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## 不断革命

## Permanent Revolution

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Our revolutions come one after another. Starting from the seizure of power in the whole country in 1949, there followed in quick succession the anti-feudal land reform, the agricultural cooperativisation, and the socialist reconstruction of private industries, commerce, and handicrafts ... . Our revolutions are like battles. After a victory, we must at once put forward a new task. In this way, cadres and the masses will forever be filled with revolutionary fervour instead of conceit.

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Mao Zedong, 1958<sup>1</sup>

**T**he Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) victory and proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 was a watershed moment in communist history. The Party had defied all odds and defeated a numerically and technologically superior foe in the Nationalist Party (*guomindang*, hereafter GMD). The victory, however, was *not* the end of the Chinese Revolution, but its beginning. As CCP Chairman Mao Zedong intimated in 1948:

The question now facing the Chinese people ... is whether to carry the revolution through to the end or to abandon it half-way. If the revolution is to be carried through to the end, we must use the revolutionary method to wipe out all the forces of reaction *resolutely, thoroughly, wholly, and completely; we must unswervingly persist* in overthrowing imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism; and we must overthrow the reactionary rule of the [GMD] on a country-wide scale and set up a republic that is a *people's democratic dictatorship under the leadership of the proletariat* and with the *worker-peasant alliance as its main body*.<sup>2</sup>

Mao's call for China's revolution to persist—what became his theory of 'permanent revolution' (*buduan geming lun*)—was a reminder that new contradictions would inevitably emerge along China's path to socialist development, and even old contradictions could reemerge, thus necessitating a persistent revolutionary fervour. Permanent revolution also meant that revolution had to pass through stages and achieve specific goals at each stage before progressing to the next. As a concept, permanent revolution raises important questions: when does a revolution end, if ever? How does one know that enemies have been defeated? Are enemies of class struggle ever truly defeated? Is there a threshold of exhaustion when permanent mobilisation becomes unsustainable? Mao believed that social change still necessitated and demanded revolution even after the defeat of imperialism and the reactionary classes. Permanent revolution thus represented a response to the fact that revolution can never truly be complete because of the persistence of contradictions in socialist society (see Rojas's essay in the present volume). The incessant emergence, development, and resolution of contradictions are ultimately integral to socialist and communist development.<sup>3</sup>

Permanent revolution may consist of charismatic leadership, mass mobilisation, and an oppositional force against which revolutionary classes can struggle.<sup>4</sup> It also contains spatial and temporal dimensions: spatially, the revolution must extend globally, as we see in the case of global Maoism (see Lanza's essay in the present volume); and temporally, it must become a duration of the present, as a way of making and sustaining revolution after seizing state power. To extend revolution in space and time, thereby making it permanent, became a central theoretical dispute of twentieth-century communism. The temporality of permanent revolution in China also led to a form of post-Cultural Revolution exhaustion and dissipation of revolutionary energies. But outside China, for instance in the case of Peru's Partido Comunista del Perú-Sendero Luminoso (Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path, hereafter CPP-SP), permanent revolution found new life.

In what follows, I trace this conceptual lineage from Mao's initial formulation to its invocation and experimentation in the highland territories of central and southern Peru, where the CPP-SP recruited students and peasants to fight incessantly across 'a river of blood' to punish exploiters and establish communism.<sup>5</sup>

### *Genealogy of Permanent Revolution*

First coined by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the mid-nineteenth century, and developed later by Leon Trotsky, the term permanent revolution has evolved significantly. Marx and Engels initially discussed a 'revolution in permanence' in *The Holy Family* in anticipation of social upheaval and a proletarian uprising after the national bourgeoisie's failure. Permanent revolution came to mean the proletariat's continued pursuit of its interests despite its political domination by another class; in the face of class hostility from above, this idea gave rise to an independent militant approach whereby the proletariat organises autonomously.<sup>6</sup> Trotsky drew from this conception, emphasising the proletariat's role in leading an 'uninterrupted' revolution, surpassing the bourgeois democratic revolution to implement socialism.<sup>7</sup> The 'socialist revolution,' he elaborated, 'begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena,' thus transforming domestic political

change into an international affair. In 1927, the CCP made permanent revolution its political line, which at this stage was ‘an uninterrupted series of armed uprisings [in the countryside] until final victory was achieved.’<sup>8</sup> This earlier approach was hardly the final formulation; indeed, on the eve of the Great Leap Forward in January 1958, Mao announced his *theory* of permanent revolution, which offered a new strategy to guide the Chinese Revolution’s transition to socialism. The ubiquity of contradictions in any society, even a socialist one, required permanent proletarian struggle, passing through necessary stages, to prevent a lapse in revolutionary progress.

### *From Permanent to Continuous Revolution*

Rhetorically indebted to Trotsky’s formulation, and to Sun Yat-sen’s view that the Chinese Revolution ‘has not yet been completed’ and ‘comrades must still bend every effort to achieve it,’ Mao’s theory of permanent revolution grew out of the CCP’s struggle against the GMD.<sup>9</sup> Pre-revolutionary China, Mao diagnosed, was semifeudal and semicolonial (see Barlow’s essay in the present volume). The bourgeois democratic revolution’s failure meant that only proletarian revolutionary action in an unbreakable alliance with the peasantry ‘as its main body’ could bestow the revolution with a permanent character on the path towards socialist development. New contradictions, however, required ‘revolutionary zeal’ to realise China’s modernisation, economic development, and socialist unity.<sup>10</sup> Mao’s theorisation thus regarded the entire revolutionary process predating and anticipating communism as ‘an endless series of social contradictions and struggles [that] can be resolved only by radical revolutionary breaks with existing reality.’<sup>11</sup> Progress to higher stages, he urged, ‘must necessarily be in a relationship between quantitative and qualitative changes. All mutations, all leaps forward are revolutions [that] must pass through struggles. The theory of [the] cessation of struggles [in a socialist society] is sheer metaphysics.’<sup>12</sup> The persistence of contradictions would remain given the permanent possibility of a reactionary class attempting to restore its power, and undermine the revolution. The Chinese Revolution would therefore pass through ‘many stages and many revolutions’ to safeguard the revolutionary gains and protect against the reemergence of bureaucratic, reactionary tendencies.<sup>13</sup>

Mao’s theory of permanent revolution departed from Trotsky’s conclusion that the bourgeois democratic revolution (the Republican government) had succeeded in China on the grounds that the latter had failed to eradicate feudalism, enact land reform, develop and augment productive forces, resolve national questions, and safeguard national sovereignty. The CCP, by contrast, sought to accomplish such tasks, stage-by-stage, on the path towards socialist construction and proletarian dictatorship. As Mao noted, the Communists were ‘exponents of the theory of the *transition of the revolution*, and not of the Trotskyite theory of “permanent revolution” ... *for the attainment of socialism by going through all the necessary stages of the democratic republic.*’<sup>14</sup> He elaborated on this break from the Trotskyite approach in 1958:

I stand for the theory of permanent revolution. Do not mistake this for Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution. In making revolution one must strike while the iron is hot—one revolution must follow another, the

revolution must continually advance ... . After Liberation in 1949 came the Land Reform; as soon as this was completed there followed the mutual-aid teams, then the low-level cooperatives, then the high-level cooperatives. After seven years the cooperativisation was completed and productive relations were transformed; then came the Rectification. After Rectification was finished, before things had cooled down, then came the Technical Revolution.<sup>15</sup>

In Mao's version, permanent revolution rationalised the CCP's economic and political rectification campaigns (see Mertha's essay in the present volume). 'Our revolution,' he urged, 'is like fighting battles. After winning a battle, a new task is at once put forward. In this way, the cadres and the masses can be made to uphold their revolutionary enthusiasm to the full extent.'<sup>16</sup> Contradictions would indeed be present even beyond the 1949 victory, and new contradictions would emerge as the CCP developed China into a socialist society with a modern socialist economy. Such 'continually emerging contradictions' required accomplishing objectives that corresponded to each stage and revolutionary enthusiasm to stamp out bourgeois tendencies seeking to reverse revolutionary gains.<sup>17</sup> Hence the CCP moved from Land Reform and the First Five-year Plan to the mutual-aid teams, cooperatives, the 1956 Hundred Flowers Movement, the 1957–59 Anti-rightist Campaign, the Great Leap Forward, and lastly, the Cultural Revolution.

During the Cultural Revolution, permanent revolution metamorphosed into the concept of 'continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat' (*wuchanjieji zhuanzheng xia jixu geming*). Continuous revolution was an innovation introduced by the Gang of Four to theoretically justify the most radical features of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>18</sup> 'Continuing the revolution' first emerged in *People's Daily* in 1967 and eventually constituted a theory of sorts.<sup>19</sup> Consisting of quotes from Mao's earlier writings, continuing the revolution was a necessary ingredient of proletarian political power and the establishment of socialism. The enduring nature of class conflict in socialist society required continued infusions of revolutionary energy and enthusiastic action to ensure its perpetuity (see Dutton's essay in the present volume).

The debate over the difference between the earlier *buduan geming* and *jixu geming* was never definitively resolved. On one hand, the shift from the predicate adjective *buduan* to the transitive verb *jixu* stresses that positive action was essential to the revolution's continuation; on the other, *jixu* also implies continuity with the CCP's bureaucratic establishment, whereas *buduan* contains the possibility of rupture.<sup>20</sup> The first reading is supported by Zhang Chunqiao's warning of a resurgence of the 'bourgeois right' unless the revolution was fortified under the dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>21</sup> The fear was that the bourgeoisie would reverse the positive gains of the revolution and reroute the Chinese path towards capitalism. Enthusiastic action ultimately took the form of a revolutionary culture that upheld the path towards socialism in all fields and stood steadfast against 'capitalist roaders.' Intrinsic to the revolutionary promise at the core of the Cultural Revolution was the formation of a new culture for a socialist mode of production, which necessitated continuous reinvention, i.e. revolution, to prevent it from deviating along a capitalist or Soviet bureaucratic path. To achieve the type of socialist society that Mao envisioned, the Cultural Revolution aimed at transforming

high culture and everyday culture into a new type of revolutionary culture, and removing rightist tendencies that presented potential obstacles (see the essays by Thornton and Dai in the present volume).<sup>22</sup>

There were, ultimately, consequences to making revolution permanent in China. As Mao once said, 'the straw sandal has no pattern, its shape evolves as it is woven.'<sup>23</sup> This phrase evokes the need for a constant reassessment and recalibration of the shape revolution takes as it unfolds. Yet the result of this approach had disastrous consequences, ranging from the Great Leap's unrealistic production quotas and pace to the Cultural Revolution's iconoclastic fanaticism, both of which disfigured the 'pattern' of revolutionary politics. Such misshapen sandals were not suitable for China's post-Mao leadership, in its attempt to 'cross the river' of economic modernisation and leave revolution on the shores of history. The lessons and inspiration from China's permanent revolution, however, spread beyond its own borders and found new life elsewhere.<sup>24</sup>

### *Exporting the Revolution to Peru*

The Cultural Revolution struck a chord with foreign visitors to China, notably a Peruvian Marxist named Abimael Guzmán. His visits to Beijing between 1965 and 1967 led him to adopt Mao Zedong Thought as the CPP-SP's guiding ideology and regard the Chinese Revolution as pregnant with lessons for Peru. He studied Mao's works closely, trained in the CCP's military techniques, and received small arms training at a Chinese cadre school. Upon his return to Peru, he founded the CPP-SP as a Maoist party, avowing Maoism in his claim that the Shining Path's armed struggle required peasant mobilisation 'under the infallible banners of Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought.'<sup>25</sup> Now convinced to launch a people's war from Ayacucho, Guzmán adopted the *nom de guerre* 'Presidente Gonzalo' and followed Mao's example in waging a permanent revolution in Peru.<sup>26</sup> The CPP-SP's ideological foundation contained four central pillars on which its revolution rested: a) the universality of people's war (see Guan's essay in the present volume); b) the Party's militarisation of the worker-peasant alliance; 3) the personality cult; and d) a *permanent cultural revolution*.

In addition to Mao, Guzmán drew inspiration from Peruvian Marxist José Carlos Mariátegui's (1894–1930) anti-imperialism and diagnosis of Peru as a semicolonial, semifeudal society. The name 'Sendero Luminoso' derives from Mariátegui's axiom that 'Marxism-Leninism will open the shining path to the future.' After Guzmán's trips to China between 1965 and 1967, he discovered ideas in Mao that resonated with Mariátegui, and also went beyond them. Mao's strategies of protracted war and revolutionary violence provided tactical elements that were absent in Mariátegui's thought.<sup>27</sup> Together, Mariátegui and Mao's respective writings from the 1920s are reflected in CPP-SP assessments of the nature of Peruvian society in the 1970s. Mao's call to apply Marxism-Leninism creatively, Guzmán admits, allowed him to appreciate the contributions of Mariátegui as a 'first rate Marxist-Leninist who had thoroughly analysed our society.'

Mariátegui had applied Marxism as an interpretive paradigm to Latin American realities with *Indigenismo*, which called for socialism to end the racial marginalisation of indigenous peoples. Since his death, however, every leftist Peruvian political party failed to address the 'ethnic question' and the state's pauperisation of its indigenous

population.<sup>28</sup> Frustrated over issues of political line, strategy, and revisionism of leftist currents in Peru, Guzmán broke from the Mariátegui-founded Partido Comunista Peruano (Communist Party of Peru) and, later, the pro-Chinese Partido Comunista Peruano-Bandera Roja (Communist Party of Peru-Red Flag). These schisms were justified as an unfolding of the principle of permanent revolution, which was venerated as a fundamental pillar of the CPP-SPP. Under these auspices, the newly formed Party declared its intention to surround the cities from the countryside in an unrelenting, continuous peasant revolution.<sup>29</sup> Guzmán's CPP-SP sought to conquer 'three mountains' before it could succeed where others had failed: a) US imperialism; b) semifeudalism; and c) bureaucratic capitalism. The 'three mountains' metaphor shows the centrality of Mao's permanent revolution in Guzmán's thinking: Mao's April 1945 invocation of the fourth-century story of the 'Foolish Old Man Who Moved the Mountains,' a tale about persistence and human will in removing a mountain, had become one of the seminal essays of the Cultural Revolution (see also Lora-Wainwright's essay in the present volume).<sup>30</sup> As Mao intimated:

Today, two big mountains weigh down on the Chinese people. One is imperialism, while the other is feudalism. The CCP has long made up its mind to dig them up. *We must persevere and work unceasingly* [*buduan de gongzuo*], and we, too, will touch God [*hui gandong shangdi de*]. Our God is none other than the broad masses of the Chinese nation. If they stand up and dig together with us, why can't we dig these two mountains away?<sup>31</sup>

The only way to conquer these mountains, Guzmán urged, was through protracted struggle, an alliance between urban and rural proletarians (notably the Andean peoples), and a perpetual struggle against reactionary forces, both local and global.<sup>32</sup>

A philosophy professor at a university in Peru, Guzmán declared himself the 'greatest living Marxist-Leninist' and intellectual successor to Marx, Lenin, and Mao. His 'mastery of Maoist text' granted him total authority over the CPP-SP as its supreme theorist, with 'pensamiento Gonzalo' ('Gonzalo Thought') constituting a 'Fourth Sword of Marxism.'<sup>33</sup> A Mao-like personality cult developed around him that employed Cultural Revolution agitprop methods of wall posters and fervid acolytes singing Mao songs 'memorised in Mandarin.'<sup>34</sup>

Peru's need for a 'permanent' or 'continuous' revolution is most explicitly stated in a 1988 interview by *El Diario* with Guzmán:

*This democratic revolution [of ours] must be followed uninterruptedly by a socialist revolution, on this we would like to specify, taking what President Mao taught us with a lot of foresight thinking about what could arise; he tells us that the democratic revolution ends on the same day that power is taken in the whole country and the People's Republic is founded, and on that same day and hour the socialist revolution begins, and in it, we have to develop a dictatorship of the proletariat and, thus, initiate the basic transformations to develop socialism.*<sup>35</sup>

Guzmán's perspective on permanent revolution was clearly informed by his close reading of Mao's texts during his time in China, as he echoes the Chinese leader's emphases on world revolution, the peasantry's potential under Party leadership, and waging a people's war. By studying Mao and the CCP, Guzmán came to regard the Cultural Revolution as 'a continuation of the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and its indispensable character; without it the revolution cannot continue its march to communism.' But in no way was the Cultural Revolution—its Chinese or Peruvian version—to be a single-step towards socialism; rather, as Guzmán makes clear, there were to be 'successive culture revolutions' responsive to 'our own reality.' The Peruvian revolution, he concludes, 'is linked inextricably to the world revolution; that is our final goal, the others are stages, steps, moments and we believe that the road to reach communism is long.'<sup>36</sup>

CPP-SP's brand of Maoism took the form of broad recruitment among rural workers, organising peasant patrols (*rondas campesinas*), military encroachment, and continuous mass violence. Recruits were either students from Ayacucho's countryside, or from the margins of urban society. Despite its self-proclaimed vanguard status, however, the Party organisation reproduced rather than eradicated Peru's top-down 'colonial stratification,' as a Central Committee of white Peruvians oversaw a largely poor youth of indigenous or mixed ancestry. The CPP-SP nonetheless won over many students and peasants, as millenarian promises of radical upheaval in a continuous armed struggle struck a sympathetic chord with a disaffected base. By 1977, young militants were hosting Maoist-style 'education sessions' and 'recruiting fighters in mountain villages.'<sup>37</sup> The ouster of corrupt authorities and punishment of criminals and counterrevolutionaries by *rondas* were also positive changes.

But when military forces moved in to eliminate Party influence in the 1980s, the CPP-SP response was mass violence, often at the expense of the impoverished villagers and respected local leaders that it purported to help. This was all part of Guzmán's grand scheme and represented, ultimately, an extension of his adaptation of permanent or continuous revolution in fervour and scope. Mao's tactic of a people's war also guided the CPP-SP. Between 1980 and 1988, the Party nearly completed all stages of its revolution, expanding its peasant revolution by 1989 in preparation of seizing Lima. As the movement progressed, however, the Party initiated brutal internal purges to ensure longevity and loyalty. The personality cult around Presidente Gonzalo and the view that the Russians, Cubans, North Koreans, and even Chinese were 'weak and not true communists' led it to change its official ideology to 'Marxism-Leninism-Maoism-Gonzalo Thought.'<sup>38</sup> Government forces captured Guzmán in 1992, and although the people's war persisted, Guzmán's imprisonment effectively ended the CPP-SP revolution.

Abimael Guzmán's thinking on permanent revolution was responsible for some of the CPP-SP's strategic blunders. A faithful adherent to the Gang of Four's dogmatic Maoism of the Cultural Revolution, his emphasis on ideological purity ultimately pigeonholed his movement and squandered its emergent momentum. The Party's fixation on its own revolutionary purity sacrificed another vital aspect of Maoism and reason for the CCP's longevity—its pragmatism and adaptability. As a result of the Party's betrayal of its base, it ended up decapitated from its body politic.<sup>39</sup>

*Permanent Revolution Today*

Today, both in China and Peru, permanent revolution is all but dead. The planted seeds of global capitalism in both nations have grown into deeply rooted trees. The afterlife of permanent revolution, or versions thereof, outside China is a different tale. Maoist parties—some of which have ruled, others somewhat marginal—have emerged in several far-flung polities in Europe (Italy and Turkey), South Asia (India, Nepal, Afghanistan, and Bhutan), and Peru's South American neighbours (Bolivia and Colombia). Although the Peruvian Maoists failed, both the theory and concept of permanent revolution remain relevant to those still seeking redress in a world increasingly dominated by global capitalist imperialism. Even in Peru, where most believe that the Maoist movement is over, the insurgents who continue the fight do not see it this way. CPP-SP acolytes revere Presidente Gonzalo, and hold firmly that permanent revolution against imperialism and contradictions will never die. 'This will demonstrate to the world that what we have in Peru is a people's war, not a central committee's war,' stated director of the pro-CPP-SP London-based Sol Peru Committee Adolfo Olaechea. 'The war has more to do with a class struggle than with personalities.'<sup>40</sup> So long as class struggle remains, then, revolution will permanently be necessary.

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