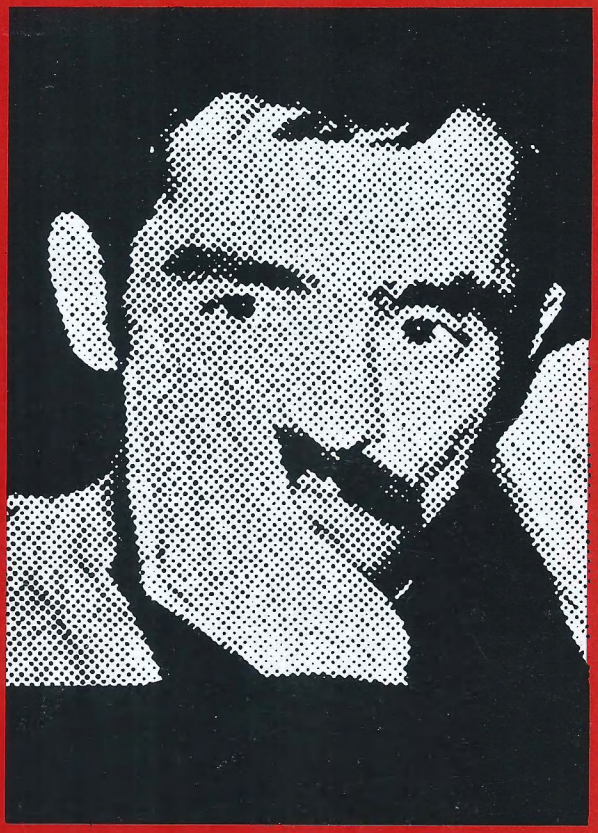
.9.50

IRAN: THE STRUGGLE WITHIN

No. 2



ARMED STRUGGLE: BOTH A STRATEGY AND A TACTIC

by Massoud Ahmadzadeh
Organization of the Iranian Peoples' Fedayee Guerrillas

IRAN: THE STRUGGLE WITHIN

No. 2

ARMED STRUGGLE:
BOTH A STRATEGY
AND A TACTIC

by MASSOUD AHMADZADEH
ORGANIZATION OF THE IRANIAN
PEOPLES' FEDAYEE GUERRILLAS

TRANSLATED AND PUBLISHED BY:

SUPPORT COMMITTEE FOR THE IRANIAN PEOPLES' STRUGGLE
P.O. BOX 671, New York, NY 10011

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH
AND PUBLISHED BY S.C.I.P.S.
NEW YORK, AUGUST, 1977

First published outside of Iran by a Marxist-Leninist group which carried out some of its activities in cooperation with other revolutionary groups through the Organizations of the Iranian National Front Outside of the Country (the Middle East section).

The Support Committee for the Iranian People's Struggle (SCIPS) is a committee of men and women with a special interest in the history and current events in Iran. The Committee disseminates information to counter the policy of an apparent news blackout in the established media concerning the momentous struggle developing in Iran today. Through its efforts the committee hopes it will provide a better understanding of contemporary Iranian affairs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION BY S.C.I.P.S. 7

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN IRAN BY S.C.I.P.S. 9

INTRODUCTION BY THE O.I.P.F.G. 14

PART I

Circumstances of the Genesis and Growth of the New Communist movement in Iran 19

Examination of the Present Socio-economic Conditions and the Question of the Stage of the Revolution 24

On the Question of the Stage of the Revolution 31

Our Line 32

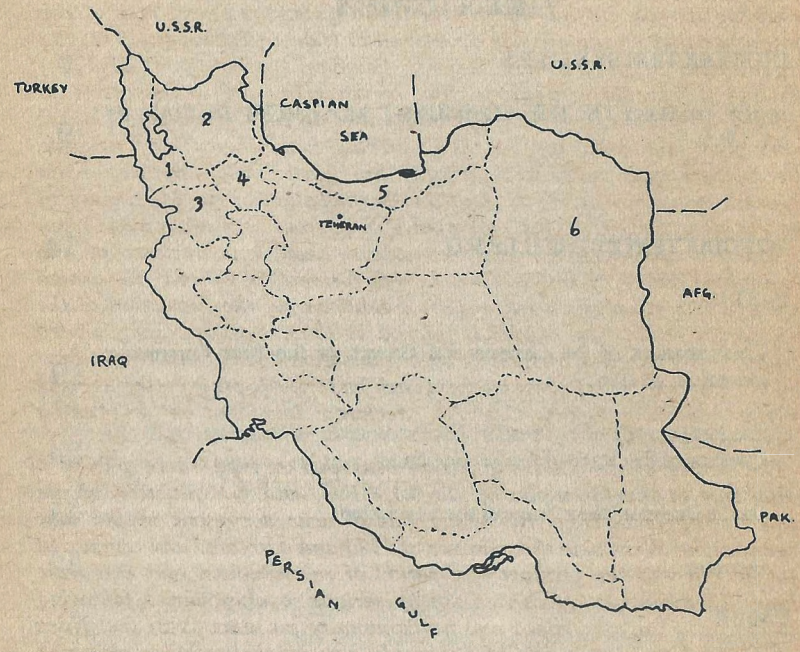
PART II

Examination of Debray's **Revolution in the Revolution?** 45

Party and Guerrilla: Political Work and Military Work 49

CONCLUSION 62

NOTES TO ORIGINAL TEXT 70



IRANIAN PROVINCES
(mentioned in text)

1 — Western Azerbaijan
2 — Eastern Azerbaijan
3 — Kurdistan
4 — Gilan
5 — Mazanderan
6 — Khorasan
Scale: 1'' equals 200 miles

INTRODUCTION
by
S.C.I.P.S.

During the last few years while the Shah's fascist regime has been assuming its role in the world imperialist system, a new phase of the anti-imperialist movement has developed in Iran. In February, 1971, the Organisation of the Iranian Peoples' Fedayee Guerrillas (O.I.P.F.G.) initiated the armed struggle in Iran by attacking the gendarmerie at Siahkal in Northern Iran. Although militarily a defeat, the battle at Siahkal was a great political victory for the Guerrillas. Since then armed struggle has been waged by several groups, but particularly by two main organizations, the O.I.P.F.G. and the Organisation of the Mojahedin of the People of Iran (O.M.P.I.). The O.I.P.F.G. from its inception has been a Marxist organisation which considers itself the nucleus of the Communist Party of Iran. When it was formed, it viewed the armed struggle as a strategy to prepare the conditions for the formation of the proletarian party. The O.M.P.I. formed in 1965, began waging armed struggle after Siahkal. Originally an organisation which tried to combine the Marxist method of class analysis with historically progressive aspects of the Islamic religion, O.M.P.I. declared itself to be a Marxist organisation in 1975.

The author of the following essay, Massoud Ahmadzadeh, played a major role in the formation of the O.I.P.F.G. and the initiation of the armed struggle in Iran. His essay was a basic document of the new organisation. Written in the summer of 1970(and corrected and annotated that fall), it was the product of a period of re-evaluation and extensive study of Iranian society carried out by serious revolutionaries following the defeat of the nonviolent and parliamentary movements of the fifties and sixties. On June 5, 1963, for example, several thousands of unarmed civilians were massacred in the streets of Iran's major cities, leaving the masses stunned and the leadership discredited. (See following brief history for details.) Ahmadzadeh belonged to one of the groups formed to carry out this study of Iranian society and to develop a new form of struggle. The analysis made by his group and its answers to the questions confronting Iranian Marxists provided the theoretical basis for the beginning of armed struggle in Iran.

Ahmadzadeh addresses this essay to other revolutionary intellectuals who, like himself, were seeking new ways to promote the struggle and make contact with the Iranian workers. His purposes was to show that the initiation of the armed struggle was the most important task facing the revolutionary groups in Iran. By reviewing the material conditions and by comparing and contrasting the revolutionary situation in Iran with the revolutionary experiences of Russia, China, Vietnam and Cuba, Ahmadzadeh attempts to show that a new approach is necessary.

The writings of Regis Debray had an important impact on Iranian revolutionaries, who, as elsewhere, were greatly inspired by the Cuban Revolution. In addition, they were confronting many of the problems of revolutionary theory and practice that Debray and his critics were

discussing. In particular, how could the proletarian party be formed in the absence of a spontaneous mass movement and in the face of a regime which rules by terror and the forcefeeding of imperialist culture to the masses? Should the formation of the proletarian party or the initiation of armed struggle take priority? Initially, Ahmadzadeh's group rejected Debray's views on the relationship between the party and the guerrilla forces. Later, while still not agreeing with Debray, the group re-evaluated his thesis. The essay includes a detailed analysis of both Debray's thesis as put forth in Revolution in the Revolution? *and the critical responses to it. Ahmadzadeh does not analyze Debray's specific recommendations so much as he regards Debray's work as a critique of the traditional views of Marxist-Leninist revolutionary theory developed from the experiences of Russia, China and Vietnam.*

As already mentioned, Ahmadzadeh helped form the O.I.P.F.G. He also was instrumental in organizing the first urban guerrilla group to carry out armed action in the cities. In 1971, he was arrested and sentenced to death by a military tribunal. At this appeal hearing international observers had the opportunity to see the scars left by the barbaric tortures he had resisted in prison. On February 28, 1972, he was executed by firing squad.

This essay has been translated into English in the hope that progressive people might better understand the nature of the current struggle in Iran. Ahmadzadeh's ideas and practice helped advance the movement in Iran at a time when the progressive forces were largely paralyzed by inaction. His essay remains one of the few theoretical works on why the armed struggle should be employed as a strategy by revolutionary Iranian Marxists. From the time his essay was written, even among those who accepted the necessity of armed struggle, many did not totally agree with Ahmadzadeh's analysis, but all agreed that it was a serious effort to deal with the questions facing the movement despite its need for refinement and correction. The successes and failures of the armed struggle, the changing strategy of the imperialist powers and the new conditions developing from Iran's role as a bulwark of imperialism all raise new questions, many of which could not have been anticipated by Ahmadzadeh and his comrades. In order to even pose these questions properly, one should first understand the basis of the current movement in Iran. Such understanding will lead to increased discussion of the theoretical and practical problems faced by Iranian revolutionaries and to conscious support for the people's struggle in Iran, an important link in the world-wide anti-imperialist struggle.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN IRAN (1900-1977)

During the early twentieth century, many Iranian revolutionaries struggling against the absolutism of the Qajar dynasty were influenced by the socialist movement in Russia. Those Iranians who worked in the Caucausian oil fields and were involved in the Russian class struggle helped transfer socialist ideas to Iran, where capitalism was in its infancy while Tsarist Russian and British colonialism had turned Iran into a semi-colony.

Iranian socialists such as Asadalloh Ghaffarzadeh Ardebili had close contact with Russian Social Democrats. They were involved in transfering Iskra *from northern Iran into Russia. In 1904, the Hemmat social democratic group was formed in Baku (Caucasia) by Iranian socialists with the participation of workers working in Baku oil fields. During the anti-imperialist and democratic movement in Iran, Iranian socialists played a major role in its persistence and radicalization. Great revolutionaries such as Heidar Amoghli, who had taken part in the Russian struggle and had close ties with the Bolsheviks, were popular and important figures in the Constitutional Revolution (1906-1908) in Iran.*

Many factors led to the suppression of the revolutionary movement in 1912. There was, of course, British and Russian interference and powerful internal reaction. In addition, the lack of a united leadership, the weakness of social democrats and the lack of meaningful contact with the peasantry were other important factors. Following this set-back and before the 1921 coup d'etat of Reza Khan, efforts to continue and revitalize the democratic and anti-imperialist movement, such as the struggle led by Khiabani in Azerbaijan and Pesian in Khorasan also met with failure and were suppressed. The democratic anti-imperialist struggle of Jangal led by Kouchek Khan, a petit bourgeois democrat, lasted longer than the other struggles due to the support of the peasantry in Gilan province. Iranian communists joined Kouchek Khan and this resulted in the formation of the Soviet Republic of Gilan.

In 1917, the Edalat Party was founded with the participation of social democrats such as Ghaffarzadeh. This party which later became the Communist Party of Iran enjoyed the support and active participation of revolutionary Marxists such as Haidar Amoghli nd Soltanzadeh who took part in its first Congress.

The Soviet Republic of Gilan did not last long for various reasons including mistakes made by the Marxists, the weakness of the Iranian working class at the time and the contradictions within the coalition. A change in the policy of the Soviet Union also significantly demoralized the movement. Initially, the young revolutionary Soviet government supported the anti-imperialist and progressive movement in Gilan. After the 1921 coup by Reza Khan [the present Shah's father], however, Soviet policy suddenly changed. Whereas Reza Khan was installed by the British to help contain the Russian revolution and to suppress the growing anti-imperialist and democratic movements of the Iranian people through a strong central government, the Soviet Union urged Iranian

revolutionaries to support this government suggesting that it represented the "national bourgeoisie" of Iran. Soon after these developments, Reza Khan was able to crush the Republic of Gilan.

Several years later, in the second Congress of Rezaieh in 1926, Iranian communists denounced the reactionary nature of Reza Khan's government. By helping to form worker's unions, communists led the struggle of the nascent working class of Iran and were able to successfully mobilize workers until Reza Shah, increasingly assuming dictatorial powers, enacted the anti-socialist law of 1931.

In the years following, the communist movement was harshly suppressed. Fifty-three intellectuals led by Dr. Taghi Arani, a Marxist, were arrested under this anti-socialist law in the spring of 1937. Arani had studied in Europe and had been publishing the progressive periodical "Donya" (World) since 1933. He was tortured and finally murdered in jail in 1940.

During the Second World War, as Reza Shah was showing sympathy toward Nazi Germany, Iran was occupied by the allied forces and Reza Shah was exiled to the Mauritius Islands. The exile of the dictator and the circumstances of the anti-fascist alliance of this period resulted in the collapse of the twenty year old dictatorship and establishment of some bourgeois democratic rights in Iran. Under these circumstances, there was a mushrooming of political parties and organisations.

The Tudeh Party was one of the larger and more significant organisations formed during this period. Among its founders were some of the intellectuals jailed with Arani who were released in 1941.

With a reformist line and petit-bourgeois leadership, the Tudeh Party mobilized intellectuals and other sections of the petit-bourgeoisie as well as many workers who at this time still lacked their own revolutionary organization. This party eventually claimed to be a worker's party. Internationally, it blindly followed the Soviet Union, never establishing an independent position that would have allowed it to support the Soviet Union while criticizing positions it deemed incorrect. The Party participated in the reactionary government of Prime Minister Ghavam in 1946. After the attempted assassination of the Shah in 1949, however, the Tudeh Party was declared illegal and its leaders arrested along with other opposition leaders. The Tudeh leadership later escaped to Eastern Europe.

During the anti-imperialist democratic movement of 1949-1953 led by Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh, the Tudeh Party opposed the nationalization of the oil industry and helped sabotage Mossadegh's National Front government. Instead of nationalization, the Party called for the termination of the oil treaty with Britain, a position which left open the possibility of a concession of oil in the north of Iran to Russia. At the end of this period, under pressure from rank and file members after the July 1952 insurrection, the Tudeh Party finally gave some support to Mossadegh.

A more determined and genuine Marxist leadership by the Tudeh Party and its affiliated military organizations might have prevented the reign of terror that began with the C.I.A. coup d'etat of 1953. Even after the coup, a significant part of the Tudeh Party remained intact including army

officers in strategic posts. While many courageous and progressive members of the party waited for the call to action, the leadership vacillated, giving the Shah's regime time to ferret out the officers' organization and underground units of the party. Even though the leadership called for members to write letters of repentence once arrested, many resisted savage torture and chose execution by firing squad rather than surrender. With the betrayal of the leadership, many party members lost hope and some joined the regime while others sought new alternatives for continuing the struggle. The end result was the total destruction of the Tudeh Party within Iran and a growing distrust by the masses generated by these events.

The following years (mid-late '50s) witnessed a lull in the anti-imperialist and communist movements in Iran. There were isolated episodes of spontaneous struggles during this period, including workers' struggles such as a strike at the Brick-Works factory in Tehran in 1957, where many workers were murdered.

The socio-economic crisis in Iran during the late 1950's and early sixties weakened the regime and brought a resurgence of the democratic and anti-imperialist struggles in 1960-1963. Associates of Mossadegh and small liberal bourgeois and petit-bourgeois groups that had been inactive or underground since the 1953 coup d'etat felt that the time was right to revitalize the National Front. Although Mossadegh was under house arrest, he was still quite popular among the Iranian people, especially the urban masses, who associated the National Front with Mossadegh. Thus, the Front was able to draw renewed support from many in and around the major cities. In May 1961, a demonstration called by the National Front in Jalalieh Square, Teheran, attracted over 100,000 demonstrators. Due to inept leadership, the inadequacy of the old methods and slogans and internal conflicts between the different sections however, this struggle also soon failed.

With the initiation of U.S. directed reforms, ("the White Revolution") and with the economic crisis subsiding, the Shah could once again flex his muscles against a movement which lacked a strong disciplined organization and a timely, progressive anti-imperialist program. This chapter of reformist struggle was violently closed with the massacre of June 5, 1963. Following the arrest of the respected religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini, a spontaneous uprising of the masses occurred in Teheran and other major cities on this date. The Shah ordered his troops to attack and shoot the demonstrators. Fifteen thousand unarmed civilians are estimated to have been murdered in these confrontations.

June 5, 1963 was a turning point in the struggle of the Iranian people. Anti-imperialist elements with differing class ideologies, including communist elements came to recognize that revolutionary violence was necessary to achieve their goals. A new path of struggle was sought. Early in this period, different groups with views ranging from Islamic to progressive nationalist took up arms in Teheran and other major cities as well as in the provinces, for example Fars and Kurdistan. They were quickly suppressed however before they could have any lasting effect on the political atmosphere.

At the same time, young revolutionaries from different reformist

backgrounds were organizing anew. Some who had participated in the anti-imperialist and democratic movement of 1960-1963 under the leadership of the National Front, including those who had once had links or sympathies with the Tudeh Party, formed their own Marxist groups on the belief that the past defeats resulted from the lack of a revolutionary Marxist organisation. Others, again including former sympathizers of the National Front, with religious beliefs but influenced by Marxism, eventually formed a progressive Islamic organisation (the Organization of the Mojahedin of the People of Iran, O.M.P.I., known as the Mojahedin) in 1965.

Regardless of ideology, these different groups held a common belief that revolutionary violence in the form of armed action was necessary to defeat the regime. The question was when and how to begin armed struggle.

*One Marxist group which believed in armed struggle (Jazani's Group) was organized in 1965 and was discovered by the regime in 1968. Jazani, Zarifi and several others were arrested, tortured, tried and sentenced to long prison terms. Some of the group escaped before being arrested. Safai Farahani and Saffari Ashtiani went to Palestine and took part in the Palestinian people's struggle before returning to Iran in 1970. With others from Jazani's Group, they formed the Jangal Group. By the summer of 1970, several Marxist groups were thus arguing for the initiation of armed struggle. Farahani, in a pamphlet called "What Every Revolutionary Must Know" and M. Ahmadzadeh and A.P. Pouyan from another group came to the same conclusions.**

In his essay, "On the Necessity of Armed Struggle and Refutation of the Theory of Survival", Pouyan attempts to show that armed struggle is the only way to break the grip of hopelessness strangling the masses and create a political atmosphere in which the working class will find its historical role. He also argues against the notion that Marxists must remain hidden and avoid any but the most limited actions by arguing that Marxists must take the offensive in order to survive and grow.

The following essay by Ahmadzadeh was also written in the summer of 1970 (and corrected and annotated that fall). As Ahmadzadeh explains, the main question facing Marxist groups and circles at this time was whether the proletarian party should be formed first and the armed struggle started afterwards or whether the objective conditions in Iran (as in other countries such as Cuba) required that the armed struggle preceed and actually aid in the formation of the party. Ahmadzadeh's group initially believed in the "formation of the party first" but eventually, they came to the second conclusion.

Ahmadzadeh's group and Safai Farahani's group came into contact and began a dialogue. In spite of some tactical differences, they finally agreed that urban guerrilla war and guerrilla war in the mountains should begin at the same time. Thus, the Organization of the Iranian People's Fedayee Guerrillas (O.I.P.F.G.) was formed.

Interstingly, an Iranian group active in the Middle East had come to many of these same conclusions without any prior contact with the revolutionaries or knowledge of their views at that time. (see **Bakhtar Emrooz, Fall of 1970.)

In February, 1971, the Jangal group, under the command of Safai Farahani attacked the gendarmery's headquarters in Siahkal [in the northern province of Gilan, on the slopes of the forest covered Alborz Mountains). This battle, though militarily a defeat, was an important political victory for the guerrillas. Many revolutionary groups and elements joined the armed struggle after Siahkal. Since then hundreds of revolutionaries have been executed or killed in armed clashes with the regime. Tens of thousands of progressives and revolutionaries have been jailed.

The anti-imperialist and communist movement in Iran is at a very important stage in its development. Serious attempts at organizing the Iranian masses and developing revolutionary theory and practice are being carried out under the most difficult conditions of repression and changing socio-economic conditions.

The communist movement, revitalized by the theoretical and practical impact of the armed struggle, is attracting more and more of the conscious elements. Despite its history of struggle and sacrifice, it is, however, yet in its infancy, with Marxist revolutionaries having embarked on a path of armed struggle to prepare the conditions for the direct participation of the working class in the struggle against capital with its own leadership and revolutionary organization.

INTRODUCTION
by
Organization of Iranian People's Fedayee Guerrillas

More than four months have passed since the People's Fedayee Guerrillas began the armed struggle. Several things have happened since that time; perhaps it is still early to analyze their results. Nevertheless, they can be presented in an overall manner.

Why did the guerrilla struggle begin in Siahkal? And why did it suffer defeat?

After making an analysis of the conditions in Iran, we came to the conclusion that the duty of each revolutionary group was to begin armed struggle in either the cities or the countryside. This view led the Peoples Fedayee Guerrillas to make preparations for guerrilla activity in the city and the countryside.

An armed guerrilla nucleus was organized and set out for the northern forests under the command of our martyred comrade Ali-Akbar Safai Farahani.* For about five months, this group continuously traversed the northern forests from east of Mazandaran to west of Gilan.** It made scientific studies of the geographical and socio-economic situation in those regions. By taking long treks in both summer and winter, they adapted themselves to the harsh living conditions in the forests and mountains. As far as we know, such a reconnaissance of an area, both in duration and in the extent of area visited, is unprecedented and has no equivalent in any similar guerrilla experience in the world.

What did we expect from the creation of this nucleus? How did we envisage its survival?

As explained in the essay that follows, the aim of the armed struggle at the outset is not to strike at the enemy militarily, but to strike at him politically. The aim is to show to the revolutionaries and to the people the path of struggle, to make them conscious of their own power and to show that the enemy is vulnerable. It is also to demonstrate that struggle is possible, to expose the enemy, and to make the people conscious. The creation of the guerrilla nucleus in the mountains followed these aims.

---

* Farahani was an engineer and librarian in the Institute of Technology of the University of Teheran. From a very early age he was politically active. In 1968 with the Iranian secret police, SAVAK, after him, Farahani was forced to go underground. He left Iran and joined the Palestinian organization Al Fatah, where he was known under the name Abu Abbas. He took part in several operations within the occupied territories, and he was promoted to the rank of captain in Al Fatah. He returned to Iran during 1970, reestablished contacts with his guerrilla comrades and became the leader of the mountain team. Farahani was arrested during the confrontation at Siahkhal and was executed on 7th of March, 1971.

** On several occasions, the thickly forested regions bordering the shores of the Caspian Sea have been the seat of popular movements and guerrilla struggles in Iran. The most important of these was the guerrilla struggle in Jangal from 1914-1921, which succeeded in establishing the first soviet republic outside the U.S.S.R.: the Gilan Republic (1919-1921).

Considering the propaganda role played by the urban guerrilla for the mountain guerrilla, the action of this nucleus not only would have repercussions throughout the region, but would also be echoed throughout the country, and thus it would play a decisive propaganda and political role in the growth of the Iranian revolutionary movement. It would give new hope to all those struggling and to all the people, concretely showing the path of struggle, and while gradually establishing a foothold in the countryside and drawing the rural masses towards itself, it would become prepared to also play a military role in the revolutionary movement.

From a political viewpoint, it would be impossible for the enemy to isolate such a struggle. Considering the very close relation between the city and the countryside in the North, the struggle of this guerrilla nucleus would have wide repercussions in the northern cities and thence would spread throughout the whole country. In the North, because it is not like Kurdistan or Azerbaijan where disquiet appears to be a normal state of affairs*, the smallest control operation is immediately felt and reverberates widely. Control over those entering and leaving the northern regions, particularly in the spring and summer, would be very damaging for the enemy, especially since the North, a popular summer vacation center, attracts huge crowds from the capital and from the whole country.

The North is one of the regions where the enemy is less established militarily. Because of the geography of the area, some parts of the enemy's military potential and weaponry cannot be used here. Although it is true that the living conditions of the rural masses in the North are more bearable than in the rest of the country, it is also true that in spite of this, the contradiction between the rural masses and the financial bureaucratic bourgeoisie is progressively increasing. In addition, the rural masses are increasingly burdened by the weight of debts and the pressure of finance capitalism, the Ministry of Land Reform, and the cooperative and joint stock companies.‡ In comparison with the rest of the country, the development of political consciousness in the North, particularly in the cities, is relatively advanced. It is very difficult for the enemy to encircle

---

*The central government, supported by imperialist powers, had long oppressed the peoples of Kurdistan, Azerbaijan and other national minorities. The oppression was most evident in the cultural sphere; even though they had their own language, the peoples of Kurdistan and Azerbaijan were forbidden to use it in official institutions or at school. In 1946, taking advantage of the weakness of the central government and with the support of the Soviet Union, they revolted against the central government and established independent states. The Soviet Union, having supported these movements and with troops in Iran (as a member of the Allied Forces), saw fit to exploit the situation. After discussions between the Soviet Union and Prime Minister Ghavam, the Soviet Union withdrew its troops from Azerbaijan, expecting in return to receive oil concessions in northern Iran. But the central government in Iran, after crushing the resistance in Azerbaijan, no longer felt obliged to give concessions to the Soviet Union. Since then sporadic opposition in Kurdistan and Azerbaijan against the central government continues.

‡See "Land Reform" by the Organization of Iranian People's Fedayee Guerrillas, translated by Iran Committee, c/o Gulf Committee, 6 Endsleigh St., London, W.C. 1.

and destroy the mountain guerrilla due to the guerrilla's ability to move throughout the northern region and their familiarity with the region which the enemy lacks (the enemy must change its local guide in each district), and also because the guerrilla avoids direct confrontations and is content with a series of limited strikes at the enemy.

Why, then, did the guerrilla nucleus fail?

We do not know exactly what happened. It appears that two factors caused the defeat: disregard for constant mobility and disregard for absolute distrust. It should be mentioned that our comrades in the mountains had learned respect for constant mobility and absolute distrust not only in theory but also in practice. So why did they commit such a mistake?

The only reason we have been able to find is that they could not imagine that the enemy would react so strongly and would mobilize in such strength to destroy the guerrilla nucleus. We know that our heroic comrades were encircled in the Siahkal region and that the enemy concentrated the greater part of its forces in the surrounding area. Nevertheless, it would have been very easy for our fighting comrades to have been tens of miles away in a few days. If such mobility had continued, the enemy would have been compelled to militarize the whole northern region to encircle the guerrillas. Since it had to mobilize several thousand men in the Siahkal region and its surroundings, it would have been compelled to mobilize several tens of thousands of men in the whole of the North and carry out strict controls over all means of communication. This would have been very difficult and would have taken much time. During that time the guerrillas could have strengthened their foothold, increased their fire power, and elevated their military potential.

From this it may be concluded that the defeat of this nucleus was a mishap that could perfectly well have been avoided. But, revolutionary struggle involves certain risks at all times; such mishaps are neither abnormal nor inevitable. In any case, it is from experiences such as these that revolutionaries should learn lessons; and it is defeats such as these which form the stages on the ascent leading to victory.

We have seen the enthusiasm and the hope which the Siahkal movement, in spite of its brief existence and its defeat, has aroused among the revolutionaries and the people, although this was even before the launching of urban guerrilla activity. The armed struggle of the urban Fedayee has produced some remarkable results also. Under the influence of that struggle, and in order to respond to its call, the student revolutionaries in the universities rose heroically and unleashed the most massive demonstrations of recent years and with the most fiery and revolutionary slogans possible in those circumstances.

Due to the influence of this same armed struggle, the military workers of the Jahan-Cheet factories courageously struggled to win their demands and responded to counter-revolutionary violence with revolutionary violence (even though they were unarmed). They thereby added dozens of names to the list of the martyrs of the Iranian revolution.

Today, the people are asking themselves new questions. They wonder what the guerrillas are fighting for, and for whom. How is such a spirit of self-sacrifice and unselfishness possible? They realise that such sacrifice

is possible and that with even a small force it is possible to rise up against such a heavily armed enemy. The revolutionary movement has begun to lay down the basis for a tradition of armed struggle. It is in the stage of crawling and taking its first steps through the setting up of groups. Its armed activities cannot fail to show the road to be followed. Through a series of successes and defeats, and successes again, it shows the people the possibility of struggle and its protracted nature. This is how the people will gradually understand that the struggle is long and difficult and that its development and success depends on their support. This is also how the people and their vanguards will gradually rise up.

We certainly do not expect the direct support of the people immediately; they cannot be expected to rise up all at once. At the present time, it is the genuinely revolutionary vanguard groups who represent the people. Conscious of the correctness of the armed struggle, influenced by it and with the moral support of the people, these groups take up arms and extend the struggle, thereby increasing the possibilities of material support from the people.

That is why the defeat of one armed group does not have a decisive effect on the outcome of the struggle. If we accept that the struggle is a protracted one and if we accept as well that it begins through organization in groups, does it matter if one of the groups disappears? What is important is that the gun that falls from the hand of a militant will be grasped by other militants. If one group fails, the important thing is that there will be other groups to carry on the struggle. It is not important that the more advanced group or groups survive to witness the results of their action, to exploit its effects, and to transform the moral support which this action has created into material support through organizational work. This may be accomplished by other groups, groups which wish to fulfill their revolutionary responsibilities.

We began our struggle with these convictions. We believe in our people and in their vanguards. We give our blood in affirmation of this belief. Deep within ourselves we feel the need for the people's support; without this support we know our destruction and the destruction of our path is definite.

We dedicate our lives to this belief. During the phase when the foundations and traditions of the armed struggle are being established, such great sacrifices are inevitable. The sacrifices which we have accepted, our martyrs who have bravely resisted against the enemy until death, our imprisoned [comrades] who are resisting heroically the medieval tortures of the Shah's executioners, will all surely bring to flower the tree of the Iranian revolution, the uprising of the sons and daughters of the people; it is then that sooner or later the People's War will begin.

Under the present conditions, the vanguard can be none other than a Fedayee. Let the capitulationists jeer. The duty of every revolutionary circle and group is to begin the armed struggle and to strike against the enemy with every means at their disposal and in every possible way. Experience has shown that there is no other path except that of the armed struggle; and experience has shown that the people will support this struggle.

LONG LIVE THE ARMED STRUGGLE, THE ONLY PATH TO ACHIEVE FREEDOM!
LONG LIVE THE IMMORTAL MEMORY OF ALL OUR MARTYRS WHO HEROICALLY FOUGHT THE ENEMY UNTIL DEATH!
SALUTE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS WHO BRAVELY RESIST THE BARBARIC TORTURES OF THE SHAH, OUR EXECUTIONER!
LONG LIVE THE UNITY OF ALL REVOLUTIONARY FORCES AND OF ALL THE PEOPLES OF IRAN!

Khordad, 1350
(June, 1971)

ARMED STRUGGLE: BOTH A STRATEGY AND A TACTIC

Circumstances of the Genesis and Growth of the New Communist Movement

In the recent decade, our country has witnessed a new phase in the revolutionary struggle of our people. Although the puppet regime has resorted to all means to subdue this struggle, from intimidation to allurement to imprisonment, torture and murder, it has constantly encountered an ever more obstinate wave of struggle. In place of any one fallen combatant, tens of others have risen, and in the process the combatants have gained more experience in the struggle.

Most striking in the present struggle of the people is the unprecedented growth of the communist movement in Iran. It may be said that our society has not, hitherto, witnessed such a movement, whether in terms of its authenticity or in terms of its depth and extent. The regime, of course, has directed most of its blows against the communist movement and its combatants because communists are the most persistent revolutionaries and are armed with the international weapon of Marxism-Leninism. The communists attach more importance to and are more successful at organization than are the other fighters. The most outstanding evidence of the growth of the communist movement and its ever increasing strength are the fierce attacks carried out by the police and the S.A.V.A.K. (the state secret police) against communist groups coupled with the extensive propaganda and pervasive ideological struggle that the establishment has undertaken against communism. Periodicals such as Jahan Nou, books published by the regime, and the buffoonish act recently put on by such sold-out traitors as Nik-khah and Parsa-nejad well reveal the regime's fear of the communist movement.*

In the present phase, this movement is basically characterized by the simple gathering of forces, its spontaneous growth and its isolation from the masses.1 To comprehend why, we must look retrospectively. The imperialist coup d'etat of the 28 of Mordad [August 19, 1953]‡ broke up all the national and anti-imperialist political organizations. The only force which would have been able to learn from this defeat and on the basis of its analysis adopt a new line relevant to the new circumstances and to take into its hands the leadership of the anti-imperialist forces that were

*Parviz Nik-khah, a member of a group with Marxist tendencies, was accused of complicity in an assassination attempt on the Shah in 1965. Nik-khah was sentenced to life imprisonment, but several years later he appeared on national television and cowardly renounced his previous opposition to the regime. Since then he has become an important advisor to SAVAK and a propagandist for the Shah's regime and against Marxism.

Siavosh Parsa-nejad was once active in the student movement in Europe and had returned to Iran with the intention of struggling against the regime. A member of the Revolutionary Organization of the Tudeh Party, he was arrested in 1970. Like Nik-khah, Parsa-nejad surrendered, claiming a conversion to the Shah's ideas.

‡The CIA engineered coup d'etat against the anti-imperialist premier Dr. Mossadegh which returned the current Shah to power.

actually ready for struggle was a proletarian party. Unfortunately, however, our people lacked such an organization. The leadership of the Tudeh Party, a mere caricature of a Marxist-Leninist party, was only capable of throwing its devoted militant cadres under the blades of the executioner before fleeing.** Thus, the organized struggle basically came to a halt and whatever struggle did take place was conducted by the remnants of the shattered organizations within the framework of the same old methods. This resulted, above all, in the further suppression of those who were struggling.

Despite this situation, at the end of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties, the development of the contradictions and recurrent crises brought about a rapid and spontaneous organization of national forces, which principally gathered around the National Front and its affiliated organizations. But, in the general framework of defunct slogans and limited by paralyzing methods, these struggles were also unable to accomplish anything in the face of an enemy that understands only force and exists on the strength of the bayonet. Of course, one result of this situation was the increasing awareness of the regime. Demonstrations and strikes were successively defeated, and although these experiences and the regime's actions gradually led to the changing of slogans (particularly reflected in the uprising of the 15th of Khordad [June 5]), the methods of struggle and the organizational frameworks remained the same.***

** The Tudeh Party was founded after the Allied Forces exiled the dictator Reza Shah in 1941. With a reformist line and petit bourgeois leadership, the Tudeh Party mobilized a significant number of intellectuals and other sections of the petit bourgeoisie as well as many workers since a revolutionary workers' organization was lacking. Eventually, the party claimed to be a workers' party. It participated in the reactionary government of prime minister Ghavam in 1946. After the attempted assassination of the Shah in 1949, the Tudeh Party was declared illegal and its leaders were arrested along with other opposition leaders. Later they escaped to Eastern Europe. During the anti-imperialist, democratic movement of 1949-1953 led by Mossadegh, the Tudeh Party opposed the nationalization of the oil industry and helped sabotage Mossadegh's premiership. Active support by the Tudeh Party's organization might have prevented the reign of terror that began with the coup d'etat of 1953. Even after the coup, a significant part of the Tudeh Party remained intact including army officers in strategic posts. While many courageous and progressive members of the party waited for the call to action, the leadership vacillated, giving the new regime time to ferret out the officers' organization and underground units of the party. Even though the leadership called for members to write letters of repentence, many resisted savage torture and preferred execution by firing squad to surrender. With the betrayal by the leadership, many party members lost hope and some joined the regime while some sought new alternatives for continuing the struggle.

***The socio-economic crisis in Iran during the late 1950's and early sixties weakened the regime and brought a resurgence of the democratic and anti-imperialist struggles in 1960-1963. Associates of Mossadegh and small, liberal bourgeois and petit bourgeois groups that had been inactive or underground since the 1953 coup d'etat felt that the time was right to revitalize the National Front. Although Mossadegh was under house arrest, he was still quite popular among the Iranian people, especially the urban masses, who associated the National Front with Mossadegh. Thus many people in or near the big cities gathered around the

Through this process, these soft-core organisations became extinct. The awesome image of the bayonet again established its domination everywhere. But, the new circumstances differed from those of the period after the coup d'etat in one fundamental aspect: no one could any longer trust the previous slogans, the old methods of struggle nor the outmoded forms of organisation. The Tudeh Party, which had not been able to exemplify a communist party even for a moment during its existence, now had all its organisations demolished, its devoted cadres subdued, and its traitorous leaders on the run. This party was not even capable of providing a theoretical or experiential frame of reference for the later phases of the struggle. Thus, in a situation of terror and repression; in a situation where our people's struggle had met with defeat; and in a situation where revolutionary intellectuals essentially lacked any theoretical or experiential background, the task had to be undertaken afresh. The new communist movement got on its feet and the simple gathering of forces was initiated. The objective was not to muster force in order to strike again, but to analyze the conditions in order to find a new path for struggle. In the years before this, the treacheries and errors of the Tudeh Party had completely destroyed its reliability, and no revolutionary intellectual was willing to cooperate with it. Under these circumstances, the bourgeois and petty bourgeois organisations affiliated with the National Front, as the sole existing political organisations, were able to attract these revolutionary intellectuals. This situation finally led to the penetration of the ideologies and tactics of the left petty bourgeoisie into these organisations. After the defeat of these organisations, however, their related ideologies also lost their credibility.

If during these periods the boundaries between Marxism-Leninsm on the one hand and revisionism and opportunism on the other had no yet crystallized on an international scale, the distrust of the Tudeh Party might initially have led to distrust of communism also. It became clear, however, that the place of genuine Marxism-Leninism was indeed vacant and that it must be occupied. Hence, revolutionary Marxism-Leninism, as the theory of revolution, became the sole gathering point for the most persistent revolutionaries. Thus, there appeared an extensive and striking acceptance of Marxism-Leninism by the revolutionary intellectuals, an acceptance which was now molded with the name and thoughts of

National Front. In May 1961 a demonstration by the National Front in Jalalieh Square, Teheran, attracted over 100,000 demonstrators.

Due to the inept leadership, the inadequacy of the old methods and slogans, and internal conflicts between different sections, this struggle failed. With the initiation of U.S. directed reforms (the "White Revolution"), the Shah could once again flex his muscles; he closed this chapter of reformist struggle with the massacre of June 5, 1963, and with subsequent repression.

The years 1960-1963 witnessed many demonstrators and other political actions resulting in thousands being jailed, universities ransacked, and students assaulted, beaten and injured. Several, such as Kolhar (a student) and Khanali (a teacher) were murdered. The struggle of these years was a necessary phase in the history of the Iranian people's struggle. It showed that new theories, new methods, new organizations and new leaders were needed if the anti-imperialist, anti-dictatorial struggle of the people was to succeed. Ahmadzadeh and Pouyan and their theory of armed struggle are results of this realization.

Comrade Mao. In the process of the exchange and publication of communist works, particularly the works of Mao, communist circles and groups came into existence. Under the influence of revolutionary experiences and peoples' wars, the (theoretical) tendency toward mass armed struggle increased day by day. Meanwhile, the Cuban experience also attracted attention. There appeared those who wanted to engage in armed struggle by forms not completely known to us.* Before they began, however, they were arrested and thus were unable to provide the movement with any positive or negative experiences. Therefore, despite the claims of a few, the defeat of the groups who wanted to engage in armed struggle did not by any means indicate the inappropriateness of armed struggle because these defeats stemmed from a series of organizational errors and from the failure to consider the rules of secrecy.

When the simple gathering of forces commenced, any form of contact between the peoples' intellectuals and the masses had been cut off in practice, and there was no serious link among the intellectuals themselves, including the proletarian intellectuals. Now, after the inner development of the communist groups, they accept that their further growth is dependent upon serious contact with the masses, real participation in their daily lives and also the building of a bond among the communist groups as a first step towards their unity. While the subjective elements for real progress have been developing, the prospect for the unity of the groups and for real contact with the masses seems dim. Any attempt on the part of the groups to establish contacts with other communist groups and to participate in the people's daily lives and political struggle (which, of course, is certainly not extensive) exposes them to the danger of police attacks.

Our group, too, has gone through this same process. Our group was also formed with the immediate goal of studying Marxism-Leninism and analyzing the socio-economic conditions of our country. In its development, the group reached a bifurcation: must the establishment of the proletarian party or the formation of an armed nucleus in the countryside to initiate guerrilla warfare be pursued? We believed that revolutionary honesty required confronting this question seriously. Unless we had honestly believed that the initiation of guerrilla war would lead to defeat, rejection of this path would have been tantamount to the absence of revolutionary courage and to the fear of action. Our group, nevertheless, did reject this path. In my opinion, however, the rejection was fundamentally based on a series of theoretical formulas which we understood to be universal and unalterable, and it stemmed less from a serious theoretical and practical analysis of reality.2 Moreover, our theoretical approach to the present conditions, our estimation of the purported changes** carried out by the regime, the role of the agrarian

* Ahmadzdeh probably refers here to Jazani's group. Although at the time this Ahmadzadeh knew little of this grou, later Ahmadzadeh's group joined with the remnants of Jazani's group to form the Oganization of Iranian People's Fedayee Guerrillas (OIPGF).

** "Purported changes" refers to the reforms promised by the "White Revolution."

reform, etc., did not lead us to turn away from that choice but rather confirmed it. Although we believed that the armed struggle was inevitable, still we thought that the purported changes gave the role of the town and the proletariat more importance and that the countryside could no longer, as in the past, serve as a base for the revolution. This view channeled our thoughts toward forming the proletarian party.

But, the purported changes were also being evaluated from two other directions. The Tudeh Party wanted to justify its inactivity and its reformist line by professing that in any case "positive" changes had taken place; that by whatever means, the feudal mode of production had been dissolved to a great extent; that the transition to capitalism had begun; that new contradictions and class divisions had appeared in society; that the proletariat had started its development and so on. They reasoned that the assistance of the so-called socialist camp to the puppet regime and, in their opinion, to the people of Iran would lead to the development of industry, to the acceleration of the development of the proletariat and to the reduction of the regime's dependence on imperialism. This ridiculous reasoning is not a theoretical error but a justification for their true tendencies. According to their view, since changes had taken place and new contradictions had come into existence, there remained a long way to go before a "decisive struggle;" what could be done was to gather forces by the undertaking of a series of reformist measure, to demand the hastening of positive steps on the part of the regime, and to attempt to force the regime into a series of tactical retreats. The key link in the struggle under the present conditions, therefore, was not to topple the "Shah's dictatorship" and establish a "people's democracy," but rather to call for the transformation of the "Shah's dictatorship" into the "Shah's democracy."

The "Revolutionary Organization,"* which had split from the Tudeh Party precisely because of its opportunism and revisionism and its concessionist line and in order to preserve the perspective of armed struggle, along with many other revolutionary communists took the diametrically opposite view of the "purported changes." In their view, any acknowledgement of change and development was an indication of besmirching the necessity of armed struggle, of evading the decisive struggle, and marked the onset of concessionism. For this reason, they believed that feudalism was still intact and that the objective conditions for armed struggle existed. But this conviction, even though it contained an element of revolutionary authenticity and respect for the revolutionary principles of Marxism-Leninism, was at variance with reality. To deal with the present realities requires a different viewpoint; the "Revolutionary Organization," due to its confinement within the framework of a series of theoretical formulas, has not been able to correctly deal with the paradox

* The "Revolutionary Organization" was formed by cadres of the Tudeh Party in the mid-sixties. Though supporting armed struggle, the Revolutionary Organization initially had no specific line. Later it took a Maoist line with the idea of copying the Chinese Revolution in Iran. The Revolutionary Organization contended that Iran was a "semifeudal, semicolonial" society, thus ignoring the growth of capitalism in Iran. It contended that the main contradiction facing the people of Iran was feudalism.

of the "acknowledgement of change or armed revolution" and therefore denies change (just as our reliance on theoretical formulas had caused our relatively correct evaluation of the claimed transformation to be applied in an illogical manner to a specific conception of the Party and its formation).

But what is the correct approach? Can it not be said that some changes have taken place, that feudalism has essentially disappeared, but that armed struggle has not lost its necessity? That the moment of the decisive struggle has not been postponed? Has the disappearance of one contradiction and the appearance of a new one made a change in the principle contradiction of our society? Or, has it intensified the same contradiction?

Examination of the Present Socio-economic Conditions and the Question of the State of the Revolution

Since the Land Reform constitutes the basis of the so-called "White Revolution", we will stress this phenomenon. In this brief examination, we will show that the objective of the Land Reform has been the expansion of the economic, political and cultural domination of bureaucratic comprador capitalism in the rural areas. Its goal was not that of remedying any of the numerous ailments of the peasantry (so as to eliminate the grounds for revolutionary potential in the rural areas by directing peasant support toward the regime). Rather, due to its nature, the regime can only suppress the grounds for revolution in the countryside through ever increasing economic, political and cultural oppression and suppression, through the branching of its influence into the rural areas and through the expansion of the dominance of the corrupt bureaucracy.

The alleged goal of the Land Reform was to give the land to the peasantry. Let us examine how this was executed:

1. Land was to go only to those peasants who were working on the master's land as tenants or share-croppers. In this way, all land on which any wage earners worked or which was under mechanized cultivation was exempted from redistribution. As a result, vast lands, including the extensive holdings of princes, princesses, big-shot bureaucrats, and the entourage of the bureaucracy were not redistributed, and thus a considerable segment of the peasantry remained landless. We must remember that in the midst of and prior to the height of the Land Reform, many landowners evicted the share-croppers and allegedly engaged their land specifically in mechanized cultivation. By so doing, or on this pretext, their land also remained immune from redistribution. Several others had extensive sections of their land exempted from redistribution by granting their land to their off-spring and relatives.

2. In many areas where land was redistributed, land did not fall into the possession of all the peasants because all the peasants did not have share-cropping or tenant contracts or, in other words, were not peasants but were working on the land as wage earners. It seems that according to the government's own statistics (which undoubtedly cannot be considered reliable) more than 40% of the Iranian peasantry has been deprived of land forever.

3. In any event, some land was redistributed. Some landlords sold their land, and others rented it to the peasants. Naturally, as far as possible, the best lands remained in the hands of the landlord and the worst lands were left for the peasants.

4. Finally, in some cases feudalism was preserved.

Therefore, we now witness the following dominant forms in land relations. To a great extent capitalism has come into existence. Even though this form of production existed before the Land Reform, its development was accelerated by the Land Reform. Exploitation is carried out in its most savage form, and the agricultural laborer has indeed no financial security whatsoever. He is given or denied work according to the whims of the landlord who still remains a master. Some large landowners, particularly those of the entourage of the regime and the royal court, including the princes, in no way refrain from encroaching upon and appropriating the lands of the small landowners. We have been witness to numerous clashes between the large and small landowners. Wherever these two forms of ownership stand side by side there appears an intense contradiction. It is these large landowners who are able to drill deep wells when confronted by water shortage by means of their capital or through their relations with finance capital and use of the loan. The small landowner is obliged to rent their tractors and purchase their water; the large landowners sell him water and rent tractors to him on their own terms.

Small landownership as a form of production has, in the main, come into existence as a result of the Land Reform, although it had existed in some areas previously. Its main enemy is the governmental bureaucracy. Wherever the reach of the landlord has been shortened, it has immediately been replaced by that of the government. The bureaucracy and comprador capital subject the peasants to oppression and exploitation in various ways through the Ministry of Land Reform, the cooperatives, the various banks and recently the joint-stock agricultural companies. Every year at harvest time, the Land Reform agents appear to collect the payment on, or rent of, the land that has been sold or rented to the peasants. Day by day the oppressed peasants, usually unable to remit the demanded amount, assume a heavier burden of debts and loans with tremendous interest rates. Wherever the peasants have shown courage and refrained from the remittance of their payments, they have been immediately faced with the bayonets of the gendarmes, the repossession of the land by the Ministry of Land Reform and other suppressive measures. The formation of the joint-stock agricultural companies, which the peasants rightly resist and whose essence they feel with their flesh and blood, must in effect be termed a conspiracy for the deprivation of ownership by the small landowner, the inevitable consequence of the Land Reform. The cooperatives, by dispensing loans, selling seeds and manure, and by pre-purchasing the produce of the peasants, do not spare the peasant's last pennies. Finally, one must consider the areas where the feudal system has remained intact.3

The objective of the so-called "White Revolution" was to expand imperialism's domination in the town and country. The "White Revolution" took place at a time when the puppet regime was faced with the people's anti-imperialist movement, precisely when the urban masses

had risen against it. How could it be that the regime consciously set out to abolish its main class basis (i.e. feudalism)? Must it be concluded that the elimination of feudalism is merely a lie? Or must it be said that feudalism was not the mainstay of the regime? If feudalism was not the mainstay of the regime, then which economic power was reflected by the political power of the state? And the interest of which power was primarily promoted?

In actuality, this power is world imperialism. The bases for the political dominance of feudalism were weakened by the Constitutional Revolution, and feudalism fundamentally forfeited its political rule to imperialism through Reza Khan's coup d'etat. The economic interests of the feudals could only be safeguarded by a central power supported and guided by imperialism. This central power, while suppressing the people's anti-imperialist movement, prepared the ground for the ever expanding influence of imperialism. Feudalism was, in reality, transformed to dependent feudalism and wherever it rejected this dependence, it was subjected to the aggression of the central power. With the expanding domination of the central power and influence of imperialism, feudalism was more and more removed from its positions of power. As soon as the feudal economy stood in contradiction to imperialist interests, the regime, facing no serious difficulty and without needing the people's force to suppress feudalism (!), finally buried what had already turned into a corpse.† In effect, Reza Khan's coup d'etat was incomplete without the "White Revolution".††

A comparison of the regime's land reform with a classic bourgeois land reform depicts well the disparities of the two and their different consequences. In the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx evaluates the bourgeois land reform and its role as follows:

> After the first revolution had transformed the peasants from semi-villeins into freeholders, Napoleon confirmed and regulated the conditions on which they could exploit undisturbed the soil of France which had only just fallen to their lot and slake their youthful passion for property. But *what is now causing the ruin of the French peasant* is his small-holding itself, the division of the land, the form of property which Napoleon consolidated in France. It is precisely the material conditions which made the feudal peasant a small-holding peasant and Napoleon an emperor. Two generations have sufficed to produce the inevitable result: progressive deterioration of agriculture, progressive indebtedness of the agriculturist. The "Napoleonic" form of property, which at the beginning of the nineteenth century *was the condition for the liberation and enrichment of the French country folk,* has developed in the course of this century into the law

† Feudalism must not be mistaken for the feudals or the big feudal elements who were the functionaries of state rule. As a whole, the existence and the interests of these individuals have gradually become dependent not on the maintenance of a feudal economy, but on the durability of imperialist domination.

†† The regime boasts that the Constitutional Revolution was incomplete without the "White Revoluton".

> of their enslavement and pauperization. . . .
> The economic development of small-holding property has radically changed the relation of the peasants to the other classes of society. Under Napoleon, the fragmentation of the land in the countryside supplemented free competition and the beginning of big industry in the towns. The peasant class was the ubiquitous protest against the landed aristocracy which had just been overthrown.
> The roots that small-holding property struck in French soil deprived feudalism of all nutriment. Its landmarks formed the natural fortifications of the bourgeoisie against any surprise attack on the part of its old overlords. But in the course of the nineteenth century the feudal lords were replaced by urban usurers; the feudal obligation that went with the land was replaced by the mortgage; aristocratic landed property was replaced by bourgeois capital. The small holding of the peasant is now only the pretext that allows the capitalist to draw profits, interest and rent from the soil, while leaving it to the tiller of the soil himself to see how he can extract his wages. . . .
> The bourgeois order, which at the beginning of the century set the state to stand guard over the newly arisen small-holding and manured it with laurels, has become a vampire that sucks out its blood brain and throws it into the alchemistic cauldron of capital. The Code Napoleon is now nothing but a code of distraints, forced sales, and compulsory auctions. . . .
> *The interest of the peasants, therefore, are no longer, as under Napoleon, in accord with, but in opposition to the interests of the bourgeoisie, to capital. Hence, the peasants find their natural ally and leader in the urban proletariat,* whose task is the overthrow of the bourgeois order. . . .
>
> (Emphasis suggested by the author.)*

While in France two generations had to pass before "the progressive deterioration of agriculture" and "the progressive indebtedness of the agriculturist" were perceptible; here [in Iran], even a few years were too many for the peasant to find himself under a heavy burden of debts. The payment on the mortgage of the little land that had been given to him was enough to keep him in debt for years. The poor conditions of agriculture and drought and water shortage that small landowners faced from the very outset were sufficient to throw him ever more into the snares of large usurers and the tentacles of the financial rule of the comprador bureaucracy. It is not his small-holding but the control by the bureaucracy and the large comprador bourgeoisie that are the cause of his misery.

While in the past, the comprador bureaucracy supported feudal exploitation and the peasant recognized it in the form of the suppressive force of the corrupt and oppressive bureaucracy's gendarmes, now, the peasant sees himself directly entrapped in the bloody grip of the bureaucy and the comprador bourgeoisie. In France, small-holding at the outset was

* K. Marx, **The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte**, Progress Pub., Moscow, 1967, pp 108-109.

"the condition for the liberation and enrichment of the country folk." After the destruction of feudalism, after the complete establishment of the bourgeoisie in the town and its independence from the peasant's support, and moreover after "landmarks" no longer "formed the natural fortifications of the bourgeoisie" and had lost their significance as the protector of the bourgeoisie in the struggle against the "attack on the part of its old overlords", two generations had to pass until "the feudal lords were replaced by urban usurers; the feudal obligation that went with the land was replaced by the mortgage; aristocratic landed property was replaced by bourgeois capital;" thus the free and rich peasant of the past again saw himself entangled in new fetters and exponentially increasing poverty.

Here [in Iran], from the very beginning, the new organs of exploitation that were busy plundering the town and which stood ready to attack the countryside immediately replaced the feudal lords. Feudal obligations still continued, this time in the form of installments and rent. Bourgeois capital, which existed in the villages before, was solidifying its foothold quickly. Here, the landmarks were not the natural fortifications of the regime against the attack of the old overlords since in reality feudalism had lost its overlordship a long time ago and had neither political nor military power.

In any case, the peasant in the past saw a separation between feudal oppression on the one hand and the bureaucracy and the gendarme on the other, despite having repeatedly experienced their collaboration and unity. This time, he sees the two in the same cloak, that of the government's agents, the governmental and semi-governmental banks, the Ministry of Land Reform, the gendarmes and more recently the forest and natural resources rangers. As such, the peasant rightly regards his calamity as stemming not from his small-holding, but from the oppressive rule of the governmental bureaucracy and its suppressive tools. The determined resistance of the peasant against the formation of the joint-stock agricultural companies illustrates this point.

The peasant is realizing now that the principle cause behind his past calamity is the government, the same government whose support of feudal oppression and suppression he had witnessed repeatedly. The more aware peasants recognized the "Land Reform" to be "politics" from the very beginning and experienced these "politics" quickly. Those peasants who dared to learn the motive of the regime and who resolved independently to chase the landlord off the land without the "Aria Mehr's" fatherly support*, did not, of course, encounter the landlord who chose to flee, but were blocked by the gendarmes' bayonets and suppressed.

Therefore, the so-called "White Revolution" not only did not solve any of the numerous troubles of the great majority of the country folk, but in large measure incorporated the contradiction between the peasant and the feudal lord into that between the peasant and the bureaucracy and the suppressive governmental apparatus. Thus, by intensifying this

* "Aria Mehr" or "Light of the Arians" is one of the titles the Shah has given himself.

contradiction and rendering it more conspicuous, it aided the peasant in recognizing the real enemy and its true nature. The severe contradiction between a major segment of the peasantry and the forest and pasture rangers (rangers created for the protection of the forests and pastures that have been "nationalized" to lay the grounds for the entrance of comprador capital in order to fill the pockets of a handful of parasites), a contradiction which has repeatedly led to armed clashes, illustrates the deep contradiction between the peasantry and the governmental apparatus, which is dependent on imperialism.

But what is the course of events in the town? While the bourgeois revolution had resulted in the severing of the feudal shackles binding the urban masses hand and foot, in the abolishment of heavy feudal obligations, and in free competition of industry, here, the "White Revolution" coincided exactly with the suppression of the urban masses and the consolidation of a central power that had for years kept them in chains. It was carried out precisely to consolidate imperialist rule and the interests of imperialist monopolies*; to increasingly suppress national industry, the national bourgeoisie, and the petty-bourgeois artisan and shopkeepers; and finally, to further intensify the exploitation of the proletariat.

For years, the town was experiencing the oppression, suppression, exploitation and poverty emanating from imperialist domination. The keeper of this domination was the same force that was instituting the "White Revolution". While in a bourgeois revolution, it was necessary for the newly liberated masses to experience the new conditions for decades in order to understand their nature and feel the new bonds and new suppressive rule over them, here, the urban masses had understood all this beforehand; the events of the early part of 1342 [spring of 1963], particularly the uprising of the 15th of Khordad [June 5] were responses to the pretenstions of the regime. If afterwards, the waves of the struggle ebbed, it was not due to an acceptance of the regime's lies, but to the violent suppression of the struggle. How was it possible to believe in the so-called "White Revolution" in the face of increasing poverty, continuous bankruptcy, the intensification of exploitation by the violent domination of foreign capital and the fattening of a handful of comprador capitalists and big-shot bureaucrats at the expense of the bankruptcy of the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie and the brutal exploitation of the workers? Thus, while two generations sufficed until "the interests of the peasants, therefore, are no longer, as under Napoleon, in accord with but in opposition to the interests of the bourgeoisie, to capital," and "hence, the

* As frequently stated by Iranian revolutionaries, the main goal of the "White Revolution" was to intensify the penetration of capital into Iran and thus further integrate the Iranian economy into the world capitalist system. This process has continued persistently following the "White Revolution." A significant example is the conference of 35 U.S. lords of monopoly capital held in Teheran in 1970 to further investigate ways to exploit Iranian resources and human labor power. During the conference different strata, especially students and religious leaders, demonstrated in opposition to this sell-out by the Shah. A religious leader, Ayatollah Saidi Khorasani, who distributed leaflets protesting this conference, was arrested and ultimately tortured to death.

peasants find their natural ally and leader in the urban proletariat whose task is the overthrow of the bourgeois order;" here [in Iran], from a historical standpoint, the peasants like the past semi-serfs in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country find their natural ally and leader in the urban proletariat. In fact, as a result of the expansion of comprador capital into the rural areas, a closer relationship between the peasantry and the proletariat has developed. In the town, too, the brutal rule of comprador capital more than ever has caused the contradiction between the proletariat and the national bourgeoisie and specifically the petit bourgeoisie, to be overshadowed by the contradiction between them and comprador bureaucratic capitalism and imperialist domination. This process has developed through the confinement of any capitalist mode of production to that of comprador capitalism and through the bankruptcy and gradual elimination of the national bourgeoisie caused by the imperialist monopolies.

Why do such fundamental differences exist? Actually, the explanation of any change and transformation in the society would be futile and nonsensical without consideration of the principal contradiction of the existing system, namely, that between the people and imperialist rule. The problem of imperialist domination must be regarded not as an extraneous factor that plays some role, but rather organically as the basis for any analysis and elucidation.

Reliance on force and anti-revolutionary violence has always been an integral part of imperialist domination. Imperialism initiated its invasion of the East through dependence on its political and military force, which stems from its worldwide economic power. Depending on the fore-mentioned anti-revolutionary violence, it disrupted the natural development as compared with that of Western societies. As we know, the bourgeoisie, subsequent to its gradual take-over of the positions of economic power, engages itself in the take-over of the positions of political power so that it may consolidate its economic power. But here, in the East, imperialist economic domination was possible only through political and military aggression and any continuation of economic domination has been inevitably molded by anti-revolutionary violence. Hence, in Reza Khan's coup d'etat we observed the establishment of a central power without this power reflecting a bourgeois economic power and without the development of industry and internal commerce giving the bourgeoisie the opportunity to succeed, by virtue of its economic power, in erecting a central political power. (The central power and the measures taken by it confused some people into thinking that Reza Khan's rule represented the national bourgeoisie.) Thus, on the one hand, we encounter a bourgeois political superstructure with the cutting off of the influence and power of the local feudals; on the other hand, we witness the continuation of feudal exploitation. At this time we witness the power of capitalist monopolies before the development of capitalism has yet begun. The feudal mode of production is changed without any corresponding change in the political rule. Feudalism is eliminated without giving the peasantry the opportunity to feel free for a moment. Feudalism is eliminated while the national bourgeoisie, more than ever, is also suppressed. In fact, with the establishment of imperialist rule, all the internal contradictions of our

society were overshadowed by one contradiction—the contradiction that spreads the world over, the contradiction between the people and imperialism. In the last half century, our country has witnessed the expansion of this contradiction: the daily augmentation of imperialist domination. Any form of transformation must resolve this contradiction. The resolution of this contradiction means the establishment of the people's sovereignty and the downfall of imperialist domination.

On the Question of the Stage of the Revolution

In solving the question of the stage of the revolution, attention must be paid to these particulars. With the establishment and expansion of imperialist domination, there is first the division of political power between feudalism and imperialism followed by the transformation of feudalism into dependant feudalism and, finally, the destruction of feudalism. Under these conditions, the national bourgeoisie, not yet developed and weakened by the pressure of foreign capital, loses the possibility of organizing as a class and in the end gradually dies out. Hence, the national bourgeoisie cannot compose an independent political force. The struggle against imperialist domination (i.e. international capital) contains some elements of the struggle against capital itself. In addition, this struggle is dependent upon the extensive mobilization of the masses. For these reasons, some elements of a socialist revolution are also born within this anti-imperialist struggle and develop in the course of the struggle. The national bourgeoisie is hesitant and unable to mobilize the masses because by its nature it is incapable of persistence in such a struggle and because of the historical conditions of its existence and its ties with foreign capital. Also, the peasantry, because of its material conditions in production, can never form an independent political force. Thus it must either place itself under the leadership of the proletariat or entrust itself to the bourgeoisie. The only force remaining is the proletariat. Although the proletariat is quantitatively weak, it is very strong qualitatively and in its potential for being organized. The proletariat, as the most persistent enemy of imperialism and feudal domination and relying on the international theory of Marxism-Leninism, can and must assume the leadership of the anti-imperialist movement. It is in this regard that the fundamental differences between the new bourgeois-democratic revolution and the classic bourgeois revolution unfold. Although the immediate goal of the new bourgeois-democratic revolution is the end of imperialist domination and the destruction of feudalism and not the abolition of bourgeois private property, in the process of its development the embryo of the socialist revolution is implanted in its womb and nutured there very rapidly by the anti-imperialist character of the struggle, the mobilization of the masses, the proletarian leadership of the struggle, and the fact that any duration of capitalist relations gradually brings about close ties with imperialism followed by the domination of imperialism. In this manner, only a few years after the victory of the Chinese revolution, the proletarian leadership was transformed into the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the socialist revolution commenced in practice. As summed up by

Chairman Mao, the Chinese experience serves as an example.† But now that feudalism has been eliminated in our country, has the Iranian Revolution left its bourgeois-democratic stage and entered in the socialist phase? In my opinion, posing the question in this manner is incorrect. Regis Debray expresses a significant point in this regard:

The nub of the problem lies not in the initial programme of the revolution but in its ability to resolve in practice the problem of state power before the bourgeois-democratic state, and not after.

In South America the bourgeois-democratic state presupposes the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus.**

In reality, during the last half century, the revolutionary struggle our people have faced a state power that has assumed an ever more bourgeois character in the process of increasing imperialist domination. As a result of the political dependency of feudalism on imperialist rule, the struggle of our people against feudalism has always been dependent upon their anti-imperialist struggle Thus, the more feudalism as a mode of production has retreated, and therefore the more the state has become bourgeois in form and character, the more significant have the socialist elements of the revolution become. The struggle against the domination of world capital has further turned to the struggle against capital itself, and the necessity of the proletarian leadership has become more evident. Since the Land Reform has not benefited the peasantry, such slogans as "the land should be given free to those who work on it" and "abolish all state tributes" remain the fundamental slogans of the revolution for the peasantry. On the one hand, considering the limited foundation and the increasing limitations of imperialist rule and, consequently, its ever increasing reliance on anti-revolutionary violence as the principle means of preserving its domination; and, on the other hand, keeping in mind the broad mass base of the revolution and the fact that the condition for the victory of the revolution is the victory of the protracted armed struggle, revolution actually commences with the most mass oriented and generalized slogans and programs. In the course of this protracted armed struggle, which proletarianizes the masses objectively and subjectively, the revolution will succeed and continue through the most radical and revolutionary measure. The (protracted) armed struggle is the the environment within which the socialist elements of a bourgeois-democratic revolution develop rapidly. This is the lesson that the Chinese Revolution has given, that the Vietnam Revolution shows, and finally that the Cuban experience, despite its shortness, has proven.(4)

Our Line

As we have said, in the course of its development and in its analysis of the experience of the Cuban people, our group confronted the following

† It would be better to quote Chairman Mao's own words, but due to their inaccessibility, this was impossible.

** R. Debray, **Revolution in the Revolution?**, Monthly Review, N.Y., 1967.

question: is not the path of the revolution the formation of the guerrilla nucleus and the initiation of the armed struggle? Can the revolution be tackled without the party? We became familiar with the Cuban experience essentially through Regis Debray's "Revolution in the Revolution?" Without a deep understanding of Debray's thesis and the Cuban Revolution and, again, without a clear view of the objective conditions of our people's struggle, we rejected Debray's thesis and the Cuban way. Why did we permit ourselves to reject them without having on hand a comprehensive analysis of the conditions of our country and without really knowing the inner elements of the Cuban way? In my opinion, what caused this was a theoretical error stemming from a superficial acceptance of a series of theoretical formulas based on past revolutionary experiences. This point will later be shown.

In this way, we accepted that our goal and that of other communist groups must be the creation of the Marxist-Leninist party. Immediately, the question was posed: what should be done to create such a party? Two fundamental duties then confronted us. We, and the other groups, would have to educate the cadres for the future party amongst the masses. That is to say, by working amongst the masses and participating in their life of struggle, particularly that of the proletariat, we had to prepare them for the acceptance of such a party.

At this point, the initial differences of our circumstances with those of past revolutionary experiences (China and Russia) became evident. We had not observed, until now, the question of the necessity of the creation of the party being posed without the practice of struggle itself demanding it, without the grounds for it existing amongst the workers and non-proletarian masses. The elements and constituent parts of the party and its cadres, the groups and organizations that already participate in the life and practical struggle of the masses in proportion to their capabilities, were all always at hand. Always, the economic and political struggles of the masses and the relationship of the conscious vanguards with the masses existed; yet, the dispersed nature of these struggles, their short-sightedness and halfway measures, demanded the vast organization of a party. But while we recognized the necessity of creating the party, due to the absence of spontaneous mass movements, due to the non-participation of that intellectual force in the life and practical struggle of the masses and due to the lack of any serious connection between Marxist-Leninist groups, we found ourselves facing a difficult path to the formation of the party. We came to believe that the creation of one organization out of various groups would have significant weaknesses and heterogenieties due to the absence of participation in the actual life of the masses, the groups' confinement to the intellectual environment and the lack of common goals and perspectives. This would not be the true unity of groups based on active political life and active links with the masses, but a knocking together of groups that, sooner or later, would fall apart as a result of a series of tactical or strategic differences. In fact, we were seeking a party that from the outset, or very soon thereafter, could be transformed into the real vanguard of the masses. Since we also believed in the inevitability of the armed struggle, the party would have to prepare the conditions for armed struggle, convince the masses that armed struggle was the only way and then begin the armed action. We believed

that only such a party would have the right to determine the strategy and tactics of the struggle. If we had paused to consider the disparity of circumstances (specifically that between Russia and our country), perhaps, while realizing that the path to the creation of the party was difficult, we would not have been so careless in failing to define this path. Could we not have been understood that the condition for forming such a party, for participation in the real struggle, and for the creation of a force capable of acting as a geniune vanguard is the armed action itself? If we had not committed the error of identifying urban armed insurrection with protracted guerrilla warfare, we could have regarded the Cuban Revolution as an experience worth studying, justly believed that the spreading of Marxism takes place on the basis of reality and not vice-versa, and at the same time claimed that the insurrection is the work of the masses.

Why is the insurrection the work of the masses? Didn't the Cuban experience show that a small armed motor force can initiate the insurrection and gradually lead the masses to insurrection?5 Here, of course, the concept of insurrection does not connote an armed urban uprising (characterized by the sudden and massive armed movement of the masses together with a leadership) but, the protracted armed struggle to which the masses are gradually drawn.

These problems were posed at a time when the group understood that it had to direct its attention outside of itself, to reality, the masses and other communist groups. On the one hand, however, we had to contend with police attacks and searches that were being carried out against commuist groups, and, on the other hand, the problem of contact with the masses seemed so difficult and seemingly beyond our forces. How could we establish contact with the proletarian masses? Must we not reach the workers where they have organized themselves as a class in the organs (ranging from small proletarian circles to unions, syndicates, etc...) that have come into existence in the course of the spontaneous struggle? 6 It is in the course of this spontaneous struggle and class organization that, on the one hand, circles of workers come into existence which have a wider horizon and contemplate a broader and more protracted struggle; circles made up of the most advanced workers who have solid links with the working masses, in short, circles which are in contact with the revolutionary intellectuals, that is, with the source of political consciousness; on the other hand, in the course of its development, this spontaneous struggle more and more approaches a political struggle. Parallel to this course, the progressive workers' circles develop and expand, becoming more receptive to political propaganda and political organization.

Socialist consciousness, too, is introduced to the workers through the intellectual circles' contact with the workers' circles and with the masses. In this context, a comparison between the development of the Russian intellectual circles during the early years of the twentieth century and the present intellectual circles of our society can bring out the differences in conditions between the two. Lenin portrays a typical circle in Russia at that time in the following way:

> A student's circle establishes contacts with workers and sets to work, without any connection with the old members of the movement, without any connection with study circles in other districts, or even in other parts of the same city (or in other educational institutions), without any organization of the various divisions of revolutionary work, without any systematic plan of activity covering any length of time. The circle gradually expands its propaganda and agitation; by its activities it wins the sympathies of fairly large sections of workers and of a certain section of the educated strata which provide it with money and from among whom the "committee" recruits new groups of young people. The attractive power of the committee (or League of Struggle) grows, its sphere of activity quite spontaneously; the very people who a year or a few months previously spoke at the students' circle gatherings and discussed the question, "Where do we go from here?", who established and maintained contacts with the workers and wrote and published leaflets, now establish contacts with other groups of revolutionaries, procure literature, set to work to publish a local newspaper, begin to talk of organizing a demonstration, and finally, turn to open warfare...*

But what are the conditions which we face? It is best to consider the development of an intellectual circle in Iran:

On the basis of the study and exchange of communist publications, a few individuals come together. At first, study constitutes the basis of the circle's endeavors, subsequently a certain amount of objective study of the society is pursued. In general, the group has no extensive contacts with the workers nor does it attract the attention of even a small section of the working class. In practical terms, they have no role or active relation with the people's spontaneous movements which are themselves sporadic and limited. Publishing local journals, organizing demonstrations, and particularly waging open warfare must not even be mentioned; it is during this limited development that many of these circles become targets of police blows under police-dominated conditions and are shattered.

What is the cause of this disparity of conditions? There (in the case of Russia) the existence of a spontaneous mass movement that bespeaks the preparedness of the objective conditions for revolution provided an inexhaustible source of experience for the masses and for the conscious vanguard revolutionaries who were in contact with it and seeking to guide it. This spontaneous mass movement, which was initially and essentially economic, by way of its militant organs and in the course of its development gave the working masses their class organizations and gradually as it became politicized created within itself a number of more persistent and more revolutionary proletarian circles. Moreover, this movement along with the efforts of the revolutionary intellectuals established contacts with the intellectual circles. The secret and semi-secret workers' gatherings to which it gave birth constituted the objective ground for and the source which nourished the intellectual force of the proletariat, and on the other

* V. Lenin, "What Is To Be Done," **Selected Works**, Progress Pub., 1970, pp 198-199.

hand, the intellectual force of the proletariat then took leadership of the spontaneous movements. Gradually, the subjective conditions for the revolution developed and grew on the basis of these same spontaneous movements and through social awareness and the conscious leadership furnished at the outset by the circles of revolutionary intellectuals and later by the proletarian party. It was with this same background and through these same organizational forms that the revolutionary organization, which had established a direct and active relationship with the masses, came into existence.

In this light, the question that confronted the revolutionaries was this: Should they head the mass movement or not? Should a movement which is fundamentally economic and politically shortsighted be transformed into a well-rounded political movement? These intellectual-proletarian circles as a single unit had to form an organization of united professional revolutionaries and by way of leadership of all forms of struggle with a political context push the movement forward. An organization of professional revolutionaries that could guarantee "continuity," eliminate fragmentary and dispersed work, devise a prolonged and steadfast program for an all-encompassing, far-reaching struggle and guide the masses in this struggle had to be established.

In effect, masses of workers had been drawn into the struggle, had to some extent acquired class organization and had also produced their own organs of struggle. Alongside these organs, proletarian circles which were extensively in contact with the masses of workers and which enjoyed the possibility of vast circulation and propaganda had been created. Now the question was this: Should or should not this spontaneous struggle be transformed into a struggle which would be political in every aspect? It is precisely the method of approaching this question that distinguished the revolutionaries from the economists, the advocates of piecemeal efforts, and the followers of the spontaneous movement. According to Lenin, the economists reasoned that:

> the working masses themselves have not yet advanced the broad and militant political tasks which the revolutionaries are attempting to "impose" on them; that they must continue to struggle for *immediate* political demands, to conduct "the economic struggle against the employers and the goverment."... Others, far removed from any theory of "gradualness," said that it is possible and necessary to "bring about a political revolution," but this does not require building a strong organization of revolutionaries to train the proletariat in steadfast and stubborn struggle. all we need do is to snatch up our old friend, the "accessible" cudgel. To drop metaphor, it means that we must organize a general strike, or that we must stimulate the "spiritless" progress of the working-class movement by means of "excitative terror." Both these trends, the opportunist and the "revolutionaries," bow to the prevailing amateurism; neither believes that it can be eliminated, neither understands our primary and imperative practical task to establish *an organization of revolutionaries* capable of lending energy, stability, and continuity to the political struggle.*

* Ibid. pp 201-202.

But, here [in Iran] there are no traces of spontaneous mass movements as such and if there are, from the standpoint of time, place and scope, they are dispersed and limited. Here, there are no signs of class organizations or proletarian organizations. As a whole, the masses of workers are not involved in any course of struggle. And if among them, there appear conscious elements who organize themselves into small circles, they, too, lack the possibility for circulating, propagandizing and mass work. In effect, the absence of extensive spontaneous movements and difficult police-dominated conditions (undoubtedly the two are inseparably connected) have kept the workers far from any kind of struggle and thought of political struggle, and have deprived them of all experience, class organization, and even trade-unon consciousness. As a result, workers' circles which contemplate political struggle are scarce and there are virtually no serious links existing between the intellectual circles and these workers' circles and in turn between these circles and the masses of workers. Therefore, the masses of workers are not prepared to accept struggle and political consciousness. Only subsequent to years of spontaneous, economic and reformist struggle can the worker gradually become prepared to welcome political struggle, socialist consciousness, political and party organization. Here, where any form of reformist movement is immediately suppressed, it is natural that the masses of workers are increasingly separated from political struggle because political struggle requires persistence, organization, and continuous self-discipline and demands consciousness and devotion. In this situation where the worker is inevitably preoccupied with struggling for his daily bread and water, he neither has the opportunity for accepting political struggle nor does he in fact accept. Thus, we cannot witness the extensive emergence of the workers' circles in the absence of the spontaneous movement. (7,8)

Yet, is it absolutely true that always and under all conditions spontaneous movements reflect the abundance of the objective conditions for revolution, and that spontaneous movements indicate the imminence of the revolutionary phase? Is the opposite also true? That is, should we deduce that the lack of broad and spontaneous movements indicate a lack of objective conditions for the revolution, and that the revolutionary phase has not yet arrived? In my opinion, no. Under the present conditions in Iran, the lack of spontaneous movements does not mean a lack of objective conditions for revolution. We, in studying the objective conditions in our country, demonstrated that any recourse to "lack of preparedness of the objective conditions for revolution" reflects opportunism, compromise and reformism. It reveals a lack of political courage and is a rationalization for inaction. I think we must essentially keep in mind that the causes of the absence of mass movements are: on the one hand, the violent repression, constant and lengthy terror which are imposed by the imperialist dictatorship, which together with the broad political and ideological propaganda of the reaction, constitute the principle factor in the survival of imperialist domination; and on the other hand, the crucial weakness of the revolutionary forces in organization and leadership. Even when the masses were ready, these leaderships never succeeded in drawing them into the struggle on a broad basis. Because of incorrect leadership the masses were led to defeat. All of these elements taken together have created an

atmosphere of a kind of inactivity, defeat, despair, and capitulation, what R. Debray calls "the old burden of fear and humiliation." But what enables us to say the objective conditions for revolution exist? Did we not show this by analyzing the objective situation? Did we not show that the masses, because of their living conditions, though paralyzed, are ready to carry the burden of the anti-imperialist revolution? Are not these enthusiasms and ardors of the intellectual forces of the revolutionary and progressive classes, these imprisonments, these tortures, and these assassinations, are they not all the subjective reflection of the readiness of the objective conditions for the revolution? Unless the existing objective conditions necessitated the finding of a solution for the problems of the revolution, how would it be possible otherwise for the problems to be posed so widely, and for so many circles and militant groups to exist, drawing their members from the oppressed classes? And finally, are not these sporadic outbursts of the popular movement proof of the existence of the objective conditions for the revolution?

And what is our road? Today, sitting in wait for the extensive spontaneous mass movement to then guide it, without having engaged in revolutionary action, without attempting to thoroughly furnish the subjective conditions through revolutionary action itself, is tantamount to following the spontaneous movement in circumstances such as those in Russia; it signifies precisely the acceptance, in practice, of the existing situation. At one time, we reasoned that the existence of scattered groups corresponded with the absence of spontaneous mass movements and was associated with the sporadic, latent and limited movements of the masses; that the existence of a vast revolutionary organization corresponded with the presence of broad mass movements and with the growth and intensification of contradictions. But now, it must be said that the absence of spontaneous movements results not from the insufficient development of contradictions, but from persistent police suppression and the inactivity of the vanguard. In these circumstances, conditioning the existence of the vast revolutionary organization on that of the broad mass movements is, of course, conditioning it on the impossible, if it is done so without considering the role of the vanguard in creating such movements. The real vanguard of the revolution is that organizaton of revolutionaries which is able to actually and practically show the masses how to struggle and remove the deadend from the course of the struggle despite the difficulty of the conditions of the task, despite the suppression and despite the grave separation that exists between the vanguards and the masses. If we do not seriously consider by what methods of struggle can the real vanguard be created and if we regard the sufficient development of the contradictions as the condition for such an organization, then it seems that we are no different from those opportunists who were the followers of the natural course of events in the Russia of that time. In that time, the opportunists, the followers of the spontaneous movement, accused Lenin of exaggeration in his evaluation of the role of the conscious element, that he: "demands direct struggle against the government without first considering where the material forces for this struggle are to be obtained, and without indicating the path of the struggle."

This cannot be explained by purposes of secrecy, because the program does not refer to a plot but to a mass movement. And the masses cannot proceed by secret paths. Can we conceive of secret demonstrations and petitions?

Lenin responds:

> All those who talk about "overrating the importance of ideology", about exaggerating the role of the conscious element, etc., imagine that the labor movement pure and simple can elaborate, and will elaborate an independent ideology for itself, if only the workers "wrest their fate from the hands of their leaders."
>
> Thus, the author comes quite close to the question of the material forces" (organizers of strikes and demonstrations) and to the "paths" of the struggle, but, nevertheless, is still in a state of consternation, because he "worships" the mass movement, i.e. he regards it as something that relieves us of the necessity of conducting revolutionary activity and not as something that should encourage us and stimulate our revolutionary activity. It is impossible for a strike to remain a secret to those participating in it and to those immediately associated with it, but it may (and in the majority of cases does) remain a "secret" to the masses of the Russian workers, because the government takes care to cut all the communications with the strikers from spreading. Here indeed is where a special "struggle against the political police" is required, a struggle that can never be conducted actively by such large masses as take part in strikes. This struggle must be organized, according to "all the rules of the art," by people who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity. The fact that the masses are spontaneously being drawn into the movement does not make the organization of this struggle less necessary. On the contrary, it makes it more necessary...*

Where the conditions are such that the regime's police terror aims at and has succeeded in severing the links between the people and their intellectuals; where no links exist among the strikers; where terror and repression have held back the masses from any appreciable movement; where this same terror and permanent repression have consistently caused the masses to assume negative attitudes towards struggle and to avoid any political idea which in their opinion does not offer any salvation; and where the regime attempts to suffocate any mass movement in embryo—is a "special struggle" against the political police necessary? Can the masses perform this task? Can the masses be expected to perceive the straw nature of the regime or to learn it through their own experiences? How can the masses possibly become conscious of their historical power (the masses who do not ask why should we struggle but can we struggle, and how can we resist in the face of the regime's awesome power) when repression has led certain "revolutionary" intellectuals to explain the ferocity of this "paper

* Ibid, p. 208.

tiger'' by the objective conditions being immature and the contradictions insufficiently developed, while at the same time not seeing that it is precisely the repressive force of the anti-people army which is the main factor for the survival of imperialist domination? How can the struggle

which finds its course in history and whose victory historical conditions guarantee; the struggle whose roots are in the material conditions of the masses' existence; the struggle which is reflected at the same time in the conscious action of the revolutionary vanguard and the sporadic and dispersed movements of the masses; and finally the struggle which under heavy dictatorial and persistently repressive conditions has taken on an explosive character at times bringing a large part of the masses out on the streets and other times dying out as a transient flame; how can the reality of this struggle be demonstrated to the masses in a concrete way? How can a current be set in motion by which the masses can become conscious of themselves, their interests, and their formidable power and be drawn into the struggle? By persistent suppression, by the backwardness of the (people's) leadership, by the inability of the vanguard to fulfill its role, and finally by the hellish propaganda of a regime which relies on the force of the bayonet, a colossal barrier of suppressive power has been erected between the people and their intellectuals, among the people themselves and between the necessity of the mass struggle and the struggle itself. How can this barrier be broken through and the roaring torrent of the mass struggle be unleashed? The only way is armed action.

The necessity for the conscious role and active practice of the revolutionary vanguard has not been weakened but strengthened precisely due to the increasing significance of the conscious counter-revolutionary forces. At the present time it is only through the most acute form of revolutionary action, that is, through armed struggle, and the shaking of that colossal barrier that the vanguard can show the masses the struggle which finds its course in history. It must be shown that ''the struggle has really started, and its progress requires the support and active participation of the masses'' (paraphrasing Regis Debray). It must be shown in practice that anti-revolutionary violence can be conquered and that stability and security are a farce. It is in the course of this action that the masses' historical stamina, accumulated and dormant behind the colossal barrier of the suppressive power, is gradually released; and it is in this same course that the masses gradually and in the heart of the armed struggle become conscious of themselves, their historical mission, and their undefeatable strength. It is at this point that some raise their voices against us, crying: these impatient, adventurous, leftist youths, who do not have the patience to wait until the masses are ready for armed struggle, until the proletarian vanguard organization (of course, along a solely political line) prepares the masses for armed struggle; who do not have the patience to wait until ''the exploited and oppressed masses realize that they will not be able to continue their existence as before, and demand its change'' and ''the exploiters are unable to live and rule, as in the past,'' (Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*) to then take up the armed struggle; they have mistaken the struggle against the political police and the militia for political work, political struggle and persistent political activity.

Although the forms of these accusations differ, their essence is the same as that of the charges made against Lenin by the Russian opportunists. They said that there was no need for the organization of professional revolutionaries, and that,

> By theoretical reasoning (not by the growth of party tasks, which grow together with the party'') Iskra solved the problem of the immediate transition of the struggle against absolutism. In all probability it senses the difficulty of such a task for the workers under the present state of affairs, but lacking the patience to wait until the workers will have gathered sufficient forces for this struggle.

And Lenin responds:

> Yes, we have indeed lost all ''patience'', ''waiting'' for the blessed time, long promised us by diverse ''conciliators'', when the Economists will have stopped charging the workers with their own backwardness and justifying their own lack of energy with allegations that the workers lack strength.*

the truth is that is that if the struggle against despotism, at that time, was fundamentally political, now the struggle against despotism is basically political-military. If in Russia the true vanguard would come to the fore as a result of a series of economic, political and ideological struggles, now (in Iran) solely a political-military struggle is able to create the true vanguard. Let us explain further. What is the main task of the vanguard? Is not the historical task of the revolutionary vanguard to make use of conscious revolutionary practice and establish links with the masses to tap the historical power of the masses and to bring that power to bear upon the decisive battlefield of the whole struggle? Will this not be a decisive factor in the whole struggle? The more complicated the conditions, the more powerful the suppressive forces of the enemy and the more urgently the question of the revolution is posed, naturally the more difficult will be this ''tapping.'' It is true that when the masses become conscious, on the basis of their material conditions, they are transformed into a tremendous material force, the only force capable of transforming society. But the problem has always been to know how to give this consciousness to the masses; through what organizations, and by what means to carry it to them. And in addition, through what forms of organization and what methods of struggle can the revolutionary force of the masses be guided in the correct direction so as to bring about the victory of the revolution, the downfall of the reaction and the conquest of political power.

With the increasing alertness of the reaction, the growing reliance on suppressive force as the main instrument for rule, and along with the passage of revolution from the West to the East, the role of the conscious vanguard and that of the militant organization of vanguard revolutionaries have acquired greater significance every day. In the era of Marx and Engels, the vanguard organization consisting of professional revolutionaries never had the importance it attained in Lenin's era.

If in Russia it was imperative that an organization of professional revolutionaries perform this role by employing various methods of

* Ibid, p. 191.

political struggle and all-around political exposures, in China and Vietnam it became necessary to perform these tasks, fundamentally, by way of the highest form of struggle, i.e. armed struggle. In Russia it was possible to undertake armed insurrection only when the masses, on a wide scale, discarded the possibility of living under the existing conditions and virtually demanded their change, and when the government was also unable to rule by the previous methods. This demand for change and this inability to rule by the previous methods had come about through the process of an economic-political struggle. Thus, the principle proved applicable, then, that attempting an armed uprising, without the masses having accepted its appropriateness through their own political experience, is an abortive undertaking. Further, the principle proved applicable that if the call for the uprising and the proposal of a particular slogan, e.g. "The rule of the soviets," was put forth a little too soon or too late, it would cause the defeat of the insurrection. Where, under the conditions of Russia, the historical vigor of the masses took form through a series of fundamentally economic and political struggles gradually passing from potentiality to actuality and erupting into armed uprising, in China the revolutionary vigor of the masses was invoked exactly while the revolutionary consciousness was being conveyed to them in the midst of the prolonged armed struggle and as a result, it lacked that explosive character.

In this way, the armed urban insurrection is transformed into the prolonged armed struggle and the revolutionary vigor of the masses gradually enters the decisive forefront. Thus, the people's army also becomes the "armed propaganda" force. Actually, when the main base of the revolution is in the countryside, when the rural masses, subjected to imperialist and semi-feudal domination, and whose material living conditions automatically disunite them (according to Marx, they do not even constitute a class), and thus, when the rural masses lack any possibility for organizing organs for classical economic-political struggle (trade unions and syndicates); one sees that the only form of action which can organize the peasantry is the armed struggle, and the only organization capable of giving it organization and unity is a political-military one.

To defeat the reaction, the broad rural masses must be drawn to the struggle. To defeat the reaction, the reactionary army must be smashed. To smash the reactionary army, there must exist a people's army. The only way to smash the reactionary army and to build the people's army is prolonged guerrilla struggle; a guerrilla war is necessary not only in terms of military strategy for smashing the powerful army, but also in terms of political strategy for mobilizing the masses. The political and military factors are fused together in an inevitable and organic way. On the one hand, the mobilization of the masses is the condition for the victory of the armed struggle both militarily and politically; and on the other hand, mobilization of the masses is not possible without the armed struggle. This is the lesson taught by not only the Cuban revolutionary war but also those of China and Vietnam. Does anyone hold that the Chinese masses on a broad scale possessed revolutionary consciousness and understood the necessity of armed struggle and the appropriateness of this tactic beforehand? Or is it that this question is posed incorrectly and we are now faced with different conditions?

Perhaps, objections will be raised claiming that it was the communist party which initiated the Chinese revolutionary war and this party initiated the Long March only after years of fundamentally political struggle and after resorting to urban armed uprisings and gaining experience. Thus, we too only have the right to turn to armed struggle after such a period. But, if in China it was possible for the party to establish itself with a few members and after a few years of political experience transform itself into a large vanguard force, it was due precisely to the particular conditions that existed there. What follows should be read carefully:

> In the period (1920-1927) Sun Yatsen was leading the Koumintang Party. The Communist Party, with its own independent organization, functioned within the Koumintang Party. We, the Communists, had imposed some conditions on our participation in the Koumintang organization: 1. Unity with Russia. 2. Koumintang's unity with the Communist Party, meaning that our party was to maintain its independence and to have political and organizational freedom of action. 3. Assisting the workers and the peasants. This condition required that the Party be reorganized, the anti-revolutionary elements be expelled and the army take on revolutionary leadership.
>
> Sun Yatsen accepted the conditions, and on that basis, cooperation was initiated between us. In 1924, our party decided to introduce its members into the Koumintang. But, at that time, the Chinese Communist Party, despite its considerable influence among the workers and the peasants, had no more than a hundred members. The participation of the communist members and combatants in Koumintang enabled the Communist Party to work better, among the workers and peasants. In this way, the Party directly worked among the workers, the peasants, and the students, and strengthened the unity of the workers. The Party succeeded, through cooperation with the Koumintang, to extend its activities among the country's intellectuals, including in the northern area; and united the students not only in the South but also in the North.
>
> We assisted Sun Yatsen in composing the revolutionary military forces. We created the "Vampova" military school to train the army's leadership cadres, i.e., the revolutionary officers. Comrade Mao Tse-Tung became a member of the Koumintang Central Committee.

What can be seen here is that not only the democratic conditions of that period, but also the direct participation of the Communist Party in state power created vast possibilities for free activity not only amongst the workers and the students, but also the peasants. This party was able to infiltrate even the army and train communist military cadres. These conditions made it possible for the process of worker-peasant unity to begin, not in the course of an armed struggle, but by means of free political and organizational activities, and to commence the revolutionary war with an army. The point that the Communist Party, having only a few hundred members, enjoyed a wide influence among the workers, the students and even the peasants, displays how the Chinese Communist Party was able, under a favorable set of conditions, to rapidly transform itself, through

fundamentally unarmed experiences, to some extent into a real vanguard force.

Must we now sit and wait for such a favorable state of affairs, so that we can, then, become the real vanguards and prepare the conditions for armed struggle? Or no? The real vanguard must itself come to the fore in the course of the armed struggle and the politico-military action. Must we wait until the communist party is formed, and them initiate the revolutionary war on a large scale, for example with an army? Or no? The politico-military nucleus itself can, by initiating guerrilla warfare and in the process of its development, create the party, the people's true vanguard politico-military organization, and the people's army.

To depict the differences between the democratic or semi-democratic conditions where purely political activities are possible, and those of a vast and intensely violent dictatorship where the urban masses, and at their head the proletariat, and foremostly the peasantry lack any possibility for any form of organization, we must turn to the situation in Russia. If in Russia:

> political exposures in themselves serve as a powerful instrument for *disintegrating* the system we oppose, as a means for diverting from the enemy his casual or temporary allies, as a means for spreading hostility and distrust among the permanent partners of the autocracy.*

here, (in Iran) under the present conditions, only politico-military exposures, only the essentially political armed action, can serve as a powerful instrument for "disintegrating" the system. The politico-military armed action alone can intensify the internal contradictions of the ruling bureaucracy. If in Russia:

> the moral significance of this declaration of war will be all the greater, the wider and more powerful the campaign of exposure will be and the more numerous and determined the social *class* that has *declared war in order to begin the war.***

here, today, the declaration of war is the war itself; the two are inseparable. The moral significance of war depends on its material progress and its material progress depends on its moral significance. The more numerous the blows dealt to the enemy, the more it disintegrates; the more political force grows, the more its moral signficance and its appeal to the masses will increase. And this causes the material strengthening of the politico-military force. (9)

* Ibid, p. 190.
** Ibid, p. 190.

EXAMINATION OF DEBRAY'S REVOLUTION IN THE REVOLUTION?

As we said, under the influence of a series of pre-judgements, we failed to deeply understand the fundamental concepts that Debray had presented in THE REVOLUTION IN THE REVOLUTION? as the inner elements of the Cuban experience. In fact, we rejected in practice these new concepts without understanding them.

We did not say that the path shown by Debray was incompatible with Iran's specific conditions, nor could we say that it was impracticable under Latin American conditions in as much as we had no precise knowledge of these conditions; nevertheless, we rejected it. This rejection was not based on a set of specific objective considerations, but rather was formulated on the basis of general principles of Marxism-Leninism.(10)

It appeared that Debray's thesis denies the role of the Marxist-Leninist party as the only force capable of giving an all embracing leadership to the revolution. It appeared that Debray's thesis underestimates the importance of the theory of Marxism-Leninism, i.e. the revolutionary theory, as the guide to practice. It appeared that Debray had ignored the leading role of political matters over the military ones and even had assigned priority to military matters over political matters. Debray quotes Castro: " 'Who will make the revolution in Latin America? Who? The people, the revolutionaries, with or without a party.' " (Debray, p. 98.) Debray then asserts:

> "Fidel Castro says simply that there is no revolution without a vanguard; that this vanguard is not necessarily the Marxist-Leninist party; and that those who want to make the revolution have the right and the duty to constitute themselves a vanguard, independently of these parties... There is, then, no metaphysical equation in which vanguard = Marxist-Leninist party; there are merely dialectical conjunctions between a given function—that of the vanguard in history—and a given form of organization—that of the Marxist-Leninist party. These conjunctions arise out of prior history and depend on it. Parties exist here on earth and are subject to the rigors of terrestrial dialectics. If they have been born, they can die and be reborn in other forms." (Debray, pp. 98-99.)

These assertions were welcomed by the liberal and the so-called anti-dogmatic intellectuals, since in these assertions they saw, to their liking, the refutation of the authoritative and vanguard role of any Marxist-Leninist party. They, on the one hand, want to enjoy the titles of revolutionary and leader; on the other hand, their liberalism does not permit them to relinquish their ideological unscrupulousness and pseudo-Marxist eclecticism. They can accept neither Marxism-Leninism as the only scientific world outlook—the ideology that can guide a permanent revolution—nor the discipline needed to work in a Marxist-Leninist organization. They thus abuse Fidel and Regis Debray's assertions, whereas it is evident throughout the book that the issue is not the denial of the leading role of the proletariat and his ideology. The Marxist-Leninist

party, here, is viewed as a special form of organization. To cite Debray, if a party does not profoundly and radically change its peacetime organization, and does not forge a new organization appropriate to the real responsibilities of a real vanguard, then the Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries have the right to launch the revolution apart from this Marxist-Leninist party as a special form of organization, to endeavor to bring into existence a new organization which can fulfill the responsibilities of a true vanguard—a truly Marxist-Leninist vanguard—and become in practice worthy of the name which the supposedly MarxistLeninist parties have usurped.

In fact, here we have a distinction between the form of the party and its content. The content of the party is the task of the Marxist-Leninist vanguard in history, a proletarian organization's task in history; its form consists of those organizational forms which are required to accomplish such an historical task. Whereas the content always remains the same, these organizational forms are subject to the rigors of terrestial dialectics. Thus the party can die and be reborn in a new form. This is why we are faced with the "reconstitution of the party" (Debray, p. 102), "rebirth of the party in a new form," etc. Debray himself rebuffs those petty-bourgeois intellectuals who want to abuse these assertions in order to justify their liberalism. He resolutely says:

> "Let us speak clearly. The time has passed for believing that it suffices to be 'in the party' to be a revolutionary. But the time has also come for putting an end to the acrimonious, obsessive, and sterile attitudes of those who think that in order to be a revolutionary one need only be 'anti-party'; these attitudes constitute two sides of the same coin, basically identical. The Manichaeism of the Party (no revolution outside the Party) finds its reflection in anti-party Manichaeism (no revolution with the Party); both are quietist. In Latin American today a revolutionary is not defined by his formal relationship with the Party, whether he is for or against it. The value of a revolutionary, like that of a party, depends on his activity."
> (Debray, p. 104, footnote.)

When action and particularly armed action is being posed, these very same ivory tower intellectuals step back and, in order to justify their ivory tower idleness and indeed in order to justify their own existence, say that revolution needs theory, and that it needs a comprehensive analysis of socio-economic-political conditions. Meanwhile they ignore the fact that exactly because of their "lack" of relations with this very armed action, these parties have now fallen from their vanguard position; they ignore the fact that the old organization of the Marxist-Leninist party has lost its commensurability with the new historical responsibility, that now a new Marxist-Leninist organization and a more rigorous discipline than that of the previous organization are required, and that every person's relationship to the revolution will be determined by his relationship with this new organization.

But before we consider Debray's principal idea, namely, the relation between the party and the guerrillas and between political and military

work, it is appropriate to clarify the relationship between theory and practice from Debray's point of view.

In "The Errors of the Foco Theory," Clea Silva contends that Debray is attempting to destroy the basic principle that "without revolutionary theory there is no revolutionary movement" when he says "The best teacher of Marxism-Leninism is the enemy, in face-to-face confrontation. Study and apprenticeship are necessary but not decisive."

In my opinion Clea Silva's deduction is not correct. However, let us see what is meant by theory. Silva himself replies: "There is revolutionary struggle only when we know how, against whom, and at which moment we must struggle." (Silva, p. 23) Does Regis Debray consider these to be secondary, unimportant, or unnecessary problems? I think this is not the case. Does not Debray attempt to advance a theory and a series of strategic achievements based on the experience of the Cuban revolution? Is not his book basically an attempt to answer how and by what means should the enemy be fought? Debray does not present in his book a comprehensive analysis of the Latin American socio-economic conditions. Does this indicate that he considers this problem unimportant and unnecessary? Why, then, does he consider, for example, the lack of socio-economic analysis on the part of the Latin American communist parties a shortcoming? However, Debray's illogical and excessive attention to the Cuban revolution's particular forms and particular specifics, indeed, to the exceptional aspects of the Cuban experience, and his attempt to generalize them throughout Latin America cause a series of errors which should be mentioned.

Even if the Cuban revolutionaries applied the strategic principles unconsciously, should we, too, start without awareness of the strategy, without a relatively clear understanding of the general lines of action which lay ahead of us? If we want to intiate a people's war, should we not have a clear understanding of the strategy of the peoples' wars and the special conditions of each country where these peoples' wars were carried out? If this is not necessary, then why was *Revolution in the Revolution?* itself devoted to this task? If it is necessary, one cannot solve the problem of theoretical works about peoples' wars doing "as much harm as good" (emphasizing the dialectical relation of theory and action) with such superficial and empiricist treatment that therefore one should not study them or "one may well consider it a stroke of good luck that Fidel had not read the military writings of Mao Tse-tung before disembarking on the coast of Oriente." If the Cuban path is to be retraced step by step, which is an unthinkable thing, and if we wish to generalize every exceptional case, one should mention that the Cuban revolutionaries themselves did not intend to undertake a protracted war at the beginning, whereas for us the protractedness of the war is an established fact. (They wanted to overthrow Batista's government by performing a series of combat, in fact shock, operations concomitant with urban insurrections. In the course of action this plan ended in failure and a new path was adopted.)

In fact, because revolution in all societies is effected under a series of general laws, and since peoples' wars contain a series of general laws, all the past revolutionary experiences provide lessons which should be learned and for this reason "do much good." But if one considers that in the final

analysis revolutionary action enables one to discover the specific objective conditions of each country and to correct and elaborate the revolutionary theory, then undoubtedly, mechanical generalizations of the old theories "do harm." Only with clear general lines and a general strategy of action is it possible to establish an organic relationship between experiences and tactical principles, to draw lessons from them, to correct and elaborate the tactical errors in relation to general strategy and thus even to correct and elaborate the general strategy itself and determine with precision its pertinent special forms of action.

Debray says: "The armed revolutionary struggle encounters specific conditions on each continent, in each country, but these are neither 'natural' nor obvious. So true is this that in each case years of sacrifice are necessary in order to discover and acquire an awareness of them." (Debray, p. 20) Is it possible to understand the specific conditions without reference to the general conditions? And are not the revolutionary experiences useful for understanding the very same general experiences? The assertion that "in Latin America a few years of experience in armed struggle of all kinds have done more to reveal the particularity of objective conditions than preceding decades of borrowed political theory," (Debray, p. 23-24.) by no means lessens the importance of the revolutionary theory; rather, it merely implies that borrowed political theory cannot become the proper guideline for revolutionary action. But only in connection with theory and in connection with the general conditions and the analysis of the specific conditions can this experience be the mainspring of a new theory and a new guideline for action. In brief, it is action which finally determines the validity or invalidity of our theory. Nonetheless, we are compelled to initiate our action by summing up the previous theories and experiences.

There are those who contemplate a relatively long period—a period whose basic characteristic is theoretical education and ideological struggle—for grasping the theory of revolution and an all-embracing knowledge of the objective conditions. They say that we need theoreticians similar to Lenin, by which, of course, they do not mean the Lenin who was reared in the process of a prolonged and active struggle, but rather someone who has a vast encyclopedic theoretical knowledge. Before we close this discussion, it is appropriate to mention one point regarding their argument:

In the history of the revolutionary experience and the international communist movement of the current century, we encounter essentially three types of struggle: ideological, economic, and political. If we consider the historical succession of these experiences, we clearly observe how the role of the theoretical and economic struggle has progressively diminished and how the political struggle has increasingly dominated the whole of the revolutionary struggle. In order to comprehend the lessening of the importance of theory in contrast to the practical political struggle, it is sufficient to glance at the documents of the communist movement: *Capital, Anti-Duhring, What is to be Done?, On New Democracy,* etc. In brief, in today's international communist movement, which is proceeding mainly in the subjugated countries, we seldom come across theoretical works on the level with *Capital, Anti-Duhring,* or *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism.* Does not this fact indicate that the international communist movement,

which in general is engaged in direct revolutionary action, neither has the opportunity nor the need to work on pure theory? Does not this imply that we increasingly need practitioners rather than theoreticians?11

The situation with regard to the economic struggle is the same. If we consider the process of revolutionary struggle in each country where it has gained importance, we will note that the economic struggle is more and more losing its significance. This situation itself is also the consequence of the ever increasing dominance of politics over economics, the consequence of the dominance of the class enemy maintained by the most suppressive means of repression and terror, the consequence of the imperialistic global domination; and, in short, it is the consequence of the fact that imperialistic global domination is passing through its period of death agony. In fact the development of the process of revolution on the global scale, on the one hand, has, more than ever, put on the order of the day the problem of how to seize political power, the acute problems of how to make revolution and in what way can the revolution crush the imperialistic dominance, and, in short, direct revolutionary action. On the other hand, the very same process of revolution on the global scale is a type of theoretical preparation for the present revolution. Now the content of revolution is more clear than ever, while what remains to be clarified, and what will be clarified only through direct revolutionary action, is he specific forms which this content assumes under specific conditions. The difficulty of the task rests not in preparing the program of the revolution, determining the objectives of the revolution, or discerning the forces of revolution and counter-revolution, but rather in determining the ways and means which are to be applied in order to carry the revolution to victory.

Party and Guerrilla: Political Work and Military Work

We used to reject Debray's views on the relationship between party and guerrilla, and between political work and military work. On the one hand; we were confronting Mao's and Giap's stress on the guiding role of the communist party in popular armed struggle. On the other hand, Debray was telling us that the vanguard is not necessarily a Marxist-Leninist party, that the guerrilla force is the embryo of the party, and that the guerrilla himself is the party. From this contradiction we thus concluded that Debray's thesis is a deviation from the principles of Marxism-Leninism. But we showed in the previous lines that this is not so, and saw that the issue is not over the denial of the role of the Marxist-Leninist vanguard; rather it is over those forms of organization and revolutionary action that a vanguard must employ in order to fulfill the tasks of the vanguard and transform itself into the genuine vanguard of the people. But what is this new organization and new action? And why have these new forms of organization and action become necessary? Before anything else, one should note that Debray's thesis basically rests on the fact that the instrument of the survival of the imperialistic dominance is mainly the violent and repressive military apparatus; his thesis also rests on the fact that the methods of maintaining this dominance have rendered all forms of reformist struggle not only insignificant but also impossible. Debray believes that the development of the revolutionary movement has reached

such a stage that the main link of the present revolutionary struggles in Latin America is the problem of seizing political power and crushing the backbone of imperialistic dominance, i.e. the army. Thus he says:

> "In Latin America today a political line which, in terms of its consequences, is not susceptible to expression as a precise and consistent military line, cannot be considered revolutionary. Any line that claims to be revolutionary must give a concrete answer to the question: How to overthrow the power of the capitalist state? In other words, how to break its backbone, the army, continuously reinforced by North American military missions?"
> (Debray, p. 24.)

Thus, if one does not truly envisage this problem, and evades its solution, then even though one accepts the armed struggle in words, he is not revolutionary.

It is at this point Debray's fundamental thesis is put forth, a thesis which should receive our attention now more than ever. What is the path of revolution? Is it the political party that should initiate armed struggle; or is it armed struggle itself which in its process of development and growth, in its process of increasing popularization, creates an organ which is capable of giving comprehensive leadership to the revolutionary struggle of the masses? Is it the party which should prepare the subjective conditions for the armed struggle or will the subjective conditions come into existence during the armed struggle? Should efforts be directed towards creating or strengthening the party or towards the practical preparation for armed struggle? Debray says "These questions have met with a standard resonse in the history of Marxism and in history as such. An answer so immutable that the mere asking of it in this form will seem a *heresy* to many. That answer is that the Party must be strengthened first, for it is the creator and the directive nucleus of the peoples army. Only the party of the working class can create a true army of the people—as the guarantor of a scientifically based political line—and win power in the interest of the workers." (Debray, p. 95.)

This is the response of those who accept the necessity of armed struggle in a certain phase and as a particular means. Of course, the words of reformists who question the necessity of armed struggle no longer have any weight, nor is it an urgent necessity to respond to them. But on what grounds does the argument of those who believe in the antecedence of the party to armed struggle and of political work to military work stand? Debray presents their argument in two parts:

> "*Theoretical Orthodoxy:* It is not a matter of destroying an army but of seizing state power in order to transform the social structure. Bourgeois state power has its own superstructure (political, judicial, constitutional, etc.) which is not to be confused with its repressive apparatus. . . . It devolves upon the representatives of the exploited classes and of their vanguard, the working class, to carry on this *political* fight up to and including its armed form, revolutionary civil war. Now then, a class is represented by a political party, not by a military instrumentality. The proletariat is represented by that party which expresses its class ideology, Marxism-Leninism. Only the leadership of this party can scientifically defend its class interests.
>
> "To the extent that it is a matter of intervening in the total social structure, it is necessary to have scientific knowledge of society in all its complexity, at all its levels (political, ideological, economic, etc.) and in its development. This is the condition for carrying out a global struggle at all levels; and the military struggle, only one level among others, has meaning only within the context of a comprehensive intervention at all levels by the popular forces against bourgeois society. Only the workers' party, on the basis of a scientific understanding of the social structure and of existing conditions, can decide the slogans, the goals, and the alliances required at a given moment. In brief, the party determines the political content and the goal to be pursued, and the people's army is merely an *instrument* of implementation."
> (Debray, pp. 95-96.)

As we indicated, we encounter these statements precisely at a time when the difficulty of the matter is not theoretical but practical, and the burning issue at hand is not the understanding of the society but rather its change, and in brief when the hub of the matter lies in finding those forms of action and organization with which one must execute the revolution. Does not this indicate a fundamental fallacy in the perception of the difference between form and content, in perceiving that the party—as a special form of organizaion—itself is an instrument? Precisely at a time when the repressive army is the chief factor in maintaining imperialistic dominance, is it not a kind of political retreat to say that the principal problem is not to destroy the army but to conquer the state power?12

In a situation where one should precisely determine what form of action and organization ought to be selected, is not evading the definition of the principal form of action a kind of reformism? It is, of course, true that "the main issue is the conquest of state power," but in today's conditions the principal and necessary requirement for the conquest of state power is the confrontation with and annihilation of the army and the repressive power of the imperialistic state. The point is not that armed struggle is one form of many various forms of struggle which under special conditions and with special preparedness becomes necessary. Rather, the point is that armed struggle is that form of struggle which constitutes the groundwork of an all encompassing struggle, and only on such a groundwork do other various forms of struggle become necessary and useful. The point is that the organ—or if we wish to call it the party—of the proletariat's class struggle, an organ which is truly a vanguard of the people, an organ which is truly able to guide the manifold struggle of the masses, itself can come into existence only through armed struggle.

Debray says: "There is, then, no metaphysical equation in which vanguard = Marxist-Leninist party," (Debray, p. 98.) Here, the dispute is not over the denial of the content of the vanguard Marxist-Leninist party, rather it is over a specific form of action and organization. Thus, the equation Marxist-Leninist party = vanguard, where form and appearance

are shown on one side and content on the other, is necessarily a concrete and historical equation, and not an immutable and everlasting one. It is only in specific historical conditions that for a given content specific forms are imperative. Therefore, "there are merely dialectical conjunctions between a given function—that of the vanguard in history—and a given form of organization—that of the Marxist-Leninist party. These conjunctions arise out of prior history and depend on it. Parties exist here on earth and are subject to the rigors of terrestrial dialectics." (Debray, pp. 98-99.)

At this point Debray sets out to refute historical orthodoxy, an historical orthodoxy which justifies theoretical orthodoxy with reliance on the experiences of the peoples' war and the vanguard role of the political party. Despite its reliance on the experience of peoples' wars, this orthodoxy as a whole results in a separation between political work and military work. This separation at the beginning is a temporal separation; that is, it believes that only a vanguard party can guide armed struggle and people's war, and that this vanguard party will be formed not through the armed struggle itself, but rather through other forms of struggle which are mostly political, economic or ideological. Actually, the reliance of this orthodoxy on a series of purely formal phenomena in the experiences of the peoples' wars not only creates a real separation between peoples' wars and revolutionary practice, between political work and military work, but also causes erroneous inferences from the lessons of peoples' wars themselves. Neither peaceful struggle nor a purely political and economic struggle, but special conditions permitted the communist parties of China and Vietnam to transform themselves into a genuine vanguard, able to guide the people's war. Debray properly shows how adherence to a series of particular forms of action whose concrete conditions have been denied by history transforms the tactical separation between political and military work, between preparation for war and war itself, into a strategic separation.

Debray asks: "In what form can the historic vanguard appear?" He replies:

"What is depends on what was, what will be on what is. The question of parties, as they are today, is a question of history. To answer it, we must look to the past." (Debray, p. 99.) At this point, Debray refers to the conditions of birth and growth of the parties of China and Vietnam with a dialectical and concrete view. He shows how these parties, without problems such as "revolution with or without party" ever being posed, very early transformed themselves into vanguard parties. Also, the history of these parties strikingly shows that they successfully transformed themselves into vanguard parties only in the midst of a real struggle and while engaged in the seizure of political power.

> "A party is marked by its conditions of birth, its development, the class or alliance of classes that it represents, and the social milieu in which it has developed. Let us take the same counterexamples in order to discover what historic conditions permit the application of the traditional formula for party and guerrilla relationships: China and Vietnam.
>
> "(1) The Chinese and Vietnamese parties were involved from the beginning with the problem of establishing revolutionary power. This link was not theoretical but *practical* and manifested itself very early in

> the form of a grevious experience. The Chinese Party was born in 1921, when Sun Yat-sen's bourgeois revolution . . . was in the ascendancy. From its inception it received direct aid from the Soviet mission, including military advisers led by Joffe and later by Borodin. The latter, on his arrival, organized the training of Chinese Communist officers at the Whampoa Military Academy, which soon permitted the Chinese Party, as Mao said in 1938, 'to recognize the importance of military matters.' Three years after it was organized it underwent the disastrous experience of the first revolutionary civil war (1924-1927), the urban insurrection, and the Canton Strike in which it took a leading role. It assimilated this experience and, under the aegis of Mao Tse-tung, transmuted it into self-critical understanding, which led to the adoption of an antithetical line, contrary even to the advice of the Third International, i.e., the withdrawal to the countryside and the rupture with the Koumintang.
>
> "The Vietnamese Party came into being in 1930, immediately organized peasant insurrections in the hinterland which were quickly repressed, and two years later defined its line, under the aegis of Ho Chi Minh, in its first program of action: 'The only path to liberation is that of armed mass struggle.' 'Our party,' wrote Giap, 'came into being when the Vietnamese revolutionary movement was at its peak. From the beginning it led the peasants, encouraged them to rise up and establish soviet power. Thus, at an early stage, it became aware of the problems of revolutionary power and armed struggle.' In brief, these parties transformed themselves, within a few years of their founding, into vanguard parties, each one with its political line, elaborated independently of international social forces, and each profoundly linked to its people.
>
> "(2) In the course of their subsequent development, international contradictions were to place these parties—like the Bolshevik Party some years earlier—at the head of popular resistance to foreign imperialism. . . . The class struggle took the form of a patriotic war, and the establishment of socialism corresponded to the restoration of national independence: the two are linked. These parties, spearheading the war of the people against the foreigners, consolidated themselves as the standard-bearers of the fatherland. . ..
>
> "(3) The circumstances of this same war of liberation led certain parties originally composed of students and the best of the workers elite to withdraw to the countryside to carry on a guerrilla war against the occupying forces. They then merged with the agricultural workers and small farmers; the Red Army and the Liberation Forces (Vietminh) were transformed into peasant armies under the leadership of the party of the working class. They achieved *in practice* the alliance of the majority class and the vanguard class: the worker-peasant alliance. The Communist Party, in this case, was the result and the generative force of this alliance. So were its leaders, not artificially appointed by a congress or co-opted in traditional fashion, but tested, molded, and tempered by this terrible struggle which they led to victory. . . .
>
> "Without going into detail, historic circumstances have not permitted Latin American Communist Parties, for the most part, to

take root or develop in the same way. The conditions of their founding, their growth, their link with the exploited classes are obviously different. Each one may have its own history but they are alike in that they have not had the opportunity, existing as they do in countries winning power in the way the Chinese and Vietnamese parties have; they have not had the oportunity, existing as they do in countries possessing formal political independence, of leading a war of national liberation; and they have therefore not been able to achieve the worker-peasant alliance—an interrelated aggregation of limitations arising from shared historical conditions.

"The natural result of this history is a certain structure of directive bodies and of the parties themselves, adapted to the circumstances in which they were born and grew. But, by definition, historic situations are not immutable. The Cuban Revolution and the process it has set in motion throughout Latin America have upset the old perspectives. A revolutionary armed struggle, wherever it exists or is in preparation, requires a thoroughgoing transformation of peacetime practices. . . ."
(Debray, pp. 99-101.)

What is the task of Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries? If we put aside the revisionist and reformist parties, parties which essentially deny the necessity of the armed struggle, few paths will be set forth for discussion. If a party has accepted the necessity of armed struggle as the decisive path, then it must profoundly and fundamentally transform its peacetime organization. No longer is there any room for armed action to be treated as a branch of party activity, or for the guerrilla forces to be subordinated to a political force which is detached from military and war problems.

If an action is basically political-military, and if the fighting cadres are composed of the political cadres of the past, this should fundamentally affect the structure of leadership and organization. However, the imporant thing is that the guerrilla force be applied not in the direction of reformist goals and not as a branch of party activity, but rather as a political-military action which constitutes the basis and the pivot of the struggle. But what is the path open to revolutionary forces who face a party with a reformist leadership? Should they expend their efforts building a party (as a special form of organization and action) that in the course of non-armed struggle transforms itself into a vanguard, isolates the revisionist and reformist parties, and then prepares the conditions for armed struggle; or must these very same tasks be fulfilled during armed struggle? Debray shows how adoption of a series of in fact reformist tactics and incorrect comprehension of the new conditions, conditions which make any kind of peaceful or merely political or ideological struggle futile, conditions under which political parties have no deep ties with the masses, mar the revolutionary strategy and cast the matter of armed struggle to the abyss of oblivion.

"Hence the oft-repeated classic involution: a new revolutionary organization appears on the scene. It aspires to legal existence and then to participation in 'normal' political life for a certain time, in order to consolidate and make a name for itself and thus prepare the conditions for armed struggle. But, lo and behold, it is gradually absorbed, swallowed up by the routine of this public life, which becomes the

stage for its normal activities. . . .

"The prospects of insurrectional struggle diminish, delayed first for a few months then for years. Time passes, with its vicissitudes, and there is an increasing tendency to view the opening of hostilities as a somewhat sacrilegious temptation, a kind of adventurism, perennially 'premature' . . . . The militants must understand that to enter into armed struggle at a given moment would be to destroy the sacred unity of the organization, to sabotage its legality, to provoke repressions against its leaders. In short, the political organization has become an end in itself. It will not pass over to armed struggle because it must *first* wait until it establishes itself solidly as the party of the vanguard, even though in reality it cannot expect recognition of its vanguard status except through armed struggle. This vicious circle has plagued the revolutionary struggle for years.

"Consequently, it is useless to create antibodies in the heart of existing political organizations: the opportunist infection, far from being halted, will be aggravated, exacertabed."
(Debray, pp. 120-121.)

Under conditions where, says Debray, "without armed struggle there is no well-defined vanguard," the time has passed for us to recognize the revolutionaries by their verbal affiliations with the revolution and Marxism-Leninism.

" . . . [I]t is necessary to avoid the diversion of efforts and resources toward 'pure' political or 'pure' ideological fronts . . . [I]nasmuch as the revolutionary movement can only be activated by an insurrectional outlook, efforts must be concentrated on political-military organization. *Revolutionary politics, if they are not to be blocked, must be diverted from politics as such.* Political resources must be thrown into an organization which is *simultaneously* political and military, transcending all existing polemics."
(Debray, p. 124.)†

† We do not have information about the pro-Chinese groups in Latin America and therefore a perfect judgement on Regis Debray's statement is not possible. One of Regis Debray's statements, however, could well be correct, namely, on the necessity of a practical and not verbal relationship to the revolution and the insufficiency of an exclusively ideological or exclusively political struggle. However, it appears that Regis Debray is influenced by Cuba's position (which, contrary to Debray's supposition is not only verbal but practical) on the Peking-Moscow dispute, a position which initially originated from Cuba's severe economic dependence on the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, it appears that this tactical dependence has turned into an ideological political position, reflected in Fidel's statement that "we don't belong to any sect." To say that the split has occurred on erroneous issues is one thing, but another thing to say that it is verbal and available information on this matter is insufficient. But here we are acquainted both with opportunistic elements who, with their verbal allegiance to Peking's position, have wanted to gain fame and popularity for themselves, and with those who have sincerely adopted this position but in practice are far from any revolutionary position.

Hence:

> "Antibodies must be created at the base, at the level of the masses by offering them a real alternative within their reach. Only then will the existing political leadership be changed. In most Latin American countries, it is only when the armed struggle has begun or is about to begin that the process of removing the revolution from its ghetto, from the level of academic talk-fests, from a cast of permanent globe-trotters, can get under way. In philosophical language, a certain *problematique* has vanished since the Cuban Revolution, that is to say, a certain way of posing questions which governs the meaning of all possible answers. And it is not the answer that must be changed, but the questions themselves. These 'Marxist-Leninist' fractions or parties operate within the problematique which is imposed by the bourgeoisie; instead of transforming it, they have contributed to its further entrenchment; they are bogged down in false problems and are accomplices of the opportunistic problematique, quarrels over precedence or office holding in left organizations, electoral fronts, trade union maneuvers, blackmail against their own members. This is what is called quite simply politicking. In order to escape it, there must be a change of terrain, in every sense of the word."
> (Debray, pp. 121-122.)

Therefore, under the present circumstances, *"The principal stress must be laid on the development of guerrilla warfare and not on the strengthening of existing parties or the creation of new parties. . . . Insurrectional activity is today the number one political activity."* (Debray, p. 116.)

"Under certain conditions, political and the military are not separate, but form one organic whole, consisting of the people's army, whose nucleus is the guerrilla army. The vanguard can exist in the form of the guerrilla force itself. The guerrilla force is the party in embryo." (Debray, p. 106.)

What can be learned from this experience? What lessons does it teach us? Before we conclude, it is desirable to consider some of the criticisms which have been addressed to this thesis.

Clea Silva: "The theory that the armed force is the embryo of the party is based on the assumption that all conditions are ripe and that there is not time to organize on a party basis. In contrast to this, Lenin said that it is never too late to organize." (Silva, p. 20.) Debray does not say that all conditions are ripe, rather he says that the necessary conditions to initiate armed struggle exist, and that the sufficient conditions for expansion and popularization of the armed struggle will develop in the course of action. Secondly, here it is not the question of whether to organize or not, it is rather the question of the creation of that organization which is appropriate to the historical task of the vanguard. Clea Silva's assertion shows that he has not correctly understood Debray's views. For example, he says: "If we observe the countries of Latin America closely, we see that the majority of them are replete with small revolutionary organizations, with secondary differences, which individually fall short of meeting the requirements of a party but which, if they were united, would form such a party." (Silva, p.

20) Only a narrow conception of party, and only belief in "unity before action" can yield such a conclusion. The point is that it is precisely this revolutionary action, armed action, which prepares the conditions for a real and fruitful unity of the revolutionary forces:

> "For reasons of both emergency and principle the armed revolutionary front is a must. Wherever the fighting has followed an ascending line, wherever the popular forces have responded to the emergency, they have moved into the magnetic field of unity. Elsewhere they are scattered and weak. Events would seem to indicate the need to focus all efforts on the practical organization of the armed struggle with a view to achieving unity on the basis of Marxist-Leninist principles."
> (Debray, p. 126.)

The same misconception of the problem of organization is also seen in the case of Cuban comrades Simon Torres and Julio Aronde. In Cuba certain alliances took place and constituted the political organization of the July 26th Movement and certain alliances were made between this movement and other organizations before the inception of armed action; consequently it was a political organization which created the guerrilla foco. (Simon Torres and Julio Aronde, "Debray and the Cuban Experience"). In my opinion, this does not contradict Debray's thesis that the guerrilla foco is the embryo of the party, and that organizing armed action and armed action itself can produce real alliances. The organization or the front which is considered by the Cuban comrades was actually a political-military organization or front which was formed for the preparation of armed action and initiation of the insurrection. And then when the armed struggle started it made the survival of the front on the basis of a revolutionary line possible and from the front created a real vanguard. Debray's view might not even be that a handful of men can set in motion a revolution and lead it to victory by merely proceeding to a mountain and fighting. Debray himself warns in the beginning of his book that the Cuban revolution should not be reduced "to a golden legend, that of twelve men who disembark and whose numbers multiply in the twinkling of an eye." (Debray, p. 15.) To cite Debray, if we consider the surface glitter of the Cuban revolution and view it as a golden legend, surely the Cuban revolution cannot be repeated. But what about its inner elements and its method? Debray's effort is more to show these inner elements and the general lines of the Cuban path, and not to specify all the details of the phases which occurred from the beginning to the end. In my opinion, we should not neglect or reject the fundamental aspects of Debray's views either because he emphasizes the decisive factor and fails to mention or consider the work which is necessary prior to the inception and during the course of decisive action, or because he also emphasizes the action of the small motor which is about to move and has a whole lot to do to activate the big motor of the masses. For example, the Latin American revolution will be a massive, protracted war and will include direct confrontation with imperialism. The war will have a popular character and thus Latin America will witness the revival of previous forms of struggle (from street operations to extensive wars between

armies), and therefore we cannot proclaim that certain forms of struggle such as "armed propagnda" or "armed self-defense" have lost their significance. Moreover, it is wrong to define the fundamental form of struggle (Clea Silva, "The Errors of the Foco Theory"). Yet these facts by no means contradict Debray's thesis. Debray neither denies the protracted character of the war, nor its popularity, nor the diversity of the forms of struggle. Under present circumstances, he asserts that in order to set in motion the big motor of the masses, the small motor is compelled to initiate the work with special forms of struggle. He does not intend to confine all the forms of struggle which will come about in the course of popular struggle to a single frame.13

It is sufficient to consider his examination of "armed self-defense" and "armed propaganda" to discover that from the beginning he has the revolutionary war in mind. In fact, the Cuban revolution, from the point of view of its inner elements, could only show the beginning of a revolutionary popular war, because the unique and exceptional circumstances under which the revolution took place allowed the revolution to achieve final victory before secure revolutionary bases were completely formed and became a starting point for a new phase, before the masses become involved in the war on a large scale and before the popular army was created. Whereas now the increasing vigilance of the repressive forces, direct imperialist intervention and other factors deny this easily won victory to the armed struggle. It does not appear that Debray considers the Cuban experience the complete path that every armed struggle should travel. Therefore, it cannot be said that he, from the phase of "emergence of foco to the achievement of the final victory, considers the military action as the only form of political work." As soon as the guerrilla force is established and can create revolutionary support bases, or liberate some zones, all kinds of possibilities for political education of the masses, training of cadres, and political propaganda, etc., are conceivable. To cite Debray, one can then deliver a hundred speeches, and they will be heard too. The relation between political work and military work constitutes one of the fundamental points of Debray's book; according to the view of many people, one of Regis Debray's major errors is the incorrect understanding of this relation. According to them, Regis Debray gives priority to military work over political work. Debray's understanding of this relation becomes sufficiently clear in this statement: "Any line that claims to be revolutionary must give a concrete answer to the question: How to overthrow the power of the capitalist state? In other words, how to break its backbone, the army. . . ?" (Debray, p. 24.) To Debray, since the revolutionary movement has reached a state where armed warfare constitutes its main link, some political concepts find expression in military matters. For example, Lenin confronted the advocates of economism and spontaneous movements and even Trotskyism (*What Is to Be Done?* and *One Step Forward Two Steps Backward*) over a professional, organizied and disciplined revolutionary organization. Debray shows that on another level, this can find expression in the confrontation between the advocates of an armed vanguard and the advocates of armed self-defense. He says: "Just as economism denies the vanguard role of the party, self-defense denies the role of the armed unit,

which is organically separate from the civilian population. Just as reformism aims to constitute a mass party without selection of its militants or disciplined organization, self-defense aspires to integrate everyone into the armed struggle, to create a mass guerrilla force. . . ." (Debray, p. 29.)

In order for the relation between military and political matters to be illuminated, it is suitable to undertake the examination of Debray regarding armed propaganda. Debray's view on armed propaganda and how it must take place after or during the direct military action against the enemy and not before, is based on a series of concrete considerations which one cannot interpret as disparaging political work. The fact that Debray regards armed propaganda as an imported political concept is due to the fact that one must not confuse the political nature of the movement, or the inherently political work, with a series of political and/or political-military tactics. Debray says that armed propaganda is based on this: "The guerrilla struggle has political motives and goals. It must have the support of the masses or disappear; before enlisting them directly, it must convince them that there are valid reasons for its existence. . . .In order to convince the masses, it is necessary to address them . . . in brief, to carry on political work, 'mass work'. Hence the first nucleus of fighters will be divided into small propaganda patrols. . . . Cells, public or underground, will be organized in the village . . . . The program of the Revolution will be reiterated again and again. It is only at the end of this stage, having achieved active support by the masses, a solid rearguard, regular provisioning, a broad intelligence network, rapid mail service, and a recruiting center, that the guerrillas can pass over to direct action against the enemy." (Debray, p. 47.)

It is correct that guerrilla warfare has political motives and goals. It is correct that the winning of the support of the masses constitutes the crucial problem of the war; and it is correct that for this purpose inherently political work must be performed. But as to how this work is to be done, as to whether military action should necessarily follow political propaganda, must speeches necessarily be delivered from the outset, and prior to the armed action must a series of public and underground communication networks and cells be organized, are matters which precisely depend on the conditions. And if we establish an uninterrupted connection between these tactics and inherently political work, we have confused the goal with the means and the form with the content; the danger arises that the impossibility of adopting a particular tactic be construed to mean that there exist no grounds for action. Debray says that if in Vietnam or China armed propaganda is placed on the order of the day, it is because of the special conditions which exist there:

1. Because of the high density of the peasant population and because the enemy is an occupier, the revolutionary propagandists can easily mingle with the people, "like fish in water" (cf. Debray, p. 50).

2. "The propagandists are linked either with the bases of revolutionary support or with a people's army capable of backing them up or protecting them in their activities. Most important, they attest to the tangible and visible reality of military victories. Village meetings and assemblies have a pragmatic and serious content—no empty, programmatic lectures, no

'fine words' of the kind the peasants so justly fear, but appeals to join up with or give support to *existing* combat units . . . ." (Debray, p. 50.)

But what is the Latin American situation?

"(1) The guerrilla *focos*, when they first begin their activity, are located in regions of highly dispersed and relatively spare population. Nobody, no new arrival, goes unnoticed. . . . They [peasants] know very well that fine words cannot be eaten and will not protect them from bombardment. The poor peasant believes, first of all, in anyone who has a certain power, beginning with the power to do what one says. The system of oppression is subtle; it has existed from time immemorial, fixed, entrenched, and solid. The army the *guardia rural*, . . . enjoy a prestige all the greater of being subconscious. This prestige constitutes the principal form of oppression: it immobilizes the discontented, silences them, leads them to swallow affronts at the mere sight of a uniform. The neocolonial ideal is still to show force in order not to have to use it, but to show it is in effect to use it.

"In other words, the physical force of the police and army is considered to be unassailable, and unassailability cannot be challenged by words but by showing that a soldier and a policeman are no more bullet-proof than anyone else. The *guerrillero*, on the other hand, must use his strength in order to show it, since he has little to show but his determination and his ability to make use of his limited resources. He must make a show of strength and at the same time demonstrate that the enemys strength is first and foremost his *bluster*. In order to destroy the idea of unassailability—that age-old accumulation of fear and humility vis-a-vis . . . the policeman, the *guardia rural*—there is nothing better than combat. Then, as Fidel tells us, the unassailability vanishes as rapidly as respect engendered by habit turns into ridicule . . . .

"(2) The occupation and control of rural areas by reaction or directly by imperialism, their vigilance today greatly increased, should rid a given group of armed propagandists of all hope of remaining unnoticed . . . . The armed unit and people's vanguard are not dealing with a foreign expeditionary force, with limited manpower, but with a well-established system of local domination. They themselves are the foreigners, lacking status, who at the beginning can offer the populace nothing but bloodshed and pain. . . ." (Debray, pp. 51-52.)

"(3) Lastly, the absence of organized regular or semi-regular forces. Armed propaganda, at least if it is geared to combat, seeks precisely to organize regular units or to expand existing units, by means of 'political recruiting.' Thus, villages are 'stormed' to assemble the populace and hold propaganda meetings. But in reality how have the inhabitants of these villages been helped to rid themselves of their class enemies? In the course of these operations, few arms have been acquired. Even if young peasants are spurred by enthusiasm to join the *guerrilleros*, with what will they be armed?

"Many comrades have concluded from these experiences that an ambush of a column of reinforcements or some other blow levelled at the enemy in the vicinity would have aroused more enthusiasm in a given village, attracted new recruits, given a more profound moral and political lesson to the villagers, and—most important of all—would have procured the arms so essential to a new guerrilla unit."
(Debray, p. 53.)

"Does this mean that armed propaganda or agitational activities should be rejected? No.

"To judge from certain successful experiences, a guerrilla unit leaves something—or at least someone—behind it, in the course of its advance, behind its own lines if such exist, for the purpose of organizing what is to become a base of solid support. But in such a case the physical security of the populace is assured by regular forces, capable of repulsing the enemy. The base thus begins to organize itself as the embryo of the people's state. The work of agitation and propaganda—the effort to explain the new organization to the populace and to bring about the transfer of zonal administration to mass organizations— becomes fundamental, and future combats depend on it. Propaganda then attests to the liberating nature of combat and instills this message in the minds of the masses. . . . We can see that no present Latin American guerrilla movements have reached the state where these activities are on the order of the day.

"In other words, armed propaganda follows military action but does not precede it. . . . The main point is that under present conditions the most important form of propaganda is successful military action."
(Debray, pp. 55-56.)

We observe that the dispute is not over the political motives and goals of the movement, or whether or not to do mass work; rather the question is this: through which forms of action and organization can one address the masses and draw them to the struggle? One should carefully note that depending upon different conditions, inherently political work can assume a purely political form, can be political-military work, or can even be purely military work.

What should we do? What path lies ahead of the Iranian communist movement? How can the communist movement transform itself into the genuine vanguard of the anti-imperialist struggle of our people? How can it pull itself out of the swamp of the intellectual milieu in which it is fundamentally trapped and establish a profound link with the masses?

In both theory and practice, the communist movement must and can give an objective answer to this question: in what manner can we smash the tyrranical imperialist dominance, which depends mainly on its armed repressive forces? How can we unmask the myth of the "island of stability and security"? How can we show to the masses the path of the revolution, the path to the seizure of power for the exploited and oppressed, and the path of victory; how can we draw them to the battlefield? In our opinion, the communist movement can find this path; if it wants to transform itself into the genuine vanguard and not tag along behind the masses, it must in practice show this path to the masses. If armed struggle is the people's only path to salvation, and in our opinion the communist movement has accepted this path, then procrastination is meaningless. Contemporary revolutionary experiences and our own experiences show us the general path, the general strategy of the revolution. These experiences have shown that neither with peaceful work, nor with merely political work, nor with clandestine work can we transform ourselves into the vanguard of the people and prepare the conditions for the so-called mass armed struggle. Under present conditions, any political struggle must necessarily be organized on the basis of armed struggle. Further, only the armed small motor can set the big motor of the masses into motion. The subjective conditions of the revolution shall fully take form in the course of armed action; the genuine vanguard, the vanguard that has a profound bond with the masses and is capable of extensively arousing and guiding the masses, can come into existence only in the course of armed action, in the process of political-military work. Yes, at the beginning, the bloodshed and pain which the operations of the armed vanguard bring for the masses, the terror which the regime stirs up, may produce a passive attitude among the masses who have close contact with the guerrilla operations. But as soon as the armed vanguard is established and can strike both political and military blows as well as material and moral blows against the enemy, the path of the struggle gradually becomes clear for the masses, and they realize that the revolution has begun and that its development and victory depend on their support. To cite Debray, winning the support of the masses is not so very easy, but as soon as it is won, and wherever it is won, it causes astonishment.

Che Guevara states the experience of the peasants' encounter with the guerrilla as follows:

> "After our regrouping and the first clashes, and simultaneously with repressive actions by the Batista army, there was terror among the peasants and coldness toward our forces. The fundamental problem was this: If they saw us, they had to denounce us. If the Army learned of our presence through other sources, they were lost. Denouncing us did violence to their own conscience and, in any case, put them in danger since revolutionary justice was speedy.
>
> "In spite of a terrorized or at least a neutralized and insecure peasantry which chose to avoid this serious dilemma by leaving the Sierra, our army was entrenching itself more and more. . . . Little by little, as the peasants came to recognize the invincibility of the guerrillas and long duration of the struggle, they began responding more logically, joining our army as fighters."
> (Che Guevara, p. 197.)

Because of the long history of repression and suppression dominating the life of our masses and because of the successive defeats of the movements of our people, our masses, not only in the countryside but also in the city, have increasingly tended to view their existing situation as unalterable. Here, that "age-old accumulation of fear and humility" (Debray, p. 52) has seriously converted the faith of our masses into "nothing can be done to confront this force". Deeply rooted religious beliefs, submission to existing conditions, and reliance on a superior force, which initially grew out of human weakness before the forces of nature, have all been strengthened because of the people's weakness before the ruling social forces. These rooted beliefs cannot be changed by speeches, and the existing repressive force cannot be challenged by words. The masses cannot be drawn into the struggle merely by political propaganda; they cannot be convinced of their invincibility and of their decreed victory in this manner. Only armed action can inflict a breach in the impasse faced by the masses; the feasibility of the destruction of repressive power is to be shown in practice. To convince the masses of its power, the armed vanguard must show its strength. Does all this mean that the masses no longer show any perceptible spontaneous movement? No, this is not the case. At that moment when their patience reaches its limits, the masses too are set in motion, confrontations occur; furthermore, due to conditions of terror and suffocation, these confrontations more and more are accompanied by armed confrontations. But because of the very same conditions, such movements do not find the opportunity to expand and are suppressed. When there exists no possibility of any kind of continuity in purely political or peaceful work, when there does not exist any kind of bond between the vanguard and the masses, the main effect of such movements will be more suppression of the people. The only line of continual work which can acquire some strength from such movements in the people's struggle and which can unite these movements together in a larger context is continual political-military work.

Now, the question is what methods of armed action are practicable under the present conditions? One thing is certain: the condition for the victory of the revolution is the destruction of the counter-revolutionary armed forces, and this task requires a people's army. But how is the people's army created?

Under the present conditions of society, the people's army is

fundamentally engendered through guerrilla struggle in the countryside, and this fact necessitates the formation of guerrilla foco. (When broad mass movements are absent, particularly in the countryside, immediate arming of the masses is not the number one objective. Here, the purpose of guerrilla foco is only to initiate at the outset armed action in the countryside by armed bands usually made up of the revolutionary vanguard.) But what preparations and conditions guarantee the growing survival of the guerrilla foco or focos? Can an armed group alone, in its course of development, become the motive of a mass movement with the initiation of operations in a suitable region? The experiences of guerrilla warfare in Latin America show that a guerrilla foco, when politically isolated and militarily encircled without any profound link with the urban movement, without effective support in the city, and without the ability to broadly attract the minds of the masses, cannot last long and sooner or later will be liquidated by the special forces of the enemy. Therefore, some of the Latin American revolutionaries talk about the establishment of the armed struggle in the city. Even the Cuban experience contains certain lessons on this subject. However, Debray, by ignoring and belittling those methods and organizations of struggle which under all circumstances are necessary for the survival and continuity of the decisive struggle, does not lay the necessary stress on this aspect of the Cuban experience; this is one of his errors. It is correct that in Cuba the decisive struggle was the armed struggle in the countryside, but what part did the struggles carried on in the city play in the whole of the struggle? Does not Debray himself accept that Batista could not utilize more than ten thousand of his fifty thousand man army against Fidel? Why? Was not this because of the existence of other forms of struggle in the city which were conducted by other organizations and the July 26th Movement itself? Given that a radio station can by no means perform an organizing role, how did it happen that even before the insurgent forces possessed a radio station, the armed struggle in the countryside could attract, particularly in the city, the attention of the broad masses? If the insurgent forces did not see that organized, disciplined, protracted and permanent activity through organized groups was necessary in order to awake the attention of the broad masses, to identify themselves to the people as the only vanguard, and to stimulate in the city those movements which have political-military significance for the struggle in the countryside (actually, this was performed in practice by the spontaneous movement and through the action of other fighting organizations and even through the urban wing of the July 26th Movement—thus the slogan "all guns, all bullets, and all resources to the Sierra"), then one cannot conclude that under any conditions whatsoever the guerrilla movement needs no organized and coordinated urban armed action either prior to the formation of the guerrilla foco or in the course of the guerrilla operations in the countryside. In fact, what in Cuba was being done spontaneously here must be carried out through an organized political-military action. (In this context, spontaneity means that while those operations being performed in the city by various organizations had a significant impact on the decisive path to victory, they were not being performed with a conscious relationship to the decisive path; that is, the objective of these operations

was not exactly to provide determined political-military support to the guerrilla movement in the countryside.) But in the course of armed operations, which inevitably find broad reflection, the fighting groups soon become revolutionized. And would not these small groups be transformed, in the course of armed action, into organized groups? Would not the unity of communist groups be achieved, in the course of armed action, on the basis of an armed line? And could not these groups and their unity, in the course of armed action, prove themselves to the masses, show in practice the way to alter the situation and seize power, and within certain limits transform themselves into the vanguard of the masses? And do not the operations in the countryside need the political-military support of the city for its own growing survival? Will this political-military support be achieved automatically or through organized work?

It is possible that some of those who, to quote Lenin, advocate "close organic contact with the proletarian struggle" will tell us "you want to create a mass organization, while the objective of we the Marxist-Leninists should be the creation of a proletarian organiation whose ranks are filled mostly from the proletariat." The very same people were asking Lenin "if we undertake the organization of a nationwide exposure of the government, in what way will then the class character of our movement be expressed?"

They in fact want to justify their inability to be pioneers in the struggle, their fear and despicability, and their lack of political courage. Lenin replied:

> "We Social-Democrats will organize these nationwide exposures; all questions raised by the agitation will be explained in a consistently Social-Democratic spirit, without any concessions to deliberate or undeliberate distortions of Marxism; the all-round political agitation will be conducted by a party which unites into one inseparable whole the assault on the government in the name of the entire people, the revolutionary training of the proletariat, and the safeguarding of its political independence, the guidance of the economic struggle of the working class, and the utilization of all its spontaneous conflicts with its exploiters which rouse and bring into our camp increasing numbers of the proletariat."

And this is our answer: The first condition for the proletarian and revolutionary leadership in this movement is the pioneership of the Marxist-Leninists. It is we who will become the precursor of this struggle; it is we who have started the armed struggle. Under the present conditions, are not revolutionary armed action and its objectives, which have been based on a Marxist-Leninist line, the greatest manifestation of communist practice and the most revolutionary method of the anti-imperialist struggle? If the prerequisite for drawing the masses, including the proletariat, into the struggle is armed struggle itself, should this armed struggle have only the proletariat as its goal or should it rely on all the masses? Should not revolutionary action and propaganda start from their most popular form? If the vanguard party will come into existence in the course of the struggle, what is wrong with also creating formal links with the proletariat in the process of the armed movement? Is it not in

armed struggle itself in which the working class will assume its proper role in the anti-imperialist struggle? The Cuban experience has a very instructive lesson in this regard to which Simon Torres and Julio Aronde allude:

> "From the time Fidel went to Mexico he had a plan to which he adhered throughout the struggle. This plan might be indicated metaphorically by means of a pyramid in which the organizational forms which constitute the base are broad enough to contain different classes, while the apex is made up of a coherent armed nucleus, capable of subordinating conflicts 'from below' in the interest of activating all forms of struggle against the dictatorship.
> ". . . Is it necessary to add that the armed unit, superimposed on the other forms of organization and leadership and also in the position of an organizational 'center,' fulfilled a double function: first, to maintain the cohesion and functioning of *one* front of classes; and second, within that front, strategically to guarantee the primacy of the most revolutionary classes?"
> (Torres and Aronde, pp. 54-55.)

> ". . . The broad base of the Movement corresponded to the narrow social base of the Batista government under conditions of profound crisis of the traditional political parties which permitted a regrouping of forces in a new way; and its central armed nucleus corresponded to the form in which it was necessary to liquidate the bourgeois-*latifundista*-imperialist domination. Batista's March 10 coup had closed all avenues to a reformist way. . . ."
> (Torres and Aronde, p. 59.)

If armed struggle can mobilize the masses and produce the overthrow of the ruling power, then it is the duty of the Marxist-Leninists to become, with whatever organizations, methods, and slogans are necessary, the harbinger of such a struggle. We should learn from experience. We have to ask ourselves why the communist parties of the Middle East became futile organizations and detached from the masses? We have to ask ourselves why the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle in this region is (still predominantly) in the hands of the petty bourgeoisie? Do not these coups†, some of which succeeded to some extent to mobilize the broad masses in an anti-imperialist struggle, show that when overthrowing the ruling power is the order of the day, the communist parties of this region are living as though there are still years to come before the question of the seizure of power is to be posed?

Today the peril exists that through inactivity the Marxist-Leninists will surrender the leadership of the people's anti-imperialist struggle into the hands of the petit-bourgeoisie. The communist movement, if it is to assume the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle of the people, if it is to transform itself into the real vanguard of the masses, must dare, must give both in theory and practice a concrete answer to the question of how

† Coups d'etat led by the petty-bourgeoisie such as Nasser's in Egypt, Ghasser's in Iraq and the Ba'athist coup in Syria.

to replace the imperialistic ruling power and transfer power to the exploited. If the vanguard role of the Marxist-Leninists in this protracted armed struggle fails to secure the revolutionary proletarian leadership in this struggle, nothing else can.

The Middle East today is one of the most important and stormy regions of the world; the anti-imperialist struggle in this region has attained powerful heights; the revolution more and more will assume a regional character. The repressive instrument of the present ruling power, which until now had been used for suppression of the peoples of Iran, is also becoming a cudgel to suppress and intimidate the anti-imperialist movements of the region. This so-called "island of stability", under the orders and with the assistance of its bosses, wants to silence the turbulent ocean. The struggle of the Kurdish people, which is subject to the most severe oppression and pressure, is now gaining new heights. How can we assist it? How can the struggle of the Kurdish people perform its proper role in the anti-imperialist struggle of all the peoples of Iran? In what way can we defeat the imperialist conspiracies of the ruling power? How can we assist the victory of the anti-imperialist forces in this region? Is not the unity of the Marxist-Leninist forces and the issue concerning the revolutionary united front composed of all oppressed classes, which has a decisive importance for the struggle of the people of Iran, attainable only in the course of armed action? For these reasons, the armed struggle is not only decisive, but also urgent. The struggle is prolonged and difficult; the support of the masses is not easily won; it requires continual, hard and prolonged work. But, the masses will certainly respond to the practical invitation of their vanguard. Revolution takes form within the revolution itself; and the truth is that even the revolution, in the process of revolution, in the course of armed action, itself becomes revolutionized. A revolution which has started with the most popular and the most general objectives, attains the most revolutionary objectives in the process of this uncompromising struggle by employing the most revolutionary tactics. The masses, in the course of this hard and prolonged struggle, under the leadership of the proletarian vanguard, become increasingly proletarized and will trust their leadership more and more. The struggle against imperialism is transformed into the struggle against capitalism; the struggle against imperialist expropriation is transformed into the struggle for socialist expropriation. The armed struggle not only eliminates the tragic separation between the Marxist-Leninist vanguard and the masses, but also prepares the ground for then to unify strategically as well as tactically, not on the immediate and urgent objectives alone, but also on the most general objectives. The communist movement must dare; it must not fear temporary failures; the time for action has now arrived; "The weapon of criticism must give its place to the criticism of the weapon."

Now we should conclude:

The experiences of the peoples of Latin America and the experiences of our own peoples (particularly those of the Kurdish people) have shown that a guerrilla struggle in the countryside will not be victorious without the political-military support of the city and without the political-military work of the urban forces. Now the question arises that while it is correct that such a struggle in the countryside which does not enjoy the support of

the city will eventually be defeated, cannot we even start such a struggle? If we have relative confidence in the support of the city in the foreseeable future, and if the survival of the rural guerrilla is guaranteed until such a juncture, cannot we even then start such a struggle? It is here that we should come out of the world of generalities and minutely examine the conditions of our country.

Before anything else, one should note the fundamental point that the armed struggle in Iran will start with group-type formations and with small groups which have limited capabilities and forces. Although some of these groups have certain connections with one another, we cannot consider these groups as actually and concretely being a unitary and solidified force. In armed struggle, the principle of dispersing the forces of the enemy is a very fundamental principle, and the armed action which is initiated by a group, if not continued by other groups, will sooner or later experience defeat.

Thus this fundamental principle is obtained: all revolutionary groups which have recognized their revolutionary tasks must, by their military work, strike blows against the enemy, disperse the forces of the enemy, expose the enemy, and educate the masses in any way they can. The method each group adopts to this end is determined merely with respect to a series of technical and tactical facts. For instance, a group which is settled in Kurdestan must, naturally, operate there. But are the cities of Kurdestan suitable places for urban guerrilla activity? Of course not. The base of the revolutionaries who are settled in Kurdestan and who want to become engaged in armed struggle must be stationed mostly in the countryside, although in the city we can also mobilize a small force for a series of political-military tasks. The case of revolutionaries who are settled in Azerbaijan, northern regions of the country, etc., is the same. Basically, the city in Iran which concretely suits vast urban guerrilla activity is Teheran. A few other big cities such as Isfahan, Tabriz, Mashad, etc. are relatively, and to a limited extent, suitable. Furthermore, at the beginning the agitational and the political aspect of armed struggle is fundamental and decisive, and its military aspect is secondary. Thus armed struggle should have an all encompassing influence on all of our people. In addition, wider and more structured organization of armed struggle and the establishment of cooperation between fighting groups is an urgent issue. Therefore, the existence of political-military work in big cities, particularly in Teheran as the crossroads of the communication network of the country and the country's important production and economic center, and as the connecting center of fighting groups everywhere, is a decisive matter. We should, however, note that the enemy will attempt to suppress this struggle with all its force and capability and with all it has in its power. This is why the military aspect of armed struggle will gain increasing importance; and as soon as this happens, the exodus to the countryside and the extension of the major arena of the struggle to the countryside becomes a decisive factor.

If we wish to conclude, we can propose the following general line for the revolutionary groups of Iran: Under the present conditions, armed struggle constitutes the major form of struggle. At the beginning, it has a dominantly agitational aspect. Politically, the guerrilla struggle in the

city, either for the movement as a whole or for the guerrilla struggle in the countryside, plays a vital and crucial role. But urban guerrillas can exist specifically in Teheran and to a lesser extent in a few other major cities. Thus, considering the vital principle of dispersing the forces of the enemy and in this regard noting that the military aspect of the struggle will rapidly and increasingly gain importance, it is the duty of the revolutionary groups to start their political-military work wherever it seems expedient considering the enemy's military potential, the technical and tactical possibilities of our own forces, the social and economic conditions of the people, and the geographical conditions.

FOOTNOTES

1. What is being spoken of here is the stage of the birth of the communist movement. Presently, the communist movement has developed to the level where it determines specific directions for action; it transforms the simple gathering of forces into an organized one and spontaneous growth into conscious growth. It has now reached the level where it is engaged in path-finding for the establishment of contact with the masses and their struggles.

2. To eliminate any possible misunderstanding here, it is necessary to make a point. The discarding of general Marxist-Leninist principles is not intended here. The issue at stake is the mechinical perception of them and the failure to correctly relate them to the specific condition. For instance, the general principle, "The victory of the revolution is impossible without a revolutionary party," in no way means that the revolution cannot start without the party, or even that the revolutionaries cannot conquer power; for, "the victory of the revolution" must be understood within a wide historical context because the victory of the revolution is clarified not only by the conquest of state power, but also by its maintenance and by the continuation of the revolution. The examples of Cuba and Congo Brazzaville are clear testimonies to this assertion. Contrary to "Che", who said that the Cuban Revolution seemed to contradict the above mentioned Leninist principle, the Cuban Revolution itself also verifies its correctness (as does the Congro Brazzaville case); as we saw, the maintenance and continuation of the revolution rendered the establishment of a proletarian party inevitable.

In our approach to Debray, other factors such as his errors and deviations and the obscurities of his writing played a role. Yet, it is a good idea to deal more with the dilemma (the party or the armed struggle without the party) and to elaborate on it. Previously, the dilemma seemed natural, for our understanding of the party and its necessity was superficial and we did not distinguish between its content and its form. But now, the dilemma no longer exists for us. How do we deal with this apparant dilemma today? We declare that we must not wait for the party; rather, we must engage in armed struggle. It will be asked, then, what are you going to do with the party? We answer that the party comes up as a specific, not general, issue in the process of struggle. For what do we want the independent party of the proletariat: to guarantee proletarian hegemony, to continue the revolution to the socialist stage and . . . . We are certain that in order to guarantee proletarian hegemony . . . the unity of the proletarian groups and organizations in a united party is necessary, but the question is not specifically and concretely now facing us. With the knowledge that the question will come up, we will, at the proper time and in the process of the people uniting around these organizations, establish the independent party of the proletariat. But now, let the armed struggle commence. The union of the groups and organizations is also at issue from the standpoint of the more massive politico-military organization of the struggle. Again, we will solve this problem in the process of action. Hence, the establishment of the proletarian party is not a specific end to which the armed struggle serves as a means, but an indicator of a new phase in the course of the struggle. It is a phase during which the guaranteeing of proletarian hegemony will be posed as a concrete and pressing question. In the past, we accepted the necessity of armed struggle in general, and the formation of the party, as a specific question, was under consideration. Today, we accept the necessity of the formation of the party in general, and the armed struggle, as a specific question, is under consideration.

3 In the discussion of the relations of production dominant in the rural areas of Iran, the uneven development of production in the towns and in the villages must also receive specific attention. Nevertheless, we can speak of the dominant form of property which is the same small-holding property. Small-holding property in Iran is intensely subjected to the rule and the oppression of the comprador, bureaucratic bourgeoisie. (Here, the lease holding alternative, which has come into existence as a result of the Land Reform, is considered a part of the small-holdings because the lease holder is presently one step behind the small-holder. According to the Land Reform laws, this lease holder will become either an unfortunate small-holder or a more miserable agricultural worker or a city vagabond.) Yet, when we talk about a qualitative change in the expansion of the rule of comprador-bureaucratic capitalism (either in the town or in the village), which, also, is exactly the essence of the so-called "White Revolution," we must not immediately identify capitalism with industry and the expansion of industrial production. Basically, the expansion of the rule of capitalism in countries such as ours is distinguished by the expansion of bureaucratic and financial capitalism long before the expansion of industry. Even though this kind of expansion, whether we wish it or not, will bring after it industrial expansion, as to how and what extent, we see that it will be very disorderly, incomplete and bureaucratic in form.

4. It is necessary to mention a few points about a semi-feudal, semi-colonial society and the stage of the revolution. In our opinion, the assertion that the imperialist rule, from an extensive historical point of view, is in basic contradiction with the feudalist rule does not require verification. According to Marx, world capitalism will disintegrate the existing relations (to different degrees) wherever it steps foot and will endeavor to bring the society under its domination within its universal system. In our opinion, the coexistence of imperialism with feudalism is a temporary and tactical one; whether one wishes it or not, the feudalist system will gradually be dissolved in the belly of the world capitalist system. Imperialist dominance, in its colonial form, initiates a violent suppression of the traditional relationships in the society. In its semi-colonial form, there is conciliation and concession between imperialist rule and that of feudalism. And in its neo-colonial form, the society under consideration will enter the complete imperialist system as an organic part. Imperialist domination passes through a spiral development wherein the neo-colonial society is a repetition of the colonial society at a more developed level.

Concerning the stage of the revolution, we can thus say that there are three kinds of national democratic revolutions: the democratic revolution of a colonial society, the democratic revolution of a semi-feudal, semi-colonial society, and the democratic revolution of the neo-colonial society. The democratic revolution is a national one because it opposes imperialist rule and embraces the whole people. Each one of these stages of revolution is one step closer to the socialist revolution. But, aside from the question of the stage of the revolution as an economic issue, there is also a political issue which is related to the practical process of the revolution. The question of where and how the revolution will continue and enter the socialist phase depends precisely on the question of whether the proletariat and its vanguard have been able to assume the leadership of the struggle and have united the peasantry and the left petty bourgeoisie with themselves.

5. We never intended here to deny the generality of the principle that "insurrection is the work of the masses." Yet, this principle must be interpreted from a dialectical viewpoint; for example, the specific forms and formulas expounded by Lenin concerning the uprising must not be considered as universal. In Lenin's view, the vanguard cannot call for the uprising unless it actually has behind it the majority of its class and the people. In other words, a true vanguard

which has become the real vanguard in the process of the struggle has the right to call for the uprising, whereas, in the Cuban situation, the vanguard could not have come into being unless it had itself initiated the uprising. Under these circumstances, "the uprising is the work of the masses" means the increasing advance of the uprising absolutely depends on the increasing support of the majorty of the masses. Lenin's era could not have a "conception of the initiation of the uprising" because it did not have a conception of the protracted guerrilla war. At that time, the insurrection constituted a short process in time that would begin with the participation on the broad masses. But now, we regard the insurrection as a people's war which is set in motion by the small "motor" of the armed vanguard.

6. The intention is not to deny the possibility of establishing contacts with the workers. We ourselves have enjoyed the cooperation of a considerable number of our proletarian comrades. The point is that the possibility of contacting the workers, in its classical form and in its real meaning, does not exist. It is possible to work amongst the workers. One can get recruits from them, of course with ample difficulties and low outcome, but one cannot conduct mass work amongst the workers. One cannot attempt propaganda and circulation.

7. Wherever there is oppression, there is also resistance. But, what kind of resistance? A restricted and dispersed one. So, it is better to speak of the stagnancy of the resistance and the spontaneous movement and its lack of development.

8. When we say that the workers are, inevitably, preoccupied with their bread and water, we only mean that the intolerable daily work and the more intolerable family troubles do not even allow the workers time to think about issues, in conditions where the work atmosphere lacks any stimulation and movement towards struggle.

9. A further explanation about the formation of the party: Stalin, in "The Brief History . . . " says that the party of the proletariat consists of a combination of the proletarian movement and socialist theory. But, let us view our circumstances. In our view, speaking about a real proletarian movement in Iran under present conditions is meaningless. The extreme strain and repression, on the one hand, and the fact that the secondary contradictions of our society, such as the specific contradiction between labor and capital, have, on the other hand, been overshadowed by the principal contradiction between the people and imperialism have caused any movement to assume a political and mass character from the very outset; thus, the independent movement of the proletariat has fewer manifestations. But, the political struggle in our society inevitably has to be an armed one. Thus, the proletariat acquires organization and consciousness not in a proletarian movement, but in a mass armed struggle. And hence the party of the proletariat will be established in this manner. The armed struggle, initiated today by the groups, must set itself the goal of mobilizing the masses and not the proletariat. It must rely on the whole people and express their general demands. Wherever one can better struggle and mobilize the masses, that is where one must go. For us communists, it is not at all necessary to first establish a base among the proletariat and mobilize them and then transfer our struggle to the villages. If necessary, even today we can also carry our struggle to the villages. Mao has made a point that is worth mentioning on this matter.

When the question of going to the countryside was posed in China, some were dissatisfied about the fact that it would decrease the role of the proletariat. Mao responded: "Have no fear, the important matter is to mobilize the masses, to wage armed struggle; what does it matter if the proletariat plays a lessor role, quantitatively?" (Why Red China Can Exist)

Here, a very significant point is made. In the present conditions, the groups,

prior to the party organization, conduct a struggle that relies on the whole people and expresses their general demands. In this struggle any revolutionary group, communist or otherwise, can participate. Hence, from the standpoint of a more effective and broader organization of the struggle and the unity of the revolutionary forces, the unity of all these groups within the context of an anti-imperialist united front becomes inevitable in the process of the struggle. In this light, the unity of all groups and revolutionary and anti-imperialist organizations that accept the armed struggle line, in the town or in the countryside, becomes more necessary and more immediate than the unity of the proletarian forces within the framework of the proletarian party. The formation of the united front is placed on the order of the day for the revolutionaries prior to the establishment of the proletarian party. If the proletariat acquires organization and consciousness within the womb of the mass armed struggle, then the proletarian party is conceived and grows within the womb of the anti-imperialist united front. It will then find a distinct form only when the principle of securing proletarian hegemony and the continuation of the revolution is, specifically and urgently, placed on the order of the day.

"The Communist," the organ of some Marxist-Leninist Iranians abroad, correctly explains that the formation of the party is a prolonged process, similar to that of the people's army, and that it is not necessary to have an all-encompassing party to commence the armed struggle. But what alternative does it offer? It offers the establishment of a militant nucleus in the countryside, drawing the peasants to the armed struggle, and the establishment of revolutionary bases with the tidal expansion of these bases.

We do not permit ourselves to express a word of definite opinion about the establishment of revolutionary bases and their tidal expansion because it is not at all certain what circumstances will develop after the armed struggle. What is facing us is the matter of creating militant nuclei in the countryside and of drawing the peasants to insurrection. As it has been thoroughly explicated in the essay itself, it is neither possible to create a nucleus in the countryside by means other than armed struggle, nor is it possible to draw the peasants to insurrection through political work; even if such an insurrection occurs, still there is a need for the armed vanguard to counter the enemy, who is armed head to toe with twentieth century military hardware. In any event, the need for the armed vanguard is inevitable.

10. We re-emphasize that the issue is not the denial of the generality of the principles of Marxism-Leninism. Rather, at issue is our shallow and dogmatic understanding of these principles on the one hand and our faulty understanding of Debray's theses on the other.

11. For a clearer expression of the subject matter, one should say that if a century ago persons such as Marx with his vast knowledge were needed to respond to the theoretical needs of the communist movement, and if responding to the theoretical needs required vast and prolonged theoretical work, today it is not so; for, the content of the revolution has become clear and a general guideline for practice has been obtained. In addition, the compilation of the special theory of revolution is more linked to revolutionary practice than to theoretical work. However, the need for the general and special theory of revolution certainly has not been lessened.

12. Lenin says: "The economists by relying on general truths about the subordination of politics to economics concealed their ignorance of the immediate political task." (Lenin)

Seizure of political power is a definite goal and its necessity is a universal fact. The question is that in seizing political power, what is the decisive factor. Now, if instead of responding to this need and determining the concrete path of action and

the main method of struggle, we come forth to say that the goal is the seizure of political power and not the destruction of the army, that one should comprehensively intervene on all levels, that one should use all forms of struggle, etc., then we have uttered generalities behind which lie hidden our incapability, our lack of courage, and our political ignorance.

13. In order not to justify Debray, it seems necessary to point out his errors: Edgar Rodrigues, in his article "The Venezuela Experience and the Crisis of Revolutionary Movement in Latin America," enumerates Debray's errors: Belittling the work of organizing, and suggesting a spontaneous viewpoint; over-valuation of the catalizing aspect of the armed struggle, and belittling the preliminary and preparatory matters of the struggle. In our view all of these may have resulted from generalizing the secondary aspects of the Cuban revolution over the whole of the Latin American reality. Such errors are also observable with regard to the relationships between city and country, the party and the guerrilla, and theory and practice. Thus Debray commits the same mistake that he subjects to criticism, that is, being dogmatic. For example, Debray himself shows that different orientations with regard to the relationships between party and guerrilla or city and country are in fact the outcome of an essential difference. This difference originates from viewing the armed struggle "as another branch of party activity," but not as the decisive branch of activity, nor as the fundamental framework of activity where only in relation to and within this framework do other forms of struggle gain importance. Nonetheless, he forgets this point and becomes dogmatic with regard to the relationships between city and countryside; he builds and polishes a series of metaphysical concepts such as the countryside is equivalent to the proletariat and the city is equivalent to the burgeoisie. The city-dwelling leadership is incapable of understanding the significance of the problems and difficulties of guerrilla war not because the leadership lives in the city, but rather because of an essential belief that belittles guerrilla war as the decisive path.

The point that should be noted, however, is that we have examined Debray's book in relationship to our own conditions and needs and have relied only on those aspects of the book which have been fundamental and crucial to us. Regardless of a series of concrete differences between the conditions of our country and Latin America, the revolutionary movement in Latin America is basically more advanced than in Iran. Thus we cannot thoroughly examine Debray's book without considering those conditions. For example, one can consider the case of the over-valuation of the catalyzing aspect of the struggle. Latin America in 1967 (the publication year of Debray's book) had undergone various armed struggle experiences following the Cuban revolution. In the territory of constant coups d'etat and instabilities, perhaps the over-valuation of the catalyzing aspect of the armed struggle and the belittling of the work of organizing (noticing the comparatively advanced level of organization of the revolutionaries in the organizations and parties in relation to Iran) is an obvious error. But in Iran, in a country which has supposedly been named the "Island of Stability" in a turbulent ocean, in a country with eighteen years of apparently unalterable strangulation, in a country where any form of organization is destroyed with an undescribable cruelty, one should assign the necessary importance to the catalyzing, agitating, and hopeful aspect of the struggle; basically, this aspect of the struggle is now crucial. Just as the Latin American revolutionaries possess certain organization and organizing know-how, the armed struggle too should possess them to a level comparable to the general level of Latin American revolutionaries and combatants.

NOTES

NOTES

PUBLISHED BY
S.C.I.P.S.
P.O. BOX 671, New York, NY 10011