

Amir-Parviz Pouyan, The Necessity of Armed Struggle and Refutation of the Theory of "Survival". Brochure, Support Committee for the Iranian People's Struggle, New York 1975

The following article was written in the Spring of 1970; since then I have found no appropriate opportunity for its correction and development. Now this article is being published without any modifications or alterations, so that it can be corrected and developed in the future upon receiving the opinions of the comrades. It should not be considered complete. In my own opinion, its development is necessary.

In the three months since this article was written, we have frequently examined the policy of armed action and each time have naturally learned new things from our discussions. Therefore, it appears necessary for me to reflect in my article what we have learned, and to make alterations in my writing if it is so required.

The militant elements, especially the Marxists, are not at all in secure conditions. The police have mobilised all their forces and are trying night and day to discover the underground network of the struggle and to identify the militants. The enemy does not hesitate in the least to use any suitable tactic or special methods to suppress the militants.

Following the defeat of the anti-imperialist struggle in Iran (1953) and the re-establishment of fascist rule of the imperialist agents, there has developed a state of terror and suppression in our country which has enabled the police to gain the collaboration of many of the cowardly, profiteering elements who have betrayed the people's interests.

Under the circumstances where the revolutionary intellectuals lack any type of direct and firm relationship with the masses, our situation is not like the example of "fish living in the sea of the people's support". Rather, it is the case of small and scattered fishes surrounded by crocodiles and herons. The terror and suppression, the absence of any democratic conditions, has made the establishment of contact with our own people extremely difficult. Even the most indirect and consequently the least fruitful contact is far from easy. All the enemy's efforts are directed towards preserving this state of affairs. So long as we are without any relationship with our own masses, it is easy to be discovered and suppressed. In order to be able to withstand this situation, and at the same time grow and create the political organisation of the working class, we must break the spell of our weakness and establish a direct and firm relationship with the masses.

Let us examine the exact methods used by the enemy to keep us away from the people. It has brought all the workers' and peasants' centers under its control. The military and non-military establishments control the movements of the urban residents to and from the villages. It has obliged the peasantry of many areas to inform the authorities of the entry of non-authorized urban residents to the villages.

In small and large factories there is an office of the National Security and Information Organization (SAVAK) operating constantly. Employment of any worker or any office personnel is preceded by a full investigation of his past activities and connections. Even after employment the SAVAK, when possible, keeps the employee's every movement under full surveillance. Therefore, difficult as it is for militants to gain entry into the factories, it is still more difficult for them to proceed with agitational and organizational work.

The existing terror and suppression even make the use of secondary gathering centres of the workers and petty bourgeoisie, such as the teahouses, very difficult. In the cities, penetration

among the workers is practically limited to accidental acquaintances, which are not always organizationally fruitful.

The process through which a worker is educated to become a disciplined revolutionary is a complex, arduous and lengthy one. Our experience shows that workers, even the younger ones, despite all their discontentment with the situation in which they live, do not exhibit much enthusiasm for political education. The reasons for this state of affairs lies in the total absence of any tangible political movement along with their lack of consciousness which has resulted, partially, in their acceptance of the dominant culture of the society. The young workers, especially, waste their limited leisure time and scanty savings upon cheap petty bourgeois banalities. Most of them are tainted with lumpen idiosyncrasies. At work, if it is possible to utter a word, they try to make the working time seem shorter by resorting to vulgar conversation. The book readers among them are customers of the most decadent and filthy contemporary reactionary works. By preventing any mass political movement and by facilitating access to cheap entertainment, our enemy tries to accustom the workers to the acceptance of the general characteristics of the petty bourgeoisie. Hence, by doing so, to spread among them the antidote to political consciousness.

The police create a state of fear and suppression in the factory more than anywhere else. All methods are used to keep the workers in a constant state of fear and apprehension. The large factories in particular have been turned into military barracks, where the "productive soldiers" are put to work. An army discipline is enforced so that there might be but the least waste of time or chance of contact between the workers. Any tendency towards a strike or non-violent demonstration of grievances is met with the most brutal reactions: detainment, long interrogations, expulsion, and at times, torture. Each of these can have long-term negative effects on the future subsistence of the worker and would endanger their chance of being able to work or being employed at other production establishments and often results in their being replaced by one of the thousands in the reserve army of labour.

A worker who even before having had any record, had to confront innumerable difficulties merely to be able to sell their labour power, a worker who must frequently find an influential sponsor, or resort to the middlemen, or even pay a considerable amount of money to obtain a job, would find it almost impossible to get employed after having a bad record. Thus, although reluctantly, the worker prefers to become a manageable sheep and remains indifferent to political problems in order to survive.

In factories, private or state-owned, in any place which is a market for the sale of labour power; exploitation in its most shameless form is the order of the day. Workers are practically deprived of all sorts of social security; their labour power is bought only to the extent to which it is needed to proceed to a desired volume of production. They live in the eighteenth century, with the exception of having the questionable privilege of the twentieth century police rule.

If we express the oppression brought against them in words, they themselves feel this oppression with their whole being. If we write about their sufferings, they themselves constantly experience these sufferings. Nonetheless, they tolerate them, accept them with patience and, by taking refuge in petty bourgeois entertainment, try to ease the burden of this suffering. Why?

The various reasons can be summed up into one. They presume the power of their enemy to be absolute and their own inability to emancipate themselves as absolute. How can one think of emancipation while confronting absolute power with absolute weakness? It is precisely this assumption which is the reason, a negative reaction to their ability - for their indifference to political discussion, and even at times, their ridicule of it.

A relationship with the proletariat, with the aim of drawing this class into political struggle, cannot be established except by changing this assumption, by destroying these two absolutes in their minds. Thus, under existing circumstances, where there exists no democratic possibility of making contact with, giving political consciousness to, and organizing the proletariat, the proletarian intellectuals must of necessity make contact with the masses of its class through revolutionary power. The revolutionary power establishes a moral tie between the proletariat and the proletarian intellectuals and the continued exercise of this power will lead to organizational ties.

Here we should pause for a moment and explain how this moral tie would come into being and how it would lead to organizational ties in due course.

We have briefly discussed earlier the main means by which the enemy has chosen to keep us away from the proletariat, and the proletariat from us. We can sum up once more. We have seen that one of the main means is through terror and suppression, which the workers and all the popular strata feel under the domination of the fascist police. The other means is the submission of the proletariat to a culture, which the anti-revolutionaries try to imprint on their minds. There is, undoubtedly, a relation between these two factors: fear from the police activities and submission to an anti-revolutionary culture. The proletariat submits to this culture because it is deprived of the material conditions for resistance against it. Rejection of this culture is possible only when the proletariat has begun the process of abolishing the bourgeois relations of production. In fact, it is only in the course of political struggle that the class-consciousness of the proletariat will find its greatest possibility to manifest and develop itself. The working class, so long as it considers itself devoid of all kinds of actual power to overthrow the rule of its enemy, cannot make any attempt in the direction of rejecting the dominant culture. It is after embarking on a plan to change the infrastructure that is able to employ the super-structural factors to assure its victory. It would establish its own special moral and cultural outlooks and make them flourish, as the precursor of a new order, absolutely different from the old.

The absolute domination of the enemy, which finds its reflection in the minds of the workers as their absolute inability to change the established order, has the indirect effect of submission to the enemy's culture. Thus, terror and suppression, which is the crystallization of the enemy's power, act as the cause for submission of the worker to the dominant culture. What here is an effect, immediately after its appearance, turns itself into a new cause for avoidance by the proletariat of the revolutionary struggle.

Therefore, in order to liberate the proletariat from the dominant culture, to cleanse its mind and life of petty bourgeois poisonous thoughts, to terminate its alienation from its special class outlook and equip it with ideological ammunition, it is necessary again to shatter its illusion that it is powerless to destroy the enemy.

The revolutionary power is used to deal with this matter. The application of this power, which in addition to its propaganda nature is accompanied by distinct political agitation on a large scale, makes the proletariat conscious of a source of power which belongs to it. First, it will find out that the enemy is vulnerable, and it will see that the swift breeze that has just begun would leave no room for the absoluteness of the enemy's dominance. If this "absolute" is endangered in action, then the absolute can no longer survive in his thought. Therefore, it will of the power which has started its emancipation. Alienation from the vanguard will be replaced by the support, which has materialized inside the proletariat toward it.

Now, this revolutionary vanguard is merely distant from the proletariat but no longer alienated from it. The proletariat will think of the vanguard with passion not only because it sees that, for its

sake, a small group has gone into battle with an enemy equipped with all extensive arsenal, but all the more so because it sees its own future directly aligned with the future of this small group.

The revolutionary power that is exercised by the proletarian vanguard is the reflection merely of a fraction of the power of the working class. Yet, what is a swift breeze must turn into a devastating storm in order to make it possible to overthrow the established order. Thus, this incomplete reflection must be replaced with a complete reflection of its power. Hence, the exercise of revolutionary power plays a twofold role: on the one hand, it restores to the proletariat its class consciousness as a progressive class, and, on the other hand, it persuades it to play an active role in securing the victory of the struggle which has begun in order to secure its own future. This course begins with passive support by the workers for the revolutionary struggle and, as it continues, will lead to its active support. *

It is no longer sufficient to speak about the vanguard with enthusiasm and to wish it success wholeheartedly, but it is necessary to turn this "enthusiasm" into "cognition" and this "wish" into assuming a direct role in the struggle. Since the exertion of revolutionary power can, in its course, reach such a turning point, then it can also render the enemy's weapons ineffective. Neither terror nor suppression can hinder the march of the workers towards the source of their vanguard's power. Nor can bourgeois culture hold its previous dominance over their minds, serving as a super-structure for their flight from the struggle and submission to the established order. The spell breaks and the enemy looks like a defeated magician. What makes his defeat is precisely our victory in establishing a most intimate and direct relationship with the proletariat for organizational ties and this attempt is no longer confronted with the hindrances by the workers themselves.

The unity of the proletarian vanguard, the Marxist-Leninist groups and organizations, could not but take such a road. Exertion of the revolutionary power would make the police domination more brutal but wouldn't increase it. This domination cannot possibly increase, for today our enemy has mobilized all its forces to discover and suppress the militants. It only uncovers its real nature and would completely unmask its face revealing to all the people its savagery which, so far, in the absence of any vehement revolutionary movement, it has deceptively disguised.

It is under these circumstances that the revolutionary forces, and at their forefront, the Marxist-Leninists, would come together in order to be able to withstand the enemy's blows and survive. They would either have to join the enemy (i.e. by following a defeatist line which in practice means supporting the enemy), or they would have to join together. To remain isolated is tantamount to annihilation. However, being drawn closer together and even joining forces does not, as of yet, constitute unity.

The organizational unity of the organized Marxist-Leninists, which creates the unitary political organization of the proletariat, is realized during circumstances where the exercise of revolutionary power has, in the course of time, reached its climax. With each blow at the enemy, the absolute domination of the enemy in the minds of the revolutionary masses is demolished and this propels these masses a step towards participation in the struggle.

Thereafter, it is the enemy who has to expose its face more clearly at each step in order to survive and suppress ever more swiftly and, consequently more brutally, its revolutionary enemies. The enemy increases its pressure on all the classes and strata under its domination by the exercise of counter-revolutionary violence against the militants. Thus, the enemy intensifies the contradictions between these classes and itself, and by creating an atmosphere which it is bound to create, it propels the political consciousness of the masses to leap forward. It insanely attacks everything like a wounded beast. It is suspicious of all but its allies who are its sources of power and

sustenance. Every small expression of dissatisfaction, every suspicious move, every word of discontent, is met with the worst reactions. It imprisons, tortures and shoots the people, yearning to restore the bygone security.

The methods it inevitably employs, however, would just as inevitably work against itself. It wants to prevent the masses from participation in a revolutionary movement, yet each moment pushes more of them toward that course of struggle. Thus, it imposes the struggle on the people, seeing the continuation of its domination harder than before, it makes the people's tolerance of this domination more difficult than before. The masses join the struggle, put their power at the disposal of their vanguard and vindicate the specific strategy of the revolutionary struggle with their active participation.

This strategy is the conclusion of the assessment of the degree of revolutionary determination of every dominated class. It necessitates the organizational unity of the Marxist-Leninist elements in order to confirm the leadership of the proletariat, which undoubtedly is the most resistant and revolutionary class. The proletariat having joined the struggle and in order to make this struggle fruitful, needs its own specific political organization. The proletarian vanguard is fed with the power of its class and the proletariat, in depending on its political organization, secures the necessary assurance for the fruitfulness of its power. Thus, the Worker's Party is born.

In constructing the party of the working class, the correctness of each policy is assessed according to the quality of the methods that it presents for the growing survival of Marxist-Leninist groups and organizations. The survival of these groups and organizations is important due to the fact that these are the actual components of a potential whole. Yet, if this "survival" lacks the character of growth, it fails to develop into a cohesive whole. Thus, every line that would aim at mere survival of the Marxist-Leninist groups and organizations and pays no revolutionary attention to their growth, is an opportunist and defeatist line. We should also demonstrate that this line is, in turn and in the final analysis, a liquidationist line as well. Furthermore, we must demonstrate that the theory of "let us not take the offensive in order to survive", is in fact nothing else but saying "we should allow the police to destroy us in embryo without meeting any hindrance."

If defeatism is liquidationism, then there remains no room for asking, "why should we survive"? All the same, posing this question helps us recognize the opportunistic nature of the above-mentioned theory. This theory of "refraining to take the offensive" means negating all kinds of constructive attempts to increase the possibilities of the revolutionary forces.

This theory wishes to keep the struggle within the limits of the extremely meager possibilities not controlled by the enemy such as simple gatherings of elements not remarkable in quantity, in fact hardly exceeding the number of one's fingers, and then occupying these elements with the study of Marxist and historical works along with the observance of secrecy. The sphere of activity of these elements to the furthestmost point is limited to totally passive and dispersed contacts with some people from each dominated class and strata. Every element in these organizations continues his/her habitual life in this kind of activity and naturally no effort appears necessary to change it.

Notwithstanding, there is no doubt that this gathering has been formed on the basis of realizing the same goals as those of the active revolutionary group, paving the way for the formation of a communist party and mastering the revolutionary theory. Yet this organizational gathering which tries to secure its survival through taking a passive stand against the enemy necessarily has to have a mechanical conception of the process of formation of a party and the mustering of revolutionary theory. It predicts that the party of the working class will be formed at "an appropriate moment" from the union between the Marxist-Leninist groups which have been able to save themselves

from the enemy's blows. The revolutionary theory, too, is the product of the studies which these groups have been able to conduct on Marxism-Leninism, on the revolutionary experiences of other people, on the history of their country and on the passive and dispersed contacts they may have had with the people as the complementary condition. According to this theory, through a series of factors that are inexplicable to us, the historical determinism is to realize the formation of a party. Again the proletarian vanguard, which by now is united, is supposed to draw the masses into the struggle during "favourable conditions".

In this theory, "appropriate moment" and "favourable conditions" are metaphysical conceptions which, without explaining anything, are used to temporarily cover its obvious weaknesses. They are put to work in order to establish a link between the abstract interpretation and analysis of this theory and reality.

If this link is metaphysical, then undoubtedly this relationship will never be real and organic. It is also quite natural that a theory, which is not derived from objective reality, naturally cannot establish a proper link with the objective reality. The thesis, which to show its correctness and objectivity absolutely avoids going beyond its meager possibilities for existing, will in practice fall into an obvious subjectivism. Thinking of the future but lacking any means to reach it, it resorts to the metaphysics of "appropriate moment" and uses it as a bridge that can only be built in a non-dialectical mind. This theory which by displaying itself in a formula desires to give itself all appearance of mathematical precision, will diverge more than ever, from reality and, from the dialectics of the revolution. It claims: study plus a minimum of organization without any revolutionary striving for its growth plus the "appropriate moment" equals the working class party. And the party of the working class plus "favourable conditions" equals the revolution.

Undoubtedly, this formula cannot be correct as a solution for removing the present difficulties facing the revolutionary forces in the course of organizing the proletariat and the revolutionary masses. The "appropriate moment" and the "favourable conditions" will not materialize unless the revolutionary elements in every moment of their struggle meet the historical necessities properly. Then, what does this formula serve? It serves the opportunism, which justifies its paralyzing fear of the enemy by presuming that its disintegration is impossible and its domination indestructible. It limits its revolutionary tasks to a point, which avoids any engagement with the police. It devolves the development of the struggle to a metaphysical and consequently, imaginary determinism. Thus, we see that the grouping which originally had the aim of striving to construct the party of the working class, by taking an opportunistic line, gets each moment closer to burying its goal, and becomes interested in its own unfruitful survival more than ever. This thesis, which aspires to serve the proletarian goals, sacrifices these goals in practice in order to save itself. "Let us not take the offensive in order to survive", reveals itself in practice as "let us dismiss all revolutionary endeavors to construct the communist party in order to survive".

Nevertheless, the dialectic of the revolutionary struggle which finds its first great manifestation in the process of the genesis of a proletarian party, not only will not furnish this enthusiasm to survive but will give it the saddest of answers by imposing upon it an untimely death. It is at this same point that we clearly find out what was defeatist is liquidationist as well. It is no longer a debate over the fact that the policy aimed at "survival" has, because of its opportunistic attachment to this aim, lost the ability to grow, rather, the discussion is about the fact that such a line, in practice, would negate what it had devoutly set its aim at. This line, in the practice of struggle, will run into a dead-end and will have no way out except by choosing one of two exits: either to adopt an active and revolutionary stand against the enemy and thus save itself; or to turn renegade and look for affection from the police to secure its survival.

The enemy has specific criteria for its behaviour. It says, "come to terms with me in order to survive, accept my rule in order to save yourselves from my deadly blows". Any focus of activity which does not accept this call for unconditional surrender, whatever its field of activity, is considered a focal point of danger and, if it could not impose its survival on the enemy, it has nothing to do other than await the devastating attack of the enemy. There is nothing more rejoicing to the enemy than to have us as harmless victims. It shoots anyone remaining at the barricades. Either, one has to answer each blow with a blow in return or has to come out of the barricade holding a white flag. There is no death more precocious than dying at the barricades without shooting.

But it appears that not all of the pillars of the theory of "survival" are yet demolished because this theory assumes, as the condition for its soundness, the addition of the principle of secrecy to the principle of "refraining from the offensive". It argues that not only must we refrain from taking the offensive but we must also conceal each of our moves from the enemy's eyes and, naturally, the enemy not knowing us, thus cannot strike us.

If we asked what can guarantee the success of secrecy perhaps we will hear the answer that happens to be the most correct one - fully knowing the elements called into co-operation and continually striving to give them organizational training. The acceptance of this answer as a necessary condition for the preservation of an underground network is irrefutable. What can be refuted is the sufficiency of this condition; there is no need to refer to any historical experience to prove that this condition is insufficient. It is only necessary to take a look at our own present conditions. Our own short-term experiences demonstrate that any kind of over-dependency upon the organizational efficiency of any one comrade is a mistake. In fact, none of us, no matter how careful and sincere, can go on without making mistakes in this area. What can guarantee one hundred percent flawlessness is absolute inactivity. When we take action, study Marxism, try to propagate it, and enjoy some sort of contact (no matter how limited) with others, it is possible to make mistakes. Not only our own mistakes endanger us, but also the mistakes of others open us to a perpetual front of vulnerability.

In the course of action we inevitably come into contact with elements and circles that are practically careless in guarding themselves and others. At the beginning it is neither possible to recognize them nor is it possible to educate them. I find it unnecessary to back up this reasoning with some tested examples, because I am sure that each militant comrade can enumerate many examples concerning this issue. In general it should be said that danger can always come from any one individual and that putting trust in individuals and their training, no matter how successful, cannot eliminate the dangers completely. However, the problem is that the danger does not end at the level of the individual. It begins with the individual and threatens the entire organization. We should think of how to free the organization from this danger.

Thought should be given as to what can open a defense umbrella over the entire organization, so that mistakes by the individual (what one should always expect) would not destroy the organization. One should find out what must be combined with the principle of secrecy (that necessary but insufficient condition) so that together they can provide the conditions for our growing survival. Secrecy is a method of defense but, by itself, it is a passive method and remains that way as long as it is not supplemented with firepower.

Thus, it is natural to emphasize that secrecy, without being accompanied by revolutionary power, is a non-active and insecure defense. If secrecy and revolutionary power together must be the condition for our survival, it is unavoidable to refute the fundamental principle of the theory of "survival", i.e., the principle of "refraining to take the offensive". Hence, the thesis of "let us not

take the offensive in order to survive" will necessarily be replaced with the policy of "we must take the offensive in order to survive".

** As soon as the revolutionary power through its deed is turned into a living tangible reality, the masses, and especially the young workers, intellectuals and students will demonstrate interesting initiatives in the struggle. We cannot foresee the specific initiatives but we can foresee a general picture by an analysis of the spirit which will prevail in conditions where revolutionary power is exercised. People start with the simplest initiatives to express their dissatisfaction, thereby adding the "revolutionary power". Street walls will be covered with harsh slogans against the existing conditions. Acts of petty sabotage in locations, establishments or anything belonging to the bourgeois, bureaucratic and comprador enemy, and in general, to the rich, will develop the extent of initiatives. These acts of sabotage; as they continue, will especially endanger the very things that the enemy is extremely afraid of losing. Young workers, cleverly and without leaving any trace, begin to sabotage production. They wreck the machines, intentionally work carelessly or even steal the instruments of labour. These acts, on the whole, demonstrate the tendency of the masses to participate in the struggle and aid the revolutionary power. Each initiative is in itself an experience that prepares them for a greater act. In fact, the masses in this way increase their revolutionary capacity and experience, and go one step forward in assuming a more essential role.*