

# **THE ROOTS OF GUERRILLA WARFARE**

Douglas Hyde

*Background Books*

*published by The Bodley Head*

There is more guerrilla warfare going on in the world today than most people realise. This is *not* a military book, however. It is about the political strategy behind this widespread adoption of the "armed struggle", superseding the insurrectionist method of revolution.

Guerrilla forces are active not only in places in the news like Vietnam, but also in Thailand, Malaysia, Burma, the Philippines, Venezuela, Guatemala, Bolivia and Colombia. There are probably, says Douglas Hyde, guerrilla bands in Peru, Ecuador, Honduras, and northern Brazil.

The big Communist powers, the USSR and China, aid the guerrillas in different ways and to different degrees; Russia tends to encourage violence and then let the local revolutionaries continue on their own or, to suit her own purposes, abandon them altogether; China incites violence wherever she can and lends support according to circumstances. Guerrillas with Russian or Chinese training or support are being infiltrated into South Africa, Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique and Portuguese Guinea.

In contrast with older methods, where the revolutionaries risked all in one insurrection, the armed struggle of today can be started, called off and then started again. Douglas Hyde writes about this little-known situation with his usual authority, drawing especially on his on-the-spot investigations in Latin America and South-East Asia, and indicates the conclusions to be drawn.

To Ten Abdul Bayak  
This book was written in the hope  
that it may contribute something to  
your good work,

Douglas A. Bayak,  
June, 1968.



THE ROOTS OF  
GUERRILLA WARFARE



# The Roots of Guerrilla Warfare

A BACKGROUND BOOK

Douglas Hyde



THE BODLEY HEAD

LONDON

SYDNEY • TORONTO

Access No:

Class. No:

© Douglas Hyde 1968

SBN/370 00446 9

Printed and bound in Great Britain for

The Bodley Head Ltd

9 Bow Street, London, WC2

by William Clowes & Sons Ltd, Beccles

Set in Linotype Plantin

*First published in 1968*

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PART I

The Changing Pattern



# I

## No Carbon Copy

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UNTIL QUITE recently, when Communists talked of seizing power their thinking flowed from the traditional Marxist belief that they would take over after a short, sharp struggle launched only when the classical 'revolutionary situation' had arisen. Now the approach is quite different, and I greatly doubt if the difference has been widely enough recognised.

It is not of revolutionary situations—or of 'ten days that shook the world'—that they now talk, but of guerrilla warfare and 'long, arduous struggle'. I have seen proof of this in many places, some of them the width of the world apart.

There is a lot of misunderstanding and confused thinking about this changed pattern. Sometimes even the men on the spot are thinking in outdated terms. Let me give an example from my own experience not so long ago in Malaysia:

As he came out of his office in Kuching to meet me, the old Malaya hand said cheerfully, 'This is where we come to life again. The morale of our chaps is better than it has been for years'. Then he added, almost with satisfaction, 'It's 1948 all over again'. And that, I told him, was precisely what in my opinion it was not.

The Sarawak Communists had recently declared in their clandestine publications that they were going over to the armed struggle. Some had gone into hiding in the deep jungle where they were drilling with shotguns, hand grenades and dummy rifles. Others were storing arms and ammunition, circulating a small pocket manual on the art of guerrilla warfare and engaging in what was called physical and psychological preparation.

In government offices in Kuching people walked more briskly, typewriters rattled more noisily. There was in general a new air of purposefulness about the place.

The staff at police headquarters had doubled and trebled

almost overnight. Among the new arrivals were men who had been through the 12-year Emergency in Malaya. They talked together of the time when the Communist Party of Malaya first took to the gun. The Communists had thrown everything they had into the jungle in 1948 and it had taken some time for the Government and everyone else to realise the size and scope of the thing. So the Communists had got off to an easy start and as a consequence the Emergency had dragged on till 1960. This time, however, the old hands knew what to expect.

But did they? Communists in various parts of the world had been doing some thinking—and fighting—since then. Their ideas on guerrilla warfare had changed quite a lot. That was why what had happened then in Malaya, Burma, Indonesia and the Philippines, and even what was now going on in Vietnam, might be an unreliable guide to what Communists could be expected to do today. The new armed struggle was not likely to be just a carbon copy of the insurrections of the early post World War II period. The fact that all but Ho Chi Minh had failed did not therefore put them off. On the contrary, Communists believe that failures are something from which you may benefit; provided you approach them in self-critical mood you learn from your mistakes.

One might have supposed that the long drawn out agony endured by the common people of Vietnam as a result of a quarter of a century of guerrilla warfare would be enough to deter others from thinking of launching their homelands on a similar course. Yet in north-east Thailand there were the beginnings of armed struggle. The remnant of the defeated Malayan Communist guerrilla organisation, established in a 'safe base' which straddled Thailand's southern border, was showing signs of emerging at last from a long period of introspection and near-paralysis and beginning to talk of a return to the gun.

Very shortly the Communist-led Huk guerrillas (Hukbalahap) in the Philippines were to start recruiting again by drawing on the hopelessness and rootlessness of the urban

slum dwellers, the frustration of students and intellectuals and, in particular, the continuing land hunger of the peasants.

On the other side of the world, in Latin America, Communist parties in Guatemala, Venezuela, Colombia and Peru were either already engaged in armed struggle or, spurred on by Castro's example, preparing for it.

Even in Africa, where most Communist parties were still either very new or in process of formation, they would soon be playing with the same idea.

Perhaps it should be noted right away that Russia's policy of peaceful co-existence and her desire to avoid world war have not prevented her from encouraging Communists in developing countries to use armed struggle as a means of achieving their political aims. Anxious to disprove the Chinese story that Russia and her followers have sold the revolutionary pass, Moscow publicises those Communists who take to the gun, quotes their example for the benefit of others and proclaims their right to engage in 'anti-imperialist national-liberation revolutions' and 'people's democratic revolutions' as recommended in the now somewhat neglected Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup>

The degree of enthusiasm Russia shows is, however, influenced today by foreign policy considerations. As we shall see, she is quite capable of encouraging local Communists to take to the gun and then rounding on them in due course as part of a process of securing some new area of peaceful co-existence for herself or, maybe, in an attempt to crowd China out of it. Peking's approach to the armed struggle in developing countries is less complicated. Today, says Lin Piao, China's Defence Minister, 'The conditions are more favourable than ever before for the waging of people's wars by the revolutionary peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America'.<sup>2</sup> 'Moscow' Communists and 'Peking' Communists sometimes fight side by side in the jungle (this has occurred in Latin America) but China's supporters usually get there first these days.

<sup>1</sup> *Programme of the CPSU*, Moscow, 1961, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Long Live the Victory of People's War!*, Lin Piao, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1965, p. 54.

The insurrections of 1948 were based upon a concept which has now very largely been abandoned. In the days when revolutionary thinking was on the 'short, sharp struggle' lines, the Communists committed everything to the struggle and if they lost, they lost everything. This was their undoing in South-East Asia and in Greece too. The whole Communist approach to armed struggle has materially changed, thus making 1948-thinking out of date both for the Communists and for their opponents.

The talk among Communists in Asia, Latin America and Africa now is not just of the Bolsheviks but of China's Communists fighting on over the years, right through the 1920s, '30s and '40s; of a quarter of a century of armed struggle in Vietnam, and of Castro's five-year fight—a fight which began with a handful of men who took up guns in conditions no Marxist of the past would have thought of as a 'revolutionary situation' which could lead on to Communism.

Communists in the three great developing continents generally understand today that they should not slavishly follow either the Moscow, Chinese or Cuban patterns. A Communist Party launching into armed struggle will aim to pursue a course in which the thought and experiences of all three are blended. That is why political detainees in Sarawak's detention camp, already familiar with the writings of Lenin on the Russian Revolution, and of Mao Tse-tung and other Chinese leaders on the People's Revolutionary War, went to some risk secretly to translate, then smuggle out of the camp, a handbook of guerrilla warfare written by Che Guevara, Fidel Castro's principal adviser, which has significantly influenced their thought and practice.

I remember Luis Taruc, Supreme Commander of the Hukbalahap, telling me that when they went over to armed struggle the only book they had to guide them was Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China*. The Chinese themselves were still much too busy completing the last stages of their own revolutionary war to be making its lessons available in handy published form to foreign Communist parties. Communists today have access to a mass of material which was not available to those who took to the jungles in 1948.

A mixture of social conditions in urgent need of reform and political ideals which grow out of a desire for greater freedom underlies most guerrilla war situations and so provides the necessary supporters for the cause. The fact that life has become intolerable for them makes them prepared to risk their lives for victory. But it is the Communist who decides what that victory will bring.

The Marxist-Leninist is very conscious of the fact that war in general is a continuation of politics and that this is particularly true for him when it comes to guerrilla war.

Communist armed struggle is always political in its origins, aims and motivations. As today's political situation bears little resemblance to that of twenty years ago it is not surprising that Communist thought on the armed struggle has changed. In fact it has changed more in the last few years than it had done in the previous half century.

If we understand the development of the Communists' thinking on the subject we shall be able to recognise what is new in their current approach. We shall then be in a better position to anticipate the forms it may take in the period ahead. It goes without saying that if we know more about what gives rise to guerrilla war situations we may be able to prevent them from occurring, and that this should be our aim.

## Short and Sharp

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MARXISM, IT might be said, came to birth against a background of violence. When Karl Marx and Frederick Engels were asked by the Communist League in November 1847 to write a manifesto, there had already been several years of growing political turbulence all over Europe. The following year, the one in which their famous *Communist Manifesto* was published, was the year of revolutions.

Marx and Engels were young revolutionaries and there was enough in the way of political violence in 1848 to satisfy even them. The year began with an insurrection at Palermo. In February there was revolution in France and political disturbances and demonstrations throughout Germany. March saw riots in Berlin, Vienna and Madrid, a rising in Milan and a revolution in Budapest. During April there was a rising in Cracow. In May came civil war in Catalonia, riots in Seville and Vienna, risings in Madrid and Posen. Then, in June occurred the working-class insurrection in Paris which Engels described as 'the first great battle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie'.<sup>1</sup> And so the year went on.

It is not surprising that thereafter when Marx and Engels thought of political power changing hands they tended to assume that this would most probably be achieved by violence. They assumed, also, that it would come about as a result of a short, sharp struggle in the cities, the centres of power.

Mulling over the lessons of the revolutions of 1848, all of which had ended in defeat, Marx observed that their effect had been to perfect the government machinery 'instead of breaking it up'. As he put it in a letter to his friend Dr Kugelmann, '... the next attempt of the French revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic mili-

<sup>1</sup> Frederick Engels' preface to 1888 edition *Communist Manifesto*.

tary machine from one hand to another, but to *smash* it, and that is essential for every real people's revolution on the Continent.'<sup>1</sup> But, since he was writing on April 12, 1871, Marx could add 'And this is what our heroic Party comrades in Paris are attempting'. For 1871 was the year of the Paris Commune, the first temporarily successful attempt of Marxist-influenced working men to seize power and hold it.

Using a war situation, in which, in January 1871, Paris capitulated to the Prussians, the workers of the capital seized power by force of arms, established their Commune and attempted to 'break up the bureaucratic and military machine'. The Commune lasted for seventy days, then ended in bloody defeat. When the barricades came down 25,000 men, women and children were slaughtered. But for Marx and his followers the whole experience had been full of meaning. The Commune, wrote Marx, was 'the political form, at last discovered, under which economic emancipation could at last be accomplished.'<sup>2</sup>

In a fascinating introduction to Marx's *The Class Struggles in France*, Engels, in 1895, when he had had twenty-four years to ponder the lessons of the Commune, wrote 'The time of surprise attacks, of revolutions carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses, is past. Where it is a question of a complete transformation of the social organisation, the masses themselves must also be in it. . . .'<sup>3</sup>

Street fighting and insurrectionary *coups* were still necessary and could be victorious, but only, he reasoned, if and when the working masses had been brought over to the side of the revolutionaries by means of organisation, by propaganda and by the ripening of conditions which would bring every possible ally behind them, too.

It was in Russia, in 1905, during the Russo-Japanese war,

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to Dr Kugelmann*, Karl Marx, Martin Lawrence, 1936, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> *The Civil War in France*, Karl Marx, Martin Lawrence, 1933, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> *The Class Struggles in France*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow.

that the next serious, though ill-organised, popular revolution occurred. As in the case of the Paris Commune, the situation grew out of defeat in war. What Lenin described as 'the sweeping movement of revolt' took the form of political strikes and demonstrations by the workers, the growth of a revolutionary movement among the peasants, and armed clashes between people and troops. The revolutionary upsurge reached its peak in a revolt of the sailors on the *Potemkin*, a battleship of the Black Sea fleet. Much of the activity was largely spontaneous and the Communists were at no time in full control of the revolutionary movement. Nonetheless, from this revolution briefly emerged the first Soviets, so that in this, as in a number of other ways, it helped to set the pattern for the future.

Commenting on these events, Lenin took the view that Engels now needed to be brought up to date. For the revolution to have had any chance of success guerrilla warfare, using very small units, would have been required, side by side with the winning over of the government's troops and the creation from these of a revolutionary army. The fight once started would have to be swiftly carried through to a victorious conclusion.

He wrote at the time that 'unless the revolution assumes a mass character and also affects the troops, serious fighting is out of the question.'<sup>1</sup> Lenin went on to say that the uprising 'confirmed another of Marx's profound propositions, which the opportunists have forgotten, namely, that rebellion is an art, and that the principal rule of this art is that a desperately bold and irrevocably determined offensive must be waged.'<sup>2</sup>

The events of 1905 he characterised as a 'bourgeois-democratic revolution' from which the workers had gained valuable revolutionary experience whilst acting as the spear-head of that movement. This led him to advance the new theory that the proletariat could and should lead the bourgeois democratic revolution. This would enable them to have bourgeois elements as their allies. But if the workers gained the initiative and hegemony then they would push the revo-

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Selected Works*, Volume III, p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351.

lution beyond a point acceptable to the bourgeoisie who would then 'recoil' from it, so leaving the workers free to carry it forward for the realisation of their own Communist aims.

This, incidentally, is the tactic used today by Communist parties in developing countries, who all insist that the revolution for which they are working is a bourgeois-democratic, not a proletarian, one.

In October 1915, in a new war situation, Lenin listed those conditions which he considered to be required to justify an attempt at the armed seizure of power. Where these arose, the act of wresting power from the ruling class must be short, sharp and perfectly timed. The masses must be led by a party of 'professional revolutionaries', an élite who knew where they were going and how they were going to get there.

This would be something more than a *coup d'état*, because the insurrectionists would have the masses behind them. But even this was not enough. There must also be a 'revolutionary situation'.

Into his definition of what constituted such a situation went the accumulated experience of the revolutionaries of 1848, 1871 and 1905. He listed 'the symptoms of a revolutionary situation' as follows:

(1) when it is impossible for the ruling classes to maintain their rule in an unchanged form; when there is a crisis, in one form or another, among the 'upper classes', a crisis in the policy of the ruling class which causes fissures, through which the discontent and indignation of the oppressed classes burst forth. Usually, for a revolution to break out it is not enough for the 'lower classes' to refuse to live in the old way; it is necessary also that the 'upper classes' should be unable to live in the old way;

(2) when the want and suffering of the oppressed classes have become more acute than usual;

(3) when, as a consequence of the above causes, there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses, who in 'peace time' quietly allow themselves to be robbed, but who in turbulent times are drawn both by the circumstances of

the crisis and by the 'upper classes' themselves into independent historical action.<sup>1</sup>

Without these objective changes, he wrote, 'a revolution, as a general rule, is impossible'.

So convinced was Lenin that the existence of a mature revolutionary situation, in which all these symptoms were present, was essential to victory that as late as July 1917, when armed workers were marching on the streets of Petrograd demanding revolution, he still could warn them that this was not yet the moment to rise.

Three months later, when he and the Central Committee of the Party finally gave the word, the ruling classes were, indeed, unable 'to maintain their rule in an unchanged form', they were split by a crisis over which they had lost control, the 'oppressed classes' were united by 'want and suffering' caused by the war and the 'workers in uniform'—the defeated, dispirited, demoralised soldiers and sailors—had been drawn into the crisis and were ready to fight on the side of the revolution.

The actual seizure of power occurred in an uprising under Lenin's personal direction. It began in Petrograd on October 24 when the Bolsheviks called for the overthrow of the Government and was completed by October 25 when they issued a manifesto announcing that 'the Provisional Government has been deposed and State power has passed into the hands of the Soviets'. It had been so short and sharp that John Reed, the American journalist, was able to call his on-the-spot report of the decisive days of the revolution *Ten Days That Shook the World*.

Marxist revolutionaries outside Russia had still not yet had time to digest the lessons of the Bolshevik Revolution, although they had certainly been inspired by it, when at the end of the war they unsuccessfully attempted to seize power in Berlin, Munich and Budapest. In each case they tried to follow the traditional pattern of the short sharp struggle for power. Superficially, Communist revolutionary situations

<sup>1</sup> *The Collapse of the Second International*, V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Volume V, Lawrence and Wishart, 1936, p. 174.

existed. But in each case some important ingredients were missing.

Failure on the part of those who attempted to follow the Bolshevik example did nothing to shake Communists in their belief that there is a situation and a moment, recognisable to those who understand their Marxism-Leninism, when a small group of revolutionaries, momentarily backed by the masses, can, by force of arms, wrest power from the hands of the ruling class. The post-war experience simply served to show how right Lenin had been to insist that all the 'symptoms' of a revolutionary situation must be present and that there must be a well-organised Communist Party ready to seize the moment of opportunity.

It was this approach to revolution which the Communist International, through the Communist parties affiliated to it, spread across the world and maintained throughout the twenties and thirties, the years leading up to World War II, which they believed would end in more revolutions. It underlies the entire thinking of the Comintern 'Programme' which was first published in 1929 and continued to reappear throughout the thirties.

The task of the Party, it declared, was to utilise minor everyday needs 'as a starting point from which to lead the working class to the revolutionary struggle for power.' That struggle would occur, it made clear, 'when the revolutionary tide is rising, when the ruling classes are disorganised, the masses are in a state of revolutionary ferment, the intermediary strata are inclining towards the proletariat and the masses are ready for action and for sacrifice'. In these circumstances the Party was 'confronted with the task of leading the masses to a direct attack upon the bourgeois State', to 'armed insurrection against the State power of the bourgeoisie'.

The Comintern's analysis of the situation was based upon the assumption that 'the international revolution is developing' and that this would engulf the colonial areas where foreign imperialist rule, and that of the feudal rulers, must be overthrown. But no new form of armed struggle was recommended to them. The Chinese Communist Party had already

been fighting a guerrilla war, on and off, for years, but the Communist International did not feel called upon to describe the methods being used in China. Nor did it suggest that, in contra-distinction to the short, sharp struggle required in a revolutionary situation in more developed countries, a long and arduous guerrilla war might be required in the colonial and semi-colonial areas.

When the Comintern spokesman Wang Ming made the main report on the revolutionary movement in the colonial countries at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, on August 7, 1935, he talked of 'the growth of the forces of colonial revolutions'. He made passing reference, too, to 'the mass armed uprisings against imperialism in Indo-China, the tremendous sweep of the liberation movement in the countries of Latin America—primarily the revolutionary struggle in Cuba', and also to 'the armed struggle of the peasants in the Philippines'.

Understandably, he paid tribute to 'the victorious development of the Soviet revolution in China', and devoted a section of his report to the Chinese situation. But it was of 'the sacred war against Japan', Comintern support for which had more to do with Stalin's foreign policies than with the fight for Communism, that he talked, not of the guerrilla tactics which the Chinese Communists were using. Nor did he take the opportunity to explain to the colonial and semi-colonial peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America on whose behalf he claimed to speak—and whom he was certainly specially addressing—the strategy and tactics the Chinese were using, nor to tell them about the new principles upon which the Chinese organised their day-to-day campaigns.

All over the world, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, just as much as in Europe and North America, Communists throughout the twenties and thirties were fed on the Russian revolutionary experience. They sold, distributed and read Stalin's *Leninism*, in which he hammered home, time after time, Lenin's definition of a revolutionary situation. The *Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, of which Stalin was one of the authors, sold in millions and was required reading for every Communist anywhere. Prob-

ably more study classes were organised around this book than around any other in the history of political publishing. It turned up in every major language. A Russian-dominated world Communist movement took it for granted that to understand the Russian experience was to have the key to the conquest of power.

In his introduction to *The Class Struggles in France* of 1895, Engels wrote: 'When the February Revolution broke out, all of us, as far as our conceptions of the conditions and the course of revolutionary movements were concerned, were under the spell of previous historical experience, particularly that of France.'<sup>1</sup> One might paraphrase this by saying that for the forty years following the Bolshevik revolution practically all the Communists, with the exception of the Chinese, 'as far as their conceptions of the conditions and the course of revolutionary movements were concerned' were 'under the spell of previous historical experience', particularly that of Russia.

This no doubt helps to explain why, at the end of World War II, what one may call the Russian approach to the armed struggle was decisively brought to bear upon the situation in South-East Asia. The Comintern was dead, the Cominform had begun its brief existence. Unlike the Comintern its membership did not include Communist Parties in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. It was based upon the ruling Communist Parties of Eastern Europe and those in Western Europe who were expected soon to be ruling their countries too. The Chinese Communist Party was not even a member.

<sup>1</sup> Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow edition, p. 12.

## Win or Lose Everything

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IN SEPTEMBER 1947, Zhdanov, Stalin's right-hand man and, of course, a Russian, analysed the world situation at a meeting of Cominform members held in Poland. 'World War II', he told them in a lengthy speech, 'aggravated the crisis of the colonial system, as expressed in the rise of a powerful movement for national liberation in the colonies and dependencies. This has placed the rear of the capitalist system in jeopardy. The peoples of the colonies no longer wish to live in the old way. The ruling classes of the metropolitan countries can no longer govern the colonies on the old lines.'<sup>1</sup>

Here was Lenin's definition of a revolutionary situation, applied to the colonial world. To Communists steeped in the history of the Russian Revolution, Stalin's *Leninism* and *The History of the CPSU* this could mean only one thing. Not only had the time come for colonial peoples everywhere to expel their oppressors, but also a revolutionary situation could be held to obtain in those colonial areas where 'the metropolitan countries can no longer govern the colonies on the old lines' and where the mass of the people were united in their opposition to colonial rule. One had only to substitute the words 'colonial Powers' for 'ruling classes' in Lenin's 'symptoms' of a revolutionary situation to see what Zhdanov was driving at.

At the now famous Calcutta conference, held in January 1948, attended by representatives of most of the Communist Parties of South-East Asia, Zhdanov's analysis provided the starting point and basis for excited discussions. Quite clearly, theirs was the one area of the world to which his reference to

<sup>1</sup> Cominform Journal—*For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy* I, No. 1, November 10, 1947.

'the crisis of the colonial system' could be applied in practical form.

The British, French, Dutch and American colonial rulers had been discredited in the eyes of the people of their respective colonies by the ease with which an Asian power, Japan, had driven them out during World War II. True, they were now attempting to re-establish their power, but things could never be the same again. To use a term which was later to be made known to the whole world by Mao Tse-tung, the Western imperialists had, it seemed, been shown to be just so many 'paper tigers'. They were weakened and divided. They were unable 'to maintain their rule in an unchanged form' (to use Lenin's words in his definition of a revolutionary situation), a crisis in their policies was 'causing fissures' in their ranks, the 'discontent and indignation of the oppressed classes' were bursting forth.

The delegates from the South-East Asian countries returned home knowing that they had been given the go-ahead to get on with the job of making revolutions. With their thinking coloured by the Programme of the Communist International, to which Communist parties still adhered even though the Comintern itself was now dead, they saw the armed struggle which they were to lead as being something more than just a bourgeois-democratic revolution. In any case, Lenin had shown how the bourgeois-democratic revolution could quickly be made something from which the affrighted bourgeoisie would recoil, thus abandoning it to the Communists.

Moreover, on the basis of Zhdanov's analysis of the world situation, national liberation struggles in colonial areas, and particularly those led by Communists, were part of the world revolution of which the Eastern European Communist countries were at one and the same time the spearhead and the base. As long ago as 1932, the Programme of the Communist International had put forward the concept (fashionable in non-Communist circles in the 1960s) of the colonies and semi-colonies being 'the world rural district' and of the industrial countries being the 'world city'. The revolutionary masses in the under-developed countries were the natural

allies of those in the developed countries, just as the peasants are the allies of the proletariat in a revolutionary situation. On two counts, the fight was therefore going to be not simply one against the colonial power—'the national liberation struggle'—but one for the establishment of Communist rule. In a matter of months Communist Parties were engaged in armed struggle in Burma, Indo-China, Malaya, Indonesia and the Philippines.

As they embarked on their own revolutions, they were encouraged and heartened by the growing number of victories being reported from China. To this extent they were influenced by the Chinese experience. Understandably they wanted to know more about the way the Chinese had done it. But they knew relatively little of the strategy and tactics, the military thinking and the guerrilla experience of Mao Tse-tung and his comrades. It was the Moscow line that the Communists of South-East Asia, as they took to the jungle, knew best.

All knew *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*. Very few had had the chance to study Mao Tse-tung's *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War* (*Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War*) or his *Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War Against Japan* (*Strategic Problems in the Anti-Japanese Guerrilla War*) even if they had ever heard of them. The first was written in December 1936, the second in May 1938.

The fact was that most of those who at Zhdanov's call went over to the use of the gun were psychologically unprepared for what they were going into although that did not mean that they had no previous knowledge of jungle warfare.

Immediately the Japanese invaded Malaya on December 1941, the Malayan Communist Party had offered assistance to the British colonial government. All Left-wing prisoners were released. Communists were armed, trained in a special jungle and sabotage training centre and sent into the jungle. From these first jungle fighters grew the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army which continued to fight the Japanese, though not perhaps on the scale later claimed by Communists themselves, throughout the period of the Occupation.

Similarly, the Communist-led Hukbalahap, in the Philippines, came into existence in response to the Japanese occupation of their country.

In the case of Burma, some of the men who were, at the end of the war, to form the Communist Party, intended to use the war years to gain experience as guerrillas. Not, however, fighting the Japanese invaders but as members of an anti-British 'independence army'. The Japanese quickly gave Burma independence and so in practice the would-be guerrillas were left with nothing to do.

The situation was somewhat similar in Indonesia where the Communist Party as such, although among the oldest in Asia, was practically non-existent during the war years. Some of the extreme Left co-operated with the Japanese, some opposed them, many were abroad.

But no matter whether their wartime experience of guerrilla warfare was fairly considerable, as in the case of the Malaysians and Filipinos, or slight as was the case with the Burmese and Indonesians, all were misled as to the nature of the armed struggle into which they were going in 1948.

They were the victims of the ossified thinking of the international Communist leaders and of their own Russian-orientated training. If this was indeed the classical revolutionary situation as defined by Marx and Engels, spelt out by Lenin and taught by Stalin and the Comintern, then this time the few could successfully lead the many. The mass of the people would be united in their opposition to their present rulers despite class or, since this was South-East Asia, racial differences. And the rulers would prove themselves to be unable to hold the situation.

If Zhdanov was right, and the Communists of South-East Asia clearly thought that he was, then victory was round the corner. The struggle would be short and sharp. Power might not pass into their hands in ten days but it should with any luck in, say, ten weeks. The Malayan Communist Party went into the jungle in May 1948. Lau Yew, who had been chairman of the Central Military Committee of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army and was given responsibility for

the military conduct of the insurrection, estimated that it would be all over by the end of August.<sup>1</sup>

By taking to the gun, the Burmese Communists threw away promising opportunities for constitutional struggle. In the Philippines, the Communists, basking in the reputation they had gained as the foremost anti-Japanese fighters, had a considerable following amongst the people, and Taruc had been elected with a huge majority vote to the Congress of the Philippines by the people of Pampanga.

Malaya's Communists had come out of the jungles at the end of the Japanese Occupation with a reputation which they were able to turn to good account in the trade unions, in particular, where their members quickly found themselves in leading and powerful positions. All this they threw away when they abandoned the constitutional struggle for the armed struggle. The general attitude was that if this was the revolutionary situation then there was no point in worrying about maintaining the constitutional positions they held. It was a case of win or lose, so they threw everything they had into the fight, from one end of the country to the other, convinced that by sacrificing a few positions now they would soon gain all. In short, like Zhdanov and most other Communists, they were still thinking in terms of 1917 and the seventy years of Western revolutionary experience which had led up to it.

The trouble with that approach, as they were to discover to their cost, is that you embark on what Lenin called an irrevocable course. If you win, the country is yours. But should your party be defeated militarily, it is also defeated politically and organisationally. Your leaders are killed or captured, your organisation left in ruins. You must then build from the ground up all over again. Which is precisely what those Communist parties who followed the Zhdanov line have been trying to do for years now.

<sup>1</sup> See *Malaya: The Communist Insurgent War, 1948-1960*, Edgar O'Ballance, Faber, London, 1966, p. 79.

## 4

# New Thinking

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NEVER PLAY WITH revolution, Lenin had said. Communists should only take to the gun when the conditions were right, then put everything they had into seizing power and consolidating it as quickly as possible. But if the Communist Party of China was to achieve the power it sought, then it had no alternative but to use the gun right from the start.

'Almost from the very beginning', wrote Mao Tse-tung in 1938,<sup>1</sup> 'the main task confronting the party of the Chinese proletariat has been to unite the largest possible number of allies and to organise, according to circumstances, armed struggles against internal or external armed counter-revolution and for national and social liberation. In China, without armed struggle the proletariat and the Communist Party could not win any place for themselves or accomplish any revolutionary task.'

Indeed, Mao Tse-tung did not complain, as Lenin had done, about a desire on the part of his followers to 'play with revolution'; on the contrary he complained that they did not sufficiently 'understand the supreme importance of armed struggle' or stress enough 'the study of military strategy and tactics'.

In recent years the whole world has come to know that the Chinese Communist leaders feel called upon to take a line different from that of Moscow. But Mao Tse-tung and his comrades almost from the start have insisted that China is not Russia and that policies suitable for the one country are not necessarily the best for the other. They tried in the early days to launch the fight for Communism with workers' risings in the towns. These failed. Thereafter the Chinese Communists were very willing to learn from Russia's experience

<sup>1</sup> *Problems of War and Strategy*, Selected Works, Volume II, Lawrence & Wishart, 1954, p. 269.

but were never prepared to apply it mechanically to their own very different situation.

As Liu Shao-chi told the Party school for Central China in July 1941<sup>1</sup> '... if we take note of the actual conditions under which the Communist Party of China was built up, we will see that these conditions were entirely different from those which confronted Lenin before the October Revolution'. Both Russia and China had experience of guerrilla war, Liu Shao-chi noted, but whereas Russia's came during a civil war which followed the seizure of power, China's was an inevitable part of a long struggle over many years leading up to the conquest of power.

China's experience of the armed struggle could hardly have been more protracted, nor more varied. It began with the Communists' fight for a place in the sun. Subsequently it took the form of armed resistance to counter-revolution and to one extermination campaign after another; the establishing of Soviet areas within a non-Communist State and of their defence. It included the Long March (when the Soviet areas had to be abandoned) and the creation of a Red Army.

With the occupation of growing areas of Chinese territory by the Japanese armed forces, the Party and the Red Army gained experience of warfare against foreign troops—often simultaneously with fighting a war against those of Chiang Kai-shek as well. At other times, when the Party was collaborating with the Kuomintang, Chiang Kai-shek's forces were responsible for regular warfare, Mao's for guerrilla activities, which included operating behind the enemy lines.

Then, in the post-war years, with the growing demoralisation and corruption of the disintegrating KMT régime, the triumphant and fast-growing Red Army was able to sweep all before it as it accomplished, after nearly thirty years of almost non-stop fighting, the final seizure of power. All this was, indeed, a rich experience of armed struggle. But it could hardly have been more unlike that of Russia.

After the ending of the fighting, one of the earliest attempts to pull together some of the lessons of the Chinese revolu-

<sup>1</sup> *On Inner Party Struggle*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, p. 13.

tion, for use by Communists elsewhere, was made by Chen Po-ta, who had been Mao's secretary and was in 1966 to become one of the leaders of the cultural revolution.

The Chinese Communists had, he wrote, adapted Lenin's teachings to a backward, semi-colonial country and used the peasantry in the long fight leading up to the ultimate conquest of power. Chen highlighted a method which others in recent years have copied. 'The establishment of revolutionary bases by armed force was the starting point of the road along which Mao Tse-tung guided the Chinese revolution to nationwide victory. He pointed out that it was necessary to establish revolutionary bases even if in the beginning they were only several small pieces of territory; and that if this course was followed, then "a single spark could start a prairie fire".'<sup>1</sup>

Summing up what was new in the Chinese approach to the armed struggle, Chen Po-ta wrote: 'The conclusion to wage a protracted revolutionary war in the villages, use them to encircle and then take the cities; the conclusion to establish and maintain revolutionary power in many small bases and gradually develop and expand these bases through prolonged struggles until seizing power throughout the country—these clear-cut conclusions were reached by Mao Tse-tung over twenty years ago by applying Marxism-Leninism in his study of the problems of the Chinese revolution. They are new, Marxist conclusions arrived at in a colonial and semi-colonial country. These new conclusions are correct because they have been verified by the Chinese revolution and because they are being verified by realities in the countries of South-East Asia'.<sup>2</sup>

Mao Tse-tung believed that, in fighting the revolutionary war, the Chinese Communists had been helped by the sheer size of China's territory. But he also took the view that as a 'vast semi-colonial country which is unevenly developed both politically and economically' China had much in common with countries throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. Like them, too, it had only a small proletariat, and the main-

<sup>1</sup> *Mao Tse-tung on the Chinese Revolution*, Chen Po-ta, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1953, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 73.

stay of its national economy was the peasantry. The peasantry, he noted in 1939, constituted approximately 80 per cent of the nation's total population.

Mao has for long held that China has a special message for the other semi-colonial, developing countries. Thus, when during May and June of 1960, he received a succession of delegations from Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East, his message to each was the same: What China suffered, you are suffering. What China has done, you can do.<sup>1</sup>

In practice, however, since the lessons drawn from the Chinese experience were not published until the early '50s, they came too late to assist decisively those Communists of South-East Asia who were already involved in armed struggle—with the sole exception of Vietnam, where the Communists had been learning the Chinese lessons over many years.

Among the Communist Parties of South-East Asia who took to the gun, only the Indo-Chinese Communist Party—that is the present Vietnam Lao Dong Party—led by Ho Chi Minh, fully understood what would be the character of the armed struggle. Like the Communist Party of China, it had used the gun almost from the start, for very shortly after its formation it organised and led an insurrection at Nghe-Tinh.

President Ho Chi Minh once traced its history as follows: 'When it was twelve years old it organised the guerrilla movement to fight the French and Japanese. Fifteen years after it was set up, it organised and led to success the August Revolution. From the age of seventeen, it led the Resistance War, which it brought to victory at twenty-four.

'After the restoration of peace, our Party led and organised our people to build socialism in the North, turning it into a base of the struggle for national reunification. Thus within thirty years, our Party has led two revolutions, the national democratic revolution and the socialist revolution.'<sup>2</sup> Less than

<sup>1</sup> *Chairman Mao Tse-tung's Important Talks with Guests from Asia, Africa and Latin America*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1960, pp. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> *A Heroic People—Memoirs from the Revolution*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi, 1965.

5,000 party members, Ho noted with satisfaction, had organised and led the uprisings of 24 million fellow-countrymen to victory.

Thus by 1948, although victory was still far ahead, Vietnam's Communists could already draw on a rich guerrilla experience of their own. Much of this, however, had been gained in the fight against the Japanese Occupation. In this respect it had something in common with the Communist Parties of Malaya and the Philippines. But there was this difference: Vietnam had a common border with China and the Communists made good use of it.

Something of the spirit which prevailed in the Indo-Chinese Communist Party is conveyed in *Stemming from the People* by General Vo Nguyen Giap, now North Vietnam's Minister of Defence, Commander-in-Chief of the North Vietnam Army and generally recognised as South-East Asia's greatest authority on Communist guerrilla warfare.

'Uncle Ho',<sup>1</sup> he wrote, sent leaders as well as rank and file members for training in the border region before sending them to the country to organise the Viet Minh League. Short-term training courses were held in a Chinese village, near the frontier.<sup>2</sup> The party's headquarters were established in a cave in Pac Bo, a hilly region only a little more than one kilometre from the Vietnam-China border.<sup>3</sup>

Towards the end of 1941, General Giap continues, 'Ho, who was again in Pac Bo, issued instructions on the organisation of the first armed unit in Cao Bang. National salvation organisations were set up in large numbers, self-defence groups were established among the youth of both sexes'.

Giap describes the way in which a Communist guerrilla force was built up in a small country, operating in fairly typical South-East Asian conditions but with direct contact

<sup>1</sup> 'Ong Cu', crudely translated as 'Uncle'. The expression is used for an old man who enjoys the affection and respect of the people. Only those who know Asia can appreciate its full content.

<sup>2</sup> See also *The Struggle for Indochina 1940-1955*, Ellen J. Hammer, Stanford University Press, 1966, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

with China and the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>1</sup> Then, as now, the Vietnam Communists steered a course between Moscow and Peking, drawing upon the experience of both but at the same time going their own way.

By the end of World War II, it is estimated, General Giap had under his command 10,000 men welded into an effective guerrilla force. By the time he launched his first assault on the French positions, little more than a year later, he had more than 50,000. But his forces were ill-armed and not yet strong enough to throw out the French.

The Viet Minh were pursued into the hill region along the China border, where Ho, Giap and their followers had years earlier done some of their first guerrilla training, and there, as good Communists, they not only re-grouped their forces but also did some new thinking. When Moscow's call to arms came in 1948 they had already decided that victory could only come after a long and arduous struggle. The Party's new thinking had been made known the previous year: 'Our people's War of Resistance is an all-out one waged by the whole nation. It will be a protracted war, full of hardship, but it will certainly be victorious.'

Victory came on the night of May 6, 1954, when Dien Bien Phu fell, bringing to an end the Indo-China war. By this time the Communists had fought almost continuously for eight years.

Analysing the campaigns which led up to victory at Dien Bien Phu, General Giap saw the political-military line they had taken as having grown out of an evolving experience of Communist armed struggle: 'This line, imbued with the Marxist-Leninist fundamental principles on revolutionary war and revolutionary army and combining the valuable experiences of the Soviet Red Army and the Chinese People's Liberation Army with our own experiences, was applied creatively to the concrete conditions of our revolutionary

<sup>1</sup> In Giap's account we see a normal Communist clandestine leadership group preparing for armed struggle—but whose immediate aims were nationalist and whose greatest appeal was their genuine nationalism.

armed struggle'.<sup>1</sup> The first 'main and fundamental factor for this victory', he wrote, 'was the correct political and military line of our Party'.

Side by side with the military campaigns in Vietnam, as in China, went political campaigns, based upon the real needs of the people whose support the Communists needed most. For example, when the Vietnamese Communists needed all the help they could get from the peasants, who both filled the ranks of their guerrilla forces and provided them with their supply bases, the Party in 1952-1953 carried through an agrarian reform in the areas it controlled, under the slogan 'Land to the Tillers'. The result, as noted by General Giap, was that they 'succeeded in bringing into play the full anti-colonialist and anti-feudal spirit, and in fostering the might of tens of millions of peasants who constituted the main forces of the revolution'.

In passing, it is worth noting that the Communists' opponents relied almost exclusively upon military campaigning. Win the war first and think about social reforms later, tended to be the French approach, just as it was that of Chiang Kai-shek in China, and with equally disastrous results. Experience would seem to show that to concentrate solely upon anti-insurgency is no way to succeed in the fight against Communist insurgents.

The nationalist revolution, the revolution of the land-hungry, and the socialist-proletarian revolution were brought together by the Vietnamese Communists to form a single stream of revolutionary activity. The three most dynamic political forces in the newly-developing world were harnessed to the victory of Communism.

The second phase of the struggle, that in the South, is seen by the Vietnamese Communist leaders as being one which was forced upon them. They contend that, had the Geneva Agreements been adhered to, Dien Bien Phu would have marked the end of Vietnam's armed struggle. America's intervention made it possible for the Communist-led guerrilla

<sup>1</sup> *Dien Bien Phu*, General Vo Nguyen Giap, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi, 1964, p. 147.

war again to be given the appearance of a patriotic fight against a Western intruder, so enabling the Communists once more to appeal to the nationalism of the people.

As the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh put it: 'What the peasants see is a large force of white Westerners doing their best to kill their fellow-countrymen, many of whom previously fought against the French. The peasants do not see the victims of the American military effort as dead Communists, but as dead patriots'.<sup>1</sup>

In terms of the development of Communist thinking on the armed struggle, the second phase of the Vietnam war has its own importance. Its beginnings are more in accord with the pattern which the Communist armed struggle may follow in the future than with the thinking of 1948.

It began with acts of terrorism in the urban areas and a gradual growth of guerrilla activities by small bands in the countryside. These expanded until large numbers were involved in guerrilla warfare. Side by side with the armed struggle, went 'constitutional' struggle, which included the creation of a broad united front and effective work within non-Communist industrial, political and cultural organisations. In town and country alike, political struggle was everywhere closely co-ordinated with armed struggle. Thus it was able to take on the form of *people's war*, with a clear, easily-understood democratic and patriotic goal.

Moreover, as General Giap has noted,<sup>2</sup> with years of fighting already behind them, none of those who went into the fight with the gun this time believed that the war in the South could end in a short time.

Years later, William Pomeroy, an American who was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Philippines after fighting with the Huks, and later pardoned, listed the causes for the Huks' defeat. A protracted war, he says, was 'neglected in favour of a relatively rapid progression toward seizure of power, with the illusion of achieving a relatively quick victory'. And possibilities of 'legal struggle' as well as 'the crea-

<sup>1</sup> *Vietnam, The Lotus in the Sea of Fire*, S.C.M. Press, London, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> *Dien Bien Phu*, General Vo Nguyen Giap, p. 172.

tion of a broad united front of a nationalist character' were neglected for the same reason. Moreover, there was not 'even one' leader with a grasp of overall military theory or of the elements of strategy and tactics.<sup>1</sup> These lessons were learned the hard way, but Communists everywhere have taken them to heart.

The experience of the revolutionary movement under the leadership of Fidel Castro which overthrew the Batista régime in Cuba and ended with Castro's triumphal entry into Havana on January 8, 1959, brought hope and encouragement to Communist revolutionaries in every country which had conditions in any way similar to those in Cuba. Major Ernesto (Che) Guevara, who master-minded Castro's guerrilla activities, consciously drew upon Marxist-Leninist revolutionary experience and teachings, and in particular upon those of the Chinese Communists.

The Cuban leaders insist that their strategy and tactics are suitable, with appropriate modifications, for use all over Latin America; that their experience is the model for the whole continent. In addition, in their travels throughout Asia and Africa and at Afro-Asian conferences, they have declared that it is suited to the other developing continents too.

The Cuban message to them is that there is no reason why the fight should not begin right away if you have suitable terrain, a small handful of determined leaders, the possibility of coming into possession of arms, and a willingness to use them.

The story of Fidel Castro and the '26th July' movement is too well known to be retold in any detail. We are here concerned with the revolution's special features and anything it added to Communist thought and practice.

On December 2, 1956, Castro landed secretly on the coast of Oriente Province with a band of eighty-two men. All but twelve were wiped out by government forces who had got wind of the landing. The twelve survivors took to the hills and there established their headquarters. Thus it was to the

<sup>1</sup> *Guerrilla and Counter-Guerrilla Warfare*, William J. Pomeroy, International Publishers, New York, 1964, pp. 66-69.

'countryside'—the Sierra Maestra mountains—that they went to establish their first base.

Gradually they built up around themselves a hard core of guerrillas whom they organised into small groups. Their numbers grew to 500, then to 1,000. Probably some 5,000 people were involved in the last big push for power. Parallel with their organisation, in small, scattered bases in the hills, went the recruitment and organising of supporters in Havana and other cities and the establishment of 'town bases'.

The more successful the rebels became, and the more audacious the methods they used, the more ruthless the Batista régime became. Increasing ruthlessness was intended to undermine support for the rebels and to stop the flood of recruits to their ranks. In practice, as so often occurs, it had the opposite effect and tended only to increase support for the revolution.

During 1958, despite the rigid censorship, the outside world began to be made aware of one very Latin American tactic—borrowed from China and further developed—which was being used. It can best be called 'the tactic of the dramatic gesture'. This contribution to the practice of guerrilla warfare is one which is already being copied by Communist guerrillas outside Latin America as well as in Central and South America.

It was the kidnapping on February 24, 1958, of Señor Juan Manuel Fangio, the world champion racing motorist, an Argentine citizen, which first hit the world's headlines. Señor Fangio was abducted by Castro's supporters from a Havana hotel shortly before he was to have competed in the Cuban Grand Prix. He was released after thirty-seven hours' of courteous and considerate treatment and driven to the vicinity of the Argentine Embassy.

During the last four days of June that year, forty-four foreign nationals—forty-two Americans and two Canadians—were kidnapped by insurgent bands in Oriente Province. Most were engineers and technicians employed by an American company. Released a few weeks later, all reported like Señor Fangio that they had been well treated. It had been explained to them that they had been kidnapped in order to

show the world that the insurgents were fighting for freedom as an organised group and were not just a rabble. Similar abductions continued throughout the year.

By the time Castro and his forces entered Havana in January of the following year the economy of the country had been eroded, the mass of the people were united behind the revolution, the ruling group was disunited and demoralised. In short, the classical Marxist-Leninist 'revolutionary situation' now obtained. But it came at the end of five years of armed struggle. It was not the starting point. It had been created by the armed struggle.

Che Guevara, the revolution's principal guerrilla war theoretician and practitioner, has listed for other revolutionaries 'three fundamental conclusions about armed revolution' revealed by the Cuban revolution.

1. Popular forces can win a war against an army.
2. One does not necessarily have to wait for a revolutionary situation to arise; it can be created.
3. In the under-developed countries of the Americas, rural areas are the best battlefields for revolution.<sup>1</sup>

Guevara subsequently made clear that he believed that these conclusions held good for those countries of Africa and Asia which had similar terrain to that of the Latin American continent.

In an article published in the September 1963 issue of *Cuba Socialista*, and reproduced in the *Peking Review*, January 10, 1964, Che Guevara spelt out for others just how guerrilla activities might be started:

'Small units with few people in them choose some places favourable for guerrilla activities, from where they can advance for counter-attack and where they can retreat for refuge, and they begin to take actions in these places. But one point must be made perfectly clear at the initial stage: when the guerrillas are still rather weak, they should only concentrate on getting a firm footing, familiarising themselves with the surroundings, establishing contact with the inhabitants and consolidating places which can be turned into bases.'

<sup>1</sup> *Guerrilla Warfare*, Che Guevara, Cassell, 1962, p. 111.

This is a pattern which, as we shall later see, has now been adopted by Communists involved in armed struggle in Thailand, on the Malaya-Thai border and in Sarawak—as well as in many Latin American countries.

Che Guevara wrote that guerrilla war or a liberation war generally 'begins with the stage of strategic defence, when the fast-moving and quickly disappearing small units will now and then take a bite at the enemy, but do not retire into a small area for passive defence. Their defence means launching every small-scale attack that can be made'. The final stage is 'the collapse of the repressive army. The guerrillas will now capture the big cities, fight large-scale decisive battles and wipe out the enemy thoroughly and completely'.

Here we have the blending of Chinese thought on the armed struggle with that of Latin America. It is this that Communists who go over to the gun in developing countries now inherit.

## 5 Cuba Si!

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CHE GUEVARA'S message to Latin American revolutionaries —'What Fidel has done, you too can do'—was heady stuff. It is not surprising that one group after another, all over the Latin American continent, attempted to follow the Cuban example, in the months and years following the spectacular collapse of the Batista régime.

There were attempts to start insurrections, to raise guerrilla bands, or to make landings on the Castro model, in Argentina, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Peru and Brazil. All were premature, poorly organised, and therefore met with failure; and it was only from the causes of their failure that others could learn. But soon more serious attempts were being made, especially in Guatemala, Venezuela, Colombia and, later, Bolivia.

A 'reactionary' military *coup* occurred in Guatemala in March 1963. In the same month, and in response to the *coup*, guerrilla units came into existence in the north-east and other areas. A number of '*foci*', or insurrectionary centres, on the Cuban model, were established in remote rural and mountainous areas. Those responsible for them were a politically mixed group. There were liberals, democrats and Marxists of various hues.

They were joined in due course by some dissident army officers who were in revolt against what they regarded as the inefficiency, corruption and general decadence of the military leaders. These new adherents included, incidentally, one man, Yon Sosa (part Chinese, part Latin American) who had received, at one of the US army's 'Special Forces' schools, training in guerrilla warfare and anti-insurgency, and who in due course became one of the guerrilla leaders. The insurrectionary centres were not established on the initiative of the Communist Party, but the Communists joined them before

long. The movement towards armed struggle was prompted by a political crisis but the background was an acute economic crisis.

One year after the *coup*, and after the first *foci* had been established, Hugo Barrios Klee wrote in the *World Marxist Review* (the monthly journal for pro-Moscow Communists the world over) that a revolutionary situation was taking shape in Guatemala and that all over Latin America the Communists were preparing themselves for armed struggle, ready to take action at the appropriate time. The type of armed struggle he described, and which he said should run side by side with the political struggle, was not the old-type short sharp attempt to seize power in the cities. It was to be 'long and bitter'—a type of guerrilla war which reflected both Cuban and Chinese thought.

'The experience of revolutions', he went on, 'shows that the transition to armed action brings success only when it is supported by the masses, when it is linked with their daily struggle and stimulates this struggle. We believe that these conditions exist in Guatemala. Our Party therefore supports the guerrilla actions now taking place in the country.'<sup>1</sup>

In preparation for armed struggle the Communists 'are intensifying their work in the *countryside* (the possible future base of the armed struggle), among the *youth* (the principal force of this struggle) and in the armed forces. The Cuban revolution is a striking example; it has shown us the possibility of victory along these lines'.

It will be noted that here something new has been introduced: *youth* is described as 'the principal force of this struggle'. This has become a significant feature of similar revolutionary struggles in other Latin American countries (the Communist Party of Venezuela for long maintained a 'foco' inside Caracas University) and in Sarawak, too, to quote an obvious Asian example.

The Central Committee of the Party, in a resolution passed on December 21, 1963, noted that 'although the guerrilla detachments are still at an early stage of development, they

<sup>1</sup> *World Marxist Review*, March 1964, p. 16.

have already become a political factor in the life of the country. . . . The armed struggle is an obvious expression of the civil war towards which the reactionary classes are steering the country'. But it must be linked with the campaign for the 'political, economic and social demands of the people'.

Commenting on this, Alfredo Borges wrote: 'This brings us to the question: Does not the armed struggle narrow the possibilities for legal struggle, for peaceful action by the democratic forces? We don't think so. . . .'<sup>1</sup> The question he raises is one which Communists in many Latin American countries who have tried or are trying to run the two forms of struggle simultaneously are still asking themselves and each other.

On the face of it, Communists who run a limited but growing armed struggle side by side with normal activities in trade unions, other political parties, cultural organisations and, possibly, within a united or National Liberation Front, would appear to have the best of both worlds. It is an attractive proposition. But so far the Venezuelan and Sarawakian experiences, which are probably the best examples of this policy in action, suggest that the opposite may prove to be the case.

It was understandable that the Cuban influence should be strong in Venezuela. Geographically, Cuba was close at hand. In the Communists' view of the situation, too, Venezuela was close to Cuba in another sense: US influence had been strong in Cuba, America had a stranglehold on the Cuban economy. The same, they would argue, applied to Venezuela.

A first, premature attempt in March 1962, to organise centres of guerrilla activity in Venezuela failed. An unsuccessful bid to stop the 1963 Presidential Elections by terror served only to alienate potential rural and urban support. But the following year the Left tried again. Soon they had 'stabilised zones' in the States of Falcon and Lara. These were insurrectionary centres, 'liberated areas', established and defended by guerrillas who operated their own local political and social régime. Others were established in the Andes the

<sup>1</sup> *World Marxist Review*, June 1964, p. 11.

following year. It is typical of Latin America that those who started the armed struggle were not actually members of the Communist Party—any more than they were in Cuba. They were revolutionaries, with a variety of Left-wing affiliations, who got together to establish guerrilla bases in the hills.

In December 1962, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Venezuela declared that there was a 'long and difficult struggle' ahead, that all forms and methods of struggle should be used, but the principal one would be that of armed force. It therefore called upon the Party and other popular forces to begin building up a people's army 'which would unite all patriots for the battle to liberate the country from the foreign yoke, overthrow the present government and carry out a programme of structural reforms'.<sup>1</sup>

It is not necessary, for the purpose of this study, to follow in detail the story of the Venezuelan guerrillas' successes and failures. Their experience is of interest, however, in that it is based upon an attempt by a mature, well-organised party to apply the Chinese and Cuban guerrilla war experience to its own local conditions. In short, it has attempted to practise what may be called the new form of armed struggle the evolution of which we have been tracing in these pages. And in this it at first had the backing of Moscow.

Since the Communist Party, which was Moscow-orientated, was reputedly the foremost party of revolution, it decided to throw itself into the guerrilla movement, and also develop 'the armed struggle in the towns'. Here was to be a case of getting the best of both worlds. But soon some of the leaders were complaining that the Party was losing its following among the industrial workers organised in the trade unions. News of the activities of guerrilla bands operating in the hills, and the sensation—and consternation—caused from time to time by acts of urban and rural terrorism and audaciously conceived 'dramatic gestures' might excite the student members and non-proletarian urban elements within the Party. But the solid trade unionists were no more sure than were the majority of rural people that they wanted to be

<sup>1</sup> *World Marxist Review*, October 1964, p. 21.

mixed up with that sort of thing. The steady work of years was beginning to be eroded.

Later, by 1966, when the guerrillas had suffered heavily at the hands of the security forces, some of the Moscow-line leaders were beginning to wonder aloud in the columns of the *World Marxist Review* whether it might be that they were going to finish up with the worst of both worlds. By April 1967, the eighth Plenum of the Party decided to abandon the guerrilla war, condemned terrorism and prepared to concentrate on the constitutional struggle.

The Central Committee's resolution of December 1962, in advocating support for the armed struggle, noted that 'up till now the activity of the so-called combat tactical units in the main cities has imparted a specific character to the revolutionary armed action in Venezuela'. This referred to the groups of revolutionaries who were responsible for carrying into effect the 'tactic of the dramatic gesture'. There were times when these gestures were very dramatic indeed. The aim was to make it appear to the public that the insurrectionists could strike when, where and whom they pleased.

These operations included the kidnapping of US security officers who, like Fangio, the racing motorist kidnapped by the Fidelistas some years earlier, were held for days or weeks before being freed. In several instances they were released on the streets of Caracas, the capital city, in broad daylight, stark naked. Another 'dramatic gesture' took the form of leaflets being distributed which announced that a policeman would be killed on the city's streets each day for a given period—and then the threat was carried into effect. Particularly dramatic were the abduction of Alfredo di Stefano of the Spanish Real Madrid football club on August 24, 1963, and the seizure of an airliner with passengers and crew on November 28 of the same year. Insurgents in Guatemala and Colombia have also used this same tactic in various forms in the last few years.

All over Asia, Africa and Latin America, the Communists in the early 1960s were being encouraged to establish worker-peasant alliances, or to capture them where these already

existed. The Communist Party of Venezuela demonstrated the usefulness of such bodies. The peasant unions it created or led in remote rural areas were linked through an alliance with the militant trade unions of the cities. Then, when street fighting occurred in the capital, the peasant unions were simultaneously brought into action. This led, as was intended, to the security forces being diverted from the trouble in the cities and dispersed into the countryside. While the workers threw up their barricades in the city streets, members of the peasant unions were busy carving up big estates and sharing them out.

This latter form of activity cannot fail to win, from the Communist point of view. If the peasants are able to hold on to the land, the Communists get the credit for it. If the government takes the land back, the peasants are left to conclude that it is the Communists who are their friends. The government is the landlords' friend which takes from peasants the land for which traditionally they have longed.

In the Central Committee resolution of December 1962, special reference was made to one aspect of the Party's armed struggle work which is becoming of increasing importance to Communist guerrillas in other parts of the world. 'A critical appraisal of the experience gained', it said, 'has led to the concept of *social activity* by the partisan detachment, i.e., work among the peasants.'

The pattern that was followed in Venezuela at that time in the establishment of rural bases has become the model for Communists everywhere.

The process would begin with a few young students, intellectuals and maybe a worker or two, quietly taking to the hills. Ideally, the group included a doctor, nurse or medical student, a veterinary surgeon or someone with specialised knowledge of animal or plant husbandry, a social worker or two and maybe a girl student or graduate in domestic science. They would arrive unheralded in an under-administered area which had neither social nor medical services of any sort.

They brought with them no arms, there was no talk of revolution. Instead, they quietly got on with the job of improving the people's health, assisting them to grow better

crops, teaching young wives and mothers how to improve the family diet. The health of the people improved, the infant mortality rate dropped, people who in the past had good cause to believe that nobody cared what happened to them suddenly found that they mattered. Mattered, that is, to the Communists who were living with them and sharing their conditions.

Only when these new arrivals had the solid sympathy and support of the people, who would be prepared to defend them and most certainly would never give them away to the authorities, did the arms begin to come in. A guerrilla 'safe base' and a mass 'support base' had been established. Here once again is, of course, an example of things being made easy for the Communists by long-standing official neglect on the one hand and, on the other, the total dedication of the revolutionary in sharp contrast to the traditional complacency of those who should be concerned with the people's welfare.

## Working to the New Pattern

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IN OCTOBER 1966 a seminar was held in Cairo under the title 'Africa: National and Social Revolution'. It was organised by the *World Marxist Review* and the Cairo journal *At-Talia*. In his keynote speech Alexander Sobolev, a Soviet expert on African affairs, declared<sup>1</sup> that whilst 'in the overwhelming majority of cases in Africa there is a real possibility of avoiding civil war between antagonistic classes' the political domination of the colonialists and racists can be ended only by armed action and in some cases such action is the basic way to fight neo-colonialist régimes too.

J. B. Marks, Executive Committee member, African National Congress (South Africa) called for the training of 'thousands fully armed to fight the enemies of progress on our continent'. Stephen Nkomo, leading member of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (Rhodesia) said, 'Our struggle takes various forms of guerrilla warfare, sabotage, etc.' Mr Marks and Mr Nkomo are both nationalists working in particularly difficult circumstances.

Among African leaders who directly related the armed struggle to the fight for socialism was Idressa Diarra, Political Secretary Sudanese Union (Mali). He asserted that 'there is a yearning for armed struggle also among the African mass parties building socialism, and some of their members even develop an inferiority complex because there is no such struggle'.

Already in 1964, Mr W. O. Goodluck, Vice-Chairman of the Socialist Workers' and Farmers' Party of Nigeria, discussing Communist tactics in independent African States during a visit to the USSR, declared that 'where the Marxist-Leninist party is banned, then depending on the prevailing circumstances the party may take up armed struggle'. African

<sup>1</sup> *World Marxist Review*, January 1967.

Communists, he said, must learn from the success of the Cuban Communist Party and the way it had supported Fidel Castro's National Liberation Movement. But they must also benefit by the experience of those Latin Americans who, inspired by the Cuban example, had too readily aped the Cuban revolution and taken up arms without sufficient preparation.<sup>1</sup>

African Communist parties, guided by the experienced South African party, are mostly Moscow-orientated, although actual involvement in guerrilla warfare would be likely to lead to a shift towards Peking. The reader may have noted that all the quotations I have so far used concerning Latin American and African guerrilla activities have been taken not from the *Peking Review*, but from the *World Marxist Review* which is Moscow's mouthpiece.

Most of the Communist parties of Latin America have remained pro-Moscow although it might be unwise to assume that this must necessarily continue to be the case. Radio Peking, Radio Hanoi and Radio Havana encourage Communists in developing countries to take to the gun, and support with words those who do. Moscow, which once did the same, has become more selective, and guerrillas can no longer be sure of its blessing. A particularly important part has been played by Radio Peking in making known to militant Communists in one part of the world what those in another are doing. It tells Asian Communists of the exploits of Latin American guerrillas, whilst simultaneously keeping the Latin Americans informed of guerrilla activities in South-East Asia.

All over Asia, Latin America and, increasingly, in Africa too, members of the Communist movement can, as a result of the development of communications media, be involved in a constant interchange of ideas on the armed struggle, so that those who go into action are able to test each others' tactics and techniques and then exchange information about them. It is natural, therefore, that there should be a constant evolution and development of Communist thought on the practice of guerrilla warfare.

<sup>1</sup> *The African Communist*, October/December 1964.

Their thought develops, whilst too often that of their opponents remains static. What needs to be grasped is that any Communists who go over to the armed struggle in the 1960s and '70s will not, or at any rate should not, simply follow earlier patterns. Malaysia provides a good example of a Communist Party which has significantly changed its thought and practice in recent years.

After being hunted for years on end, most of the remnant of the defeated Malayan National Liberation Army (the Communist Party of Malaya's guerrillas) made their way across the Malayan border into southern Thailand. At its peak the MNLA had been thousands strong. Now it was reduced to a few hundred. A high proportion were suffering from chronic malnutrition and a host of other ailments. Many of the rank and file were so disillusioned and demoralised that only terror held them to the MNLA.

For the next six years they did little more than cling to what was described as a 'safe base'. The term 'safe base' should express an offensive not defensive concept. It is a place to which tired fighters may momentarily withdraw in order to prepare themselves for the next offensive action. For the weary guerrillas of the MNLA, however, the safe base on the other side of the Thai border became a place from which to hide from a relentless opponent, a place which gave one an opportunity merely to survive.

They had moved into three provinces which come near to being an administrative vacuum. The Thai government was more concerned with areas nearer to Bangkok and with the growth of its own guerrilla problem up in the north-east. The MNLA left Bangkok alone and for most of the time Bangkok appeared to be prepared to leave the MNLA alone, too. There was an occasional combined operation by Malayan and Thai security forces aimed at smoking out some of the guerrillas, but for most of the time they remained undisturbed. In these circumstances, they quietly, and, one might say, almost inevitably, took increasing control over the lives of the unsophisticated people living in the areas in which they had settled.

It seemed almost as though their safe base might come to be rather like Marquetalia, one of the so-called 'independent republics' of Colombia in which bandits and other rebels established their own régime. Marquetalia was so isolated and devoid of communication of any sort with the outside world that the rebels could forget the government for years on end and were by government forgot. Then, in 1963, the Communists began the ideological penetration of the area, with the aim of making it into an active base from which to spread revolution. They prepared for guerrilla warfare, evacuated the women and children and invited the attention of the Army who, in 1966, mounted a massive attack against them. The Communists abandoned their 'self-defence zone' for the mountains and jungles and switched to mobile guerrilla operations claiming that they now had the battlefield of their choice.

In 1963 there were signs that at long last the CPM leaders too were about to come to life again. A drive to raise the political understanding of the MNLA and its fellow-travellers in the three Thai provinces was started. This, in true Communist style, took the form of study classes based upon carefully-prepared syllabi. The Communist leaders had been jerked out of apathy into activity by first the Brunei revolt and then Indonesia's military confrontation of Malaysia. From their jungle hideout on September 20, 1963, they issued a statement declaring that neo-colonialist Malaysia<sup>1</sup> (which was just coming to birth) must be smashed, and identifying themselves in this aim with the Indonesian confronters. 'The Communist Party of Malaya calls on the peoples in these territories to unite and form a solid united front against the British Abdul Rahman<sup>1</sup> clique and persist in a protracted and arduous struggle, armed and otherwise, to overthrow completely the domination of this clique, to smash to smithereens their neo-colonialist "Malaysia" intrigue and

<sup>1</sup> Comprising Malaya, Singapore and the two North Kalimantan (North Borneo) States of Sabah and Sarawak. Singapore has since seceded.

<sup>1</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman, Prime Minister of Malaya (then in process of becoming Malaysia).

to realise the national liberation of North Kalimantan and Malaya.'

The Communist leaders went on to declare that the 'Malayan people will continue to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Indonesian people and support each other in the common struggle against the neo-colonialist "Malaysia" intrigue'.

They had thus taken two very significant steps: (1) they had called for a return to armed struggle, and (2) identified themselves with the enemy in a war situation—a position which always has revolutionary implications.

No question, however, of waiting until the war led to war-weariness or defeat and so to Lenin's 'revolutionary situation'. The call to arms was immediate, but the goal, the seizure of power, was recognised as remote and to be reached only after 'protracted and arduous struggle'. And it would start by being conducted from what could only be a very limited number of bases at the best.

In Sarawak, which was to become part of Malaysia, the Communist Organisation had already declared that it was going over to the armed struggle and hundreds of its members had gone to Indonesian Kalimantan for training. Before long, young members of the CPM's satellite organisations were setting off from Malaya for Indonesia too, in order to learn guerrilla warfare and urban sabotage and terrorism.

It may be reasonably objected that the CPM was in no position to go over to full armed struggle, on the 1948 pattern, even had it so desired. But the point to grasp is that, in the past, if a revolutionary situation was not already present, and if the Communist Party was not ready to throw everything it had into the struggle for power on an "all or nothing" basis, then it was not expected to take to the gun at all.

In their statement of September 1963 the CPM leaders not only called for 'protracted and arduous' struggle, but, in accord with the new trend, they declared that the struggle must be 'armed and otherwise'. In other words, that armed struggle and constitutional struggle should both be used. When this tactic is used the emphasis is switched from one to the other according to what the Communists call the

'objective conditions'. Sometimes it is the 'armed struggle' stop which is pulled out, sometimes the 'constitutional' one, sometimes both together.

The CPM line embodied this new feature. Even as they issued their statement, the leaders must clearly have realised that they would have to be ready to call off the armed struggle again if and when required. This is what, in due course, with the ending of confrontation, they were in fact obliged to do. In the past, once the irrevocable decision to take to the gun was made, commitment to the armed struggle was seen right through to victory or defeat. Today, as the Latin American experience shows, it is permissible to start armed struggle, call it off again, then if necessary restart it yet again. This has been the story in Venezuela, Guatemala and Peru.

During recent years the hold of the CPM leaders and their Malayan National Liberation Army over the local population of the three under-administered provinces where they are established has been very noticeably increased. Again, the methods they have used to achieve this are similar to those one now finds in Latin America and which in particular were used in Venezuela.

The Thai provinces in which the Malayan Communists are installed comprise two in which there is a mixed Thai and Chinese population and a third which is strongly Muslim-Malay.

In all three the Party now shows increasing interest in what the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Venezuela called 'social activities'. In an area where there have been few medical or social services, the MNLA try to fill the vacuum. They supply the local population with drugs of both the 'Western' and Chinese varieties, tend the sick and engage in malaria-prevention work. They organise old people's benevolent associations. To isolated jungle villages where human existence is characterised by its deadly monotony they bring singing and dancing classes and other forms of entertainment.

Such activities provide a means of making good the wastage of manpower within the MNLA and recruiting additional

members to it, and also of winning over some of the local peasantry to Communist policies and of neutralising others.

Special attention is paid to the rural people whom they are busy organising into peasant unions. The textbooks the Communists use for instructing themselves in this work include one on the role of the peasantry by D. N. Aidit (the leader of the Communist Party of Indonesia—PKI—who was killed after the abortive *coup* of 1965) and which reveals the Communists' motivation. Aidit's main points are that the peasantry supply recruits and food for the revolution, as well as 'the base from which guerrilla units can counter-attack government forces and re-take towns'. Revolutions or people's wars 'cannot be launched without the peasantry and rural bases'.

In one respect the CPM on the Thai border show themselves more up to date in their thinking than are many of their Latin American comrades. This is on the question of the Communist approach to religion, which in this age of 'dialogue' should be more moderate than in the past. The new approach has still to be applied in practice in some Latin American countries where Communist agitators who go to the Indian areas still attack the people's mixture of Catholicism, animism and superstitious practices—and alienate the Indians in the process.

In their propaganda to the Muslims the CPM, on the other hand, take the line that the immediate aims of Communism and Islam are identical. One CPM propaganda booklet quotes the Prophet Mohammed to support the claim that those who struggle for the liberation of their motherland follow God's command that men, who are created to serve, must engage in meritorious activity. The Prophet is quoted as saying 'Love for nation and motherland is part of faith'; therefore those who side by side with the MNLAs fight the imperialists and neo-colonialists are following the Prophet's command. Another publication likens the Communists' struggle to 'the sacred fight of the Prophet Mohammed against the Arab tyrants of his time'.

Possibly some of those responsible for this propaganda are on more familiar ground when they produce other booklets

and papers addressed to the Buddhist section of the population. In these they argue that the MNLA and the MNLL (Malayan National Liberation League, which is the political arm of the MNLA), in fighting British imperialism and Malaysian neo-colonialism, are acting in accord with the tenets of Buddhism by eradicating evils and practising good deeds. The 'ammunition' for the Communist propaganda campaign amongst the Buddhists includes prayer rolls and joss sticks for use in Buddhist temples.

The activities of the MNLA and the MNLL are publicised over 'Voice of the People of Free Thailand', a clandestine radio station thought to be situated either in South China or in one of the areas of north-east Thailand controlled by the local Communist guerrillas.

It is not unusual for a movement engaged in the armed struggle to kidnap and kill suspected informers. That suspected informers on the Thai border have of late met with this fate is not in itself proof that the CPM has adopted the 'tactic of the dramatic gesture' although the circumstances of some of the kidnappings, and particularly the propaganda surrounding them, bear a close resemblance to those which have been organised in Latin America in recent years. Directly in the Cuban tradition was the 'shanghai-ing' of a Muslim religious leader in 1966. This man, a Thai, was abducted, taken into the jungle and questioned. In the Latin American manner—and that of the Chinese in an earlier period—he was treated relatively well and his captors went to some pains to convince him that the Communists were good men who were not there to create trouble but only to assist the local people in curing the sick and improving the life of the community.

The influence of Latin American methods on South-East Asian practice might be seen in an ambush staged in the border territory in August 1966. A combined Malaysian-Thai field team who went into the border area walked into an ambush in which eight Malaysians and two Thais were killed. The subsequent Communist propaganda about the incident suggests that the CPM were probably more concerned with its publicity value than with the elimination of members of

the field team, who could have been easily avoided and could, quite reasonably, have been held to constitute no serious threat to the MNLA.

The ambush has been used to convince the local population that it is the Communists, not government, who have the last word in this area.

Letters were later sent from the Communists on the border to Thai security officials in Bangkok regretting that some Thai officers had inadvertently been killed in the ambush and explaining that their quarrel was not with the Thais but only with the imperialists and neo-colonialists. Fidel Castro himself could hardly have done better.

In any Communist-led guerrilla war the political aims and the political campaign in support of them are as important as the military campaign itself. The movement must therefore put forward a programme which will gain the widest possible support and so must not go too far ahead of popular demands. Nationalism is stressed, Communism is rarely mentioned.

In this, the Malayan National Liberation League's eight-point programme is typical. This calls for genuine independence; a broad democratic system; an independent national economy; improvement of the people's standard of life; the building of a broad progressive culture; equality of all national groups; support for the national liberation struggle of North Kalimantan; and a peaceful, independent foreign policy.

It is the sort of programme around which—or behind which—Communist-inspired guerrilla wars are fought today. To Communists, the points in the programme are so many slogans for rallying the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Then, if things go well, this can be made to lead on without a break to the people's revolution and people's democracy—in short, a Communist régime.

On May 8, 1887, a group of Narodnik terrorists who had made an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Tsar Alexander III were hanged in the St Petersburg's Schlüsselburg Fortress. Amongst them was Alexander Ulianov, Lenin's

oldest brother. Lenin was at that time a schoolboy aged seventeen. His brother's death had a profound effect upon Lenin which remained with him throughout his life. Much as he admired his brother's heroism, he considered that the use of terrorist methods was a mistaken way of attempting to achieve political goals. Told of his brother's death he said: 'No, we shall not take this road. This is not the road to follow'.<sup>1</sup>

In opposing acts of individual terrorism Lenin was accepting what was already the established Marxist line. Karl Marx himself throughout much of his political life fought the anarchists and their leader Bakunin because he believed that their activities weakened the whole revolutionary movement by turning people's eyes away from the mass struggle which alone could bring them victory.

In his *History of Anarchism in Russia*, the Soviet Communist leader, E. Yaroslavsky, wrote that the anarchist-terrorists 'weakened the forces of the revolution and thereby played into the hands of the counter-revolution'.<sup>2</sup>

Of terrorism, *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*<sup>3</sup> had this to say: 'The method of combating Tsardom chosen by the Narodniks, namely by the assassination of individuals, by individual terrorism, was wrong and detrimental to the revolution. . . . They hampered the development of the revolutionary initiative and activity of the working class and the peasantry'. This message was hammered home by Communist Party tutors in ten thousand Marxist study classes right across the world.

In practice, organised terrorism was seen by Marxist-Leninists in the past as being permissible as a feature of the opening stages of an insurrection. The Communist Party of Malaya, for example, sought to terrorise rubber planters living on lonely estates as part of its campaign to drive them

<sup>1</sup> *Lenin*, biography prepared by Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, Moscow, Hutchinson, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Anarchism in Russia*, E. Yaroslavsky, Lawrence & Wishart, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)—A Short Course*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1939, pp. 10/11.

out and so to undermine the country's economy. But this was in what had already been defined as a revolutionary situation.

When a revolution was already under way, terrorist acts could be recognised as part of the authentic struggle. They were used in Yugoslavia and Greece and, for that matter, by the partisans in France and Italy at the end of World War II as a means of eliminating opponents. But this was an 'if-I-don't-kill-you, you-will-kill-me' situation. A significant new feature of the armed struggle is that acts of isolated terrorism are now permitted to Communists in admittedly non-revolutionary situations.

Once upon a time, the commencement of terrorist activities by Communists could be taken as proof that an all-out fight was imminent, a clear indication that the Communists had already fully and irrevocably committed themselves to immediate guerrilla warfare or to bloody revolution. Today acts of terrorism may be spaced out over the years. They are recognised as a legitimate if elementary method of conducting armed struggle to be pursued along with the constitutional struggle in suitable circumstances in Asia, Africa or Latin America.

Largely isolated as it still is in its base on the other side of the border, the Communist Party of Malaya has no parallel to the 'foco' which the Venezuelan Communist Party had inside Caracas University. Nonetheless, it has tried, and may be expected to continue to try, to use in this way the Nanyang University established and maintained by the Malayan and Singapore Chinese.

As is to be expected, the CPM, which still has to rebuild its organisation from the ground up inside the Malayan Peninsula itself, places its greatest hope upon youth. But because of the border-based leaders' physical isolation it is difficult for them to reach the point where their following is such that, in Hugo Barrios Klee's words, youth can become the principal force in the armed struggle. However, an imaginative method which the Party uses today to appeal to the sense of adventure and idealism in young people is the 'baptism of revolution'. Groups of young people cross the

border illegally, spend a day or two with the guerrillas in the 'liberated areas', are shown 'what life under Communism is like' and then return to their schools or jobs.

The Communist Party of Malaya knows perfectly well that nothing which could remotely be described as a genuine guerrilla war situation in the Malayan Peninsula is in sight. It simply does not have the bases on Malayan soil (useful though those over the border may be) nor has it sufficient followers. Nor do the 'objective conditions' exist. Communists, however, always go on hoping and preparing, firm in their belief that sooner or later the opportunity must come.

A particularly instructive example of a Communist organisation in an under-developed country which within ten years of its first nebulous beginnings has already launched itself into the opening stages of the armed struggle is to be found in Sarawak.

It is precisely the sort of place where no one in the past would have expected to find a serious Communist problem at all. Yet a well-organised Communist movement has been able to gain effective control of a majority of the country's progressive organisations even whilst they were still coming to birth, to involve a large number of young people in preparations for guerrilla warfare, and, in the process, to create a major security problem for government. The Sarawak Communist Organisation deserves a special detailed study of its own.



PART II

Sarawak Case Study



## To the Gun in Eight Years

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SINCE RELATIVELY few people have visited Sarawak, it may be as well to fill in some factual background so that the country's very instructive political story may be better understood. Sarawak consists of a narrow coastal strip, 450 miles long and varying in width from 40 miles at its narrowest to 120 miles at its widest, carved out of Borneo (now known as Kalimantan<sup>1</sup>). It is a land of jungle, high mountains and rivers. Providentially, many of the rivers are navigable for considerable distances and still provide Sarawak's principal means of transport. The principal towns are connected only by sea, river and air—the few roads in existence all tend to run out from coastal towns through a string of small villages into the jungle and there come to a stop.

In Sarawak's 48,250 square miles live three quarters of a million people. The largest group are Sea-Dayaks, or Ibans. Most Ibans live in longhouses in the jungle, as do also the much smaller group of Land Dayaks. The Ibans are best known to the outside world for the fact that as recently as 1948 some of them were still head-hunting. A small minority have become fully urbanised.

Other indigenous groups include the Kayans, Kenyahs and Kelabits, who generally live in inaccessible parts of the deep jungle where they pursue primitive forms of agriculture. There are also the Penans, a timid, nomadic group who wander the jungles, living on wild sago. They trade jungle products with their neighbours, at government-supervised trade meetings, for such things as cloth, salt and shotguns. All these indigenous groups are collectively known as Natives—which is not a derogatory word in Sarawak.

<sup>1</sup> Local nationalists and Communists call the three small States of Sarawak, Sabah and Brunei 'North Kalimantan' and the remainder of Borneo 'West Kalimantan'.

Grafted on to this complicated and confusing Native structure of Sarawak is a large community of rather more than a quarter of a million Chinese, who comprise something over one-third of the population and will soon be the largest group of all. Like other overseas Chinese communities, they are extremely hard-working. They control nearly all the country's retail trade. The main towns and the shopping areas of the rural villages are predominantly Chinese. The Chinese peasants' houses are scattered along the roads, on the edge of the jungle, but rarely if ever in the deep jungle itself.

The Chinese are the most efficient and successful agriculturalists, even though the amount of land they may acquire for their well-kept little pepper gardens is restricted by law. This is because the Native groups have traditionally pursued a form of agriculture which involves burning down a patch of jungle, cultivating it for a year or two, then moving on, and for this reason they have been permitted to have cultivation rights over most of the territory. As a consequence the rural Chinese are restricted in the main to strips of land reclaimed from the jungle's edge.

The country's third largest group are the Malays, who live on the coastal areas and along some of the rivers. Their ancestors came from Malaya and Sumatra.

Sarawak has a somewhat exotic colonial history, having had a succession of White Rajahs between 1841 and 1946. In 1888 it came under British protection. The last of the White Rajahs, Sir Charles Vyner Brooke, permitted the country to come under the British Crown in 1946 when it became the Colony of Sarawak. This colonial status continued only until 1963, in which year Sarawak gained its independence by becoming part of the new Federation of Malaysia. The period of rule by the White Rajahs was one of an increasingly benevolent autocracy. The Brookes tended to favour the Malays—who became their special champions—brought a paternalistic approach to the Natives (and therefore did little to assist their development) and left the Chinese, who might be regarded as an 'outsider' group, to go their own way.

Despite certain distinctive features (such as the rule of the White Rajahs), the history of Sarawak is, for practical pur-

poses, not untypical of other ex-colonial peoples. It is not unusual to find, in Africa for example, that one tribe, as opposed to another, was favoured by the colonial rulers, that large sections of the population in the hinterland progressed very little and that another 'outside' group (the Indians in East Africa are an obvious example) were left to establish themselves as the merchants and traders.

In fairness to the Chinese in Sarawak, however, one must acknowledge that their contribution to the country's development has been very considerable indeed. They may in the past have maintained family, cultural and religious ties with the land of their origin (as East Africa's Indians still tend to do) but they have succeeded in making themselves an essential, though not as yet fully integrated, section of the country's multi-racial population.

Like other countries in South-East Asia, Sarawak was occupied by the Japanese (from December 1941 till September 1945). This undermined the rule of the White Rajahs. The wave of nationalism and of consequent de-colonialisation which swept South-East Asia and the rest of the developing world ensured that British colonial rule would not last for long.

At the time when the British took over, 98 per cent of the Ibans were illiterate, so were 60 per cent of the Chinese, and the illiteracy rate of most of the other groups fell somewhere between the two. Before 1941 there was no representative government of any description in Sarawak. The first political party to be formed, the Sarawak United People's Party, was founded as recently as 1959.

It is against this improbable and, one might think, unpromising background that the clandestinely organised Sarawak Communist Organisation has had to operate. No country could be less like those which Marxists used to think would be susceptible to Communism than Sarawak. Yet in those matters which are important to the spread of Communism it is similar to other countries of the three developing continents where Communist organisation is either new or has still to be brought into existence.

To name some of these:

Problems of land, language and education.

The existence of a large but not yet fully integrated group (the Chinese) many of whom have still to feel that they have any real stake in the country.

A built-in inability to make full use of an important educated section of that group.

Only very recent experience of the practice of democracy and of democratic organisation.

An intellectually alert but scattered section of the younger rural population for whom life has become unbearably dull, monotonous and utterly without meaning.

An existing tradition of clandestine organisation.

An insistent demand for rapid development, in conditions which make this almost impossible.

Under-administered areas where the government was until recently known to the people only in the hostile shape of the tax collector and of the policeman.

Availability of a limited supply of arms.

Deep jungle and mountains, suitable for providing favourable conditions for guerrilla activity.

It was in 1951 that Teo Yong Jim, a school-teacher in a Chinese school in Kuching, left Sarawak for Singapore. Several very small, informal groups had for some time been meeting in Kuching to discuss the recent victory of the Communists in China and the ideas behind the revolution. Singapore had an active Communist Party and a 'front organisation' consisting mainly of students and intellectuals, called the 'Anti-British League'. On the nearby Malayan Peninsula, Communists were fighting with the gun.

Whilst he was in Singapore, Teo Yong Jim took the opportunity to learn what he could about the Malayan Communist organisation and about Communist activities in Singapore, and as a consequence he came in touch with the Anti-British League. The Communism he and his friends, most of whom were teachers in Chinese schools, had discussed in Sarawak had been a very theoretical thing. The Communism he found in Singapore could hardly have been more practical.

Members of the local Town Branch of the Communist Party were providing active working-class support for the guerrilla fighters on the peninsula, whilst the ABL was harnessing to the cause the excitement and interest created among students by the insurrection. The ideas which the little undercover groups in Sarawak had been discussing, Teo Yong Jim was told, threatened to make them 'right wing deviationists'. Teo Yong Jim, who still maintained contact with them, put them on the Party line.

In March 1954 he returned secretly, via Indonesian Borneo, to Kuching. There he found some difficulty in reconciling the conflicting views held by the different groups. He seems, however, to have been a good organiser and a man of considerable drive, and by the middle of that same year he had brought them together in the Sarawak Liberation League.

One of the main differences of opinion he had to overcome was between those groups who, in accord with the accepted Marxist-Leninist line, argued that the proletariat were the true revolutionary class, and others who believed that in the conditions obtaining in Sarawak it was the peasants, rather than the workers, who should be regarded in this way. Teo Yong Jim succeeded in convincing them that it was to the towns that they must look in particular rather than to the rural areas. Subsequent events have tended to show that it is from the towns that the small minority of leaders are likely to be drawn but it is in the villages that the majority of recruits can be made.

In practice, at that time, however, the new organisation, like the groups from which it had been formed, consisted mainly of school-teachers working in the urban areas. These made their principal field of activity the schools in which they were teaching. Almost immediately after Teo Yong Jim's return a student strike was organised among senior pupils, who succeeded in having the anti-Communist principal of one school removed. The founders of the Sarawak Liberation League, which was undoubtedly seen as the forerunner of a fully established Sarawak Communist party, could not have found a more fruitful field in which to work nor one which would yield them better or quicker opportunities to

spread Communism among decisive sections of the population.

Sarawak's young Chinese were hungry for education, immensely studious (you will find as many bookshops in Kuching, the little capital, as in many a big city of the West) and almost inevitably frustrated.

Their parents had scraped and sacrificed to build and maintain the schools so that some, at least, of their children might have education. It was understandable that they insisted that these schools should use the Chinese language as the teaching medium and, as has happened in so many South-East Asian countries, it was the history, geography and culture of China that were taught, not those of the country of their adoption. In most cases the older teachers were unqualified to teach anything else.

The younger, more forward-looking teachers were often unhappy about the situation. They recognised that this type of education tended to perpetuate the language barrier and the isolation of the Chinese group from the rest of the community. And the student who had worked hard and long for his exams all too frequently found that graduation still did not qualify him to do anything much more than find a living within the Chinese community itself. The best that the majority could hope for was that they would become assistants in Chinese sundries shops or clerks working with Chinese firms. It does not require a psychiatrist to explain why the deep resentments which many of them felt were against the society into which they had been born rather than against the form of education they had been given.

The government's educational policy, inherited from the earlier régime, was based upon the belief that there was no point in providing higher education in a society which could not use it. Even those few schools which used the English language as the teaching medium (and it was this, of course, which fitted young citizens to take what few jobs there were going in government service) were independent mission schools, not government schools. The bulk of that minority of youngsters who got any schooling at all received only primary education, and this ended at the age of twelve when

they were thrown on to the streets until they were old enough to go to work.

The Communists' job had been made all too easy for them. With exceptional though understandable speed, agitation spread through the schools. Perhaps more significant for the future, Communist organisation, in the form of classroom cells, was established within the schools themselves. In September 1954, just six months after his return from Singapore, Teo Yong Jim, who by now had the police on his tail, decided that things were getting too hot for him. He obtained permission from the Communist organisation to leave the country and made his way to China. There, before long, he went blind and it is there, so far as one can trace, that Teo Yong Jim's political story ends.

But Teo had done his work so well that by the end of 1954 there were nineteen Communist cells in Sarawak, most of them in the school where he had taught although there were a few in Sibu, capital of the Third Division. (For administrative purposes, Sarawak is divided into five Divisions which are numbered according to their proximity to the capital.)

All the cells were kept small, the majority were 'triangular', i.e. composed of just three members, and the entire membership totalled about 100. From the start the organisation was strongly security-conscious, only one member of each cell had contact with any other cell, and even such contact was confined to a single member of each cell. There were cells for teachers, cells for pupils, so that SLL was simultaneously operating at both levels within the schools.

Those joining had to take an oath of loyalty to the organisation; full membership was achieved only after a period of probationary and candidate membership. It was from the start known as 'the Organisation' and referred to only as such. This is not, of course, unusual in illegal or clandestine movements. For example, in Cyprus, Eoka was known to its members as the Organisation, too.<sup>1</sup> A peculiarly Sarawakian Chinese note was added, however, by 'Organisation' being reduced to the

<sup>1</sup> See *Guerrilla Warfare and Eoka's Struggle* by General Grivas, Longmans, Green & Co.

Roman 'O' in documents written (as almost all were) in Chinese characters.

In the early days of its life the Communist Organisation was not technically an illegal one, but operated on a clandestine basis from choice. This helped to screen it from the attentions of police and government, thus enabling it to spread and grow almost unobserved. It was so successful in this that even after it was well established and strong enough to manipulate other organisations many government officials still refused to believe in its existence. In addition, its clandestine character put it in the tradition of Chinese secret societies and considerably added to its romantic appeal to the young.

Into the Organisation's first classroom cells went some of the brightest and best of the Chinese community's young people. They were taught that they must combine theory with practice. In other words they must get away from the tendency towards being too 'theoretical' of which the first nebulous groups had been guilty. They must engage in group- and self-study—known in Chinese as *'hsueh-hsih'*—of Marxist-Leninist works. This could then be immediately translated into action in the form of agitation within the school and the recruitment and organisation of others and assisting them with their political studies.

As soon as a group became too large a new cell broke off and was formally established. And so the process went on. The majority of members were senior pupils and, as they neared school-leaving age, they were prepared and trained to take their Communism straight out into a society which for long had lain practically dormant and was just beginning to stir to life.

In 1956, less than two years after the first small formal Communist organisation was established, SLL members who had joined at school began to take their Communism with them into working life. Whatever their work, they were instructed to join the appropriate trade unions and there to gain positions of responsibility as quickly as possible. In a number of cases, because of their educational background and their willingness to use this for the cause instead of for

their own financial and social betterment, they stepped straight into full-time employment as trade union officials.

None of this was very difficult. The unions themselves were in their infancy and the majority of their members illiterate. Most of the unions had until then been poorly run, the officials were often incompetent and their headquarters little more than gambling houses. Sarawak's Communists soon learned, as have so many others in developing countries elsewhere, that it is relatively easy to get into top positions of unions whilst the unions are small and their members still inexperienced. Once there, it is not very difficult to remain in the leadership as the unions grow.

By the end of 1956 all the principal unions in Kuching, Sibü and Miri (the only three towns of any size) were under Communist control, with the exception of the Sarawak Wharf Labourers' Union and various small unions for government employees most of whom were Ibans. In these, Communist influence was present but not dominant.

Other SLL members when they left school, following 'the party line' of going wherever their influence would be greatest, went straight into jobs with the various Chinese-language newspapers. A number took Communism into the teacher-training colleges and then to the schools in which they subsequently taught. The Communists became the most active members of old boys' (alumni) associations and teachers' organisations. They stood for positions on boards of management in Chinese schools and, since there is usually not much competition for voluntary work of this sort, stepped straight into them. Others took jobs as paid—or, rather, underpaid—school secretaries.

One Kuching group made itself responsible for working among rural school-teachers. This was the one which from the start of the movement had stressed that the peasantry were the decisive class. Through the rural teachers the message and the organisation were spread to the little village schools and, as a consequence, in 1958, the nucleus of a Communist-led peasant movement emerged which was to become their biggest mass organisation.

Sometime earlier, probably in 1956, the Sarawak Advanced

Youths Association (SAYA) was created. The SLL leaders, it seems, decided that the Sarawak Liberation League was too political in name and make-up for it to be able to bring in the politically uninitiated in any large numbers. Experience had already shown that the majority of those likely to be attracted would be young. But Sarawak's youth, and particularly the Chinese youth, were anxious to be regarded as being in the vanguard of thought and action. The Sarawak Advanced Youths Association should therefore be just the thing to bring them in.

The leaders proved right. SAYA, like SLL, was based on a cell system. It quickly established itself in the schools even more successfully than the parent organisation had done. More than this, it was the very place for those who would in the past have been probationary and candidate members of SLL itself. So no matter whether they were senior school boys or girls, young teachers, trade unionists, shop assistants, clerks or peasants, if they were prepared to take their Marxist education and training seriously and accept the Communist discipline, there was a place for them in SAYA.

The Sarawak Liberation League remained in existence, becoming the senior body. Senior not just in years but in authority too. Henceforth the majority who came towards Communism were put, after a suitable period of preparation, into SAYA and remained there. A minority went on to become SLL members—an élite within an élite. The Sarawak Communist Organisation now had a growing, firmly-established 'youth base'. A tightly organised leadership consisting of SLL members already tested in action, experienced in industrial and political work, held the movement together, gave it overall direction, decided matters of strategy and tactics, organised its day-to-day work. Communists working in the 'open' organisations, such as the trade unions, were put into SAYA, which was made responsible for this work although, like the other organisations brought into existence by SLL, it was answerable to the parent body.

Sarawak's first political party came into existence in 1959. By now the Communists already had control of the schools, had a powerful influence in a majority of the unions and a

promising peasant organisation. They were themselves considering creating a political party just at the time when a group of non-Communists, headed by Mr Ong Kee Hui, a leader of the Chinese business community, decided to found the Sarawak United People's Party, a progressive, mildly socialist body. Since the SLL was a secret, and very secretive, clandestine organisation, no one outside its own leadership knew who were its members, still less its total strength.

It was all too easy: SLL moved straight into the Sarawak United People's Party within weeks of the latter's birth and immediately provided it with its most enthusiastic, dedicated, politically-conscious activists. They were young, keen and prepared to work for it from morning till night in the towns, in the villages, even in the most remote rural areas.

When they launched their party, the founders of SUPP had no idea of the situation which existed. They were not alone in this. At the end of World War II no security organisation existed in Sarawak. In the first years after World War II there were just three Special Branch officers. 'In 1957, when I came here', one Special Branch officer told me, 'there were only five of us.' This in a country with an area of approximately 48,250 square miles, and a population the majority of whom live in some of the densest jungle in the world. Add to this the fact that the Communists were exclusively Chinese, carrying on their activities and conducting their business like that of a secret society, in a language which the rest of the population, including the Special Branch officers themselves, did not understand, and it will be appreciated that those five men must or should have been very busy people.

It was not until August 11, 1960, that it became possible for the government to have any real idea of the extent and seriousness of the growth of Communism in Sarawak. On that day, police found 1,062 documents stored in some old drums. They were the archives of the Sarawak Liberation League for 1954—a single year. Then, thirteen months later, on September 17, 1961, another 380 documents were seized in a house in a kampong in Sibü. These latter related exclusively to Communist penetration and control of trade

union organisations in the Third Division. Quite suddenly this absurdly small security organisation found itself in possession of a vast mass of material every bit of which had to be translated even before it could be read. Documents were sent off in all directions outside Sarawak for translation and analysis. Eighteen months later they were still coming back from being 'processed'. By then the unfortunate Special Branch knew that they had got an almost impossibly big problem on their hands.

Gradually it was realised that the Communists, who had been dismissed by many as 'a lot of little boys playing politics', had gained a significant, and in many cases the dominant, influence over labour, the peasantry, students. They were established in the Chinese cultural bodies and in the traditional 'clan' organisations, and they were making their first serious attempts to get their message over to members of other races, particularly to the decisively important Ibans.

Right from the start, the Organisation, in all its various manifestations, had been extraordinarily active in producing clandestine publications. From 1954 until 1959 *Democracy* circulated regularly, though illegally, for the use of SLL members. After that came *National Independence* produced every six to eight weeks. This made no secret of its Communism, its main purpose being the instruction of members in Marxist theory. There were *Study News* and *Masses News* for members in the Third Division, *Sentinel* for those in the Fourth Division.

Literature had also been arriving through the open mail from Communist China. Some attempts had been made to prevent it from coming in, but the inadequately staffed security organisation was quite incapable of stemming such a flood. Nor, for that matter, is it likely that any security organisation can ever be entirely successful in excluding all undesirable literature from abroad. Secret libraries of home and foreign produced literature were built up by the Organisation and concealed in the jungle. Young Communists, sometimes teachers and pupils together, worked at duplicating-machines in school buildings during out-of-school

hours. The Communist Organisation had all the ideological training material needed and used it well.

The basic unit of the Organisation and the key to its strength was the small cell-cum-study group. In this it was enormously assisted by the passion for study which is a characteristic of Sarawak youth, particularly the Sarawak Chinese, as it is of young people in many a developing country today. Chinese Communists everywhere talk of *hsueh-hsih*. This is the traditional practice of self-study and mutual help in study. It has the most honourable and respectable of origins, since it was encouraged by Confucius himself, and until recent years had no sinister connotations. 'We must *hsueh-hsih*' runs like a single thread through all the many publications of the Sarawak Communist Organisation. This has been a feature of the Organisation's life throughout the whole of its brief but instructive existence.

The practice of *hsueh-hsih* helps to explain why it was that the Communist Organisation was able to spread so quickly and effectively. Because of it, the Communists knew where they were going, what they were doing and why they were doing it. Moreover, in hundreds of small study classes they had been told over and over again that Communists must be leaders, that on the basis of an understanding of Marxism-Leninism and the teachings of Mao Tse-tung they had a right and a responsibility to leadership. In a politically unsophisticated society they were equipped to analyse situations in the light of the doctrines they had accepted, and were taught to think 'two or three jumps ahead of everyone else'.

The Sarawak local leaders and still more the rank and file may not have been great politicians nor even great Marxists judged by the standards of a more politically mature country. But the fact is that they were operating in a society in which practically no one else had any political experience and in which the overwhelming majority of the population had until very recently quite literally done no political thinking. The opportunity was there, and they took it.

This then was the situation into which the Sarawak United

People's Party was born. Its origins could hardly have been less sinister, nor less auspicious either.

When the first executive committee of SUPP was formed there was, in Ong Kee Hui's words, 'not one bad boy on it'. Crypto-Communists came flooding into its ranks, particularly through the trade unions which associated themselves with the new party. Soon the SLL leaders were manoeuvring dedicated members of SAYA into key positions at every level of the party. They worked as no one else was prepared to, and in the process were able to bring the party's organisation in large areas under their control.

The SUPP leaders, who in common with the rest of the population had no idea of the strength of the Communists, were congratulating themselves on the number of keen young activists they had been able to attract to their cause.

It was indeed their intention that SUPP should be a progressive party, socialistic—as so many parties in under-developed countries are—and one which would express the nationalist sentiments which were growing amongst the population. The Communists who had joined the party, however, had within months of its formation so strengthened their position that they could influence its national policies. They dragged it increasingly to the Left. Some of the party's most successful branches were built up in remote areas which had practically no communication with Kuching at all—conditions in Sarawak were such that even to travel a dozen miles down the road out of the capital was to enter a different world almost untouched by government authority.

Such areas were almost totally lacking in any sort of recreational or cultural facilities: monotony was the greatest enemy. SUPP brought new life and excitement to them and so it spread with extraordinary rapidity. It met a very real need. The local activists, most of them dedicated and very tough young Communists (as the leaders were soon to learn) organised basketball tournaments, dancing classes, singing groups, concerts and picnics. They moved into a vacuum. Those who came into the party, attracted by such activities, were before long usually drawn into secret Marxist-Leninist study groups, taught the importance of *hsueh-hsih* and then,

in all too many cases, enrolled into SAYA. But they still remained within SUPP where, they were told, their most useful work might be done.

The Communists had acquired a near-perfect political 'open front'. Where previously all their recruitment had had to be by means of clandestine activities, now they could openly go about their business working for a lawfully constituted party yet all the time working too for the Communist cause.

Members of the Sarawak Advanced Youths Association who were active in the countryside were everywhere reporting a favourable response to their propaganda from the rural Chinese. Some of the founders of the movement back in 1954 had believed the peasants to be a conservative class. This was probably true of the little pepper farmers of that time. But half a dozen years later their sons, who had received some education in the Chinese schools, had a very different outlook. In many cases the new generation were determined not to be small farmers if they could help it and were consciously in revolt against the backwardness and monotony of rural life.

An attempt by the Communists was made in 1961 to form a legal farmers' association. Application was made to the government, who, already in possession of documentary evidence that the initiative had come from the Communists, refused registration.

The following year the Communists went ahead with a clandestine Sarawak Farmers' Association. Those who joined it, all of them Chinese peasants, knew that they were being enrolled in an illegal organisation. Recruitment was rapid. In one area of the Third Division, close to Sibu, 1,000 members were enrolled in a month. What strikes the outside observer is how little the SFA had to offer and yet how big was the response. Nothing could indicate more clearly how great was the need which had remained unmet for so long in the lives of the rural Chinese. However, in practice, the SFA was increasingly drawn into activity associated with preparations for armed struggle. The SFA was soon to become the Communists' largest mass organisation. Here, it seemed, was the

'support base' of the future which all guerrillas must have if they are to survive.

In the middle of 1961 the creation of Malaysia was put forward as a serious political project. It had been in the air for years. Sarawak, Sabah, the little oil-rich protectorate of Brunei (surrounded on three sides by Sarawak) and Singapore would be brought into federation with the existing Federation of Malaya. This would, among other things, provide a means by which Sarawak would become independent of British rule. The Communists, however, denounced Malaysia as a neo-colonialist plot. It followed automatically that this view was advanced by large numbers of SUPP's activists and by all those branches and committees which the Communists had under their control.

In December 1962, a rising occurred in Brunei that played an important part in preventing the protectorate from coming into Malaysia. It also proved to be a milestone in the life of the Sarawak Communist Organisation.

Rebellion can be contagious. An insurrection or a *coup* in one developing country seems invariably to be followed by trouble in neighbouring territories. This thought was in the minds of both the security authorities and the Communists in Sarawak when the Brunei revolt occurred.

The rising was not Communist-organised. Indeed it is doubtful if there was a single Communist in the State. The rebels were Moslem Malays. The revolt spilt over into surrounding Sarawak territory where there were oil and other installations linked with Brunei. In response to a call for help, Sarawak's police and troops were rushed to the trouble areas. Kuching and most other parts of the country were momentarily left defenceless and exposed. This brought a rush of revolutionary blood to the head of the SCO. A combination of circumstances led to the Organisation's deciding to go over to the armed struggle almost at once.

The Sarawak Liberation League, parent body of the entire Communist Organisation, had, as we have seen, been brought into existence when the insurrection in Malaya was at its height. The first error of which it was ever accused was 'right

deviationism', but since then it had lived with the thought that sooner or later the gun would have to be used if its aims were to be achieved. Now here were guns being used. By others.

Having rebellion so near at hand, in one of the States which were expected to go into the new enlarged 'neo-colonialist' federation, had the effect of exciting the Communists into talking about the need for armed struggle and quickly brought a demand from some members that this should be started immediately.

The government, declaring a State of Emergency throughout Sarawak, took action against the Communist Organisation. Preventive detention was introduced. A number of Communists and suspected Communists, most of whom had been engaged in the Organisation's 'open front' work, were detained and before long were in a newly-established detention camp.

Ten days after the start of the unsuccessful Brunei revolt the SCO leadership issued a directive committing members to the task of preparing for armed struggle. The directive noted that some people, when the revolt began, proposed that the movement in Sarawak should 'co-ordinate with this struggle'. The Organisation considers, it said, that 'objective conditions for starting armed struggle do exist because (a) there is a conscious appreciation of the Brunei struggle by the broad masses of the people and (b) there is a certain demand made for armed struggle here'. It would, therefore, be possible to start organising in preparation for it. However, subjectively (and more realistically) 'our efforts are still insufficient because the broad masses do not think of themselves as going into armed struggle and they have had no practical preparation in the use of arms'. The British imperialists would, by means of military suppression, ensure that 'such action' could not last long, and 'even if victory were gained, the fruits of victory could not for long be retained. The revolutionary régime could not be consolidated'.

The Organisation therefore considered that, although there were many advantageous conditions favouring armed struggle, to launch into it now would inevitably lead to more arrests

causing 'serious losses to the revolutionary forces—particularly the directing forces'. The first task must for the moment be to safeguard the existing forces. 'When the decision is taken, i.e. when all the conditions are right for it, we will resolutely lead the masses to rise and struggle. For this we must have considerable preparatory work.'

Meanwhile, constitutional struggle should continue hand in hand with preparations for armed struggle. These preparations would include propaganda to familiarise people, particularly the peasants, with the idea of armed struggle. There would be military training 'so that we can go into immediate action when circumstances are right'.

Thus, only eight and a half years separated the day when one little Chinese school-teacher, Teo Yong Jim, returned home to an undeveloped country intent on turning a small number of theorists into a disciplined Communist organisation from the day when that organisation felt strong enough to send its members into active preparation for the fight with the gun. The movement had travelled a long way in a short time.

## Preparing for Revolt

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AS SO OFTEN happens, the Communists' progress towards armed struggle was prompted by what they themselves called the objective conditions. It was a reaction to circumstances not of their making and, in part at least, a response to emergency security measures taken by government.

The round of arrests, the establishment of a detention camp in a country which in the past had been exceptionally peaceful and law-abiding, and the introduction of restrictive legislation, led to a number of young Chinese sympathisers (though not, in the main, members of the Organisation itself) fleeing over the border into Indonesian territory. Just a handful of members seems to have been permitted to join that first batch of border-crossers in order to maintain contact with them. Hundreds of members of SAYA and the other satellite bodies, seeking to avoid arrest and to maintain their organisation, either disappeared into Sarawak's deep jungle or were hidden by members of the SFA living in remote spots.

The government was also reacting to 'objective conditions'. It called in all shotguns, as a reaction to the Communists' declared aim of moving over to the armed struggle. In this tropical, underdeveloped land where administration had been minimal and where rural people traditionally augmented their diet by hunting and some, particularly the Natives, actually lived by hunting, it was normal for there to be shotguns in practically every peasant home.

If there was to be armed struggle, those guns would clearly be useful to the guerrillas all of whom, on present showing, would be Chinese. The government therefore called for a general registration of arms but demanded that the Chinese farmers should turn in their guns—the Ibans and others could keep theirs.

This made good sense as a security measure, indeed it was

almost inescapable in the circumstances. Security measures, however, can solve immediate problems but then have political repercussions which in turn create new problems for the security authorities. Since all those who so far had joined the SFA were rural Chinese, most people would have seen it as an act of lunacy on the government's part if they had been left in possession of their guns. Yet in emergency situations the innocent tend to suffer along with wrong-doers.

Not all the rural Chinese were Communists, even though there were by now areas where the vast majority had been persuaded or pressurised into joining the SFA. The singling out of the Chinese for special treatment looked to the Chinese rural community like an act of blatant discrimination. Life for many of the hard-working Chinese pepper growers would now be more difficult. But of greater psychological importance was the fact that they, who had for so long been the 'outsiders' in the Sarawakian community, were once more being picked upon by government, singled out from the rest for special and harsher treatment.

The decision to go over to the armed struggle was the result of circumstances which were not of the Communists' making or choosing. This is, in any case, the way in which the armed struggle most frequently begins. The Vietnamese Communists would claim that the first phase of their revolutionary war was forced upon them by the French colonialists, the second by the activities of President Diem's government and the Americans. Luis Taruc insists that he took his Huks back into the mountains in 1946 and again in 1948 only because the government of the day by its repressive measures left him no alternative to armed insurrection. Every Latin American Communist party which has gone over to the armed struggle has used a similar argument.

The nature of the SCO's response to this particular situation owes its origins, of course, to the current Communist belief that sooner or later Communists in developing countries may in any case be obliged to take to the gun. This had for years been a part of their thinking. It was the line which had been pumped over Radio Peking night after night in broadcasts which the Communists had industriously tape-recorded,

transcribed, then circulated in their clandestine publications. The inevitability of violence had been the theme of the books by Mao and Che Guevara in which they were steeped. The concept of armed struggle was thus part of the thinking of everyone who had come under the influence of the Sarawak Communist Organisation. They had played with revolutionary words and ideas, to which they became committed. Now the showdown had come, forced upon them by events.

It is not our purpose to retrace or to tell again in detail here the story of Indonesia's confrontation of Malaysia. Our purpose is to take a look at the response of a Communist organisation, poised ready for the armed struggle, in a backward country, to situations which may arise in other countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

When Indonesia's military confrontation of Malaysia, aimed at crushing the new federation, began in April 1963 the Sarawak Communist Organisation had to decide what would be its policy now that its own country was under attack from a neighbouring State. This is a situation which could occur in countries in any one of the three developing continents at almost any time.

The Sarawak Communists' response was the traditional Marxist-Leninist one: to work for the defeat of their own country in the hope that this might ultimately lead to a victory for Communism. War is the revolutionary's opportunity and this one was too good to be missed. Like the leaders of the Communist Party of Malaya, on the Thai border, they called upon the people to 'fight shoulder to shoulder' with the Indonesians. Many of their own members interpreted this in practical terms and went, with the Organisation's encouragement, to be trained by the enemy in the use of arms. The SCO's particular concern was of course to use the conflict by learning the art of guerrilla warfare.

Something more than 1,000 Sarawakian Chinese crossed the border. Not all were given training, still less saw any action. But the majority received some valuable instruction in guerrilla warfare and a good proportion got some practical experience in the use of arms and of jungle fighting generally.

As it worked out, there were no really large-scale operations at any time during the entire period of confrontation, and therefore not very many Communists, or any other forces for that matter, actually engaged in military operations at any given moment.

But the Organisation had its 'baptism of fire'. So now when it spoke of armed struggle it was talking about something it had experienced. It knew what was involved. Significantly, when confrontation ended, it still went on talking about this and preparing for it too.

It is difficult to estimate whether on balance the Organisation lost or gained by the fact that it associated with a country involved in conflict with its own. The support for China of the pro-Peking faction in the Communist Party of India when the Chinese attacked India had visible consequences. At the time, it split the party organisationally, as between those who, aided perhaps by some degree of opportunism, found they could make out a Marxist-Leninist case for supporting Nehru's 'neutralist' India, and the others who put China, a Communist country, before their own and publicly demonstrated that they had a prior allegiance to it.

The angry little landless peasants and squatters of Kerala, however, seemed to care little about the rights and wrongs of Delhi versus Peking. They saw the Communists as their champions in the struggle for land and for justice, and were prepared to continue to support them regardless of matters so far beyond their range of interest. The Peking faction's support for China did not deter them from voting for it in the elections of February 1967. The net result, one might say, was that some sympathy was lost among the intelligentsia and the party was temporarily weakened organisationally but the attitude of the poor in search of someone who would redress their wrongs and improve their lot was not materially affected.

The Sarawak Communist Organisation's support for Indonesia during the confrontation period led to no disagreement within the Communist ranks. The Organisation was able to identify itself with a country which attacked its own and to

emerge from the experience having sustained no organisational split and without having created significant numbers of new militant anti-Communists in the process either. And if the local Chinese community, from which its members were drawn, felt any misgivings on the question—as it may well have done—it did not show them. Years of semi-isolation from the rest of the population had taught it to keep its own counsel. Since it was not a fully integrated group it could perhaps not be expected to feel any very deep sense of outrage.

There was one way in which Indonesia's military confrontation of Malaysia, with its direct threat to Sarawak, hit the Communist Organisation very hard indeed. The Brunei revolt led, as we have seen, to the Organisation's decision to prepare itself physically and psychologically for the armed struggle. It also brought to Sarawak additional numbers of militarised police from Malaya, considerable numbers of the Malaysian armed forces and even more British and other Commonwealth troops. Before confrontation was over they were there in their tens of thousands.

In theory, at least, it might have been possible for the Communists to stage an insurrection just when power was changing hands in the moment of their country's maximum weakness, when Britain and her forces were pulling out and when Sarawak had still to be fully integrated into Malaysia.

The coming of confrontation meant that this became a moment of strength instead, because troops were thicker on the ground than ever before. Moreover, these were supported by helicopters and other aircraft and all the paraphernalia normally used by a Great Power involved in a jungle war. There could be no question, in these circumstances, of the Communist Organisation, as such, going over to any active form of independent armed struggle.

Indonesia's quarrel with Malaysia brought with it an unexpected opportunity to learn the art of guerrilla warfare, but, paradoxically, it made the Communists' own armed struggle impossible for the moment. It would have been as though the Communists of South Vietnam had decided to start the

second phase of their armed struggle when the country was already full of American forces and equipment. Communists are most likely to go over to the use of the gun in developing countries today when outside help for their opponents is far away and inaccessible. Conversely, the presence of large numbers of troops in their country at the time when they intend going over to armed struggle obviously must inhibit them and, in Sarawak, actually prevented them from starting their insurrection.

Confrontation ended in circumstances which the Sarawak Communist leaders would, right up to the last moment, have regarded as almost impossible. The huge Indonesian Communist Party was the most powerful driving force behind confrontation, and so Sarawak's Communist leaders, like the PKI leaders themselves, believed that its strength and influence would grow as confrontation proceeded. Indonesia would actually become Communist whilst they were pushing Sarawak in the same direction. They would thus have a powerful Communist neighbour and ally by the time they came to the last decisive struggle for power.

Then the impossible happened. There came the abortive *coup*, and terrible retribution fell upon the PKI. A large number of its leaders, including its brilliant secretary-general, D. N. Aidit, were killed, its members at every level of the organisation were massacred in their hundreds of thousands. Almost overnight it changed from being a party which most of the world believed to be heading almost inevitably towards power, to one stricken and decimated. And, from being a country moving inexorably, as it had seemed, towards Communism, Indonesia became militantly anti-Communist instead.

It speaks volumes for the resilience of the Organisation and the extraordinarily high morale of its members that, although they were momentarily shaken by what had occurred (as we shall see when we come to examine their own documents), it hardly for one moment led to their thinking of abandoning the armed struggle to which they had committed themselves.

The fall of the PKI was quickly followed by the ending of confrontation. A minority of the Communists began to make their way back across the border and to go into hiding in Sarawak itself. Most, probably between 700 and 800, applied themselves to trying to maintain, on the Organisation's orders, their 'safe base' in Indonesian Borneo. More than half of these were armed. A strong minority were women. All were Chinese. Now no longer attached to the Indonesian military machine, disowned by the Indonesian government, they hoped nonetheless to be able to regroup their forces on Indonesian territory, and then, at a time of their own choosing, filter back into the jungles of Sarawak. Since they were left high and dry by the ending of confrontation they had to set about re-establishing themselves as a separate force, with a separate identity. They proceeded to deal with this in the approved, up-to-date Communist fashion.

For Communist guerrillas, political campaigns and goals are inextricably combined with military ones. Nationalism would provide the broad political appeal the SCO needed. Appealing to memories of the past (which mean more to the Malays and Natives than to the Chinese of immigrant stock) the SCO called for a Kalimantan Utara—Unitary State of North Kalimantan. The guerrilla units formed from the ranks of the border-crossers now called themselves, among other things, the People's Liberation Army of the Unitary State of North Kalimantan. It was nationalism, above all else, which had first given the Vietminh and later the Vietcong their greatest basis for support among the people of Vietnam; Sarawak's Communists hoped that their goal of a unitary state of North Borneo might in due course invest their cause with a similar 'nationalist' appeal to the other races in Sarawak, which might then extend to those of the neighbouring States.

They were acutely aware that throughout the life of their organisation its purely Chinese composition had been its greatest weakness. In Malaya this had proved fatal. It could have equally disastrous consequences in Sarawak where the overwhelming majority of the non-Chinese live in precisely those areas—the rural areas—where guerrilla wars are fought.

To go over to the full armed struggle, to take to the jungle, without the support of the Iban jungle-dwellers would be to court not only defeat but also a civil war which could lead to the massacre of the Chinese. Making a unitary State of North Kalimantan one of their principal declared aims would, they hoped, help to bring them that support. Radio Peking has given the aim its blessing, so it would appear to be the Peking 'line'.

A Sarawak Communist, Wen Ming Chuen, who some years ago was deported to China and who, it is supposed, had some years of contact with the Chinese Communist Party, was reported by the Peking press to have joined the Sarawak Communists on Indonesian soil. At a meeting of journalists called by the Afro-Asian Solidarity conference he was reported by Radio Peking as saying: 'Our armed struggle in North Kalimantan gives us no choice but to follow Mao's road of a people's war; to build up our army on Mao's principle of giving prominence to politics during its formation and to follow his guerrilla strategy which depends upon work among the masses and regional military formations'.

To the 'safe base' also went, at some time towards the end of confrontation or soon after it had stopped, a majority of the Organisation's leaders, who were then able to direct the work far away from the activities of Special Branch, the police and the Malaysian armed forces.

This arrangement provided the leadership with a greater degree of security. After all, if Lenin directed the Bolshevik Party from far-away Switzerland, why should not the leaders of the Sarawak Communist Organisation direct theirs from just across the border of a neighbouring territory? But there is this difference: Lenin returned to Russia when things were building up towards the revolutionary situation. According to the Sarawak Communists' own analysis, the 'guerrilla war' or 'armed struggle' situation had already arrived. It became essential, therefore, that there should be quick and continuous contact with members operating in Sarawak.

By early 1967 these included an estimated couple of thousand trained SAYA members and the best part of 20,000 members of the SFA. Many of these latter had rela-

tively little political background and training, although everything was being done to raise their political understanding as quickly as possible. A dozen or more Communist periodicals, all produced illegally and in conditions of what must have been very great difficulty, were being published and distributed regularly. All this work required constant guidance and supervision.

In such circumstances, the courier becomes almost as important as the member of the Political Bureau. Without a living contact between leadership and led, little progress can be made. To the anti-insurgency forces, therefore, the courier becomes a target of prime importance. And Sarawak's couriers must operate in extremely difficult country where, unless one follows the established trails (which tend to be under surveillance) made by smugglers and illegal barter traders, it is possible to spend a whole day hacking one's way through just a few hundred yards of jungle.

Communist leaders of the Hukbalahap, in the Philippines, with whom I have lived, maintain that one of the milestones to their own defeat was the severance of contact between themselves and the rest of the movement, by the security authorities. Magsaysay's successful campaign against the couriers undoubtedly had profound repercussions within the Hukbalahap and upon the whole course of the rebellion. Driven into the deepest of deep jungle, the Huk leaders found that an urgent directive, possibly calling for an immediate switch in tactics or even in strategy, might take months to reach those for whom it was intended. Lack of contact in the end brought calamity upon the guerrilla army.

To quote but one example: a point was reached when both sides were increasingly guilty of terror and atrocities. When Magsaysay became Defence Minister, he ordered that these, so far as his forces were concerned, should cease at once. Anyone found guilty of an atrocity would be punished with the utmost severity. Predictably, atrocities by members of the armed forces stopped. The Huk leaders realised what Magsaysay had done and desperately tried to get a similar order out to their forces, backed with the threat of equally extreme penalties. But, because the courier system had broken down,

it was months before these orders reached large numbers of the Huks, during which time the rebels' atrocities continued whilst those by government forces had already stopped. The government propaganda and psychological warfare experts were able to make good use of that period, swinging rural public opinion against the Huks and over to the side of government. Disadvantages resulting from remote control of the armed struggle can be very real indeed.

Realistically, a great deal of SCO activity, of SAYA and of SFA in particular, was soon concentrated on the attempt to establish bases to which the leaders could later move, within Sarawak itself. This served a double purpose. Firstly, and obviously, they would be ready when the leaders either chose or were obliged to move their headquarters to Sarawak. Secondly, and less obviously, though equally necessary, it was essential to morale that the mass membership should be engaged in what may be described as 'armed struggle activity'. This does not necessarily involve the use of guns. A party which has committed itself to the armed struggle must keep its members busy on activities which are related to that form of struggle, otherwise their interest will flag and in due course they will drift away.

Any revolutionary organisation has a problem in holding its membership together and maintaining their enthusiasm during periods when no revolution is in sight. This is true even of Communist parties in the West, which today must operate in an affluent society and in a part of the world where victory for Communism must necessarily seem remote. The problem is far greater for a Communist party in a developing country, particularly when it has declared itself to be ready to go over to active armed struggle. Thus preparations for guerrilla warfare serve the double purpose of actually preparing the way for the fight with the gun while also maintaining the morale and enthusiasm of members.

The Sarawak Communist Organisation devised a variety of means by which it could achieve both these ends. The most spectacular was the construction of underground hides, fox-holes and dugouts. Copying the Vietcong, the Sarawak Com-

munists were switched on to digging large numbers of hides and shelters in the deep jungle, which they did with impressive patience and industry.

One such hide, which was discovered by the security authorities, was approached by 120-ft-long tunnels. In the huge, central chamber were food and medicines—everything needed by guerrilla fighters returning from Indonesia or by guerrillas in action on Sarawak soil. The tunnels and the chamber were alike walled with tree trunks. The central chamber had been dug first, then the two tunnels, which went outward through the crown of the hill in opposite directions. Soil and vegetation had been carefully replaced. The jungle in any case quickly took over and the whole thing was soon superbly camouflaged by nature. So effectively was it hidden that even men who had been engaged on its construction had difficulty in finding it shortly after its completion. One of the leaders of Malaysia's armed forces told me that he would have been proud if his own men had constructed it.

Yet those responsible were almost all drawn from the ranks of the SFA, young Chinese pepper farmers and others from the little villages and rural homesteads. They had, it is believed, in this case got details of how to excavate and build such shelters from an illustrated article in the *Reader's Digest* which described the activities of the Vietcong. Twelve months of work had gone into the construction of this particular 'hide', and a night and day system of lookouts, usually either young boys or old men stationed on surrounding hills, had been used.

Some thirty such 'hides' were discovered in the months following the Organisation's switch to this type of activity. It is reasonable to assume that for every one discovered a very large number of others remained undiscovered.

The collecting of food supplies, necessitating also constant replacement and replenishment of stocks and of drugs, bandages and other medical supplies, involved large numbers of members in forms of activity calculated to maintain their sense of being involved in preparations for armed struggle. So, too, did the collection of funds. From SFA units all over the country came many thousands of dollars, the result of

regular monthly collections, often from the entire rural Chinese community throughout a given area. Some of this quite extraordinary amount of cash was given voluntarily by the peasants, some under pressure.

One SFA treasurer, a woman, had nearly 14,000 dollars<sup>1</sup> in her possession at the time of her arrest. Her accounts showed that her particular unit had in recent months passed nearly 40,000 dollars to the safe base across the border.

There, the leaders had no difficulty in converting the cash into arms, drugs, food and other supplies, to be held in readiness for the day when they would be needed for the all-out armed struggle. This is an area where smugglers abound—I have watched them coming over the established trails across the border only forty miles or so from Kuching—and where the majority of people in any case carry arms.

Like the Communist Party of Malaya, and the Malayan National Liberation Army in their base on the Thai-Malaysian border, the SCO were buying drugs in quantities far in excess of what they were likely to require for their own use. It is possible that they were hoping to be able to win the support of some of the Native population by providing them with some limited form of medical service.

The mass basis for the Communist Party of Indo-China was created by means of fund-raising activities in the villages of Vietnam in the late 1920s by what Dennis J. Duncanson<sup>2</sup> calls 'clandestine cells of collectors of subscriptions for un-revealed purposes'. Of those days Mr Duncanson writes that many recruits had been made in the villages before it occurred to anyone that active service might one day be required of them. He refers to the practice of committing young people to joining in some small unlawful act 'even if no worse than collecting funds or distributing leaflets' and of committing them more deeply and 'retaining them primarily by a studied combination of secrecy and fear'.

The sale of clandestine publications, the collection of

<sup>1</sup> There are approximately eight dollars to the £1 sterling, just under three to the U.S. dollar.

<sup>2</sup> *How—and Why—the Viet Cong Holds Out, Encounter*, December 1966.

funds, the purchase of drugs and food supplies and of barterable goods such as watches, pens and gold, are all seen as forms of armed-struggle activity. More obviously falling into this same category are the self-defence groups and armed work-groups, which the SCO began to form in 1966 and which are similar to those described by General Giap as having been organised by the Vietminh in Indo-China.

Sarawak's armed work-groups are responsible for the digging of hides and the construction of secret store places. Members are drawn from among the most committed Communists. Lacking arms, the self-defence groups drill with dummy rifles, learn something of the use of weapons and spend much time in Chinese forms of 'body toughening' and other activities aimed at improving their physical fitness in readiness for the hard life in the jungle when the day comes.

For the entire membership of all the various organisations which go to make up the movement, there is also constant 'psychological preparation' for the armed struggle. This takes the form of discussion of what is involved in guerrilla warfare, and of continuous organisation of study courses at which the writings of Mao Tse-tung and Che Guevara are used as textbooks. The Organisation has also produced a handy little pocket-size illustrated digest of Guevara's manual of guerrilla warfare. With its simple drawings of rifles and hand grenades it could hardly be more elementary. But this is precisely what is required by those for whom it has been prepared. It gives them some knowledge of armed struggle but, equally important, it sets ordinary SCO members thinking in terms of their own coming involvement in jungle war and urban terrorism. It thus contributes to the creation of a 'guerrilla war mentality'.

If interest and morale are to be maintained, the Organisation must demonstrate from time to time that all the talk of armed struggle and the preparatory work for it are real, that those engaged in it are not being kept busy for the sake of being busy and that they are not just 'playing soldiers'. This is where the use of acts of terrorism—once forbidden to Communists—comes in. The SCO has shown itself prepared

to use terror when it deems fit. On a couple of carefully-chosen occasions hand grenades have been thrown, in public places, in Kuching. But on June 27, 1965, a series of incidents occurred which made the armed struggle come vividly to life for every member.

Sarawak's longest and most important road is the one from Kuching to Simanggang. For much of the way it runs very close to the Indonesian border. The location of villages and scattered roadside communities is identified by their proximity to the nearest milestone. By the mid-1960s Communist influence was dominant among the Chinese section of the people living right down this road from around the 10th to the 30th Milestones. The Communist presence was so all-pervasive that the Organisation literally controlled the life of the people at every turn. In most respects it was the Communists', not government's writ which ran, in this strategically important area. In their clandestine publications the Communists called this their 'liberated area' and boasted that already the villages had, in Mao's words, 'surrounded the town', by which they meant Kuching.

On the night of June 27, 1965, a long stretch of this road, from the 10th to 25th Milestones, came under simultaneous attack from guerrillas. In the vicinity of the 10th Milestone planks through which huge nails protruded had been scattered over the road surface. Elsewhere oil was poured over the road, as another way of preventing police and military aid from being rushed to the area. Near the 25th Milestone intruders from across the border used rocket-launchers, in an attempt to blow up a bridge, with the same end in view. A series of attacks was then launched upon selected targets within the isolated areas. Most of the preparatory work was done by Communists living in the roadside villages. The attacks were carried through by groups made up of Sarawak Communists, and of Indonesian soldiers from across the border.

Near the 24th Mile, assaults were made upon a number of houses. Three people were slashed to death, all of them alleged by the Communists to be informers. The biggest and most daring raid occurred only a matter of minutes later at a

village at the 18th Milestone. There the police station was attacked and a police sergeant, brother of Stephen Kalong Ningkan, at that time Chief Minister of Sarawak, was killed. In the village a man, his wife and their ten-year-old son were shot. A member of this family was also mistakenly suspected of being an informer. Some thirty raiders were involved in the incidents and, in all, nine civilians were killed in cold blood.

The SCO's clandestine publications have since shown that the initiative, timing, planning and location of the raids were the work of the Organisation although, since confrontation was at that time still in progress, some of the leading personnel and most of the arms were provided by Indonesians. The aim, as spelt out in the clandestine publications, was to intimidate informers, obtain arms from the police, downgrade and humiliate authority and demonstrate Communist strength.

The police had good reason to know that the people of the area had for long been deeply influenced by Communist propaganda and had permitted the Organisation to grow up among their young people to such an extent that it now dominated the life of the entire community. There was too much Communist activity in the area, the police maintained, for anyone to be ignorant of what was going on. They also knew that Communist organisations in these villages had established contact with their comrades across the border and that both were collaborating with the Indonesians.

By the morning of June 28, there was already sufficient evidence that local Communists had guided the mixed raiding parties to their targets. It was later established by the police that some twenty local SCO supporters had been directly involved one way and another in the incidents.

'Operation Hammer', the government's response to the challenge, was swift and stern. Whether it was the right one will continue to be a matter for study by those charged with preventing a repetition of the events of that night. In the light of the evidence in its possession, the government decided to treat the entire Chinese population of the area as a guilty population. There was collective guilt and so there must be

collective punishment. The government could reason that this was war and in time of war it is regrettably normal and unavoidable that the innocent should suffer along with the guilty. Part of its purpose was, therefore, openly punitive. But its response was also intended as a deterrent. There must be no more incidents of this sort. Every Chinese community in the country must be impressed with the knowledge that if it permitted the same sort of thing to occur again it would be in very serious trouble. And the population between the 10th and 25th Milestones, in particular, must be dissuaded from ever entertaining the idea of repeating the events of the night of June 27.

Within twenty-four hours the whole area was made a restricted one: no one might enter it or leave it without first being checked. The entire Chinese population along the affected stretch of road, comprising some 8,000 men, women and children, were put 'under control'. All available manpower was deployed by government to regroup them in five centres. For some three months they lived in temporary huts, requisitioned shop-houses—anywhere where the authorities could put them, so long as they were under supervision and strict curfew. Meanwhile, three new villages, into which the people were resettled, were brought into being. Each of the new villages was behind a wire stockade which was electrified at night. Between the hours of 6 a.m. and 7 p.m. the inhabitants were free to move anywhere within a restricted area known as the controlled area. They could go back to their pepper gardens and small-holdings by day—all of them within this area—but had to be behind the electrified wire before the gates were closed at 7 p.m.

This involved hardship. Since they had to travel up to four miles each way to their holdings, two working hours each day were lost—a total of twelve weekly, or the equivalent of one working day. The number of police within the villages was quintupled and in theory the entire population was under police supervision for twenty-four hours a day. There were constant police patrols within the villages and outside the electrified wire. All political activity was banned except the right to vote.

Against all this, the people in the new villages had facilities they had never enjoyed before and probably had never expected to have in the foreseeable future. New shops, clinics and schools were built, there was a piped water supply with standpipes in the streets. Preparations were made to bring electricity into the new homes, which was an amenity none had had before. Government and voluntary welfare organisations distributed food and clothing to the needy. Before long some of the Natives, from whom the Chinese population were now isolated, were beginning to think aloud that being a guilty population had its compensations.

Although, after the first three-month period of considerable hardship, the people of the three villages were given much in the way of material assistance, there were some obvious omissions too. These are partly explained by the speed with which the whole operation was put into motion. There was, for example, a purely negative ban on political activity of any sort. But, for some time, no positive attempt was made to create other organisations aimed at fostering a community life for these uprooted communities. The people's traditional homes had been abandoned. The old pattern of life had been broken down, but over an important period of some months little was done towards assisting in building up a new one. The Central Government in Kuala Lumpur was at the time burdened with the cost of confrontation and was already pouring into Sarawak all it could afford for development projects. The reasons for the omissions are obvious but the consequences were real.

Despite the police surveillance, it was not long before the Communists were taking over. They succeeded in building up various organisations among the people of the new villages almost as before with SAYA cells and SFA branches meeting behind the electrified wire at night. By means of a courier system they had contact not only with the Communists outside but also with the leaders over the border.

When I visited the new villages in late 1966 Communist armed work-parties were installed in hides and dugouts in the jungle, within a few miles of the controlled area itself, and the Communists inside were co-operating with them. Police

gloomily estimated that there probably were approximately 200 Communist activists operating inside each of the three villages, who maintained a network of *hsueh-hsih* cells, collected monthly subscriptions and circulated the Organisation's underground publications. The three resettlement villages—or 'fortified hamlets' as the Communists called them—even had their own clandestine publication, named *Crush New Village*.

Viewed militarily, as an immediate deterrent, Operation Hammer succeeded. It was followed by no 'dramatic gesture' of comparable size, although one or two attempts were made with a typical show of audacity, to carry out small raids on the resettled villages themselves. No other Communist-influenced local Chinese communities elsewhere co-operated in the staging of incidents like those around the 18th Milestone on June 27. Seen in political terms, the consequences of Operation Hammer are less easy to assess, but they must possibly be entered on the debit side of the sheet.

The killing of civilians by the raiders on the night of June 27 did not have the effect of turning public opinion, in the area, against the Communists. No one doubted that the Communists were responsible for the murders. Those who died in most cases died horribly. Despite this, there was practically no adverse public reaction. This is no doubt a tribute to the effectiveness of years of Communist propaganda, which had succeeded first in making government be seen as 'the enemy' and then in building up an intense hatred of anyone suspected of collaborating with it. It may also be proof of how effective a display of ruthlessness can be, within a close-knit community. But the indications are that it was the conditioning of the public mind over the years, rather than the threat itself, which was the more important.

The Communists had had the people thinking in revolutionary terms, in terms of preparation for armed struggle, for a long time before the raids occurred. A majority were by then identified one way or another with the revolution, had been committed to it and so were vulnerable to pressure. The ones who died were either police, 'running dogs' of a puppet government or suspected collaborators. What happened to

them seen from the people's point of view was therefore no more than a certain sort of rough revolutionary justice.

Here is something with which any government confronted with this sort of situation must contend. The outside world will hear about Communist 'atrocities' and may possibly expect these to bring in their train a wave of revulsion among the local population. Most often this does not happen.

From the time SAYA was first brought into existence in 1954, the Communists had talked of the importance of 'racial work'. Twelve years later, so far as could be established, they had enrolled and retained in the Organisation just one Iban—and he was soon to be in detention. A few here and there had briefly come under their influence but only one had 'stuck'.

Quite clearly, propaganda was not enough, but the closest possible person-to-person contact might provide the means for a break-through. The Organisation called for volunteers to work in the Native areas, live with the Native people. A trickle of volunteers infiltrated into longhouse villages. They found life in the longhouse hard and uncongenial. But they endured it for the cause. Articles by those engaged in this type of 'racial work', which have appeared in the clandestine press, graphically tell of the difficulties the volunteers had in facing unhygienically prepared and unpalatable food and insanitary conditions.

Many young Chinese who have gone into this work have returned home after periods of sickness to recuperate and then have gone back to face the same difficulties again. For those who go from the more remote Chinese homesteads the transition from the one life to the other may not be quite so difficult. Most often those who have volunteered have been the well-instructed, deeply committed, idealistic Chinese of the towns for whom the new life is very different and difficult indeed.

A fairly typical example came to light when a Kuching Chinese businessman reported to the police the disappearance of his son. He had no idea that the boy had been involved in Communist activity. Police enquiries, however, revealed that the youngster, who came from a comfortable and cultured

background, had abandoned everything to go and work for a few cents a day as a rubber-tapper in a Native area, and was now sharing the life of the people in a longhouse.

The problem of how to gain support for the Communist cause, or at any rate for its immediate declared aims, among the more backward section of the people is one which many Communist parties who go over to the armed struggle in developing continents have to face. And it is the one which frequently gives them the greatest difficulty. Yet it is one that cannot be ignored.

In Latin American countries with large, pure Amerindian populations, the problems can be almost as difficult as in Sarawak. The most primitive of the Indians live in precisely those areas which are of the greatest importance to the armed struggle—the jungles and the mountains. They have their own language and customs, and a religion which, though often a mixture of animism, spirit-worship and superstition lightly 'baptised' by Catholicism, is nonetheless strongly resistant to atheistic Communism.

When the Communist Party of Peru was preparing to go over to limited and, as it proved, unsuccessful armed struggle in the mid-1960s, it created a peasant league for the Indians in the interior. The league had a very militant but short existence. No one can deny that the injustices and deprivations of the Indians are real; and the hill and jungle dwellers responded excitedly at first to the agitators who came to work among them. Then they learned of the Communist nature of the movement, with its threat to their culture, beliefs and way of life, and they quickly drifted away again.

The lengths to which Communists will go in 'adapting' their normal practices, to get the support of primitive people living in strategically important areas, is illustrated by General Vo Nguyen Giap's account of the Vietnamese Communists' work among the Tho and the Man Tien people. It was not of Communism they talked but, he says, of 'the idea of organising associations to fight against the French and the Japanese'. The people responded, but if their commitment to support

was to mean anything at all, it must, in their own opinion, be backed by an oath-taking ceremony.

'The oath', says General Giap, 'was taken by either extinguishing a burning incense-stick or beheading a chicken. The wording of the oath ran like this: To unite with one another like kith and kin in the fight against the French and the Japanese in order to save the country and the village, and to achieve the programme of the Vietminh; not to leave one another in difficulties and betray the Association because of enemies' repression; those guilty of betrayal would face annihilation. The one who took the oath would plunge the burning incense-stick into water to extinguish it' or he would chop off a chicken's head with one stroke.<sup>1</sup>

This proved acceptable. Gradually party cells were set up among the Man people. The first Man Tien to join the party was Comrade Hoan, native of Ha Hieu, in Cho Ra, who was later captured by 'the imperialists' who, says Giap, 'tortured him eleven times', then finally shot him. Before his execution, Comrade Hoan handed to his wife, who had come to visit him, a drug made of tiger bone, saying, 'Keep this drug and pass it on to Comrade Van, when you meet him. Tell him that I send him my best wishes and want him to take this drug to preserve his health to be able to work.'

It is stories like these, which the Sarawak Communists read in publications from China and Vietnam and which they circulate in the underground, and which, too, they hear frequently over Radio Hanoi and Radio Peking, that help to maintain the Sarawak Communists' hopes as they search over the years for a means of breaking through to the Natives. Other Communists have had to deal with bigger problems than theirs and have succeeded. The question, they feel, is to a very great extent one of finding the right approach. If only they could find this, then, with a change in the 'objective conditions', the break might come.

<sup>1</sup> *A Heroic People*, op. cit., p. 112.

## The SCO Speaks

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AT ALMOST ANY given moment the Sarawak Advanced Youths Association, the Sarawak Farmers' Association and the North Kalimantan National Liberation League are between them responsible for the regular appearance of at least a dozen periodicals, some fortnightly, some monthly. Only in periods of very exceptional disruption do they fail to appear at the appointed time, despite all the difficulties of producing them in conditions of illegality.

A large number of occasional publications are produced as well. Books useful for 'Marxist education' and for instruction in guerrilla warfare, which have appeared in other languages, have been translated into Chinese and cyclostyled, and these are widely circulated. Since the language in which they are written is Chinese, there can be no question of using typewriters for the purpose. All the work, including that on stencils, must painstakingly be done by hand, in Chinese characters.

From these publications it is possible to learn just what are the appeals of Communism in an under-developed area like this, what are the conditions, situations and events which most help the cause, how the Communists react to particular situations, and the way in which they prepare themselves for the protracted struggle for power.

Rarely, if ever, have Communists written more freely. Where their press is open and legal they are naturally inhibited in what they write. In Sarawak it has from the start been clandestine. It is written by and for members; for use only within the family, as it were, and so takes on something of the intimacy of a family correspondence. Thus it provides unique insights into the extent to which the Communist Organisation influences and controls the thought and life of its members.

From a study of the SCO's regular and occasional publications emerges what one may call the anatomy of a Communist organisation in a backward country.

#### YOUTH, IDEALISM AND DEDICATION

The majority of Communist recruits are young, particularly in Sarawak. Much of the writing in the illegal publications is therefore directed towards youthful idealism and is aimed at harnessing this and obtaining from those who respond an extraordinary degree of dedication.

An appeal to the idealism of the very young is made by an obviously very young contributor in a SAYA publication *Youth News*, June 1964. It is headed 'What are your aims in life?' The writer contrasts bad aims with good and then says that the Communists' lofty aims are the correct ones. 'Persons of this type live so that others may live better. In other words, they struggle for the happiness of the masses. They do not work for fame or wealth, but in the cause of the revolution.'

The *Sentinel*, official organ of the Fourth Divisional Committee's Department of Propaganda and Education, in 1963 contained a fairly typical description of a good cadre.

'A good working cadre is a genuine Marxist who really understands and guides the masses. He comes from the people and goes to the people. Wherever he goes the masses respect and support him, consider him their leader, their lighthouse.

'His personal interests come second to those of the masses whose problems he is ever ready to try to solve. He knows that if he would liberate them he must liberate himself. Without their support the revolution would fail and he would fail as a revolutionary.'

In another article in the same issue, a young Communist tells of the way in which he is preparing himself for the dangers and hardships of the armed struggle and ridding himself of 'liberal' tendencies in the process.

'At present the O<sup>1</sup> is getting ready for xxx.<sup>1</sup> In order that I

<sup>1</sup> In these clandestine publications certain code letters are used, in Roman script inserted among the Chinese characters. In publications

may stand firm against the coming, relentless struggle and be ready to kill the enemy, I must struggle vehemently with my own ideological problems and cultivate my revolutionary qualities. We can learn from the examples of the heroes in China. We can learn from them the spirit of dedication to people and to country.'

Practically the whole of this particular issue of the *Sentinel* is given over to a discussion of youth problems and to articles and poems in which young people express themselves, often naively but with considerable fervour. Many of those who contribute to this publication, and an even larger number of those who read it, would be senior middle-school students—probably from fifteen to eighteen years of age. It is from this age group that the largest number of recruits comes.

Often the young Communists use what can only be described as the language of love or of religion in addressing themselves to the Communist movement.

Some of the poems, if the writers were Christian, could almost equally be addressed to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Typical is 'O—our great mother' by Yu Ming:

You who are our great Mother  
Nourish us by feeding us with your milk,  
Enabling us to grow up rapidly.  
Oh! Dear O! We will safeguard you as we would safeguard our  
lives.  
If the enemy dare to molest you, we will fight against them to  
the last.  
Until they are completely destroyed.

Great Mother, how am I going to repay you my great debt of  
gratitude,  
How can I continue to be your unworthy daughter?  
In the past I did not live, I merely survived. Aimlessly.  
I could not even understand why human beings exist.  
Because of this I wasted ten precious Springs.

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for the masses, "O" is the Organisation but, in documents intended for the leaders, it stands for Headquarters, Organisation Department. "xxx" signifies armed struggle, "S" is Sarawak.

Today I have found a saviour—the great Mother.  
How warm and loving you are.  
Would that I could spend my life in your bosom.  
Till death I will protect you, my storm-beaten Mother.

Though your daughter is not tough like some,  
Still with my unshakable faith  
And by means of my sacred activities in the cause  
I will struggle for you, the people and liberation.  
Then one day will come the time  
When I and the movement are unconquerable.

It seems that I would already be dead had I not been saved  
By you my Mother and by the masses to whom I dedicate my-  
self.

I wish to offer my red-hot heart to you, my Mother.  
I am willing to respond absolutely to my Mother's call.

To say that this is not very far removed from the sort of sentiments expressed, for example, in 'I'll praise the name of Mary' with its line 'When wicked men blaspheme thee, I'll love and bless thy name' is to do no more than to suggest that many of the young Sarawak Chinese give to Communism what others give to religion. In other words, Communism fills a spiritual vacuum in their lives.

Sugary and sentimental though the poems may be, it would be wrong to suppose that the girls who write them are incapable of being very determined young revolutionaries. Many have gone into the jungle and shown themselves to be fearless guerrilla fighters.

In some parts of the country, there have from time to time been drives to recruit primary school pupils, who have then been organised into their own Small Children's groups.

Says one cadre's report which fell into the hands of the police in 1963: 'I have organised fifteen youths, several in primary school, ages between eight and fifteen years'.

An SFA area report listed practically the entire Chinese population of the district, from children to old men and women, with an ideological rating of each. One girl of twelve was listed as 'politically innocent' and therefore ideal for use as a courier.

## LOVE AND MARRIAGE

A discussion on the subject of love and marriage in the life of the revolutionary was spread over a number of issues of *Sentinel*. In April 1966 there was an article which gave examples setting out to prove that love and marriage are often 'an encouragement and source of strength when the lovers share the same truth, the same faith and the same ideals'.

In the January 1966 issue of *Workers' and Farmers' News*, journal of the Sarawak Farmers' Association, there appeared an article on 'love and revolution' which touched off a correspondence extending over many months. It advised the comrades to keep their marriage a mere formality and to avoid having children (as far as possible) or else to steer clear of love altogether by 'overcoming their personal feelings, thinking of O and the revolution instead of letting their thoughts turn to their low personal desires'.

Another article in the mid-July 1966 issue discusses the causes and consequences of 'mismanaged' love and marriage. This, it says, 'has often proved to be the graveyard of revolutionary fervour'.

*Masses News*, No. 19, January 1964, declared that 'Every comrade has a right to make love. But he or she must report regularly to the leadership about his or her love affair. I can assure comrades that they will be able to enjoy the happiness of love if they have full and genuine confidence in the Organisation and accept its guidance.'

## WOMEN, HOME AND FAMILY

Women are seen by the Organisation as being especially well suited to engaging in social activity designed to bring sympathisers to the movement. *Workers' and Farmers' News* for mid-May 1962 suggested that this could include attending funerals (the presence of large numbers of mourners is always much appreciated by the bereaved at Chinese funerals), visiting the sick, organising voluntary medical aid services, domestic sanitation groups and tailoring classes.

'Promotion of welfare work', it said, 'is the most effective method to win over and unite the masses.' It then turns to

less beneficent forms of activity on which women should be used. 'Women may supply us with information about the activities of the enemy and traitors and may sometimes serve as couriers or cover.'

March 8, for Communists and Left-wingers throughout the world, is International Women's Day. *Emancipation News* gave most of its space in March 1966 to a discussion on the role of women in the armed struggle. Editorially it called upon the women of North Kalimantan to 'inherit and promote the great spirit of progressive women in other countries by plunging themselves into this people's war to fight shoulder to shoulder with their men in order to eliminate the enemy'.

Many Chinese parents at this time were concerned about their teenage children who had taken to the jungle to join the movement for armed struggle. An article by Ai Ming addressed to these is headed: 'Let your children join the revolution'. It advises mothers not only to permit but actively to encourage their children to join the revolution, 'which is an immensely happy and glorious undertaking'. They, too, should join in revolutionary activities. The mother of a revolutionary 'is not only respected and loved by everyone, she also gains the greatest possible happiness and satisfaction from her role'.

The last item in this special Women's Day issue is a short poem, 'Welcome Your Heroic Fighting Children', extolling the revolutionary fighters in the North Kalimantan People's Revolutionary Army 'who are battling their way across the border to their homeland'. It calls on the mothers of North Kalimantan to stand up, proudly to welcome the heroism of their children and to assist them in destroying the enemy.

#### MARTYRS AND MORALE-BUILDING

Martyrs are a gift to any revolutionary movement and all too often the Communists are given them quite unnecessarily. There are few issues of the clandestine papers, published by the various illegal organisations, which do not contain some appeal to heroism.

Despite years of armed struggle activity and direct active association with a foreign power which conducted military attacks on Sarawak, the SCO remains short of genuine martyrs. Preventive detention, rather than heavy prison sentences, has been used by the government to curb its activities.

In the circumstances, the Organisation has had to do its best over the years to represent the detention camp as a 'prison' or a 'concentration camp' and the detainees as prisoners of the 'enemy'.<sup>1</sup> More particularly, it uses stories and articles in its publications, about the sufferings of revolutionaries, as part of the 'psychological preparation' for armed struggle.

*Voice of Liberation*, No. 9, May 1966, has an article headed 'Accept Boldly the Trials of Prison Life', which says: 'Prison is the chief instrument adopted by the ruling class to suppress the people. . . . Those who do not experience prison life are not qualified to be called true revolutionaries. Prison is an arena in which revolutionaries continue their struggle. For those who have faith in Marxism-Leninism and the teachings of Mao Tse-tung it is a privilege to be able to maintain struggle in such circumstances. . . .

'Comrades! Let us courageously welcome the struggle. If we are arrested, we must boldly accept the trials of prison life and maintain struggle until the end.'

Almost every one of the underground publications at some time or another has recommended members to read *Red Crag* by Lo Kuang-pin and Yang Yi-pen, published in Chinese (and a number of other languages) by the Peking Communist Press. Copies of this book continue to be smuggled into the country and to turn up in almost every cache of seized documents; in 1966 the book was made required reading for all members.

It is a lengthy story of revolutionaries who, in the words of the publishers' blurb, 'faced the mediaeval tortures and barbarities of concentration camp life with unconquerable spirits'. It is said to be based on the experiences of the

<sup>1</sup> A party of British Left-wing Labour Members of Parliament who visited the detention camp declared that they had never seen one which looked so much like a European holiday camp!

authors, who were imprisoned in one of Chiang Kai-shek's concentration camps in Chungking in South-west China. The novel was first published in 1961, and has been made into a film.

Most of *Red Crag* is given over to a portrayal of life in the camps, 'showing how the reactionaries use torture, hunger and drugs to try and pry open the lips of the political prisoners; how the invincible revolutionaries courageously fight against all odds—and finally establish contact with the Communist Party organisation in Chungking'.

In June 1966, *Emancipation News* brought out a special 'martyrs' edition. Typical article headings are 'To be a Revolutionary or a Traitor?', 'Attitude Towards Death', 'Emulate the Revolutionary Martyrs' and 'To Die for the Revolution is a Glorious Privilege'. One of these, 'An Exemplary Fighter in Racial Work—Our Fellow-Fighter Chan', is intended to prompt supporters to sacrifice for the movement by going to work in the longhouses.

The same issue tells the story of a SAYA member who crossed the border to be trained by the Indonesians, returned with a party of intruders and was killed in battle. It is headed 'The Hero of Batang Lupar—Koo Choo Yin'. Koo 'courageously joined the guerrillas in the fight against the British imperialists and their puppet soldiers. . . . In a fierce battle he braved the bullets in order to protect some of his fellow fighters. He sacrificed himself but his revolutionary spirit will live forever among the people'.

The Communists, incidentally, found the body of Koo, who was killed during a Security Force operation. They exhumed it and reburied it in an impressive, newly-constructed tomb with an epitaph reading: 'Fought for the truth and died for the truth'. They have made this tomb a centre of veneration.

Underlying this constant campaigning around the martyrs and those who stand firm is, one suspects, a fear that some detainees may sooner or later talk and give away to the authorities details of the Organisation's generally very good security system, and of its preparations for the armed struggle.

This fear was—along with a thinly veiled threat—expressed most clearly in *Workers' News*, August 1963.

'We believe', it said, 'that in our ranks are many weaklings and opportunists, who, if arrested by the enemy, will not be able to withstand the intimidation, persuasion and torture they will have to face and thus they will betray the comrades and the Organisation. The enemy will make use of them in order to fish up information about us and sabotage our work. We should never trust the weaklings but should expose them before the people so that they will know the despicable things they may expect of shameful running dogs.'

#### SELF-IMPROVEMENT

In the autumn of 1966, China's newly formed Red Guards were told that all were expected to read Chairman Mao's essay *In Memory of Norman Bethune*.<sup>1</sup> Bethune was a member of the Canadian Communist Party, a doctor who gave his services to the Republican side during the Spanish Civil War. At the outbreak of China's anti-Japanese war in 1937 he arrived in the Chinese Communist 'liberated areas' at the head of a medical corps of North American doctors. He died in November 1939 in Wan county, Hopeh, of a disease contracted whilst treating wounded Red Army men. The following month Mao Tse-tung wrote the essay in which he praised Bethune as an example in self-sacrifice, enthusiasm for work and sense of responsibility.

To inspire their members and boost their morale, the NKNLL's *Voice of Liberation* in May 1966 published Mao's essay along with a brief biography of the Canadian doctor whose name, when translated direct from the Chinese, appears as Pai Chiu Eng.

Members were urged by *Voice of Liberation* to learn Mao's essay off by heart and, moreover, to put its ideas into practice in their daily lives.

'A man's ability may be great or small', Mao wrote, 'but if only he has this spirit, he is already a noble-minded man, a pure man, a moral man, a man who has left vulgar tastes behind, a man who is useful to the people.'

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Volume III, p. 104, op. cit.

When the Organisation's publications clearly showed that members were deeply shaken by the massacre of Communists in Indonesia, the line of the clandestine publications was that such setbacks, though tragic, were inevitable in the ebb and flow of the revolutionary movement. The important thing was that Sarawak's Communists, already over the threshold of armed struggle, should stand firm. The response of *Voice of Liberation*, March 1966, to the Indonesian situation was to tell its readers: 'We must adapt to all forms of struggle if we are to reform society. We must come to hate the enemy more and love the revolutionary organisation and the people with even greater fervour. This period will then help us to cultivate a firm and persistent will and so give us strength to cope with every difficulty'.

#### WORKERS AND PEASANTS

Typical of an underdeveloped country in which trade unionism is very new, Sarawak has a large number of small unions. In early 1964, for example, there were thirty-six regional trade unions whose combined membership totalled less than 15,000. The Communists' main strength in the unions was in Kuching and Sibiu. The unions which the Communists controlled were the industrial ones, almost entirely Chinese. Their influence was minimal in seven unions, with a combined membership of approximately 6,500, mainly Natives in government employment. Already the experience of Venezuela was being repeated in Sarawak: with so much talk of armed struggle there was a tendency for less thought to be given to the unions by the movement as a whole, and some of the older Communists, whose main work was supposed to be in the unions, tended to feel that they and their activities were seemingly of decreasing importance.

The inherent conflict in the new Communist line of attempting to keep the two forms of struggle running parallel can be seen in an article in *Voice of Liberation*, April 1965. This lists the current tasks of comrades within the labour movement as follows:

- (a) efficiently carry out political and educational work within the Organisation itself.

- (b) intensify the unity of the workers of all trades as well as of all races.
- (c) seize every favourable opportunity to engage in struggle with employers.
- (d) look after the wages and welfare of the workers.
- (e) concentrate on development towards an armed revolution.
- (f) intensify *hsueh-hsih* on the labour movement of other countries.

The need to make a worker-peasant alliance the basis for a broader national front was outlined in an article which appeared in *Emancipation News* in early December 1965. There must, it said, be worker-peasant unity, but also a broader front must be created on the basis of a worker-farmer alliance which united all classes and races in North Kalimantan. 'All revolutionaries must therefore exert every effort towards the accomplishment of this great mission of building progressive national unity.'

When Khrushchev's policy of peaceful co-existence between the great Powers began to take effect, Moscow publications placed a new emphasis on the permissibility at this time, and as part of the new strategy, of 'wars of national liberation' and other forms of armed struggle, in suitable developing areas. And as a natural corollary of this, they also placed renewed stress on the importance of worker-peasant alliances in the developing countries. In accord with established Moscow practice and in support of the new line, the Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, provided ammunition for the fight by collecting together anything Lenin had ever written on the subject and publishing it under the title 'Alliance of the Working Class and the Peasantry'. Soon Communist parties in the three developing continents were busy creating worker-peasant alliances.

SFA's *Masses News*, April 1963, reproduced a number of these quotations from Lenin, particularly those which related the alliance to the armed struggle. 'We are aware that only by succeeding in the task of gaining control of the farm villages can there be a new turn in the state of the revolution in our motherland', the paper wrote editorially.

The paper noted that 80 per cent of Sarawak's people were 'working farmers', who were 'the decisive force . . . the task

force of the revolution. . . . 'Many of our combatant friends who were working in the open', it went on, 'have now gone into hiding in the farm villages and have received protection from our farming brothers and sisters. Because of this, in spite of having wasted a lot of time and energy, the enemy's spies and police running dogs are still unable to catch them.'

#### EBB AND FLOW OF ARMED STRUGGLE

At the time of the Brunei revolt, in December 1962, and whilst fighting was still continuing in Brunei and in the Fifth Division of Sarawak, the Communist leaders put out their first directive committing the Organisation somewhat hesitantly to a policy of running the armed struggle and constitutional struggle side by side.

The Organisation was worried by the arrests and detentions, and feared the consequences if and when more should come. One contributor wrote: 'Our Organisation is still young and compared with the experienced Communist parties of the world it is still very naïve and unsound in some respects. Our Organisation is very weak by comparison with the class enemy but the colonial rulers have by numerous intrigues created conditions which they hope will enable them to destroy our Organisation in a single blast. All this has led to a most serious trial for us. Only by making great efforts to cultivate cadres, expand the organisation, lay a strong foundation by spreading our work widely, can our heavy and arduous tasks be performed'.

Not all those who contributed to the underground press were as realistic in their approach to the strength of the colonial power. Reading their publications over the years, one frequently is reminded of the fact that hardly any members of the Organisation have ever travelled outside isolated little Sarawak—of the very few who have done so it is doubtful if more than one or two have been further than Singapore.

*Masses News* in April 1963 declared that 'the British imperialists are an isolated group in the world today. They are without allies whilst we can count on receiving support from all the newly independent countries and all the socialist countries in the world'.

Even less realistically another contributor who had a knack of mixing his metaphors wrote in the same issue of *Masses News*: 'Our enemy, British imperialism, is an aged lion, a disintegrating capitalist country. At the same time he is a rat who is crossing a street just at the moment when everybody is shouting that he should be beaten to death. He is being attacked by the armed forces of the awakened people in the colonies of the world. As long as the colonial peoples are united, it is possible to defeat this paper tiger. Our people are therefore the giants who will beat him to death. Final victory can only be achieved by the popular forces'.

Most of the articles in the July 1963 issue of *Masses News* urged that the long-term armed struggle be placed above all other forms of struggle. One, however, stressed the need to combine armed with constitutional struggle 'because there might be setbacks'. The same writer stressed that it would be unwise to depend entirely on outside assistance.

Immediately after they had made their armed-struggle decision, the leaders took a number of steps to tighten up organisation, strengthen security and put the Organisation in fighting trim.

One issue after another of the Organisation's publications contained threats to spies and provocateurs within the movement. Said *Masses News* (April 1963): 'Those who surrender to the enemy or put themselves in opposition to us will never be forgiven by the people. It is not going too far to declare that we must smash out their brains and silence them'.

A campaign of threats and violence began against people supposed to be police agents, and a number of suspected renegades disappeared without trace; a defector had recently been buried alive in one area to which I went during this period.

The SCO looked abroad for inspiration in its armed struggle activities. An article in *Masses News*, March 1963, quotes the example of Cuba and Algeria, who 'obtained their genuine independence and liberation after a fierce struggle against their reactionary rulers'. In April of the following year the paper directed its readers' eyes to 'the powerful

peasantry of Latin America who are increasingly turning to guerrilla warfare'.

Practical help for those going into the armed struggle came with 'How to Handle a Rifle' in *Trumpet News* of January 1964, issued by the 'General Staff of the People's Liberation Army'. This was a reprint from a Peking publication *Science Fortnightly*. Other articles extolled the victories of the Vietcong and recalled the 'successful military struggle of the people in Kenya'.

*Trumpet News* found it necessary to restrain some members: 'Some comrades are too anxious to launch into the armed struggle. They are of the opinion that it will bring glory to themselves when they go off to the battle front to kill the enemy. Some entertain the false idea that imperialism can be defeated without much difficulty'.

After the abortive *coup* in Indonesia came the mass killings of members of the PKI, which continued for months. The end of confrontation came officially on August 11, 1966. It follows that this period was one of considerable anxiety for Sarawak's Communists. For them, the fall of the mighty Communist Party of Indonesia was almost unbelievable; the massacre of Communists shocked them and before long there were stories that this was spreading to Kalimantan, in the areas where the Organisation's members were active. The leaders had now to deal with a problem of fast-falling morale.

An article entitled 'The Indonesian Political Situation and the Revolution in our own Country', in *Workers' and Farmers' News*, May 2, 1966, admitted 'the cruel persecution of the PKI and also the revolutionary forces of Malaya and North Kalimantan now in Indonesia' by what were described as 'right-wing elements in collusion with the imperialists'. Wistfully it noted that 'before the *coup*, the political situation in Indonesia had been very favourable to our revolutionary forces. The Indonesian government, inspired by the PKI, had actively given military assistance to our revolutionary forces'.

The mid-July issue of the same publication gloomily predicted that 'when the so-called peace has been ushered in by the reactionary régimes of Malaya and Indonesia, both

will be able to concentrate all their energies and conspire with each other to sweep out the revolutionary forces'.

China's doctrine of 'self-reliance' came to the aid of the Organisation when all hope of help from Indonesia faded. *Emancipation News* of late January 1966 had an article: 'Self-Reliance will Triumph'. It exhorted members not to think that because Indonesia 'has turned to the Right' there was no hope of victory for the revolutionary movement. It emphasised that the policy of self-reliance would always be adopted because the liberation of the people must in the last resort depend upon the people themselves—it was they who furnished food and other supplies, equipment and manpower for the armed struggle. Even the weapons required by revolutionaries should be obtained either through home-manufacture or by capture from the enemy.

But the best way to deal with the sort of mood which was the inevitable outcome of such a situation is to plunge into new forms of activity. The spirit of the rank and file was raised by involving them in preparations for the reception of the heroes—the Sarawak Communists who had been trained and, in some cases sent into action, in Indonesia—some of whom were shortly expected to come home.

Then came another guaranteed morale-booster. Members who had been attached to Indonesian Army groups began to organise themselves into their own military force, a new 'liberation army' on the Indonesian side of the border. News of this was greeted with enthusiasm in the clandestine press. *Voice of Emancipation* brought out three special issues. One contained an article, 'Life in the North Kalimantan People's Liberation Army'. In each of them were open letters greeting members of the 'Sarawak people's guerrillas'.

There was a new concentration upon the importance of unity of the three Borneo States and for the eventual spreading of the revolutionary struggle to include the whole of North Kalimantan. *Voice of Liberation* discussed 'problems concerning the possibility of unity in the three States of North Kalimantan and of spreading revolutionary struggle'. Recently 'the people have again requested this kind of merger'. The idea of the formation of a 'North Kalimantan

Unitary State' had been generally accepted by the people, who therefore, in all three States, now had a common objective—'to establish a new country by means of armed struggle'.

The Vietnamese experience has shown that nationalism probably provides the most fruitful means by which Communists in such areas can awaken and maintain the support of the people for armed struggle. The emphasis on the goal of a unitary state of North Kalimantan was clearly intended to inject into the movement at the moment of 'low ebb' a new element of nationalism, which would appeal to all races.

In order to emphasise this goal still further, the North Kalimantan National Liberation League was created. The first issue of *Voice of Liberation*, published in March 1965, issued a resounding rallying call: 'Comrades! The founding of the NKNLL indicates that the revolutionary struggle waged by the North Kalimantan people has developed to a new phase. Its aim is to liberate the people of North Kalimantan'. Editorially—and against all the facts—the paper declared that unity of the people of North Kalimantan and the people's struggle both have the full support of progressive countries and people the world over.

Particularly useful to the movement, because it made members feel that the armed struggle was a reality, was the '18th Mile Incident', the series of terrorist raids on the night of June 27, 1965. And the resettlement of the 'guilty' population of the area into new villages gave the Communists a new 'agitational issue' upon which to campaign.

*Voice of Liberation* for early August 1965 was devoted to countering the effects of 'Operation Hammer' and the government's resettlement project. An editorial article declared that the people who had been killed during the raids were 'either enemy police or their running dogs'. The helplessness of the enemy in the face of attack of this sort, the article said, had been exposed by their failure to trace the people involved in the incident.

Although the underground press shows that there was some disagreement, and certainly much discussion concerning the choice of location for the raids, it is quite evident that they

stiffened morale within the movement itself and carried the revolution a significant step forward.

In *Emancipation News*, late September 1965, 'Operation Hammer' is described as an action by government 'of a punitive nature directed against the people who have given much support to the guerrilla forces of North Kalimantan and who supported the successful attack on a police station in the area'.

The Organisation's press could claim by early June 1966 that 'already our revolutionary fighters are returning and some are openly taking part in self-defence training in our own country'. It is likely that a burst of 'armed struggle activity' at this time did more than anything else to bring about by mid-1966 a situation in which, despite all the disappointments and setbacks, the movement began to move forward towards guerrilla warfare more confidently than ever.

A document entitled 'Bases and Revolution', published in 1966, stated that the Organisation had resolved to establish military bases in the mountainous region of Indonesian Kalimantan lying opposite Kuching. There were references to the limited military and political power available to the government following upon the withdrawal of Commonwealth troops, and to the improved opportunities this offered for the armed struggle.

There was heartening news for Sarawak's Communists when *Emancipation News*, in late June 1966, reproduced a Peking Radio report that a five-man North Kalimantan delegation had arrived in Peking on May 23 at the invitation of the Chinese Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee. Leader of the delegation was Lui Choon, whom Radio Peking had frequently quoted as the leading spokesman of the NKNLL. The delegation, said the report, had been received at Peking Airport by the First Secretary of the Chinese Foreign Affairs Department, representatives of China's trade union congress and the First Secretary of the National Youth Federation.

This was interpreted as evidence that Sarawak's Communists were taken seriously by the leaders of the world's most populous Communist State.

Failure to make any significant headway with the Natives is repeatedly deplored and members are urged, by precept and example, to leave everything to go out and engage in racial work.

'Up to the present, we still have not a single member or cadre of their own blood among the Dayaks', said *Workers' and Farmers' News* in May 1962. 'There is not even one single, lonely activist.' Then came a call to heroic missionary activity. 'We must go and live as they. Their food is indeed unclean and insanitary but for the sake of our work we must trust them and express a liking for it.'

A similar call came in *Masses News*, April 1963, in an article headed 'Life Among the Masses'. The writer had, he said, gone to live and work with the Ibans. 'Some say members of our brother race, the Dayak race, are barbarous and hard to deal with. . . . However, the fact is that it has been proved that we can befriend them and live with them like brothers, provided that we are determined to strive for this, mankind's most glorious enterprise. We must be prepared to go through thick and thin together with our brothers of the other races, to be concerned over their problems, their daily necessities. Comrades! Do you still remember the promises you made when you took your oath,<sup>1</sup> voluntarily to work for all races? Now is the time for action!'

Another article calls upon members of the farmers' association to volunteer to go to the rural people of both races, but particularly to the Dayaks, in groups 'to do hair-cutting for the people'. Incidentally, the response to this call was considerable and has continued over the years, despite the fact that the barber has always been seen as being at the very bottom of the Chinese social ladder. Those who volunteered for the hair-cutting groups were taking an opportunity not only to spread the word among the Dayaks, but also to demonstrate that they were prepared to humble themselves utterly and completely for the revolution.

<sup>1</sup> The mid-May 1962 issue of *Workers' and Farmers' News* noted in passing that members of SFA 'take an oath of loyalty before the portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin'. Each of the other organisations within the movement has its own oath-taking ceremony.

In the longhouses they used the opportunities for making friends with the Dayaks, for introducing propaganda into conversation whilst they were busy cutting hair (Chinese hairdressers are as talkative as barbers the world over) and also, incidentally, for picking up intelligence too.

The SFA began in September 1964 to produce a publication, *Suara Bangsa*, in the Iban language (the study of Iban has become part of the Communists' preparation for the armed struggle). The September 1965 issue announced the formation of what is hopefully described as the multi-racial North Kalimantan National Liberation League, whose task is given as 'to promote extensive study and lead established trade unions, farmers' organisations and national patriots, because the main strength of the people lies in these groups'.

By the end of 1966 many hundreds of SCO members detained in Sarawak's political detention and rehabilitation centres were busy learning the Iban language.

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# What They Read

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DURING THE YEARS that followed the ending of the Emergency in Malaya in 1960 I watched the steady decline in the calibre of the new generation of followers of the CPM who were functioning inside the country's democratic organisations.

Until 1966, contact with the recognised leaders on the other side of the Thai border was poor. No day-to-day, or even week-by-week, guidance came to the members of the satellite organisations who had the difficult task of illegally promoting Communism in schools, trade unions and other political parties. This clearly made things harder for them.

But by far their greatest handicap was that they were obliged to try to train raw new members as good Marxist cadres, with practically none of the literature normally available to Communist parties elsewhere to help them. The sale of Marxist works for political purposes was prohibited by government. Existing stocks had been seized by the police, and Special Branch had achieved a high degree of success in preventing Communist publications from coming into the country. Over a period of years, such books and pamphlets as the members possessed wore out and were not replaced. A few cyclostyled pages from the writings of Mao Tse-tung, Lenin or Stalin would pass from hand to hand until they were tattered and unreadable. To try to build up an organisation that would see itself as part of the international revolutionary army was in these circumstances an almost impossible task. It was like attempting to run an army staff college with no library, no reading room and no text books or military manuals.

When I went to backward, isolated Sarawak I expected to find that the members of its relatively new Communist Organisation (not yet even elevated to Party status) would

have even less Marxist-Leninist background and be of generally poorer quality than those in Malaya. I was wrong. To my surprise I found that there was clearly a group of top leaders with a good understanding of Communist theory, strategy and tactics, capable of analysing situations in a Marxist way and drawing the right conclusions. They obviously followed Radio Peking closely and intelligently, but this was not sufficient in itself to explain the high quality of the leadership, still less the calibre of the rank and file, who, man for man, appeared to be markedly superior to their comrades across the water.

The explanation, I found, lay in the fact that the Organisation, in contrast to the CPM, was in possession of a huge quantity of Communist literature which it had retained from the days before such things were banned.

In my experience, the size and seriousness of the Communist threat to security in a developing country may be determined, to a significant extent, by the quantity of appropriate reading matter available to the party and its subsidiary organisations.

The first issue of *Masses News*, in early August 1961, gave a list of books which members and cadres must read. These included Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*; Lenin's *Left Wing Communism*; *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People* and *Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership* by Mao; Liu Shao-chi's *How to be a Good Communist*, and a novel *How Steel is Made* (this did not reflect a sudden interest in the steel industry but referred to 'human steel'), and 'all documents, resolutions and directives issued by the O'.

Among documents seized by the police on one occasion was an underground library list of 275 titles. These were broken down under such headings as political reports, literature, self-cultivation, economics, history, novels, poems and songs, selections from poetry, literary theories, 'cultural and recreational publications'.

They ranged from Lenin's *Imperio-Criticism*, through John Strachey's *The Nature of Capitalist Crisis* to a book giving definitions of the terms used in dialectical materialism.

Under the 'literature' heading came Lenin's essay on Communist journalism and a guide to 'how to *hsueh-hsih* the noble personality of Stalin'.

A police haul in another part of the country unearthed a library of eighty books, buried at scattered points in the jungle, each in its separate polythene bag. There were Communist classics, books on guerrilla warfare and others on philosophy and science. Since this was the library of an illegal organisation, borrowers would have to get their books through a complicated system which enabled no single borrower to come directly in touch with the key man, the librarian.

When the Organisation was first building up a non-stop campaign, aimed in particular at relatives of the political detainees, alleging that tortures and atrocities occurred in the detention camp, the English edition of Henri Alleg's book *The Question* was translated into Chinese inside the detention camp and it turned up in many secret library lists. In *The Question*, Alleg, a French-Algerian Communist newspaperman, tells the story of his own experience of tortures at the hands of the French in the prisons of Algeria. Before long, the identical tortures were being alleged in the Organisation's propaganda against the Sarawak detention camp authorities.

#### ARMED STRUGGLE LITERATURE

There are certain titles that are included in practically every library unearthed by the security authorities, and in every reading list published by the Communists in their clandestine press. These are *Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War* and *Strategic Problems in the Anti-Japanese Guerrilla War*, both by Mao Tse-tung, and *Guerrilla Warfare* by Che Guevara.

Anyone who takes the subject of guerrilla warfare seriously today, no matter whether he be Sarawakian Communist, Angolan nationalist or Western anti-Communist, must read Mao Tse-tung. Recognising this, the Foreign Languages Press, Peking, in 1963 brought together within two covers everything Chairman Mao had written on the question under

the title *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-tung*. This is a book for leaders, specialists and other people who are actively engaged in directing the armed struggle. A great many of its 400 pages are devoted to specifically Chinese situations which arose out of the CCP's constantly-changing relations with the Kuomintang and also out of the war with Japan. The ordinary guerrilla fighter, and the man who is trying to prepare himself for going into the jungle, are unlikely to have either time or inclination to select the useful nuggets from the mound of slag.

It is upon Mao's two short works—*Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War* and *Strategic Problems in the Anti-Japanese Guerrilla War*—that such as these must concentrate. Even so, the weakness of these books from the activist's (as opposed to the theorist's) point of view is that neither was intended to be a handbook of guerrilla warfare for general use. These are works written in the heat of battle, dealing with particular situations. Nevertheless, from them the activist and the student learn the basic principles, acquire a good deal of useful knowledge and, perhaps even more important in a guerrilla war situation, an approach to the armed struggle that is of immediate value. The SCO's publications reveal the points on which the Communist cadre with no specialised knowledge of the subject is most likely to seize.

From Mao's *Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War* they have learned the importance of the peasantry as a revolutionary class and that, in a guerrilla war situation, the peasants would be of decisive importance; that in a semi-feudal country both the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie can be useful allies too. Mao's whole concept of protracted guerrilla war, of a long and arduous struggle, although it may sound pretty grim to non-Communists, is a message of hope to Communists in such places as Sarawak. The armed struggle can be started right away. No need to wait for the revolutionary situation; no need either to feel that once one has committed oneself to armed struggle then it must be pressed through continuously to a victorious conclusion or end in failure. Establish revolutionary bases even if in the beginning they are only small pieces of territory, says Mao,

and his words 'a single spark can start a prairie fire' recur over and over again in SCO literature.

In contrast to Lenin's 'Never play with revolution' we have Mao's 'As to the moment for starting the preparation, the general advice is "better too early than too late"'.

Every Communist today knows by heart Mao's sixteen-word formula: 'enemy advances, we retreat; enemy halts, we harass; enemy tires, we attack; enemy retreats, we pursue'. This is no doubt an excellent formula for a guerrilla army, but its constant reiteration by Communists in a country like Sarawak can lead to their feeling that it is all a good deal easier than it really is. *Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War* is full of passages like: 'We defeat the many with the few—this we say to all the rulers of China. Yet we also defeat the few with the many—this we say to the separate units of the enemy forces that we meet on the battlefield'.

It is all very encouraging for Communists raring to fight. But nowhere in this book does Mao Tse-tung really spell out just how one goes into the armed struggle, what is involved in guerrilla warfare and how one conducts it from day to day.

His *Strategic Problems in the Anti-Japanese Guerrilla War*, which the SCO also spends a lot of time studying, is of not much more help in this respect. This book, like the other, helps to create a disposition to go over to the armed struggle, it assists the process of 'ideological preparation' for guerrilla war and in 'creating the right attitude', but it can hardly be described as a basic textbook for guerrilla fighters.

Mao stresses the importance of surprise attacks, swift actions, quick decisions in battle. He emphasises the dangers of passive defence, delay and dispersal of forces immediately before combat. In guerrilla war there is not just one big decisive battle in which power is seized, but many battles. Seizing the enemy's main stronghold comes only at the very end of the armed struggle. So guerrillas must know that to 'gather a big force to strike at a small enemy sector remains one of the principles for field operations'.

Such advice as this may have an immediate usefulness to a Communist organisation involved in armed struggle. But much of this refers directly to the experience of a powerful

Red Army which had been in existence for years and which was involved in a gigantic war of resistance to Japanese aggression.

Once Communists might have thought that for a country like Sarawak the only revolution within sight would be the bourgeois-democratic revolution. But China and the Chinese leaders have shown that Communists today can link this with the socialist revolution about which Communist revolutionaries may naturally be expected to feel more strongly. In the words of Lin Piao: 'Comrade Mao Tse-tung has pointed out that, in the epoch since the October Revolution, anti-imperialist revolution in any colonial or semi-colonial country is no longer part of the old bourgeois, or capitalist, world revolution, but is part of a new world revolution, in the proletarian-socialist world revolution. . . .

'The Chinese Revolution has successfully solved the problem of how to link up the national-democratic with the socialist revolution in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.'<sup>1</sup>

Mao made the goal quite plain: 'The ultimate aim of all Communists is to establish a socialist society and then a communist society'.<sup>2</sup>

In the past, the opportunity for backward countries to join in the world socialist revolution would have seemed very far away. But for Communists in colonial and semi-colonial countries today the opportunity is waiting for them here and now. That is the part of Mao's message upon which the Communists of Sarawak have seized. It seems not unlikely that some others will do the same.

Mao's famous theses that 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun' and that 'the whole world can be remoulded only with a gun' are probably more likely to be rejected than accepted by the majority in a country where people are politically sophisticated and have generations of democratic

<sup>1</sup> *Long Live the Victory of People's War!*, Lin Piao, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party*, Mao Tse-tung, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, p. 50.

government behind them. For such people it may be difficult to appreciate just how great an impact it can have on the minds of the politically unsophisticated in a country with no experience of democracy and where political parties are still new and the party system has still to be fully appreciated.

It is not surprising that from the start the Chinese youngsters in Sarawak thought and talked of armed struggle and on the first occasion that the 'enemy' attacked them at all seriously they immediately decided that the only answer lay in the barrel of a gun. It is a disturbing thought that the leaders of the Communist parties now coming into existence all over Africa, in newly-independent countries where democracy was hitherto unknown, soon begin to talk in the same terms.

Right under the noses of the guards, Communists in Sarawak's detention camp in 1963 translated Che Guevara's book *Guerrilla Warfare* from English into Chinese, then smuggled it out to the Organisation.

This translation has since been cyclostyled over and over again by the Organisation, and turns up regularly among the 'seized documents' which clutter the country's police stations.

There is an important difference between Che Guevara's book on guerrilla warfare and those by Mao Tse-tung. Mao was providing guidance for his own followers whilst their fight was still in progress. Che Guevara's aim, on the other hand, was specifically to provide a textbook deliberately intended for Communist revolutionaries going over to armed struggle.

Its value is for the ordinary little peasants and urban dwellers who, with no war experience or military background of any sort, take up their guns at the party's command and head into the jungle. Guevara's book may seem elementary to a man with a background provided by a military academy and staff college. But it contains exactly what the little amateur with the shotgun needs.

What do the Communists in the developing areas learn from Guevara? *Guerrilla Warfare* begins with a resounding three-fold affirmation that popular forces can win against an

army, that they do not have to wait for a revolutionary situation and that the rural areas are the natural battlefields in underdeveloped countries.<sup>1</sup> This is guaranteed to raise the spirits of any revolutionary in Latin America, Africa or Asia.

Like Mao, Guevara insists that the political campaign should run parallel with the military one and that the political long-term objectives must be clearly understood by all. He emphasises the importance of the type of propaganda which contains a veiled threat to the fence-sitter—what he calls 'stressing the unquestionable truth that those who hold out against the people are going to lose'.<sup>2</sup>

In his summing up, Guevara outlines an overall pattern which, since Castro's victory in Cuba, has been followed in many another Latin American country. First, a partially armed band takes refuge in some remote, hard-to-reach spot. In due course it is joined by a few 'discontented farmers, idealists and others'. Next, the band sets up semi-permanent encampments, establishes service echelons and adopts the characteristics of a government in miniature.

An enemy attack is beaten off, arms are captured and more guerrillas armed. The process spreads. Saboteurs infest the enemy-held open country, cutting roads and bridges, planting mines and sowing unrest. 'As guerrilla warfare nears the cities, popular support rallies to the cause. Meanwhile, guerrilla combat forces capture heavier arms and begin positional warfare. . . .' Guevara stresses that here he is writing from his own particular experience in Cuba, that other conditions may call for different tactics. 'We are concerned with providing an outline, not a bible.'

The nub of his message to the Communists of his own continent but also, as he and they recognise, of the other two developing continents as well, is: 'Given suitable operating terrain, land hunger, enemy injustices, etc., a hard core of thirty to fifty men is, in my opinion, enough to initiate armed revolution in any Latin American country'.

This is not the Communist teaching of the past, but Mos-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 50 of *Guerrilla Warfare* by Mao Tse-tung and Che Guevara, Cassell, London,

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

cow has shown itself willing when it suits its purpose to encourage those who listen to this message, and Peking almost daily incites them to act on it. Something new and very important has entered into Communist thinking. Its full repercussions have yet to be felt.

There can be no doubt that Cuba, and Guevara's message, have had a profound effect upon Communist thinking elsewhere. This is in no way to minimise the impact made by the military and political writings of Mao Tse-tung: for obvious reasons, this is at its greatest when his books are read by Communists of Chinese origin in South-East Asia. But when Communists today take the decisive step of committing themselves to armed struggle, then for the really down-to-earth hints of the type that the Communist insurgents of Malaya and the Philippines lacked, it is to Guevara that they must, and do, turn.

Significantly, in all the great mass of captured SCO material which has come into the hands of the security authorities, at no time, so far as I can ascertain, has General Giap's *People's War, People's Army* turned up, although the Communists have tape-recorded many items on the Vietnamese experience broadcast by Radio Peking and Radio Hanoi, then transcribed and reproduced them in their publications. I have been able to trace only one instance of Indonesian General Nasution's *Fundamentals of Guerrilla Warfare* being used for study, even though members of the SCO were fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Indonesians during the confrontation period.

If we ask what in particular moulds the thinking of those Communists who may possibly go over to guerrilla warfare in the foreseeable future, the answer is the writings of Che Guevara and Mao Tse-tung. These add up to an explosive mixture which may yet bring additional suffering to areas that have already suffered enough.

The SCO's clandestine publications and captured documents reveal no ebb and flow of support commensurate with the ebb and flow of the 'objective conditions' against the

background of which the Organisation had to function. The development of one set of unfavourable circumstances after another brought no corresponding decline in activity on the part of the Organisation's cadres nor in the financial and other support it extracted from the 'masses'. The people concerned may or may not have reacted adversely in their hearts and minds at certain moments when the tide was running against the movement. The Organisation's grip upon them was by then sufficiently strong for it to be relaxed neither by events nor by anything government might do.

At some point fairly far back along the line it might have been possible for the government of the day to have broken the SCO's hold on the Chinese community, either through its security organisation or by means of imaginatively conceived and intelligently publicised agrarian and other reforms. Or, more probably, by a combination of both. The same was true in the days when the local Communists were building up their support in the villages in the French Indo-China of the past. But colonial administrations do not usually behave like that.

The fact is that in both cases the first, political, round of the fight had long ago been lost for want of political, social, economic and administrative reforms, the gulf between the Communist-influenced section of the population and the administration became, therefore, virtually unbridgeable, and so the second round took a military form.

Thus, as President Lyndon B. Johnson has so often reminded the world in the case of Vietnam, although the response to insurrection had to be a military one, everyone knew, even whilst the guns were firing, that the fight could only be won at the political level. The period of insurrection was a bloody interlude between the realisation by significant sections of the masses that their conditions had become intolerable and the necessary attempt by government to meet the people's genuine needs. The indications are that in developing countries today if this attempt is not made freely in the first instance, it may in due course be extracted at the point of the revolutionary's gun.

PART III

Roots of Guerrilla Warfare



## II

# Where the Roots Grow

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AT ONE PERIOD during the Hukbalahap rebellion in the Philippines, a group of Huks, led by Luis Taruc, were being driven by the security forces ever deeper into unexplored parts of the jungle-covered Zambales Mountains. Hopelessly lost, the Huks were faced with the very real possibility that they might die of starvation. Then they had the good fortune to fall in with some friendly little Negritos—four feet high, curly-headed pygmies, naked except for a narrow 'G-string'. The Negritos shared edible leaves with them, showed them their own jungle tracks and, accompanying them on their way, set them back on course again.

The first sign that the group were approaching human habitations was a straying caribao, or water buffalo. The Huks killed the caribao. The period of semi-starvation was at an end. When they offered to share the beast with the Negritos the little men replied that since they preferred the intestines they would be content with these; the Huks were welcome to have the rest of the meat.

That night Huks and pygmies feasted together. When the meal was over, Taruc decided that he should seize the opportunity for a little Communist propaganda. 'Help us in our fight', he told them, 'and then, when victory comes, you will be able to feast on intestines every day and you'll have freedom too.'

The spokesman for the Negritos rose to reply. 'Sir,' he said, 'we don't know or care much about freedom but if we could have more intestines we would be quite content.'

Many people will feel that this story which Taruc told me in his prison cell sums up quite a lot of what can be said about the appeal of Communism in the developing areas. 'Stomach Communism', as it has been called, can be exaggerated, but it does exist, and the Communists have frequently

been helped by people who have never had the chance to enjoy that degree of luxury which enables one to start thinking about such abstract things as freedom. This is true particularly for the fast-growing lumpen-proletariat, the propertyless urban shanty-town dwellers. These are not usually dreaming of better worlds and new societies. The limit of their thinking is: where is tomorrow's meal coming from? How can we survive for the next twenty-four hours? They will give their temporary support to anyone who looks like being able to contribute to their continued survival. This group has been described as a conservative one and there may be an element of truth in this in periods of normalcy. In times of unrest, however, the lumpen-proletariat may be swayed by demagogues, sent off on the rampage by inflammatory propaganda of either the Right or the Left.

Such people do not normally become organised revolutionaries. But they can be made the cannon-fodder of the revolution. They come out in their thousands when, under Communist leadership, the barricades go up during food riots in Calcutta. In 1957, I saw them in Santiago, Chile, flood into the city from their 'mushroom' slums to loot, burn and destroy. And I saw spokesmen of the then clandestine Communist Party appear at the street corners and weld them into a temporarily formidable force for Communism. The role of the urban slum dwellers is clear in the last stage of a Castro-type revolution which begins with the erosion of the economy and public morale by activities in the countryside and ends in the cities when the régime starts to crumble.

Hunger and degrading sub-human conditions in the rural areas can be a powerful ally for Communism, too. These conditions may breed apathy but even this can serve the Communists when they are first establishing their guerrilla bases in the mountains and jungles.

Hunger of the body, mind and spirit have all brought recruits to Communism. In practice, it is not usually the man who endures physical hunger who becomes the Communist leader. The leader is more likely to be one who, observing it in others and contrasting their plight with his own relative well-being, is driven by a troubled social conscience into

association with Communism. The intellectually hungry, too, turn up in significant numbers among the leaders. These include frustrated men who see society as the cause of their unrealised hopes and so turn their resentment against the social order into which they have been born.

The proportion of these may be expected to be particularly large in a developing society in which the spread of education has outpaced development. The spiritually hungry are those who have quarrelled with the religion into which they have been born, or have never found a faith which could satisfy them, and so they fill the vacuum in their lives by giving to Communism what others give to God. These may exist in exceptional numbers where ancient patterns of life and age-old religious sanctions are crumbling under the impact of a new, alien, materialistic culture.

A complete list of the political, economic, social and human roots of Communism in developing countries would be a catalogue of all those countries' most pressing problems. But there are some which, as experience has shown, either serve the Communist cause particularly well or can be used by the Communists to get support for their armed struggle and are worth underlining.

At the top of the list of those things which can be used to create Communist guerrilla war situations must come *nationalism*, expressed in terms of resentment of foreign domination or interference, and sometimes more narrowly as anti-Americanism or hostility to the West in general. This is in part a legacy of the colonial period although it may be found today in countries which never knew colonial rule. Both Marx and Lenin saw the value of linking the fight against colonialism with the fight for Communism. They believed that there was an irreconcilable conflict of interests between the colonial peoples and the colonising powers. Lenin in particular thought that this would be resolved by bloody struggle.

In practice, a majority of the former colonies obtained their freedom without serious bloodshed. Only one group of Communist leaders, in North Vietnam, succeeded in linking the nationalist appeal to the Communist cause in such a way as to bring a Communist government to power. Most often the

urge for political independence, taking the form of a great popular movement, has pushed Communism into the background. Contrary to what Marx and Lenin expected, nationalism during the period of the decline of colonialism frequently proved to be the rival not the ally of Communism.

The aftermath of the colonial period—what Communist propaganda calls neo-colonialism—may, it seems, possibly serve the cause of Communism better than colonialism ever did. It may well be that the frustration of new nations will more easily turn them in the direction of Communism than did the hunger for independence. For too many nations, political independence has brought little more than a shocked awareness of unrealised dreams, resentment at the knowledge that a country may be politically independent yet still economically dependent.

The Communists have been quick to seize upon this. Thus Latin American countries which for a century and a half have been politically independent are nonetheless represented in Communist propaganda as 'neo-colonies' of the United States. Almost every ill with which a Latin American country is beset is attributed to dollar imperialism.

It is too early to be able to predict whether over a long period 'neo-colonialism' will be made to serve the Communist cause more effectively than did colonialism. What is important to us here is that the Communists believe it will.

When, by January 1950, the Huks had failed to get the quick victory they had expected, the Communist leaders, at a specially convened political bureau meeting in the jungle, declared that the Philippines was still in effect a colony of the United States and renamed their guerrilla movement Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (HMB) or People's Army of Liberation.<sup>1</sup> And in the revolutionary war in South Vietnam the Communists have been able to use nationalism, as expressed in terms of fear of 'neo-colonialist' America and suspicion of its 'puppet' government in Saigon, as effectively as during the earlier period they exploited detestation of

<sup>1</sup> See *He Who Rides the Tiger* by Luis Taruc, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1967, p. 73 and *Guerrilla & Counter-Guerrilla Warfare*, William J. Pomeroy, International Publishers, New York, p. 65.

French colonial rule. From the Communists' point of view the important thing is that it should be possible to represent the local government as the puppet of a Great Power.

No one can doubt that Thailand's military defences against both the internal and external threat of Communism are strengthened by the build-up of American forces there. But against this one has to set the fact that the American presence demonstrably helps to breed anti-Americanism, which the Communists then exploit. So while on the one hand it may become more difficult for the insurgents in the north-east to get very far with their rebellion, Communism begins to emerge as an organised force in other areas, such as in the vicinity of Bangkok itself, where previously it was practically non-existent. Thailand's government, which traditionally has been more independent than most, is now represented by the Communists as America's puppet and the spectre of neo-colonialism is used to disturb the peace of mind of liberals and patriots.

The arrogant, insensitive, or just plain ignorant Western tourist, the big monopoly anxious to drive a hard bargain, and the Western government quick to intervene in other countries' affairs may each play a part in bringing recruits to Communism in the developing countries today.

*Land hunger* is probably the second most valuable ally of any Communist Party contemplating going over to the use of the gun. If, the Communists reason, both the agrarian revolution and the national revolution can be harnessed to the Communist cause then the three most dynamic political forces in the modern world are moving along together. As we have seen from our study of Sarawak and from the Chinese and Cuban experiences, the Communists recognise that they must have the peasants either on their side or, at the very least, neutralised if they are to stand any chance of success in a guerrilla war.

I recall a conversation I had with Colonel Thao<sup>1</sup> in Vietnam in 1962. The Colonel, who at one time fought with the Viet Minh but was now governor of a province in the South,

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Thao subsequently led one of Vietnam's many abortive *coups* and was then hunted down and killed by government forces.

had remained close enough to the peasants still to be on speaking terms with those who worked in their paddy fields by day and fought with the Vietcong at night.

Colonel Thao told me that on one occasion he went through the villages asking the people why it was that they were prepared to risk death and even torture under interrogation by associating with the Viet Cong. In practically every case, he said, the answer had something to do with land ownership. Land hunger led them to feel that life was so intolerable that it was worth any risk to support a cause which offered some hope, no matter how faint, of more land and, therefore, a better life for the people.

I recall, too, an occasion when I met some 170 captured local leaders and commanders of the Hukbalahap in the military jail to which they had been sentenced. For hours on end I took whatever questions they cared to ask me. Hardly any related to Communism. Instead, these men from the barrios seized the opportunity to tell me what had driven them to revolt. They talked of the problems which come from having too little land, of the need for title deeds, the unjust ratio demanded of them at harvest time because they were sharecroppers permanently in debt to the landlord. It was in the areas where the land problem was most acute and most deeply felt that a new barrio-based Huk guerrilla movement began to build up again in 1967.

When Luis Taruc was asked to list positive answers to the guerrilla problem he made his first point: 'Ownership of land by those who till it—the implementation of the programme of "land for the landless"'. The second was: 'Where ownership is not immediately possible there is an urgent need for security of tenure, with low rent, on a lease basis, guaranteed by law, together with the repeal of the old crop-sharing system'.

We have seen that the rural Chinese of Sarawak have their own peculiar land problem. Although they are Sarawak's most efficient farmers they have, for reasons which go deep into both the country's history and its racial structure, very definite and, they contend, crippling restrictive limits set to the land available to them. Land hunger played a very important

part in driving hundreds of thousands of rural people in overcrowded Java into support for the PKI in the days before the party's violent downfall. The Vietnamese Communist Party, Dang Lao-Dong (Vietnamese Workers' Party) which from the start mirrored the common people's highest hopes and deepest aspirations in its propaganda, in 1951 wrote into its statutes that its mission was 'to eliminate the invading imperialists, to suppress the remains of feudal and semi-feudal rule, and to implement the principle 'to each his own piece of land . . .''<sup>1</sup> The inequitable distribution of land in Latin America has been a gift to the Communists there. Even in Europe, it constituted an important part of the background to the events leading up to the Spanish Civil War.<sup>2</sup> It is this probably more than anything else which has given Communism its supporters in the countryside. Land has become dynamite.

For easily understandable reasons there is a *desire for rapid change* in every developing country today. But even when and where aid is received on a vast scale, age-old traditions, deep-rooted habits and conventions frequently put a brake on the speed at which sustained development can occur. A country whose whole economy rests upon the export of raw materials cannot, with the best will in the world, industrialise quickly. The human needs may be urgent but the rate of progress will be infuriatingly slow for those who have placed their hopes of a better life upon it.

Communist propagandists are very conscious of this conflict between hopes and realities—what President John F. Kennedy called the revolution of rising expectations. The Communists' claim that only under socialism can the people's hopes be realised has brought them many a convert. But, to balance the picture, it is also true that a growing realisation that even Communist dictatorial rule is, quite demonstrably, no guarantee of an overnight change from feudalism to a

<sup>1</sup> See *The Two Viet-Nams*, Second Revised Edition, Bernard B. Fall, Pall Mall Press, London, 1967, p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> See *They Shall Not Pass*, Dolores Ibarruri (La Passionaria), Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1966, p. 86f.

modern industrial society, has probably brought as many defections as recruits in recent years.

In the pro-Peking publication *The Marxist* one of China's most faithful apologists wrote: 'The Chinese have no illusions that a completely socialist society can be built within one or two generations. They believe it may take centuries'.<sup>1</sup> Such an admission brings a chill not only to Communist hearts but to those of simple people who had dared to hope that a Communist-ruled socialist society was a short cut to plenty.

Exploitation of the *problems experienced by the emergent proletariat of the towns* helps to give the Communists their 'city bases'. It is fundamental to Marxist-Leninist belief that it is the proletariat, the industrial workers, who should play the leading role in the fight for Communism. But if we are to get the picture in perspective we must recognise that in practice the Communists have not been notably successful with this new class in recent years. And it is a fact—and one which Moscow does not let Peking forget—that contrary to the teachings of Marx and Lenin, Mao Tse-tung long since gave up placing first emphasis upon the historic, revolutionary mission of the proletariat and in recent years he has hardly bothered even to pay lip service to it. This may be bad Marxism on Mao's part but it is in accord with the political realities in the developing continents.

The influence of the Communist-led World Federation of Trade Unions—once the point of entry for Communism into the organised working class movement of many a new country—has visibly declined, particularly in Latin America, during the past decade. In Africa and Asia it has stagnated at least as often as it has progressed. But Moscow may be expected to place renewed emphasis upon the role of the industrial workers in the years ahead.

As we have already noted, where the attempt has been made to run the 'legal' struggle side by side with the armed struggle, as in Venezuela and Sarawak, this has so far proved to be to the detriment of the Communists' work in the trade

<sup>1</sup> 'China's Cultural Revolution', Colin Penn, *The Marxist*, London, January-February 1967, p. 19.

unions and among the city workers. It has led to tensions between party members engaged in the two forms of struggle. Communists of both the Moscow and Peking camp must be expected to use for their own purposes every bad industrial situation, to conduct agitations for higher wages and better conditions and to lead resistance, where they can, to any attempt to depress working class standards. Their willingness to sacrifice their own personal positions understandably leads to their coming to the top in time of trouble. They are, therefore, always liable to achieve a break-through.

But experience tends to show that this is most likely to occur where human relations have for long been bad. An infant industrialism still tends to be an inhuman one. As it matures, so it becomes more easily open to reform. It is noteworthy that in Singapore, for example, the number of Communist-led industrial disputes (which once had very pronounced political overtones) has visibly declined as conciliation machinery and good labour laws have come into being. The Communist Party of Malaya would find it more difficult to make the city of Singapore its 'town base' today than it did when it started its insurrection in 1948.

When one considers the numerical strength of the different social classes in the developing areas it is reasonable to suggest that the Communists have recruited more successfully among the newly educated 'middle class' group than among the working class. One of the problems of any developing country is that you can educate people more quickly than you can develop society to absorb and effectively use them. This leads almost inevitably to the growth of a substantial group which, for want of a better term, one may call the frustrated intellectuals. Communism feeds upon *the frustrations of the educated group*. Many of the new countries have a pool of educated unemployed, or under-employed, and still larger numbers of frustrated, discontented and disillusioned men and women in jobs which do not adequately use the education they have received.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Hammer, *op. cit.*, p. 73, for the educated Vietnamese as 'second-class citizen' in colonial Indo-China.

Here we have a very real human problem. Many of these people are ones whose families sacrificed for years to give them the education which it was believed would automatically open the door to a better life. Only those who have seen the problem at close quarters and have shared the minds of its victims can fully appreciate the sense of let-down and hurt pride to which this leads. The Communists have substantial reasons for believing that disillusioned, frustrated and angry members of this group can be used for Communism. A high proportion of Communist leaders in developing countries are drawn from it.

The mood of restlessness and frustration frequently comes even before the formal process of education is complete, for already the individual student, then whole classes still at middle school, may become increasingly fearful of the problems that lie ahead. There are understandable reasons why high school and college students in Asia, Africa and Latin America have from time to time come under Communist leadership and have then provided the movement with some of its keenest and most reckless young guerrillas. In Latin America, students have traditionally been both restless and politically minded. Often in the past the leaders of established political parties encouraged politics on the campus and recruited their future lieutenants whilst they were still undergraduates. It requires little imagination to see that this political tradition helps the Communists today.

But there are many reasons for the successful agitation which Communists have been able to conduct among students. Even in the 'old' countries a significant proportion of their recruits normally come from the student body. They come in the greatest numbers, of course, during periods of tension or political excitement. This goes for the new countries too. But the student there has far greater problems than has his counterpart in the West. Too often the education he is given was tailored for life in a highly developed society rather than to the needs of a newly developing one. The pressures on the students of Africa and Asia are therefore far greater than those experienced by the students of Europe or North America. And almost always the student of the emergent

country knows that many people have placed their hopes upon him. He must not, dare not, let them down, yet he knows that the chances of this happening are high indeed.

Thirty years ago it was unusual for anyone under the age of seventeen to join the Communist Party. It is quite normal in developing countries today to find fifteen-year-olds and sixteen-year-olds organised in cells within their schools. Communist organisation has been successfully built up, for example, in the high schools of Venezuela and the Chinese middle schools in Singapore and Malaysia whose students gave active support to the guerrillas in the jungle. The illicit character of their activities gives such schoolboy organisations an added attraction, meeting the desire for romance and adventure normal to a healthy adolescent. At that age it is quite easy to see involvement in secret, illegal activities as a proof of high-mindedness and the leaders of such a movement as so many Robin Hoods.

Experience in Malaysia has shown that students who have been organised into Communist cells while they were at middle school tend still to be active when they go on to Nanyang University. They have become too deeply involved to be able to pull out even though by the time they reach university many have come to recognise that their commitment to the movement conflicts with their studies, and so with their future careers, and may quite possibly end in expulsion.

Where the Communist Party is illegal, Communism tends to have the added appeal of a forbidden subject. As with sex, it is probably better to bring it out into the open and put it on to the curriculum in some way. The teaching of civics and the discussion of world affairs in the classroom a few years ago almost certainly contributed to reducing the Communist influence and undermining Communist organisation among schoolgirls and boys in Malaysia.

The problem of Communism in schools is likely to be particularly acute where there is a minority group which already has a language problem. This is particularly true of the overseas Chinese of South-East Asia who have for long been conscious of the need for education. The tragedy was

that for reasons which go deep into their history the Chinese children were educated in a language which was understood only by their own group and the education they were given had far more to do with life in the old China than with the new countries of South-East Asia. During the 1940s and '50s the Chinese education problem probably played a greater part than any other single factor in bringing recruits to Communism in Malaya, Singapore and parts of the Philippines.

As a minority group becomes more fully integrated into the country of its adoption, so more of its members acquire the language of the majority. And as time goes on it comes to be recognised that the schools must teach the national language and come in line with national education programmes. This is, therefore, a problem which belongs to a particular, transitional period but it happens to be one through which some countries especially vulnerable to Communist appeals are passing today.

The problem of language is of course bound up with that of *racial minorities*, and particularly neglected ones. So long as Communist parties thought in the old way, believing that power was to be seized in the cities by urban masses, they were unlikely to pay much attention to small racial groups. This was particularly so if these were backward people living in remote rural areas.

Once the new approach to armed struggle is accepted the picture changes, as one can see in Thailand. There the Communists' activities among the disaffected and backward Lao minority gave them a useful guerrilla base in an area where they could get Pathet Lao and Vietnamese support. By means of a combination of 'social action' for the people and terror against local leaders they have been able quickly to spread their influence and control, causing increasing concern to both the Thai government and to the United States—who have responded by building military roads and bringing social services to areas where none had previously existed. These will need to be maintained if they are not in the end to become self-defeating.

The Communists' success with the neglected Muslim-

Malay minority in South Thailand, against the Malayan border, has given the Communist Party of Malaya the chance to gain longed-for experience in administering a predominantly Muslim area.

According to Wilfred G. Burchett,<sup>1</sup> the Diem government's mishandling of the Kor and Hre tribes produced the first organised violence in the second phase of the Vietnam war. The Communists were quick to make the most of it.

It must be expected that if the Communist Party ever becomes a serious, organised force in Africa this will be one of the means by which it will create the disunity and political turbulence which Communists believe is conducive to the growth of their movement and to the creation of local guerilla war situations. In almost every African country there is at least one alienated, outside group, a racial or tribal minority which has not been fully absorbed into the new society and which has its own special grievances.

Newly independent governments, anxious to put all they have into the most rapid possible development and, therefore, liable to begrudge every diversion from this urgent task, can be as neglectful—or resentful—of their minorities as were colonial governments. But the neglect or persecution of a minority group can, taking the long view, prove to be a costly business.

*Under-administered areas* can be ideal breeding grounds for guerrilla groups. Nothing helped the growth of the Sarawak Communist Organisation in its early days more than the fact that Sarawak had for long been one of the most under-administered countries in the world. It was easy to think of it as a peaceful little backwater which could almost be left to run itself provided that the various racial groups were balanced off against each other. The most advanced group was, as we have noted, also the least assimilated one and it was the one with the most pressing land problems. This contributed significantly to a seemingly idyllic situation being changed in a few years into a highly explosive one.

<sup>1</sup> *Vietnam: Inside Story of the Guerrilla War*, International Publishers, New York, 1965, p. 129f.

But it is doubtful if this could have occurred had it not been that the country was so under-administered that no one was aware of the rapid growth of a highly organised revolutionary movement which, though it may not be able to win a guerrilla war, could create a situation which, by wasting the nation's wealth and manpower, may hold back the development which the country so urgently needs.

Remoteness of government from the lives of the people works in two ways, both of them detrimental to the security of the State. It makes it easy for Communists to represent government as a hostile organisation—the 'enemy'—and it leads to government being ignorant of what is going on. This happened in Thailand with backward minority groups and in Sarawak with a relatively advanced one. But the consequence was the same. Many of the areas in which live the large Indian communities of Guatemala, Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru are every bit as remote from government, as under-administered, and as ideal for guerrilla purposes, as any part of Asia or Africa.

Rarely listed among the causes for the growth of revolutionary Communist movements in backward countries, but in my opinion a very important one, is the *boredom and monotony of life in remote rural areas*. In the days when illiteracy was almost universal in the countryside and when even small children worked in the fields with their parents from the time they got up in the morning until they went to bed at dusk, this was not such a pressing problem. Traditionally the village community was a conservative one.

Today minds are opened, horizons broadened, in the classroom. It is not surprising that the youngsters who emerge from the little schools on the jungle's edge, or the larger ones to which they travel in the nearest town, find life intolerable when their homes are tiny villages totally lacking cultural and recreational facilities of any kind. Their plight and their restlessness are even greater when, as is so often the case, they are far from any neighbour and practically surrounded by inhospitable jungle. That darkness comes so early in the tropics serves to aggravate the problem particularly

where, as is usual, there is no lighting in the home other than an oil lamp and no street lighting at all—even where there are any roads to light.

It does not require much imagination to see that life can take on a new dimension for the youngster who, living in such circumstances, joins a revolutionary movement. Suddenly life is given meaning and purpose. The monotony of the long, dark evenings is ended. Indeed, as the experience of the SCO shows, the hours of darkness become ones of excitement and intense activity. The jungle, which formerly cramped and restricted life for those who were compelled to exist on its fringes, becomes a place where guns can be hidden, hides dug, illegal libraries buried and clandestine papers produced. The very backwardness of life in the remote area can now contribute to the appeals of Communism where in the past it would have been seen as a barrier to it.

*Corruption* is a feature of life in most developing countries. It has served the cause of Communism well. In China it brought support to the Communists and their Red Army and spread detestation of the Chiang Kai-shek régime among vast numbers of people who knew little about politics but who had learned from hard experience that where corruption is rife it is the man at the bottom who suffers most. The Communists' promise to deal roughly with those guilty of corruption was guaranteed a sympathetic response. Corruption in Thailand has helped to win support for Communism among some of the better types of young people of middle-class origin who have reacted against it and among the poor who have suffered from it.

In Laos it widened the gulf between rulers and ruled. The Viet Minh benefited by the corrupt character of the Bao Dai régime in Vietnam, and the Viet Cong by the corruption—and misgovernment—which flourished under Ngo Dinh Diem. The corruption and decadence of former collaborators who misgoverned the Philippines in the first post-war years bear part, at least, of the responsibility for the Huk insurrection. Nothing contributes more to the creation among the common people of that 'them' and 'us' attitude to government

which is an almost essential pre-requisite for the creation of a guerrilla war situation.

Perhaps one should link with corruption the use of atrocities and terrorism by military and security forces in the opening stages of a guerrilla war. When the armed struggle first begins the Communist leadership for very good reasons normally make atrocities against working people a capital offence. Mao Tse-tung enforced this rule with an iron hand. The Huks even went so far as to make the killing of a peasant's water buffalo punishable by death. The leaders know that a guerrilla group's survival will depend upon the goodwill, or at the least the benevolent neutrality, of the rural people.

All too often government forces during the same period show little awareness of the fact that they, too, will need the sympathy and support of those same people if they are to have any quick success in their anti-insurgency operation. Politics are as important as military prowess to both sides in a guerrilla war. It has become almost standard experience for the government to lose the first round in the political sphere because of the behaviour of its troops.

In his prison cell, where he was serving three life sentences, Taruc once told me that each time a barrio was put to the torch by government forces a new wave of recruits joined the Huks; for every woman raped before her husband's or her father's eyes a dozen men would come pleading for guns and the chance to use them—and many a young girl would come asking for a gun, too. It seemed to me that such a reaction was understandable but, because of its importance for others, it needed to be checked. I got Taruc to give me times and places, then went to a man high in the security organisation and asked him to check its records to see whether these supported Taruc's claim. He did. And his reply was that Taruc had, if anything, underestimated the people's reaction to the atrocities of the early years.

Officials in Guatemala have admitted to me that when the Communist guerrilla bands were first established in the mountains the security forces immediately earned the hostility, and therefore the non-co-operation, of the local people whom

they treated as a hostile population. They destroyed their villages, feasted off their livestock, made free with their daughters—and then wondered why no one would give them information about the guerrillas' whereabouts. Soon American advisers were telling them that what was needed was a hearts-and-minds campaign, but there was little hope of being able to create a new and favourable image in those areas where the security forces had already operated. In a Communist-led guerrilla war the defenders of the *status quo* resort to terror from fear, the poor who support the insurrection, from hatred. But the side which starts with clean hands has a great advantage.

Most of the problems we have been considering are ones which governments have inherited from the past even though they are not necessarily capable of easy or quick solution. Communist guerrillas use the tactic of the dramatic gesture. Governments might be well advised to adapt the idea to their own purposes. For *bad human relations and a failure to communicate by government* have certainly contributed to the creation of guerrilla war situations, not least in Diem's Vietnam. President Ramon Magsaysay demonstrated the value of the dramatic gesture when he initiated imaginatively conceived, well-publicised local reforms in the areas from which the Huks drew their strongest support. But this is something of a cautionary tale, for Magsaysay was killed in an air-crash and before long, with the Huk rebellion crushed, many of the schemes he launched were being allowed to wither.

Today the Huks are active again in those same areas. But it is going to be immensely more difficult to get as great a public response to such gestures a second time. Once started they must be maintained. The public needs visible evidence that the authorities know and care about the problems of the common people, that they are attempting to find the answers and will continue to do so even after the Communist threat has passed.

Governments who are saddled with a Communist organisation which is making preparations for the armed struggle, or who already have a guerrilla war on their hands, tend to ask what reforms they can introduce which will cut the ground

from under the Communists' feet. The answer, put quite brutally, is that had the reforms been carried through earlier there might possibly be no guerrilla war situation. The point to grasp is that such situations do not just happen. They are made.

## Guerrilla Prospects

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THERE ARE AT the moment of writing Communist guerrillas active in Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Burma, the Philippines, Venezuela, Guatemala, Bolivia, Colombia. There are probably a few guerrilla bands still active in Peru, Ecuador, the Republic of Honduras, North Brazil. There may be some in process of formation, despite all that the Communist Party of Indonesia has suffered in recent years, in parts of Java. The Communists give their support to guerrillas now under training or actually being infiltrated into the Republic of South Africa, Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique, Portuguese Guinea. By next week this list may be too long or too short. In contrast with the first post-war years the armed struggle these days tends to be started, called off and then, maybe, started again.

If Communists in developing countries, applying the Marxist teaching on the use of violence as recently developed, respond to the call of Moscow, Peking, Havana and Hanoi to take to the guns and the jungles, where do they go from there?

Russia still talks the language of revolution but one is increasingly forced to the conclusion that her words sometimes lack a certain warmth and sincerity. For millions the very word Moscow has for long been synonymous with the revolt of the oppressed. The world movement she headed was the great movement of revolt. Yet Moscow's leaders clearly have misgivings today as to whether the guerrilla wars and wars of national liberation to which they still give theoretical and verbal support may not in practice conflict with the overall strategy of peaceful co-existence.

Russia's reputation prompts her to use the same vocabulary, make the same revolutionary noises as in the past. But the world has changed. A war fought with nuclear weapons

might destroy the world. Not just capitalism, but Communism too. Destroy, that is, all that the Russian people, at enormous cost to themselves, have built during the past half century and in which their leaders take such pride today. It is better, they seem to reason, that almost any group of Communists anywhere should be sacrificed rather than that such a calamity should occur.

With Russia's encouragement and support, the pro-Moscow Communist Party of Venezuela sent some of its keenest and most idealistic young cadres into the mountains to be guerrilla fighters. Faithfully the party tried to follow Moscow's line of maintaining the armed struggle and constitutional struggle simultaneously. By April 1967, Moscow had decided that the experiment had failed. The Eighth Plenum of the Party took the decision to call off the guerrilla activities.

Anyone with any practical knowledge of guerrilla warfare knows that it is relatively easy for the individual to take to the jungle, immensely more difficult for him to come out again—unless it is as a defector, with the connivance of the security forces. Those who over a period of seven years followed Moscow's call to take to the jungles and mountains in Venezuela were faced with the almost impossible task of trying somehow to come down and become re-absorbed into a legal existence in the city. Yet by then almost every one of them was known to the security police, every detail of his record and his personal appearance carefully recorded in the appropriate file. To these faithful members the party's decision must have looked very much like a death sentence. And to add to their distress, they would be seen by the pro-Castro groups, who also had established themselves in the mountains, as so many traitors to the cause.

In East Malaysia members of the Sarawak Communist Organisation concerned themselves little with the rights and wrongs of the dispute between Moscow and Peking for both had backed the idea of armed struggle. With enormous enthusiasm the SCO committed itself to the use of the gun with all the risks that this involves. Its sister party in West Malaysia, the Communist Party of Malaya, identifying itself with the Indonesian aim of crushing Malaysia, did the same.

Of the CPM, Brigadier Richard Clutterbuck, who fought against the Communists in the earlier period of armed struggle, wrote that 'probably no body of men and women have shown such endurance since the early Christian martyrs'.<sup>1</sup> No higher tribute could be paid by a professional soldier to the men who had been his enemies.

Malaysia's guerrilla fighters are seen in a different light by Russia, according to the pro-Peking CPM, which chose to interpret an article dealing with confrontation, published in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (mouthpiece of Russia's Young Communist League) of March 19, 1967, as an attack on 'all opponents of the imperialist-Rahman puppet set-up'. The *Malayan Monitor's*<sup>2</sup> headline read: 'Indonesian, Malayan and North Kalimantan revolutions betrayed by Soviet revisionists'. The Soviet paper, it alleged, had attacked all three 'national liberation movements' as advocates of 'dangerous adventures' who were acting 'contrary to the principles of peaceful co-existence'.

This was reading a lot into the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* article. The suggestion was that armed struggle against the Malaysian Government had for some reason come into conflict with Soviet co-existence policy. Just two weeks later a joint communiqué announced that a trade agreement between Malaysia and the Soviet Union had been concluded and the two countries had agreed in principle to the exchange of diplomatic missions. Predictably, Peking and its supporters denounced both the 'imperialist puppet set-up' and the Soviet 'revisionists'. It is not difficult to guess what were the thoughts of Chin Peng who until recently had been hailed in Moscow as a great revolutionary leader and had now become a dangerous adventurist. And one can appreciate the sense of let-down which must have been felt by his comrades in Sarawak who had drawn much of their inspiration from Russia's frequent calls to Communists in developing countries to engage in armed struggle but who now found themselves allegedly under blanket condemnation.

<sup>1</sup> *The Long Long War: The Emergency in Malaya 1948-1960*, Cassell, London, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> *Malayan Monitor*, March 1967, Vol. 20, No. 3, p. 9.

In Colombia, in Latin America, the Moscow-line Communist Party had since 1954 been intermittently engaged in guerrilla war. Its members had tried to penetrate and influence the vast bandit and guerrilla movement which had grown out of a sordid and bloody quarrel in 1948 between the ruling parties. By 1964 a guerrilla bloc was formed, composed of the various political groups which had in recent years taken to the gun along with peasants who had staged spontaneous risings.

Proclaiming its strategic aim to be the conquest of power, the Communist Party set about the task of trying to make itself the leader of all the various groups, Trotskyist, pro-Peking Communists, Left revolutionaries and others within the united fighting front. In the April 1967 issue of *World Marxist Review*, Alberto Gomez claimed that the Party now headed the broad guerrilla movement. Incidentally, what had by now become a struggle for the seizure of power began as an armed movement of self-defence, which is the way the armed struggle began in Sarawak in far away Malaysia.

It is possible that Colombia's President Lleras Restrepo also felt he had a link with Malaysia. For on April 26 the President was reported as having told a visiting Russian trade delegation that Colombia would do business with the Soviet Union if the Moscow-line Communists would pull out of the guerrilla war. There was a time when local Communists would have felt certain that Moscow would reject such a piece of blatant horse-trading. In the light of recent Soviet behaviour, however, they were bound to have misgivings. Moscow might well sell them down the river. And the pro-Peking Communists and other guerrilla fighters would know that their pro-Moscow comrades-in-arms might suddenly decide that the overall demands of peaceful co-existence, as determined by the Soviet Union, required a return to the constitutional struggle and the abandonment of armed struggle.

It was in April 1967, too, that President Barrientos of Bolivia, on the eve of the Punta del Este Pan-American conference, told the world that his troops were engaged in a fight with Communist guerrillas near the border with

Paraguay and Argentina. 'Revolution by armed struggle is the only way to the people's liberation', said *Peking Review*, April 28, reporting a statement of the Political Committee of the (pro-Peking) Bolivian Communist Party.

An article entitled 'Present Phase of the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America', in the June issue of *World Marxist Review*, struck a more cautious note. The two writers began with a reference to the 'new revolutionary armed struggle' in Bolivia but although, in the analysis which followed, they used the old heart-warming revolutionary phrases, their discouraging conclusion was that after a decade of struggle with the forces of reaction in North and South America there was now 'a slowing down to some extent' of the revolutionary process. The article ended with a warning against 'sectarian and adventurist trends' as well as a 'wait-and-see attitude'.

By now the emphasis placed on Asia, Africa and Latin America as the 'weak links in the capitalist chain' and, therefore, the most important areas of struggle in the present era, is increasingly questioned by those Western Communists who support Moscow, and by Moscow itself in its dispute with Peking. Particularly revealing is a booklet, *Whither China?*<sup>1</sup> by R. Palme Dutt, who for years headed the British Communist Party's International Department and for a generation had a direct responsibility to Moscow for guiding Communist parties in colonial areas.

Dutt quotes the letter of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, June 14, 1963, which declared that 'the vast areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America' are now 'the most vulnerable areas under imperialist rule and the storm centres of world revolution dealing direct blows at imperialism'. This 'new theory' of the Chinese Communist Party, he says, has turned Marxist-Leninist theory of the movement for national liberation upside down. 'Instead of presenting the main base in the working class and socialist countries, with the national liberation movement as allies', the CCP had proclaimed the national liberation movements

<sup>1</sup> Communist Party, London, 1967.

in Asia, Africa and Latin America 'as having now become the main force of the world socialist revolution'.

By 1965, Dutt continues, 'this geographical three-continent theory of the revolution separating Europe and the Soviet Union from the main area of the world revolution was carried forward into a theory of the battle of "the rural areas of the world" against "the cities of the world"'. He quotes Lin Piao, from *Peking Review*, September 3, 1965: 'Taking the entire globe, if North America can be called "the cities of the world" then Asia, Africa and Latin America constitute "the rural areas of the world" . . . in a sense the contemporary world revolution hinges on the revolutionary struggles of the Asian, African and Latin American peoples who make up the overwhelming majority of the world's population. The socialist countries should regard it as their internationalist duty to support the people's revolutionary struggles in Asia, Africa and Latin America'.

Contemptuously Dutt declares that 'this geographical theory of the battle between "cities" and "rural areas", drawn from the experience of the Chinese revolution and transferred to the world scale, plays straight into the hands of the reactionary imperialist theories. . . .'

The Moscow line which Dutt is defending in fact represents a break with traditional Communist policy. It was *The Programme of the Communist International*<sup>1</sup> which long ago said that colonies and semi-colonies 'represent the world rural district in relation to the industrial countries, which represent the world city'. Moscow's fear today, it seems, is that the new countries may group themselves around Communist China instead of round the Soviet Union. And Russia's foreign policy needs, now even more than in the last days of the Communist International, take precedence over the interests of the revolutionary movements of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Moscow continues to talk the language of armed struggle to certain selected areas but even this verbal support is unpredictable: it may be withdrawn at any moment. There is

<sup>1</sup> Modern Books, London, 1932.

no limit to Peking's verbal militancy. China, like Castro's Cuba, is prepared to call for revolution anywhere in Asia, Africa or Latin America and to publicise consistently the guerrillas' activities, holding them up as examples which others should follow.

Both China and Cuba are also eager to give practical aid by training would-be guerrillas in jungle warfare and urban terrorism. In the circumstances, it would seem likely that those contemplating or already engaged in armed struggle will increasingly look to China in particular as their natural ally. But if they hope for very much more than this they, too, may be disappointed. Despite all the stirring calls to arms which come from Peking, no army of advisers is waiting to take off for the next country whose Communists decide to head for the jungles, nor is there a fleet of ships waiting to bring them guns, munitions and other material. Most would be happy to see even a few advisers and the occasional small consignment of arms coming in.

In the last days of the earlier Huk revolt the Philippines' Communists desperately tried to get aid from China, but none came. The Communist Party of Malaya's guerrilla army was slowly worn down over the years, but at no point did China come to its rescue. The Communists of Sarawak, Chinese to a man, went unaided into the armed struggle and they were left in an extremely difficult situation by the sudden ending of Confrontation. But no veterans of the Long March, no great authorities on the art of guerrilla warfare, infiltrated into Sarawak from Peking even though this would not have been a particularly difficult operation. Instead, one solitary Chinese who had earlier been deported to the mainland, who had no guerrilla experience and who could by no stretch of the imagination be described as a political heavyweight, joined the SCO's leaders in their base over the border. His role would appear to be that of an observer rather than adviser.

Because of the conspicuous absence, so far, of any Communist parties of truly significant size in Africa, China seems to have settled for trying to buy African politicians instead. In this she has had some limited success. But this is no way

in which to establish a revolutionary movement. A genuinely ideological movement is unlikely to be built on such corrupt foundations, and it is not thus that totally committed, dedicated converts are made. Yet a clear-cut ideological-political goal, undeviatingly adhered to, and incorruptible, dedicated cadres are the two greatest assets any guerrilla movement can possess. It is these which have given the Communists something which the other side has most often lacked. And it is these which China has treated as expendable in Africa.

Mysterious Chinese have allegedly turned up in small numbers in Latin American countries in recent years, though substantial evidence of their presence has usually been lacking. In any case, while it is relatively easy for a Chinese to infiltrate unnoticed into South-East Asian society it is practically impossible for him to do so in most Latin American countries; his appearance is against him. A Chinese continues to look conspicuously Chinese wherever he may be. There is even less evidence of any significant quantities of arms reaching Latin America from China although presumably small quantities might in certain circumstances be smuggled in by merchant seamen and others.

As Professor Morton Halperin, of Harvard University, has said: 'The Chinese are not willing to run greater risks than the Russians. They just have a different, and possibly more correct, assessment of how dangerous it is to support wars of national liberation'.<sup>1</sup>

Castro has publicly proclaimed his belief in Cuba's right to aid revolutionaries all over Latin America and Communists of the area are probably justified in believing that this is the quarter from which they are likely to get most material help. But Cuba is small, and continental Latin America very large. There is an obvious limit to the amount of aid which may be expected, even though this could be decisive in actually launching parties into the armed struggle. Once launched they must depend upon their own resources. Cuba and China alike, one suspects, can provide enough assistance to wound but not enough to kill.

<sup>1</sup> *China and the Peace of Asia*, ed. Alastair Buchan, Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1965.

The revolutionary talk at the meeting of the Organisation for Latin American Solidarity (OLAS) in Havana in August 1967 was good for the morale of the guerrilla fighters and would-be guerrillas represented there. Significantly, no delegate from the Communist Party of Venezuela was present. Most vocal were the Marxist splinter groups which abound in Latin America. These nowadays are generally very Latin American, enthusiastically pro-Castro, have a fair degree of sympathy for Peking and tend to be bitterly anti-Moscow. Che Guevara—and in some cases Trotsky—inspire their revolutionary thought which has been analysed and clarified for them by Régis Debray.<sup>1</sup> Committed to the hard line and spurred on by Havana, they may start abortive guerrilla activities here and there in the period ahead but they are more likely to fail than to succeed. They contribute little that is new to the mainstream of Communist revolutionary thinking which we have been considering here, and even less to the development of their respective countries, except to the extent that they may frighten governments into granting long-overdue reforms.

In striking contrast was the publication in Moscow at that same time of *World Revolutionary Movement of the Working Class*, written by a team of Soviet experts. 'Latin American Communists', it said, 'are proceeding from the fact that revolution is not synonymous with armed struggle.'<sup>2</sup>

What does all this mean in practice? Moscow is still prepared to incite to armed struggle people in the developing continents who have absorbed the Marxist teaching on the use of violence as a means of gaining political ends. But in so doing she is talking the language of an earlier period, which grew out of a quite different world situation and an entirely different Soviet strategy. And even this somewhat hesitant

<sup>1</sup> See *Révolution dans la Révolution?*, Librairie Francois Maspero, 1967, (*Revolution in the Revolution?* MR Press, New York, August 1967), and 'Latin America: The Long March', *New Left Review*, London, September-October, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1967, p. 370.

and unpredictable verbal support is prompted by the needs of Soviet foreign policy rather than by Marxist missionary zeal. Those Communists and their sympathisers who take Moscow's words at their face value are therefore likely sooner or later to find themselves abandoned, even attacked, by the very propaganda machine which first encouraged them to risk their lives by taking to the gun.

Peking, Havana and Hanoi, with greater conviction, incite Communists to take to guerrilla warfare. But between them they create a quite unreal, even idealised, picture of what is involved.

This is typified by *Some Aspects of Guerrilla Warfare in Vietnam*, a booklet by Lieutenant-General Hoang Van Thai, published by Hanoi's Foreign Languages Publishing House for distribution overseas. The cover design depicts a group of people all happily working together. It is a cheerful scene. Grandfather is putting steel spikes with fish-hook ends into a wooden block. A young guerrilla fighter, gun on back, is showing two young women how to make another type of spiked man-trap. Even the little toddler is giving concentrated attention to some similar task. And all this against a background of rose leaves. The intention is to convey a picture of the entire population from the youngest to the oldest actively working for the guerrilla movement. But it is a glamorised version of something which should in fact make the blood run cold.

And it is a glamorised version of the armed struggle which the young Chinese of Sarawak, the barrio people of the Philippines and the campesinos of the Latin American interior get from Peking, Havana and Hanoi today. There is plenty of evidence (as we have seen from the SCO's publications) that the majority of those who go into what must by its very nature be a ruthless and pitiless form of activity have a completely false, idealised picture of what they are going into. 'A long and arduous struggle' has an heroic, if somewhat austere appeal. But civil war is the dirtiest and cruellest form of war, as anyone who has seen it in practice knows perfectly well.

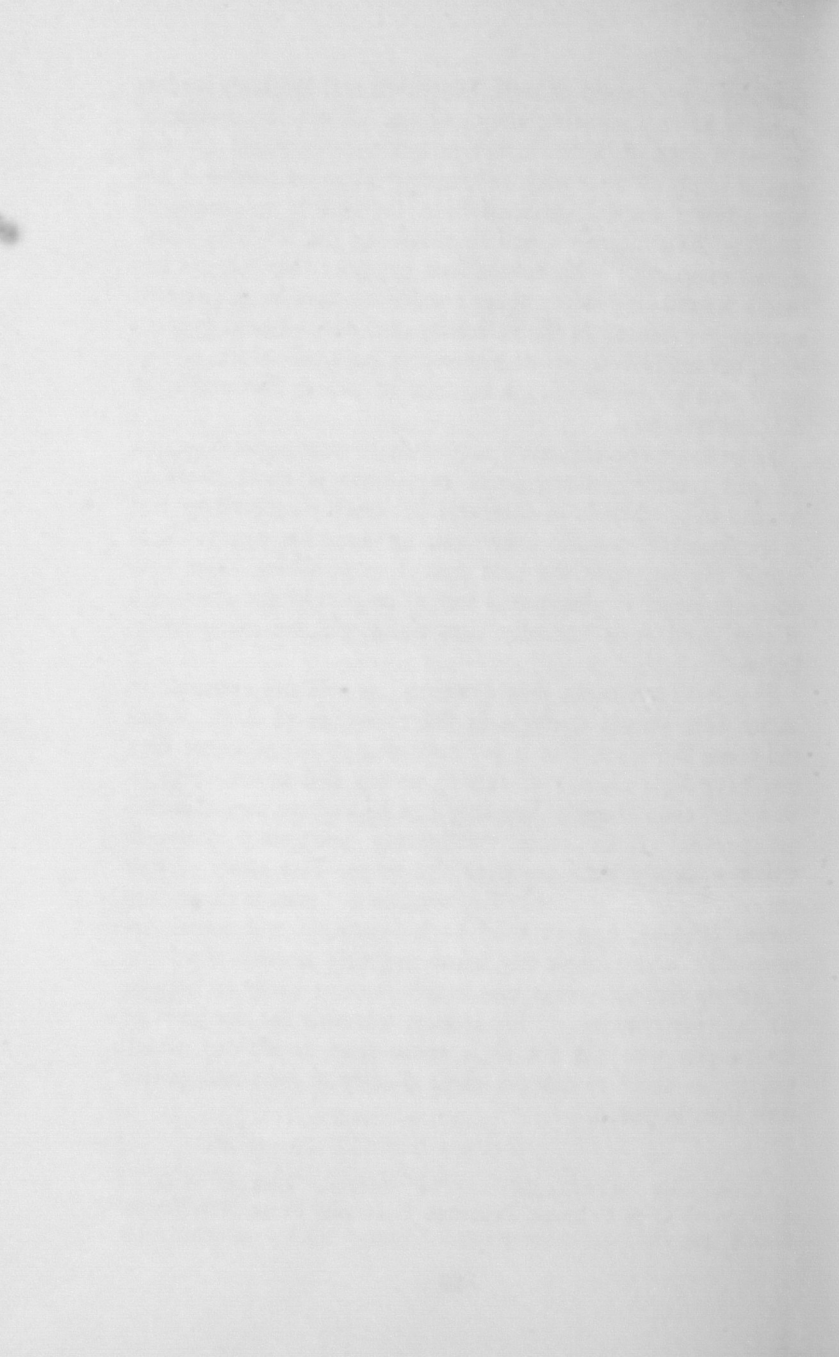
Not only is a false picture conveyed of what is involved;

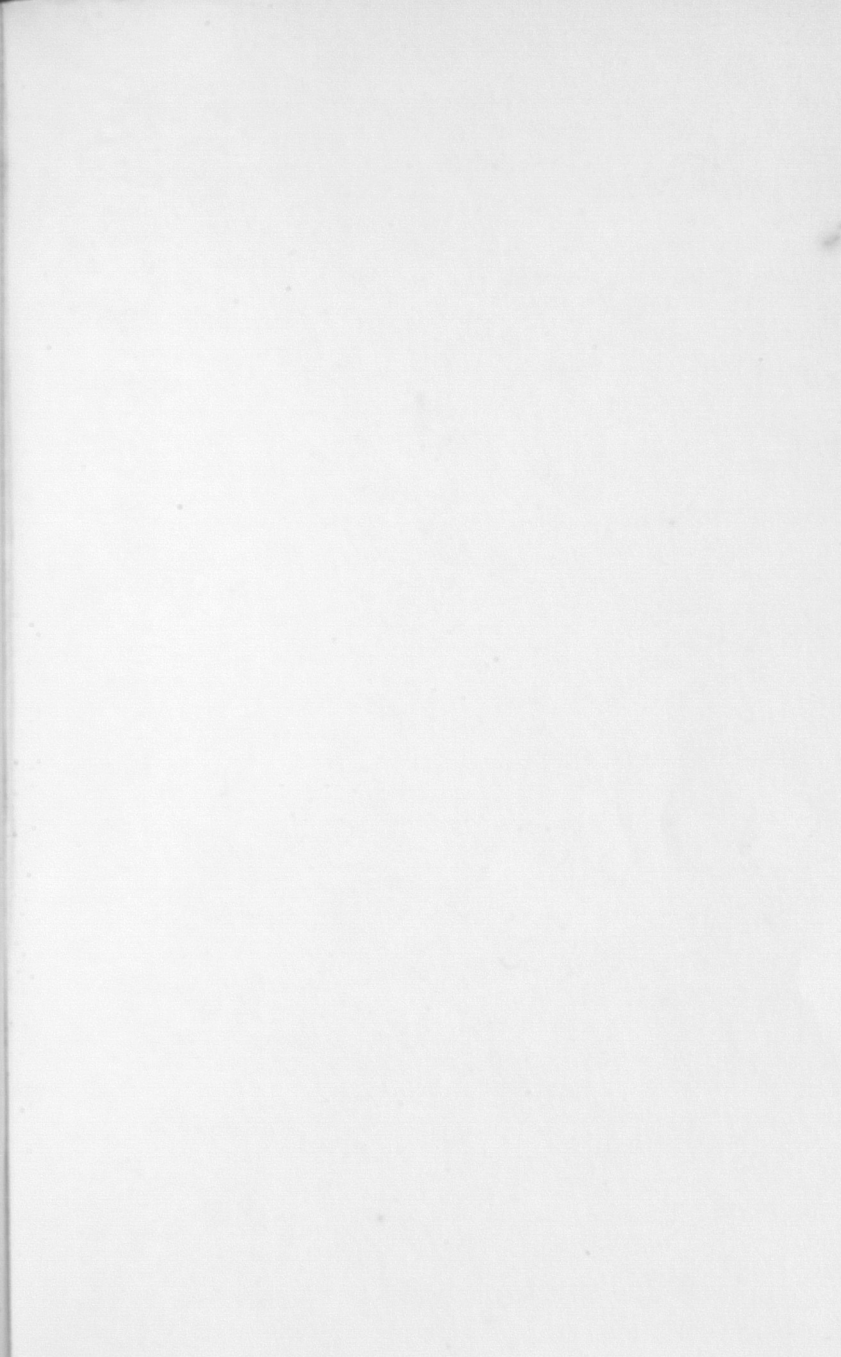
false hopes are raised as well. Moscow's and Peking's leaders certainly know that what they call the 'objective conditions' for the success of Communist guerrilla movements are not present today. Where such movements have succeeded it has been against the background of a favourable international situation. As Professor Cyril E. Black has put it: 'The Communist experience with revolutions suggests that success has been achieved only when three conditions have been present: a critical weakening of the authority of the incumbent government, the ineffectiveness of alternative political reform movements and an international balance of power favourable to the Communists'.<sup>1</sup>

To be more specific, even according to traditional Marxist-Leninist teaching, Communist revolution is most likely to succeed in conditions of international crisis produced by war or profound economic recession. In practice every Communist régime, with the sole exception of Cuba, came into existence either during world war or as part of the aftermath of war. And it is unlikely that there will be many other Cubas.

This does not mean that Communists will not continue to launch into armed struggle in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. But it is reasonable to suggest that they may have little chance of seizing power and maintaining it. However, even though they may not be able to win, this will not prevent them from conducting protracted guerrilla activities slowly built up over the years. The effect of this can only be to drag already impoverished countries down into deeper poverty, and to hold back economic and social development where these are most urgently needed. And the tragedy is that the areas where this is most likely to happen are the very ones where life is least tolerable for the mass of the people, who ask for little more than conditions which will enable them to achieve their dignity as men and to live their lives in peace.

<sup>1</sup> *Communism and Revolution—The Strategic Uses of Political Violence*, ed. Cyril E. Black, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1964, p. 425.







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## The Author

Douglas Hyde has spent much of his time in the last seventeen years travelling in Europe, Asia, Africa and the American continent lecturing, observing and writing of what he has seen and heard.

A recognised authority on Communism—which he personally renounced in 1948 after many years as an active Party member and eventually news editor of the *Daily Worker*—he has maintained personal contacts in many countries with leaders of all political shades. This book is the result of travels in South-East Asia and Latin America, when he went deeply into the activities of guerrillas.

As an author he established his reputation with his first book, *I Believed*. His books since then include *One Front Across the World*, *The Mind Behind New China*, *United We Fall*, *The Peaceful Assault and Confrontation in the East*, a Background Book on the conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia. His most recent book is *The Troubled Continent: A New Look at Latin America*.

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