WHEN WE RIDE ON OUR ENEMIES

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PART 3 OF 4 OF

THE SPECTER THAT STILL HAUNTS: LOCATING A REVOLUTIONARY CLASS WITHIN CONTEMPORARY CAPITALISM-IMPERIALISM

> The (communist) movement is in its very essence an international movement. This means...that an incipient movement in a young country can be successful only if it makes use of the experiences of other countries. In order to make use of these experiences it is not enough merely to be acquainted with them, or simply to copy out the latest resolutions. What is required is the ability to treat those experiences critically and to test them independently. He who realises how enormously the modern (communist) movement has grown and branched out will understand what a reserve of theoretical forces and political (as well as revolutionary) experience is required to carry out this task."
>
> -Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*[1]

Since the death of Mao Zedong and the subsequent capitalist restoration in China, communist people's wars became, to one degree or another, contenders for power in the Philippines in the mid-1980s, in Peru in the early 1990s, and in Nepal at the beginning of the new millennium. The people's war led by the Communist Party of India (Maoist) was deemed by the Indian Prime Minister

1 Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?,* in *Selected Works* vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 109–10. I have changed Lenin's "working-class movement" to "communist movement" because, in light of the overall thrust of *What Is To Be Done?* and my argument in part one for dropping the term "working class" when describing the revolutionary class in capitalist-imperialist society, "communist movement" better captures the meaning of Lenin's words today.

in 2005 to be the country's greatest internal security threat, and the CPI(Maoist) has made great strides in its military capabilities and organized mass base over the last several decades. While none of these people's wars reached the level of strength necessary to launch an all-out assault aimed at seizing power nationwide, in at least two instances the communist-led revolution became the phenomenon most impacting those particular countries—the subjective factor, more than anything else, began to determine the objective situation.

Given the drastic changes in the workings of the capitalist-imperialist system over the last several decades and the new class configurations these changes have wrought, how recent people's wars were able to thrive in these new conditions is perhaps the most important question for communists to consider as we develop new strategies and practices. Unfortunately these revolutionary experiences have been given inadequate summations for a number of reasons.[2] First, in some instances defeats and setbacks, including the death, imprisonment, and/or capitulation of many of those leading these revolutions, have rendered summation by those comrades impossible. Second, within the international communist movement the process of summation has too often focused one-sidedly on the documents and resolutions of the communist parties involved rather than the practices of those revolutions. This relates to a larger weakness of Maoism: that while Maoists, or at least those who are Maoist in deed and not just in declaration, have been exemplary at carrying out detailed social investigation among the basic masses and using concrete analysis of concrete conditions to guide strategy and practice, on a theoretical level Maoists have been far too content to issue general statements and rehash general principles rather than rigorously developing theory on the basis of practical experience and empirical data.

2 To be clear, my purpose in this essay is not to provide some definitive "line" on the successes and failures on these people's wars, but to consider what their advances tell us about the social base for revolution within contemporary capitalism-imperialism and how that social base became a revolutionary people in the course of these people's wars.

The overall objective of this four-part essay has been to locate where, under contemporary capitalist-imperialism, a class exists that can be organized and led by communists to overthrow the present social order and embark on the socialist transition to communism. The central thesis put forward in part one was that *it is in the **process** of dispossession, including the casting off of people into the reserve army of labor, and through the volatile effects of the social anarchy of capitalist production that masses of people most receptive to the aims of and immediate need for communist revolution can be found*. This third part shall test this thesis in relation to the achievements of people's wars since the capitalist restoration in China. While the relative successes of these people's wars rested on a number of factors, most importantly the subjective actions of communists, here I argue that one key objective factor in the advance of these people's wars was the existence of masses of people undergoing the process of dispossession and set in motion against the social anarchy of capitalist production. This is particularly evident in Lima at the height of the people's war in Peru in the early 1990s, in Davao City in the Philippines during the first half of the 1980s, and more recently in the Dandakaranya forest region of India.

A note on sources is in order before digging into analysis of these three sites of revolutionary struggle. Given the above critique of existing Maoist discourse, this analysis seeks to draw theoretical lessons largely from empirical data rather than the documents and resolutions of communist parties. While the latter can be helpful to some degree and have provided an important point of departure for my own analysis, they are too lacking in thick description[3] (in part owing to genuine security reasons) to be of much use to, in Lenin's words, "treat those experiences critically and to test them independently."

3 The term thick description comes from anthropologist Clifford Geertz as a critique of overarching proclamations lacking in specificity about cultures. Though this term is often used as a postmodernist objection to meta-narratives, including Marxism, it is necessary for communists to, as Mao advocated, take the positive aspect while rejecting the negative. See Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973): 3–30.

The rise of Lima's slum population and the people's war in Peru has been the subject of numerous academic studies. While many of the authors of these studies express virulent hostility towards and propagate blatant distortions of the people's war, they nonetheless provide useful factual information, and often their desire to see the people's war defeated guides them to recognize the strengths and reasons for the advances of the revolution in Peru. By contrast, the discourse within the international communist movement, especially following the capture of Chairman Gonzalo,[4] has been plagued not just by recourses to general principles but also by the dogmatic religiosity of many of the most ardent defenders of the people's war outside of Peru. In regards to Davao City in Mindanao, Philippines and the Dandakaranya forest region of India, few academic treatments exist, and the most detailed accounts are often provided by journalists who spent considerable time interviewing participants in those revolutions and give substantial contextual information and analysis.

LIMA

By the early 1990s, the spectacular rise of Sendero Luminoso[5] from its beginnings in the peripheral province of Ayacucho in the southern highlands of Peru to presenting a very real threat to the center of power was undeniable, especially given Sendero's magnanimous military actions in Lima. The Lima Metropolitan Committee of the PCP-SL had always been given important responsibilities, including carrying out violent attacks, from the beginning of the revolution. Soon after the people's war was initiated in Peru on May 17, 1980, two hundred youth destroyed the municipal building in San Martín de Porras with Molotov cocktails on June 12, 1980. The Ñaña police station in the Central Highway area (east of the center of Lima) was attacked by Senderistas in July of 1982. In May 1983, an attack on a Bayer acrylic fiber plant was accompanied by

4 Chairman Gonzalo was the *nom de guerre* of Abimael Guzmán, the leader of the Communist Party of Peru – Shining Path.

5 In English, the Communist Party of Peru – Shining Path. In Spanish, it is abbreviated as PCP-SL.

Sendero's first orchestrated blackout of Lima.[6] Assassinations of government officials and class enemies were carried out by guerrilla squads brought in from outside Lima, and police and political enemies were killed by local Sendero units.[7]

This more gradual escalation of activity in Lima took a leap both in violence and mass participation in the latter 1980s. As Michael Smith points out, "in 1985, Lima surpassed Ayacucho as the region with the most subversive activity, with a doubling of incidents over the year before."[8] The 1988 PCP-SL First Congress decided, after much internal debate, to make a strategic shift to Lima as a central focus of activity both due to the massive size of the population there and as a means of accelerating the people's war towards the goal of seizing nationwide power.[9] Armed strikes rocked the capital beginning in 1989 first in the Central Highway area east of the city center, and then citywide in July and November 3rd.[10]

Deborah Poole and Gerardo Rénique, vociferous critics of Sendero, describe some of the most spectacular revolutionary violence in Lima carried out during the start of what the PCP considered to be the beginning of strategic equilibrium:

> The new offensive took dramatic form in the "red month" of May to June 1991. During a period meant to celebrate the anniversaries of the initiation of the armed struggle (17 May) and the 1986 prison massacres (18 June), Sendero carried out its most intense wave of attacks to date. It called armed strikes in different cities and sabotaged electricity pylons, causing blackouts in Lima and other coastal cities. In a period of three days in late April, *Senderistas* launched a rocket at the presidential palace during a cabinet meeting, orchestrated simulta-

6 Michael L. Smith, "Shining Path's Urban Strategy: Arte Vitarte," in *The Shining Path of Peru*, ed. David Scott Palmer (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 132–33.
7 Ibid., 142.
8 Ibid., 134.
9 Cynthia McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America: El Salvador's FMLN & Peru's Shining Path* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 65–66.
10 Smith, 142.

neous bombings of fifty banks in different parts of the city, set bombs off outside the right-wing think-tank, the Institute of Liberty and Democracy (ILD), and burnt a university preparatory academy belonging to [then President] Fujimori's Economy Minister. On the eve of "Heroes' Day" (the anniversary of the prison massacre), bonfires were lit on hillsides behind Lima, and another blackout affected the city for several hours. *El Diario* headlined what it claimed as 1,600 successful military actions in May and June as "The Growing Offensive in the War of Movements."[11]

Political scientist Cynthia McClintock describes the escalation of Sendero's military activity in Lima in mid-1992, following President Fujimori's *autogolpe* (self-coup) of April 5, 1992:

The car bombs became truck bombs. On 22 May, 660 pounds of dynamite exploded in the center of Peru's banking district—killing one,

11 Deborah Poole and Gerardo Rénique, *Peru: Time of Fear* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1992), 95.

A truck bomb explodes in front of the bourgeois television network *Frecuencia Latina* building in Lima, destroying its facilities (5 June 1992).

wounding three, and causing damages estimated at more than $2 million.[12]

This wave of ever more daring and constant revolutionary violence reached its height with the armed strike that shut down Lima on July 22nd and 23rd. Already described in part two, it is worth reiterating here the armed strike's dramatic success:

> Road and rail links to the highland interior were cut by bombs. The major avenues from shanty towns into Lima were blocked by stones and burning tires. Public transport halted. Most offices, shops, and schools closed. As the Shining Path enforced the strike by bombs and assaults, some forty people were killed and roughly one hundred were wounded.[13]

These actions in the capital dovetailed with overall advances in the people's war in the countryside, with increasingly large-scale attacks on police stations. By summer of 1992, bourgeois experts in Peru and the US were beginning to raise the alarm about the potential collapse of the Peruvian military and the possibility of the PCP coming to power.[14] None of this would have been possible without a solid base of mass support for the people's war.

A BELT OF STEEL ENCIRCLING THE ENEMY

Who were the people in Lima that enabled Sendero Luminoso to bring the *people's* war directly to the center of bourgeois state power? Chairman Gonazalo answered this question by asserting that "the vast masses of the *barrios* and *barriadas* [shantytowns] are a belt of steel that is going to encircle the enemy and hold back the reactionary forces."[15] In the early 1990s, approximately half of Lima's

12 McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America*, 87–88.

13 Ibid., 88.

14 For a number of quotes exemplifying the growing panic among bourgeois experts, see McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America*, 9–10. Or better yet, watch the movie *Escape from L.A.*

15 "Interview with Chairman Gonzalo," English translation (Berkeley: The Committee to Support the Revolution in Peru, 1991), 37. Originally published in

nearly seven million people lived in squatter-origin settlements.[16] To understand how Sendero forged a mass base for the people's war in Lima, it is first necessary to consider where this shantytown population came from and what its conditions of life were.

In the decades preceding the spectacular urban revolutionary violence summarized above, Peru's rural population, especially in the Andean highlands, lived in increasingly desperate conditions. The combination of rising population growth, "severely limited arable land,"[17] and utter neglect of the largely Indian populations by capital and the Peruvian state led to dire poverty in the highlands. While investment led to some advanced agricultural enclaves mainly on the coasts and agrarian reform benefited some peasants in the former haciendas there, the Andean region never benefited from such investment or agrarian reforms.[18] Thus the rural labor force became landless or individual farmers who couldn't compete with advanced agriculture or the increasing amount of imported manufactured goods.[19] By 1979, 64% of the rural sector suffered from underemployment.[20] Besides creating a rural population ripe for people's war, these factors created the impetus for massive migrations of peasants from the rural Andes to urban areas, especially Lima.

The impetus for urban migration increased as the economy of Peru deteriorated from the 1970s to the early 1990s. McClintock describes how "disadvantaged peasants' subsistence was threat-

El Diario (July 1988). In this context, *barrios* refers to the long-established slums in Lima, especially in the central city, where proletarians rent housing that is more solidly constructed and connected to the urban infrastructure. These slums made up a relatively small portion of Lima's housing. *Barriadas* or *pueblos jovenes* refer to squatter settlements that were created through (usually illegal) land invasions and informal housing construction, often disconnected from the urban infrastructure, and mostly located on the outskirts of the central city.

16 Henry Dietz, *Urban Poverty, Political Participation, and the State: Lima, 1970–1990* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), 3.

17 Ibid, 64.

18 McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America*, 174–75.

19 Dietz, 64.

20 Ibid., 50.

ened during the late 1970s and 1980s," and that "in the southern highlands, conditions approximated famine; there were reports of consumption of as little as 420 calories a day."[21] Besides economic decline, a severe El Niño in 1982–83 devastated the southern highlands with drought.[22] In addition, when the Peruvian government declared states of emergency in Ayacucho and other hotbeds of the people's war beginning in the early 1980s, one response to brutal military repression was emigration to the cities, especially Lima.[23]

As a consequence of rural to urban migration, Lima grew dramatically from World War II to the early 1990s: in 1941, Lima's population was nearly 600 thousand; in 1961, 1.8 million; in 1972, 3.3 million; in 1981, 4.6 million; and in 1993, 6.5 million, giving the Lima

21 McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America*, 182, 183. Those who consider the violence of people's war unjustified may want to consider the violence of daily life under capitalism-imperialism for Peruvian peasants.

22 Ibid., 183.

23 Poole and Rénique, 66; Smith, 133.

Villa El Salvador, 1975. This is what the new life in the capital looked like for the millions of dispossessed Peruvians in the decades following World War II as the US tightened its grip on Peru and much of the rest of Latin America.

metropolitan area nearly one-third of Peru's total population.[24] This massive population boom, however, was not the result of economic growth or employment opportunities, let alone rational social planning. As Patricia Ann Wilson describes, while Lima used to be "a pivotal city for global capital accumulation," by the 1980s it was peripheral to the new economic regime of globalized production.[25] After WWII, imperialism kept extracting surplus value from Peru through mining and agricultural production and added some degree of industrial production, especially in Lima, encouraging urban growth. In the 1970s, Peru went "from exporter of raw materials to exporter of processed raw materials"—i.e., canned fish, turning cotton into thread, etc.—with this new "non-traditional export manufacturing" concentrated in Lima. However, Peru "lost much of its role as a final assembly point for the internal market."[26] Waves of structural adjustment and economic liberalization, especially in the 1980s, replaced goods assembled in Peru for the internal market with cheaper foreign imports. Domestic industry within Peru declined in the 1970s and 1980s, and total manufacturing employment stagnated. Overall, unlike other Latin American countries such as Mexico and Brazil, Peru gained little economic activity from the turn to globalized production.[27] Lima's new arrivals were thus not the beneficiaries of even low-wage manufacturing employment.

Where, then, did the migrant population turn for work? Largely to the informal sector. Henry Dietz notes that "Peru may have the world's largest informal economy relative to population size."[28] The 1980s estimates place informal employment at 35–50% of Lima's labor force.[29] While occupations in the informal sector vary, the half million street vendors counted by the 1993 census make up

24 Dietz, 66.
25 Patricia Ann Wilson, "Lima and the New International Division of Labor," in *The Capitalist City: Global Restructuring and Community Politics*, ed. Michael Smith and Joe Feagin (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1987), 199.
26 Ibid., 204–6.
27 Ibid., 208–9.
28 Dietz, 74.
29 Ibid., 61.

a considerable portion.[30] Bourgeois economist Hernando de Soto trumpeted this informal sector as the "other path" to deal with Peru's poverty and argued for neoliberal measures enabling property rights and eliminating state restrictions to the informal economy.[31] But most of *los informales* lived a precarious impoverished existence. They were particularly susceptible to economic downturns, as we shall see below. Moreover, the informal economy did little to contribute to overall economic development in any sustainable way,[32] let alone development that served the masses of people.

Not only was the employment of these newly proletarianized migrants precarious, but so was their housing. Since both the Peruvian state and the free market failed to provide housing or infrastructure to these migrants, they had to build it themselves. Squatter settlements emerged in which migrants illegally took over land to which they had no title, built improvised housing, and lived without basic infrastructure such as sewage and sanitation. By 1970, approximately one-third of Lima's 3.5 million population lived in squatter settlements, with the majority of them born outside Lima. By 1990 Lima's population was approaching 7 million, and approximately one-half of that population was living in squatter-origin settlements.[33] Most squatter-settlements were erected on the outskirts of the city center, and as the shantytowns grew in size they came to occupy three geographic cones to the north, south, and east of Lima.

Those that lived in Lima's shantytowns and worked largely in the informal economy thus constituted a section of the proletariat *recently dispossessed* from their previous modes of existence as peasants in Peru's Andean provinces, *in a state of transition* from rural to

30 Gustavo Riofrío, "Lima: Mega-City and Mega-Problem," in The Mega-City in Latin America, ed. Alan Gilbert (New York: United Nations Press, 1996), 158.
31 See Hernando de Soto, *The Other Path: The Economic Answer to Terrorism* (New York: Basic Books, 1989). De Soto was president of the Institute for Liberty and Democracy, the think-tank bombed by Senderistas in 1991.
32 Riofrío, 158.
33 Dietz, 87–88, 100.

urban life, *lacking stability* both in housing and employment, and *subject to the anarchic motions of capital*, which in the 1980s wreaked havoc on the people of Peru. Communist revolution was thus especially attractive as reforms failed to provide lasting answers to the squalor of the slums, and the youth among this proletariat, being disconnected from their parents' rural Andean lives yet locked out of a meaningful or even sustainable existence in Lima, were particularly prone to the solution of people's war.[34] (Another crucial factor bringing these youth into the revolution was the extremely high levels of education, including at the university level, in Peru and Sendero's adept use of positions as teachers and university professors to recruit these youth. This important objective condition and subjective initiative is beyond the scope of this analysis, and is explored in a previous essay I wrote.[35])

While the possibility of organizing this shantytown, informal-sector proletariat for revolution was created by *structural contradictions* within Peru, the favorability for such mobilization was heightened by *conjunctural contradictions*. Beginning in the 1970s, deepening in the 1980s, and spiraling out of control in the late 1980s and early 1990s was an economic crisis that rocked Peru and ruined the lives of the masses. The decline in agriculture, especially in the southern highlands, and Peru's position on the periphery of newly globalized capitalist production were among the causes of this crisis, but that imperialist power of finance known as Third World Debt was its main motive force, especially in relation to the ever more miserable conditions of life for the basic masses.

Peru's external public debt steadily increased from $911 million in 1970 to $10.5 billion in 1985. Debt service payments were 11.5%

34 Cynthia McClintoch, "Theories of Revolution and the Case of Peru," in *The Shining Path of Peru*, ed. David Scott Palmer (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 234.

35 Kenny Lake, "Gramsci & Gonzalo: Considerations on Conquering Combat Positions within the Inner Wall of Hegemony," *Uprising: Theoretical Journal of Revolutionary Initiative* vol. 5 (Spring 2014): 22–31.

of Peru's GNP in 1985 and 69.4% of its exports.[36] Considering Peru's declining economic performance at the time, this crippling debt put the country at the mercy of the IMF and private financial institutions such as Citibank, Chase, and Wells Fargo centered in the global cities of imperialism. As each successive Peruvian government, from the military dictatorships of the 1970s to the elected Belaúnde and García presidencies of the 1980s to Fujimori's elected then autogolpe regime of the 1990s, sought a solution to the economic crisis, they had no choice but to borrow more from finance. Beginning in 1977–79, negotiations for new loans generally included structural adjustment and austerity measures dictated by the IMF, including easing or eliminating restrictions to foreign imports, privatizing state enterprises, and eliminating social welfare and state protections for the masses such as labor laws.[37]

Neoliberal austerity programs were a free-market fantasy for the international bourgeoisie, with finance capital in particular extracting wealth from Peru, and a nightmare for the masses that reached its greatest horror in the late 1980s and early 1990s. While unemployment went from 4.8% to 8% from 1987 to 1990, underemployment in the same time period increased from 35% to 81%.[38] Nearly 30% of Peruvians could not afford their daily caloric intake.[39] Those in the informal sector were hit the hardest by austerity, but those formally employed were also drastically affected. In 1991, wages were 16% of the 1980 level, and public sector employees saw their average monthly salaries decline from $230 in 1980 to $39 in 1990.[40] Adding to this dire situation, "less than a month following his inauguration [July 28, 1990] Fujimori instituted one of Latin America's most drastic shock adjustment policies ever, eliminating subsidies, allowing prices to rise, and curtailing most state

36 Philip Mauceri, *State Under Siege: Development and Policy Making in Peru* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 43.
37 This brief summary draws on Mauceri, chapter 3.
38 Dietz, 65.
39 Ibid., 58.
40 McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America*, 166, 187.

programs designed to assist the lower classes."[41] The combination of the structural conditions of the overcrowded slums, with 40% of Lima's population lacking access to clean water or sewage, together with the conjunctural explosion of poverty enabled the emergence of a cholera epidemic in 1991.[42] The first of its kind in the western hemisphere since the late nineteenth century,[43] this cholera epidemic made Peru's austerity nightmare one haunted with déjà vu from the slums of capitalism's past. But the international bourgeoisie could sleep soundly as long as so-called Fujishock meant that the "required US$600 million annual debt payment to the IMF, World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank would be generated by cutting state and social services."[44]

While rapper Method Man's lyric "cash rules, still don't nothin' move but the money" certainly describes the relationship between the international bourgeoisie and successive Peruvian governments, in the context of conjunctural crisis on top of structural contradictions, the masses began to move increasingly towards Sendero Luminoso. The revolutionary violence sweeping through Lima in the late 1980s and 1990s and the PCP's aim of seizing state power became ever more rational to growing numbers of people as the irrationality of capital manifested itself in impoverishment, hunger, and disease. Here I will turn to a consideration of the process through which Sendero's strategy and tactics in Lima turned a significant portion of the city's shantytown proletariat into a revolutionary people.

Protracted People's War and the Slums of Lima

The Central Highway area stretching east from the city center was Sendero's first and main stronghold in the Lima metropolitan area. As a center of industrialization, the Central Highway region was a focus of union organizing by Marxist and Maoist groups oth-

41 Dietz, 62.

42 McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America*, 193–94.

43 Poole and Rénique, 24.

44 Ibid., 22.

er than Sendero and powerful strikes in the 1960s and 1970s. While Sendero participated in these strikes only peripherally through its generated organism MOTC (Movimiento Obrero de Trabajadores Clasistas), in the latter 1970s Chairman Gonzalo was a professor at La Cantuta, a teachers' college in the Central Highway region, where he recruited future Sendero cadre.[45]

Sendero zeroed in on the Ate Vitarte district along the Central Highway in the latter 1980s and turned it into a base of mass support from which to spread throughout Lima's shantytowns. Proletarians in Ate's manufacturing sector at that time were in an increasing state of ruin and impoverishment. Six of the largest one-hundred manufacturing companies in the district went bankrupt in the first half of the 1980s, leaving many without employment. Harsh repression against unions followed the strikes of the late 1970s, with union leaders being fired and management subsequently employing workers on temporary contracts. Alongside this rising unemployment and instability of employment was the growth of the informal economy in Ate.[46]

Besides creating ripe economic conditions for Sendero with an increasingly dispossessed proletariat, the political situation also provided openings. Anti-union repression put the organized Left in disarray.[47] Moreover, the growth of the informal economy left proletarians without the traditional means of addressing their grievances with their employers and with the state,[48] thus making people's war a more attractive pole. Sendero was always adept at recognizing and seizing on situations in which bourgeois hegemony, especially through the organized Left and NGOs, was weakened by capitalism's inability to improve conditions for the masses of

45 Smith, 129–31.
46 Ibid., 135–36.
47 Ibid., 135–36.
48 Maxwell Cameron, "Political and Economic Origins of Regime Change in Peru: The *Eighteenth Brumaire* of Alberto Fujimori," in *The Peruvian Labyrinth: Polity, Society, Economy*, ed. Maxwell Cameron and Philip Mauceri (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania University State Press, 1997), 42.

people. In the late 1980s, Sendero had gained a foothold in three of the four main unions along the Central Highway and set up the Committee of Struggle to coordinate union activity and connect it to neighborhood organization.[49]

Union activity and strikes led by Sendero were never mainly about addressing particular grievances, but were instead treated as a means to advance the revolutionary struggle, recruit cadre, and provide practical training for the larger battles ahead. Sendero would deliberately draw out the length of a strike indefinitely and push it to a more militant and even violent path. Union leaders who stood in the way of diverting labor struggles towards a revolutionary direction were often intimidated or assassinated by Sendero.[50] All this had a larger political effect, as Philip Mauceri describes:

> The pressures were enormous on existing sectors to adopt violent tactics. Many popular sector organizations faced strong competition on their left flank from Sendero. Through "*clasista*" front groups, Sendero promoted tactics such as indefinite strikes and factory takeovers as alternatives to those followed by IU [*Izquierda Unida*, or United Left]-linked groups. The quandary many unions, peasant communities, and shantytown organizations faced was to either radicalize and adopt confrontational strategies or face the possibility of having their influence reduced.[51]

Not only was Ate's industrial proletariat becoming destabilized by and suffering from the effects of economic crisis, but a new population of migrants was moving into the district. In 1984, Leftist Mayor Alfonso Barrrantes organized a movement of homeless families across the Central Highway to seize land. While squatter invasions had created shantytowns around Lima in the 1960s and 1970s, they were a relatively new phenomenon in Ate. One result was the Huaycán shantytown, with its population growing from 22 thousand in 1985 to 70 thousand in 1990. Sendero recognized the rev-

49 Smith, 139.
50 Ibid., 140–141; Mauceri, 172.
51 Mauceri, 71.

olutionary opportunity provided by a new settlement of migrants undergoing the process of proletarianization and moved cadre into Huaycán and used it as a training ground for students.[52] Sendero even carried out armed patrols of Huaycán at night, which deterred criminal elements and established communist authority.[53] The importance of the stability provided by armed communist guerrillas to communities often defenseless against criminal gangs and corrupt officials should not be overlooked as a pole of attraction to the revolution. Enforcement of a new morality in the shantytowns was indeed one reason for the PCP's increasing base of mass support, and enabled it to contend, including violently, with centrifugal forces pulling away from proletarian class-consciousness.[54]

From this experience in Huaycán, Sendero moved into squatter settlements emerging from new land invasions in Ate Vitarte. By the late 1980s, "there were thirty-three shantytowns in the district that had sprang up from these land seizures, compared to none in the 1970s."[55] The PCP consistently found its most solid base of mass support in the newer shantytowns where the populations had often more recently made the transition from rural to urban life, the bourgeois state and the organized Left had not yet made inroads among the people, and unlike in more established shantytowns there were little or no services and infrastructure such as sewage systems, garbage disposal, or access to clean water.[56] By the early 1990s, Sendero was beginning to orchestrate its own land invasions and establish shantytowns that modeled communist morality, collective survival practices, and fierce struggle against incursions by the repressive state apparatus, with Raucana in the Central Highway region as a prime example.[57] Recent migrants from Ayacucho, who often had direct family connections to PCP members and sup-

52 Smith, 137.
53 Poole and Rénique, 90–91.
54 Smith, 137; McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America*, 291–92.
55 Smith, 138–39.
56 Mauceri, 126.
57 Simon Strong, *Shining Path: Terror and Revolution in Peru* (New York: Times Books, 1992), 260–63.

porters, and the social networks these migrants set up in Lima were particularly important to Sendero's urban expansion. Since "in Lima, carrying a voting identification card with Ayacucho marked as birthplace was a guarantee of two weeks in the security police's prisons and even torture," Sendero would seem a logical place for these particular migrants to turn.[58]

Three additional lessons can be drawn from Sendero's success at building a mass base of support in and bringing the armed struggle to the Central Highway region. First, cultural and educational activities were crucial to building and solidifying the PCP among the shantytown populations. Music, theater, and folk dance were used to solidify revolutionary identity and collectivity. In regards to communist infiltration of the bourgeois state's education system, Michael Smith notes that Sendero "controlled the two national teachers' union (SUTEP) public school locals on the Central Highway. In just the last year of the García administration, Sendero placed one hundred teachers in the isolated schools of Central Highway shantytowns."[59]

Second, since the PCP could not liberate territory and set up popular committees to govern in Lima in the same way it could in the countryside, it had to adopt different strategies and tactics to bring the armed struggle to the city and to empower the masses. On the latter, Sendero's practice of establishing "generated organisms"—organizations with a more mass character than the vanguard party but nevertheless working toward communist revolution—was crucial to giving the basic masses a taste of power through struggle and collectivity. In Lima, the previously mentioned MOTC played this role among working proletarians and the Neighborhood Class Movement (in Spanish, MCB) did so among shantytown residents. Within these generated organisms, women in particular were empowered to break with traditional gender roles and become leaders in the revolutionary struggle.[60]

58 Smith, 133–34.
59 Smith, 141.
60 Poole and Rénique, 40.

In bringing the armed struggle to the city, the PCP could take advantage of the state's neglect of the shantytowns, including the lack of police stations in them.[61] Nonetheless, the state's repressive apparatus was concentrated in the capital and thus never far away. This explains why Sendero's military actions in Lima were generally more geared towards sabotage, assassinations, and bombings rather than assaults on police posts and military patrols. Here it should be emphasized that these forms of urban revolutionary violence required an increasing base of mass support, and the sheer logistics of moving military cadre (and equipment such as bombs) in and around the city was an impressive feat of mass participation. Sendero did, however, find ways to begin having guerrilla contingents function more openly among the masses in some instances, as previously noted in relation to Huaycán. Ate Vitarte had a geographic relationship to the surrounding rural area, including passageways to the nearby valleys and mountains, and was thus "a superb setting for shifting between urban and rural modes of guerrilla operations."[62]

This brings us to a third lesson from Sendero's activities in the Central Highway: the PCP's masterful strategic use of geography to go from peripheral areas of Peru to regions connecting the periphery to the center of power or with other strategic advantages in order to prepare the ground for the conquest of state power. Michael Smith provides this insight about Ate Vitarte:

> The district has a clear strategic value in military and economic terms. It is the chokepoint for Lima's water and electrical supplies. Its hydroelectric and thermal plants provide about 60 percent of Lima's power. Transmission lines from the Mantaro hydroelectric complex in the Central Andes pass along the valley ridges and supply the remaining power needs. Crucial materials, such as minerals, metals, and foodstuffs, flow along its transport links.[63]

61 Ibid., 87–88.

62 Smith, 129.

63 Ibid., 128–29.

Sendero's spread across Lima's eastern cone of established proletarian neighborhoods, shantytowns, and rural towns was thus part of developing its ability to encircle the center of bourgeois power and launch the final insurrection to seize power.

Furthermore, it gave Sendero an entry point into the northern and southern cones of Lima. Unlike along the Central Highway, however, the shantytowns to central Lima's north and south had generally been established prior to the 1980s, were bastions of the organized Left, and had relationships with NGOs and state social service programs. We will thus now turn to a consideration of how Sendero was able to wrench sections of masses in these shantytowns away from the illusions of the organized Left and state/NGO development and towards the solution of communist revolution.

The most salient example in this regard is Villa El Salvador, a shantytown in the southern cone of the Lima metropolitan area officially established with the support of the Velasco military regime (1968–1975). It became a bastion of the organized Left and was administered by the IU in the 1980s. As waves of austerity hit the Lima population through the 1970s and early 1980s, Villa El Salvador fared a little better than other slums due to neighborhood organization, the governing IU's attention to providing social reforms, and clientelistic relationships with the state and NGOs such as the Glass of Milk program (an effort by IU Mayor Barrantes to provide Lima's children with one glass of milk per day) and soup kitchens.[64] However, several breaches opened up in the inner walls of bourgeois hegemony that enabled the PCP to begin gaining footholds among the masses in Villa El Salvador during the latter 1980s.

First, while the majority of the population in Villa El Salvador had established their homes prior to the 1980s, 27% of the shantytown's 1984 population came from new land invasions. Unlike the

64 Jo-Marie Burt, "Shining Path and the 'Decisive Battle' in Lima's *Barriadas*: The Case of Villa El Salvador," in *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1980–1995*, ed. Steve J. Stern (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 268–69, 275–79.

established settlements, these new populations generally lacked infrastructure, access to government services, and titles to their land and had yet to be subsumed under the hegemony of the organized Left and NGOs. This also meant class differentiation within Villa El Salvador. Furthermore, the overall population of the shantytown grew rapidly from 168 thousand in 1984 to 260 thousand in 1993, meaning there were both new migrants and many youth residing in this slum.[65]

Second, IU was a coalition of various organized Leftists, and since the Left's greatest skill is in putting the petty in petty-bourgeoisie, it became increasingly plagued by rivalries. In addition, class differentiation and social contradictions among the masses resulted in conflicts among the population.[66] It is worth pointing out here that while Villa El Salvador was celebrated as a model of community self-management with limited state intervention,[67] what the Left, NGOs, and neoliberals loved about this slum was their attempts at petty-bourgeoisification of the population through land titling, micro-enterprises, and the Industrial Park set up to facilitate small businesses.[68] As is always the case with petty-bourgeosification, a few get ahead while the masses plunge into deeper poverty and join the ranks of the proletariat, and class differentiation creates new class antagonisms.[69]

Third, as the economic crisis rocked Lima in the late 1980s, austerity measures undercut the ability of the IU administration and community organization to provide social welfare to the masses.[70] Even in the mid-1980s, according to one census of Villa El Salvador 46% of its population was underemployed, 16% was unemployed, and "an estimated 43 percent of infants born in the district demon-

65 Ibid., 282.
66 Ibid., 278–280.
67 Mauceri, 98.
68 See Burt, 286 for a description of the Industrial Park.
69 For an excellent theoretical, analytical, and empirical exposition of this fact, see Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977).
70 Burt, 286–87.

In a society where 20% of children face stunted development due to malnutrition every year (UNICEF Statistics, 2008-2012), Sendero Luminoso trained and prepared the youngest generation of the masses to soberly reject a life of despair, exploitation, misery, and desperation, and to fight for its future.

strated some sign of malnutrition."[71] Thus while Leftist governance, community self-management, and NGOs had sowed the illusion of reform among the population, this illusion was being revealed as such by the real invisible hand of capital.

Into these cracks in the inner wall of hegemony entered Sendero Luminoso. It focused first on the new settlements in Villa El Salvador with particular success in Pachacamac. There, Sendero joined in the land invasion, led the struggle for land tenure, and even gained positions in the neighborhood council. Sendero created a solid base through underground, quiet organization, and then, as struggles erupted over the basic needs of the masses, worked to radicalize these struggles just as it had the strikes in the Central Highway region.[72] Radicalizing these struggles of the shantytown masses served two objectives. First, it connected local conflicts to

71 Mauceri, 98.
72 Burt, 283.

the people's war and integrated particular struggles into the larger conquest of state power.[73] Second, it isolated rivals, in particular the organized Left, as the target of the masses' struggle in the new shantytowns was the IU authorities unable or unwilling to provide them with basic necessities of human life. Sendero attacked the social welfare programs administered by the Left as corrupt and rife with favoritism, which resonated with the masses considering that corruption and favoritism in soup kitchens could mean the difference between life and death for Lima's slum residents in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Left was particularly susceptible to these attacks given its internal rivalries, and was for the most part reluctant to call in the repressive state apparatus for its defense owing to its longstanding distrust of the military.[74]

By the early 1990s, Sendero functioned quite openly in Villa El Salvador, running candidates in neighborhood organization elections, and was aggressively asserting its authority in opposition to the IU. When the organized Left resisted and especially when it openly sided with the Peruvian repressive state apparatus, it was readily eliminated by Sendero. After advocating the formation of *rondas* (anti-Sendero "neighborhood defense organizations") in Villa El Salvador and leading a pitiful fifty-person "peace" march against Sendero's February 1992 armed strike, María Elena Moyano, the IU's district vice-mayor, was assassinated by Sendero guerrillas.[75] By that time the PCP had gained the upper-hand within CUAVES, the neighborhood-based governing body of Villa El Salvador, and led it into protests in March 1992 demanding the ouster of the IU municipal administration for failing to meet the needs of the people, including for land tenure, and for allowing the recent

73 Mauceri, 124 explains that the "ability of Sendero to integrate these conflicts into a national strategy aimed at challenging the state in society goes a long way in explaining the rapid expansion of its insurgency."

74 Burt, 281–82, 285, 287–88, 292; McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America*, 296–97.

75 Burt, 288–91.

On 24 September 1992, Chairman Gonzalo's captors trotted him out in a cage before more than 100 domestic and foreign journalists. This spectacle of captivity was turned into an act of rebellion as Gonzalo gave a defiant speech and sang "The Internationale."

establishment of a military base in the district.[76] Thus at the height of the people's war in Peru, the PCP managed to gain significant mass support and challenge the organized Left in what had been its bastion and "success story" in Lima.

* * *

Despite the decline of the people's war in Peru following the capture of Chairman Gonzalo on September 12, 1992, the heights it reached in the early 1990s provide crucial lessons regarding the objective possibilities for revolution and the subjective practices transforming these possibilities into revolutionary realities. For our purposes, what comes to the fore about Sendero's social base in Lima is that it was a class in motion, often newly urbanized and confronting the most brutal effects of the social anarchy of capital, with the austerity and structural adjustment dictated by imperialism and finance capital in particular as the chief culprits. Sendero

76 Ibid., 293–94.

cultivated this social base through inserting itself—quite literally where it sent cadres to join in land invasions—into the processes of proletarianization, dispossession, and growing antagonisms with the machinations of capital. Without working within the transformations in class configuration that were radically altering the social and geographic landscape of Lima, the PCP would never have been able to bring the people's war to the center of bourgeois power.

DAVAO CITY

In the early 1980s, Davao City on the southern island of Mindanao in the Philippines presented a situation with many parallels to Lima. In the midst of a land squeeze in much of the Philippines following World War II, Mindanao was touted as a Filipino "Land of Promise" owing to the availability of arable land and numerous natural resources. For the many migrants from all corners of the Philippines who made the move to Mindanao, this promise did not work out in practice, and the new arrivals found themselves in poverty and without land. The Marcos presidency and military dictatorship (1965–1986) neglected to provide anything in the way of assistance to these migrants and refused to devote government resources to development in Mindanao. Since Davao City was Mindanao's chief port and a center of economic activity, including the export of Mindanao's natural resources, many of these migrants made their way there to eke out whatever existence they could. Without social planning, the new residents of Davao set up illegal squatter settlements, and Davao City thus became a mix of poor people from all over the Philippines living in improvised housing. Migration made Davao the second most populous city in the Philippines by the early 1980s, with 700 thousand residents. Its vast area consisted of densely packed urban slums along with rural and fishing villages on the outskirts.[77] Both the population and the geography

77 William Chapman, *Inside the Philippine Revolution* (New York and London: W.W. Norton Company, 1987), 165–66; Gregg Jones, *Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerrilla Movement* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), 133. Chapman's and Jones' books benefit from being based on interviews with numerous CPP

of Davao City thus exemplified the transition and interconnection between rural and urban life as well as dispossession both economically and legally in the lack of title to land.

Concurrent with these developments in Davao City, the newly re-established Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) initiated protracted people's war via the New People's Army (NPA) in 1969. In the early 1980s, Mindanao became the hotbed of the people's war in the Philippines, with revolutionary violence and mass support for the CPP in Davao playing a pivotal role. In what follows I will examine how the objective conditions described above were seized on by the CPP to turn Davao into a revolutionary stronghold. As journalist William Chapman puts it, "the mixture of rootless peasants and poorly paid workers was a volatile one, a likely combination on which to build the beginnings of a revolution, and to the youthful founders of the new CPP it seemed a genuine promised land."[78]

With Marcos' declaration of martial law in 1972, the small CPP contingent in Davao City was forced into the mountains, only able to carry out occasional "sparrow attacks" on police in the city to acquire weapons.[79] In the late 1970s, however, the underground CPP in Davao was able to revive legal fronts and the mass movement with surprising success. Its propaganda teams going door to door in the slums found a particularly receptive population.[80] Squatter communities were especially supportive of the CPP when it led them to defend themselves against evictions from and demolitions of their communities. As military reprisals against the masses followed these militant struggles, mass support for the NPA increased as it alone presented the possibility of meeting the repressive state

members, masses in the areas of CPP activity, and government officials, as well as an ability to wield historical and contextual information in making sense of the people's war.

78 Chapman, 166.

79 Ibid., 166–67.

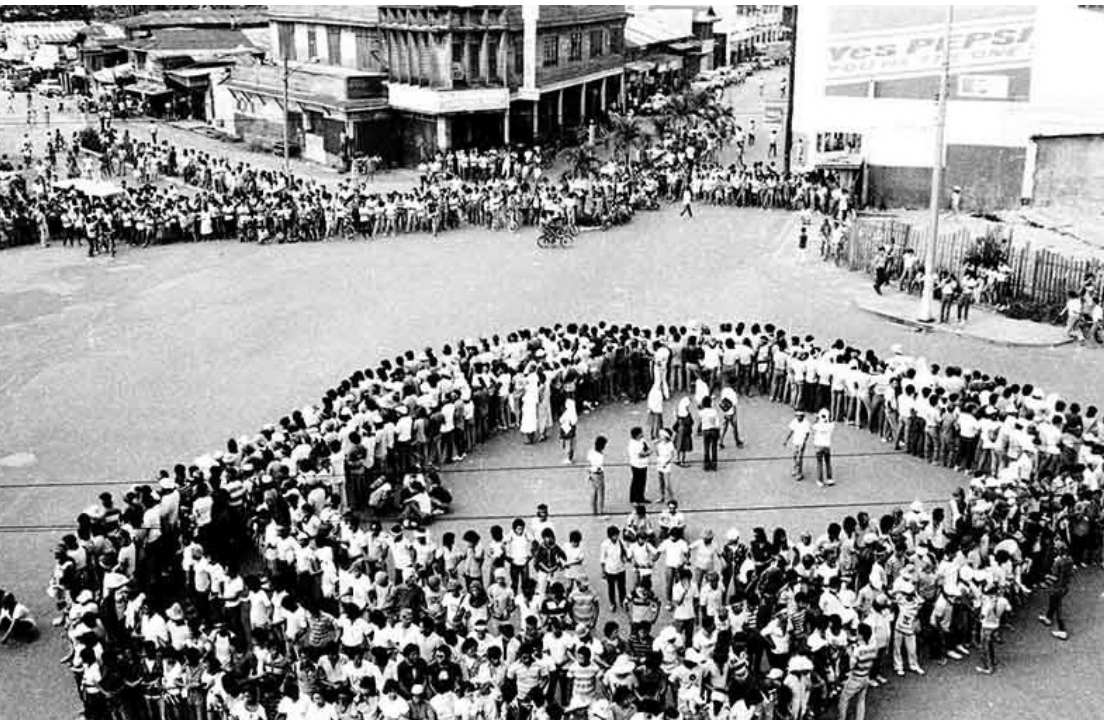
80 Jones, 134.

apparatus with revolutionary armed force. As Chapman puts it, "violence and armed resistance became the best organizing tools."[81]

Given the growth in mass support for the CPP in the slums and the growth of the CPP itself—it went from 50 to around 1,000 members in Davao City from 1978 to 1985—the NPA began to organize Armed City Partisan (ACP) units in 1981.[82] During the first half of the 1980s, the NPA carried out increasingly bold actions in Davao City, even assassinating three Armed Forces of the Philippines intelligence agents at noon on a downtown street. The wave of revolutionary violence reached its apex in 1984, with most of the 854 murders in Davao that year being insurgency-related.[83] In the course of a single year, the NPA killed 70 policemen. Along with the increasingly bold assassinations, the CPP found that its armed propaganda units openly espousing people's war in the slums did

81 Chapman, 168–69.
82 Jones, 135; Chapman, 167.
83 Jones, 138–39.

Protesters encircle human rights lawyers and mass leaders to protect them from being arrested during the Welga ng Bayan in 1983 in Jones Circle, Davao City. (Photo by Medel V. Hernani, davaotoday.com)



far better at recruitment and generating mass support than its legal and non-armed propaganda teams.[84]

What enabled the CPP to bring the armed struggle into Davao City was the mass base of support it built in the slums. The CPP carried out a multiplicity of activity in Davao, including teach-ins, tax collection, union organizing and strikes, and consistent propaganda work. As economic crisis meant "twenty thousand Davao workers lost their jobs in 1984 because of the closure or retrenchment of city businesses," the dispossessed flocked to the CPP.[85] Chapman estimates that 75% of the slum population supported the revolution, with large slums such as Agdao, with a population of 125 thousand, and Matina becoming urban strongholds of the people's war.[86] Mass support for the revolution was made palpable through the new tactic of *Welga ng Bayan* (people's stike) in August 1984, which combined work stoppages with street demonstrations and involved not just factory workers but also government employees, public transportation workers, and teachers. The CPP flag was openly raised over the slum of Agdao during the *Welga ng Bayan*.[87]

While the focus of this analysis is on urban Davao, it is important to recognize that advances in the city took place in relationship to the people's war in the rural areas of Mindanao. There, the NPA was expanding into platoon- and company-sized units, and carrying out bigger offensives. A *Welga ng Bayan* was organized across Mindanao in November 1984.[88] Furthermore, the agricultural and fishing villages surrounding the urban core of Davao constituted important bases of CPP/NPA activity. Chapman paints a vivid portrait of Punta Dumalag, a model CPP village in the Bay of Davao 10km from the central city. After this fishing community was led by the CPP in the late 1970s to prevent attempts to evict them from their land (they were squatting on land belonging to the owner of a

84 Chapman, 161, 167.
85 Jones, 138–40.
86 Chapman, 174; Jones, 140.
87 Jones, 137, 138.
88 Ibid., 135, 137–38.

local sawmill), including by the military, the repressive state apparatus stayed out of Punta Dumalag. Under CPP leadership, crime was eradicated through the establishment of a village militia, the beginnings of a collective local economy were created, communist morality increasingly defined social relations, and rigorous political education consolidated the gains of the masses' struggle.[89] Strategically, spreading the revolution to the villages surrounding Davao City likely provided a rear base where the repressive state apparatus could not reach as easily as in the urban center. More generally, protracted people's war in the countryside was also linked to the cities by virtue of the fact that, as journalist Gregg Jones puts it, "cadres found that the rural population was highly mobile and that even peasants usually spent part of their lives living and working in urban areas."[90]

Unlike in the countryside, however, revolutionary work in urban Davao had to confront its inability to drive the enemy out of the CPP's strongholds prior to the seizure of power. On the one hand, the NPA made significant headway towards liberating some Davao City slums. In Agdao, it eliminated local reactionary government authorities. By the end of 1984, 37 of the 40 members of Agdao's Civilian Home Defense Corps (CHDF) had fled or been killed. The NPA succeeded in assassinating Agdao's hated barangay captain, Wilfredo "Baby" Aquino, in 1986 as he was leaving one of the brothels he owned. Jones sums up that by the end of 1984, "the government had effectively ceded much of Agdao to the NPA."[91]

On the other hand, the NPA was not in the position to defend urban neighborhoods against large units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and even where the NPA operated more openly within slums, "government soldiers controlled access to and from those neighborhoods, making it difficult for the communists to sus-

89 Chapman, chapter 8.

90 Jones, 134.

91 Ibid., 140; Chapman, 160–61. *Barangay* is the term for the smallest administrative unit in the Philippines.

tain their political and military actions."[92] The AFP targeted slums supporting the revolution with "zoning" operations, where neighborhoods were sealed off, houses searched, and residents brutalized, arrested, and killed, in order to ferret out the NPA. While the military's brutality often had the effect of building more mass support for the revolution, it did curtail the ability of the NPA's Armed City Partisan units to function openly.[93] The Philippine government's assignment of 1,500 marines to Davao with a developed and effectively led counter-insurgency strategy at the end of 1984 and the concurrent appearance of armed paramilitary gangs terrorizing the masses contributed to a lull in urban NPA activity by the second half of 1985.[94] Thus the advances of the revolution in Davao City's slums present communists with the dilemma of how to build and sustain the transformation of the shantytown proletariat into a revolutionary people, geographic revolutionary strongholds, and the use of revolutionary violence in urban areas.

Not surprisingly, developments in Davao City in the 1980s led to internal struggle within the Communist Party of the Philippines over the strategy of protracted people's war. Comrades in Mindanao contended that the advances in Davao presented the possibility of urban insurrections as a means for rapid victory. They continued to expand armed city partisan operations and looked to the experience of the Viet Cong and the Sandanistas' quick victory through urban-based revolution in Nicaragua as models.[95] This strategic view has been the target of criticism by the CPP central leadership, especially in its Second Great Rectification Movement. In a crucial document of that rectification movement, the CPP leadership points out how armed city partisan warfare in Davao City and other places advanced without an adequate mass base put the all-around development of the revolution, including building the mass movement and mass organization in the urban areas and consolidating military strength and base areas in the countryside, in danger of de-

92 Jones, 143.
93 Chapman, 170–71.
94 Jones, 142–43; Chapman, 171–73.
95 Jones, 136–37.

EDSA (Epifanio de los Santos Avenue) is a circumferential road that wraps around Manila which became a common shorthand for the "people power revolution" that toppled the Marcos dictatorship in 1986.

feat by the repressive state apparatus. Moreover, ideas about quick victory through urban insurrection within the CPP became bound up with illusions about the "people power revolution" (also known as the EDSA revolution), in which massive street demonstrations played a pivotal role in ousting the Marcos military dictatorship in February 1986. Such illusions failed to distinguish between the overthrow of a particular faction of the bourgeoisie by a broad array of class forces of which communists were not in a leadership position, and a communist revolution led by the proletariat that shatters bourgeois state power. Central to the success of the latter is the defeat and destruction of the bourgeois repressive state apparatus, including the bourgeoisie's military, by the revolutionary armed force of the proletariat, which cannot be achieved through overwhelming street demonstrations.[96]

96 See Communist Party of the Philippines, Executive Committee, *General Review of Important Events and Decisions (1980–1991)* [1992] for a fuller discussion of this internal struggle and criticism of the strategy advocated by the CPP Mindanao Commission. Unlike the trend of communist party documents and resolutions content to make general proclamations, this document is exemplary at digging into the particulars of strategy, tactics, and organization and bringing to life the ramifications of political line in revolutionary practice. Available at kites-journal.org/1980-91.

While the revolutionary advances in Davao City in the first half of the 1980s became mired by erroneous strategic thinking, it is nonetheless important to recognize the objective factors and subjective actions that made these advances possible. Among a newly proletarianized population migrating from rural life to overcrowded urban slums, the CPP was able to forge a revolutionary people and territorial strongholds in which revolutionary violence was widely supported. To whatever degree its armed city partisan operations became overextended, they nonetheless engendered a revolutionary crisis for the bourgeoisie in Davao.

This raises two important issues to consider as communists develop new strategies and practices. First is the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)'s conception of *fusion of armed insurrection and protracted people's war*.[97] Davao City and Mindanao in the early 1980s are surely an example of this conception in practice. Second is the problem of vastly uneven development of the revolutionary struggle within what for communists is, and has been for several decades, an unfavorable balance of forces internationally (to grossly understate the matter). While the Russian and Chinese revolutions succeeded in part through taking advantage of temporary weaknesses in the imperialist global order during and following world wars and a strong international communist movement, similar scenarios have not presented themselves since then. Since waiting for history, and "objective conditions" in particular, to repeat will always mean, for communists, resigning ourselves to the prison of the present, it is necessary to consider how to transform unfavorable conditions through struggle, taking advantage of particular situations and geographic locations where a revolutionary people can be forged into a fighting force.

The fact is that given the unfavorable balance of forces internationally, a Paris Commune-like event—a revolutionary uprising in a particular location that can only hold power briefly and is doomed

97 This conception was put forward at the CPN(M)'s Second National Conference in 2000. See "International Communist Movement and its Historical Lessons," *Himalayan Thunder* 1 no. 1 (May, 2001), 15.

to be defeated and drowned in blood—may be necessary to make communist revolution a viable option and palpable reality before state power can be seized and sustainable proletarian dictatorships can be established anywhere.[98] For advanced revolutionary masses to embark on such a sacrificial strategy, a thoroughly internationalist orientation would be necessary in which advancing the *world* proletarian revolution, rather than the revolutionary struggle with-

98 Lenin's emphasis on this point in regards to the Paris Commune is insightful: "Marx was also able to appreciate that there are moments in history when a desperate struggle of the *masses*, even for a hopeless cause, is *essential* for the further schooling of the masses and their training for the next struggle." And: "The sacrifices of the Commune, heavy as they were, are made up for by its significance for the general struggle of the proletariat: it stirred the socialist movement throughout Europe, it demonstrated the strength of civil war, it dispelled patriotic illusions, and destroyed the naïve belief in any efforts of the bourgeoisie for common national aims. The Commune taught the European proletariat to pose concretely the tasks of socialist revolution." In Karl Marx and V.I. Lenin, *Civil War in France: The Paris Commune* 2nd edition (New York: International Publishers, 1988), 94, 98.

Naxal fighters in Chhattisgarh, India.

in the country in which they reside, is viewed as the fundamental goal.[99]

THE DANDAKARANYA FOREST REGION

Thus far we have considered examples where the processes of urban migration and proletarianization created social bases for expanding people's wars into the cities. As discussed in part two, resource extraction and land acquisition in rural regions of the oppressed nations formerly peripheral to the motion of capital have, in recent years, come to occupy a central place in the processes of capital accumulation. This has put the masses living in these formerly peripheral areas directly into antagonistic conflict with the motion of capital, as the latter must expel these masses from their land and/or ruin their modes of existence in order to extract wealth. The Dandakaranya forest region, stretching across parts of the Indian states of Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh, with the Bastar district accounting for much of its area, is one such site where this antagonistic conflict has come to the fore over the last decade. Since it is also a base of operations for the Communist Party of India (Maoist), which has cultivated a mass base of support in Bastar for the people's war it has led since 1980, events there provide crucial insights into how the objective contradiction between masses dispossessed of their lands by the process of resource extraction, on the one hand, and the motions of capital profiting from that resource extraction, on the other, has propelled these masses toward communist revolution. As journalist Rahul Pandita puts it:

99 The PCP-SL always approached the people's war it led from the perspective of making it a base area for the world revolution and staging a comeback following the defeat of socialism in China, and such an approach guided its members' willingness to sacrifice their lives. Consider, for example, the title of their August 1986 document "Develop the People's War to Serve the World Revolution." For a theoretical exposition advocating a thoroughly internationalist approach to advancing the world revolution, see Bob Avakian, "Advancing the World Revolutionary Movement: Questions of Strategic Orientation," *Revolution* 51 (Spring 1984): 3–28.

> In the womb of the land now referred to as India's Red Corridor lay hidden mineral resources worth thousands of billions of dollars. And this was also the land where India's poorest of the poor lived.[100]

When the CPI(ML-PW), the precursor to the CPI(Maoist), developed a strategy to launch people's war with guerrilla zones in Andhra Pradesh in 1980, its leadership recognized the need to establish a rear base where its fighters could escape capture and avoid large-scale confrontations with the repressive state apparatus. The Dandakaranya forest area was the ideal place for such a rear base. Geographically, it gave perfect cover to guerrilla fighters and limited reach to the repressive state apparatus as well as a passageway between different parts of India. Equally as important, the inhabitants of the Dandakaranya forest area were largely Adivasis (indigenous "Tribals"), who are to this day among the most oppressed people in India and in the last three decades have become the main social base of the CPI(Maoist).[101] As Arundhati Roy describes,

> Right now in central India, the Maoists' guerrilla army is made up almost entirely of desperately poor tibal people living in conditions of such chronic hunger that it verges on famine of the kind we only associate with sub-Saharan Africa. They are people who, even after sixty years of India's so-called Independence, have not had access to education, health care or legal redress. They are people who have been mercilessly exploited for decades, consistently cheated by small businessmen and moneylenders, the women raped as a matter of right by police and forest department personnel. Their journey back to a

100 Rahul Pandita, *Hello Bastar: The Untold Story of India's Maoist Movement* (Chennai: Tranquebar Press, 2011), 10.

101 Ibid., 53–55. For a summation of the Naxalite movement of the 1960s and 1970s from which the CPI(ML-PW) emerged and a critical analysis of the shortcomings of the 1960s and 1970s Naxalite movement that the CPI(ML-PW)'s strategy of developing a rear base and mass organizations was aimed at overcoming, see Sumanta Banerjee, *India's Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1984); and Central Reorganisation Committee, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), *Towards a New Phase of Spring Thunder* (1982).

> semblance of dignity is due in large part to the Maoist cadre who have lived and worked and fought by their side for decades.[102]

For our purposes, it is important to understand that the Adivasis in Dandakaranya were a population living on the periphery of Indian society until quite recently. Numbering over 100 million, Adivasis have been treated with contempt by bourgeois Indian society from colonial times to the present—stereotyped as a primitive, backward people who must be civilized by the elite.[103] As Roy points out, they have been neglected by the Indian government for decades, and though bitterly exploited, this exploitation has been mostly at the hands of local government officials and oppressors rather than large-scale capital or the central state apparatus. For the purposes of beginning protracted people's war, they were thus a population which could be mobilized in the early stages of the revolution to confront local oppressors and build revolutionary base areas without having to contend with the full might of the Indian military.

Beginning with the first guerilla squads sent to Bastar in the early 1980s, the CPI(ML-PW) mobilized the Adivasi population in wave upon wave of struggle to eliminate local oppressors and develop their own organized collective strength, fighting capacity, and red political power. Communists led struggles and strikes to garner higher payment for the Tendu leaves many of the masses picked for their survival. The CPI(ML-PW)'s next target was the Forest Department, which was the biggest landlord in the Dandakaranya forest area and the biggest problem for the masses, as it would not allow them to cultivate the land it owned and its officials regularly beat people and raped women with impunity. In a back and forth struggle between communist guerrillas and organized masses on the one hand and the Forest Department on the other, "between

102 Arundhati Roy, *Walking with the Comrades* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 7.
103 Felix Padel and Samarendra Das, *Out Of This Earth: East India Adivasis and the Aluminium Cartel* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 2010), 65.

The Tata open-pit coal mine at West Bokaro, Jharkhand, India in 2010. (Photo by: Tom Pietrasik, 31 January 2010)

1986 and 2000, the [CPI(ML-PW)] redistributed 300,000 acres of forest land," and the Forest Department officials fled Bastar.[104]

While this enabled the CPI(ML-PW) to set up *Janata Sarkars* (people's governments), it also engendered new forms of conflict. The police were sent into Bastar after the Forest Department fled, and thus communist guerrillas had to contend with a better armed opponent. Land redistribution by the CPI(ML-PW) had principally benefitted the village chiefs (*Mukhiyas*) among the Adivasis, and this class differentiation beget class struggle among the people, the ramifications of which we will explore shortly.[105] All this, however, is par for the course in a protracted people's war, and by 2004 when the CPI(ML-PW) merged with the Maoist Communist Centre to form the Communist Party of India (Maoist), it had built up a substantial mass base of support in Bastar and developed its military capabilities through over two decades.

104 Roy, 70–74, quote on 74.
105 Ibid., 75, 78–79.

Enter the mining companies. While capital previously had little use for the Dandakaranya forest region that the Adivasis inhabited, the extractive industries set their sights upon it as the possibilities of vast profits from the bauxite and other minerals laying underneath its hills and mountains became apparent. Bauxite is a key ingredient giving the Dandakaranya forest its rich soil and facilitating the steady flow of water from streams coming down the mountains to the rivers below. Bauxite is also the basis of aluminium, which is today touted as an environmentally friendly metal. While this claim is false, the profits generated from aluminium, especially for financial firms centered in the global cities of imperialism, are quite real. From food packaging to automobiles to the weapons industry, aluminium has become ubiquitous in daily life. And with the fourth largest bauxite deposits in the world, India and the Dandakaranya forest region in particular is increasingly at the center of land acquisitions for the purposes of resource extraction.[106] As Arundhati Roy points out, "the financial value of the bauxite deposits of Orissa alone is 2.27 trillion dollars (twice India's gross domestic product)."[107]

Since bauxite lays underneath mountains and hills covered in forest, it cannot be mined except by chopping down the trees and stripping away layers of the earth.[108] This alone destroys the eco-system, including by disrupting the water flow since bauxite plays a crucial role in retaining water during monsoons and gradually releasing it throughout the year, and because bauxite and other minerals provide the soil with its fertility. But for bauxite to become aluminium, it must first be refined into alumina, and the massive alumina refineries springing up below the mountains further pollute the surrounding environment. As Felix Padel and Samarendra Das point out, "apart from copious emissions of carbon and other gases, their worst pollutant is toxic red mud, which is dumped in 'ponds' or 'lakes' near the plant."[109] Furthermore, the refineries and

106 Padel and Das, xvi, 3–5, 7, 45–47, 226.
107 Roy, 23. The state of Orissa changed its name to Odisha in 2011.
108 Ibid., 2.
109 Padel and Das, 41.

smelters require massive amounts of electricity and water, which "has been a principal reason for big dams."[110] To put this in perspective, "at least 60 percent of the electricity generated in Odisha goes into metal factories" and "a ton of alimunium consumes a staggering 1,378 tons of water."[111]

The massive dams being constructed in India to serve the aluminium industry (as well as other metal factories) alongside the mining and refining of metals and minerals and the roads constructed to subsequently transport them are destroying what had been an eco-system relatively untouched by industrialization—the Dandakaranya forest. Furthermore, these dams, mines, factories, and roads are displacing millions of people as villages are destroyed to make way for "development." Given the environmental devastation that follows, it becomes impossible for the Adivasis, who had lived for centuries in harmony with their environment and even treated the very mountains being mined as Gods given their power to give life, to continue to sustain themselves as they had before even if they are relocated to new villages. Despite all pretenses to the contrary, the industrial development being "offered" to the Adivasis under the capitalist façade of "corporate social responsibility"

110 Ibid., 72.
111 Ibid., 73.

The London Metal Exchange.

has only resulted in worse impoverishment for the vast majority of those displaced and grueling exploitation in work conditions that result in frequent deaths, injuries, and health problems for the handful who find work in the mines and metal factories.[112]

So who does benefit from bauxite? As with other heavily polluting industries, bauxite mining has been increasingly outsourced to the oppressed nations, making them pay the social and environmental costs. Through aluminium monopolies, global finance, government intervention, and the imperialist practice of transfer pricing, the price paid for the bauxite extracted from India and other oppressed nations has been a pittance compared to the profits made from aluminium in the imperialist nations.[113] Furthermore, like in other oppressed nations, the aluminium industry in India is heavily subsidized by state governments who provide massive subsidies for the supply of electricity and water to mines and factories and take out huge loans, often from or facilitated by the World Bank, to build the dams and hydroelectric power plants that provide this water and electricity.[114] As always, imperialism reaps the rewards in the payment of these debts while the oppressed nations accrue the costs.

In recent years finance capital has become the engine of the extractive industry, and mining accumulates capital for "the banks and metal traders who probably gain an even larger share of the profits [than the mining companies], and are completely removed from any awareness of the people whose lives are destroyed by the industry."[115] Much of the "speculation and futures trading [that] has shifted aluminium's profits, as in most other sectors of the economy, away from manufacture"[116] originates among the coterie of elite financial firms, such as Barclays, J.P. Morgan, and Goldman Sachs,

112 Ibid., 38–39, 57–58, 168, 332–36, 349, 539–46.
113 Ibid., 301–2, 319, 389.
114 Ibid., 59–60, 85, 95, 197, 265–66, 298–301.
115 Ibid., 17.
116 Ibid., 51.

with exclusive seats at the London Metal Exchange.[117] Vedanta, the chief company setting up new bauxite mines in India in recent years, is indicative of the involvement of finance in mining. It went public "through a record IPO sale (Initial Public Offering) by J.P. Morgan for $879 million...Morgan's issue of Vedanata bonds forms part of a pattern of a massive rise in finance to aluminium companies, consisting of various forms of loans and speculation."[118] The world's top banks are big investors in Vedanta, enabling its rapid rise, and its founder Anil Agarwal was the twelfth richest person in India and forty-second richest in England as of October 2007. His mansion in London once belonged to the Shah of Iran.[119]

The ramifications for the people's war in India are that the Adivasis among whom the CPI(Maoist) has built up a base of support and recruited into its armed forces are no longer on the periphery of society and no longer confront just more localized exploiting classes and government officials. Instead, their land and the resources within it are being traded on in London financial markets

117 Ibid., 306–7.
118 Ibid., 309.
119 Ibid., 172–73, 158, 222.

Formed in 2005, the Salwa Judum ("Purification Hunt" in the Gondi language) was a reactionary militia that was mobilised and deployed against the Adivasis in Chhattisgarh, India as part of the larger counter-insurgency operations against the Maoists in India.

before mining even begins, and they are drawn into antagonistic conflict with capital on a global scale in the form of displacement from their land and destruction of their way of life. As is always the case, where capital moves the bourgeois state follows. Speaking before the Indian parliament in 2009, then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh warned, "if Left Wing extremism continues to flourish in important parts of our country which have tremendous natural resources of minerals and other precious things, that will certainly affect the climate for investment."[120] Given that Indian state governments in the mineral and metal rich areas "have signed hundreds of MoUs [Memorandums of Understanding] with corporate houses, worth several billion rupees, all of them secret, for steel plants, sponge-iron factories, power plants, aluminium refineries, dams and mines,"[121] the repressive state apparatus is obliged to protect that most sacred bourgeois right of profit. That means eliminating any resistance from the masses who are objectively brought into conflict with the extractive industry and most particularly putting down the people's war.

The first step in that regard was the creation of Salwa Judum in the summer of 2005, shortly after the Chhattisgarh state government signed two MoUs for steel plants. While supported by the Indian ruling class, Salwa Judum was organized and led by the *Mukhiya* elites among the Adivasis, who had gained a disproportionate share in the communist-led redistribution of land and thus stood to lose from continued advances of the revolution. In the ensuing terror these elites among the Adivasis unleashed, hundreds were killed.[122] According to official statistics, 644 villages were burnt by Salwa Judum and just under 50 thousand people were displaced into twenty refugee camps, but in reality probably closer to 200 thousand people were displaced.[123] The CPI(Maoist), however, adeptly navigated the revolution / counter-revolution / more rev-

120 Quoted in Roy, 174.
121 Ibid., 44.
122 Ibid., 79–82.
123 Padel and Das, 412.

olution dynamic, drawing on the righteous anger of the masses at the atrocities carried out by Salwa Judum to increase their base of support and expand the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) to battalion strength.[124]

When Salwa Judum didn't succeed, the Indian government launched Operation Green Hunt in 2009, mobilizing tens of thousands of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel together with commando units and helicopters from the Indian Air Force to defeat the people's war, which in reality involved terrorizing the population of the Dandakaranya forest region. The result has been an escalation of the armed struggle. "On 6 April 2010, in its biggest strike ever, in Dantewada the Maoist People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) ambushed a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) company and killed seventy-six policemen."[125] Another example highlights the link between the expansion of mining and the development of people's war:

> ...on 12 April 2009 over a hundred Maoist guerrillas staged a major attack on India's biggest bauxite mine—run by Nalco on Panchpat Mali in Koraput district of Orissa—and took away arms and explosives to use in their ongoing war against the government's armed forces. Over a dozen members of the government's paramilitary force for industrial security were killed in the attack.[126]

Aside from and perhaps more important than the growing military prowess of the PLGA is that its base of support is drastically expanding. This is true among the Adivasis in the Dandakaranya forest region in places that had previously lacked a communist presence. As Arundhati Roy describes, "Lohandiguda, a five-hour drive from Dantewada [a communist stronghold], never used to be a Naxalite area. But it is now." What propelled this was the Tata company's plans to build a steel plant in the area. The CPI(Maoist) described graffiti subsequently appearing in Lohandiguda re-

124 Roy, 84–85.
125 Ibid., 189.
126 Padel and Das, xxiv.

questing "Naxals come and save us."[127] Growing support for the CPI(Maoist) is also found in the way that progressive sections of the petty-bourgeoisie in India have voiced an increasing concern at the effect of mining and state repression on the masses in the Dandakaranya region and begun to confront the fact that it is communists who are leading some of the most effective struggles and liberatory practices among these masses.

It is no exaggeration to say that the CPI(Maoist), with thousands of guerrilla fighters and a mass base of support likely in the millions, is at present the most successful revolutionary struggle in the world. While its subjective actions have led the struggle up to this point, it is crucial to recognize how specific objective conditions—the extractive industry setting its sights on Dandakaranya—propelled increasing numbers of masses into antagonistic conflict with capital and the repressive state apparatus backing it, and, because of the decades of work of the CPI(Maoist), propelled them into revolutionary people's war. While these masses are not, technically speaking, proletarians, and the extractive industry proletarianizes only a small portion among them, they are nonetheless *set in motion* against the anarchic movements of capital and thus constitute a social force ripe for communist revolution.

As pointed out in part two, this raises the possibility of rapid development within protracted people's war where rural and peripheral populations are thrust into the center of international capital accumulation processes and forced to confront not just local, relatively small-time oppressors, but international finance capital and its military enforcers. Without dropping the strategic advantage of developing protracted people's war in relatively isolated locations where the central repressive apparatus has little reach, communists also need to locate where, in the rural context, possibilities for more rapid development of revolutionary struggle exist, even though those possibilities also present greater danger of defeat. As has been the case from Lima to Davao City to the Dandakaranya

127 Roy, 86–87.

forest region, the prospects for revolutionary advances are always accompanied by increased risks and potential setbacks. It is only by navigating this unity of opposites that communists can hope to break links in the chain of international capitalism-imperialism and begin to embark on the socialist transition to communism.