

The National Question*

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Contemporary Peruvian Society

- The character of our society.
- The character of the revolutionary process of Peruvian society.

Bureaucratic Capitalism

- What do we mean by bureaucratic capitalism?
- Three lines within bureaucratic capitalism.

The Contemporary Situation of the Country

- The conditions under which the current regime grows.
- The plans and characteristics of the regime.

Evidently, it is very important and necessary to analyze the character of Peruvian society; because if we do not have a clear understanding of it, we cannot comprehend and explain adequately the process we are living in today. Thus, it is not possible to understand concrete problems of today and the current political situation, such as the law of education or law of mines, without understanding what the character of contemporary Peruvian society is. Unfortunately, little is known about the national question and this get worse with the gross disinformation campaign launched by the state on this matter lately.

*https://web.archive.org/web/20120730032728/http://www.presidentegonzalo.org/document/p_19740000_nacional_eng.html

The Character of Contemporary Peruvian Society

Peru is a semifeudal and semicolonial society. Our country became independent in the last century. More than 150 years ago, we were a colony of Spain. We lived subjugated by this metropoly and had no political independence at all. On the other hand, at the beginning of the 19th century Peru was a feudal country and our society was fundamentally based on agriculture, which was the economic base. Of course, there was trade and incipient industrial modalities, but the economic base was feudalism. The society was based on the existence of big latifundios [The New Flag (TNF): large farms or haciendas] that belonged to a handful of people, and upon this kind of property, servitude existed. The peasants were cruelly exploited, and had to give personal services such as working the land of the feudal lord and others, including domestic services, in order to have a plot of land. Our country was backward, where the norm was the practice of old forms of production and modalities of government that were totally decrepit. At the beginning of the 19th century, the country had two problems, which with certain minor modifications still persist today. First, the the land question, the problem of feudalism, of the servitude of the peasantry based on the latifundia property; and the second was the problem of national sovereignty (our nation was a colony of Spain.)

The struggle for independence raised these two problems. The issue of sovereignty was present in parliamentary debates in which it was proposed that independence could only be assured if the land was handed over to the peasants, also this is proven by the decrees of Bolivar on territorial property. However, independence only meant breaking the chains with Spain. Soon thereafter the country found itself controlled and dominated by England. This great capitalist power dominated all of Latin America. What is the importance of the domination of England in our country? Up until independence, we were a feudal and colonial country, but once we became independent although we maintained our feudal base, we achieved a certain political independence. We became a republic despite of the problems inherent to emancipation. England introduces higher modalities of development in the country, capitalist modalities, fundamentally in trade which was tied to the world market of the fertilizer guano [TNF: seabird excrement]. As a result, the destruction of feudalism advanced because England brought mer-

chandise and introduced capitalist method of production. On the other hand, England began to control the country and introduced a process of colonialization. The British domination resulted in the beginning of a change: a step toward the formation of a semifeudal and semicolonial society.

In the 20th century the United States (U.S.) displaced the English domination in the Americas and becomes the master, around the 1920's. Thus, our country sees itself dominated by another world power, an imperialist power. The U.S. came when it was already an imperialist country, with a developed system of monopolies, and big corporations that concentrate the U.S.'s economy. It was already a power undergoing a colonial expansion in Latin America and even in parts of Asia.

Under the Yankee imperialist domination, our society evolves further its semifeudal character. However, it is not totally destroyed. It continues to survive. In the same manner that under English domination (especially after the war with Chile), there has been a major push toward the destruction of feudalism under the development of a form of capitalism tied to the big monopolies and dependent upon imperialism. In addition to maintaining its semifeudal character, our country continues to be a semicolony; a dominated country that even though has declared its political independence is under the domination of an imperialist power in economic, diplomatic, cultural, and military affairs. This domination turns Peru's declared political independence into a formality.

In synthesis, since the 19th century, Peruvian society has evolved from a feudal society into a semifeudal one, and from a colonial society into a semicolonial one. In this long process, three powers have dominated and exploited us: First Spain until 1821 (although it continued its domination for many more decades.) Then England dominated us in a more subtle way. The British even fabricated for us political parties of a bourgeois nature, and organized a better state apparatus in order to subjugate us better with its subtle domination. It was a subtle domination but no less exploitative than the previous one. Finally, the U.S., which continues to oppress and exploit us, an imperialism that despite all that is said (about "independence,") dominates us on all levels.

When we were a colonial country we had two problems: the land problem and the national question. Under English domination we were a semifeudal and semicolonial society (less developed than the present time), and had two problems: the land and the nation. The land was concentrated in a few hands and servitude continued to exist in the country. In the 20th century under

U.S. domination, we continue to be a semifeudal and semicolonial society (undoubtedly much more evolved than before) but the basic problems of the country continue to be the two mentioned before: the land and the nation. The land question is because the feudal modalities of exploitation still survive and grip our entire society. Thus, our unscientific and superstitious mentality, our ideology in general, as well as our social and political relations, still have many feudal aspects. The national question is because we are an oppressed nation, apparently free, but at the bottom, subjugated in many ways.

Therefore, the nation's history from the 19th century to today is the feudal and colonial class struggle that under the domination of English capitalism and Yankee imperialism in succession, has evolved and transformed into a semifeudal and semicolonial society with two basic problems still unresolved: the land question and the national question.

The Character of the Revolutionary Process of Peruvian Society

In laying down the character of Peruvian society a question arises: which is the path of revolutionary transformation? Concretely, what is the character of the Peruvian revolution? We have established that today there are two problems: the land question and the national question, from whose resolution the solution of the rest of the nation's problems will derive. The entire national question is tied to the semifeudal and semicolonial character of Peruvian society. Hence, in order for Peruvian society to change, to be truly revolutionary, these two problems must be resolved:

- The land question, whose solution demands that semifeudalism be swept away, unless this is done, the land question cannot be resolved;
- The national question, whose solution demands sweeping away Yankee imperialist oppression, because if this semicolonial domination is not swept away the national question will not be resolved.

Therefore, without eliminating semifeudalism and semicolonialism it is not possible to genuinely transform Peruvian society (despite all what they'd been telling us.) Furthermore, what it [TNF: by the ruling classes] being proclaimed today is nothing new. For instance, in 1919 we heard similar siren songs. Consequently, the two tasks that must be carry out in the process of

transformation of Peruvian society, scientifically called the Peruvian revolution, is to completely destroy semifeudalism and semicolonialism. These are the two tasks of the Peruvian revolution in its first stage. This means that the Peruvian revolution is antifeudal and antiimperialist. It must destroy the feudal remnants and the imperialist domination. For this reason, the Peruvian revolution is necessarily democratic and national. Scientifically speaking the character of the Peruvian revolution is a national-democratic revolution; democratic because it will destroy the feudal relations of the nation; and national because it will destroy the Yankee imperialist oppression. Thus, in the contemporary semi-feudal and semi-colonial Peruvian society, there is only room for a national-democratic, anti-feudal and anti-imperialist revolution. Let us analyze the character of the Peruvian revolution in relation to the concrete historical conditions. The two problems of the country (the land and the nation), during the XX century as compared to the XIX century, have big differences. In the last century there was no imperialism like there is today, and there was no international working class capable of leading the revolution, nor was there a developed working class in our country, whereas today, we have a triumphant working class [TNF: the October revolution, China, etc.] and in our country we have a working class with a long history of struggle. These are very important differences in the revolutionary process of our country.

Until the 1920's, the bourgeoisie in our country was in the capacity of leading the process of transformation towards the solution of these two problems, but they didn't. Nevertheless, in our country, before the 1920's, there were great struggles, heroic struggles and continuous uprisings of peasants, mobilizations, and student struggles, and powerful actions of the working class. All of this generated a great process of political struggle in which the ideology of the proletariat began to be spread out and be applied to our reality. The extraordinary figure of José Carlos Mariátegui emerges, whose tireless work as a "thinker and activist man" marked a milestone in history. In 1928, Mariátegui founded the Communist Party, the Party of the working class in Peru. This period determined a fundamental change in our revolution through which the bourgeoisie, under the conditions of imperialist domination and the existence of a working class forged in struggle, could no longer lead the revolutionary process of our nation.

Thus, the working class has sprung forward and developed, and beyond disputing the leadership of the revolution with the bourgeoisie, it is the only class capable of carrying the Peruvian revolution to its triumph. The bour-

geois revolution in the country has two periods:

- The old bourgeois revolution that was able to be completed towards the beginning of this century, under bourgeois leadership; and
- The new bourgeois revolution or national-democratic revolution, or bourgeois revolution of a new type, under the leadership of the proletariat which is the only historical perspective for the country.

After 1928 the proletariat achieved political organization and displaced the bourgeoisie from the historical leadership of the revolutionary process, as the only class that can complete the national democratic revolution. Thus, after 1928 the revolution in the country, the destruction of feudalism and imperialist domination, can only be completed under the leadership of the proletariat, a class that in order to fulfill its historical role must unite with the peasantry in a solid worker-peasant alliance, since the peasantry as a majority, although it does not lead the revolution, is the principal force. We uphold the position that in the country the proletariat, with its party, must lead the movement, or else there is no national-democratic revolution. If not, let us not fool ourselves, directly or indirectly, we would be serving the enemies of the class.

To conclude, we must point out that there are other theses opposite to what we have explained. For example, there is a thesis that states that Peruvian society is capitalist. This is the most dangerous. If the country is capitalist, the revolution must be socialist, and the proletariat and not the peasantry would be the principal force. This thesis fundamentally changes the extremely important problem, which is the road of the revolution. As we have seen here, there are two revolutionary paths:

- The path of the October revolution which is from the city to the countryside, and this is the path of the capitalist countries by way of a socialist revolution, the path that old Russia took or that France would have to take today, for example; and
- The path of the Chinese revolution, which is from the countryside to the city, and this is the path that semi-feudal and semi-colonial countries follow by way of a national-democratic revolution, the path the Vietnam, among others, is following today. As such, the question of

whether the country is semi-feudal or capitalist is not simply a Byzantine discussion, because if we err about the character of society we err on the course of the revolution, and consequently it will not triumph.

The thesis of the capitalist character of Peruvian society has been and continues to be upheld by Trotskyism and positions close to it, nevertheless such typifications begins to be upheld by revisionism in order to deepen its surrender to the regime.

Bureaucratic Capitalism

This question is important for the comprehension of Peruvian society, and ignorance of it is the root of grave political errors. The thesis of bureaucratic capitalism is found in the classics and in Mariátegui, although he used another term.

What do we mean by bureaucratic capitalism?

This is the capitalism that imperialism promotes in a backwards country; the type of capitalism, the special form of capitalism, that is imposed by an imperialist country onto a backwards country, whether it is semi-feudal or semi-colonial. Let us analyze this historic process.

How did capitalism develop in the old European nations?

Consider France; toward the end of the 18th century it was a feudal country, with 20 to 22 million peasants while workers numbered only around 600,000 (from which we can see the feudal passage it had); it was based on servitude of various forms. Nevertheless, within the feudal entrails of France new productive forms, of manufacturing, and capitalist forms were generated, and a class, the bourgeoisie, was gaining ever more force, more economic power, including political influence. We ask: Was France a nation subjugated by another? No. France was an absolute monarchy that contested with England for global hegemony, it was not oppressed by anyone. Its socio-economic and historical conditions had made it develop that way. Did imperialism exist in that era? No. Imperialism is of this century. What existed were countries undergoing capitalist development, like England for example, and France was independently developing a capitalist society. Other countries followed the same path, and when they reached the XIX century, France,

England, Belgium, Holland, etc. were capitalist countries that developed independently.

What was the situation of Latin America in the 19th century?

When the emancipation of America began (1810), the nations of Europe were already powerful, whereas the Latin American ones had only recently begun to structure their nationalities, a problem that has not yet been concluded. Moreover, soon after becoming independent these nations fall under the domination of a power, namely England; thus their capitalism will develop under English domination, a kind of dependent capitalism. Thus, there is a well-known historical, economic, and political difference compared to the European process.

On another side, the bourgeoisies that develop in Latin America begin to link themselves more and more to the dominant country, in such a way that these weak bourgeoisies, instead of developing independently like the Europeans did, serving the national interests, they evolve as subjugated bourgeoisies, dependent, given over body and soul to the imperialist powers (England or the U.S.) to the extent they even believe in converting themselves into rich men and developed intermediate bourgeoisies, as our history in this century shows.

This latter path is the one taken in Peru. As we have seen, in the second decade of this century Yankee imperialism supplanted English domination.

Three Lines Within Bureaucratic Capitalism

Bureaucratic capitalism develops three lines within its process: a landlord line in the countryside, a bureaucratic one in industry, and a third, also bureaucratic, in the ideological sphere. This is without pretending that these are the only ones.

It introduces the landlord line in the countryside by way of expropriatory agrarian laws that do not aim to destroy the feudal landlord class and their property, but rather progressively evolve them by means of the purchase and payment of the land for the peasants. The bureaucratic line in industry aims at controlling and centralizing industrial production, commerce, etc., putting them ever more in the hands of monopoly with the goal of sponsoring a more rapid and systematic accumulation of capital, to the detriment of the working class and other workers, naturally, to the benefit of the biggest

monopolies and consequently imperialism. In this process the forced saving which workers are subjected to plays an important role, as we can see in the industrial law. The bureaucratic line in ideology consists of the process of molding the people, by means of the massive diffusion, especially in political conceptions and ideas, that serve bureaucratic capitalism. The general law of education is a concentrated expression of this line, and one of the constants of this line is its anti-communism, its anti-Marxism, whether open or concealed.

These three lines form part of the bureaucratic path which is opposed by the DEMOCRATIC PATH, the revolutionary road of the people. If the former defends feudal property, the latter proposes its destruction, and it opposes the buying of lands with confiscation; if the former recognizes and fortifies imperialist industrial property, the latter denies it and struggles for its confiscation; if the former fights to ideologically subjugate the people, the latter strives to arm them ideologically; if the former attacks Marxism, the latter upholds that we must guide ourselves by Marxism as the only scientific instrument to understand reality. They are thus two absolutely contrary paths. The history of the country in this century is a history of struggle between these two paths: the bureaucratic path, that is capitalism submitted to imperialism, and the democratic path, the road of the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, and under certain circumstances, the national bourgeoisie. In order to understand bureaucratic capitalism it is very useful to study and analyze the decade of the 1960's, during which the process of the destruction of feudalism advanced more; in this period industry and capitalist relations in agriculture are strengthened. From another side, the class struggle developed greatly; the trade union movement, the peasant movement, and the student movement reached higher levels. Thus a strong trade union movement developed that in a particular moment took localities and bosses as hostages; the peasant movement also had a great apogee, in the second half of 1963 it ran from the center of the country to the south like a trail of gunpowder; and the student movement rose rapidly. In synthesis, the mass struggles have lived through great experiences in this period of political struggles.

Thus, party politics had a great apogee, on the one hand the reactionary political parties entered into grave difficulties and struggles leading up to the crisis of the so-called "representative democracy" in 1967 and 1968, and on the other the left developed a vigorous political life, within which it unleashed the struggle between Marxism and revisionism, which later re-took the path of Mariátegui as a condition to develop the revolution.

Another very important deed which is not sufficiently studied is the question of the guerrillas: in 1965 there was a outbreak of guerrilla warfare, including this zona. The guerrilla movement in the country is part of the national process. It is a primary question that must be highlighted because due to sectarianism, sometimes it is considered as simply the experience of an organization and it is not seen as the experience of the Peruvian people. It is a movement intimately linked to the political process of the country, developed according to petty bourgeois conceptions; it is a great experience that needs to be analyzed from the point of view of the proletariat in order to draw fruitful lessons.

It is impossible to understand our situation and perspective since 1970 without understanding the concrete conditions of the 1960's. There is a good thing: in the last few years, the Peruvian intelligentsia begins to understand the necessity of studying the decade of the 1960's. Only by understanding this period will we be better armed ideologically, in order to understand the current situation.

The problem of bureaucratic capitalism is important because it allows us to understand which is the dominant path that imperialism imposes on a backwards country, on a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country; by understanding this problem we will be armed and equipped to combat the thesis of the capitalist character of the country and its political derivations.

In order to conclude this theme we will deal with the following: some maintain that to hold that bureaucratic capitalism is in the country is to ignore its semi-feudal and semi-colonial character; they say it proposes that the nation is capitalist in a hidden manner. This is an error ignores the laws of social development of our country and of the backwards countries; precisely because bureaucrat capitalism is no more than the path of imperialism in a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country and without semi-feudal and semi-colonial conditions there would be no bureaucrat capitalism. Thus, to propose the existence of bureaucrat capitalism is to propose as a premise that the country is semi-feudal and semi-colonial.

The Contemporary Situation of the Country

Under what conditions does the current regime arise? Let us go back to the end of the 1960's. What was happening? Economic problems: in 1967 the currency devaluation, freezing of credits, etc. An economic crisis. On another side, the struggle of the masses was rising, strong worker and peasant

struggles, and we saw daily that characteristics similar to those in the first year of the decade were beginning to present themselves; a future rise in the movement of the masses was within sight. In politics, confrontations and fractionalizing between and within the political organizations of the ruling classes; the famous dispute between parliament and the executive. Furthermore, the elections drew near, creating the juncture for many of the nation's problems to be illuminated, even for the parties in dispute, because in their eagerness to get votes the "dragged out their dirty laundry." Ideologically our country had passed through a profound debate of ideas and this greatly clarified what is Marxism and what is revisionism. Furthermore the path of Mariátegui began to be retaken by applying Marxism to the concrete conditions of the country. Aside from the above we must highlight two situations:

1. The economic situation of the country, which is the development of bureaucratic capitalism could no longer continue developing itself in the old way, urging its deepening. It needed to open a wider path so that this process in the form of imperialism would advance; with the previous forms it could not advance. We must not forget that for many years the agrarian problem was discussed, there were even agrarian laws: the Beltran project, the laws of Pérez Godoy and of Belaúnde. Another question: in the industrial problem the law of the second government of Prado was now insufficient and raised again the necessity of making industrial parks, give a priority to the state role in planning, etc. There is the plan of Belaúnde of 1967 to 1970 that stated the necessity of changing the social condition of the country in order to construct a "new society, national, democratic, and Christian." In conclusion, the process of bureaucratic capitalism needed to deepen itself.
2. In the country there was the so-called "representative democracy," but parliamentarism did not satisfy the needs of the exploiters; the popular masses advanced with relative ease putting the exploiting classes in difficult, although temporary, positions. Thus, they needed to substitute the representative modality, parliamentarism. Was this a typical case that only happened in our country? No. The decade of 1960 implied the fragility of the so-called "regime of representative democracy" in Latin America, the crisis of parliamentarism, and consequently the need to substitute it for state modalities more efficient for reaction.

In synthesis, the economic necessities of deepening bureaucratic capitalism and the fragility of parliamentarism, in the conditions indicated, presented the exploiting classes and imperialism with the necessity of a new political establishment for the country. Thus, the current regime arises from economic, social, and political necessities of deepening bureaucratic capitalism.

The Plans and Characteristics of the Regime

There now exists a socio-economic plan which is little talked about. In synthesis it establishes: the need to reinvigorate bureaucratic capitalism, by way of the efforts of workers and peasants, the former brought about by means of the industrial law and the others by means of the agrarian law. At the same time it proposes the direct and primordial action of the state to open conditions of investment for private capital; the financing of which necessarily comes from imperialism and since this financing is insufficient, it must fundamentally take root from its own resources. This plan clearly illustrates its linkage with the process of bureaucratic capitalism in the country; daily this play is linked to Belaúnde's, and with this the entire system of bureaucratic capitalism of the country.

Very deep between the economic plan and social mobilization, this is another thing that is not very clear. The regime, sanctioning its fundamental measures (in agriculture, industry, and education), has passed to an organizational stage. Today and in the immediate future we develop within organization, mobilization, and participation that the regime is promoting. The social mobilization must be understood linked to the economic process; the same government says that without social mobilization it will not be able to complete its socio-economic plan, and proposes that the social mobilization has a basis, the participation in property ownership. Lately the representatives of the regime talk about social property: what does this serve? This property serves, behind the decoy of participation in property ownership, to mobilize the masses to the benefit of bureaucratic capitalism. For this reason the basis of social mobilization is social participation.

What does this social mobilization serve? Social mobilization is a political instrument in the hands of the regime to strengthen its conceptions and open a "neither capitalist nor communist road," that is, to spread its ideas. Upon spreading its ideas it seeks to "avoid that foreign, exotic ideas become embedded in the masses"; what ideas are they referring to? Marxism. This ideological process is to avoid that the masses learn about Marxism and

thus tie them to the bureaucratic capitalist road. Thus, the mobilization is a means of organizing, starting from the property modalities, the masses and channel them into a vertical authority. This is what they mean by social mobilization; it is a masterpiece of the system at the service of their economic and political plan. One of the reasons why the economic plan doesn't advance like they hoped it would is the lack of their so-called social mobilization.

From the above, we derive: the current political situation of the country is centered around the problem of the mobilization of the masses, now and in the immediate future we move within this juncture, which is: who mobilizes and how are the masses mobilized. The government pretends to move them according to their conception; their actions prove it. The regime aims to organize the peasant masses. The law 19400 serves this end, and it aims to organize the workers with the so-called CTRP. "Nationalists, revolutionary participationists"; among the students they create organizations that are born one day and disappear the next. All of this signifies the intention to organize the worker, peasant, and student masses, and it reveals that the contention is happening on an organizational plane.

Nevertheless, despite the propaganda and efforts of the regime and their followers, the struggle of the masses is alive and develops; why? Because the living conditions of the masses worsen as a consequence of the very system. For this reason, no matter how much they scream that it is the "ultra-left" that moves the masses and agitates them, what is certain is that the masses are mobilizing around their own interests, and defend them to the extent that they are conscious. Synthesizing, the social, economic, and political conditions lead to the sharpening of the mass struggle, and the organizational question is one of confronting the serious difficulties before the organizational offensive of the regime, the same one that is incapable of imposing its total control and will have to appeal more to systematic repression (of which there are many and rapidly growing examples).

In conclusion: the ideology and politics of the regime, including organizationally, express a fascist character. The regime's measures, as expressed by their leaders, their style of organizing, their attitudes towards the representative regime, their manner of treating civil liberties, only show one thing: the abandonment of the demo-liberal and representative system and adherence to fascism. The very chief of the sinamos [paramilitary squads set up by the Velasco regime] said that we are in a pre-revolutionary period, and that all the regimes and political organizations have become invalid in the new social

conditions.

From another side, the measures applied in politics, economics, and organizationally truly prove that they are laying the foundations for a CORPORATIVIST system. The essence of this question are the organizations on different levels, in which the bosses, the workers, and the state should participate. Three parts in the organizations, which has been defined as a corporation since the last century. This is the way it has been proposed by those who have upheld corporativism since 1920 and this is the way it is upheld today in Spain and Portugal.

Thus, the current regime is a system that has an ideological orientation of a fascist bent and is laying the foundations for a CORPORATIVIST system. It will be said that here is another thesis. It is very clear. There is a thesis that says that this is not certain, some maintaining that we are dealing with a revolutionary bourgeois regime that is completing a stage of the revolution; if we recall what we have seen this is a position without a political, ideological, or economic basis. Another thesis maintains that it is a bourgeois reformist regime, that it is applying reforms. What are reforms? Reforms are the concessions that the people win with their struggles, or they are the by-product of revolution, as Lenin said. Are the agrarian, industrial, or educational laws concessions to the people? This is enough to show the inconsistencies of this thesis.

Finally: when we emancipated ourselves we had two problems, of the land and of the nation, the problem of feudalism and the problem of domination by a foreign power. Many years have passed, and our society has advanced. The people of today are not the people of yesterday. We consider that today, after so many years, we continue having two problems: the land question and the national question. From this the process of transformation in our country is scientifically called a NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION, and this can only be lead by the proletariat.

“All debates are open for those who voice opinions, not those who remain silent.”

“Polemics are useful when they are truly set out to clarify theories and actions, and when only clear ideas and motives are introduced.”

José Carlos Mariátegui