

MARXIST-LENINIST ORGANISATION OF BRITAIN

"THE THEORY OF THE GUERILLA ELITE"



An analysis of the theories of Regis Debray as propounded in "Revolution in the Revolution?", and their relevance to the revolutionary struggle in Latin America.

By Cmde MS on behalf of MLOB.

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THE THEORY OF THE GUERRILLA ELITE

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Introduction

Regis Debray, a "private student of revolutionary theory and practice", has written a book which purports to offer a "third way" to revolution. It is a "third way" which all Marxist-Leninists have hitherto failed to perceive, a "scientific truth" awaiting its release at the hands of this roving French philosophy student fresh from the cloisters of the "Ecole Normale Superieure".

In their introduction to this book, Leo Huberman and Paul Sweezy, the American sponsors of Debray, claim that the revolution in Latin America:

"will not and cannot follow one or another of the patterns, traced out by the two great revolutionary upheavals of the first half of the twentieth century. The Latin American revolution is taking a third way, the first stages of which already been revealed in the Cuban experience." ("Revolution in the Revolution?" Penguin Books, 1968)

On the basis of this claim for a "third way", these American liberals with a touch of rouge on their cheeks rush to proclaim the ultimate outcome of this breach in the wall of proletarian hegemony, the anti-Marxist-Leninist content of the loquacious petty- bourgeoisie of our time: that "still other revolutionary patterns may be possible" – ranging from the Yugoslav to the Chinese variants of the new syndicalism.

Debray's book seeks to lay the basis for such radical revisions by spurning Marxist-Leninist theory in every one of its essential tenets: replacing proletarian hegemony and discipline by petty-bourgeois hegemony and anarchical relations, replacing class by individuals, proletarian parties by "focos" of undisciplined petty bourgeois insurrectionists, historical materialism by naïve mechanical materialism, scientific analysis by sweeping presumptuousness.

Like countless other renegade products which attack Marxism-Leninism, this book has been received favourably by the bourgeoisie. In that it offers a way to "make revolution" from scratch, learning by the simple empirical process of trial and error and rejecting the Marxist-Leninist scientific method of the universality of contradiction and the unity of theory and practice, it serves them well. For if the "third way" of Debray were to remain unchallenged and be applied in practice, it would result in the most tragic setbacks and useless losses to the revolutionary cause in Latin America.

Indeed, the Bolivian adventure which cost Debray his liberty and Guevara his life was merely the latest in a long series of defeats and annihilations for which the addicts of spontaneity who exist in the national liberation fronts of many Latin American countries are responsible. It is for this reason that it is essential to deal with Debray's claims in some detail. On the first page we read:

"One began by identifying the guerrilla struggle (in Cuba – Ed.) with insurrection because the archetype – 1917 – had taken this form, and because Lenin and later Stalin had developed several theoretical formulas (sic) based on it – formulas which have nothing to do with the

present situation and which are periodically debated in vain, such as those which refer to conditions for the outbreak of an insurrection, meaning an immediate assault on the central power." (Ibid.-p. 19)

NOTE: Because Debray's "theories" have been endorsed by the Cuban leadership and because he uses the term "we" throughout his text, references to Debray and the Cuban leadership are interchangeable, except where otherwise specified.

No doubt we are supposed to be eternally grateful for Mr Debray's clarification of Lenin on the "formulas" for an insurrection, i.e, "an immediate assault on the central power". This statement is to set the tone for disclaiming Leninism by alluding to Lenin as someone who, from 1900 to 1917, contributed nothing to the struggle in Russia but the cry "insurrection" without any of the detailed handiwork which Debray claims as his own discovery.

Unfortunately, of course, Mr Debray has not understood Lenin, or Marxism, on this elementary point. The involved and rich experience, of the tactics and strategy of "making revolution" the Marxist-Leninist way are a closed book to Debray (as a student of bourgeois philosophy still in his early twenties, this is not surprising) who assumes throughout that such wild and unqualified statements, can serve as the starting point for his even wilder flights of innovation around them.

Lenin and Stalin remain (despite the distortions of petty-bourgeois innovators such as Debray who wish not to see that which deflates the balloon of their pretentiousness) the most notable of those few proletarian leaders who have successfully led the working people through to the seizure of state power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is distinct from that seizure of power by the national bourgeoisie in alliance with the peasantry, usurping the leading role of the proletariat, which masquerades as "the dictatorship of the proletariat" in some corners of the globe – and to the building of socialism. Given this historically unique position, we can assume that the definitions and experiences of Lenin and Stalin, hold important lessons for us in establishing further theoretical and practical bases of proletarian dictatorship without which there can be no socialism – in our respective countries.

In every fundamental essential, Debray betrays not only his divergence from these principles, but his total ignorance of them.

BOURGEOIS OUTLOOK AND SPONTANEITY

When he deals in detail with the specific conditions in the countries of the Latin American continent, he refers to the divisions existing between the revisionists and Trotskyites in the liberation fronts of these countries. These divisions, which have been responsible for many defeats – notably the failure of the Cuban general strike in 1958 – Debray seeks to solve, by going over to the purely military front and brushing ideological and political questions aside. He ignores the fact that leadership involves the clarification of a line in theory and the consolidation of the forces around that theory in action. Lenin subjected anti-Marxist-Leninist theory and

practice to a ruthless critique on every front, this struggle bearing fruit in the undisputed leading role of the Bolsheviks at the crucial turning points in the Russian revolution. Debray seeks to cancel out the role of theory and to advocate some kind of idealised and subjectivised "action" as the unfailing panacea guaranteeing victory. He quotes petty detail after petty detail, generalises them to the level of the universal in order to justify his "revolutionary" theories revising a whole arsenal of genuine revolutionary theory painstakingly accumulated throughout a century or so of arduous struggle by valiant proletarian fighters the world over.

Not once does he justify his claims against Marxist-Leninist theory – we are presented merely with surface details and Debray's own brand of arrogant ignorance of the harsh facts of the struggle against imperialism. Thus, in justification of the "spontaneous inevitable progress of history":

"The reverses suffered by the Latin American revolutionary movement are truly minor if one measures them in terms of the short period of time which is the prologue to the great struggles of tomorrow, if we take into account the fact that the few years which have passed correspond to that period of 'takeoff' and re-adjustment through which all revolutions must go in their early stages. Indeed, what seems surprising is that guerrilla movements have been able to survive so many false starts and so many errors, some inevitable and others not. According to Fidel, that is the astonishing thing, and it proves the extent to which the movement is impelled by history. In fact, we must speak not, so much of defeat as of a certain explicable stagnation and lack of rapid development, the consequences of, among other things the inevitable blunders and errors at this stage of exploration, of revolutionary conceptions and methods which are new, (our emphasis – Ed.) in spite of their deceptive kinship with other international experiences....

"Of all these false starts, the Latin American is the most, "innocuous". (p. 23)

This "innocuous" record has involved the annihilation of "half a hundred revolutionary organisations" on the Latin American continent, since the Fidelista upsurge!

On an even more alarming scale, on page 2 the cry of the petty bourgeois intellectual reveals itself in full swing in its justification of spontaneity, taken to the lengths of advocating the pleasures and benefits of a blissful ignorance of theory. In this assertion, Debray is typical of the worst philistine intellectual who steeped himself in book learning but condescends to the "masses" in their ignorance – in such a way he seeks to preserve the prestige of learning which can only stand up when contrasted with the "low level" of the masses. Anathema to Debray are the forces of the organised proletariat with their developed theory:

"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; he could thus invent, on the spot and out of his own experience, principles of a military doctrine in conformity with the terrain. ... all the theoretical works on people's war do as much harm as good. (This includes General Giap, Lenin! – Ed). They have been called the grammar books of the war. But a foreign language is

learned faster in a country where it must be spoken than at home studying a language manual." (p. 20-21).

And, when dealing with the dangers of "imitation from past experiences":

"All the more reason to remain aware of the inversion of which we are victims when we read theoretical works." (p. 59).

So, we have here the claim that theoretical knowledge is a hindrance and that spontaneous "trial and error" is the only guide to revolutionary action. Likewise, political struggles through programmes, fronts, alliances – the essential and inevitable shifts and deployments of forces in the complex struggle to win the working people for revolution are not necessary. Those who claim they are,

"...believe that revolutionary awareness and organisation must and can in every case precede revolutionary action." (p. 82)

This is carried to the lengths of noting (we presume with favour – otherwise why point it out?):

"A significant detail: during two years of warfare, Fidel did not hold a single political rally in his zone of operations." (p. 53).

Thus we are dealing with a defence of spontaneity, (a spontaneity which yet Debray makes a show of criticising in others) where spontaneity takes as its fundamental precept:

"...the armed struggle of the masses against imperialism is capable of creating by itself, in the long run, a vanguard capable of leading the peoples to socialism." (p. 126).

CLASS ANALYSIS IN SOUTH AMERICA: THE "THIRD" WAY

In order to justify his anti-Marxist-Leninist theories, Debray has to claim a "unique" class situation in Latin America:

"... the irony of history has willed, by virtue of the social situation of many Latin American countries, the assignment of precisely this vanguard role to students and revolutionary intellectuals, who have had to unleash, or rather to initiate, the highest forms of class struggle." (p. 21)

No doubt his studies at the Ecole did not include a syllabus on Marxism-Leninism. Debray, is about to proceed upon the unfolding of his "new" theories of revolution, applicable only to Latin America:

Firstly, that the leading instigating role of the intellectuals and students is unique. From this assumption he intends to demonstrate, that a new concept of the vanguard, a "foco" (a small band

of guerrillas with allegiance to one "leader") follows logically, and from this that the normal political channels should be ignored and give place to armed struggle as an end in itself.

However, his claim for uniqueness of situation in Latin America is a red herring raised in order to conceal his anti-proletarian, thoroughly bourgeois thinking. For in Russia the revolutionary students and intellectuals also initiated the struggle against imperialism and capitalism: it was they who formulated the theory of the vanguard party and the strategy of the world's first proletarian revolution. And it is here that we come to the crux of the difference between those petty-bourgeois forces which, when declassed and pushed into the ranks of the working class, overcome their bourgeois thinking and thoroughly embrace the proletarian world view and its revolutionary struggle; and those who fail to identify themselves with the aims and aspirations of the majority class. These latter merely use their new class position to air their own minority grievances against capitalism, objectively striving to climb back to their former class position, sowing confusion and propagating theories in the process which act against the tide of revolutionary struggle.

There are of course, vast differences between the aims of those intellectuals who led the way in Russia and the aims of those in Latin America who advance Debray to be their spokesman. The intellectuals in Russia worked for the hegemony of the proletariat in the socialist revolution and, as its necessary preliminary, in the bourgeois democratic revolution.

Debray and those he represents, are that section of the petty bourgeoisie which stand for the hegemony of bourgeois ideology and the petty bourgeois forces, not for a socialist revolution and not even for the final victory and, consolidation of the national democratic revolution. For in the epoch of imperialism, this can only be led by the proletariat in alliance with the poor and middle peasantry if it is to be consolidated and is to prepare the ground for the transition to the socialist revolution. The petty bourgeois and bourgeois view is for the holding of the revolutionary process at the stage of the national democratic revolution, in order that the groundwork for capitalism may be sown and the path towards the re-incorporation of the nation into the imperialist sphere once again be laid. They seek to prevent that national democratic revolution from being turned into the stream which feeds the proletarian revolution by crying "against dictatorship", "against bureaucracy", thus serving the interests of the national bourgeoisie.

And so, Debray's claims that his "third way" is the new form of worker-peasant revolutionary alliance:

"What gives the guerrilla movement the right to claim this political responsibility as its own and for itself alone? The answer is: that class alliance which it alone can achieve, the alliance that will take and administer power, the alliance whose interests are those of socialism – the alliance between workers and peasants. The guerrilla army is a confirmation in action of this alliance; it is the personification of it alone can guarantee that the people's power will not be perverted after victory."

And

"... This progressive petty bourgeoisie must... commit suicide as a class in order to be restored to life as revolutionary workers, totally identified with the deepest aspirations of their people." (p. 111).

Yet despite these claims, we find that the real picture is very different.

In order to make his thesis workable Debray has to provide the vanguard leadership without which this class alliance cannot be consolidated. He performs this conjuring trick by taking the current "left" revisionist emphasis on the countryside in opposition to the cities, to its most illogical conclusion to date: all who live in cities are bourgeois, all who live in the mountains are proletarian, and hegemony in the struggle belongs to the petty bourgeois rural guerrillas who become the vanguard "proletariat" of Debray's imagination.

This is one of his more remarkable "additions" to Marxist-Leninist theory:

"...As we know, the mountain proletarianises the bourgeois and peasant elements, and the city can bourgeoisify the proletarians, The tactical conflicts that are bound to arise, the differences in the evaluation and line, conceal a class conflict, in which the interests of the proletariat are not, paradoxically enough, on the side which one would expect. It was possible to resolve these conflicts rapidly in Cuba, and the advance towards socialism was undertaken as quickly as it was after taking power because Fidel, from the first day, demanded, won, and defended hegemony for the rural guerrillas". (our emphasis – Ed; p. 75)

He quotes approvingly Guevara's muddled thesis in the same vein:

"These differences (ie, between the plain (the town) and the sierra (the countryside) – Ed.) go deeper than tactical divergences. The Rebel Army is already ideologically proletarian and, thinks like a dispossessed class; the city remains petty bourgeois, contains future traitors among its leaders, and is very influenced by the milieu in which it develops." (Guevara , quoted by Debray on p. 77).

In this strange system of Marxism, the city, wherein labour and toil, the wage slaves of capitalism, has thus been conveniently disposed of to make way for leadership by that more revolutionary the petty bourgeoisie!

In further imaginative vein, the "back to nature" aspirations of the dilettante petty-bourgeois fleeing from the terrors of the era of machinofacture and proletarian organisation are eulogised:

"Such are the mental reactions of a bourgeois, and any man, even a comrade, who spends his life in a city is unwittingly bourgeois in comparison with a guerrillero.... Not to have any means of subsistence except what you yourself can produce, with your own hands starting from nature in

the raw. ... The city dweller lives as a consumer. As, long as he has some cash in his pocket, it suffices for his daily needs." (p. 68)

"Nothing like getting out to realise to what extent these lukewarm incubators (the cities – Ed.) make one infantile and bourgeois. In the first stages of life in the mountains, in the seclusion of the so-called virgin forest life is simply a daily battle in its smallest detail: especially is it a battle within the guerrillero himself to overcome his old habits, to erase the marks left on his body by the incubator – his weakness." (p. 69)

Really, Mr Debray – speak for yourself! No doubt it is a delightful element of "free choice" for the coddled petty bourgeois to remove himself temporarily to the more ascetic hardship of the mountains! But even capitalist economists have had to acknowledge that the daily lot of the proletariat is one which requires him to sell his birthright, his freedom, his expectancy of life precisely in order to obtain that little "cash in his pocket" without which he would be too dead to have any "daily needs"!

Also, in magical vein, we are told that:

"Under these conditions (guerrilla experience Ed) class egoism does not long endure.. Petty bourgeois psychology melts like under a summer sun ..." (p. 110).

Would that this were so!

From a reference he makes to Castro on the subject of the inherent qualities of "the people" we can draw only the conclusion that the term refers to the peasantry alone (p.112). And of course this is as it must be, for despite the loud claims, these theories bear absolutely no relation to the proletariat whatsoever.

The fig-leaf cover required to normalise this petty bourgeois leadership and masquerade it under the false cloak of a "worker-peasant alliance" leading to socialism was the verbal trick of claiming that a handful of petty bourgeois guerrillas, through their relationship to their "means of production" in the rural environment – the "dispossessed class" – were the proletariat leading the peasantry.

This makes the formula complete. But no amount of verbal juggling can make these theories any other than what they really are –

Namely, the laying of the foundations of the dictatorship of the national bourgeoisie in Latin America with all the jargon that goes with it:

the abstract and classless theory of "armed revolution";

the purely military "foco";

the primacy of spontaneity and,

the overall aim of "the happiness of the people" divorced from any concrete class analysis.

A typical petty bourgeois phenomenon is the spurning of class analysis and political theory. The bourgeoisie has its class theory, just as the proletariat has. But the petty bourgeoisie has no independent ideology because it is a transitional class, a virtual hybrid ideologically – part bourgeois and part proletarian in its advocacy of ideology according to the fortunes of which major class appears likely to benefit it most. That is the reason for the sweeping idealist phrases which are utterly classless. It therefore vacillates opportunistically, avoiding the statement of a political position because it does not know at any one stage in the movement of class struggle which side it will need to be on.

Thus the claims of the Debrayists are not new. Always and everywhere they have been part of the arsenal of the petty bourgeoisie in attempting to further their social and class aims – and they are theories which are inimical to the hopes and aspirations of the only truly revolutionary class, the proletariat; theories which at root and beneath the libertarian cover are nothing but a vicious attack on the proletariat and its class mission.

THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL – THE MAXIMUM LEADER – FIDELISM

If the character of the theories we have outlined are correct, it will follow that, in place of proletarian discipline and democratic centralism, petty bourgeois individuality will be enthroned. And this is so. We read:

"The city, Fidel says, "is a cemetery of revolutionaries and resources"..... A leader cannot go down to the city to attend a political meeting: he has the politicos come up to discuss and make decisions in a safe place up above: otherwise he sends an emissary. Which presupposes, in the first place, recognition of his role as responsible leader, the willingness to give him the resources with which to exercise his leadership – if not, he takes them himself. It implies, above all, the adoption of an open and explicit strategy". (p. 67).

"This reconstitution (of the "party" Ed.) requires the temporary suspension of 'internal' party democracy and the temporary abolition of the principles of democratic centralism which guarantee it." (p. 101).

Furthermore, the conventional party only brings with it "the plethora of commissions, secretariats, congresses, plenary sessions, meetings etc". These are the cause of "the vice of excessive deliberation" which "hampers executive, centralised and vertical methods, combined with the large measure of tactical independence of subordinate groups which is demanded in the conduct of military operations (p. 101).

In other words, discipline and organisation, which are the main manifestations of proletarian organisation, 'hamper' the freedoms of the petty bourgeois leaders, who wish to answer to no strata or section of the population – and indeed, by their very hybrid class position, do not

directly represent any. To these military adventurists, the primacy of political struggle which is supplemented by military struggle, is the source of all evils. It brings with it the necessity for disciplined leadership, political discussion of strategy, the difficult work of actually involving the working people in struggle. All these tasks are anathema to the Debrayists and their foolhardy bands of "trial and error" revolutionaries.

But we have only proceeded a little way in our analysis.

We have now to deal with the real reason why Debray has thought it necessary to throw all previous historical experience overboard, to decry and reject any lessons from the revolutions of Russia, China and Vietnam, the theories of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin; to throw the leading role of the proletarian party overboard. It is because:

"In Cuba, military (operational) and political leadership have been combined in one man: Fidel Castro". (p. 96)

It is because of:

"the line of action of which Fidel Castro, the leader of the Cuban Revolution, is the incarnation." (p. 119)

Throughout the text is peppered with glowing references to "Fidel says", rather like the children's nursery rhyme. Thus, speaking again of "the leader" and his qualities:

"In brief, no detail is too small for a politico-military chief: everything rests on details – on a single detail – and he himself must supervise them all". (p. 89)

What a staggering piece of nonsense! In contradistinction to even the Blanquists, who claimed that a small elite could liberate the people, we have the ridiculous adolescent hero-worship that one man – one "maximum-leader", the "incarnation", is our hope for socialism. Mr. Debray claims with pride that this leader, combining all qualities, "is the startling innovation that has been introduced" into the theory of Marxism-Leninism. We must indeed confess ourselves startled at such a turn of events – when the personal feelings of a twenty-year old whose transference to maturity had been stunted inside the portals of a bourgeois temple of philosophy – are put forward as the basis for a world-view involving the fate of millions!

But it would appear that in the sierras under the sway of "Fidelism", in place of the proletarian party and its healthy collective discipline, that body representing the best qualities of a class, such inverted and ingrown petty bourgeois acts of hero worship are commonplace. For Guevara himself, on the basis of his experiences with Fidel, stated that "the aim is for all qualities to be united if possible, in one person". This maximum leader, as the world knows, has not been slow to bask in the limelight of glory and rise to the heights of demagoguery which this mystical cult has presented to him.

Thus we are dealing with an idealisation of the petty bourgeoisie, an idealisation which can only finish up in extremely deep water.

And it does, for such baseless hero-worship and unquestioned allegiance to one "leader" is the very essence of bourgeois class thinking, when confronted with the problem of misleading and subjugating vast social forces for its own ends. It represents a crisis in the leadership of a historically obsolescent class when the normal, logical, although unequal, system of maintaining its power is threatened from below. This initial demagoguery of the "maximum leader" often appears too ridiculous to take seriously. But beneath it, lies the sabre of a force which is responsible to no constitution, to no labour laws, no checks by the working people, no power other than to itself. All too often it has finally resulted in bloodbaths not only involving the working class but any other strata which have got in the way of a totally destructive and anarchic force.

The seeds of such theories of an independent armed force, are present in the thinking of the Debrayist petty bourgeoisie:

"It has been proved that for the training of revolutionary cadres the people's war is more decisive than political activity without guerrilla experience. Leaders of vision in Latin America today are young, lacking in long political experience prior to joining up with the guerrillas. It is ridiculous to continue to oppose 'political cadres' to 'military cadres', 'political leadership' to 'military leadership'. Pure 'politicians' who want to remain pure – cannot lead the armed struggle of the people; pure 'military men' can do so, and by the experience acquired in leading a guerrilla group, they become 'politicians' as well. The experience of Cuba and, more recently, of Venezuela, Guatemala, and other countries demonstrate that people – even petty bourgeois or peasants – are more quickly and more completely moulded by experience of guerrilla warfare than by an equal amount of time spent in a training school for cadres – a consequence, as far as men are concerned, of the essentially and totally political character of guerrilla warfare." (p. 88-89).

This dominant military force will be naturally, young – since the old are, well – they are "alas... old" and worn out:

"In Latin America, wherever armed struggle is the order of the day, there is a close tie between biology and ideology. However absurd or shocking this relationship may seem, it is none the less a decisive one. An elderly man, accustomed to city living, (do workers retire at the age of 40? – MS-Ed) moulded by other circumstances and goals, will not easily adjust himself to the mountain nor – though this is less so – to underground activities. In addition to the moral factor – conviction – physical fitness is the most basic of all skills needed for waging guerrilla war; the two factors go hand in hand. A perfect Marxist education is not, at the outset, an imperative condition. That an elderly man should be proven militant – and possess a revolutionary training – is not, alas, sufficient for coping with guerrilla existence, especially in the early stages. Physical

aptitude is the prerequisite for all other aptitudes (?? – MS-Ed); a minor point of limited theoretical appeal, but the armed struggle appears to have a rationale of which theory knows nothing". (p. 101)

Thus it is brawn, not the creative brain; political ignorance, not understanding; youth and fitness, not experience which constitutes Debray's "master race" of revolution.

Such is the demagoguery which wears the mask of "Marxism". It is this monstrous deformation which results from the failure to build a vanguard party based firmly on the alliance between the working class and peasantry in the conditions of a national democratic struggle. For with this party denigrated, with the proletarian role usurped and the peasantry dragged in as fodder to back up and strengthen the inherently vacillating national bourgeoisie, the net result can only be, once foreign imperialist domination is overthrown, the imposition of the dictatorship of this national bourgeoisie fully confirmed in its class role – a national bourgeoisie forced to adopt the fascist-type "maximum leader" principle in order to maintain its hold over the vast masses of the people and obtain its surplus value from an underdeveloped economic system by screwing up the rate of exploitation – free from the bugbear of any organised opposition and defence by the working people of their own interests.

This is precisely the same demagoguery which we see today stretching from China to Indonesia and Cuba: with the party of the proletariat destroyed, the national bourgeoisie walks into its repressive role, and the proletariat is denigrated viciously as "a bourgeois force" in order to cover up the real bourgeois nature of these leaders. There is an exact parallel with the Chinese national bourgeoisie and its assumed "leftism": the "cultural revolution", which aims to destroy the proletarian vanguard party.

THE "FOCO" AS SUBSTITUTE FOR THE PROLETARIAN PARTY

We have already had a pretty rounded introduction to the theories of Debray.

It comes as no surprise therefore, that for Debray the Marxist-Leninist theory of the vanguard party of the proletariat, must give place to yet another unique contribution to "Marxism-Leninism"; that is, the theory of the immaculate conception, or the spontaneous begetting, of the vanguard nucleus.

Thus:

"The vanguard party can exist in the form of the guerrilla foco itself. The guerrilla force is this party in embryo. This is the staggering novelty introduced by the Cuban Revolution." (p. 105)

"The people's army will be the nucleus of the party, not vice-versa. The guerrilla force is the political vanguard in nuce, and from its development a real party can arise That is why at the present juncture, 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." (p. 115).

"Eventually the future People's Army will beget the party of which it is to be, theoretically the instrument: essentially the party is the army." (p. 105).

Just as a vanguard party is not necessary in the struggle, one can also dispense with political education of the mass of the-working people:

"(the system of political commissars)... does not appear to correspond to Latin American reality. ... The people's army is its own political authority. The guerrilleros play both roles indivisibly. Its commanders are political instructors for the fighters, its political instructors are its' commanders." (p. 114).

For in place of the scientific truths of Marxism-Leninism, we are offered a set of maxims mouthed parrot-like by "revolutionaries" whose proudest claim is their rejection of the historical experience of the revolutionary peoples in struggle and their philistine ability to "invent", on the spot, 'the great truths, which are hereinafter valid for all time:

"In many countries of America the guerrilla force has frequently been called the 'armed fist' of a liberation front, in order to indicate its dependence on a patriotic front or on a party. This expression, copied from models elaborated elsewhere – principally in Asia – is at bottom, contrary to the maxim of Camilo Cienfuegos: 'The rebel army is the people in uniform'." (p. 65)

What duplicity. A handful of petty bourgeois adventurers, who are a law unto themselves, constituting a "foco" which preserves its independence from the people because the mass of the people "contain many potential betrayers of the revolution", are put up as the true representatives of the workers' and peasants' best interests, as the substitute for a party of the working masses. Such are the lengths to which these arrogant petty bourgeois will go in their task of attacking the fundamental and only guide to action of the masses, in whatsoever corner of the globe: the scientific principles of Marxism-Leninism.

And, of course, Debray, in addition to his ignorance of Marxism or Leninism, is completely at sea on the facts of the Cuban revolution and its outcome, as we shall see in more detail later. Suffice it here to say that he is under the totally erroneous impression that the "theories" he claims to have unearthed, were actually borne out in practice:

"Around this nucleus, and only because it already had its own politico-military leadership, other political forces have been able to assemble and unite, forming what is today the Communist party of Cuba, of which both the base and the head continue to be made up of comrades from the guerrilla army. The Latin American revolution and its vanguard, the Cuban Revolution, have thus made a decisive contribution to international revolutionary experience and to Marxism-Leninism." (p. 105)

Obviously no one has told him that so weak, so undisciplined and so politically inept was this guerrilla force when faced with the directly political tasks of managing a "state of the working

people" that its first action was to call in the aid of the revisionist Popular Socialist Party, a party which had played a completely traitorous role in the struggle against Batista, to help them man the heights of political power.

Debray devotes a good percentage of his book to attacks on those revisionists (such as of the Popular Socialist Party) – attacks which are justified to a certain extent – but what cannot be justified is his attempt to make of the sell-out which the Cuban revolution was to become a model of "Marxism-Leninism", every unprincipled turn of which must be copied throughout the Latin American continent.

When the Cuban leadership granted Mr. Debray full facilities to study the Cuban revolution and its history that is, employed him to embroider a myth and bury the facts they chose wisely. They chose a representative of that privileged section of the petty bourgeoisie which devotes all its time and energies to the renegade task of attempting to destroy the only theory and practice which can liberate all the oppressed social classes by a revolution which will end for ever the unequal privilege whereby those who create wealth and culture are robbed by those who make of it a reactionary metaphysical mystique.

PEOPLE'S WAR WITHOUT THE PEOPLE

We begin, as usual, with a claim of uniqueness for the Latin American situation.

The discovery of this "new" path has led to many errors, but these are inevitable "at this stage of exploration, of revolutionary conceptions and methods which are new in spite of their deceptive kinship with other international experiences" (p.23). The aim of the armed foco is to build up "through guerrilla warfare carried out in suitably chosen rural zones a more mobile strategic force, nucleus of a people's army and future socialist state" (p. 25).

Of course this armed spontaneity diverges radically from all other successful experiences to date – and, naturally, has met with innumerable failures. Therefore, we have to have a scapegoat. Upon this scapegoat are blamed residual "imported" errors, that explain the "inevitable" errors on the "new" path. He makes this scapegoat, the dangerous "imported political conceptions" of Vietnam and elsewhere, with such out-of-context claims as the "subjection of the guerrilla force to the party" (p.25) contentions, which are not applicable to the "historical and social conditions peculiar to Latin America." (p. 56)

He notes that:

"... in Vietnam, the Communist Party was the organisational nucleus from which and around which the people's army developed." (p. 47).

But:

"Differences between Vietnam and Latin America lead to the following contrast: whereas in Vietnam the military pyramid of the liberation forces is built from the base up, in Latin America on the other hand, it tends to be built from the apex down; the permanent forces first (the foco), then the semi-regular forces in the vicinity of the foco, and lastly or after victory (Cuba) the militia." (p. 50)

Of course, such a radical turning on its head is not clarified in any way. It is simply taken for granted.

Another "irrelevant" theory to Debray, employed as it has been in all the successful national liberation struggles of our time, is that the guerrilla forces should aim to be so integrally a part of the people that they remain unnoticed "like a fish in water";

"The occupation and control of rural areas by reaction or directly by imperialism, their vigilance today greatly increase should rid a given group of armed propagandists of all hope remaining unnoticed like a fish in water'." (p. 51)

And another "unique" point:

"Let us not forget, that the class enemy carries out selective assassination on a large scale in Latin America – kill the leaders and leave the rest alive." (p. 66)

Really, Mr Debray, one would think from such a statement that imperialist oppression itself is completely unique to Latin America. Yes this elitist militarist theory is nonsense.

It has been put forward in order to cover up the essential heresy which lies beneath the claims to a "people's army"; by inventing a uniqueness which prevents the application of the theory of people war, as it is understood by all genuine representatives of the working people, it is hoped to cover up the fact that this was the work of a handful of insurgents who bear no relationship whatsoever to the real aspirations and political requirements of the forces in struggle against imperialism.

In a vulgarisation of the role of the guerrilla we read:

"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 so that the 'rebellion' will truly be – by the manner of its recruitment and the origins, its fighters a 'war of the people'". (p. 46)

and:

"..... the only conceivable line for a guerrilla group to adopt is the mass line; it can live only with their support, in daily contact with them." (p. 110)

But behind this thin "mass line" lies the real reason why Debray has found it necessary to reject the experience of people's war in Vietnam, Laos, etc. It is a reason which completely removes

the class basis and pins his theory down as a justification of the individualism, instability and shallowness of the petty bourgeoisie. For Debray rejects the concept of a fixed base of support, i.e. a mass-base amongst the people, for individualistic nomadism, without any social base.

"the guerrilla base is, according to an expression of Fidel, the territory within which the guerrilla happens to be moving; it goes where he goes. In the initial stage the base of support is in the guerrilla fighter's knapsack." (p. 64)

"During the first stage (of the guerrilla war Ed.), clearly the hardest to surmount and the most exposed to all sorts of accidents, the initial group experiences at the outset a period of absolute nomadism." (p. 31)

A fine "people's war", one of the main aims of its elitist liberating mission being to achieve independence from the people (as opposed to the Marxist-Leninist thesis of the necessity to build the revolutionary independence of the working people from their exploiters):

"The revolutionary guerrilla force is clandestine. It is born and develops secretly. The fighters themselves use pseudonyms. At the beginning they keep out of sight, and when they allow themselves to be seen it is at a time and place chosen by their chief (sic). The guerrilla force is independent of the civilian population in action as well as in military organisation; consequently it need not assume the direct defence of the peasant population." (p. 41).

With a further display of arrogant elitism and incredible lack of faith in the forces they claim to represent, we read:

"Constant vigilance, constant mistrust, constant mobility – the three golden rules. All three are concerned with security. Various considerations of common sense necessitate wariness towards the civilian population and the maintenance of a certain aloofness. By their very situation (? MS-Ed) civilians are exposed to repression and the constant presence and pressure of the enemy, who will attempt to buy them, corrupt them, or to extort from them by violence what cannot be bought... . 'We hid our intentions from the peasants', Che relates, and if once of them passed near the scene of an ambush, we held him until the operation was completed. This vigilance does not necessarily imply mistrust: a peasant may easily commit an indiscretion and even more easily, be subjected to torture." (p. 4-3)

Thus the claim that these theories are a more highly developed form of "people's war" begins to look slightly ludicrous – when the guerilla foco is fighting not only the imperialist enemy but completely isolated from and antagonistic to the mass of the working people, and peasants, the only possible base in a people's war against imperialism.

In this scheme of things the working people and peasantry serve merely as fodder for the adventurist, personally gratifying, military gambles of the unstable, dissatisfied petty bourgeoisie. We begin to see why the solidarity of the Vietnamese people in their genuine

people's war is anathema to the Debrayists, and why they constantly warn of the dangers of "imitating the Vietnamese experience."

So Debray has disposed of the class base of a genuine revolutionary movement, of its wholehearted dedication to and identification with the exploited and oppressed classes;

Debray has disposed completely of the alliance of the two major oppressed classes, proletariat and peasantry, which when welded together into an invincible alliance, constitute the only force which can resolutely oppose and defeat imperialism by classing the proletarian forces of the cities as "bourgeoisie";

Debray has cancelled out the role of political struggle by scorning the tasks of building a revolutionary movement around a programme, forging alliances, educating the people for struggle, organising, agitating propagating in the course of building this powerful force of the working masses, and revealed his thoroughly bourgeois content by ignoring the vital and indispensable role of the general staff of a revolution, its vanguard party;

And at the tail end of this rejection of all that constitutes a genuine revolutionary force, his guerrilla focos resemble nothing more than bandit groups, cut off from the oppressed people to such an extent, that at a certain stage of their reckless ill-conceived adventures they are forced to break the cardinal principle of genuine people's war – never to steal the property of the workers and peasants by advocating raids – on villages for supplies:

"It is less risky and safer for a guerrilla group to make raids on neighbouring villages from its own base in order to obtain foodstuffs and field equipment." (p. 70).

It is now quite clear why so many Fidelista focos have floundered and been wiped out. For by elevating guerrilla struggle (or their completely militarist inversion of it) to an end in itself, as opposed to a stage in the struggle which it really is, and by advocating that a handful of "dedicated determined men", maintaining their aloofness from the vast mass of the working people, ignoring political questions" with the same blindness as mediaeval mystics, can overthrow the considerable might of imperialism, they cut the very ground from under their feet and lead those who follow them to almost certain defeat and massacre.

Debray claims that the great misconceptions which exist concerning the Cuban revolution are the reasons for so many failures in recent years on the Latin American continent. He claims his book is the vehicle which distils the true essence of that revolution and lays down its theory for the edification of all like-minded insurgents. It has been pointed out that the essence he has distilled, besides its dangerous implications, bears very little resemblance to the actual course of the Cuban revolution add the lessons which are to be learned from it.

We must therefore now look at that Cuban experience and distil from it our own essence – one which has been processed according to the scientific principles of Marxism-Leninism.

"LEFT" AND RIGHT IN LATIN AMERICA

What is the fundamental malaise which is responsible for such anti-Marxist-Leninist rubbish as the Debray theories being purveyed with some seriousness in Latin America? It lies, surely, in the classic division between right and "left" which has – we now borrow Mr. Debray's phrase – revealed itself in a very obvious form due to certain more heightened conditions in Latin America.

Debray takes as his point of departure the right revisionist betrayal over many decades in Latin America, and seeks to counter-pose his leftist theories as the way forward.

But whereas the right deviation seeks to tie the class forces of the proletariat and its allies to bourgeois ideology and practice in such a way as to transform the party into an instrument of foreign imperialism, the comprador bourgeoisie and the feudal reactionary classes;

Its leftist counterpart, the "left" revisionist deviation, also reflects, the influence of bourgeois ideology and practice within the class forces of the proletariat, but in this case adapted to the class needs of the national bourgeoisie.

The national bourgeoisie has an objective interest, at least for a time, in the victory of the national democratic revolution, but wishes to achieve that victory under its class leadership and not under that of the proletariat and its allies.

It therefore needs to make use of revolutionary phraseology, the best form of which is provided by the petty bourgeois left distortions of Marxism of which Debray's teachings are typical.

These deviations are able to take an extreme and clear form within the contradictory framework of political institutions in Latin America. The apparently organic and established character of the state frameworks in most Latin American countries has resulted from the early formal independence won against Spanish colonial rule which resulted in an earlier development of semi-colonial forms of domination by USA imperialism. This has seduced the majority of the revisionist parties in those countries into believing that the doctrine of "peaceful transition" could be applied there without the disguise of leftist phraseology and lip service to guerrilla and other violent forms of struggle. As a consequence, right revisionist policies in Latin America have met with the most abject failure of any in the world, driving those parties, in a number of instances – the best known being that of Batista's Cuba – to degenerate into direct, tools of foreign imperialism and indigenous comprador reaction.

This history of open right-revisionist betrayal and errors is the main factor determining the current swing to the "left" in a diametrically opposed direction. This history counterposes "peaceful legal advance without violence" and the militarist spontaneity of "military struggle without politics".

It represents a classic manifestation of the spontaneous division between "left" and right. We say spontaneous, because these extremes occur in the vacuum-left, when genuine scientific analysis and the revolutionary leadership which results from it are lacking. A right deviation delivers the working people and peasantry helpless to the massacre of imperialist guns and without any means of defence. Whilst leftism provokes isolated violence and brings down the full force of imperialist violence on an inadequately steeled and prepared nucleus, divorced from the mass of the people but involving these forces in the bloodshed which accompanies their defeat.

These complementary deviations have wreaked havoc within the national liberation fronts of the Latin American continent and make more essential the return to a class analysis as the basis for a scientific theory of revolution.

Certain countries of the Latin American continent have been viewed by right revisionism as possessing sufficient formal trappings of democracy to justify a full programme based on electoral advance to socialism by peaceful means, such as Uruguay, Chile, Argentina, Costa Rica and Brazil. The remaining long-standing open dictatorships have necessitated right revisionist programmes of a more militant type, albeit singularly lacking in any guide to action to overthrow the repressive regimes, but relying on the hope that "democratic rights" would be established under restrained "mass pressure". It is therefore to the statements of the Communist Parties of the former category that we should turn for the clearest expression of "parliamentarism" on the Latin American continent.

A reference to the Costa Rican Communist Party's "competition" some years ago makes the right revisionist position very clear.

Here instead of the vanguard party thriving in a situation of heightened class struggle, we are presented with the novelty of a "vanguard party" which finds itself losing ground; when objective class struggle is seen as a nuisance factor which has interfered with the prime task of the ingrown little organism's race to achieve a per capita paper representation in some imaginary "democratic institution" – whilst all comprehension of the realities of class remains blissfully outside its scope.

It does not require a very detailed knowledge of the situation Costa Rica to understand that the way to salvation of the Costa Rican working People does not lie through such "struggle" as advocated by the "Costa Rican People's Vanguard":

"A competition in the sphere of organisation, education, propaganda and finances has been conducted by the Party in five of the seven Provinces of Costa Rica. ... Judging by the results it looked as if the target advanced by the Ninth Congress (doubling the membership) would be realised without much difficulty. However, unforeseen circumstances arose which hampered the work of building Party.

The first was the Caribbean Crisis last October and the wave of repressions that came in its wake. Our newspaper was banned and the activity of the Party was restricted in one way or another

Owing to the repressions in the Pacifico Sur party membership has shown no increase. However, despite these negative factors and the intensified repressions in connection with the talks between the presidents of the Central American countries and President Kennedy in March 1963, the competition conducted by the five provinces was, on the whole, satisfactory....

It is clear to us that when international tension increases and the war danger grows, repressions are intensified and democratic liberties curtailed, and the growth of the Party slows down...Hence we are waging a constant struggle for peace, against the restriction of democratic freedoms.

This, of course, does not lead us to the opportunistic conclusion that we can fight and win only in conditions of legality and extensive utilisation of democratic rights. However, the fact remains that in the present conditions the most favourable climate for Party growth is international detente, since this makes it easier to defend the democratic gains of the working people." (Oscar Vargas: World Marxist Review: Oct 196,3; p. 61-2).

The trite rejection of opportunism offered by Vargas does not invalidate the charge which any honest militant must make against such a grossly renegade strategy as is offered by the Costa Rican "vanguard". For of course, such a logic is clear. Imperialism, class struggle, brings the threat of repression which hampers the work of building an electoral party in conditions of class peace. Therefore a status quo of peace between labour and capital is vital if this work of conservation, the buffer preventing class confrontation can go on.

The theme was repeated in Chile, the same reformist dreams of "The British Road to Socialism" being applied to a situation where striking workers were murdered, where any substantiation to the claim to a "democratic facade" had been ripped away a decade ago by the brutal dictatorship of Gonzalez Videla which outlawed the Communist Party and subjected it to persecutions all too familiar under the heel of open reaction, and where any democratic facade exists merely as a perfected weapon for ensuring the continuation of bourgeois dictatorship by drawing to its assistance in this conspiracy the renegade "leaders" of the working people.

Thus the Chilean Communist Party leadership hotly denied any revolutionary intentions ascribed to it:

"What is needed ... is to secure a turn to the left in national policy"....

"Through the medium of parliament, municipal councils and public meetings, the Party constantly advances and supports all projects and measures designed to benefit the people. Reactionaries in the ranks of the Christian Democrats accuse the Communists of seeking bring

down the government in order to take its place. But the resolute stand taken by the Communists has demonstrated the baselessness of this and has shown that the Communists are prompted by neither opportunist nor narrow tactical considerations." (World Marxist Review: November 1965; p. 47)

The whimpering denial of opportunism appears like a Judas mark in the programmes of these guilty men who commit every anti-proletarian crime it is possible to imagine given that they propose and preach class peace in a continent whose peoples subsist in indescribable conditions of brutalising poverty and misery. Yet with every increase in reactionary terror, the subservience of these handmaidens of the bourgeoisie increases in proportion. Each decisive parliamentary defeat, such as occurred in Chile in 1964, is followed by an ever more eager act of grovelling to an ever more contemptuous, corrupt, and confident bourgeoisie.

The Brazilian Communist Party, the leading mouthpiece of right revisionism in Latin America had a carefully mapped out plan for "utilising democratic rights and liberties". In 1964 it was striving by means of a system of "structural reforms" to win power by:

"...establishing a national and democratic government and laying the groundwork for far-reaching changes that would ensure complete political and economic liberation and pave the way for socialism,"

believing that:

"the basic task of the vanguard forces in the struggle for structural reforms now is to build up the national and democratic movements. It is along these lines that we envisage the possibility of a peaceful revolution." (World Marxist Review: Jan 1964; p. 22)

However, these hopes were not to be realised. The coup which overthrew Goulart in 1964 and installed the rule of the generals smashed the "democratic" illusions of these men of peace, and the naive veneer given to the theoretical estimation of the Party's errors, attempts to draw attention from the fact that the leaders of the Brazilian Party, especially Prestes, are well versed enough in political manoeuvring not to suffer the lack of experience they claim. Thus, analysing the errors of the Communist Party:

"We ourselves had not been prepared politically and ideologically and had not prepared the masses to repulse the violence of reaction. As a result of a not altogether correct formulation of the Fifth Congress which took as its guidelines the thesis of the 20th Congress of the CPSU, we inaccurately assessed the possibilities of the 'peaceful path', seeing revolution as an idyllic process, free of clashes and conflicts.

Due to this incorrect assessment the leadership failed to see the danger signals. Instead of calling on the masses to fight the danger of a rightist coup, it continued to demand the holding of plebiscite." (C Prestes: World Marxist Review; June 1968; p, 17).

"Although we sensed a certain tension (! Ed) we failed to act accordingly". (World Marxist Review, February 1965; p. 28)

Despite the "self-criticism" of the above – conducted purely in the realm of the senses though it is – the conclusion of the right revisionists is a remarkable piece of un-dialectical nonsense. For the failure to prepare for violent struggle, to see through the bluff, of parliamentary 'legality', were mistakes of a "leftist" character!

"The Sixth Congress rejected the view that the main mistakes made by the Party were the consequence of a right deviation and noted that they were, on the contrary, mistakes of a leftist, putschist and petty bourgeois character." (C Prestes: World Marxist Review; June 1968; p. 17)

This massacre of the truth is necessary because, despite their "self-criticism", despite the objective failure of their line, despite the setbacks to which their opportunism has led, they still intend to pursue their "peaceful" cause. The coup which installed a "semi-fascist political regime" will be destroyed through:

"Active opposition and vigorous mass actions (which) will reduce the regime's socio-political basis and could lead to its defeat by non-violent means. Democratic action can compel the reactionary and defeatist minority to retreat and restore democratic rights." (Ibid.; p. 18)

Of course, "it may turn out too, that the Party and the people will be compelled to resort to other, more elementary and particular forms of armed struggle". But we can rest assured that the right revisionist leadership of the Brazilian Communist Party will do everything in its power to be true to the spirit and the letter of the passive "may" and place it far behind in its list of priorities.

Such is the face of right revisionism in Latin America.

It has been against this background of betrayal that the working people and peasant masses have been compelled to resort to spontaneous armed struggle – struggle which was, and largely remains, outside the framework of control of the revisionist parties of the right. In those countries where such armed struggle has already taken root and the masses of the working people are beginning to be drawn into the struggle against semi-colonial dictatorship and foreign imperialist oppression, the further result of this has been that those, communist parties subservient to Soviet right revisionism have been forced to pay lip service to armed struggle and modify their more blatant parliamentary transition formulas in a bid to regain the influence within the armed liberation fronts which previously they were threatened with losing completely.

In its wider context, this pragmatic and opportunist response to the spontaneous growth of armed struggle reflects the shift in policy on the part of the Soviet revisionist leadership which has taken place since Khrushchev's overthrow – a shift away from "all-round cooperation with US imperialism" to one of striving for the establishment of independent spheres of influence in areas hitherto comprising sectors of the US sphere. Within the overall task of developing this policy, a

certain independent sphere of operations in relation to the national liberation movements of the underdeveloped colonial and semi-colonial sectors of the world has been allotted to the so-called "centrist" bloc of revisionist communist parties and "socialist" states, of which Cuba is one, and has given rise to the need for lip-service to armed national liberation struggle to be admitted to the platforms of some, though by no means all, of the Latin American communist parties under the influence of Soviet revisionism.

An example of this is offered by the criticism of the 20th Congress formulations on peaceful transition and peaceful coexistence made by the Brazilian right revisionist leader, Prestes. The alternative to the long discredited right revisionist formulations put forward is the flexibly leftist slogan of "armed struggle as a tactic, democratic constitutional advance as a strategy". With its perceptible overtones of Kautsky and Bernstein, this formulation neatly solves the dilemma of how to maintain the long-cherished peaceful transitional shibboleths of right revisionism, now becoming so tarnished, simply by reversing Marxist-Leninist theoretical principles and relegating to armed struggle a subordinate tactical role serving the main strategy of seeking to secure minor palliatives to the increasingly oppressive life of the working people through reforms and the ballot box.

The outcome of these opportunist policy manoeuvres has been that, utilising the dominant hold which they exercise over the apostle of "violent struggle" in Latin America, Fidel Castro and the Soviet revisionist leadership has been able to control the transition to support for "centrist" revisionist policies on the part of certain Latin American Communist Parties without loosening in any way their traditional control over the leaderships of those parties – and even in some cases to increase it through the prestige added by the accession of Castroite "centrist" revisionism to the overall force available to Soviet policy needs.

As for "left" revisionism and Trotskyism, these take many forms in Latin America. The case of Guevara and Debray, who take an "ultra-leftist" position themselves, while condemning the Trotskyites as revisionists, has already been analysed. The lessons of their position, i.e. of an armed struggle divorced from any political and class organisation of the working people, have been borne home most clearly following the collapse of Guevara's mission in Bolivia. So much so, that Arguedas, a firm sympathiser of the guerrillas, wrote as his epitaph to Guevara:

"...he failed because he did not have the support of the peasants and because the Bolivian people did not know the action programme of the guerillas",

A lesson so elementary that it should hardly have required the sacrifice of so many aspiring national liberation fighters to make it known. And indeed, the lessons of this, collapse of "ultra-leftist" method and morale accompanying Guevara's experiment were not lost on those forces which represent the national bourgeoisie with more perception than Guevara. They can have acted as yet one more forceful argument for Castro strengthening his "centrist" position.

Trotskyism in Latin America – as represented particularly in Guatemala and Peru is "left" opportunism which claims a "theory" of socialist revolution. This "theory" completely denies the national democratic stage of the revolution in a colonial-type country and insists that "socialist revolution" is at any given moment on the order of the day.

Its effect is to isolate the genuine revolutionary forces from class allies who stand objectively for the national democratic revolution, and without whose added weight imperialism cannot be defeated and the national democratic tasks achieved. In practice, however, they resort to all manner of semi-anarchist, syndicalist and outright irridentist ideologies in order to win bases amongst the peasantry and urban poor, purveying such illusions as the direct growth of the village peasant-commune into socialism, the romanticism of the primitive subsistence economy and so on.

In strategy and tactics, their aim is to sow the usual kind of confusion associated with their name, advocating peaceful legal advance in the manner of the right revisionists whenever and wherever an actual revolutionary situation is close at hand, and pressing for ultra-revolutionary forms of struggle whenever and wherever the revolutionary tide is temporarily on the ebb turn. Thus they contribute directly to rendering the more militant vanguard forces an easy and isolated target for imperialist guns. Within these overall perspectives of betrayal, however, the "socialist revolution" for which they aim is, as with the right revisionist communist parties, in essence a peaceful one.

Thus all of these trends, "left" or right, spell defeat and betrayal for the revolutionary aspirations of the working people of Latin America and the decimation of their actual or potential organisations, of struggle.

At the helm of all this confusion and betrayal, seeking to unite the political manifestations of bourgeois and petty bourgeois thinking within the forces of the developing national democratic and socialist revolutions of Latin America under the one "super revolutionary" centre, has stood the Cuban revisionist leadership. They have encouraged every kind of anti-proletarian and anti-Marxist-Leninist theory and practice, inspiring the most infantile forms of petty bourgeois leftism, and nationalist euphoria; and finally, they have resolved the failure of both "left" and right revisionism into the doctrine of a "centrist" revisionism, a position which has emerged as a specific heritage of the Cuban-revolution.

It is to an analysis of the Cuban development itself, therefore, that we must now turn.

ASSESSMENT OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

The Cuban Revolution represented a phenomenon with two contradictory sides.

One was the fundamentally positive fact that US imperialist domination over Latin America had been breached for the first time, and a nation free of US imperialist oppression and ranged in

struggle against it now stood as a symbol of anti-imperialist liberation struggle for the peoples of the continent.

The second and negative side was that, from its inception, the Cuban Revolution was carried through not under the leadership of the working class in alliance with the poor peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie but under that of forces representing the national bourgeoisie. This epoch is characterised by the onset of a world pre-revolutionary situation and the beginning of the disintegration of the imperialist world system. Therefore, this class basis can only serve its fundamental class interest and achieve, the construction of a form of capitalist society in the newly emerged nations, in as much as it succeeds in manoeuvring with the offer of its neo-colonial and comprador services between the various competing imperialist groups. This is a strategy which leads sooner or later to the incorporation of the newly-independent nation, willy-nilly, into the sphere of influence of another imperialist group, most likely one which is hostile to the imperialist power from which independence had originally been won.

The economic in-viability of Cuba – a fundamental feature inherited from the one-sided development imposed by US imperialist domination in the past – together with its geographically isolated position and economically unbalanced character, placed Cuba in a precarious position which rendered its newly-won independence highly vulnerable.

Debray seeks in his book to paint a glowing and utopian picture of the Castro leadership which completely ignores the historical facts and sets out to enshrine every trite phrase and thought of this leadership as valid "scientific truths". It remains a quite obvious fact however, that Castro and those who fought with him to overthrow Batista were not Marxist-Leninists. Castro claims that the "Marxism-Leninism" of the Cuban leadership was learned during the course of the struggle. The absence of scientific revolutionary principle guiding a clear strategic perspective – fundamental necessities in any revolutionary process, whether national democratic or socialist in character, in which the working class fulfils the leading role and which is guided by a genuine Marxist-Leninist vanguard party – and the opportunist manoeuvring to which that absence inevitably leads –

These are all explained away by Debray, with the claim that the revolutionary process was undergoing a justifiable period of "trial and error" – not, be it understood, trial and error in the application of Marxist-Leninist science to the revolution but quite abstractly in the search for a "Cuban form of Marxism".

Castro and the inceptive forces of the guerrilla movement which he led were urban petty bourgeois revolutionists acting objectively as the leading representatives of the Cuban national bourgeoisie. The rebellion based on the Sierra Maestra drew to the ranks of the rebel army recruits from the peasantry, the mass base of the petty bourgeoisie and, in the absence of a leading role fulfilled by the working class, formed the social arsenal of the national bourgeoisie.

The movement claimed to be a liberal alternative to the tyranny of Batista, the stench of whose corruption was believed by Castro to be a constant source of embarrassment to the United States – the diaries of Guevara in his Bolivian campaign imply that, in begging aid from US monopoly interests under the threat that US holdings would be confiscated in the event of victory in Bolivia if support for the insurgents were not forthcoming. In this he was merely repeating methods prominent in the early stage of the Cuban revolution itself. The "left" revisionists of the Castro/Guevara stamp, attempt to explain these away as "tactical" covers for their real "Marxist" aims.

Throughout the course of the struggle Castro increasingly won the support of the urban petty bourgeoisie and middle classes – the involvement of the working class taking place considerably later. The tone of the Castro leadership on the role of the working class, was that the working class should be thankful for its liberation at the hands of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia and peasantry. However, support for the rebels against the tyranny of Batista was sufficiently overwhelming in its scope to cause the United States, refrain from any serious attempt to maintain Batista in power by overt force, and to give only that amount of aid to Batista which would preserve US face with lesser tyrants of the Batista stamp throughout Latin America. Although a covert attempt using Cuban exiles to restore a US colonial-type puppet regime was launched later, with the abortive Bay of Pigs landing. These were the factors which assisted the seizure of power by the Castro leadership in 1959.

The victory of 1959 brought Castro his first lessons in the attempt to carry through reforms of a national and democratic character in the epoch of imperialism.

Whilst at the comparatively early stage of establishing his bases in the Sierras, Castro had approached the lawyer, Urrutia, with an offer that he should form a government when victory was won – an offer which was accepted and implemented in 1959. Urrutia was a representative of the nascent Cuban national bourgeoisie, but nevertheless one of the first acts of his government was to approach US imperialism with assurances that his government intended to continue the semi-colonial status of Cuba, and to maintain the traditional agrarian structure of the economy and economic dependence on the US. It was only the rejection of these assurances by the US and the latter's refusal to recognise the Castro regime which compelled the subsequent alignment with the Soviet Union.

As for Castro himself, it was a typical and in view of the later developments, an ironic expression of the spirit of the expediently opportunist freebooter that he was ready and willing to place his services at the disposal of the highest bidder, that he did not conceive of taking any initiative in the political and state affairs, of the new government.

All the evidence shows that Castro did not wish to govern on behalf of any defined class. He saw his role as that of a latter-day Garibaldi effecting a purely military liberation on behalf of abstract "liberty, equality and fraternity" and then handing over power to a vague and undefined "liberal

intelligentsia", i.e., to elements of the national bourgeoisie which, at that stage, had no conception of the revolution winning for them full national independence from US imperialism, and who merely wished to extend somewhat the scope of their economic holdings and the degree of their participation in and control over the state and administration.

According to the terms of the Urrutia government's approach to the US, agrarian landlordism, the security of US holdings in both agriculture and such service industries as existed and the corresponding structure of feudal and comprador relations, were to remain essentially untouched and only subjected to a degree of mild reform. Only the short-sighted rejection by the US of these proposals for the reform of the semi-colonial structure of Cuba as it had existed under the corrupt and brutal reign of Batista finally compelled Castro and his followers both to take up themselves the reigns of state and to implement measures designed to secure independence from the US – an independence the only available economic foundation for which was, ultimately alignment with the Soviet neo-imperialist bloc.

Amongst the first measures enacted was the land reform – a step which was essential if the base of peasant support was to be maintained. The confiscation of large holdings, particularly those owned by foreign capital, brought down the wrath of US imperialism.

For Castro the second dilemma and the second lesson had begun.

Despite numerous manoeuvres to outwit the Imperialists and to prevent their hostility and inevitable embargos on trade, the US in traditionally short-sighted fashion, declared its hostility and began to threaten Cuba with economic reprisals. Castro, countering this blackmail as best he could, entered into trade agreements with the Soviet Union, intending to walk the tightrope of a balance between the two blocs which would ensure Cuba's economic future without drastic political shifts.

However, the breach was forced by US imperialism with the cutting of the quota for the import of Cuban sugar, forcing Castro to look elsewhere for cheaper supplies consequent upon the loss of US dollars. There followed a train of reprisals and counter-reprisals culminating in the Soviet offer to buy Cuban sugar (at an unspecified price) and to meet the Cuban demand for oil. The refusal of the US to refine Soviet oil, was met by Castro's nationalisation of the key US interests in Cuba as a final and irrevocable reprisal. The course of Castro's future was now set – a future which had originally never been intended or planned; but which had developed piecemeal out of the course of events. By 1963, according to Castro, the trade balance with the Soviet Union had risen to over one hundred million dollars.

This nationalisation, as we are now informed by the Cuban "Marxist- Leninists", represented the "socialist revolution".

However, in reality it represented an inevitable move which Castro, representing the national bourgeoisie, was forced to make given that he was fighting for his economic life and needed to

trade with whomsoever would offer these services. But dependence on trade with the Union and being totally at the mercy of the defence protection, of the "nuclear umbrella" brought with it the expected penalty. Castro, the man who had hitherto publicly denounced Marxism-Leninism and denied any affinity with "communists" now began to air his brains in public and to take the first carefully rehearsed steps towards embracing Marxism-Leninism as avidly as he was later to embrace Khrushchev.

The previous emphasis on the role of the intellectuals as the leading force in the revolution, and as the "liberators of the working class" was now dressed up in a more conventional "Marxist-Leninist" disguise to accord with the announcement of the "socialist revolution", albeit a multifarious class definition typical of national bourgeois "socialism":

"the labouring masses, the farmers, the student masses, the masses of the poor, the underprivileged mass of our nation, significant portions of the middle class, sections of the petty bourgeoisie, intellectual workers, made Marxism-Leninism their own, made the struggle for the Socialist Revolution their own." (F Castro: "Castro Denounces Sectarianism", March 1962, p. 13)

One of the penalties for the alignment with the Soviet Union was the loss of middle class support – a section which had supported Castro whole-heartedly during the struggle for power. These now flocked in large numbers to Miami, plotting counterrevolution, and thereby weakening considerably the already overstrained technical and administrative cadre force and heightening social tensions. It was, at this point that the other long arm of revisionism, that from within Cuba itself, came into its own.

The history of the Cuban Communist Party offers an appalling record: of opportunism and class betrayal.

Based mainly on the urban working-class and aimed at building a mass social-democratic party, engaged in negotiations for economic improvements to the exclusion of almost all other forms of struggle and bound up with unprincipled agreements and alliances with whatsoever dictator happened to be in power, it was only to be expected that it could play no role in the struggle to overthrow Batista. Denouncing Castro as a mere adventurer, in the early days of the guerrilla struggle, and effectively assisting the sabotage of all attempts by the guerrillas to mobilise urban strikes, it only changed its tactics in the later stages, when the victory of Castro was already clearly inevitable. At this stage, certain leading revisionists were sent to join the guerrillas, with the aim of establishing the first bridgehead within the revolutionary forces in preparation for the later penetration of the right-revisionist party into the anti-imperialist front and the newly-founded national democratic state.

In the period immediately following the seizure of power, the clear anti-communist content of the half-hearted national democratic revolution which was "spontaneously developing", effectively blocked the entrance of careerist-minded revisionist party members into positions of

influence in the state. But this situation changed radically when apathy began to strike the middle class and comprador-orientated bourgeoisie after the confiscation of their property and the establishment of the open alliance with the Soviet Union, and especially after significant numbers of these strata had begun to desert to the Florida mainland. In the chaos of Castro's "spontaneously developing" revolution the tried and tested organisation men of the revisionist party were drafted in large numbers in an effort to stem the growing confusion and pull together the basis of a workable economic and political system – matters which Castro had formerly considered could be left to merge spontaneously with the passage of time.

Thus arose the third of Castro's dilemmas.

He had given up the political initiative almost completely. The revisionists, "always intent on mere political questions", as Debray spurningly pointed, out, had after all played one better than the child of spontaneity, Castro. The price Castro had to pay for a viable political and, administrative apparatus was the achievement by the right-revisionists of an increasingly dominant role in party and state, despite their history of betrayal during the struggles leading to the overthrow of Batista.

Through a combination of external pressure from the Soviet Union, including economic blackmail, and internal penetration by the agents of Soviet revisionism, the indigenous revisionist leaders, Castro and his old guard of insurrectionists were gradually out-manoeuvred and sewn up in a web of inexorable dependence and commitment. No doubt, this was to the horror of the existentialist coterie of sun-seekers of the Sartre ilk who had seen in the Cuban development, the embodiment of their ideas about a liberal spontaneous revolution giving birth to an anarchistic utopia around which they could spin the subject matter for countless bestsellers.

The merciless straitjacket of unequal colonial-type economic relations, together with the necessity for a heavy defence programme in the face of the increasingly aggressive posture of US imperialism in the period prior to the 1962 crisis, represented further pressures inexorably pushing Cuba into dependence on the Soviet Union. The ominous features of the limited crop economy, had once again begun to dominate economic development.

The political counterpart of this situation of dependence, expressed the reciprocal need of the Soviet revisionist world centre to "explain" the obvious contradiction of a successful armed revolution taking place in an epoch the main feature of which was allegedly "the peaceful co-existence of states with differing social systems". This was reflected in the corresponding determination of the Cuban right-revisionist party leadership to build and maintain the myth of Cuba as an example of "peaceful transition" in line with the precepts of the Khrushchevite international programme as laid down by the infamous 20th Congress Report:

"It was precisely in conditions of peaceful coexistence between states with different social systems that the socialist revolution triumphed in Cuba." (Letter of CC of CPSU to CC of CCP, March 30th, 1963. Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1965. p. 507).

From the crisis of 1962, the starting duplicity of Castro in adopting his new subservient position was revealed.

Castro, who was later to announce demagogically:

"We will never make ideological concessions, and we will maintain an unyielding Marxist-Leninist position." (F. Castro: "This is our Line Havana 1963; p. 79)

Then begins Castro's remarkable history –

of bear hugs with the chief spokesmen of modern revisionism followed by denunciations of those same spokesmen;

of his statements supporting "peaceful struggle" followed by statements supporting armed struggle;

and his steadily increasing subservient role assisting the propaganda line of the Soviet revisionists in the Great Debate, with the deceptively "principled", contention that "Division in the face of the enemy was never a revolutionary or intelligent strategy";

all culminating in the carefully timed attacks on the Chinese government over alleged "cut-backs" in the promised rice quota.

This latter 'news' on the rice quotas, was leaked on the eve of the Three Continents Conference in Havana in order to cause the maximum damage to the prestige of the Chinese party and state throughout the national liberation movements. It was intended to act as an ameliorative gesture, to off-set the criticisms of those aspects of Soviet policy which reflected the residual influence of Khrushchevite doctrine, now inimical to Castro's new role. It was intended to demonstrate to the Soviet neo-capitalist class in unequivocal terms just where the support and sympathy of the Cuban national bourgeoisie and its "centrist" revisionist representatives lay in regard to the growing struggle between the Soviet and Chinese leadership.

Castro, however, in his attempts to reconcile service to the interests of his indigenous class, the Cuban national bourgeoisie, with the fulfilment of a comprador role on behalf of Soviet neo-imperialism, has often proved a difficult and demanding pawn.

Castro has sought to retain as an essential ingredient of his "centrist" revisionist position, the right to criticism of Soviet policies wherever these tended to conflict with the long-term aims of the Cuban national bourgeoisie.

The Guevara adventure in Bolivia thus represented an attempt to raise the bargaining counter of the Cuban national bourgeoisie with Soviet right revisionism, and its failure merely confirming the inadequacy of "leftist" methods of struggle and the superiority of the "centrist" revisionist disguise. In almost all cases, the crux of these Castroite and Guevarist criticisms has been those aspects of Soviet policy reflecting the continuation of a Khrushchevite stance towards US

imperialism or its comprador puppets in Latin America. However the necessity which the Castro leadership feels for the military and economic protection which the Soviet Union alone can provide against US threats of aggression compels them to lend their support to every fundamental policy statement and action of the Soviet leadership, and to place Cuba at its disposal as the base of operations for right revisionism on the Latin American continent.

It was under Castro's auspices that the OLAS and Tricontinental Conferences were able to serve the policy aims of Soviet neo-imperialism, which envisage not only the building of "anti-imperialist" and, where necessary, armed national liberation movements under "centrist" revisionist leadership, but also the incorporation of existing national bourgeois or even comprador-bourgeois states and governments into its sphere of influence. This has already been effected, for example, with a certain measure of success in Peru. Thereby effecting the reciprocal utilisation of both rightist and "centrist" revisionist policy methods. In this way, the former implements the classical techniques of international diplomacy and "power politics" through the direct agency of the Soviet Union on behalf of its neo-imperialist aims; whilst the latter seeks to mobilise the working people and their movements of struggle in the same neo-imperialist cause by presenting the necessary "left" demagogic appeal.

Thus it is that, under the overall condition of a former semi-colony newly emerged from imperialist domination, with an urban and rural proletariat, labouring peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie amongst which revolutionary feeling is at a high level, any national capitalist class attempting to build a viable system of state capitalism can only hold out for itself any prospect of success provided that it can utilise to some degree the ideological strength and power for conviction and mobilisation of proletarian ideology and organisation of Marxism-Leninism.

This type of social development may be characterised in general terms as the demagogic abuse of the international working class and communist movement, of its world view, Marxism-Leninism, and of its organised strength and influence in order to bend them to the service of the enemies of the working class and socialism, amongst which the national capitalist classes of colonial-type countries emerging from imperialist domination must ultimately be placed, whatever class alliances may appertain in the period of the national democratic revolution.

In this light, the case of Cuba illustrates with convincing clarity an example of the harnessing of the potential or actual forces of the socialist revolution, the exploited and oppressed proletariat, poor peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie, to the task of establishing not the socialist system under the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat, but a system of centralised state capitalism of a bureaucratic and comprador type under the dictatorship, albeit concealed by demagogic "left" phraseology, of the national bourgeoisie, and under the conditions of intensified class struggle and heightened inter-imperialist competition typical of the contemporary advanced stage the disintegration of the imperialist world system.

CONCLUSION

The collaboration between "centrist" and right revisionism which forms the predominant basis of policy amongst a majority of Communist Parties of Latin America, with the "Communist Party" of Cuba acting as a comprador-type overseer on behalf of the Soviet Union, reflects the unsuitability of a purer "left" revisionism as an ideological mask enabling the national bourgeoisie to gain control of the national democratic revolutions and to determine their development and the class composition of their forces in their own class interest, in at least the majority of states concerned and under the objective conditions as they have shaped themselves up till the present time.

Left revisionism tends to find the appropriate objective conditions for its application and a fertile subjective ground for its dissemination and growth primarily in national and political terrains in which not only the objective conditions for the onset of the national democratic revolution are present – this in itself is also a feature of the situation in many American states – but also where a militant and politically conscious working class and a more or less powerful Marxist-Leninist vanguard are, or at the least have been in the past, to some degree in control of the revolutionary process of at least participants in it.

In view of the progressive undermining and final liquidation of the world communist movement through modern revisionism since approximately 1943-45, the presence of such features in a national democratic revolutionary movement in a colonial or semi-colonial country since World War Two, in spite of a majority of the leadership having long since fallen into the hands of "left" revisionists, must be attributed to the persisting influence of the Communist International and the continuing presence in the leadership of the leading cadres trained by it during the period prior to World War Two.

These features are, of course, typical of the development of the Chinese revolution and of the Communist Party of China. They are almost totally absent from the histories of the national liberation and working class movements of the Latin American states and their communist parties.

Where, however, such a Marxist-Leninist leadership, or at least a Marxist-Leninist contingent within a "left" revisionist led party and movement, is present, its defeat and dismemberment is clearly an absolutely prime necessity if the national bourgeoisie is to succeed in its aim of wresting the leadership out of the hands of the Marxist-Leninists and of consolidating it in the sole hands of their revisionist representatives.

The fact that, in Cuba itself, no Marxist-Leninist party, or even a Marxist-Leninist contingent within the leadership of the party, was present requiring ideological penetration, dismemberment and capture, in order to transform that party as a whole into a tool of national bourgeois aims and aspirations, rendered it easier for the petty bourgeois representatives of the national bourgeoisie to control the direction.

It rendered it possible for the petty bourgeois representatives of the national bourgeoisie to win victory in the national democratic revolution by purely military means, without the fusion of political and military forms of struggle and without a political party and an organisational centre for the mobilization of the masses, through the sole agency of a small elitist guerrilla force of predominantly petty bourgeois composition, is also symptomatic of the objective conditions and subjective characteristics of the movements of the oppressed in at least the smaller and weaker states of the Latin American continental mainland.

In spite of the many features specific and peculiar to it, the Cuban revolution, however, was not an isolated, once for all time phenomenon. Still less does it represent an example of "specific national roads to socialism" beloved of Khrushchevian revisionist "theory". It took place and won victory, on the contrary, precisely within the general context of:

"a world pre-revolutionary situation. As in all pre-revolutionary situations, the primary aim of the class struggles, including national liberation struggles, now beginning to unfold on a world-wide front between the world proletarian forces and the imperialist bourgeoisie is a struggle to determine which of these two fundamentally opposed world class forces shall win the allegiance of the intermediate exploited and oppressed classes and strata, of which the most significant are the peasant masses of the colonial periphery of imperialism and the petty bourgeois and professional middle strata in the developed imperialist countries which are undergoing a process of intensified proletarianisation, and so to achieve on behalf of its class interest the decisive strategic advantage in the coming final stages of the world proletarian socialist revolution." (Programmatic Manifesto of the Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Britain; p. 22)

The upsurge of national liberation struggles and national democratic revolutions in the colonial and semi-colonial lands, including those of Latin America, forms one of the most prominent features in the process of disintegration of the world imperialist system at the present stage in the development of the general crisis of capitalism.

It is they which are contributing directly to the process of disintegration of the established imperialist power groups and to the break-up of the existing inter-imperialist balance of power, and which are effectively assisting in the formation of new imperialist-type power groups and a new inter-imperialist balance of power centred around the entry of the new neo-imperialist or state capitalist nations – primarily the Soviet Union, but including, at a lower stage of capitalist development, China and India, the total population resources of which alone amount to some 1,400 millions – into the already saturated capitalist world market.

As far as the future development of the world proletarian socialist revolution is concerned, the crucial issue confronting the national liberation movements at the present time is, however, the issue of which class shall lead the revolution, the national bourgeoisie or the working class.

On the outcome of this issue depends the solution to the question, of absolutely fundamental significance, as to:

"Whether or not the working people of the developing nations at present fighting for their liberation from imperialist colonial enslavement, for national independence and democratic rights and liberties, will succeed in bypassing the perspective of a more or less protracted period of capitalist development and will succeed in establishing new socialist states under the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat?"

Such a victory for the world proletarian socialist revolution would so weaken the already intolerably unstable and crisis-ridden world capitalist system as to render its continued operation virtually impossible.

Alternatively, on the other hand, the victory of the national democratic revolution in the colonial-type lands would merely lead to the establishment of new independent capitalist states which will thus provide a sorely needed extension to the total area and resources of the world capitalist system and so give it a new lease of life. This latter has already taken place in a whole number of formerly colonial or semi-colonial lands since the end of world war two, including People's China, India, Egypt and, of course, Cuba.

The entire evidence provided by the experience of the new features in the development of the world proletarian socialist revolution since World War Two indicates strongly that

Only when the working class movements in the developed countries join with the working peoples of the colonial-type lands to form a common world-wide anti-imperialist front,

Only when powerful and influential Marxist-Leninist parties, capable of securing leadership over the entire revolutionary process in both types of countries have been built and are able to wield that decisive ideological and political initiative and influence which can ensure the leading role being fulfilled by the working class in both strategic world sectors, and so laying the basis for the uninterrupted transition of the national democratic to the socialist revolution in the colonial-type lands and for the victory of the latter in both;

and, finally, Only when the world Marxist-Leninist leadership of the world proletarian socialist revolution has developed to a point where a mighty Marxist-Leninist international is forged capable of uniting, integrating and directing the revolutionary struggles in both world sectors against the common imperialist class enemy, of elaborating a world strategic and tactical programme of general offensive on all fronts and in all sectors based on advanced scientific theory –

Then, and only then, will it be possible for the working people of any one sector, in the developed or the under-developed lands, to advance to the victory of the socialist revolution and so to bring the epoch of capitalism to its close and to commence anew, and on an infinitely higher level than previously, the epoch of world-wide socialist construction.

For the present; therefore, and until such time as the revolutionary proletariat in both the developed and the colonial-type lands, realise the primary and indispensable tasks of revolutionary leadership and organisation, particularly as regards the building of the Marxist-Leninist vanguard, the predominant influence in the national democratic movements in the underdeveloped colonial world sector is likely to remain in the hands of the national bourgeoisie and its petty bourgeois revisionist representatives.

But each and every such instance of a national arena of capitalist development being opened up, under the conditions of a congested and saturated capitalist world market, merely serves, in the longer or perhaps the shorter run, to add new components of mounting contradiction to the already unstable situation in the world capitalist system. The monopoly capitalists of the developed imperialist countries, faced with the shrinking of the relative size and resources of the colonial sector relative to the developed sector, are attempting to obtain a significant intensification of the rate of exploitation in both the colonial areas that remain and, in an effort to offset the inevitable decline in super-profits, in the developed countries themselves.

Only provided that Marxist-Leninist vanguard parties are built in both the developed and the colonially subjugated sectors of the world will this intensification of exploitation and oppression result in a qualitative raising of the level of class militancy and capacity for struggle of the working masses, to their revolutionisation.

In other circumstances, including those at present appertaining in which the leading influence is fulfilled by social democratic and right revisionist representatives of monopoly capital in the developed countries and by a combination of right, "centrist" and "left" revisionist representatives of the national or the comprador bourgeoisie in the colonial-type countries, the outcome of the world reactionary offensive now in preparation could equally well be a series of bloody defeats for the working people and their organisations of struggle and the descent of the blackest night of fascist repression that the world has yet seen.

The law of uneven development will undergo and is undergoing an equally profound and far reaching intensification of its mode of operation, thus accelerating the process of break-up of the existing imperialist and capitalist power groups and the formation of new ones anxious to secure a re-division of the total area and resources of maximum exploitation available to the capitalist world system, which are continually shrinking relative to the rapidly increasing rate at which capital tends to be amassed, and which are indispensable for securing that maximum rate of profit so essential if the inherent tendency under state monopoly capitalism for the rate of profit to fall is to be offset. These fundamental contradictions in their turn prepare the conditions for the outbreak of yet another imperialist world war more devastating both in its scope and its revolutionary effect than any previously known, and so also preparing for the transformation of that war, in area after area, country after country, into, socialist revolutions.

These are the profound and climactic contradictions which are even now accumulating under the surface of the world capitalist system, and it is against this background that the teachings of Guevara and Debray relative to the struggle in Latin America must be critically evaluated.

Marxism-Leninism teaches, and all experience of the world's working class, and oppressed peoples in struggle confirms that only through the unity of the working class of all lands, forged through the exercise of leadership and an overall guiding function on the part of powerful Marxist-Leninist parties, and through the unity of all non-proletarian classes and, strata behind that Marxist-Leninist proletarian vanguard in a mighty world anti-imperialist united front, can victory in the national-democratic revolution in the colonial-type lands be secured in such a way as to ensure that that victory leads:

Not to the development and consolidation, on however temporary or unstable a basis, of new, independent neo-capitalist states (which will merely substitute exploitation by the established imperialist oppressor nations for exploitation by the indigenous national bourgeoisie and so assist in increasing, again on however temporary or unstable a basis, the total arena and resources of the world capitalist system and to lengthen by a span of a few years or decades its bloodthirsty, profit hungry life);

But that that victory will lead instead to the weakening and restricting of its arena, resources and span of life, to the choking of the arteries feeding it with the super profits which are its very life blood, to the formation of a mighty and growing chain of national democratic and socialist revolutions encircling it with a steel ring of proletarian power which steadily suffocates and finally annihilates it.

In the developed countries, it is bureaucratic social democracy, reformism, revisionism of the right and Trotskyism which constitute the chief weapons of the monopoly capitalist class in frustrating and diverting the potential or actual revolutionary energies of the working class and working people.

In the colonial-type lands, it is "left" and, where appropriate, "centrist" revisionism, likewise assisted by Trotskyite disruption, which fulfill this function. Within this international apparatus of counter-revolutionary disruption, a certain clearly definable division of labour can be discerned.

It is the function of social democracy and reformism in the developed countries, and of liberal-anarchist ideas of spontaneous revolution in the colonial type areas of maximum exploitation, to act respectively as the instruments for undermining the unity of the class forces themselves, of the mass base, potential or actual, of the developing class struggle and/or revolutionary movements.

On the other hand, it is the function of revisionist teaching – in developed countries mainly of the right, and in colonial-type lands mainly of either "left" or "centrist" varieties – to weaken the

struggle waged by the most advanced and class conscious proletarian elements to forge powerful, steeled and united Marxist-Leninist vanguard parties without which the socialist revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat remain mere empty dreams, vistas of mechanical scheming or the subjective projection of idle wishes.

In the relationship between mass base and vanguard, it is the vanguard which must first be established even if only in embryo, if the whole revolutionary process in a given country is to develop into the structure of proletarian power capable of incepting and carrying through the socialist revolution directly in the case of the developed countries, through the intermediate stage of the national democratic revolution in the case of the colonial-type lands.

In both these types of revolution, a clear kinship exists between the older variants of bourgeois ideology typical of a capitalist class in the period of its youth, represented by liberal spontaneity and anarchistic insurrectionism of the Garibaldiist or Blanquist type, and the more sophisticated right, "left" and "centrist" variants of revisionism which form typical anti-proletarian ideological weapons of an aspiring capitalist class in an underdeveloped country which is struggling for ascendancy and independence within a world environment and under the conditions of an epoch in which capitalism is lying mortally sick upon its deathbed.

Both deny the revolutionary historical mission of the proletariat;

Both deny the need for the violent, forcible overthrow of the rule of the capitalist class – "left" revisionism advocating the use of armed force solely against the comprador, imperialist-orientated section of the capitalist class in a colonial-type country;

Both deny the need for the independent revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat armed with scientific Marxist-Leninist theory.

The petty bourgeois insurrectionist theories of Guevara and Debray form the logical inheritance and continuation of the classical ideas of spontaneous revolt first developed by the European bourgeoisie in the 19th century. The characterisation of the bourgeois ideological basis and antecedents of "left" revisionism contained in the Report of the CC of the MLOB, "Proletarian Internationalism: The Key to Victory in Anti-Imperialist Struggle and Socialist Revolution", is as applicable to the unsuccessful, misapplied and naive variant of "left" revisionism concocted Guevara and Debray out of the historically superceded lees of liberal anarchist theories of spontaneous "uprisings of the freedom loving people" as ever it was to the more astute variant of "left" revisionism devised by Mao Tse-tung:

"When we consider the development of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Europe, we find that the petty bourgeoisie, played a generally analogous role to the one it later came to play in the colonial national democratic revolutions of the epoch of imperialism....

"the prime need (of the capitalist class – Ed.) was to hold in check the independent revolutionary class aspirations of the proletariat, and to harness its energies to the task of the bourgeois democratic revolution whilst simultaneously preventing them from leading to the fulfilment of the revolutionary aim of socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. In all the developing capitalist nations of Europe to which the bourgeois democratic revolution spread in 1848-9, therefore, the leading role was played by bourgeois or petty bourgeois leaders.

"'Leftist' phraseology and the rabble-rousing slogans of anarchism are always and everywhere the essential disguise of rightism, of policies designed to assist and strengthen the class position and forces of the capitalist class in the face of the growing or potential offensive of the proletariat. . . . Just as the counterpart in practice of the utopian theories of Proudhon were the state sweatshops for the unemployed workers of Paris established by Louis Blanc, similarly Mao Tse-tung's leftist battle-cries directed at the emerging and developing, but as yet immature, proletarian classes and their potential petty bourgeois allies in the colonial lands have their essential counterpart in the so-called- "Three-way Revolutionary Committees", in which the long-discredited utopia of the "union of capital and labour", is dragged from the oblivion to which Marx condemned it..." (Proletarian Internationalism: Report of the CC of the MLOB in "Red Front", March/April 1968; p.vii)

With the defeat of this peculiarly Latin American revisionist hybrid, the same demagogic mantle of revisionist deception has fallen upon the shoulders of the "centrist" revisionists headed by the Castro clique, acting as a semi-independent "left"-wing of the Soviet neo-imperialism. If this new and perhaps even more, insidious ideological and political weapon of the national bourgeoisies of the Latin American states is to be exposed and defeated and the hegemony of the working class and of scientific Marxist-Leninist theory in the Latin American revolutionary movement secured, a persistent-and wide-ranging struggle must be waged by the Marxist-Leninists of all lands against it.

There are no short cuts to the socialist revolution. The struggle to develop and change man's social practice, and the thought processes which consciously guide that practice, is a protracted and arduous one. In the course of this struggle, the development of conscious revolutionary thought and practice on the part of the most advanced and consistently revolutionary class produced by history, the proletariat, is characterised at all stages by the close interaction of theory and practice, culminating in the scientific principles of Marxism-Leninism and of its fundamental theoretical guide to action, dialectical-materialism, and their embodiment in the vanguard class party of the new type.

This final embodiment of the science of socialist revolution and of socialist revolution as a science, when theory and practice become so united as to be indivisibly fused together, is precisely what the "social scientists" of the bourgeoisie are most concerned to frustrate and disrupt by whatever means they find to hand inherited from the theories and practice of pre-scientific utopian or reformist schools – and amongst these modern "mystical schoolmen" of

piecemeal reform or spontaneous revolt must be included not only such representatives of the right as Khrushchev, Togliatti or Gollan, but also such leftist figures as Debray, Guevara and Castro.

The struggle to build the vanguard Leninist party of the proletariat involves such tasks as the inner-movement struggle within the revisionist and reformist parties and organisations, work amongst all sectors of the working population to win them for a common front of struggle, actions at the most basic level to build militant, class-orientated organisations where previously none existed, the achievement of a correct balance between legal and illegal, armed and political, forms of struggle, and so on. At every level, the process is an extremely complex and many-sided one. It is a test which only those who genuinely uphold, the cause of the working class and working people are prepared to stand.

That is why Guevara, Debray and others present such a disillusioned picture to the world once they enter from the realm of their subjective fantasies into the world of class reality. In their "theory" the peasantry existed as an idealised force which could do no wrong; the grim reality of the Bolivian adventure revealed besides Debray's dilettantism, the fundamental scorn for the peasantry into which Guevara's earlier idealism was transformed as a consequence of his inability to change that reality. The diaries, with their self-pitying descriptions of ignorant and suspicious peasants threatening to betray the self-styled advance guard of the revolution constitute an elitist petty bourgeois testament which marks a disgraceful end for those who had claimed to aspire so high. And it is perhaps from this last fact that the final lesson of the Guevara-Debray affair can be most clearly drawn: that the subjective desires of any aspiring revolutionary are less than nothing in value to the revolutionary cause and will be cast aside as such if they are not based on Marxist-Leninist scientific theory.

By Cmde M.S. For the MLOB;

Dated 1968