

**OUR RED FLAG
IS
FLYING IN PERU**

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From A World To Win

I. Introduction: A New Political Power Is Being Born

The poor and downtrodden of Peru, despised for centuries as indios (Indians) and choños ("half-breeds") by the rich for whom it was their lot to labour, are standing up. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of Peru (PCP), a Maoist party, they have organised a revolutionary army. In the last year, their people's war has made far-reaching advances and inflicted important defeats on the government and its troops. They have set up revolutionary political power in areas of the countryside comprising a third of the country's population; their army carries out actions in every part of Peru, rural and urban. Now the PCP has issued the call

to organise and prepare for the seizure of power countrywide, "in the service of the world revolution".

Like a baby in its mother's womb, the People's Republic of Peru is taking shape, building nerves, bones and flesh, gathering strength and preparing to be born amidst struggle. The U.S., for its part, is preparing to do its best to strangle the revolution in Peru.

In August 1990 the newly-elected government of Alberto Fujimori renewed the state of emergency in the country's capital, Lima, and extended it to nine of the country's 24 departments. This itself represents a rapid quantitative change. But in a large part of the countryside, the situation in which the government Armed Forces and the revolutionary armed forces contest for political power is undergoing a qualitative change as well. For the first time in the ten years of people's war, the red flag is flying openly in many villages. Many of the thousands of People's Committees are no longer clandestine, but rule openly, by the light of day. Some of the revolutionary base areas made up of the People's Committees in a given region have become relatively stable, and new ones are coming into being. Following Mao, the PCP

calls these base areas "the essence of people's war", because they enable the war to unfold as truly a war of the masses of people and not the work of an isolated "roving rebel band".

The People's Guerrilla Army (PGA) nourished by these People's Committees is on the threshold of a whole new level of fighting. So far it has waged mainly guerrilla warfare, wearing down the enemy bit by bit. It began by attacking isolated police outposts and later mastered the art of ambushing Armed Forces patrols. Now on several occasions the PGA has ambushed enemy units of hundreds of soldiers and assaulted major fortified Armed Forces bases. This process of shifting from guerrilla warfare to mobile warfare means a greater concentration and mobility of revolutionary troops, and striving to seize heavier armament, in order to attack columns and even well-fortified bases, often no longer relying on the advantage of surprise, in large-scale battles sometimes lasting several hours. Even as the main forces of the revolutionary army begin to acquire these characteristics of a regular army, the village militias (who continue to work full-time in their fields) and the

local guerrillas are also expanding and heightening their fighting capacity, so that in large parts of Peru the reactionary army faces an armed people. In the cities, including Lima, the revolution has begun to measure its strength against the enemy through a series of armed shutdowns and by other means. Workers, shantytown dwellers and other city people are looking to the people's war centred in the countryside, and preparing for the future urban insurrections that will mark the revolution's victorious climax.

The government still enjoys strategic superiority over the revolutionary armed forces. It has several hundred thousand armed men under its command in the Army, Navy (whose Marines are particularly bloodthirsty), Air Force (Soviet-equipped and now receiving used Soviet helicopter gunships withdrawn from Afghanistan) and various police services (including two anti-guerrilla battalions). To protect its troops it must concentrate them more and more in strategic strongholds and withdraw from increasingly broad areas of the countryside. Massive concentration of troops and reliance on fortifications and air power gives the enemy a certain strength, but as in Vietnam it also reveals

the enemy's political weakness and brings about new military vulnerabilities. It leaves the revolutionary armed forces greater room to manoeuvre and creates new possibilities for revolutionary political power. The fortresses from which reactionary troops stage airborne and overland incursions to overwhelm guerrilla units can themselves be encircled and overwhelmed as the guerrillas learn the skill of concentrating their forces to attack and then disperse once again to carry out their other revolutionary tasks.

Since 1983 the Armed Forces have deployed so-called rondero (also known as mesnada) vigilante gangs to carry out a terror campaign on the village level against PCP supporters and fighters. The term rondero originally meant peasants who banded together to defend their livestock against robbers. But the present-day gangs are directly run by the Armed Forces. Their hard core is made up of ex-soldiers and policemen, people tied to the landlords and local tyrants, and criminals. For instance, former President Garcia called the rondero leader Comandante Huayhuaco "my personal representative" and said that if he had a hundred men like Huayhuaco he could put an end to "subversion" overnight. The

revolutionary newspaper El Diario (forced by the government to operate clandestinely) revealed that Huayhuaco is a notorious local drug lord. He was released from prison in order to re-convert his network of gangsters controlling the trade in coca leaf (from which cocaine is made) in the Apurimac river valley of north-eastern Ayacucho into a model of what the Armed Forces are attempting to organise in many areas. The Armed Forces surround these men with peasants forced to abandon their villages and relocate in Vietnam-style strategic hamlets (Armed Forces-controlled camps), obliged to participate as human shields and to risk death in battle by threats of a slower death by torture or the murder of their families.

These bands serve a political as well as military purpose: to blur the class nature of the civil war and exaggerate its character as a war among the people themselves. They enable the government to pit "white" villages (under Armed Forces control) against "red" villages and portray the war as a "war of peasant against peasant". When ronderos carry out a massacre, the government reports it as a massacre carried out by guerrillas, and when the ronderos are defeated in battle,

this too is reported as a guerrilla attack on peasants. But because of the military defeats the People's Guerrilla Army has inflicted on these gangs and the Armed Forces that organise and lead them, the destruction of many strategic hamlets by guerrilla units working with peasants within them, and the Party's successful policy of annihilating the rondero leaders, the Armed Forces have been forced to pull back and regroup these gangs. Now the government is aiming to rebuild them and implement measures beneficial to a minority in the countryside, in order to strengthen the social basis for the reaction's attempts to avoid complete isolation and defeat.

The PCP has analysed the three stages its people's war will have to go through. The shift from guerrilla warfare to mobile warfare is a precondition for being able to go over from the stage in which the PCP has been on the strategic defensive against the enemy to a stage of strategic stalemate. This would mean that the government could no longer concentrate on trying to roll back the revolution but rather would have to defend itself by trying to consolidate its rule where it is strongest. After wresting strategic superiority away from

the enemy Armed Forces, a revolutionary counter-offensive will wipe them out thoroughly and completely.

It is not possible to foresee now how quickly or exactly how this will happen. As the PCP points out, international experience has shown that the first stage is by far the longest in protracted people's war, and the second and third stages could be relatively brief. Further, the transitions to the two latter stages depend on the political situation within the camp of the reaction, on the U.S.'s actions, and on the international situation overall, as well as on the developing situation on the battlefield, especially because of the impact that wiping out the enemy nationwide and establishing the People's Republic of Peru would have on the region and the world. But the prospect of countrywide political power is now in sight, not in the sense that it will inevitably happen very soon, but in the sense that the people's war has developed mightily, that the balance of forces could tip very quickly, and that the Party and the revolutionary masses must now prepare to do something that no oppressed people have done for too long now: run their own country, in the service of the world

revolution.

The U.S. government, for its part, has escalated its military presence in the country and announced that planning is underway for possible massive U.S. intervention in the near future. Certainly the U.S. cannot stand back and allow the People's Republic of Peru to emerge in its own "backyard" without a fight.

II. Advances in the People's War

The Andes mountains running the length of Peru are the backbone of the people's war. The greater part of the country's people live there. The small highland cities (almost none bigger than 100,000 inhabitants) strung together by the few roads running through Peru's mountains are occupied by the enemy: the Armed Forces set up major bases in the departmental capitals and maintain permanent sub-bases in the smaller provincial capitals. In the countryside, many hundreds of thousands of people actively participate in the revolutionary political power arising in the multiplying, expanding and increasingly contiguous revolutionary base areas in the mountains and the river valleys leading to

the jungle in the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west. (Although the jungle lowlands account for a majority of the country's total area, they are sparsely populated and not a major theatre of revolutionary warfare.)

The ambit of the people's war is made up of these base areas and the surrounding guerrilla zones (where the revolution is contending for political power), operational zones (into which the guerrillas carry out raids and then withdraw), and points of action (places where the enemy has complete control, such as cities, but where the guerrillas act). As these areas move towards becoming an articulated whole, this greatly multiplies the power and range of the revolution's military blows, as well as making possible a fuller exercise of revolutionary political power and a more extensive economic development of the zones under revolutionary rule.

The people's war first arose in 1980 in the south-central Andes, in the department of Ayacucho and neighboring Huancavelica and Apurímac. Now there are extensive zones in these dry, cold and sparsely vegetated mountains where the Army rarely penetrates. In 1989 and again in

mid-1990, the People's Guerrilla Army unleashed a spectacular series of engagements that destroyed many rondero gangs there. The U.S. is reportedly planning to establish a firebase between the rivers Ene and Tambo, from which attacks can be launched directly against the area which continues to be a main battleground of the revolution.

In 1986, the revolution took a spectacular leap to Puno, a high plateau in southern Peru. Land invasions there involved tens of thousands of peasants. In this region the People's Guerrilla Army has several times taken over cities (including Azángaro, a provincial capital) and held mass meetings. In September 1990, the PGA wiped out a column of the elite anti-guerrilla Grude police sent in to mount an offensive against them. The commander and three sergeants were killed in a seven-hour firefight. Armed propaganda has been carried out in the adjoining southern departments. In the city of Cuzco, not previously notable for guerrilla activity, 10 soldiers were killed in an August 1990 ambush. The war has also developed in the northern departments, including the coastal cities as well as the northern highland regions where the PCP has

also led large-scale armed land seizures.

In the latter part of the decade the people's war began breaking through in the centre region, vital to Peru's economy because of its mining and large-scale commercial farming. The PGA has repeatedly sabotaged these facilities. In November 1989 it led powerful armed shutdowns with especially strong mass participation in Junin and Pasco. The people's war is also advancing up the river valleys leading from the coast into the mountains in the mid-north and mid-south regions. This has led to important work in coastal cities and an increasingly tight encirclement of Lima itself.

The Huallaga river valley is a key region. It has been chosen by the World Bank and other international imperialist agencies as a potential focus for major investment and development. It has witnessed a powerful upsurge in people's war since the middle of the 1980s. Although U.S. advisers, mercenaries and other forces have been involved in the war since its beginning in Ayacucho, it is in the Upper Huallaga where the Peruvian revolution and the U.S. have most come face to face.

Two spectacular battles in the Upper Huallaga Valley herald the changes

occurring in the war on both sides.

This region is sometimes called the "eyebrow of the jungle" because here the fringes of the jungle climb the eastern foothills of the Andes. Due to the success of guerrilla ambushes against troop convoys in the last several years, the reactionary Armed Forces in this region seldom travel overland, but instead are dug into sandbagged "anti-subversive warfare" bases from which they launch land and air attacks.

In July 1989, "hundreds of guerrillas", according to press reports, surrounded and completely destroyed the Madre Mía Armed Forces base, the main reactionary bastion in that part of the department of Huánuco, which included a well-known concentration camp and torture centre. Hundreds of peasants had been brought there, to emerge once again only as corpses or to "disappear". In a four-hour battle, half of the 150 soldiers stationed there fled, while most of the rest became casualties. This was an unprecedented blow. The PGA was able to confiscate a large amount of weapons and ammunition, making good on their policy of making the enemy serve as the main source of the revolution's armament. The Armed Forces

took their revenge by murdering over 1500 peasants in the area in the following months.

April 1990 saw the attack on the U.S.-commanded counter-revolutionary warfare base at Santa Lucía, in the heart of the Huallaga river valley.

The base was opened in February 1990, staffed by about 30 American military advisers and "civilian" helicopter pilots and mechanics under contract to the U.S. government, with 500 Peruvian troops at their disposal. A New York Times reporter wrote that it reminded him of U.S. firebases in Vietnam, its "perimeter bolstered by watchtowers, pillboxes, mine fields, barbed wire and waist-high piles of black plastic sandbags... safely accessible only by military air transport". Units of the People's Guerrilla Army surrounded the base and poured in automatic rifle fire and rifle-propelled grenades for several hours, damaging seven helicopters. This was the first large-scale combat directly opposing U.S. forces and the People's Guerrilla Army. It is not likely to be the last. In addition to reinforcing Santa Lucía after this attack, the U.S. began negotiations with the Peruvian government to open other bases in the region.

The area is renowned as the world's main source of coca leaves, bought up by Colombian-based drug gangs and shipped in light airplanes to Colombia (or sometimes Brazil) for final processing. Most of its inhabitants are recent settlers, peasants who were driven out of the backward mountain regions in the past two decades by feudal oppression. The government encouraged them to move to the jungle highlands to relieve the pressure of peasant movements demanding land in the central mountains. Once installed in this fertile region, the peasants found that government policies and the economic system made it impossible for them to grow any cash crops profitably enough to pay the debts with which they were burdened -- except coca leaves.

Soon they found themselves becoming vassals of drug dealers and the Army and government officials in league with them. A certain amount of the trade in coca leaves, traditionally chewed by Peru's highland people, is legal. It is supposed to be a government monopoly. This gives government officials the opportunity to suck an enormous amount of money out of the peasants legally, through various fees and interest, while turning a blind eye to the

far more extensive illegal coca trade without which the peasants could not pay such exorbitant tribute. Further, much of the leaf bought by the government ends up in this illegal trade.

The People's Guerrilla Army began working with these peasants to enable them to protect their land and crops (and their lives) from the various drug barons, including the government. As they have established the new political power, the peasants have begun to shift part of their land to subsistence farming, in order to hold out against the government, and have been building up the revolutionary strength necessary to do away with the whole system, including drugs, which are not used in the revolutionary base areas. Even the reactionary Peruvian magazine Si had to admit that in the Hualaga valley, "Sendero [the PCP] has accomplished in a few years what the government has not done for many decades: change the cultivation habits among the peasants, as a beginning to doing away with drug trafficking."

Shortly after taking office in July 1990 Fujimori criticised the U.S. for limiting its "war on drugs aid package" to Peru to military aid, instead of combining arms with money to help peasants change

crops in the Upper Huallaga. The crass refusal of this idea by the U.S. does show that for the U.S., the question of drugs is nothing but a pretext for military intervention. But the whole "dispute" is pure demagoguery. The money already spent by the Peruvian government for such schemes, in fact, has ended up forcing the peasant to grow coca leaves so as to pay back the loans he received for seed and fertiliser to grow other crops, such as coffee that remained unsold or fruit that rotted because there is no transport.

No such reform could succeed, no matter how much money was spent, because the workings of the Peruvian economy under imperialist capital's domination make it more profitable to import food than to grow it, and cheaper to bring it by boat from the U.S. than to truck it over the mountains of Peru. Under current international conditions, where imperialist investment has brought about a glut of almost all Third World export commodities in the world market, and a disastrous drop in their prices, the amount of investment needed to profitably reorganise the economy of the Upper Huallaga into some other imperialist scheme is just not possible.

The other side of this exceedingly

valuable coin is that the estimated \$1 billion U.S. dollars a year brought to Peru by what has become by far the country's biggest export make it possible to keep the country's import-addicted economy afloat. The regime counts on the coca trade for some of the shreds of economic stability without which it would be difficult to prosecute the counter-revolutionary war. No wonder top government officials and army officers have been caught up to their necks in the drug trade again and again -- the survival of their regime depends on it. (Ex-President Garcia, who accused his predecessor Belaunde of being financed by narcotics money, himself sponsored legislation to enable narco-dollars abroad to legally re-enter the country. General Arciniega, military commander and political chief of the Hualaga emergency zone, was removed at the end of 1989 on the insistence of the U.S. Congress which accused him of being soft on the coca trade. He now has a new command.) And no wonder the ruling classes of Peru and the U.S. have less interest in eradicating the drug trade than in turning it to their interests.

The revolution cannot liberate the peasants from dependence on growing coca

leaves at one blow before countrywide political power is in its hands. But the people's war has spelled its doom. Nothing less than revolution could put an end to it.

In all, the People's Guerrilla Army carried out about 35,000 armed actions during the first six years of the people's war, over twice that many actions during the two and a half year period from December 1986 to May 1989, and 23,000 actions during the last four months of 1989 alone. These actions peaked during the Party's boycott of the November 1989 and May 1990 elections -- and mounted once again in September and October 1990, alongside the mass upsurge that exploded in reaction to the measures taken by the new president.

Along with ambushes and assaults on the Armed Forces in most of the country, including Lima itself, the People's Guerrilla Army also carries out sabotage with the aim of damaging the economy that finances the counter-revolutionary war and undermining specific government projects. For instance, the state-owned mining industry in the centre of the country, upon which the government depends for much of its legal foreign exchange earnings, has

been repeatedly attacked, and train lines that carry minerals to foreign buyers have been cut. Foreign-owned enterprises such as the giant Bayer chemical plant and domestic monopolies such as the Hogar department stores in Lima have been burned down. Explosions and sabotage of electrical pylons and powerlines they carry have completely blacked out whole cities and regions innumerable times, to the delight of the revolutionary masses and the consternation of the impotent government, which reveals still more its class nature as it scrambles to restore electricity to banks and industry while leaving the people in darkness. Tourist installations, such as the government-owned hotel at Machu Picchu, are sabotaged to wreck the tourist industry, though it is not Party policy to destroy the ruins that represent the people's history or attack foreign tourists.

One of the first acts of the people's war was to hang a dead dog in front of the Chinese embassy in Lima, with a sign around its neck that read "Deng Hsiao-ping". Since then the PCP has continued to publicise its foreign policy with quite a few attacks on various embassies -- the Indian embassy, for instance, in solidarity with the Indian

revolutionary movement, and the Israeli embassy. In October 1989, car-bombs went off in front of the U.S. consulate, and also the Soviet and Chinese embassies, to dramatise the PCP's opposition to what it calls "the world-wide revisionist offensive headed by Gorbachev and Deng" and the Peruvian revolution's stand with the Chinese people who rose up against the Deng regime.

There has been the selective annihilation of well-known enemies of the people (Armed Forces officers, government officials, mayors of villages and towns who ignore the Party's invitations to resign, etc.), as well as the informers on whom the government depends to direct the murder of revolutionaries. In September 1990, in Lima, a top military counter-intelligence officer was shot, and a car-bomb exploded in front of the home of a U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency officer in a district inhabited by high Armed Forces officials. There are Europeans working as volunteers on various governmental projects in the rural areas; the fact that such schemes are part of the efforts by the government and its imperialist backers to smother the revolution is explained to them, and they are warned to leave or risk the

consequences.

Agitation and propaganda constitute a major part of the work of the People's Guerrilla Army. This includes painting slogans on walls (or rocks, in the countryside); hanging Party banners (in June 1990, 70 red flags appeared simultaneously one morning at key intersections and other spots in Lima); setting huge fires in the shape of a hammer and sickle on the hillsides, especially during blackouts; launching swarms of red balloons carrying banners; putting up Party posters; giving out the pictorial leaflets that are important for reaching illiterate masses, as well as regular leaflets; distributing Party pamphlets (in quantities of as many as 100-200,000 each) and Party reprints of selections from the Marxist classics; agitating at illegal "lightning" demonstrations that appear and disappear on city streets without warning; holding mass meetings in the countryside; conducting people's schools (clandestine courses for political education in the outlook and line of the Party); and many other ways of creating the public opinion without which it is impossible to seize power.

The People's Guerrilla Army takes part in production (usually farming), so as not

to be a burden on the people. Furthermore, it is mainly through the PGA that the Party conducts its mass work, including organising the new political power in the countryside and developing mass revolutionary organisations that serve the people's war. A journalist described the PGA as "a youth movement supported by their parents", since so many of its members are in their early and mid-teens or twenties at most. A large percentage of the fighters and commanders of this army entrusted with carrying out the political tasks of the revolution under the leadership of the Party are women. The patriarchal ruling classes find this rather threatening. In fact, what most is throwing Peruvian reactionaries and their foreign bosses into a mortal panic is that the PGA represents the political awakening, organisation and arming of the masses of people themselves, especially the poor peasants.

III. Character and History of the Revolution

The war the PCP is leading is mainly a peasant war. Though it also involves fighting and other work in the cities, it

is based in the countryside and its fundamental strategy is to surround the cities from the countryside. The Peruvian revolution is taking this road because of the particular conditions and history of the country, the broad characteristics of which it shares with most of the countries oppressed by imperialism in today's world.

When the Spanish invaders arrived in Peru, they found "a communal agrarian system, and this was beginning to give rise to a slave system, the Inca empire", as the PCP has analysed. This empire could not withstand Spanish steel and was razed to the ground. Despite the Indians' resistance the Spanish imposed their own feudal system. The vast majority of people became serfs, forced to serve the Spanish lord entrusted by distant kings with the Indians' souls and most of the land. They were given "rights and obligations": in return for the right to tend their own poor plots or graze their livestock on the landlord's hacienda, they worked in his fields and his house without pay, subject to being hung up and whipped at his whim.

For several hundred years the country was a colony. Although later Peru won independence, it continued to be a dominated country. Unlike the imperialist

countries where the rising bourgeoisie (capitalist class) was able to settle accounts with feudalism and give free rein to all-around capitalist development, Peru never underwent a bourgeois-democratic revolution. PCP Chairman Gonzalo describes contemporary Peru as "a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society within which bureaucrat capitalism is developing."

By semi-feudal, what is meant is that "the outworn semi-feudal system continues to exist and affect the country from its deepest foundations to its most developed ideas, with the essential persistence of the land question, motive force of the class struggle of the peasants, especially the poor peasants who make up the majority." Most of the land is still concentrated in a few hands, both in the form of traditional landlord ownership and "associative" forms established in the 1960s and '70s when the state bought out the owners of the old private estates and set up state-linked "agrarian enterprises" (SAIS). The administrators of the SAIS are often the landlord's sons, and continue the tradition of local political tyrants whose power is based on monopoly ownership of land. Payments to the government for the land continue to hinder the development of

agriculture. The PCP considers these SAIS "an evolution of feudalism" because their leading members are former rich and middle peasants, while the majority of peasants, especially in the mountains, remain without land or tools and bound by relations of servitude. They are obligated to perform free labour for the SAIS in return for lodging and food, and personal services for the new feudal tyrants who run them. (For instance, carrying their packages -- no self-respecting rural big shot would be seen carrying anything himself.) There is an autonomous (locally self-sufficient) agricultural economy alongside the national economy, especially in the mountains. "Semi-feudalism exists in new modes but continues to be the country's basic problem."

Much has been made in the foreign press about PCP-led attacks on several Andes experimental farms run by European agronomists and other rural scientists. Supposedly this shows the PCP is, for some inexplicable reason, against "progress". These farms are run in the interests of imperialist capital in university garb (after all, what European university is in the hands of the people?). The scientists in their pay usually turn a blind eye to

the bondage of the peasants who care for the cattle that make these farms cheap to run in Peru, nor do they understand that the vast expanses of land they monopolise (often many thousands of hectares) are urgently needed by the peasants who work them to emancipate themselves and feed their families. Unlike the traditional landlords who must be more concerned with reducing expenses than increasing productivity, and thus leave most of their land idle, and the technocrats whose notions of productivity led them to think it more sensible to raise meat for the rich and import wheat than to grow potatoes, and thus devote the best land to pasture, the peasants are most interested in figuring out how to produce as much food as possible. Such farms are in fact an obstacle to the country's overall economic development. So who is really blocking progress?

The PCP defines semi-colonial to mean that Peru is "politically independent but economically subjugated"; bureaucrat capitalism refers to the particular kind of capitalism "generated by imperialism in the backward countries", which fails to thoroughly challenge the pre-existing feudalism and serves the interests of

foreign capital instead of the country's own national development.

This analysis leads to two fundamental conclusions. The first is that the proletariat, the class of property-less workers whose conditions most cry out for socialism and communism, can rely upon and lead the peasants, especially the poor and landless peasants, as well as forces from the urban petite bourgeoisie (the middle classes) and even, at certain times and under certain conditions, be joined by or neutralise the national bourgeoisie (medium-sized capitalists with economic interests opposed to the country's domination) as well, in order to smash imperialism, the big bourgeoisie and the landlords, who are the immediate targets of the revolution, and thus open the door to socialism and serve the cause of communism. The second conclusion is that the revolution can and must wage armed struggle from the very beginning, to build up strength through armed struggle, seizing political power little by little in the countryside and carrying out other work on this basis until it becomes strong enough to seize power countrywide.

The PCP is applying the concept of New Democratic Revolution developed by Mao

Tsetung to the concrete conditions of Peru. The PCP defines the tasks of that revolution as the following:

"Destroy imperialist domination, principally that of Yankee imperialism in our case, and ward off the other superpower, Russia, and the other imperialist powers. 2) Destroy bureaucrat capitalism by confiscating monopoly capital inside and outside the state sector. 3) Destroy feudal landlord ownership by confiscating large-scale property whether associative or non-associative, redistributing the land on an individual basis guided by the slogan 'land to the tiller', to the poor peasants first and foremost. 4) Support for medium-sized capital, which is permitted to work if it observes certain conditions. All this implies overthrowing the old state through people's war by means of revolutionary armed force under the leadership of the Communist Party, and building a new state."

The Communist Party of Peru was founded on a revolutionary basis by Jose Carlos Mariátegui in 1928, as part of the Third International established by Lenin. Mariátegui made a basic analysis of Peruvian society that still holds today.

For instance, he considered Peru "a nation in formation" centred on the Indians who made up three-quarters of its population, in opposition to those who spoke of "Indians" as something different from "Peruvians". He also stressed that the Indian question was basically a peasant question. He sketched out the road the revolution would take in Peru: a peasant war led by the proletarian party. Yet within a few years, after Mariátegui's untimely death, the Party leadership fell into the hands of revisionists who abandoned the revolutionary road, though revolutionaries persisted within the Party.

In the mid-1960s, under the influence of the polemic led by Mao Tsetung against the new capitalist class that had usurped power in the USSR, revolutionary forces began to come to the fore within the PCP. Led by Comrade Gonzalo, they began to fight for a revolutionary orientation and ideology, a correct definition of the road and objectives of the Peruvian revolution, and a Party capable of carrying it out. The First Congress of this reconstituted party, held in 1988 on the basis of the advances of the people's war, was to adopt the formulation Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, Gonzalo Thought to describe the stand,

method and political line that had been key, "for it is the Chairman who, creatively applying Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to the concrete conditions of Peruvian reality, has developed it, thus providing the Party and the revolution with an indispensable weapon which is the guarantee of victory."

The process of party-building, especially in its later stages, also involved specific organisational steps, including sending people from Ayacucho, where Comrade Gonzalo's forces were based, to establish Party organisation and links with the masses in other parts of the country according to the strategic needs that flowed from the line and programme around which unity was emerging. The PCP founded the Party-led mass organisations and people's schools that would later play an important role in the people's war and which at that time played a role in preparing it. In June 1979 the Party held an Expanded Conference which marked the culmination of the process of reconstituting the Party. The conference agreed to launch the people's war. The PCP then went over to a short period of preparation which included intense study of military issues and military training, as

well as careful planning of the opening phase of the war.

People's war was launched on 17th May 1980, with the seizure and burning of the ballot boxes in the Ayacucho village of Chuschi, on the eve of elections through which a weakened and widely opposed military junta hoped to pass power on to its civilian successors. The slogans "Armed Struggle! Workers' and Peasants' Government! Down with the New Reactionary Government!" were given the dignity of a programme of action. The Party did not yet have support from the broadest masses in large areas of the country, but from the beginning it sought to rely on the masses in the face of the enemy's attacks, to call upon them for food and shelter, and to draw in masses and wage the war as a war of the masses.

In Ayrabamba, also in the department of Ayacucho, hundreds of peasants were mobilised to burn down the house of a particularly cruel and rapacious landlord who had stolen their land. The guerrillas had called the peasants together and held a meeting to explain the Party's programme and allow the peasants to speak their grievances. The landlord was driven off and the crops and livestock divided up by the

peasants themselves. The Party warned the peasants that the authorities would retaliate; some took heed and withdrew temporarily, while others were under the illusion that because justice was on their side the authorities might be also. The enemy himself administered a practical lesson in the need to wage war to establish revolutionary political power. When the police came to terrorise the masses and restore feudal order, the guerrillas took the struggle a step further and assaulted and burned the police outpost. In the poor neighborhood of San Martín de Porros in Lima, guerrillas called together a crowd of people and led them to attack and firebomb the local police station. Agitation was carried out in the centre of Lima. The people's war itself was awakening people and drawing them in to participate.

The people's war has gone through four different phases, each marked by a distinct plan, since it began on 17th May 1980. In the first few months of the Party's Plan to Begin the armed struggle, only a few hundred clashes took place as a small number of very poorly armed men and women attacked police outposts and local authorities in the countryside in the mountain departments of Ayacucho,

Huancavelica and Apurimac, as well as elsewhere, including the capital. A main aim, initially, was to seize weapons; in one of the first attacks, guerrillas captured a police barracks by surprise using painted wooden guns. Other early assaults on police outposts depended on firebombs and dynamite thrown into flimsy buildings. Later, in 1981, in the Plan to Unfold people's war, the Party led the formation of detachments and platoons that fought to open up guerrilla zones, areas in which the guerrilla forces could count on mass support in order to move around and hit the enemy, with a view towards later building base areas. In some places, the Party had had contacts among the local masses for years, while in newer areas the initial work was even more difficult and the guerrillas had to sleep in caves and go hungry until they had won over local people.

The first guerrilla company (made up of several platoons) saw action in the 1982 assault on the prison in the city of Ayacucho. Guerrillas pinned down the police, shot and blasted their way into the prison and freed dozens of prisoners of war. A few months later, as a guerrilla unit withdrew after an attack, one of those

escaped prisoners, Edith Lagos, was captured by police and stabbed to death with a bayonet. Her funeral became one of the biggest mass outpourings Ayacucho had ever seen. Tens of thousands of people marched through the streets behind her coffin draped with the Party's red banners.

By the latter part of 1982 a power vacuum had been created in many rural areas. The first sprouts of revolutionary political power had arisen in the form of peasant committees to divide the crops and land seized from old-style feudal landlords and the state-linked farms. Now it was beginning to blossom. As the guerrillas moved from village to village, mobilising the peasants and attacking local authorities, units stayed behind in the villages to organise the Party, recruit fighters and build People's Committees. In this way, by relying on the masses, guerrilla zones were gradually being turned into base areas, where the revolution held political power.

At the end of 1982 President Belaunde was forced to send in the Peruvian Armed Forces, despite his earlier reluctance to do so for fear that rival factions in the ruling classes might use the occasion for a coup d'etat. Now facing the regular army

for the first time, the revolution entered a very hard period. The Armed Forces carried out massacre after massacre of whole villages suspected of revolutionary sympathies, with the stated policy that "it is necessary to kill ten peasants to kill one guerrilla". Many thousands of peasants died, combatants and non-combatants alike. Some People's Committees were destroyed. Nevertheless, the Party founded its People's Guerrilla Army, so as to be able to fight on the higher level now required and carry out its Plan to Win Base Areas by re-establishing overthrown People's Committees and building new ones. Although this guerrilla army could not yet threaten the encampments the enemy was establishing, it learned how to ambush the Armed Forces patrols that sought to enforce government power in the villages. But this revolutionary power was not yet even relatively consolidated because the enemy could still carry out repeated incursions into the developing base areas. As the PCP was to explain, "restoration and counter-restoration", the see-saw battle for political power in the countryside, characterises people's war at this stage.

By 1986, the people's war extended through the Andes from Puno in the south

through the central part of the country and up to Cajamarca in the north. As the revolutionary tide rose, the government moved its prisoners of war out of the countryside and concentrated them in three Lima gaols. In the face of clear indications that the newly-elected Garcia government was planning to kill them all in order to flex its muscles and demoralise the revolutionary masses, the prisoners rebelled and took over the prisons.

The prisoners were determined to defend the morale of the revolution with their very lives. They had been able to obtain small quantities of dynamite. They made spears and crude flame-throwers and assembled bags of rocks to throw. Garcia unleashed the Armed Forces. At the Fronton island prison, the revolutionaries held out for 20 hours until naval artillery destroyed everything standing. With captured weapons, the prisoners killed six officers among the Marine landing force. In Lurigancho, which had a glass roof and open walls, the prisoners were not able to withstand attack as long, but they fought. Those taken alive were murdered. The women prisoners in Callao held out against the Air Force. No one surrendered at any of the three prisons. Only a few among the 300

prisoners survived. Their resistance on what became known as the "Day of Heroism" -- 19th June 1986 -- threw the Garcia government into a crisis from which it was never to recover. Among the ruins at Fronton, the immense red hammer and sickle painted on the side of a wall remains.

(Since then, several hundred new and old prisoners of war have been regrouped in a new Lima prison called Canto Grande. They are held in two buildings, one for men and another for women, in equal number, separate from other prisoners. Despite the lack of electricity and water and frequent attacks by the guards, they continue their programme of handicrafts and other collective work, study and physical education so as to continue contributing to the revolution. The Committee of Relatives of Prisoners of War, Political Prisoners and the Disappeared has warned of the danger of a new massacre.)

At the end of 1986, the people's war entered a new phase, the Plan to Develop Base Areas -- to spread them and consolidate them where possible. The Pilot Plan of this phase was completed in May 1989. It was followed by what the PCP calls the Great Plan to Develop Base Areas So As To Seize Power Countrywide. This title

speaks for itself.

Speaking of the beginning of the people's war, the PCP wrote: "It was a defiant political blow of far-reaching importance; unfurling red banners and raising hammers and sickles it proclaimed 'It's Right to Rebel!' and 'Political Power Grows Out of the Barrel of a Gun!', calling the people, especially the poor peasants, to stand up arms in hand, to light the bonfire and shake the Andes, to write a new history in the countryside and the mountains and ravines of our tumultuous geography, to knock down the rotten walls of the oppressive order, to conquer the mountain peaks and storm the heavens rifles in hand to clear the way for a new dawn. The beginnings were modest, almost without modern arms; we fought, we advanced and built from the small to the large, and from our weak armament the initial fire became a roaring, tumultuous, raging, expanding blaze, further sowing revolution and giving explosive momentum to the people's war."

IV. Exercising Political Power in the Countryside, Preparing to Seize Power in the Cities

The new revolutionary political power is for those who have never had any power at all in their whole lives, for those who have been the most lowly and scorned of society, though they carried the country on their backs: the workers and peasants, along with progressive forces from among the middle classes. The PCP describes it as the joint dictatorship of four classes, since although the weak and vacillating national bourgeoisie does not now participate in the revolution, they may in the future, and their interests are taken into account. This new state being born openly declares itself a dictatorship because unlike the old state which pretends to rule in the interests of all and tries to hide the fact that it rests on armed force, the revolution has every reason to reveal the antagonism between the interests of the big bourgeoisie, landlords and imperialism, and the masses of people.

PCP Chairman Gonzalo is said to have remarked that even at the beginning of the war, the guerrillas carried the new political power in their knapsacks. The seizure of political power is the central task of any revolution. In the conditions of their revolution the task was to begin to set it up piece by piece, in the form of

People's Committees.

These Committees are made up of five members, called commissioners because they are commissioned by the masses and subject to recall at any time. They are chosen by Representative Assemblies, which in turn, when possible, are elected by People's Assemblies of all the masses in a given village. They are led by the Party, and made up of communists, ordinary peasants and other local progressive forces. Their job is to begin to create a new politics, new economics and new culture in the countryside, as part of preparing to be able to do so on a countrywide scale.

The Secretary among the five commissioners represents the Party and the proletariat (which is present in the countryside mainly through the Party). The commissioner of security, also a PCP member, is in charge of the defence of this new political power, by the local population as a whole, organised into militias, along with local guerrilla forces and the main forces of the People's Guerrilla Army. This also means preparing the organised withdrawal of villagers from the area, in case that becomes necessary. The security commissioner is also in charge of police functions, taking measures

against counter-revolutionaries who attack the new political power or common criminals who harm the masses. Robbery, drugs, constant drunkenness, prostitution, gambling, beating of wives and children, rape and other scourges which long flourished under the protection of the old established authority are now suppressed.

The commissioner of production and economy orchestrates the development of a new economy based on a new kind of relations between people. The land is divided up and given out first to those who have no land and then, if there is any left, to those who have a little, on the basis of how many people there are in a family. It is given to the family as a whole, and not just the fathers or men in general. (Youth who want to leave their parents and start their own family also get land.) But while this possession of the land is individual, planting and harvesting are collective and carried out by all. The PCP refers to this policy as a seed of the future, socialist stage of the revolution. This commissioner must see that the land of old people, widows and orphans is taken care of. He or she also organises the production directly owned by the People's Committee, such as communal raising of

chickens, ducks or guinea pigs, and collective work on irrigation projects.

Often changes have to be made in terms of which crops are grown, to allow the base areas to become more self-sufficient. The People's Committee sets up seed exchange, so as to permit scientific seed selection and a diversification of crops. This seed exchange is particularly important. Along with efforts to replace import-dependent chemical fertilisers, it ends the need for credit. These measures and the abolition of rent frees the peasants of the burdensome and costly weight of the government bureaucracy that long sucked the blood of agriculture and the tyranny of the local despots whose power over the land, credit and inputs was exercised in a most arbitrary manner. The organisation of new relations of production and exchange, designed to meet the needs of the people and the people's war, frees the productive forces from their fetters and leads to improvements in productivity. There is even some beginning manufacture of clothes and tools, so that these base areas can become more self-sufficient.

Small and medium merchants are allowed to continue to exercise their important functions; in fact, for them, too, this is

a liberation. But in addition the People's Committees also organise exchange. Locally, this might mean a People's Fair at which items are directly sold from producer to consumer or traded. It also means mule trains that can securely cross the mountains and allow commerce with other localities, for the base areas cannot be completely self-sufficient and the Party must lead in resolving this problem.

As the military strength of the revolution advances and its political power begins to become relatively consolidated in some areas, these economic questions are increasingly crucial. Economic self-sufficiency means self-sufficiency from debt and inflation and the chance to begin developing an economy that feeds the people instead of feeding upon them. It is key for the war, because without these advances revolutionary political power would collapse and the revolutionary army would no longer be able to rely on the people for its sustenance. These changes are also part of building the future, when an economically independent and militarily powerful Peru can hold out against imperialism and serve the world revolution.

The commissioner of community affairs

is in charge of administering justice. This means organising people's trials: a prosecutor presents the case of the People's Committee, the accused has the right to defend himself and present evidence, while the masses of people listen and decide. Another example is the establishment of a damages committee from among the peasants on a rotating basis. If a peasant's cow damages another peasant's seeded fields, it is up to this committee to impose payment of damages. The first time, a warning is issued; the second time, the cow is detained; the third time the cow is slaughtered and the meat divided up for the necessities of the villagers.

This commissioner also presides over marriages. The two people who wish to marry must bring two witnesses to testify to the fact that neither is married to anyone else -- that is the only requirement. Community affairs also includes registering births, stocking the people's medical dispensary (with drugs confiscated from the enemy and herbal medicines) and health examinations of newly-weds and others. Education is guided by the communist outlook and linked with labour. Peasants are taught basic mathematics, Spanish (which the PCP considers important so that non-Spanish

speaking people can have a window on the rest of the world), natural science and history. The commissioner also organises recreation, including sports and culture (such as plays and puppet shows), celebrations to mark revolutionary anniversaries, and helps with the feast of the village saint. This feast has become a popular holiday -- the Party neither helps nor hinders other, more religious observances. The Party carries out a policy of what Lenin called freedom of religion in the broadest sense -- it respects the people's right to their religious beliefs while at the same time it also reserves the right to struggle to educate people in dialectical materialism.

Divorce is granted instantly, at the demand of either person, with no conditions. This commissioner must get the couple to reach an agreement about the children. In general, the community affairs commissioner tries to help settle family disputes, between a couple, or between parents and children, through a process of criticism and self-criticism. If it happens that a woman wants to leave to join the People's Guerrilla Army and her parents or husband are opposed, she can go anyway. The husband has priority to get the

children, if he is willing; otherwise, the People's Committee finds another solution.

There is also a commissioner in charge of convening and planning the meetings of the Party-led mass organisations.

This is how an open People's Committee works. They have taken different forms, according to the relative strength of the revolution and the counter-revolution in a given area or at a given time, and the fluidity of the people's war, expanding, contracting, appearing and then perhaps disappearing, only to reappear there or in another place. For instance, until 1989 their members were always secret (known only to the Representative Assembly that chose them). Attempts to keep these committees operating publicly in the beginning of the people's war failed because too often the commissioners would be murdered. If the reaction reoccupied an area, the committee might be able to exercise an authority parallel to that of the old authorities. A destroyed committee might have to be reorganised. In a new area, an organising committee would strive to bring about conditions under which the emergence of a full-scale elected committee would be possible. Of course, the functioning of the clandestine committees

is somewhat hampered, especially by the fact that the commissioners cannot be publicly known but must work through delegates. In any case, the Party makes it very clear that it stands for political power for the proletariat and the people and not for personal power; any commissioner who exercises personal power can be submitted to a people's trial, removed or otherwise disciplined. With the appearance of the first Open Base Areas, this whole process can be carried out more freely and fully.

In 1983 the PCP formed an Organising Committee for a New Democratic People's Republic, with a view towards the future. Today, the development of the People's Committees, the growth and linking up of base areas and the emergence of more and more state functions that cannot be handled locally are posing the question of organising state power on a new and far higher level, in the near future, even short of nation-wide victory.

In the countryside, where this revolutionary political power can already exist, the entire population is armed and fully participates in the Party or Party-led organisations, the People's Guerrilla Army and the new state power. The

situation is different in the cities, because they are strongholds of the reaction and political power can only be taken there in the final moments of the war. Instead of People's Committees, the Party has formed the Revolutionary People's Defence Movement, "with the goal of mobilising the masses to resist and to raise their struggles to a higher level -- people's war -- so as to harass, undermine and shake the old state apparatus and serve the future insurrection, preparing the cities by waging people's war there as complementary [to the war in the countryside]. We implement the dual policy of primarily developing our own forms of organisation and secondarily infiltrating all kinds."

The Party's policy is to "go lower and deeper", as Lenin said, to rely on the poorest and most basic masses and distinguish between them and the upper layer most influenced by revisionism and the trade union bureaucracy, and to participate in the masses' struggles and link them to the struggle for political power. Through the People's Guerrilla Army it has played an active role in strikes and the formation of what are called class-conscious workers' committees; in

campaigns waged by shanty town dwellers for their basic necessities such as electricity and water; in the struggles of women of all the popular classes, for women's emancipation (under the Chinese revolutionary slogan "women hold up half the sky") and for specific demands that affect poor women with families, and against affronts to the moral integrity of the people (such as pornography and prostitution); in winning over intellectuals, including secondary school and university students, as well as professionals and artists in various fields, to serve the people; and in leading youth and children to take up the proletarian outlook and fight for their future through revolution. The Party has founded mass revolutionary organisations among these sectors in order to carry out this work (in addition to the Party-led peasant organisation in the countryside), and is also active in a number of trade unions and other groups which are beginning to support the people's war.

The Revolutionary People's Defence Movement called armed shutdowns in the city of Ayacucho since the beginning of the war. These shutdowns combine work stoppages, halting commerce and transport, guerrilla

assaults and ambushes, sabotage, selective annihilations, agitation and propaganda and violent mass confrontations with the forces of order. Four regional armed shutdowns swept the departments of Ayacucho, Huancavelica and Apurímac in 1988, lasting three days in most places and seven days in Ayacucho. Tingo María, on the Upper Huallaga River, was shut down for three days that year in actions involving not only the paralysis of this city, but also the digging up of the main roadway by thousands of peasants under the leadership and protection of the guerrillas. Huancayo, Juaja, Oroya, Huánuco and Cerro de Pasco, in other words, departmental and provincial capitals in the centre of the country, have also been shut down. Small cities and towns as well as rural districts in eight departments were shut down for as long as three weeks in connection with the boycott of the April 1990 general elections.

These armed shutdowns are now rocking Lima with increasing power and frequency. The capital was shaken in November 1989 and March 1990. On the eve of the November strike, the traditional "day of the dead", about 3000 families of prisoners of war and other people marched in Lima carrying floral offerings to a cemetery in honour of

the fallen heroes of the people's war. This march was brutally suppressed by the police, who formed a wall at Manco Capac Plaza. Three people were killed and fifty more wounded when police opened fire with automatic weapons. The casualties would have been much greater if People's Guerrilla Army fighters had not waged a half-hour all-out battle against the police so that the bulk of the marchers could withdraw. People in the neighborhood took the wounded into their houses and took care of them.

The following days saw mass clashes with police in several factory districts and shanty towns, the closing of the markets, cinemas, banks and most other businesses and schools, a complete stoppage of the public transport system (state-owned buses were attacked and burned, while most of the mini-buses owned by individuals or small companies stayed home), and major strikes in several industries. Hated class enemies and informers were annihilated. The armed shutdown in March was even more bitterly fought on both sides. The government sent in a helicopter gunship to fire on a mobilisation in a shanty town, killing eleven people.

The Revolutionary People's Defence Movement called for another armed shutdown

on 21st August 1990, following Fujimori's price hikes that sparked violent mass outbursts in Lima. It was prepared by two weeks of mass work: leafletting at markets, factories and schools; armed seizures of neighbourhoods and radio stations to allow agitators to give speeches; slogans painted on walls along main streets and bridges. This time, there was no central march, to the frustration of police who lay in wait at certain plazas. Instead several lightning processions crossed the shanty towns of Chosica and Huaycan, on the outskirts of Lima. A phalanx of uniformed revolutionary youth in formation strode rapidly and audaciously through the grounds of the San Marcos university campus. Their escape from police was facilitated by paint-filled dynamite bombs and crowds of students who blocked pursuit. Strikes were particularly strong in the many small workshops, textile and shoe factories, a tobacco processing plant, a paper mill and so on along the Carratera Central, an artery leading from Lima towards the mountains. This area is a stronghold of the Class-Conscious Workers Movement. The revisionist-led, official national unions based mainly in large-scale plants and state industries maintained an ambiguous

attitude toward the shutdown, taking no firm attitude for or against it in many cases.

The Party's work was never confined to the countryside. But the advance of the war principally in the countryside has permitted the Party's work in the cities to advance with giant strides, because the strength of the new, red republic arising in the rural areas has enabled broad numbers of people in the cities to see the link between their longings and reality. Today the country's ruling classes are "huddled against the coast" in Lima and in a few other bastions, as a correspondent for the London Guardian put it, surrounded by the advance of the people's war in the mountains on which Lima depends for its food, power and revenue and in the river valleys advancing to the coastline to the north and south of the capital, encircled by the "rings of poverty", the shanty towns, that are turning into iron bands tightening around the capital, and increasingly isolated and opposed by broad numbers of all the classes of the people who are coming to support the people's war.

V. Elections and Crisis

The situation in which Peru's ruling classes are waging war on the revolution is being torn apart at both ends by political and economic crisis.

The intense penetration of imperialist capital which shaped the country's development in the past decades threw Peru's economy into a deep pit: economic stagnation and inflation that began in the mid-1980s and have yet to show any signs of improvement. The government is stumbling under the weight of an almost \$20 billion debt owed to the U.S. and other rich countries -- loans which for the most part went to finance further enslavement of the economy to imperialism. This debt is about equal to the country's entire production for one year. It is also more than twice the estimated cost to the government of carrying out its reactionary war for the last decade. As expensive as the counter-revolutionary war has been, economic subservience to imperialism is even more expensive. These debts must be paid because under the present system Peru cannot survive unless it gets new loans. One Peruvian president after another, including the newly elected Fujimori, has tried to

deal with this problem by devaluating Peru's currency in order to boost exports while restricting imports and enforcing "shock" measures to cut living standards.

Fujimori had stood for election on a platform opposed to the devaluations and "shock" cutbacks proposed by the odds-on favorite in that campaign, Mario Vargas Llosa. But within days of taking office he turned around and implemented the sort of measures he had just denounced. This was no surprise to the kind of people who read the foreign financial pages, which reported Fujimori's private meeting with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), banks and Peru's other creditors in New York, where he agreed to reverse the stand that had got him elected. But it was a cruel deception to many of his middle class supporters, who took to the streets alongside Lima's poor in several days of outraged protests.

The term "hyper-inflation" fails to capture the catastrophe: Peru's currency has been devalued by a million percent since the mid-1980s. This devastated the lives of working people. Real wages fell by half during that period. But such inflation also provokes serious problems for investment and business overall, adding to

the growing climate of desgobierno ("ungovernment", as in "undo"). In an attempt to deal this inflation a death blow, Fujimori slashed the dollar value of Peru's currency (the inti), and removed price ceilings and government subsidies on basic necessities. Since Peru depends on imports (even of oil, though it is a medium-ranking oil producing country), prices rose by an average of 600% within a few days. These price hikes were concentrated where they hurt the masses most: with the new petrol prices bus fares jumped so high that some people could no longer afford to go to work. Kerosene, the basic cooking fuel, became prohibitively expensive, as did medicines, and bread, noodles and everything else made with wheat. Though the minimum wage (the maximum wage for the majority) was raised from the equivalent of \$12 U.S. dollars a month to \$55, to eat three meals a day and live in a house the average family of five would need five times that much, according to government figures, and eight times that much according to private economists. In Lima's shanty towns, home to half the city's population, to live on one bowl of potato soup a day is now considered normal.

Fujimori hoped to repeat the

experience in Argentina, Bolivia and Brazil, where such drastic "shock" measures have dampened inflation, at least for a short time. But inflation is not the underlying problem. Peru's economy has been stagnant since the beginning of the 1980s. President Garcia was able to inject a brief spurt of growth during the mid-1980s at the cost of turning galloping inflation into runaway inflation. Fujimori's recent measures to lay open the country even more nakedly to imperialist investment could, at most, only work to pull up those areas of the economy where such investment is concentrated, and even that presupposes that there would be massive investment, when this is not the case presently anywhere in Latin America.

Five hundred years ago, before the Spanish invaders, people ate considerably better in Peru than they do now. (Average caloric consumption was over the minimum needed to maintain health, while now it is considerably lower.) The deterioration in the last decade has been rapid. Over a third of the country's 23 million people are said to suffer malnutrition; over half of all children have been irreversibly affected. Statistics such as the declining average life span and the recent leap in

infant mortality do not fully reveal the depths to which living standards are falling, because antibiotics and other medicines today hold back epidemics that formerly would have decimated a hunger-weakened population. Yet the spectre of epidemic is once again rising. Hepatitis and other diseases spread through Lima's now thoroughly-befouled water supply. In some shanty towns, mothers have to decide whether to buy water from a cistern lorry or bread.

Without imported wheat, modern Peru -- especially coastal Peru -- starves. Formerly, the country lived on domestically-produced corn, potatoes, barley, wheat, mutton, pork and beef, despite the semi-feudal relations that kept all but a fraction of potentially arable land from being planted. Yet the pressure of food imports and the chase after maximum profits dictated by foreign investment has ruined agriculture especially over the course of the last two decades. Agricultural production fell by a third between 1970 and 1986. Only one out of three peasants capable of working full-time is actually able to do so. A third of the formerly cultivated land was unseeded in 1989, particularly in the Andes, where

credit for seed was unavailable to poor families. In 1990, less than half the capital needed for seed, fertiliser and other inputs was available and the year's crops were declared a disaster long before the harvest.

The exodus from the countryside that has swollen Lima's population by several times in the last decades has brought the kind of urban development typical in oppressed countries. Besides proletarians, these shanty towns also are home to impoverished people of the middle classes, such as lower-level school-teachers, who have waged particularly militant strikes. Hundreds of thousands of people make their living peddling cigarettes one at a time or selling other items in the sidewalk markets on which most people depend.

Now, because of the country's reliance on imperialist capital, factories are shutting down due to lack of dollars to import raw materials. The official unemployment rate of 14% refers only to formerly full-time, legally employed and registered workers who have been made redundant; there are no real unemployment statistics in a country where two-thirds of working-age people are said to be under- or unemployed. State workers (including many

labourers as well as office workers and others) have seen their incomes drop to a fraction of what they were a few years ago, as the government does everything possible to be able to pay its foreign debt.

Many skilled workers and middle class people are also facing severe difficulties and a hopeless future. They find that if they don't change their Peruvian intis for dollars on the streets on payday, their cheques will be worthless within a few days. The prices of all but the most daily purchases are given in dollars. Some people can so little afford to keep any money at all in intis that they are obliged to use the money traders who ply the sidewalks across from downtown cinemas in order to simply buy two tickets. These money changers, who operate with complete legal impunity, are said to change four million dollars a day. This is an important way in which the dollars paid by drug dealers for coca leaves are recycled into the more mainstream sectors of the Peruvian economy, where they play an indispensable role in preventing a difficult situation for the middle classes from becoming completely impossible, in fuelling Peru's import-dependent economy, in lubricating the enrichment of the upper classes and in

maintaining the flow of dollars in the form of payments and profits being pumped to the U.S. monopoly capitalists who sit on top of this mess, along with their European and Japanese partners. This situation led 300,000 young Peruvians to immigrate in 1989, to neighboring countries and, ironically, to the U.S. itself.

These economic conditions, as well as the advance of the people's war and the consequent changes in the political climate, have enflamed an equally disastrous political situation. Fujimori's appointment of a "government of national unity" reflects tremendous disunity in the ruling classes: no party was able to win even a third of the votes in the general elections and no-one has been able to unite the ruling classes and those who support them around a programme other than trying to hold together a quivering house of cards.

Even the pro-Soviet revisionists and others who have tried to present themselves as a "third way", between the revolution and the counter-revolution, have all but collapsed. They split into two motley factions, the United Left of some self-styled "Marxists" and the more openly reformist Socialist Left led by former Lima

Mayor Alfonso Barrantes. Together they failed to achieve even 10% of the national vote in 1990. By comparison, at the end of the 1970s they won a third of the ballots. This defeat was all the more bitter because throughout the mid and late 1980s the foreign press predicted Barrantes would become President in 1990. Pro-Soviet forces and others abroad had held them up as a model of a parliamentary "left" that would come to power through elections, in opposition to the road taken by the PCP. The pro-Cuba Tupac Amaru group (MRTA) that has combined armed actions with negotiations and other agreements with the government dropped its initial demagogic opposition to the elections, supported United Left candidates and even ran its own candidates as part of the United Left coalition in some places. All of these "left" forces have ended up at least as discredited as the rest of the system's politicians.

The PCP applied the same policy to these elections that it has to all elections since the people's war began in 1980: to expose them, to call on people to boycott them, to disrupt them, and to stop them through military actions wherever possible. The PCP never claimed that it

would prevent the elections from taking place, which would be impossible as long as the enemy holds state power. Still, an analysis of these elections and a comparison to past elections reveals important elements of the current political situation.

In much of the countryside, the November 1989 municipal elections simply did not take place at all. This was especially true in the revolutionary base areas, where the government was not able to organise candidates, hold campaigns or set up polling places. The ruling classes had to concentrate their voting stations in the provincial and departmental capitals and in Lima. In some cities where the government was able to carry out election activities, those elected accepted the PCP's advice to leave town rather than take office. Quite a few elected officials were subsequently disqualified because of the scarcity of valid ballots. For instance, a mayor in Chongos Bajos, in Huancayo, "won" with the votes of three people, said to be himself, his wife and his son.

To take the example of the department of Ayacucho, there was little semblance of elections in a dozen towns in the southern part of the department, and in the north,

there were no candidates even in the provincial capital of Huanca. The elections in the departmental capital of Ayacucho had to be subsequently overturned by the courts because two-thirds of the few votes cast were null and void. Just before the day of elections, the People's Guerrilla Army briefly took over the cities of Huanca and Ayacucho simultaneously, temporarily pinning down the Army in their barracks, amidst an armed shutdown, as part of the Party's anti-elections campaign.

In the neighboring department of Huancavelica, the Armed Forces who used the departmental capital as their base from which to assault the countryside were met with sabotage and Party slogans painted in red everywhere. One night, agitators joined the crowd leaving a cinema, leading them in a march which grew in strength when it passed through the central plaza. While PGA units blacked out the city and trapped the repressive forces in their lairs with dynamite and rifle fire, the plaza filled with people chanting, "Long Live the PCP! Long Live Chairman Gonzalo! Don't Vote, Long Live the People's War". As the PCP says, this was truly an example of how to use elections for revolutionary purposes.

The government was to show just how

much it needs elections to legitimise its system of repression, by unleashing the repression on which this system rests. On election day itself the Armed Forces brought in reinforcements from other areas and went house to house to enforce obligatory voting. Nevertheless, only 40% voted. In the outlying districts and villages the Armed Forces could not occupy, there was no voting and people put up barricades to block roads leading in and out of the city.

Even on the outskirts of Lima, the government found it impossible to carry out elections in Huaycan, a shanty town along the Carretera Central on the eastern edge of the capital.

Voting is mandatory. Not voting is punishable by a large fine; more importantly, a voter registration book is the national identity document. Those who do not have a stamp to prove that they voted face serious problems in applying for a job or anything else. Just before the April 1990 elections the armed forces warned that soldiers would examine the voter books of all travellers stopped at military checkpoints. The government mobilised all its repressive apparatus and all possible social support to hold the

April presidential elections. Because of the lack of a majority by any candidate in the first round, they had to hold a second round in June.

The percentage of absentees and blank or spoiled ballots in the November 1989 municipal elections totalled about 65%, according to the London Independent. As for April 1990, according to official figures, the national average of those registered who didn't vote was 21.2%, compared to 10% for the last presidential elections, in 1985, and 19% in 1980. The abstention rate rises to 27% if both registered and eligible but un-registered voters are counted. Of the ballots cast, 15.3% were blank or spoiled, compared to 14% in 1985 and 21% in 1980. Absenteeism and blank or spoiled ballots totalled over 50% in the ten departments of the country where the vast majority of the country's population outside of the capital is located (Ancash, Apurímac, Ayacucho, Cajamarca, Huancavelica, Huánuco, Junín, Pasco, Puno, San Martín), reaching 89.3% in Ayacucho and 80% in Huánuco (which includes the Upper Huallaga). In Lima, 12.9% didn't vote, and 8.7% of the ballots cast were blank or spoiled.

No regime ever fell because of lack of

votes. As the PCP says, the task is to "merge the people's war led by the Party with this torrent made up of millions who don't register, who don't vote or who cast blank or spoiled ballots, this torrent the Party is helping to organise as part of the armed sea of the masses who will inevitably sweep away the old order of exploitation and oppression".

Given the disarray in the ruling classes, the discrediting of their politicians and the system of government itself, the PCP has analysed that a military coup d'etat is real possibility. The Party's policy towards such a coup is to oppose it, because its main purpose would be to unleash an even more unrestrained bloodbath in the cities as well as the countryside. But whether under an "elected" or a military government, for the vast majority of the people, especially the basic masses, the people's war is the only way out.

VI. Yankee Go Home! Victory to the People's War in Peru!

As a result of the advances of the people's war and the deepening crisis

undermining the regime's ability to combat it, the United States is making serious preparations for more direct military intervention.

This threat is more than an idea. Pieces are being moved into place.

The U.S. began sending equipment, "civilian" helicopter pilots and mechanics under contract to the U.S. State Department, and "Drug Enforcement Administration" military advisers in mid-1989. At the same time, General Maxwell Thurman, head of the U.S. invasion of Panama and chief of the U.S. Panama-based Southern Command in charge of U.S. military operations in South America, began drawing up plans for different military contingencies in Peru and the neighboring countries. The CIA and other U.S. government services are using spy satellites to create detailed maps of the Upper Huallaga Valley and other parts of Peru. Such maps, previously non-existent, are necessary for planning and carrying out a stepped-up counter-revolutionary war and would be a precondition for an invasion. The U.S. is also planning to install hi-tech communications systems in Peru and Bolivia.

After decades in which the U.S. had

virtually no official military relations with Peru, in 1990 it came up with an offered \$36 million military aid pact. Fujimori, amidst grave opposition to his economic policies, suddenly adopted a pseudo-nationalist posture and unexpectedly vetoed this project that the U.S. had counted as already in the bag. The terms of this rejection are most revealing: Fujimori ridiculed the amount offered by comparing it to what he described as the \$7.9 billion allocated by the U.S. for domestic anti-drug purposes. Far from considering the matter closed, the Bush government then offered Peru \$110 million for 1991, including \$39 million for Peru's Armed Forces and a larger amount for "law enforcement", as well as economic assistance. Both governments, it seems, have seen their objectives well served by this game.

This package would bring U.S. "aid" to Peru to about the same level as El Salvador. While not an enormous amount in terms of U.S. spending, it would represent a huge foot in the door. According to the New York Times, the pact provides for Green Berets (U.S. counter-insurgency Special Forces) to train and equip six Peruvian battalions into an elite force of 5500 men,

to furnish river patrol boats and train their crews, and to refurbish and maintain a ground attack force of 20 ground-attack jets. Even without a formal agreement between the governments or U.S. Congressional approval, Bush has used his legal powers to directly transfer military equipment from U.S. stocks to the Peruvian government.

All these measures resemble U.S. efforts in the early days of the Vietnam war. This will certainly mean an immediate escalation of the airborne machine gun and napalm attacks that have already rained down on several villages and shanty towns.

The new U.S. ambassador to Peru, Anthony Quainton, is part of this military build-up. He was stationed in Nicaragua when the U.S. mined that country's harbours; as ambassador to Kuwait he helped engineer the U.S. naval build-up against Iran in the Persian Gulf. His associate, Richard Meadows, who served with the U.S. secret services in Vietnam and Iran, first went to Peru in 1983. Now he is director of security at a palm oil plantation near the U.S. firebase at Santa Lucia, where he oversees a small private army. Other Americans involved in the "private" air force under contract to the U.S. State

Department at Santa Lucia were last employed in the Contra operation run from the White House by Oliver North.

U.S. Vice President Dan Quayle himself went to Peru to speak to Fujimori a few days after Fujimori took office. In Lima, Quayle held a news conference to deny "false reports". "We have no plans for military operations in the war on drugs -- period", he said, with a straight face, to correspondents who had already heard from other U.S. government sources that he was there to discuss sending Green Berets. In the same vein, top Bush cabinet member William J. Bennett warned newspaper editors that "if these efforts are caricatured as another Vietnam, an American invasion or involvement in a foreign war, then we risk crippling a series of strengthened relationships that our president and the presidents of the Andean region have recently forged." This is a typical example of the U.S.'s policy of coating its Peruvian intervention with tranquillising deception and trying to forbid people to draw the obvious conclusions. Quayle's very presence in Peru reflected escalating U.S. involvement, since he was the first U.S. government big shot to visit Peru in 30 years.

These statements do reflect the unease with which many senior U.S. military and political strategists view the situation in Peru. The Vietnam war was a disaster for U.S. imperialism whose impact is still being felt today, including in the political constraints and domestic and international opposition that would certainly meet open U.S. involvement in a large-scale counter-insurgency operation. This is one major reason why the U.S. has gone to such lengths to paint what it is doing in Latin America as a "war against drugs" and not as armed counter-revolution. Furthermore, if the U.S. does send troops into Peru they are not in for a quick romp as in Grenada or a relatively easy victory such as they won in Panama. The PCP is a Maoist party, determined to fight until imperialism and all reaction are wiped from the face of the earth. It is leading a people's war and a revolution. It is a most formidable opponent and the U.S. is not at all anxious to take it on directly. The consequences of such a war, in the rest of Latin America, elsewhere in the world and in the U.S. itself, are potentially momentous. The more cautious imperialist thinkers are quite correct to fear that if the U.S. invades Peru it might

be biting off more than it can chew, and choke on it.

A March 1990 report prepared for the U.S. State Department by the Rand Corporation think-tank sharply presented a part of this dilemma (like the rest of the reactionary press, this writer calls the PCP Sendero or Shining Path):

"Peru is a country poised on the brink of internal collapse... Sendero and the social and economic disequilibrium that have fostered its growth have moved Peru into a pre-revolutionary situation. What the final outcome of this condition will be is far from clear. At best, Peru can look forward to a protracted campaign against the Shining Path. Should this conflict devolve into a 'dirty war', it could end in a full-scale class conflict between the Army and Peru's rural and urban poor. The worst case scenario is that Sendero could win. Although that seemed inconceivable even as late as 1987, it has become a plausible outcome. That we can discuss this possibility today is a testament both to Sendero's vitality as a political force and to the government of Peru's continuing inability to make any serious inroads against the insurgency. One way or another, the Shining Path will be a force to be

reckoned with for the foreseeable future. There will be no quick or easy solutions. The movement is firmly entrenched in the highlands and is already a permanent presence in and around Lima. Its growth has not been rapid, but it has been steady. Sendero now enjoys a substantial base of support in the countryside and has begun actively recruiting from among the urban work force and the country's rapidly growing mass of urban unemployed. It has also proven to be a resilient, adaptable, and ruthless organisation. These traits, together, have made Sendero a formidable adversary."

Formidable or not, the United States cannot just sit back and tolerate the victory of a Maoist revolution, not anywhere, and especially not in the heart of a continent ready to burst into flames, a continent where U.S. control and exploitation is a key part of what gives U.S. imperialism its power. It is already working to prepare a political climate in which "public opinion" regards large-scale U.S. military intervention as a reasonable future option, even while covering up the military moves already taking place.

The U.S. has other options as well, that could be used alone or in combination.

Describing some of the military operations being planned, a U.S. Defence Department official said "we wouldn't pull the trigger, but we would point the gun." To some extent this refers to U.S. attempts to beef up and command Peruvian troops. But such measures are more of a stop-gap than a solution. He was also referring to the possibility that the U.S. might use the troops of one or more third countries to invade Peru. This was how the U.S. got rid of a government it didn't like in Bolivia in the early 1970s, when the U.S. directed and backed the Brazilian army in temporarily taking over Bolivia on its behalf. It is in this light that one should see the recent agreement between the Bush administration and the Paz Zamora government in Bolivia to send U.S. officers and Green Berets to that country, whose borders lie close to main strongholds of the Peruvian revolution. Under the "war on drugs" label, Bush has also sent massive arms shipments to Colombia, Peru's northern neighbour. Brazil, which is pressing for an outlet to the Pacific, has mobilised troops along the Peruvian and Colombian borders with the pretext of fighting narcotics traffic.

The people's war in Peru has

tremendous international significance. It is living proof that the oppressed can rise up, relying on their own strength and not any imperialist or reactionary powers, and deal powerful blows to all the oppressors. It is a living example of the correctness of the Maoist outlook and political line, of the miracles that can be accomplished by the masses of people led by a communist party armed with this line, and of the power of people's war.

The revolutionary people of the world and the parties and organisations of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement of which the PCP is a part hold this revolution very dear. There has been important work to defend it, most notably a world-wide campaign to Support the People's War in Peru waged by the RIM parties and organisations in 1985 and 1986 that involved meetings, rallies and other kinds of actions in all the inhabited continents of the world and showed the great potential support this people's war enjoys in all countries. Through several years of efforts, big holes have been blasted through imperialism's blockade and distortion of news on the people's war. But today, the qualitative leap in the attacks on the Peruvian revolution must be met by

something more.

The Peruvian people have suffered from 20,000 to 30,000 dead since 1980. The vast majority of them have been non-combatants murdered by the police and Armed Forces in their terror campaigns against the villages. Certainly the reaction will exact a far higher price if the masses are to wage the kind of battles on a grand scale necessary to win countrywide political power, and to face and beat back U.S. imperialism and its flunkies. But the alternative is for the masses of Peruvian people to continue to die anyway, in poverty and degradation, without consequence. PCP Chairman Gonzalo has said, "Yankee aggression, whether direct or indirect by way of puppet governments, is bringing about a war of national liberation, and despite the sacrifice and efforts this would require, there will be a magnificent opportunity to unite 90% of the Peruvian people, at a time when the Party is calling for the countrywide seizure of power, and this will mean more favourable, though more difficult, conditions for the Peruvian revolution. Imperialism is dreaming if it thinks it can snuff out the revolution, and while this period will be extremely difficult, complex and bloody, it

will lead to the people's triumph and serve the emancipation of the class and the world proletarian revolution.... Only through great storms, Chairman Mao said, can the world be changed." (From the speech "In Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Chinese Revolution")

A great storm will certainly rise across the world to oppose Yankee intervention and defend the revolution in Peru.

The authorities in the West have crowed quite a bit about what they call "the death of communism", as if the Soviet-bloc regimes that matched the West ugliness for ugliness had not abandoned Marxism and installed their own brand of disguised capitalism long ago. Yet the "old mole of revolution", as Marx put it, is still at work, crisscrossing the earth underground. It has burst out into the daylight in Peru.

Bibliography

This article drew upon the major May 1990 pamphlet by the PCP Central Committee, Elections No, People's War Yes. It is not yet available in English.

Many of the quotes come from the document Basis of Discussion prepared for the PCP's 1988 First Congress. This and other PCP documents have been reproduced abroad in English and other languages and are widely available through participating parties and organisations of the RIM, the Peru People's Movement and other supporters of the people's war in Peru, as well as a few bookshops and other outlets.

Also available in the same form is the Interview With Chairman Gonzalo published in the Peruvian newspaper El Diario in 1988. After this interview appeared and circulated in two editions of 100,000 each, the editor of this legal daily newspaper was driven into exile and the third edition confiscated. Police later occupied the

newspaper's offices and threw its interim editor into prison, where she remains. Now published clandestinely, El Diario continues to appear several times a month; photocopies are available abroad. The newsletter El Diario Internacional published in Europe is available

The following PCP documents have been published in English and other languages in A World To Win: "In Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Chinese Revolution and 'Honour and Glory to the Proletariat and People of Peru' (No. 15), "Documents from the First Congress" (No. 11), "Develop the People's War to Serve the World Revolution" (No.'s 8 and 9), "Day of Heroism" (No. 6), "Don't Vote -- Step Up Guerrilla Warfare" and "PCP Salutes the RIM" (No. 3), "On the Shining Path of Mariátegui" (No. 2), "Letters from the PCP" (No. 1).

The following issues of ANTW carried articles and other materials on the people's war in Peru: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 13, 15.

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