Dear Friends,

Greetings from the desk of the Tricontinental Institute for Social Research.

As one door sharply bangs shut in Kashmir, another opens in Argentina. That is the nature of our struggles. In 1859, Friedrich Engels wrote, “history often proceeds by jumps and zig-zags.” To imagine history as a linear line that moves in a progressive direction is bewilderingly incorrect. It is romantic to believe either that history is conservatively circular – so that change is fundamentally impossible – or that history is progressively linear – so that everything improves in a scientific manner. Neither is plausible.

Human history is a struggle between the imagination for a better life and the constraints of the present. Some of these constraints are material, and some are social. Inadequate material conditions and the rigidities of class can hold back human progress. The undemocratic attack on the people of Kashmir comes at the same time as the people of Argentina voted in their primary to overwhelmingly say that they are fed up with the politics of austerity (please see our Dossier no. 10 from November 2018 on the crisis in Argentina and the role of the IMF). Argentina’s population will vote again in October. By all indications, they will throw out their President, Mauricio Macri. Musicians and militants in Argentina have taken the old Italian partisan ballad (Bella Ciao – Goodbye Beautiful) and refashioned it as a cry against neoliberalism and austerity (Macri Chau – Goodbye Macri).
that this was a ‘light at the end of the tunnel for Argentina and for Latin America’.

The whole of Kashmir is, at the moment, a prison, under military control’, they write. The drawing above is from Chittaprosad, one of the great Communist artists of his day. ‘In my artwork, I represent the wishes of the people’. The standoff brought the dispute to the United Nations Security Council, which called for a plebiscite (resolutions 38 and 47).

Where is Kashmir?

- Kashmir is fundamentally contested, each acre claimed by one or the other neighbouring country (India, Pakistan, and China). It covers 222,200 square kilometres – the size of countries such as Ghana and the United Kingdom.
- Approximately 17 million people live across this vast area, mostly in the regions controlled by India and Pakistan. The population of the Indian-held region is 12.5 million. About 60% of Kashmir is in Indian-controlled territory and 39% in Pakistani-controlled territory.

Where is Kashmir?

- The question of Kashmir is part of the unresolved business of the partition of South Asia in 1947. Until 1947, the region was under the control of a Hindu monarchy. The king was unwilling to accede to India. It was after armed clashes from Pakistan armed the Kashmiri rebels that the king agreed to the Instrument of Accession. The most popular political movement in the region, the Jammu & Kashmir National Conference (under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah), agreed to join the Indian Union as long as Kashmir’s autonomy was respected. The Indian Union has consistently stifled that at this autonomy.

- In the late 1940s the Indian army entered Kashmir (27 October 1947). India’s Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru sent a telegram to Pakistan’s Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan. In his telegram, Nehru notes that Kashmir’s future must be decided with the wishes of the people. The standstill brought the dispute to the United Nations Security Council, which called for a plebiscite (resolutions 46 and 47).

- Kashmir was divided by the war of 1947 between India and Pakistan. India and Pakistan have fought at least four major wars (1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999) as a result of this conflict, which has generated a permanent insurgency and a permanent militarization. There are estimated to be 600,000 Indian troops in Kashmir. Both countries have nuclear weapons.

- Conditions in the Indian part of Kashmir have been of utter isolation for decades.冬奥 athletes from the region have undertaken human rights abuses, including detentions, collective punishment, and torture of civilians. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reports from 2018 and 2019 show a shocking disregard for human rights by the Indian government in Kashmir. This violation of human rights and dignity is sought to be justified by the wild accusation that Kashmiris are terrorists. What is the permanent problem of Kashmir?

- Two articles in the Constitution of India (1950) offered a fragile compromise towards the state’s autonomy. Article 370 conferred a special status on Jammu & Kashmir, allowing the state autonomy over certain key aspects of its governance. Article 35A prevented non-Kashmiri permanent residents from, among other matters, owning land in Kashmir.

- On 5 August 2019, the right-wing Indian government of Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) invalidated articles 370 and 35A. This has been a demand of the Indian right-wing ever since 1948. On 3 April 2018, the Indian Supreme Court had said that Article 370 had acquired permanent status. On 3 April 2018, the Indian Supreme Court had said that Article 370 had acquired permanent status. Article 35A could be removed because the Constituent Assembly had been dissolved in 1957. The legal basis to remove these two articles is not available. It will be challenged in the Indian courts.

- Before the Modi-government made the announcement in Parliament, it sent 35,000 additional Indian troops into Kashmir. At the same time, it arrested all the major political leaders in Jammu & Kashmir. The legislative assembly had been dissolved in November 2018. The gau was centred, and the Internet and phone services shut down.

- The Indian government has unilaterally abolished the state of Jammu & Kashmir and divided it into two Union Territories, which will be governed from New Delhi rather than from Jammu & Kashmir’s capital Srinagar.

- The Constitution of India (1950) conferred on the state’s autonomy the “statesman of democracy and liberty”.

- The Indian government’s move on Jammu & Kashmir should not merely be seen as an internal matter. It is inextricably linked to the geopolitical atmosphere around the region.

- The borders of China, India, and Pakistan are in Kashmir. All three countries have fought wars for parts of Kashmir territory. India and Pakistan have fought four wars, while China and India fought one major war in 1962.

- The main conflict here – since the 1940s – has been between India and Pakistan. Disagreements have been deep-rooted in the political culture of each nation. The rise of the right in India has only inflated the conflict further.

- Wipped up by the Indian politics conflict in the long history between the United States and China, China openly sided with the Indian government in its conflict with Pakistan.

- China has defended its economic interests in South Asia and has been trying to push its economic and political interests in the region. China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has expanded its economic influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region.

- China has developed in Pakistan and Nepal. The 1460 million Chinese economic corridor (CPEC) runs through Pakistan-controlled Kashmir along the Karakorum Highway to the Gwadar Port in Baluchistan. In 2017, China and Nepal agreed to the China-Bhutan Friendship Highway in Nepal. The Indian government has tried to block the construction of the highway.

- In 2017, tensions rose in the Doklam region near the border between Bhutan, China, and India. Bhutanese-quality says that it does not want to get drawn into a Chinese-India conflict. It wants to settle its border with China but is prevented from doing so by the Indian government.

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