men as a whole and turn them into the most reliable oppressors of women – but the point is to struggle to change society and in the process of that, to change the individuals who make up that society. Basically, as Chairman Avakian put it, it's society that creates the people, not the other way around. Of course, the point of that isn't to "let people off the hook," but to point to the need for people to make revolution to change the society and as a very necessary part of that, to revolutionize themselves and their own thinking and behav-

ior in the process. Reformism is also reflected in the view that has some currency among sections of the "movement" that sexual freedom – the freedom to fuck who you want when you want with no consequences, as it's sometimes put – has to be a central objective of the struggle. First of all, this has always been a "right" of ruling class men (and men more generally within certain class and racial boundaries) in patriarchal society and a way for them to exercise power over women (and over other men, for that matter). When that demand came up in the 60s, it didn't result in liberation for women but in another form of sexual domination of women by men. It doesn't break at all with the bourgeois view of sex as a commodity, and tends to reduce men and women to their sexuality.

Sexual objectification of oneself or others is wrong, no matter who does it to whom. Why is the sexual objectification rampant in certain aspects of the lesbian/gay male scene, for example, any more acceptable than that of the heterosexual "singles bar" scene? Both are meat market scenes and both boil down to treating other people as commodities, and it is perfectly in tune with this screwed-up commodity-crazy society. We want to get rid of sexual objectification of people, not extend the "right" to it. The kind of revolution I'm talking about, and that the Party is all about, means getting beyond viewing and treating people as sex objects or commodities of any kind. The problem that I see here isn't only that the goal of "sexual choice" is a petty goal indeed when put alongside real women's liberation and the liberation of all humanity, it's that such a goal still doesn't break with the system we're under today and its oppressive, exploitative relations.

Q: *So you're saying it's a question of what your goal is?*

The sex drive is biological, but how it is expressed is socially and historically determined . . . there is no intrinsic naturalness or moralness in any sexual practice. . . .

A: I suppose so. Ultimately it gets back to your whole view of what is freedom after all? Is it that you can somehow carve out some freedom in the middle of – and, let's face it now, on the basis of – what is after all a daily horror of brutality and degradation and starvation for billions of people? Some kind of freedom inside imperialism? That's a view of freedom that is pretty tied in with what Bob Avakian has pinpointed as "bourgeois individualism, the notion that each person has to look out for her or himself first and above all and in opposition to everyone else. . . [This] outlook of 'look out for No. 1' is in accord with commodity relations, where people are involved not simply in exchange with others through the medium of their commodities, but also in competition with each other, a competition in which some prosper and others lose out..." (Bob Avakian, *Phony*

Communism Is Dead . . . Long Live Real Communism!, p. 110). That's one view of freedom, it belongs to the bourgeoisie, but we have to recognize that it permeates society and influences everyone.

The other view of freedom is the communist vision: as Chairman Avakian puts it, one that

"envisions, yes, the freeing of individuals from these relations of exploitation and oppression, but . . . does not envision a situation where each individual independently pursues her or his own individual interests divorced from or over and against society." Today this means that freedom, real freedom, is the freedom to join together with other people to wage revolutionary struggles and "to turn the bourgeois world upside-down (or rightside-up), to completely transform the world and the condition of humanity as a whole." (*ibid.*, p. 112)

I think that a big part of what's getting fought out around this in the movement now is just this: setting up a little enclave where you can be "liberated," while carrying on some selective struggles in the larger society, vs.

striving to make revolution in this country as part of a desperately needed world revolution, and in the process striving as well to transform every sphere of life – including personal relations – in a communist way.

Q: *So is the logic of your position to argue for compulsory heterosexuality?*

A: No, it's not. Look, sex and sexuality in general are emphasized far too much in this society. It is promoted as the one arena where people can find satisfaction in life, that even though maybe the rest of their lives are shitty and unfulfilling, sex can be the one thing that makes it all tolerable and worthwhile. And let's be real here. All too often this satisfaction comes out in practice to mean the one arena where one person (almost always a man) can exert power over another (almost always a woman). This definitely characterizes male-dominated heterosexual relations and it really no less characterizes homosexual relations. It's because unless any human relationship is cast in the context of going up against and fighting the dominant power relations of society, then these attempts at individual solutions can only end up reproducing those sickening relations. *That's* what's compulsory in all this and we didn't mandate it, we just recognized and analyzed the reality of it, and are trying to join with others to fight our way out of it.

Q: *So how then will you get to a time where the relations between men and women won't be characterized by everything you're saying, where male domination won't put a stamp on every relation?*

A: Well, first, as I've said all along, we don't settle for those relations now. We wage struggle

against them, we're not leaving them for later, so to speak. As one example, we've raised the slogan "When you're dissing the sisters you ain't fighting the power," and we've taken this out to the youth, including particularly the male youth and within that some rappers. Some of these youth can be really bold and strong and very clear on the need to fight the police and other authorities and then turn around and treat women like dirt and call them "hos" and "bitches." The struggle against that kind of thinking and action is absolutely necessary to wage now as part of getting ready to make revolution.

You know Marx pinpointed what we call the "four alls." He said that you have to get rid of the division of people into different classes, and you have to eliminate and go beyond all the production relations that gave rise to those class divisions, but that you have to do something more as well: you also have to eliminate all the social relations that correspond to those production relations and class divisions, and all the ideas that flow out of those social relations.

That's our goal and that's what the period of socialism, the period of proletarian dictatorship, takes as its task. Getting rid of those "four alls"

is going to take world revolution, and repeated revolutions at that.

Even when you eliminate privately owned means of production, as long as there are different groups of people who have different relationships to the means of production in society and what is produced and how it is produced – as long as there are managers and technicians on the one hand, and workers on the other – then there's going to be soil for ideas that say one group deserves to have advantages over another. There'll be soil for those ideas to turn back into relations of domination and ultimately into what amounts to private ownership of socialized productive forces – and soon capital-

What does it mean for a section of society to regard a sexual relationship with a woman as repellent, or at the very least unfulfilling? This is a culturally loaded phenomenon and by no means an individual choice. . . .

ist relations will be setting the tone overall and the new bourgeois class will seize back power. We saw this in the Soviet Union and China.

The struggle around the family is part of this. Even under socialism, you'll get the aspiring bourgeois strata and even just some of the better off sections wanting to secure and pass on what amounts to bourgeois property via the family. This'll reinforce bourgeois thinking and relations – me (and my family) first – in every sphere. And you'll have the proletarian family once again serving to reproduce a new generation of wage-workers as cheaply as possible, and to socialize people into the relations of dominance and submission so entwined with exploiting class society. So you really have to eliminate ALL of these relations, you have to grasp and wage this struggle as part of the “four alls.” And part of that, as I've said, is transforming people's thinking, including on this question of the family.

One prerequisite for abolishing the family is common abundance, that is, when the material requirements to sustain humanity can be produced and distributed on such a social basis worldwide so that people no longer have to depend on living in small family units for their livelihood and well-being. Another is the ability for humanity to rear children on a social level, rather than individual. All that's going to take struggle – it's going to be part of an entire epoch of revolutions throughout the world, and of revolutions within the revolution, so to speak – and during this time, heterosexuality will continue to have a material basis to be the socially dominant form of sexuality.

Now during this time, as an integral part of getting rid of these “four alls,” the fight against male supremacy and misogyny has to be waged throughout society, from now through the whole socialist period, and male right must be restricted in every sphere. This kind of struggle will undercut the ability of heterosexual relations *per se* and the family to embody and perpetuate the oppression of women, it'll change the character of the family, and it'll be

part of bringing new forms into being. And this, in turn, will have an impact on other forms of sexuality, and all of society generally.

When we reach a society where the oppression of women has been eliminated, where individual men and women are not forced into personal relationships because of economics or superficial standards of physical attractiveness, where it really is possible for people to freely associate with each other on the basis of equality, then who is to say what kind of personal relations and sexual relations are going to be developed? As we say in the article in *Revolution*, “While we are certainly not willing

to say that heterosexuality is a permanent category etched for all time in stone, who's to say exactly what this ultimately will mean? Who's to say that homosexuality or bisexuality will become dominant? Or for that matter, who's to say sex and love will play a role in society even recognizable by today's standards? Human beings

may very well bring something entirely new into being.” But again, that's for some time in the future, and those people who are in that future are going to be the ones to determine that. We can speculate and dream about that future today – but most of all we need to make revolution today so as to bring that future into being.

We want to get rid of sexual objectification of people, not extend the “right” to it!

Q: I think that leads us again to the Programme, to what the Party plans on doing upon seizing power. Just to repeat what I earlier read, “Once the proletariat is in power, no one will be discriminated against in jobs, housing and the like merely on the basis of being homosexual. But at the same time education will be conducted throughout society on the ideology behind homosexuality and its material roots in exploiting society, and struggle will be waged to eliminate it and reform homosexuals.”

A: First, I do want to draw attention again to the whole thrust against anti-gay discrimination in our Programme. That's something that capitalist society doesn't even promise, but that socialism will carry through on. A socialist

society will put an end to discrimination against homosexuals. To put it another [way], we've already passed our "gay rights bill." That's one thing.

As for the controversial phrases "eliminate" and "reform." Well, we do intend to eliminate the *ideology behind homosexuality* – the bourgeois individualism, misogyny, and reformism that's bound up with it. What's wrong with that? And we do want people to reform their thinking and outlook – if you look through the Programme, we discuss the need to remold and reform thinking in reference to many different sections of people. And we carry out that struggle today, for instance, with heterosexual men who want to hold onto their socially sanctioned dominator status, and/or to ideas reflecting that status.

Once again, we don't view homosexuality as a crime, sin, or "deviation," but, rather, as a political/ideological matter that must be struggled out as part of the overall reformation and transformation of all social relations. We view it as a contradiction among the people, similar to the contradictions of the continuing existence of religion or nationalism under socialism. Those kinds of contradictions are settled by debate and not force. By getting things out in the open, not driving them underground. We're not talking about roundups or camps or the various repressive measures associated with Castro, for instance, who isn't a genuine communist in any case. We've repeatedly emphasized that the Programme does not mean or in any way imply "eliminating people" – which should be clear from reading it.

As far as the "reform" part, as I've been explaining, we are talking about struggle over what homosexuality represents and the ideology behind it, as part of struggling over all ideas and practices that hold back the masses from being fully unleashed to revolutionize society. Here we are talking about, specifically, ideas that hold back the full liberation of women.

Our goal is to eliminate *all* the social relations that correspond to those production relations and class divisions, and *all* the ideas that flow out of those social relations. . . .

Again, people really should read our article in *Revolution*. It says, "We recognize that for people to recognize that their views are incorrect, and to unburden themselves" – it is speaking of religious beliefs here – "a process of protracted ideological struggle will be required in the context of, and in combination with, the overall and ongoing struggle for the revolutionary transformation of the world and all social relations. A similar process will apply in the struggle against the ideology and mater-

ial roots of homosexuality as it has taken form in class society, focusing on such things as the misogyny, defeatism and at best, reformism underlying it, which are objective hindrances to the proletariat's struggle to make a thoroughgoing radical rupture with the past and completely refashion all social relations

on a new basis free of the stamp of the old oppression and exploitation." In a certain sense we're saying to people – look, if you really want to bring into being something really new and really different and something that really breaks with the dead hand of the past, put down those old ideas you are carrying and let's wage the struggle to transform the relations between men and women in a thoroughgoing way.

Q: *Does the Party discriminate against gay men and lesbians who want to join it?*

A: There are a lot of radical and revolutionary-minded gay men and lesbians in different struggles today. And they're among the forces of the people broadly who will stand on the side of revolution, and I think many will play an active part in the mass armed seizure of state power. We work in different ways today with many of them, and want to work with many more. But that's different from people joining the Party.

Look, revolutionary people need to join this Party. But the Party isn't a mass organization that people can just declare themselves to be

part of. We aren't playing come as you are, come with whatever ideas or baggage that you have from this society. You have to make a leap to fully embracing the world-outlook of the proletariat – Marxism-Leninism-Maoism – and the discipline of its vanguard. You have to struggle to cast off the baggage, like I said, that everyone brings with them from bourgeois society.

And baggage includes a lot of different things. In this particular question, it's either the ideology of male dominance, or the belief in reformism and individual solutions. So we're calling on people to come forward and not only work with this Party, but break with the things that hold them back from a thorough revolutionary understanding and worldview. We work with many different people, but a certain political and ideological unity is necessary to join the Party. We are certainly against the oppression of women and we work with many feminists, but the ideology of feminism has a different analysis of the fundamental problem and solution to the question of women's oppression. Similarly, we stand against national oppression and unite with nationalists to fight it, but to join our Party you have to make a leap beyond nationalist ideology and take up the internationalist outlook of the proletariat.

Take the question of people who believe in religion. The question is, are you fully committed to changing society? Are you fully committed to unleashing humanity to change things? Or, is there some part of your thinking that says there is some arena that is out of our control and puts things in the hands of God or a supernatural being? We're talking about the masses of people transforming all aspects of society guided by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and led by its Party. We can analyze things, we can understand things. . .

Q: *The world is not a mystery . . .*

A: Exactly, the world is not a mystery. With the masses and Marxism-Leninism-Maoism we can

transform society. We can transform the world, including the relations between men and women, which is one of the biggest bastions of oppression, and one of the things that people cite when they talk about "you can't change human nature." That there's an innate "femininity" and innate "masculinity" that can't and shouldn't be tampered with. All that crap! We're talking about changing all that, and we can change it, too. The masses led by their Party took giant steps toward transforming that in China. And we, the international proletariat, can go further still.

Q: *One thing that comes out in all this is a taste of socialism as a society full of wrangling and struggle and upheaval – and especially around the position of women.*

A: Exactly. In Chairman Avakian's talks "End of a Stage, Beginning of a New Stage," and "Two Radical Ruptures: Mao More Than Ever," in *Revolution*, he talks about "the positive side of

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What's wrong with that?**

unresolved contradictions under socialism—the bringing to the fore driving forces for social transformation in the socialist stage – forces on the cutting edge of contradictions that are coming to the fore as decisive questions in

terms of whether society will be moved forward or dragged backward." And then he said, "A very important aspect of all this is the woman question, the struggle for the complete emancipation of women. This will be a decisive contradiction giving rise to crucial struggle throughout the socialist period." I think that this is a real challenging thing to think about. Because not only is proletarian revolution necessary to solve the question of the oppression of women. But the actual process of solving that, of unleashing women, pushes forward revolutionary transformation in other spheres.

Now why is that? I think it gets back to the fact that the oppression of women is so integral to and so ingrained in traditional, property-based society, that when you begin to dig up

patriarchal domination, it has a real impact on all the other oppressive relations, as well. By the same token, when you go after some of the other oppressive relations – when you do things like moving to a more socialized level of land ownership in the countryside, or challenge some of the ways in which workers are “kept in their place” in the production process itself – well, these can interact deeply with the woman question.

We need to think more about this and understand it much more deeply. We can learn from some feminist analysis. But more, I think we need to understand more deeply what happened in China, and look at what is happening in Peru with the participation of great numbers of women, including as political and military leaders in the people’s war. Bob Avakian, talking about revolutionary China in *Phony Communism Is Dead . . . Long Live Real Communism!* wrote:

To take another decisive aspect of social relations, the struggle to emancipate women from patriarchal oppression; to have men take an equal part in household tasks while moving to socialize many of these tasks; to break the shackles restraining women from fully participating in every sphere of life: all this was not only important in terms of its political and ideological dimensions but also represented a further radical transformation of the relations of people in production and a tremendous liberation of the productive forces, above all the masses of women themselves. (p. 91)

That’s the kind of dynamic we’re trying to more deeply understand and the kind of thing that we want to bring into being through the only way possible – revolution. The Party is really breaking some ground in trying to understand all the ramifications of the role of women in society. Not from a narrow standpoint of pulling those relations out of the broader social context and dealing with the oppression of women by itself, but trying to understand how they are bound up with and impact on the broader society. What we are talking about here is extremely exciting and challenging.

Q: One thing that I was put in mind of while you were talking is the “16th of May Circular” announcing the Cultural Revolution in China. The phrase was used: “These are struggles that touch people to their very souls.” I think that’s true in this sphere. When we begin to imagine the kind of turmoil and upheaval that we are going to need to keep on the socialist road, and the kind of widespread struggle that’s going to be happening off of this, it’s really a pretty exciting vision. And, off of what you were quoting, I want to further quote from Chairman Avakian the point that,

Unleashing all these forces to speak out, rally forces, raise criticism and rise in rebellion can be risky and messy. But such mass upheaval is no less essential under socialism than it is under capitalism. And certainly this is not something that communists should fear. Fundamentally, all these are forces that are favorable to the continuation of the revolution. By unleashing them and jumping in with them in the swirl of struggle, it will be possible to strengthen the influence and leadership of the proletariat within this mass upheaval, and to direct the main thrust of the masses’ resistance against those in authority who are acting like bigshots and are seeking to restore a system based on the oppression and exploitation of the masses.

I agree with you, that is a very, very exciting vision to work for and look for.

By way of ending, and in that light, I wanted to take the interview back to the example of Chiang Ching, whom you talked about earlier [in the first part of this interview, Revolution, Spring 1992]. Chiang Ching died in Spring 1991. At that time, the Party did a special issue of the newspaper on this and there were programs in several cities commemorating her life. Quite a few comrades commented informally that her death and the special commemorations of it really re-challenged them and re-inspired them in a certain way. I wonder if you could just take a minute and comment on your personal reaction to Chiang Ching’s death and life.

A: This is hard for me to do, because the experience of China and the example of the revolutionary leaders, including Chiang Ching,¹ are so much a part of my political development and my whole life. She was such an inspiration to me, personally as well as politically. I also had really wanted her to be alive when the proletariat seizes power somewhere else in the world. And it would have been particularly wonderful when they again seize power in China. I wanted to be able to open the prison door and have her join us in celebrating another revolution and the ascendance once again of the proletariat to power. I wanted the proletariat to honor her and benefit from her leadership even more. I really wanted that to happen.

When I read the obituary of Chiang Ching in the *New York Times*, it was filled with the usual slanders, including the typical misogynist slanders, about her. I was reminded of the time of her trial when they accused her of being "a brazen woman," of holding her head up, of refusing to be humble and meek, and most of all of refusing to capitulate. While this obituary in the *Times* was hateful of her, something came through that showed that she was just as unrepentant and just as scornful of the reactionaries as she had always been.

Q: *And just as frightening to the bourgeoisie . . .*

A: Exactly. It pointed out that to her death, she had sneered at the present regime and said: This is not Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. And that gave me great strength, and should give great strength to the proletariat everywhere. Here was a revolutionary leader who had been in power who did not capitulate. She held to revolution and fought for it to her death, and gave immeasurable strength to the proletariat worldwide by doing so. As our Party

1 Chiang Ching, along with several other leading members of the Communist Party of China, and countless other rank-and-file members and revolutionaries, was imprisoned in 1976, after a reactionary coup following Mao's death. In 1980 Chiang Ching, along with Chang Chun-chiao (another key leading revolutionary leader), stirred the world with their defiant stand before the kangaroo court in Beijing. — *Ed.*

said at the time of her trial in 1980, this time the proletariat was not defeated politically. There were revolutionary leaders who upheld that line and our Party was able to understand and analyze what went on there. And to come out of that whole period with a strong political understanding.

I think that Chiang Ching really represented what we call, and what Bob Avakian has talked about, "the strategic double C. Strategic contempt for the enemy and strategic confidence in our cause." She had her feet firmly planted among the masses of people, and everything she did was motivated by that based on Marxism.

Bourgeois commentators are fond of bemoaning the so-called lack of role models for youth today. Well, Chiang Ching is a fine revolutionary role model for the youth today (males as well as females): a life of dedication to the people and willingness to sacrifice even her life for their revolutionary interests, absolute fearlessness in dealing with the enemy, and the greatest firmness and courage in the face of incredible personal and political hardships and challenges. She's truly a woman for these times as well as a woman for and of the future!

One poem by Mao really captures for me what she represented. It ends with the line:

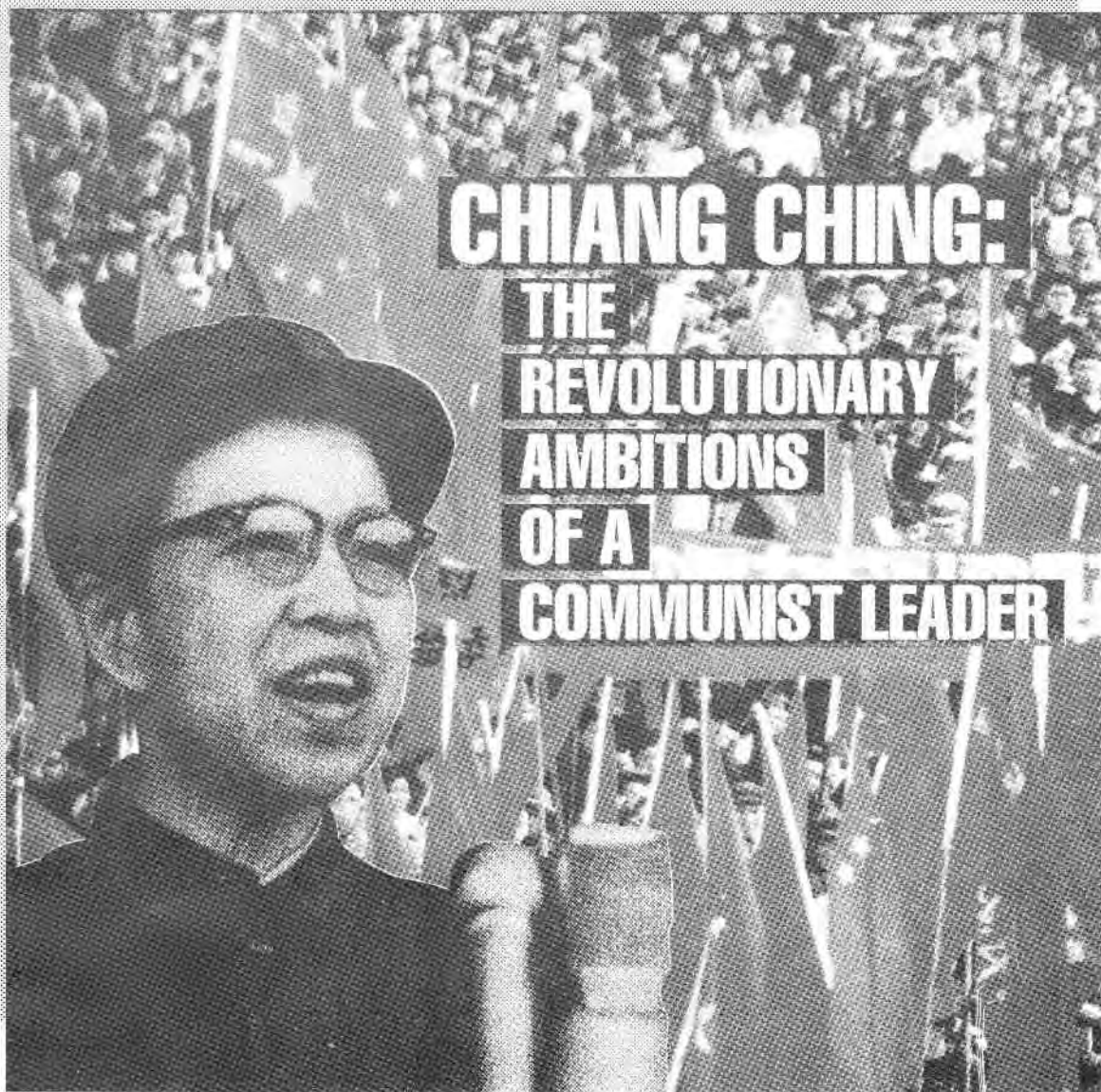
"Nothing is hard in this world
If you dare to scale the heights."

Chiang Ching dared to scale the heights. Dared to unleash the masses to scale the heights as they did in the Cultural Revolution. And for that the revolutionary proletariat will always treasure her as one of the greatest revolutionary leaders. Our Party has put forward a slogan: *Fear Nothing, Be Down for the Whole Thing*. Chiang Ching is a living example of that. No matter what the situation, she feared nothing. And by her determination to uphold and defend revolution, she showed that she was down for the whole thing. That's what we mean. Fear nothing. Keep on going toward all-the-way-revolution until we have eliminated all the miseries and sufferings of the present world and brought a truly new and truly beautiful future into existence.

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