

The Peasant Problem and the Revolution^{*†}

Central Committee of the Communist Party of Peru

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1 The Peasant Problem and the Problem of Power

It is of special importance and decisive to approach the peasant problem from the point of view of how it serves the acquisition of power; and this is ultimately what interests the Party, as the issue of power is the central question of the revolution. Thus, organizing and directing the class struggle as a whole with the definite purpose of seizing power, and in this perspective, clarifying and resolving the arising problems is fundamental. The 5th plenum of the PCP, in addressing topics like this, states:

“The problem of Power as a central issue, People’s War as the realization of revolutionary violence, the conditions under which a Party develops in a country like ours, and the importance of peasant work as the foundation of People’s War are, therefore, substantial problems of our line that we must always keep in mind. Today, as we push for the Party’s reconstitution, these issues will increasingly come to the forefront and will have an impact on matters of political line and its application.”

It is noteworthy, then, the importance of addressing a topic such as the peasant problem: after all, the development of the peasant movement in the midst of armed struggle constitutes today the crux of the problem of power.

^{*}<https://cedoc.sisbib.unmsm.edu.pe/biblioteca-digital/coleccion-documental/publicaciones-periodicas/18>

[†]From *Bandera Roja* no. 46.

The great teachers of the proletariat have laid down the basic questions on this matter. Marx expresses it accurately in a letter to Engels:

“All the course of events in Germany will depend on the possibility of providing assistance to the proletarian revolution through a second edition, so to speak, of the peasant war.”

Lenin reaffirms this idea when discussing the Russian Revolution:

“The proletariat must carry out the democratic revolution, attracting the masses of peasants, to forcefully crush the resistance of autocracy and paralyze the instability of the bourgeoisie.”¹

And in a report to the Third Congress of the International, he states:

“The movement is advancing, and the working masses, the peasants of the colonies, despite still being backward, will play a very significant revolutionary role in the successive phases of the world revolution.”

And finally, Mao Zedong, who achieved a deep understanding of the role of the peasant movement, states:

“The current rise of the peasant movement is a grand event. Soon, hundreds of millions of peasants in the provinces of Central, Southern, and Northern China will rise like a storm, a hurricane, with such impetuous and violent force that nothing, no matter how powerful, can contain them. They will break all restraints and set forth on the path of liberation. They will bury all imperialists, warlords, corrupt officials, local despots, and evil 'shenshi.' All revolutionary parties and comrades will be tested by the peasants and will have to decide on which side to stand. Will they lead and guide them? Will they stay behind gesturing and criticizing them? Will they confront and fight them? Every Chinese is free to choose among these three alternatives, only that events will force them to choose quickly.”²

¹ *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution.*

² *Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan.*

Mariátegui, the founder of the Party, defined this fundamental problem in the General Political Line. Speaking of the indigenous peasantry, he said, "The indigenous hope is absolutely revolutionary," and pointed out to the PCP the goal of organizing workers and peasants with a highly class-oriented character, and that of "first stimulating and then carrying out the tasks of the democratic-bourgeois revolution," that is, leading the agrarian revolution.

Upon resuming the path of Mariátegui, the PCP has been raising its understanding of this important problem. Thus, the editorial of *Bandera Roja* no. 41 states:

"Without revolutionary work among the peasant masses, politically oriented by Marxism-Leninism, led by the Communist Party, there can be no development of the armed forces, nor can there be People's War; in conclusion, there can be no national liberation, and therefore, no destruction of imperialist and feudal exploitation."

2 The Peasant Movement and the National-Democratic Revolution

The peasant struggle for land, which is an anti-feudal struggle, lays the foundations for the national-democratic revolution; this is derived from the general laws of the class struggle in our revolution, laws systematized by Mariátegui as the General Political Line. Our society has a semi-colonial and semi-feudal character, where the Peruvian people suffer from the exploitation and oppression of imperialism, feudal landlords, and bureaucratic capitalism; hence the need to overthrow these classes and sweep away their dominance. This is the current stage of the revolution, and its content is bourgeois-democratic, not directed against the entire bourgeoisie, but only against a part of it, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, in addition to combating feudal landlords and imperialism.

Let us highlight the role of bureaucratic capitalism, which in its development matures the final conditions for the triumph of the democratic-national revolution. Mao teaches us that this monopolistic capital, associated with state power and closely linked to imperialism and landlords, forms a state monopoly capital, comprador and feudal; in this way, it reaches the pinnacle

of its development and prepares "sufficient material conditions for the revolution of new democracy," leaving the task of "confiscating the land from the feudal class and giving it to the peasants" and "confiscating the monopolistic capital." In our country, there is a deepening of this bureaucratic capitalism, particularly driving state monopoly capital as the lever of the economy, seeking to amass enormous capital and monopolize the vital arteries of the economy. All of this inevitably leads to the same conclusions that Mao Zedong points out.

The national-democratic revolution and the peasant war. To what extent are the peasant problem and the problem of war closely linked as absolute conditions of the democratic-bourgeois revolution? This is established by Mao Zedong when analyzing the Chinese Revolution:

"Thus, the bourgeois-democratic revolution in China has two fundamental characteristics: 1) the proletariat either establishes a revolutionary national united front with the bourgeoisie or breaks it when forced to do so, and 2) armed struggle is the main form of the revolution. We do not consider the Party's relationship with the peasantry and its relationship with the urban petty bourgeoisie as fundamental characteristics here because, first, these relationships are essentially the same as those of all Communist Parties in the world, and second, in China, when we speak of armed struggle, we fundamentally refer to the peasant war, and the Party's close relationship with the peasant war and its connection with the peasantry are one and the same thing."³

It becomes very clear that the armed struggle we must undertake is an agrarian revolution carried out by the peasants under the leadership of the proletariat; this is a constant, the natural means of the revolution. If the war has not yet broken out, everything must serve to prepare for it, and once it starts, everything must be directed towards its development.

The worker-peasant alliance. Mariátegui taught us:

"The strength of the revolution has always resided in the alliance of agrarians and laborers, that is, the alliance of the working masses and peasants."

According to this, workers and peasants form the basic masses of the revolution, and once they are mobilized and organized, the exploiters will be overthrown, and the revolution will succeed. Based on the alliance of

³INTRODUCING THE COMMUNIST.

millions of workers and peasants, it will also be possible to unite the urban petite bourgeoisie and, under certain conditions, the national bourgeoisie.

Peasantry is the largest and most oppressed class, burdened by the heavy chains of the semi-feudal system, and because of this, it possesses a formidable latent strength. As our founder said:

“The indigenous people, often unfairly labeled as submissive and cowardly, have never ceased to rebel against the semi-feudal regime that oppresses them, whether under the republic or the colony.”

Supporting the peasants in their struggle for land leads us to gain the greatest ally for the proletariat and helps us organize powerful fighting forces. The peasantry emerges as the main force of the democratic-national revolution and the proletariat’s best ally.

The proletariat, the most advanced class in history, has the urgent duty to lead the peasant masses. Mariátegui succinctly synthesizes this problem in the preface to *El Amauta Atusparia*:

“Peasant demands did not succeed against feudalism in Europe until they were expressed only through ‘guerrilla tactics’. They succeeded with the bourgeois liberal revolution, which turned them into a program. In our Spanish American continent, still semi-feudal, the bourgeoisie has neither known nor wanted to fulfill the tasks of liquidating feudalism. As direct descendants of the Spanish colonizers, they have been unable to appropriate the demands of the peasant masses. This task falls to socialism. The socialist doctrine is the only one that can give a modern, constructive meaning to the indigenous cause, which, when placed in its true social and economic context, and elevated to the level of a creative and realistic politics, relies on the will and discipline of a class that is now emerging in our historical process: the proletariat.”

Giving a proletarian direction to the peasantry is the essence of the worker-peasant alliance. It means merging the Party with the peasantry and their struggles, imparting a proletarian outlook to the peasants, recruiting activists among them, and building the Party in rural areas. Specifically, it involves mobilizing, organizing, and arming the peasantry under the leadership of the working class represented by its Party, the Communist Party.

3 The Struggle for the Land

The bureaucratic path. Throughout centuries, feudal oppression has been manifested by the concentration of land ownership in the hands of a few landlords, while millions of peasants possess little or no land at all. Thus, upon this gigantic concentration of land, cruelly usurped by the feudal class, a system of servitude is established, which, under different forms (unpaid labor, payments in kind or money), allows the feudal landowning class to live as parasites in luxury at the expense of boundless misery and oppression of the peasants, plunging our entire people into backwardness and hunger. Latifundia and serfdom have thus been maintained, for several centuries, as pillars of Peru's social, political, and economic organization.

The landlord economy evolves, through a slow and prolonged process, towards a capitalist form, following the bureaucratic path, which consists of introducing capitalist techniques and modalities while preserving the large agrarian ownership and safeguarding the power of the feudal landowning class. Along this path, the landlord economy evolves internally, and instead of liberating the peasants, it maximizes the exploitation of unpaid labor and other feudal modalities to achieve rapid capital accumulation. The peasants painfully suffer this lengthy transformation process, where their labor and possessions are drained, and they are deprived of their few lands, even being driven off the fields. Latifundia and serfdom remain, concealed under new names (CAP, SAIS, "Social Property," "communal labor," etc.), and are more closely linked to bureaucratic capitalism and State Power.

Mariátegui explains this process with the following words:

"Capitalism, as an economic and political system, is shown to be incapable, in Latin America, of building an economy emancipated from feudal burdens. The prejudice of the inferiority of the indigenous race allows for maximum exploitation of the labor of this race, and it is not willing to give up this advantage, from which it derives so many benefits. In agriculture, the establishment of wage labor and the adoption of machines do not erase the feudal character of large landownership. They simply perfect the system of exploiting the land and the peasant masses."

The peasant problem cannot be separated from the national problem. As Mariátegui once told us, "the problem of the indigenous people is the problem of three-quarters of the population of Peru. It is the problem of the

majority. It is the problem of nationality.” The struggle against imperialism finds its basis in the struggle of the peasantry, in the semi-feudal struggle. To detach both is to fall into a false rationalism.

“**Land for those who work it.**” The founder of our party, in *Outline of the indigenous problem*, says:

“The struggle of the indigenous people against the local bosses has invariably revolved around the defense of their lands against absorption and dispossession. Therefore, there is an instinctive and profound indigenous demand: the reclamation of their land. Giving an organized, systematic, and defined character to this claim is the task that we have the duty to actively accomplish.”

Mariátegui summarizes centuries of peasant struggle and also the need to channel this peasant aspiration of “land for those who work it,” as only with the proletariat organizing the peasants, the fight for land will have a successful outcome. The delivery of land to the peasantry after crushing the landlord class and their state will forever eliminate serfdom, thus emancipating the peasantry from feudal agrarian relations. The peasant path in agriculture opens up the prospect of capitalist development under the best possible conditions for the peasantry. In the second stage of the revolution, the socialist stage, these capitalist relations are limited and restricted to make way for the collectivization of the countryside. As part of the democratic path, the peasants demand an agrarian reform that abolishes feudalism; this reform entails:

1. The destruction of latifundia, with land distributed to the peasants.
2. Confiscation or ”expropriation without compensation.”
3. Implementation through force, through peasant warfare, and popular power.

4 The People’s War is a Peasant War

War is an absolute necessity for the realization of our revolution. Mariátegui instilled in the PCP and the Peruvian proletariat this Marxist-Leninist principle of universal validity with the following words: “Power is conquered

through violence... Power is preserved only through dictatorship.” Empowering the vast masses in the use of revolutionary violence is key to achieving the liberation of our people, and this is even more urgent in a backward, semi-feudal, and semi-colonial country like ours.

War is the primary form of struggle. The victory of the proletariat and the people over their enemies is an inevitable future. The current situation of the people’s weakness and the enemy’s strength is only apparent and temporary because, when viewed as a whole, the reactionaries are nothing more than a ”paper tiger,” while the people are an impenetrable iron wall, invincible. This concept by Mao Zedong is fundamental to fight with confidence in victory, in his own words:

“The enemy has a fragile base, disintegrates internally, is separated from the people, and immersed in inextricable economic crises - therefore, it can be defeated - and at the same time, there are the masses, millions and millions of people who genuinely support the revolution. This is the true iron wall that no force can break. To fear the enemy as if it were all-powerful is right-wing thinking that hinders action. In their fear of the enemy, some even go so far as to say ‘fascism is the destruction of the popular movement and its organizations’ and choose occultism under the guise of ‘retreating’ or ‘going underground.’ ”

The reaction has a large army, but its economy is plagued with significant contradictions and is facing a severe economic, political, and ideological crisis. The strength of the enemy lies in a vulnerable point, but this weakness doesn’t manifest overnight. Similarly, the masses are vast and powerful, but their weakness lies in their lack of mobilization and organization.

It is necessary, therefore, to undertake a protracted war, a war to the death in which we destroy the enemy bit by bit. Only through such a long process with twists and turns will the weakness of the enemy become evident, and the strength of the people will be overwhelming.

The proletariat must forge and train itself amid the war; it must organize and mobilize the entire people, especially the peasantry, in pursuit of this form of struggle. The fact that the country is semi-feudal and semi-colonial, and that the vast countryside is bound by feudal oppression, devoid of any political freedom or rights, determines that the armed revolution must confront armed counter-revolution if it is to advance.

Mao Zedong has synthesized this great truth, valid for all backward countries, and of tremendous value in building the Communist Party in these countries:

“In China, the main form of struggle is war, and the main form of organization is the army. All other forms, such as organizations and struggles of the popular masses, are also very important and absolutely indispensable and must by no means be set aside, but the goal of all of them is to serve the war. Before the outbreak of a war, all organizations and struggles aim to prepare for it... After the outbreak of a war, all organizations and struggles are coordinated directly or indirectly with the war.”⁴

Then a long period of preparation and use of legality does not fit us, before unleashing war as in a capitalist country. It is in the midst of war that we will win over the people and destroy the enemy, part by part.

The war belongs to the peasants under the leadership of the proletariat. The peasantry, as the foundation of the national democratic revolution, is also the foundation of the people’s war. This is a peasant war or nothing.

Mariátegui analyzed the role of the peasantry in the revolution and argued for the need to arm the workers and peasants to achieve their demands, the first of which is land. He pointed out “the armed action of the peasant masses” in Mexico and how “the rebellion spread rapidly” there. Although they did not have a specific program, “their first concrete demand was the reclamation of land usurped by the large landowners.”⁵ He emphasized that this was a democratic-bourgeois revolution that would only progress if led by the proletariat; otherwise, it would “move backward.” The hegemony of the proletariat in the democratic-national revolution, once the correct path is established, is measured by the influence it exerts over the peasant movement. The Party must concern itself with mobilizing the peasantry and organizing it as a powerful combat force.

The path of revolution is from the countryside to the city. Mariátegui taught this path when he declared:

“With the downfall of latifundist feudalism, urban capitalism will lack the strength to resist the growing working class.” This path consists of encircling the cities from the countryside, ultimately leading to taking control of the cities. This strategy takes advantage of the fact that the enemy is weak and has limited forces in the countryside, while the vast peasant masses represent

⁴*Problems of War and Strategy.*

⁵*Temas de nuestra América., Themes of our America.*

the main contingent in this war.

The revolution must develop its forces by first occupying vast rural areas, and once strong in the countryside, advance to seize the cities where the reactionaries concentrate their armed strength. This path of revolution in backward countries has been systematized by Mao Zedong, who, with his profound teachings, provides a valuable weapon for our own revolution:

“Considering that the powerful imperialists and their reactionary Chinese allies have long been entrenched in the main cities of our country, revolutionary detachments, if they refuse to compromise with imperialism and its lackeys and wish to persevere in the struggle, if they want to gather strength, toughen themselves, and avoid, as long as they don’t have enough power, a decisive battle with the mighty enemy, they must transform the backward rural areas into advanced and solid bases of support, into great military, political, economic, and cultural fortresses of the revolution from where they can fight the fierce enemy that attacks the rural areas by using the cities, and gradually lead the revolution to complete victory through prolonged struggle.”⁶

We are not going to conquer the peasantry immediately. First, we will build support bases in extensive areas and from there develop the People’s War. Constructing a support base requires annihilating enemy forces, mobilizing peasant masses, and developing our own armed forces. In these support bases, popular power is established, and agrarian reform is carried out. The issue of the support base is crucial for the development of the People’s War.

The construction of the Party and its work in the countryside must be oriented towards turning the peasant struggle into an armed struggle. Within the overall framework of their revolutionary work, it is necessary for the Party to be built in rural areas, where its main weight lies. The Party must fully understand the economic and political situation of the countryside and, using Marxism-Leninism, must study the classes to determine who are friends and who are enemies.

The Party must reach out to the poorest and “take root among them, mobilizing and organizing the masses in their struggle for land.” This work gradually leads to armed struggle, and it falls upon us to lead this struggle in order to overthrow the reactionary power in a region and establish

⁶*The Chinese Revolution and the Communist Party of China.*

popular power. This is how the Party faces the challenge of establishing support bases, advancing in ideological, political, organizational, and military aspects. Finally, agrarian reform must be carried out by confiscating the land from feudal landlords and distributing it among the peasants.

Mariátegui was always concerned about the construction of the PCP in the countryside. Speaking about a peasant activist of the time, he said:

“The ‘new Indian’ is waiting. He has a goal. There lies his secret and his strength... Urviola represents the first spark of a fire to come. He was the revolutionary Indian, the socialist Indian... today the Sierra is pregnant with Spartacuses.”

Another important problem of the war is the people’s army, which is the main form of organization and one of the three instruments of the revolution. Mariátegui defines the role of this new type of army, of which he says:

“The red army is a new case in the military history of the world. It is an army that understands its role as a revolutionary force and never forgets that its purpose is to defend the revolution.” Emphasizing the guerrillas, he states that “the same relationship of body, of class, existed between the guerrilla and the working-class and peasant masses. The guerrillas were simply the most active, militant, and dynamic part of the masses.” The problem of war and its general laws must be thoroughly studied by the entire Party to steadfastly fulfill the role that history indicates for us.

5 The Reactionary Path

In our country, the reaction follows a bureaucratic path that essentially unfolds the imperialist and feudal domination and, on these two pillars, develops bureaucratic capitalism.

Since its inception, this path has faced strong opposition from the people and has encountered a series of difficulties in advancing. In the 1960s, the peasantry rose up and led the entire nation into a revolutionary peak that seriously challenged the reaction and questioned its power. Hence, the reaction drew two conclusions: 1) to deepen bureaucratic capitalism, and 2) to corporatize Peruvian society.

With this spirit, the fascist regime emerges as a pilot and preventive plan aimed at crushing the People’s War. One of the main measures it implemented was the agrarian law, which consists of maintaining and developing

large landownership based on new forms of unpaid labor. This represents a bureaucratic approach in the countryside and not “socialization,” as some claim.

Facing difficulties due to the opposition of the peasantry towards this measure, the corporate readjustment undertaken two years ago by the fascist regime seeks to ensure its objectives by “bringing capitalism to the countryside” and through frenetic exploitation of the farmers to achieve their coveted “accelerated accumulation of capital.” On the 7th anniversary of the Agrarian Law (June 1976), the Minister of Agriculture announced that “all institutions, both public and private sectors, must participate in this great mobilization to transform the Peruvian countryside into the fastest and most powerful wheel that will lead our nation towards development.”

In reality, with these measures, by bringing bureaucratic capitalism to the countryside, they will set it on the path of revolution. Engels made this problem clear long ago: “The transformation of all small rural homeowners into industrial workers at home, the disappearance of the old isolation and thus the political nullity of the small peasants, swept along by the ‘social maelstrom,’ turns out to be the extension of the industrial revolution to the countryside, and therefore, the transformation of the most stable and conservative class of the population into a revolutionary breeding ground; and as the culmination of all this, the expropriation of the peasants engaged in home industry by the machinery that forcibly propels them into insurrection.”

6 The Path of the People

The Peruvian people have a single path through which they must liberate themselves, and that is the path of Mariátegui. This path urgently demands that the democratic-national revolution will move forward only if we arm ourselves “with rifles, program, and doctrine,” as Mariátegui explicitly stated. Today, we refer to these three instruments of revolution as the Party, the Army, and the United Front.

Currently, there is a development of the masses as the main trend, where the people engage in increasingly significant struggles and progress on all fronts: ideological, political, and organizational. The deepest and most backward sections of the country’s population experience this situation intensely, and discontent spreads among them as they prepare to unleash great revolutionary storms.

This main trend necessarily leads to a surge of the masses. Let's remember the experience of the 1960s: the surge of the masses means, first of all, the rise of the peasantry; at that moment, the peasantry takes the land and disregards the courts, leading to violent confrontations with the reactionaries. We certainly live in a situation where, as Mao Zedong said, "a single spark can start a prairie fire," in which all contradictions are heightened, and a colossal and self-driven mass emerges from deep within the people.

Mariátegui masterfully analyzes a situation similar to ours, that of Mexico in the moments leading up to its revolution:

"But a people who had fought so stubbornly for their right to land ownership could not resign themselves to this feudal regime and give up their demands. Furthermore, the growth of factories was creating an industrial proletariat to which foreign immigration brought the pollen of new social ideas. New syndicalist and socialist nuclei were emerging... And, above all, a revolutionary spirit was fermenting in the countryside. A leader, any skirmish could ignite and set the country ablaze."⁷

In this heated situation, it is up to the PCP to promote its reconstitution and merge with the masses, mainly the peasantry. Let us conclude with full confidence in these wise words of Mao Zedong:

"Whether the ideological and political line is correct or not decides everything. When the Party's line is correct, we have everything. If we don't have people, we will have them; if we don't have rifles, we will obtain them, and if we don't have power, we will conquer it. If the line is incorrect, we will lose what we have gained."

⁷ *Temas de nuestra América, p.39, Themes of our America*