



Starvation and repression in Peru

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Introduction

We print here a translation of an article from Poder Obrero, the Peruvian section of the LRCI. The article was written in November 1990, when the new Peruvian President, Fujimori, had been in office for six months. The shock winner of the June 1990 election, Fujimori rapidly implemented an IMF-imposed austerity plan which led to huge reductions in public spending, a massive fall in real wages and an unprecedented slump.

Fujimori—a university teacher and one-time TV presenter—set up his Cambio 90 (?Change?) party in 1989. From the outset its chief role was that of a vehicle for Fujimori and his particular brand of neo-liberalism. As he himself has said:

?I began with the idea of organising a political movement. What should I call it? . . . I don't know if it took me three or four months to find a name, but finally I found it: Cambio. Now I had a name, but nothing else.?

Fujimori builds support

Casting around for allies, Fujimori roped in a series of rightist politicians—including leaders of right wing protestant sects—who felt that a cosmetic alternative to the leading bourgeois coalition, Fredemo, should be presented at the presidential elections. As a series of economic austerity packages (?Fuji-shocks?) over the last nine months have shown, Cambio's programme is no different from that of Fredemo.

At Christmas Fujimori gave the masses an unwelcome present: a new austerity package which cut subsidies on food, transport and services even more savagely than previously. At a stroke petrol prices rose by 63%, gas by 90%, groceries by 60% and public transport fares were simply doubled. In the first two months of this year inflation was 28%, or over 200% per year. The price of petrol has soared, costing 3000% more than in June 1990, making it the most expensive in the world. There are plans to sack tens of thousands of public sector workers and to privatise 90% of the 250 state enterprises.

The imperialists' plans are simple: they want low inflation so that the private sector can be certain there will be economic stability and no sudden devaluations nor any need for ?emergency methods? in the near future. To ?stabilise? the economy they have insisted on a programme of privatisations, public sector sackings and cuts in education, health and social services. And all this is against a background of falling GDP and soaring unemployment, which has now reached the astronomical figure of 80%.

Prescriptions cost 500% more than when Fujimori came to office. The lack of elementary health care for the vast bulk of the population, and the decaying or non-existent infrastructure, coupled with government cynicism and corruption, has led directly to the recent outbreak of cholera. This has already claimed hundreds of lives and blighted tens of thousands of others. The imperialists are pleased: their new lackey is doing his job better than they dared hope. The misery and death caused by their policies mean nothing to them.

This disastrous situation for the Peruvian masses could not have come about without the active collaboration of the leadership of the Peruvian workers and peasants—the ?left? parties and the trade union bureaucracy. The process of capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe and the Soviet bureaucracy's capitulation to imperialism have led to a turn to the right by the Stalinist-influenced Peruvian left. The trade union leaders and the left parties have refused to organise a

fightback and have accepted the government's austerity plans.

Indeed, it was the class-collaborationist policies of the leaders of the labour movement which led to Fujimori's victory. Workers' resistance to the austerity programme of the previous President, Alan Garcia, had been curbed and weakened by the leadership. Faced with a second round choice between Fujimori and the Fredemo candidate, Vargas Llosa, virtually all the labour movement organisations called for a vote for Fujimori, who they thought would be a 'lesser evil'.

The 'left' and Fujimori

One of the main Peruvian left groups, the Partido Unitario Mariateguista (PUM) argued that Fujimori was really on the side of the people, and called on him to tax the rich, promote health and education, defend workers' salaries against hyper-inflation, etc. They wrote:

'We do not believe that what the Cambio 90 candidate has said up until now contradicts these fundamental points, which will take the economy along populist and nationalist lines.'

Swept away by this opportunist—not to say treacherous—line, Hugo Blanco, leader of what remains of the Peruvian section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, threw himself behind Fujimori's candidacy.

Only Poder Obrero argued from the first round that all the candidates were bourgeois and pro-imperialist, calling for a spoilt ballot and for the organisation of an indefinite general strike against impending austerity. The correctness of this position has been shown over the last few months.

The government's austerity programme has caused enormous discontent. Workers have gone on strike, especially in the textile, oil, chemical, education and state sectors. There have been demonstrations and marches on the Presidential palace, as well as mass looting in which the masses by-passed the market and instituted their own form of food distribution. Despite the courage and determination shown by the working population, the labour leaders have been consistently timid. They have refused to organise a general strike against austerity and have restricted themselves to calling for a national day of action and limited demonstrations, even failing to seriously mobilise for such a feeble 'fightback'.

The role of the military

Whilst the labour leaders prevaricate, Fujimori is busily strengthening his ties with the military. The sectarian Maoist guerillas of Sendero Luminoso are the target of vicious repression by the Peruvian army, which Fujimori has given a free hand to act as it sees fit. The result has been a massive increase in human rights abuses and repression against the workers.

Torture, mutilation, arbitrary arrests, extra-judicial killings and disappearances have all become routine. Over 20,000 people have been killed since Sendero started their guerilla war, the overwhelming majority of them at the hands of the military, either through the 'special units' or the right wing death squads.

The number of 'Emergency Zones' within which the army exercises absolute control has increased: over 65% of the population is now subject to arbitrary military rule. The army has also increased its weight in Fujimori's cabinet and is the subject of direct imperialist funding: in 1990 the USA gave \$63 million in military aid as against a mere \$3 million for development!

In order to consolidate the forces of repression around his rule, Fujimori has begun a purge of the police and armed forces: more than 150 police officials have been sacked. When Fujimori was asked why he had sacked the Admiral of the Fleet, he brushed the question off. 'A President doesn't need to give explanations', he said.

The Peruvian masses are facing a historic turning point. The growing economic crisis will force them to take action

against the bosses, their government and their imperialist backers. The growing strength of the military shows that a successful fightback will require the clearest and most determined leadership.

The current labour leaders have shown themselves to be spineless class collaborators. They will lead the masses to bloody defeat. The only way forward for the Peruvian workers and impoverished masses is through the building of a revolutionary party, committed to fighting for a programme which can organise the workers, defend their interests and lead them to victory.

That is the focus of the work of our Peruvian comrades, carried out in conditions which are becoming increasingly dangerous but which make their work all the more vital and urgent.

Fujimori's attacks and the crisis of leadership

Since mid-1988 Peru has been in a pre-revolutionary situation. There is a massive economic crisis which even the bourgeoisie recognises is the worst this century. Hyper-inflation and stagnation have simultaneously been ravaging the country. The number of unemployed and partially employed has grown to almost 80% of the working population. At the political level Peru has witnessed the collapse of both the government and the main traditional parties.

For the first two years Garcia's APRA government had wide popular support. The failure of its populist policies led to the implementation of a series of pro-IMF packages which deepened the economic crisis. A government which initially enjoyed massive popular support ended up being the most hated regime in the country's history. Large-scale corruption became endemic. The traditional bourgeois and reformist parties fell into disrepute. The treachery of the labour leaders resulted in a political vacuum, which was filled during the 1989 and 1990 elections by new 'independent' capitalist politicians. Inside the security services there have been outbursts of mutiny, taking the form of movements for trade union rights, and strikes within the police force.

Another characteristic of the pre-revolutionary situation has been the development of widespread struggles among workers, peasants and the poorest sections of the masses. In 1990, for the first time in the country's history, there were four national strikes. Last year also saw the greatest number of strikes and working days lost for a decade.

The national strike in July was very effective and paved the way for a return to the type of action seen in 1977 (a day of action on 19 July 1977 unleashed a wave of political strikes). There were a series of disputes which turned into indefinite all-out strikes in various sectors (mining, textiles, etc). Regional general strikes also took place. These movements became isolated and were held back by the counter-revolutionary labour leaders.

An increase in political and social violence is yet another feature of the pre-revolutionary situation. Guerilla warfare and counter-insurgency are becoming more widespread. Armed rebellion by these petit bourgeois forces has reached its highest point.

Any pre-revolutionary situation is necessarily a transient phenomenon. It must either lead to a revolutionary period, to bloody repression by means of totalitarian counter-revolution, or be dissipated by the triumph of 'democratic' counter-revolution which in turn opens up a period of political stabilisation.

To date the pre-revolutionary situation has not been transformed into a revolutionary crisis. This is mainly due to the counter-revolutionary role of the leaders of the workers' and popular movement. Despite the economic crisis and the increasing violence, the leadership have done everything possible to cripple the actions of the proletariat, the only class able to successfully combat the reactionary offensive.

The Peruvian left, heavily influenced by Stalinism, has been consistently opposed to the strategy of a revolutionary proletarian dictatorship. Either because of parliamentary or military cretinism, the left has blocked the fight for an anti-capitalist programme. It has opposed organising a united indefinite general strike with a national strike committee. It was against the building of soviets?workers? and popular councils with elected delegates subject to recall by rank and file assemblies?and would not call for independent militias and unions for the rank and file in the armed forces.

Attempts to dissipate the pre-revolutionary situation

Faced with the various austerity packages the left has refused to organise such an effective fightback which would be the only way to defeat the reactionary onslaught. By their policy of isolating strikes, calling disorganised days of action without the participation of the rank and file, or, like the Sendero Luminoso guerillas, of decreeing ?armed strikes? without the involvement of the unions, the ?left? demobilised the masses and became as discredited as the regime they claimed to be fighting.

Thanks to this treachery the strikes and mobilisations were crippled and the right wing was able to present itself as the only viable alternative to austerity.

The petit bourgeoisie is a vacillating class which in times of crisis shows ever-greater mood swings. When hyper-inflation, food shortages and chaos engulf society, the middle classes demand order and stability. The proletariat could become a pole of attraction for these layers by showing that it is able to take resolute action and has a programme for an alternative system which would eliminate the anarchy of capitalism. When the labour leaders hold back the workers? movement and do everything possible to betray strikes and rescue a dying system, they impel many desperate petit bourgeois into the arms of reaction. If, because of its leadership, the proletariat is incapable of offering the middle classes an end to chaos, the reactionaries will propose their classic solution: putting an end to strikes and ?saving? the country by shoring up the capitalist system.

The left has not only disorganised and demobilised the workers. Increasingly it has also taken on board the monetarist recipes of the reactionaries and the IMF. The rightward drift of the left made it so unattractive that in the second round of the presidential election the masses ended up polarised around two different neo-liberals. The bourgeoisie did not need a bloody coup to end the pre-revolutionary situation.

Because of Stalinism?s global turn towards capitalist restoration, and the rise of the democratic-liberal counter-revolution, imperialism can now carry out its economic shock programme without resorting to Pinochet-style repression. The model which is increasingly being adopted is that of the ?militarised democracies?. They are trying to put an end to the pre-revolutionary situation by means of a democratic constitutional counter-revolution backed up by a strong army.

The debacle of the national strike against the ?Fuji-shock? has revealed that the country is now a long way from a revolutionary situation. A frustrated pre-revolutionary situation can lead to a period of stabilisation. The final phase of this process will require a series of defeats for the workers? movement and victories for the government. However, this process is not yet complete.

It is also possible that the stabilisation plan will collapse and the masses will be radicalised, uniting in struggle. In these circumstances a revolutionary situation would be not far off.

One of the problems facing the new government is the need for a new austerity programme. The sharp increase in the value of the dollar and the pressures of the IMF have led to talk of a fuel price rise of 60%, massive redundancies in the state sector. Sections of the ruling class are worried that such a programme would provoke social chaos and that the masses would not accept it.

Perspectives for the current strike wave

In the coming weeks and months we will see a series of sectional protests and strikes, coupled with attempts at stabilisation by the new regime. This will be a decisive period for the government. It is possible that there could be a

new explosion of mass discontent, focused around strikes and workers' demonstrations. The key question is the future of the current strike wave. If the strikes are isolated, sold out and stifled, it will herald a period of reactionary democratic consolidation.

Fujimori has decided to confront this wave of strikes and protests (by CITE,¹ IPSS,² public services etc) with a mailed fist. He has ordered large-scale sackings and a ban on the right to strike in key sectors. In this way he hopes to deliver a massive blow against the whole of the labour movement.

After a two week strike the workers at IPSS were defeated. The APRA and United Left (IU) leaders did everything possible to prevent it. Once it had begun they tried to isolate and hold it back. In this context the government felt strong enough to threaten mass sackings and the placing under military control of IPSS in order to intimidate the strikers.

The occupation at Carbolan³ was isolated with no generalised national protest. Even an attempt to support the occupation by blocking traffic on the main road failed. Making a mockery of the law, the forces of repression entered and used brute force to break up the occupation. Not surprisingly, the strike in the state sector has continued to be weak.

The labour movement is riddled with contradictions. On the one hand there is the undoubted anger of the workers. It is often expressed in frustration, demoralisation and resignation. Sometimes the anger spills over and explodes into action, but the trade union bureaucracy consistently isolates the struggles.

Substantial sections of the working class have no confidence in the leaderships of the CGTP, the ANP and the small trade union federations. They are not attracted by the half-measures and the holiday protests proposed by the bureaucracy. The workers are not prepared to risk their security or a Sunday's pay,⁴ simply to take part in the pathetic 'actions' which the bureaucracy calls in a vain attempt to look good in front of the rank and file.

On the other hand, the crisis and the repressive violence has increased the militancy of some struggles. In various sectors (Carbolan, the ministries, La Union,⁵ Lusa⁶ etc) the workers have taken over their workplaces. In civil construction, the state sector, chemical factories, IPSS etc, workers have taken the lead in a series of marches which have involved the building of barricades and clashes with the police and army.

Another new phenomenon is the organisation of mass meetings out of the trade union federations. These have taken place amongst workers in the paper, cardboard, footwear, plastics, chemicals and textile industries. This new and positive development permits has increased rank and file democracy and participation in the strikes. It is a trend which must continue, culminating in an all-union central mass meeting.

The biggest obstacle to these movements is the demobilising activity of the union bureaucrats. When Fujimori launched the anti-strike law and prepared other anti-working class legislation under the guise of 'anti-terrorism', the CGTP and ANP should have organised tens of thousands in a massive protest against the laws. But the leaders remain paralysed. The CGTP and ANP leaders do not seek to unite the struggles whilst the union leaders linked to the IU and the UDP are trying to push the strikes and assemblies into an isolated and sectional dead-end.

The CGTP has sent a letter to Fujimori seeking an agreement with him to amend his austerity programme. CADE⁷ and El Comercio⁸ have sent greetings to Checa and Patho.⁹ The CGTP and CTP bureaucracies want to go to the IMF headquarters in order to plead with them not to impose quite so severe an austerity programme. The ANP celebrated its third anniversary with a rally so small it looked more like a family gathering! This indicates a substantial decline in its support. Instead of organising a united national fightback, the CGTP and ANP bureaucrats are trying to pacify the workers with a set of feeble half-measures.

During the last strike wave rank and file militancy should have been built on with assemblies and marches with the IPSS, CITE, construction workers and others being organised. But the unions leaders preferred not to go down this road. They wanted to prepare themselves for government office.

After taking part in talks with the government, one of the CITE representatives told the press that they understood the

problems of the Treasury! They insisted that the CITE workers and the ministry could 'do business', but that the government had to understand their point of view.

The starting point for a working class position is not to make concessions to the 'Fuji-shock', but rather to mobilise the masses behind the strike wave, and demonstrating the government's intention of keeping wages low so it can pay half the national budget to the IMF. But such a strategy would have meant transforming sectional and economic strikes into a centralised political movement. This was the only way to defeat the President for whom most of the labour bureaucracy voted.

The current strike wave should have had the miners' strike which was due to begin on 15 August as its rock solid base. But the reformists pressed for it to be delayed. There has still been no concrete call for strike action! Meanwhile, important sections such as Hierro-Peri and Sider-Peri were subject to the threat of plant closure and mass sackings.

The bureaucracy called on workers to have confidence in Fujimori. When he was elected they tried to influence his choice of ministers. Pressure from the IU kept Helfer and Azcueta in the government. Even the radicals of the PUM pressed for a minister (Ugarteche) connected to their own organisation. When the 'Fuji-shock' was announced the labour traitors demobilised the mass movement. Now they are trying to limit the remaining strikes to economic and sectional demands. If Cambio 90 manages to continue consolidating its anti-working class measures and defeats and disarms the strikes, then a period of relative stabilisation will emerge.

The guerillas have also contributed to the demobilisation. All of the various factions are opposed to the general strike, to the workers and to the building of soviets. The assassination of bourgeois figures does nothing to advance the destruction of the ruling class. Indeed, it provokes repression and tries to sow the belief amongst workers that their struggles cannot put an end to the system, but that only a brave and righteous few can come from outside and rescue them. Both Sendero Luminoso (SL) and the MRTA guerilla organisation are completely wrong on the trade unions. While the MRTA supports the bureaucracy of the ANP, SL calls for the complete destruction of both the ANP and the UDP.

The government's anti-union plans go hand in hand with increased militarisation. New massacres and the discovery of mass graves are being reported all the time. Disappearances, such as that of Castillo, are continuing, together with attacks on left leaders (e.g. the attack on Diez Canseco's house). Meanwhile the government is planning to sack thousands of workers. These attacks will go hand in hand with major repression.

We must beat back these attacks and campaign for a united fightback by workers, peasants, students, villagers, the unemployed and the oppressed. This would open the way for the building of soviet-type organisations and a National Action Committee, with delegates elected and recallable by rank and file meetings, and the launching of a general strike. Turn the reactionary offensive into a proletarian offensive!

Militarised democracy

This government has been legitimised under cover of a legal and constitutional system based on universal suffrage. Unlike a military dictatorship, parliamentary democracy can integrate left, union and peasant leaders. They feel increasingly obliged to moderate their language and activity. This is due as much to the pressure exercised by social democracy and Stalinism's sharp right turn on a world scale, as to their own need to cling on to office, mayoralities and other crumbs from the system.

Instead of using open and brutal repression, under 'democracy' the bourgeoisie benefits from a more selective and professional repression which creates fewer enemies. In exchange for token power which does not affect the real power of the bourgeoisie the 'left' sees itself as part of the institutions of the capitalist state and collaborates in its defence with the police and army.

Even if the armed forces do not have total control over the government, as in the case of military dictatorships, they are not subject to the hazards of political office. Yet they maintain all their privileges and powers behind the façade of a

civil president. Although the military chiefs are obliged to bow to press and public opinion when criticised for their 'excesses', a militarised democracy gives them an invaluable advantage. They can rely upon substantial support for their bloody actions. Under the pretext of 'eradicating terrorism', every legalist and reformist ends up closing ranks in support of the forces of repression as the 'defenders of the nation'.

In the case of Peru, the armed forces have been acting with complete impunity since the reimposition of parliamentary rule. During the last eight years of 'democracy' 20,000 people have been murdered for political reasons. This figure is higher than during any of the military dictatorships over the last fifty years of our history.

The character of the new government

The Fujimori regime is unique as compared to previous Peruvian constitutional governments or other parliamentary regimes in Latin America. Cambio 90 is in a minority in Congress, does not hold office at either mayoral or regional level and has no base. It is an outfit without principles, programme, traditions, ideology or structure. It has never called a single conference. It is an improvised movement whose leaders have only recently met each other. It is full of contradictions. In this curious mixture the will which prevails is that of the all-powerful figure of Fujimori.

This is a party which has taken office without occupying a single ministry. All the ministerial portfolios have been given to technocrats and 'independent' professionals. Three are occupied by bourgeois groups who pretend to be socialist. This is a government of no particular party. It has a strong cultish tendency and is centred on a presidential style of government.

Fujimori is trying to continue with the method that brought him to power. Faced with a wide variety of social and political forces, he is trying to play them off against each other.

Despite its democratic and parliamentary origin the government is developing bonapartist features. Bonapartism is a regime in which the executive is the supreme power. Parliament is deprived of authority or reduced to an ornamental status. The supreme head of state takes on huge powers and is supported by the military-police bureaucratic state apparatus. He tries to set himself up as an arbiter between the different classes and factions, making deals in order to reinforce his rule.

From the moment he took office, Fujimori has tried to develop ties with the three most important reactionary forces in society: the army, the church and the IMF. Although ostensibly elected as the president of the whole nation, Fujimori has offered himself as the champion and defender of these specific sectors. He went to the IMF headquarters and even visited the Japanese emperor! He has since put into action a pro-IMF programme more brutal than even many Fredemo supporters would have believed advisable.

Fujimori lives surrounded by the military elite. He has given the army two cabinet posts and he has carried out a purge in the Peruvian National Police (PNP) and other parts of the state repressive apparatus in order to consolidate the absolute domination of the army over the armed forces.

He has sought to distance himself from the evangelists who did so much in his campaign. He has applied the austerity programme with such vigour that it has earned him the applause of the church, to whose clerical organisations (Caritas etc) he has given control of the charities.

Fujimori has a 'shogun' complex. This was the name given to the Japanese imperial system where all power lay with the emperor. With the support of the armed forces 'our' authoritarian president seeks to be the faithful servant of the world's emperors, grouped together in the IMF.

Fujimori does not want to be subordinate to any party or organisation. The shogun tries to be all things to all people, without committing himself to any one grouping. At any moment he could turn one way or another. He is capable of seeking alliances in this or that sector, then making another turn. He has admitted that he has confidence in nobody and that he does not even tell his wife of his intentions. It is he alone who takes the decisions and changes his plans and his

teams.

Fujimori consistently tries to orient to a specific social or political force, benefiting from its support and influence. When he has taken advantage of them and they are no longer useful for his new line, he breaks with them. He tears up agreements and divides his former allies into those who wish to remain close and those who go over into the opposing camp.

When Fujimori started his movement he wanted to base himself on thousands of evangelical activists. Then he decided to sacrifice them in order to ingratiate himself with the Catholic church. The evangelist lobby has not been able to build a definite and identifiable movement.

Fujimori was also helped into office with the support of the APRA and the IU. He had barely won the election when he allied himself with the conservative right by offering them the premiership. His initial choice was De Soto (founder of the rightist 'Liberty' tendency from which he has since parted company) and an ex-Minister of Belaunde, Grados Bertorini. Finally the post went to the Fredemo supporter Hurtado. Fujimori was thus able to split Fredemo and the IU. He tried to isolate and destroy the 'Liberty' wing of Fredemo which had viciously attacked him and to attract sections of the AP10 and PPC11. From amongst the supporters of Bedoya, Amiel is inclined towards the new president and Borea does not want to lose his domination of the right wing opposition to the ultra-liberals.

He has offered the education portfolio to Pease, who declined in favour of another member of his own party, Helfer. To oblige Ugarteche to leave his own team he drove a wedge between the PUM and the rest of the IU. Having promised Helfer and Azcueta positions of responsibility in the government, Fujimori launched his austerity programme. This created new splits in the IU. Having used the IU as a left cover, he has the luxury of dispensing with them.

Fujimori initially sought support from the AP; then he turned to a pact with APRA. This has been sealed with a shameful pardon for the perpetrators of the prison massacres. The outcome of all this was the fragmentation of the AP.

Fujimori is balancing on a tight-rope, leaning first one way, then another. He plays his opponents off against each other. He won the left's support by pointing to the Fredemo bogeyman. Then he won the backing of the right by calling for unity against chaos, the proletariat and 'subversion'.

When Fujimori won the election, various left publications maintained that the new government would be very weak and that this would permit a mass offensive. They pointed to the fact that Cambio 90 did not control any municipal or regional councils, not even an employers' organisation (with the exception of APEMIPE12) or trade union centre, and argued that it would govern with only a small parliamentary presence, without a properly structured party and without major direct influence in the higher echelons of the judiciary.

But this apparent weakness has been Fujimori's major strength. He owes nothing to any economic or party-based group. This enables him to manoeuvre all the better, doing all manner of deals and leaning in this or that direction.

The bourgeoisie needs different types of government for different situations. The populist approach of APRA helped the bourgeoisie hold back the rise of the left and subversion which was quite strong in 1984. Two years of growth followed (1985-87). But with the change in the situation at home and abroad, a neo-liberal programme was imposed. The problem was, how to carry out such a programme? Garcia's APRA government set out on this road but did not feel that it had the authority or the strength to pursue it to the end. Garcia preferred to leave government before his image became too tarnished. He has recently made a semi-populist turn with Vasquez Razon.

The Peruvian bourgeoisie decided that whoever was elected, the new government had to assure 'insertion into the world financial order', that is to say, leave populism behind in order to apply the privatisation programme of the IMF. The problem was knowing which type of government it would need to take this step.

The Llosa alternative

The economic programmes of Vargas Llosa and Fujimori have many points in common, but the style of government had to be different. Vargas Llosa sought a clear mandate for the harsh imposition of a monetarist and liberal programme which would lead to open confrontation with the workers' movement and the guerillas.

Vargas Llosa is not a fascist, nor has he ever been one. The reformists used this label in order to justify their support for whichever other bourgeois reactionary?e.g. Fujimori?was standing against him. Vargas Llosa's project was inspired by the 'Thatcher revolution' in Britain. Thatcher's regime maintained formal democracy while adopting extremely harsh privatisation and anti-union measures.

The British Conservatives had a number of advantages which our native copycats could not rely upon. Thatcher had a solid and disciplined parliamentary majority. She had a national party with a substantial party apparatus. She also benefited from a crooked electoral law which enables a party with only 40% of the votes to gain 60% of the seats in parliament.

Thatcher was only able to get power and popular support for her privatising measures because she had been preceded by a treacherous Labour government. The bankruptcy of the Labour Party coupled with the absence of a mass revolutionary party, demoralised wide layers of workers, weakened the image of the trade union movement and facilitated the reactionary offensive.

In contrast, Vargas Llosa could not rely on a party. There was very little possibility of winning an absolute parliamentary majority. Fredemo was a fragile coalition of diverse and hostile parties and interests headed by a non-politician. The workers' movement was weakened but had not been exhausted through a period in office. The opposition which Fredemo would have faced would not have been as moderate and reformist as that of British social democracy. Faced with massive crises or serious violence and unable to control parliament or the ruling parties, Vargas Llosa's messianism could have ended up being a cure worse than the disease.

Compared with Fredemo's plan, Cambio 90's austerity programme has raised prices and savaged the social welfare programme. However, Fujimori has managed to prevent any major social upheaval. His secret stems from having taken office with the support of the left and having persuaded them to participate in his team. He has further generated an image of national salvation and unity having quietened and then isolated the 'radicals'.

Fujimori has no need of a party. He has no interest in calling a congress of Cambio 90 nor does he have to subordinate himself to any party organisation. He tries to be the 'perfect' independent in keeping with the image of a great 'father of the nation'. He can call a meeting of the best technocrats and change them when he pleases. He owes favours to few.

The President has been given the nickname Karate Kid because of the way in which he hits out this way and that. This style is part of his political nature. Fujimori, at the same time as building bridges for current or future agreements with various sectors, is insisting on keeping his distance. He can make temporary agreements with anyone but will make a permanent alliance with no one.

The programme of the new government

The government's action is very much influenced by the new turns in the world situation. The degenerated workers' states are being dismantled to open the way to capitalist restoration. The most industrially developed post-capitalist state?the GDR?has been totally absorbed by capitalist Germany. In Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and various republics of the USSR and Yugoslavia, openly bourgeois anti-communist movements have formed governments. The USSR is falling apart. Vietnam is adopting increasingly pro-capitalist policies. Albania is the Stalinist museum of Europe.

The Venezuelan austerity programme produced the food riots in Caracas. The Bolivian austerity programme produced a five-week general strike by the COB which was extremely effective in the first two weeks. The capitalist offensive in Argentina continues to generate violent popular resistance and the Chilean austerity programme was imposed by a bloodthirsty dictatorship. But how has the 'Fuji-shock', which has been worse than many of these, been imposed with

such little resistance?

The key answer to this is the criminal policies of the left and union leaders. They demobilised and demoralised workers' struggles against the APRA government's pro-IMF austerity. Then they created illusions in Fujimori, whose cabinet included an IU leader. When Fujimori's 'super-shock' was unleashed, with wages being cut by 50% and prices soaring by 400% at a stroke, the CGTP and ANP leaders did not have the political authority to call for a strike against the new government for which they had recently voted and built support!

Instead they organised a mini-demonstration in work time, then changed the time of the strike a few days beforehand, all with the intention of blocking a real fightback against the Fuji-shock.

A revolutionary situation implies an extraordinary political, social and economic crisis. The ruling classes cannot govern in the old way and the masses cannot carry on in the old way. While the exploited continue to carry out mass actions and create organs of dual power, society polarises, the regime decomposes and the bourgeoisie needs to change its form of rule.

Although elements of a revolutionary situation exist—notably the massive economic crisis—the counter-revolutionary role of the leaders of the IU, CGTP, ANP and SL, have to a remarkable degree held back the mobilisation of the revolutionary class, the workers, and its allies among the poor.

Various currents, from the PUM to the PST, claim that the situation has been, and continues to be, revolutionary. But in their programme they all deny this characterisation. If they were to follow through the consequences they would have had to pose crucial tasks and slogans that spring naturally from all revolutionary situations—general strike, soviets, factory occupations, unions for soldiers etc. But they demand none of these. Today both the PUM and the PST not only fail to call for a general strike, but even for a national 24-hour strike. They may wear a 'revolutionary' mask over their opportunist and economistic politics, but in practice they waste their combativity in sterile manoeuvres and voluntarism.

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