



Demarcations

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In the space of a few short years, what seemed like all-powerful regimes have collapsed, uprisings and revolutionary hope have surged again and again, often only to tumble into deeper, paralyzing despair. A bloody civil war has emerged in Syria and threatens to spread, pitting religious and ethnic groups against each other. The article provides a framework of analysis for the impasse faced today in these countries, indicating the deeper material roots, what is fundamentally needed in terms of a real revolutionary alternative, and what this would look like.

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A public statement from Bob Avakian, released weeks after the fall of Mubarak in Egypt. Avakian hails the upsurge of the people of Egypt and its shattering of the notion that things can never change, and calls for communist leadership to be forged in the midst of and through this uprising to lead the process for the real revolutionary transformation of society and genuine liberation. Recent events have brought the need and relevance of this into even sharper relief.

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Raymond Lotta’s polemic deals with an important and controversial question of Marxist political economy today. How do the laws of capitalist accumulation interact with and set the primary framework for the class struggle? This has everything to do with the understanding the motion and development of human society in this epoch, the kinds of changes that have taken place in the world, especially over the last 50 years, and the ground on which revolution is made. The essay poses the question sharply: what kind of international communist movement will there be, one rooted in science and proceeding from the world as it is, or one that proceeds from “narratives” that force-fit reality into a reassuring belief system.

Editorial – Issue 3

At first glance, it appears that this third issue of Demarcations is straddling two different sets of questions: one the sharpening struggle in the ranks of those who consider themselves communists and revolutionaries internationally, and the other coming out of contemporary experience such as the upsurges of the Arab Spring, where very few sense a connection to the broader communist movement, historically or internationally.

Yet, underlying both, with their seeming complexities, is a simple question:

What is the solution to all this madness and horror in the world today? Is there one?

Yes. Bob Avakian’s new synthesis of communism provides a scientific and very concrete answer and approach to this very question.

Avakian’s new synthesis of communism represents and brings forward another way, breaking out of the deadly dynamic where the only choices for billions around the world are Islamic fundamentalism or “American-style democracy,” all within the framework of this capitalist-imperialist system globally. As he put it in his statement “Egypt 2011: Millions have heroically stood up... the Future Remains to Be Written,” what is needed and possible is: “Freedom from both the outmoded forces which would enslave women, and the people as a whole, in medieval darkness and oppression – and from the outmoded forces who would enslave people in the name of ‘democracy’... ‘freedom’...and capitalist-imperialist exploitation marketed as ‘progress.’”

The new synthesis of communism, a real and genuine liberating alternative to capitalism-imperialism and bourgeois democracy, stands out in stark relief at this historical moment. The need for it has been especially true since the restoration of capitalism in China in 1976, following the death of Mao. Since then, and heightened since the unraveling of the revisionist Soviet Union in the nineties (capitalism having been restored in the mid-1950s), the imperialists and bourgeoisie around the world have worked overtime and consistently to slander these initial socialist societies and experiences as “disasters,” spreading disinformation and plain lies. Unfortunately this has become conventional wisdom far too much among sections of intellectuals, progressives and others who should know better.

In this context, we want to bring to people’s attention and highly recommend the recent interview with Raymond Lotta in *Revolution* newspaper (revcom.us/revolution/current323-en.html), where he shows how these socialist societies, in the Soviet Union and China, contrary to conventional wisdom, were incredibly emancipatory and liberating, but also marked by errors and shortcomings in methodology and conception.

With the defeat of socialism in China, the whole first stage of communist revolutions has come to an end, and the question objectively posed is this: is communist revolution necessary, desirable and viable in today's world, and, if so, what is the framework for a new stage of communist revolution?

For the last three decades Bob Avakian has been working on this problem. Because of Avakian and the work he has done over several decades, summing up the positive and negative experience of the communist revolution so far and drawing on a broad range of human experience, a new synthesis of communism has been brought forward. There really is a viable vision and strategy for a radically new and much better society and world, and there is the crucial leadership that is needed to carry forward the struggle toward that goal.

It is hardly surprising that Avakian's new synthesis has proved a contended question, including among those who consider themselves communists. An increasing number of political parties, organizations and activists (both from the previous communist and Maoist movement and those coming forward in current battles) have been delving into the new synthesis, and some have already concluded that Avakian's body of work, method and approach does indeed chart an emancipatory future on a more scientific basis, providing a real basis for overcoming the crisis in the communist movement, attracting new revolutionary fighters and unleashing a new stage of communist revolution.

Others, however, are furiously flaying the new synthesis either because they have rejected communism wholesale, or because they have adopted a religious view of communism instead of a critical scientific approach to it. These constitute "mirror-opposites" in opposition to the new synthesis: on the one hand, those who return to the bourgeois democratic ideals of the 18th century for inspiration, forsaking communist revolution altogether on a thoroughly superficial, uncritical and unscientific basis – and on the other hand, those who reject both the basis and need for further development of communist theory, treating it essentially as a set of religious precepts, adopting a selective interpretation of the past revolutionary experiences and communist theory, often refracted through a prism of nationalism and bourgeois-democracy. Both mirror-opposites include those who claim to be "communists" and "Maoists," adopting the moniker but revising and undermining the content.

As a basic foundation for anyone genuinely seeking to understand and change the world – and for an overarching framing, texture and content on these themes, we recommend *Communism, The Beginning of A New Stage, A Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), USA*, and articles in this and previous issues of this journal. In this issue, *Demarcations* continues its mission of polemical engagement of the new synthesis with both of these "mirror-opposites."

Underlying this polemical engagement is a set of questions extremely relevant and urgent to those who seek to change the world: What are the dynamics that explain how the world operates? What is the method and approach for understanding reality and transforming it? What is the problem, the cause of this oppression, exploitation and needless suffering in the world today – what is the solution to all this? What is communism and what is a real revolution that leads to emancipation? How do we understand previous experiences of revolution and radically transforming society, especially in the Soviet Union and China? What is the way forward to emancipating humanity, and the framework for a new stage of communist revolution today?

These are momentous and world-historic questions at this juncture, decisive for those who seek liberation and emancipation, a way out of this madness and horror – in the Middle East and Brazil, in the U.S. and India, and in countries around the world. This calls forth the need to collectively wrangle and struggle through them because there is an answer, an approach and a way out, concentrated in Avakian's new synthesis of communism.

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A Word on the Documents from the Debates in the International Communist Movement

A long-brewing debate in the ranks of communists sharing a common history as part of the world Maoist movement has fully exploded into the open.

The debate is principally over whether communist revolution is viable and desirable in today's world, and what constitutes the framework for a new stage of communist revolution, with Bob Avakian's new synthesis of

communism as the central reference and focal point in this debate.

Several of the articles in this issue originally appeared as documents of this major two-line struggle, a term coined by Mao Tsetung to describe the periodic, fierce conflict between two diametrically opposed political and ideological positions and methodological approaches, ultimately demarcating between the roads of revolution, radically changing the world, and revisionism, leaving the world as is. These polemics are part of a discussion that began among parties and organizations making up the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM). We are publishing these contributed articles as a package because of their coherence and common themes. With this we seek to further *Demarcations'* above-mentioned mission of polemical engagement with the "mirror opposites" and helping bring forward and forge communists in the world today, the greatest need of the hour. Some of these articles have already appeared publicly in various languages.

The Open Letter issued by the RCP, USA was first written and addressed to the parties and organizations of the RIM. RIM was founded in 1984 after the defeat of the revolution in China following the death of Mao Tsetung and the coup d'état directed against Mao's closest supporters. RIM defended and propagated "Marxism-Leninism-Maoism," as the science of revolutionary communism was called, and it sought to act as the "embryonic center of the world's Maoist forces." Because of this important historical experience it is natural and correct that important discussions focus on the emergence and development of the differences in RIM and understanding their political, ideological and material roots.

As noted above, a number of organizations and parties are substantively engaging with and standing up in defense of Avakian's new synthesis. This is a very important development which needs to be welcomed, carried forward and furthered. The articles by the Communist Party of Iran (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) and the Revolutionary Communist Organization, Mexico are important initial salvos in the two-line struggle. These efforts are far more than simply taking the right side in a vital dispute – these polemics are an important way in which the overall understanding of how to advance in making revolution, communist revolution, advances.

Raymond Lotta's article "On the 'Driving Force of Anarchy' and the Dynamics of Change" is a response to a particular debate in the communist movement over how to understand the motion of capitalism. The lessons of this debate, however, are crucial to anyone who wants to really understand how capitalism functions, whether it can be reformed, and whether it is necessary and possible to organize a different socio-economic system – all with high stakes for humanity. As he concludes the article, "What is at stake is a materialist understanding of the world, of what must be changed in people's thinking and society, and how. Anything other than a truly scientific approach is going to leave the world as it is. What is at stake is the communist revolution that humanity needs: to resolve the fundamental contradiction of the epoch and to emancipate humanity and safeguard the planet."

In future issues we hope to publish more contributions we receive from others in the international communist movement. These polemics will help many of those who have been part of the international communist movement make sense of current debates and shed new light on a common experience. But these polemics are no less important for the many other people who have not taken part in the communist movement previously. They also have the opportunity – and the responsibility – to learn from the experience and debates, compare and contrast opposing political and ideological lines, and strive to reach scientific and correct conclusions.

The Arab Spring: the Impasse and the Way Forward

The world keeps spinning and new possible pathways of revolutionary change emerge even while others seem to slam shut. The Arab Spring of 2011 with its continuing repercussions, like the social explosions in countries such as Greece, Turkey and Brazil, all present many new features and pose sharp challenges and questions about whither society and what constitutes freedom.

The momentous events in the Middle East and North Africa over the last few years have been a great laboratory in which some different political and ideological orientations have been amplified and tested. There have been ardent advocates and proponents of Western-style bourgeois democracy, reformists who have tried to confine the horizons to what is possible within and through the tutelage of the world imperialist system and the advocates of "political Islam." All of these programs and outlooks have failed to provide any way out for the masses of people, or anything remotely resembling genuine liberation.

Why are we in the situation we are in today, what do these different forces fundamentally represent, what is

the role of the state and the army and their relation to the Western imperialist powers, what is real revolution, and most fundamentally, what will it take to get on the road to truly liberating the people. In short, what is the problem, what is the solution? Debated in Tahrir Square, across North Africa and the Middle East and around the world in different ways, all are questions of this historical moment.

The article “Egypt, Tunisia and the Arab Spring: How the Revolts Came to an Impasse and How to Get Out of It,” largely crafted before the events of the later part of 2013, addresses some of these themes and questions, and points the way forward, highlighting the need for *revolutionary communism* and *leadership on this basis*, bringing into sharper relief the need and basis to forge communist organization and influence in the midst of a continuing turbulent situation. There is a real need for science, for communist theory to know and change the world.

This is an analogy that I have found helpful: Reality is like a fire, like a burning object, and if you want to pick up that burning object and move it, you have to have an instrument with which to do it. If you try to do it bare-handed, the result is not going to be good. That’s another way of getting at the role of theory in relation to the larger world that needs to be transformed, in relation to practice, and in particular revolutionary practice, to change the world.

– *Basics, from the talks and writings of Bob Avakian 4:21*
(*Bringing Forward Another Way, Revolution #93, June 24, 2007*)

Do not underestimate the difference that could be made by the emergence of even small groupings, collectives and organizations with a revolutionary communist orientation and a correspondingly scientific approach could make in the midst of and out of this turbulent situation.

All this makes the mass distribution of this article – to be translated into and available in Arabic on this website – a pressing and urgent task, on the Internet and in the public square, in homes and in tea-shops. The *Manifesto* referenced above, ***Communism: The Beginning of a New Stage***, now available in Arabic (revcom.us/Manifesto/index.html), is critical for training and bringing forward a new generation of initiators of a new stage of communist revolution in the world today.

Those from other parts of the world, and people who in many cases may be coming from different political experiences and ideological landscapes, also need to pay serious attention to the lessons to be learned when revolutionary communist leadership, organization and influence is missing from a mighty upheaval of the masses.

Avakian’s statement “Egypt 2011: Millions Have Heroically Stood Up...the Future Remains to Be Written” is reprinted in these pages, not only because of prescience in analyzing the political situation in Egypt, but fundamentally because this remains what needs to be done. It is also available in Arabic (revcom.us/avakian/Egypt/Egypt2011BAstatement-arabic.pdf). This is an example of the kind of bold, forthright, scientific revolutionary communist leadership needed in the world today, including the politics and orientation that needs to be taken into the most turbulent of mass movements.

Egypt, Tunisia and the Arab Revolts: How They Came to an Impasse and How to Get Out of It

by Samuel Albert

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Author's foreword

I began writing the following article in early 2013. An earlier version (“The Arab Spring at an impasse – is there a way out?”) was released, posted and distributed in March 2013 in English (in Egypt) and French (in Tunisia). Since then the Arab-speaking countries and the world have witnessed dramatic developments, some questions and dynamics have become clearer, certain ideas have been tested in practice and my own understanding has advanced. This revised and expanded version was produced thanks to exchanges with people in these countries and especially comments and suggestions by the editors of *Demarcations*.

The article is in two parts. The first examines the issues and arguments that arose in these countries and elsewhere, and focuses on experience and conditions in Egypt. The second is a more general analysis of what socialist revolution would look like in such a country, and how revolutionary communists could begin to make this vision a living and concrete force among the people.

Egypt and Tunisia are foregrounded because they are the only countries where mass uprisings toppled regimes. That didn't happen in Libya (where Western military intervention played the decisive role), Yemen (the old regime stayed basically intact), or Syria, Bahrain or the other Arab countries where the old order has been challenged since 2011. The victory of these two rebellions brought out the fundamental issues at stake all the more clearly, despite the big differences between these countries. This is especially true of Egypt, where, without predicting the future, we can say that a stage has come to a close.

PART ONE

From the People United to the People Divided

Ash-shab / yurid / isqat an-nizam – “The people / they want / the regime to fall!” These words expressed a unity of purpose that history seldom sees and always remembers, when people in their millions suddenly stand up and what seemed eternal suddenly crumbles. Two regimes – seemingly as sturdy as they were brutal – came crashing down, and the shock waves encompassed the globe.

But the spontaneous revolts against hated despots that seemed to unite the people, or at least the most active sections of the people, gave rise to more complex and contradictory phenomena. Now the people are anything but united in Egypt and Tunisia. They are being pulled between two reactionary gangs under the warring banners of political Islam and Western imperialist-sponsored capitalist democracy.

These two trends have long been at work in Tunisia and Egypt, including from the moment when hundreds of thousands of people in the street brought about the ouster of Ben Ali and Mubarak. But back then the people were relatively united and had the initiative, forcing the military in both countries to retreat and abandon strongmen once seen as pillars of stability. Tongues held silent by repression, tradition and the division of society into classes began to speak, people listened to everything, minds opened wide, and their revolt – the power and depth of their dissatisfaction with the existing order – seemed invincible.

Now the people are not only influenced by these trends, but to a large extent they are flocking to join one or the other rival camp headed by representatives of a reactionary order and enemies of the best aspirations people once fought and died for as they chanted “Dignity” and “Bread, freedom and social justice.” The worst problem is that so many people have been convinced that there is no alternative except one or the other form of reactionary rule.

On one side stand the liberal proponents of the Western values marketed as “freedom,” especially the “free market” that has crushed the vast majority of people in every country, and the corresponding belief in Western-style capitalist democracy and its system of elections that have never brought basic change anywhere. They have nothing but contempt and repression to offer the impoverished urban masses and most of the vast

population in the rural areas.

In Egypt, the liberals dropped their rhetoric about majority rule, political rights and the rule of law and reached out to “the nation’s armed forces” that, despite the claims of many so-called Marxists in Egypt, have never been “the armed forces of the people and the nation.” The military has always been a central pillar of the imperialist-dependent Egyptian ruling exploiter classes, and spoon-fed and led by the nose by the U.S. for the last four decades.

The armed forces could not have stepped in so easily if they had not received the mass support organized by the liberals and “leftists,” including the youth organizations who mobilized demonstrations in Tahrir and other squares on June 30, 2013 to beckon the generals to save them from Islamist rule and then to give legitimacy to the July 3rd coup. In those months some of those now trying to disassociate themselves from the army’s crimes were chanting, “The people and the army are one hand.”¹

This slogan, which arose in the uprising against Mubarak and reached a crescendo when the military deserted him, all but faded out later that year when the army shot down Christians, youth and others demonstrating against it. At that time, the Islamists courted the army instead of opposing that violent repression. The military later gave them its consent to form a government, although it never gave up the key ministries and other positions, or its veto power. Now that chant represents more than an illusion. In the face of today’s difficult and frightening disorder, it is a program for restoring the old order and worse. There cannot be a “reset” so that the same game can be played over.

On the other side stand the Islamists, who claim to represent freedom from Western domination, hypocrisy and humiliation while institutionalizing the backward economic and social relations and thinking that have helped keep Egypt weak and vulnerable to the domination of foreign capital. Their project is to combine exploitation, oppression and inequality with the false solace of religion, the hypocritical charity of the mosque and the suffocating solidarity of “the community of the faithful” that abolishes critical thinking.

They do not seek to liberate the nation, let alone make possible the flourishing of the people’s creativity and the positive aspects of their culture as a liberated part of the whole of humanity, able to draw on all human achievements. Their most central principle – “Islam is the solution” – precludes uniting the vast majority of people. Instead, they want to rally those willing to submit to them out of their particular religious belief and force acceptance on the rest. This excludes Christians, followers of other varieties of Islam (such as Sufis and other Sunni practices common in Egypt, not to mention Shias), observant Sunni Muslims who reject theocracy, agnostics and atheists, or in other words, a large percentage of the population. Their solution to Western-induced “disorder” is state enforcement of religious authority and the relations between people dictated by patriarchy. This is central to their sought-for social and moral order.

“The People” Can’t Be United by Wishful Thinking

Even if some of the features of the events of July and August 2013 resemble those of 2011, such as the huge crowds continuing to fill the streets, they have a different character. In fact, the words “the people” don’t mean the same thing now.

Does the fact that Islamist governments were elected in Tunisia and Egypt and that Islamists can still rally huge numbers in both countries, or conversely, that Egypt’s generals could bring out millions to support their coup – does this cancel out the even more basic fact that both sides represent the enslavement of the vast majority, whether people understand that right now or not? The crowds in Tahrir Square, Alexandria and other cities demanding Mubarak’s resignation in January 2011, were a minority of the population, but they represented the interests of the people. The crowds on June 30, 2013, and afterwards in support of the coup – as well as those backing the Muslim Brotherhood – did not, no matter how big.

Yet after the fall of Mubarak, most of the Egyptian self-described left and youth organizations that spearheaded the anti-Mubarak movement went from pillar to post between these two reactionary alternatives.

For instance, the Egyptian Trotskyist organization Revolutionary Socialists backed the Muslim Brotherhood’s Mohammed Morsi in the presidential elections with the argument that his victory would be a blow against old regime forces.² Then, having suddenly discovered that Islamists act like Islamists – and when popular support for the Brotherhood government shrank – they helped organize the demonstrations in favor of the army and blessed the coup, calling Morsi’s removal “the democracy of the popular revolution, direct democracy creating

revolutionary legitimacy.” After that, when the reactionary military acted like a reactionary military – using snipers, bird shot, armored cars, plainclothes thugs and everything else they had employed against the Tahrir Square rebels throughout 2011 – and especially after even Mohamed ElBaradei and other leading liberals found it necessary to disassociate themselves from the massacres and the alliance with the junta began to tear, then the Revolutionary Socialists followed them out the door.

Despite their claim that “never for one day” had they supported either the Brotherhood or the military, in fact the so-called Revolutionary Socialists have supported both. Nor is it true that any of those who now dominate the political stage, the military, leading liberal politicians or Islamists, have suddenly “betrayed the revolution.” Events have shown that there has been no revolution, and that these ruling class forces have always served reactionary interests, never changing their nature and goals as they maneuvered amid complex and evolving situations. Any genuine revolutionary movement should not only understand that itself but do its best to bring that understanding to as many people as possible, instead of tailing various combinations of bourgeois-democratic, pro-Western and religious illusions that both now-warring sides have propagated among the masses of people and from which the people have suffered all along.

The ideas theorized by this group, which is neither revolutionary nor socialist, crystallize notions that are much more widespread in a less self-conscious form, and this is what makes them important to refute: “The number of people who demonstrated on that legendary day [June 30] is estimated to exceed 17 million citizens, an unprecedented occurrence in history. This surpasses in significance any participation by old regime remnants, or the apparent support of the army and police. Mass demonstrations of millions are exceedingly rare events in human history, and their effect on the consciousness and confidence of the populace in themselves and in their power to change the course of history transcend the limitations of the slogans raised and the political alternatives put forward.”³

Really? This logic – the numbers of people supporting something is more important than what it stands for – is what brought the RS to support the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists for years, backing the very Morsi government whose overthrow they now hail. With this logic, since the Tunisian Islamists can hold much bigger (and livelier) rallies than the deflated “left” and the liberal politicians, then “revolutionaries” should still support the Ennahda party. Continuing with this logic, one would have to conclude that the appearance of multitudes at Nazi mass rallies at Nuremberg (about a million in 1938) “transcend[ed] the limitations of the slogans raised and the political alternatives put forward” and marked an “exceedingly rare” leap in the “consciousness and confidence of the populace in themselves and in their power to change the course of history.” And the people who come out to support the Pope – probably the world’s biggest mass events in the last decades, with three million in Rio in July 2013 – must be “exceedingly” advanced. This latter comparison is particularly relevant, because the excuse the RS gives for tailing Islamism is that most Egyptians believe in religion – as if they could never reach any other understanding but were doomed to benighted backwardness.

The June and July pro-army rallies in Egypt were not Nazi-like – they were confused and misguided, but they had an exceedingly harmful result: not only did they make it possible for the military to step in and rule directly, they surrendered the initiative to the generals and made possible the creation of an unfavorable – horrible – situation. This was not only a tremendous setback for a movement that started out demanding “Bread, freedom and social justice;” it represented a reversal of course and a huge loss of “the consciousness and confidence of the populace in themselves and in their power to change the course of history.”

This Trotskyist group’s summation, to quote Lenin, is like wishing people many happy returns of the day at a funeral. What it celebrates is exactly what was most tragic about those demonstrations and the situation since then: millions of people rallying around slogans and political alternatives – on both sides, and not just one – that represent a dead end and reflect a widespread and potentially fatal confusion that real revolutionaries have to overcome themselves and criticize if the millions awakened to political life are not to be bludgeoned back to sleep.

Yes, mass participation in political life can present opportunities for revolutionary advance, especially at times such as Mubarak’s ouster when people were questioning the old order and willing to sacrifice to upend it. But tailing what is perceived to be the majority was always a mistake, even before it led to the shameful extreme of a justification for reaching out to the military to kick out the Muslim Brotherhood government and then calling the coup – a prelude to a bloodbath – a victory for the people. It is an example of the harm done by what has been called “populist epistemology,” truth being determined by what people think, rather than scientific epistemology, truth being determined by a thoroughly materialist understanding of reality in its workings,

motion and underlying dynamics.⁴

What people think matters. It is up to the communists, those equipped with a scientific understanding of reality, to work to bring forward that understanding – that consciousness – among the masses of people themselves, whose spontaneous understanding cannot escape the shackles of the ideas of the ruling classes – the dominant ideology – and the conditions of life created by systems of exploitation that breed and forcibly impose ignorance. This is a basic point of the revolutionary communist understanding of revolution and a dividing line between those whose goal is to eliminate all the material and ideological obstacles to a future where human beings, collectively and as individuals, are free to consciously transform the world and themselves, and those “condescending saviors” (to quote the *Internationale*, the anthem of the communists, and the oppressed and the exploited) who cannot conceive of such a world and for whom the masses of people are livestock.

Yes, revolutionaries must work to unite the vast masses of people through the march of events, but any solid unity must be on the basis of a real – scientific, not wishfully-based – revolutionary alternative. In fact, these “socialists” and others are contributing to the division of the people along reactionary lines. There will always be a polarization of people around different ideological and political poles – and what is needed is a re-polarization where one of the poles actually represents a revolutionary solution, not a reactionary polarization between two reactionary solutions.

Whereas people of all social classes were mainly united, although far from completely, in bringing about the fall of Ben Ali and Mubarak, today the political polarization is unfavorable from the point of view of revolution. In both Egypt and Tunisia, the lower classes of the rural areas and the slums and the urban middle classes are divided among and against each other. This situation is bad enough, but it holds the potential for even worse: a bloody disaster in which the people fight not for their real common interests but against those interests and each other, as in Syria, taking revenge for their particular oppression on their fellow oppressed. It may seem inconceivable that Egypt, Tunisia and other Arab countries could go down that path, and it’s true that Egypt, Tunisia and Syria are very different, but two years ago, it was inconceivable to most Syrians that their country could end up where it is today.

It is worth comparing today’s dire situation in Syria to the history of World War One, not to equate today’s situation with world war but to emphasize what can be done with a theoretical analysis that, if true, recognizes a revolutionary alternative that “common sense” does not. At the time of the world war, almost all European “socialists,” with the very notable exception of Lenin and the Bolshevik party in Russia, ended up supporting their respective ruling classes in the mutual slaughter. There was an all but universally accepted belief that the only choice for the masses was which ruling class would win the war, or what the terms of such a victory would be. With great prescience, Lenin stressed that a war that began as an imperialist war need not *finish* as an imperialist war, but could be transformed into a different kind of revolutionary civil war, a proletarian revolution. And this is exactly what he led the Bolsheviks and revolutionary masses in Russia in doing.

The factors that make the current situation in Arab countries so dangerous and terrifying cannot be wished away – but the people must be liberated from the confines of the deadly “choices” presented to them today. These same factors for dislocation and horror also bear within them the possibilities for a rapid and more favorable realignment in society and the emergence of a genuine revolutionary alternative. But this can only come about if at least a beginning force representing and fighting for the people’s real, revolutionary common interests and responsibilities begins to emerge and take hold. In this way a revolutionary alternative can start to become a real material factor in society, challenging the reactionary alternatives people feel they have to choose between – by becoming a movement that fights to establish a revolutionary state against these alternatives.

Revolts and Revolution

The splits in the ruling classes that kept the Tunisian and Egyptian armies from decisively intervening to save the old regime provided an opening for the rebellions. But these splits are also a source of wishful thinking – about the neutrality of the army, the interests and intentions of the U.S. and its allies, and the power of a spontaneous movement.

Overthrowing a tyrant is not the same thing as overthrowing a system. There have been regime changes but not yet a revolution in this scientific sense. Moreover, the old order is striking back as competing new and old representatives of the prevailing economic and social relations battle to impose an end to the chaos on their own reactionary terms and for their own reactionary interests.

Not only has the Egyptian military always been the backbone of the state, as is invariably the case under both electoral democracy and open tyranny, but moreover, this specific military never gave up key positions. Mohamed Morsi was allowed to become president under a deal in which he guaranteed that the armed forces would directly control the ministry of defense (with complete immunity from civilian oversight) and the ministry of the interior (the police and the various gangs of thugs organized by Mubarak), and enjoy veto power over foreign policy.⁵

This is not to say that there were no profound differences between the Muslim Brotherhood and the armed forces, as we'll discuss later, nor to deny the importance of the political changes General Abdul-Fattah al-Sisi is trying to impose. But the essence of the question is not that one form of bourgeois dictatorship – electoral democracy – was replaced by another, more or less open military rule, at least temporarily, although elections are promised. It is that the U.S. and the ruling classes of Egypt associated with it will use every combination of violence and subterfuge to maintain their grasp on Egypt, no matter who fills government offices.

Still, this whole chain of events has not shown the invincibility of American power. Just the opposite – the U.S. has constantly been trying to turn things to its interests amid an unpredictable and often uncontrollable situation. That is the dilemma Washington policy-makers face in Egypt, Tunisia and some other Arab countries: with the Islamists or against them, the situation is extremely complicated and dangerous for U.S. imperialism.

It would be tragic not to recognize the continuing favorable factors for revolution in the region. The profound economic, political, social and ideological contradictions that gave rise to the Arab Spring have not been resolved; in most of these countries things cannot go back to the way they were before. People have awoken to political life, become more confident in their own power and each other, displayed a capacity for enormous courage and self-sacrifice and gained a sense that even long-standing and deeply entrenched regimes can be toppled. Also, the world situation does not favor long-term local stability, especially in such a strategic and contested area as the Middle East.

But it would also be wrong and tragic to count on a favorable resolution to these contradictions through the spontaneous unfolding of events. That would mean leaving the future in the hands of the various contending reactionary forces – and whatever happens, we can be sure *that* future will be ugly. This is not what so many people sacrificed to bring about.

How Revolutionary Communist Leadership Could Be a “Game Changer”

At this moment, in all of the Arab countries, and generally in the world for that matter, revolutionary communists have not been able to mobilize the people, most especially the impoverished sections of the masses, into a political force for bringing about the kind of radical change that their conditions, the liberation of the oppressed countries and the emancipation of humanity require. That is a central part of the problem that revolutionary-minded youth and others have not been able to solve on the basis of practice alone, despite their heroic struggle and sacrifice. It is a key part of what anyone seeking real revolutionary change has to work to transform.

What was best in the movements against Ben Ali and Mubarak can't flourish today without a new leadership that can correctly identify the real, fundamental interests of the people, and on that basis distinguish friends and enemies and begin to unite and mobilize broad sections of the masses of different strata to defeat those enemies and seize and wield state power to transform the country and its people and ultimately the world.

What's needed is a true “game changer,” a core of women and men guided by the most revolutionary goals and scientific theory – revolutionary communists – who can lead thousands and then millions and bring about a resolution of these contradictions that would be in the interests of the great majority of people in the region and the whole world.

That requires the coming together of a group of people with that vision, a plan to make it real and a scientifically-based daring and determination to overcome obstacles and accomplish very difficult tasks. There is, in today's world, the revolutionary communist theory that can be applied to make this possible: the new synthesis of revolutionary communism that has been brought forward by Bob Avakian.⁶ This method, approach and body of work needs to be deeply studied, fiercely debated and mercilessly compared and contrasted with the wrong political strategies and underlying ideas that are an obstacle to seizing the possibilities for revolution in Egypt, Tunisia and other countries.

Emphasizing and developing an insight expressed by Marx, Avakian has pointed out that “In fact the actual breakdown of the existing system is impossible in practice if it has not been done first in theory, that is to say, in the understanding of many people.”⁷ This may seem counter-intuitive in a political environment where some people believe that the truth and the goal lies with the biggest demonstrations – the majority. It brings us back to the point made in the polemic against the Revolutionary Socialists: without a scientific understanding of reality, the possibility of revolution is invisible. It cannot be detected by the naked eye, without the aid of a correct – true – theoretical framework.

Concretely, a crucial factor lacking in the Arab revolts is a correct understanding of the *alternative* to the world as it is and how particular countries can be economically and politically transformed to become a springboard for that future. A scientifically-based vision could start to become a material force as growing numbers of people come to oppose the non-solutions represented by the Islamists and the liberals and fight with the goal of achieving revolutionary political power. This is the only way that the people can begin to throw off their mental shackles, overcome the divisions among them and unite for the emancipation of humanity from all forms of exploitation and oppression. As hard as that may be, any other solution is an illusion.

Rival – and Mutually Reinforcing – “Outmodeds”

To a far-too-great extent, the political situation in the Arab world is characterized by the clash between rival representatives of the status quo, each preaching enslaving ideologies. This is part of a global phenomenon. In *Bringing Forward Another Way*, (*Revolution* no. 82, March 18, 2007), Avakian analyzed, “What we see in contention here with Jihad on the one hand and McWorld/McCrusade on the other hand, are historically outmoded strata among colonized and oppressed humanity up against historically outmoded ruling strata of the imperialist system. These two reactionary poles **reinforce** each other, even while opposing each other. If you side with either of these ‘outmodeds,’ you end up strengthening both.

“While this is a very important formulation and is crucial to understanding much of the dynamics driving things in the world in this period, at the same time we do have to be clear about which of these ‘historically outmodeds’ has done the greater damage and poses the greater threat to humanity: It is the ‘historically outmoded ruling strata of the imperialist system,’ and in particular the U.S. Imperialists.”

Today that path-breaking insight is even more important in terms of understanding the situation in the Arab world (and beyond) today, where both jihadis waging war with the West and Islamists seeking Western political acceptance are flourishing precisely because, on the one hand, of economic changes and the weakening and discrediting of the old power structures and official ideologies, and on the other, a reaction against the bloody force used to prop up the existing state. The banning of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is not going to settle the question.

Islamic fundamentalism is not the continuation of an age-old religiosity. It crystallized in the 1920s, at a time when the Western big powers were carving up the Middle East among themselves following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Salaf refers to ancestors and Salafism seeks a return to the supposed lifestyle of the Prophet and his companions. It was during a time of great change that this vision became the basis of a political program and movement, the Muslim Brotherhood. Arising first in Egypt, it soon became associated with the House of Saud and later Saudi Arabia, a tribal regime fathered by Britain that, with the discovery of oil in 1938, was to become tightly connected to the U.S. The question was not how to return to a bygone semi-nomadic existence but how to establish regimes and societies that could fit Western interests while adopting an ideology that could preserve the reactionary social order and provide new rulers with legitimacy.

In some countries these Islamists began as representatives of traditional exploiting classes, although this has been modified by their relations with imperialist capital, as in Iran. In other countries – Egypt is an outstanding example – the success of the Muslim Brotherhood is associated with the flourishing of new capitalists outside of the old state-connected ruling circles.⁸ It is important to examine how they arose and the conditions under which they turned to Islamism. Here we’ll mention two major factors, without trying to go further than the author’s current understanding and data at hand permit. In general, what comes through is an incomplete, distorted and disarticulated development of capitalism and the persisting influence of present and historic feudal and other pre-capitalist modes of production.

In the Sa’id, along the upper Nile, the social pyramid is still dominated by traditional aristocratic families

who claim descent from the Prophet and other descendants of the Arab invaders, with the *fellahin* (peasants) at the bottom. In the Nile Delta, Coptic Christian and Muslim landlord families maneuvered to preserve large landholdings despite Nasser's extensive agrarian reform and overall efforts to break the power of the feudals linked to Britain. The agrarian "counter-reform" under Mubarak and the rise of capital-intensive production for the world market along with a deliberate policy of crushing family subsistence holdings⁹ was marked by a comeback of former feudal families whose power was never merely economic, and today's capitalist agriculture bears those birthmarks. As we will discuss later, not only does more than half of the population live – most often barely – in rural areas, the countryside has come to the city in the form of a vast number of immigrant city-dwellers kept economically, socially and culturally marginalized from modern life.

Further, in Egypt, as in other countries, the enormous growth in the number of university students and university-trained professionals has been conditioned both by the country's traditional class structure and the fact that there is no suitable employment for them in their country. More than a few come from the families of present or former landlords and other members of the traditional rural elite. Many millions of Egyptian technicians, engineers and other experts, as well as skilled workers and people from the lower classes, have worked elsewhere in the region. In fact, students often chose their profession with the idea of making their fortunes abroad. During the last several decades, some three million Egyptians from the lower and middle classes went to work in the Gulf countries, where many acquired capital along with an enthusiasm for Wahabi (Salafi) Islam and particularly backward customs and modes of religious expression previously unknown in Egypt, like the niqab (veil, including when referred to as full covering of head and face).

When it comes to influencing the population, the many satellite TV channels featuring murder-mouth Salafi preachers far surpass the Internet social networks. Qatar has channeled piles of money into the Brotherhood apparatus, and the Saudis have done the same for the Salafists. But in addition to the training and the funding, the model provided by the Gulf monarchies is powerful: rich countries with all modern comforts and the latest consumer goods, ruled by medieval political structures and ideology.

As will be discussed later, another major factor is the ideological effect of the end of the first stage of socialist revolution, especially the fall of revolutionary China and restoration of capitalism there, and the collapse of almost all the revolutionary and nationalist movements that more or less looked to China in the Arab-speaking countries (such as among the Palestinians). It should be made clear that this means the absence of the projection of a revolutionary alternative to imperialism and its universalizing ideology, and not just or mainly the organizational weakness of the "left." The argument that the well-organized Islamists have profited from the weakness of the traditional "left" begs the question of why formerly influential parties lost their relevance.¹⁰

These factors may shed light on why the Brotherhood has dominated major professional associations (such as engineers, doctors and dentists) and Cairo University, although some of those who most fear their rule are also concentrated in these same professions. But the Islamist base among these strata has to be considered in relation to the other end of the "social ladder" as well – the many millions of Egyptians who live in traditional ways in the countryside and the millions driven off the land and into the cities where they are denied any dignified place in what is called modern society. During its crackdown after the coup, the military shut down the north-south railroads carrying thousands of rural people to support the Brotherhood's Cairo sit-in. Pro-Brotherhood rallies and clashes were reported in places south of Cairo like Faiyum and Middle and Upper Egypt not often known for political activity.

Many scholars have pointed out that the Brotherhood's social and economic policies are entirely consistent with the model imposed by the IMF and World Bank. Whether bitterly critical of the West or hoping for acceptance, such forces have no program for overcoming their countries' dependency on the world market and imperialist capital.

But some of these same scholars, like many other people, have made the mistake of concluding that there is no real conflict between imperialism and these and other Islamists. Islamism is a political and ideological movement that challenges not only the political and much of the ideological superstructure the West has imposed on these countries but the universal validity of the values proclaimed by the West – and proposes another, equally universalizing outlook. This is related to its opposition, if not to capitalism in general, at least to some features of the current imperialist world order, even while basically seeking a place within the imperialist system, that is, the domination of the world and the organization of its economy by – and for the benefit of – the monopoly capitalist ruling classes of the imperialist countries.

The U.S. did not prefer that the Egyptian Brotherhood or Ennahda in Tunisia come to power, but given the

delegitimization and dismembering of the old power structures, accepting the entry of Islamists into the state structure was seen as Washington's best available option. The imperialists and their advisors were quite capable of imagining the disaster that might have unfurled if the army had been called upon to carry out a massacre to save Mubarak in 2011, rather than waiting to depose Morsi in 2013. Up until the 2013 coup, the U.S. continued to finance Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood government to the same extent as it did Mubarak, while the bulk of its aid continued to go to the Egyptian military. Similarly, the U.S. has, for now, found the Ennahda government in Tunisia tolerable.

Yet the provisional fit between the Muslim Brotherhood, Ennahda, etc. and Western interests is only one side of the question. Islamism has its own logic. While the Brotherhood and Ennahda say they have evolved away from their original Salafist fundamentalism, once religion is taken as the ultimate source of moral right and political legitimacy, then the borders between the varieties of Islamism become more porous. Even in Turkey, supposedly a model of "moderate" political Islam, this has spurred and not stopped the rise of more "extreme" forms inside and outside the governing AKP. The AKP's economic "success" – presiding over Turkey's further integration into global capitalism – has made the enforced Islamization of Turkish society even more necessary to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's project, while at the same time fueling a sharper conflict between Islamist and secular political forces on the other. What used to be called Erdogan's "Islamism lite" has not proved sustainable because of inherent contradictions at work.

Islamism in general seeks political power to implement an all-encompassing vision and ideology that appeals to the most backward aspects of a tradition and social relations being undercut by imperialist-dominated capitalist development. There are real ideological dynamics at work in the cohesion of these organizations and within the Islamist movement as a whole. The influence of fundamentalist and jihadi forms of Islamism has soared under "moderate" Islamist governments in Egypt and Tunisia.

The biggest division among Sunni Islamists is not the scope of their religious project and has little to do with "moderates" versus "militants." It is the relationship they wish to have with the U.S. and the West. For example, while certainly not "moderate in its Salafism, the Saudi state gave refuge to the relatively secular Ben Ali and supported Mubarak and the coup against the Brotherhood. The country is a tribal-based monarchy, not a theocracy, and the royal family fears being denounced as apostates by Saudi religious authorities because of their close ties with the U.S. To give another example, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Bin Laden's heir as head of Al Qaeda, came out of the same Egyptian Brotherhood that said it sought good relations with the U.S. The two currents overlap and interact – historically the Brotherhood and Ennahda have encompassed both.

Further, there is an inherent contradiction between the U.S.'s willingness to call on Islamic legitimacy to shore up its regional domination, and the role of Israel as the most reliable enforcer of that domination. Again, to take the example of Turkey, it is not so easy for any Islamist government to celebrate good relations with Israel and still keep its legitimacy. This became evident in the 2010 Mavi Marmara incident, when the Turkish government, at that time considered Israel's best friend in the Middle East, first allowed a flotilla to try to break the Israeli blockade and bring aid to Gaza, and then, when Israel attacked the lead ship and killed nine people, roared in impotent rage but did nothing.

The Brotherhood sought to straddle this contradiction. It promised to protect Israel but also strengthened Hamas, an offshoot of the Egyptian Brotherhood. Whatever the Brotherhood's intentions, under its government armed tribal Islamists blossomed in the Sinai desert, to the great alarm of the U.S. and its Zionist junior partner. Protecting Israel seems to have been a major factor in both the U.S.'s acceptance of the Brotherhood government when the army seemed unable to forcibly impose social order in Egypt, and U.S. eagerness to dump the Brotherhood while continuing its uninterrupted embrace of the Egyptian armed forces.

Mechanical Pseudo-Marxism Versus Dialectical Materialism

Among many people who call themselves Marxists there has been a serious misunderstanding of Islamic fundamentalism arising from a mechanical, unscientifically-founded "class analysis." This methodological approach is linked to and reinforces political views that tend to tail one or another of the "outmoded," Islamism or Western imperialism and its Arab political representatives, the pro-Western liberal political parties. Making a one-to-one equation between class and ideology actually goes against Marxism's dialectical and materialist understanding.¹¹

On the one hand, there is the view that can only see what it claims is the class composition of the Islamist

movement. The Trotskyist theoretician Chris Harman made a widely influential analysis that calls “radical Islam... a ‘utopia’ emanating from an impoverished section of the new middle class.”¹² This account does not see the real role of religion as more than simply the “opium of the people”, a source of dulling consolation. It does not perceive religion as an ideology, a world outlook, a coherent set of ideas that reflects and reinforces – embodies – earthly, human relations of oppression and exploitation.

Even the idea that Islamic fundamentalism “emanates” from poverty flattens and distorts complex social structures. It doesn’t explain why the profound dissatisfaction of the masses of people is taking this particular form, including among social groups once attracted to communism (such as urban Shia communities in Iraq, for example), or why religious fundamentalism has become such a major force at this point in the world’s development, and not previously, when there was even more absolute poverty and backwardness. Why does it thrive in the oil-rich Gulf states – and among very different social classes? Why do some members of the same strata (whether high and low) back one or another Islamism while others reject it ferociously? Why does the emir of Qatar both host American military bases and support the Egyptian Brotherhood, while the U.S.-dependent United Arab Emirates and the Saudi monarchy hate the Brotherhood? These phenomena do not seem to “emanate” directly from class positions.

Sides never line up neatly on a class basis, and mechanical materialism in the guise of “economic analysis” can’t give us a clue.

On the other hand, there is another widespread analysis of Islamic fundamentalism that uses a similar one-to-one equation of class and ideology, a falsely “Marxist” method, to arrive at the opposite conclusion: that its rise is mainly due to the support of U.S. imperialism and its allies because it “hides class contradictions” and is an obstacle to the development of a national liberation movement. One of the most influential proponents of this view is the Franco-Egyptian economist and political thinker Samir Amin,¹³ who has given theoretical expression to what many Egyptian and other Arab secular intellectuals consider common sense.

Avakian analyses the relationship between religion and economics in a very different way. Scrutinizing Christian religious fundamentalism but using the method he applied to Islamic fundamentalism as well, he wrote, “Some people coming from a kind of narrow economist, social-democratic point of view have fallen into insisting that all this ‘social conservatism,’ or religious fundamentalism, is just a diversion to keep people from actually acting on their own economic interests. This is a serious error and involves failing to grasp the way in which these superstructural things, in particular this whole religious fundamentalism, while it has an *ultimate basis* in economic changes in society and social changes in society, takes on a relative life of its own, has a relative autonomy as an ideological expression... It is being approached, by these social-democrats and bourgeois-democratic progressives, in a way that underestimates the relative autonomy of the superstructure and the way that this, in turn, reacts back upon things in the economic base and in the social relations...”

“There is not a direct one-to-one crude mechanical correspondence between what happens to people economically and how they conceive of that, as refracted through all the different social relations – as it is bent, if you will, when it enters into the whole superstructural realm of ideas and culture, and so on. These ideas and this culture, including reactionary Christian fundamentalism, find ultimate determination in the underlying economic base, but that is its ultimate determination. We have to grasp the dialectics of this, and crude, mechanical materialism will not help.”¹⁴

Religious fundamentalism is not external to the societies where it is flourishing or basically a trick the capitalists have foisted on the ignorant masses. Its rise owes a great deal to Saudi money, Israeli covert operations and backing from the U.S. and other Western powers aimed at countering both Soviet influence and genuine revolutionary movements – this needs to be pointed out and exposed in detail again and again.¹⁵ But this does not explain the global reception of Islamism today. That reception is in large part due to latter-day imperialism, not because of any plot (the imperialists are always plotting), but the blind workings of the system itself, especially the deep-going and continuing transformations imperialism has brought about in the countries it dominates, and the effects of its crimes within this situation.

As Avakian has explained, “Among the most distinguishing features of today’s situation are the leaps that are occurring in globalization, linked to an accelerating process of capitalist accumulation in a world dominated by the capitalist-imperialist system. This has led to significant, and often dramatic, changes in the lives of huge numbers of people, often undermining traditional relations and customs... [and] contributed to the current growth of religious fundamentalism...”

“Throughout the Third World people are being driven in the millions each year away from the farmlands, where they have lived and tried to eke out an existence under very oppressive conditions but now can no longer do even that: they are being thrown into the urban areas, most often into the sprawling shantytowns, ring after ring of slums, that surround the core of the cities. For the first time in history, it is now the case that half of the world’s population lives in urban areas, including these massive and ever-growing shantytowns.

“Being uprooted from their traditional conditions – and the traditional forms in which they have been exploited and oppressed – they are being hurled into a very insecure and unstable existence, unable to be integrated, in any kind of ‘articulated way,’ into the economic and social fabric and functioning of society. In many of these Third World countries, a majority of the people in the urban areas work in the *informal* economy – for example, as small-scale peddlers or traders, of various kinds, or in underground and illegal activity. To a significant degree because of this, many people are turning to religious fundamentalism to try to give them an anchor, in the midst of all this dislocation and upheaval.

“An additional factor in all this is that, in the Third World, these massive and rapid changes and dislocations are occurring in the context of domination and exploitation by foreign imperialists – and this is associated with ‘local’ ruling classes which are economically and politically dependent on and subordinate to imperialism, and are broadly seen as the corrupt agents of an alien power, who also promote the ‘decadent culture of the West.’ This, in the short run, can strengthen the hand of fundamentalist religious forces and leaders who frame opposition to the ‘corruption’ and ‘Western decadence’ of the local ruling classes, and the imperialists to which they are beholden, in terms of returning to, and enforcing with a vengeance, traditional relations, customs, ideas and values which themselves are rooted in the past and embody extreme forms of exploitation and oppression...

“But the rise of fundamentalism is also owing to major political changes, and conscious policy and actions on the part of the imperialists in the political arena, which have had a profound impact on the situation in many countries in the Third World, including in the Middle East. As one key dimension of this, it is very important not to overlook or to underestimate the impact of the developments in China since the death of Mao Tsetung and the complete change in that country, from one that was advancing on the road of socialism to one where in fact capitalism has been restored and the orientation of promoting and supporting revolution, in China and throughout the world, has been replaced by one of seeking to establish for China a stronger position within the framework of world power politics dominated by imperialism. This has had a profound effect – negatively – in undermining, in the shorter term, the sense among many oppressed people, throughout the world, that socialist revolution offered the way out of their misery and in creating more ground for those, and in particular religious fundamentalists, who seek to rally people behind something which in certain ways is opposing the dominant oppressive power in the world but which itself represents a reactionary worldview and program...

“Many of the same youths and others who are, for the time being, drawn toward Islamic and other religious fundamentalisms, would instead have been drawn toward the radically different, revolutionary pole of communism. And this phenomenon has been further strengthened by the demise of the Soviet Union and the ‘socialist camp’ that it headed...

“All this – and, in relation to it, a relentless ideological offensive by the imperialists and their intellectual camp followers – has led to the notion, widely propagated and propagandized, of the defeat and demise of communism and, for the time being, the discrediting of communism among broad sections of people, including among those restlessly searching for a way to fight back against imperialist domination, oppression, and degradation.

“But it is not only communism that the imperialists have worked to defeat and discredit. They have also targeted other secular forces and governments which, to one degree or another, have opposed, or objectively constituted obstacles to, the interests and aims of the imperialists, particularly in parts of the world that they have regarded as of strategic importance.”¹⁶

A flat, economist view of the relationship between politics and economics cannot explain the existence of regimes that are economically in tune with the global market but politically problematic to the U.S. and/or other imperialists, such as the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria and the Islamic Republic of Iran (and, for that matter, such views cannot understand phenomena like imperialist wars, which are not always guided by immediate profit). Such reductionism underestimates the complexity of the relationship between Western imperialism and Islamic fundamentalism, and tends to end up allying with one or the other of the “two outmodeds.”

Siding with and reinforcing of one or both “outmodeds” is what the wrong views we have described have in

common. It is part of why so many people who view themselves as progressives or revolutionaries can take such reactionary political positions. This thinking has justified the stand taken by most of the historic left and self-identified secularist forces in Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere who have come to see the Islamists as their principal enemy and become appendages of the liberal parties. (Or, for some in the case of Syria, appendages to the ruling Baath party, which is much more secularist and economically liberal and even tolerant of a certain “left” than most regimes in the Middle East – again, the relationship between politics and economics is not so simple. Here we can also see the bankruptcy of “left” parties whose vision, at its most radical, is limited to an Assad-like regime.)

A Vicious Cycle of Mutual Reinforcement

The widely-held hope that the coup in Egypt will spell the decline of political Islam is wishful thinking. Exactly because it is the U.S. and other imperialists who dominate and oppress the world, to the degree that people can see no alternative but to take sides between the Islamists and the pro-Western forces, today’s situation in Egypt could ultimately strengthen Islamists everywhere.

Islamists love to point out the blatant hypocrisy and oppressiveness of the values and morality promoted by the Western imperialists. While the U.S. was preaching about human rights, it was supplying instruments of torture, instruction manuals, lists of questions to be asked and even victims to Mubarak and Assad, and backing every crime perpetuated by Israel. They have turned the earth into a hell for most of the planet’s inhabitants and threaten its very survival. They rave about saving Arab women from Arab men and at the same time promote the degradation of women in their own countries by reducing them to objects for men’s sexual gratification.¹⁷ These imperialists and the leading Arab liberal politicians who are their local representatives cannot provide a solution to the frustration and pain that characterizes daily life for most people, nor an alternative to the religious outlook that expresses hopelessness and submission.

The Islamists will have an advantage as long as they can falsely portray the conflict as one between the vast masses of the downtrodden and privileged apologists for Western domination, rather than as a clash between rival enemies of the interests of the vast majority of the people. The attempt to paint secularists as a minority worried mainly about their endangered privileges is aided by liberals who fear the lower classes and barely bother to address their basic needs.

Even if it were possible for Egypt and Tunisia, for instance, to become what the liberals promise, free of corruption or torture but as tightly linked to foreign capital and the international market as they have always been, with all the inevitably resulting impoverishment, backwardness and inequalities for the masses of people – how could that satisfy the demand for “bread, freedom and social justice”?

And what, in the real world, does bourgeois democracy look like? Witness South Africa, with one of the world’s most advanced bourgeois-democratic constitutions, guaranteeing not only political equality but the right of all citizens to housing, health care, sanitation, food and water, and education. This is a country where inequality has increased since the end of apartheid two decades ago, even as the size of the economy has almost tripled, where the black majority are still kept in misery and strikers are shot dead. Or India, the “world’s largest democracy,” where world-class call centers and factories sprout amid the garbage and raw sewage that the masses have to live in, where hi-tech industry brings wealth to some and nearly all have no reliable electricity, where medical technology is used to detect and destroy female fetuses, a country marked by extreme poverty, extreme corruption, the caste system, and religious and ethnic oppression.

Or look at the U.S. itself, for that matter, the richest bourgeois democracy of all, with a ruling class bloated by global predation and exploitation, where the stench of the remains of the slavery system permeates society, not to mention the crushing of lives and aspirations by the ordinary workings of the market.

Those who claim that what is needed in North Africa and the Middle East is more capitalist development fail to recognize, or admit, that capitalist development – which can only mean, in today’s world, a capitalist development subordinated to imperialist capital, an economy whose various parts are tied to the world market and not an articulated national economy – is what has brought these countries to where they are today. Economic growth rates in Egypt and Tunisia over the last decades have been higher than many other countries. Yet in these two countries, as in most of the region, persistent poverty and backwardness weigh heavily on the whole of society, producing a general sense of frustration and humiliation. To return to Avakian’s analysis, this is part

of the context in which Islamism has become a new major factor in today's world.

As for the liberals' claims in the political sphere, that they represent "freedom," again Islamists love to point out how the imperialist powers these liberals represent invade country after country and generally run much of the world. When the imperialists' chosen local representatives lose out in electoral maneuvering, suddenly they declare that majority rule, constitutional rights, etc., are no longer sacred to them – as in Egypt. Just like for the Islamists, for them elections and parliament are a means to an end to be adopted or discarded as needed – for the preservation of their system of exploitation and oppression. While it is necessary to wage ideological as well as political struggle against religious fundamentalism, it is equally necessary to oppose not only the liberals' economic program but also their ideology of bourgeois democracy, which is no less a poison than religion in the minds of the masses.

To go back to Avakian's discussion of the relationship between politics and economics, "Now, with regard to the question of freedom and democracy, and the rights of the people, a fundamental point is that when the relations of production are such that the masses of people are denied ownership of the means of production – and therefore are dependent, for their very life and livelihood, on a small group, or class, that monopolizes ownership of the means of production – there is, in the very essence of things, a situation in which these masses have been denied the fundamental ability, or 'right' if you will, to exercise essential control even over their own lives, let alone over society... And not only does this economic relationship – in which one class exercises the power of life and death over others – qualitatively limit, in many ways, the ability of those 'others' to take part in and to play any decisive role in determining the direction of society... but this economic relationship is, and can only be, reflected in the superstructure, in particular in the ways that political power is embodied and exercised to reinforce the exploitative economic relations."¹⁸

Even with real elections, parliamentary democracy is perfectly compatible with and often the best form for the dictatorship of the exploiting classes, as can be seen by looking at the social and political reality in countries all over the world where such elections take place. The formal equality of citizens before the law masks and gives full play to the enormous inequalities that characterize every country.

As Avakian put it: "In a world marked by profound class divisions and social inequality, to talk about 'democracy' – without talking about the class nature of that democracy and which class it serves – is meaningless, and worse. So long as society is divided into classes, there can be no 'democracy for all'; one class or another will rule, and it will uphold and promote that kind of democracy which serves its interests and goals. The question is: which class will rule and whether its rule, and its system of democracy, will serve the continuation, or the eventual abolition, of class divisions and the corresponding relations of exploitation, oppression and inequality."¹⁹

Furthermore, in the countries dominated by imperialism such as in North Africa and the Middle East, not only is parliamentary democracy (when practiced) a form of the dictatorship of the exploiting classes where the interests and deepest desires of the people do not bear any weight in basic decisions, as is also the case in the West, it would be doubly empty because local life is ultimately determined by the interests and decisions of the imperialist powers whose twin instruments of subjugation are their military and the global market. These factors, along with severe poverty and the persistence of pre-capitalist social and economic relations, make it difficult to implement the kind of parliamentary democracy the capitalists generally use to rule in the imperialist countries.

The lack of political rights, censorship and a servile press are general features of the democracy practiced in the countries oppressed by imperialism. There are reasons why governments in countries whose people are kept in despair by an imperialist-dependent ruling class make even more frequent recourse to vicious repression and torture, along with religion and the increasing Islamization of society (which Mubarak and Ben Ali also promoted, even while trying to keep a lid on the Islamist organizations).

In 1958, Habib Bourguiba, Tunisia's first president after independence, drank a glass of orange juice on TV during Ramadan in an effort to discourage what he considered the economic waste of the country all but grinding to a halt during the month of fasting. That would be inconceivable in any of the Arab countries today, where even Assad, the region's most secular leader, needs all the help he can get from religion. Such is the prevalence of despair and accompanying rise of religion throughout today's world.

When it comes to the imperialists (and their pet pro-Western local politicians) on the one hand, and the Islamists on the other, there is no acceptable choice. In fact, whatever happens, without the emergence of a communist-led revolutionary movement that could change today's political landscape in the Middle East, the people of

the region and beyond will suffer from both imperialist dictates and the yoke of religion, and the tensions and conflicts that stem from their interaction.

Why Egypt is the Way it is Today

Imperialism is not just a swear word or a set of policies. It means a system where monopolies and financial institutions control the economies and political structures in their home countries like the U.S. and the “West” in general, and all over the world. The economies – and the lives of people – of the dominated countries are subordinated to the accumulation of capital based in the imperialist countries. As explained in *America in Decline* by Raymond Lotta with Frank Shannon,²⁰ “This is not to say that imperialism simply holds down the oppressed countries, or that it just extracts wealth through unequal trade or naked plunder, although these certainly occur. Imperialist capital can, and in the long run must, develop the economy of these countries. But it must develop them on an imperialist basis – in particular, on a basis favorable to foreign capital – and in contradiction both to the welfare of the broad masses of those countries and to the development of a relatively articulated social formation. Even where capitalist relations have been extensively introduced into these countries, they are not on the road to independent capitalist development.” Among other distortions it produces, this kind of capitalist development dispossesses much of the peasantry and other traditional classes but cannot profitably employ them. The result is a “huge under- or permanently unemployed urban ‘fringe’ population and enormous wasted (unutilizable) labor in the countryside.”

These are the characteristics of many Arab countries. It is a chronic situation in Tunisia, which has long legally and “illegally” exported part of its rural population, to take one example, or, to take another, the acute, sudden crisis over the last few years due to Syria’s opening to the global market.

As Egypt became more fully integrated into global financial markets during the last several decades, some sections of the economy boomed, but life became even more painful for the majority. In the rural areas, the agricultural “counter-reform” designed to promote modern capitalist agriculture in a countryside characterized by very small landowners turned many *fellahin* into laborers and deliberately drove many more off the land completely. Consequently, cheap labor is so plentiful for the textile mills, clothing plants and other factories located in the Nile Delta that even capitalist China, with its own vast supply of impoverished workers and displaced peasants, has found it advantageous to set up export manufacture there.

Both agriculture and industry remain hobbled because Egypt’s insertion in the global imperialist system conditions and sets the limits for its development.²¹ The development that has occurred has often been more speculative or tied to services and consumption rather than basic production.

For instance, although favorable agricultural conditions provided the wealth for one of humanity’s earliest civilizations (some irrigated land can yield three crops a year), Egypt has become increasingly dependent on imports from the U.S., along with other countries, for basic foodstuffs like maize and wheat.²² Much of its agricultural resources are devoted to export crops. This began in the early 1800s, when producing cotton became Egypt’s assigned place in the “international economic division of labor” – a code word for capitalist and imperialist exploitation.

To take another example, Egypt imports refined petroleum products, even though it is a major oil and gas producer. While its pipelines have carried natural gas to Israel (at a very friendly price), many Egyptians have been forced to lug heavy and unsafe butane canisters up the stairs to cook for lack of local gas pipes and infrastructure. The butane is imported. So are diesel fuel and gasoline. Government price-fixing just means that these things are often unavailable through official channels and people have to spend time dealing with the black market.

The Suez Canal, built by the forced labor of peasants and later seized back from the British who stole it, is an important source of revenue and employment, especially for skilled workers, but it, too, is basically an export and contributes little to the country’s development.

As a consequence of all this, a large part of the population, in the cities and countryside, has been displaced from their traditional lives but not integrated into the formal economy. The persistence of this situation over more than half a century is proof that the problem is not development, but what kind of development.²³

Cairo is one of the world’s most sophisticated cities, but the lack of stable jobs, dependence on feudalistic, clan/tribal and other personal relationships of obligation in order to survive, the often improvised and precarious

living conditions of many of its inhabitants and even its unsustainable size are conditions very much related to the way that all-sided economic and social development is thwarted by the country's subordination to capital based in the imperialist countries. Vast numbers of people work as replacements for machines (in construction for instance, where a back is cheaper than a crane), or as doormen, guards, helpers and so on. This is a criminal waste of human potential.

At the same time, thanks to television and the Net, American and European living standards and life styles are very familiar to millions of youth who have little plumbing, limited access to schools and no hope of being admitted into that kind of modernity. This situation exists throughout much of the Arab world.

A striking example of the hollow character of the country's development, seen from the perspective of the interests of the people, is Egypt's medical system. Almost everyone is theoretically within a short distance of clinics and hospitals dispensing free treatment. But the bribes required to obtain health care are far beyond the reach of many people. Despite its modern medical facilities, Egypt has a high infant mortality rate, a signal of the real health situation. At the same time, while Egyptian medical schools churn out doctors, many of them go abroad, not only because of the money, but also because as individuals there is little they can do to change this situation. Large amounts of social resources and individual effort that go into the university education are wasted when the person ends up as a chauffeur in London or running a food truck in New York.

The uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere cannot be explained by economic deprivation alone, since that is not new. There is a general feeling throughout these societies that people's lives and the country have come to a dead end.²⁴ These are the conditions that set the stage for both the political crisis that brought down Ben Ali and Mubarak and the rise of Islamism.

Is There a Middle Way between Capitalism and Socialism?

There are some people who try to distance themselves from both the liberals and the Islamists, although they tend to fall into the liberal camp because they hope that a "democratic space" can allow gradual change. They put forward variations on the idea of a "transitional" political and economic structure where capitalism would function in a different way. They call for the state to intervene to force investors into compliance with national and social goals.

For instance, in a spring 2013 article featured on the World Social Forum Web site, Samir Amin outlines a series of concrete steps which, he argues, could avoid both the "crony capitalism" of Mubarak, in which a handful of people tied to the regime and especially Mubarak and his family could thrive (much like in Ben Ali's Tunisia and the Assad family in Syria), and the "liberal" (unrestricted free market) capitalism espoused both by the liberals and the Muslim Brotherhood. We want to examine his proposals not only because of Amin's influence but also because his points are specific, whereas the economic programs of the so-called leftists in the liberals' National Salvation Front, particularly the most prominent among them, the former presidential candidate Hamdeen Sabahi whom Amin supported, have been so deliberately vague. Amin's ideas crystallize the explicit or implicit program of most of the "left" in Egypt and Tunisia.

1) Put an end to "crony capitalism" by forcing those who were allowed to buy state property at bargain prices to pay for the real value of their holdings. (2) Raise the minimum wage and adopt a salary ceiling. (3) Set up a tripartite commission between the unions (including independent unions not currently recognized by law), the employers and the state to negotiate rights and benefits. (4) Suppression of state subsidies for monopoly corporations. (5) Higher taxes for large and foreign-owned businesses, lower taxes for small enterprises. (6) The allocation of the resulting budget surplus to health care and other public services. (7) The centralization of credit under a central bank. (8) For small farmers, improvement of agricultural methods, state credits for inputs, distribution cooperatives, the freezing of land rent and new laws making it more difficult to evict peasants from their land.²⁵

The enormity of the country's problems stands in sharp contrast to the paltriness of these proposed solutions. Let's examine just three of the fundamental flaws in this argument.

First, it exaggerates the difference between "crony capitalism" and "liberal" capitalism. In fact, Amin's first point, insisting that capitalists pay the "fair" value (which can only be the market value) for past and present acquisitions is exactly what free market theorists (liberals in the historical sense) advocate.

Capitalism, crony or otherwise, must seek the highest rate of profit. For instance, take agriculture, which Amin

admits is the thorniest problem on his list, one that many on the left avoid completely. It is more profitable to concentrate capital in relatively big farms producing a handful of export crops like cotton, import food and let the rest of agriculture stagnate, than to encourage all-around development and diversification.

Further, the resulting huge numbers of people deprived of viable land and desperate for other work is exactly the reason why there has been state and foreign investment in factory production, again, mainly cotton goods for export. What else would attract foreign capital to Egypt? As long as any economy is based on the capitalist principle of production for profit, it must submit to the dictates of the world market.

Second, this approach carries an implicit underlying assumption that the state is neutral and can be used against the capitalist ruling class, whereas in fact it represents that class. Anyone familiar with Egypt's power structure, for instance, would find it hard to deny that the armed forces and security organs are the state's core. This is not just because of the military's commanding role in the economy. The same applies in Tunisia, where the armed forces are much smaller and do not enjoy the same major economic role. The whole state apparatus, including the judiciary and bureaucracy from top to bottom, serves that class's interests. These organs have remained almost untouched despite Mubarak and Ben Ali's coerced resignations, continuing to enforce the economic and social system. Indeed the role of the state as the enforcer of the predominant ensemble of economic and social relations, in this case capitalism and imperialism, is a central tenet of Marxism, a scientific and materialist understanding and approach to society, which our "Marxist" theoreticians would be well advised to remember.

Third, this approach is also based on another, unstated but basic assumption: That genuine revolution is not possible in Egypt (or any other country, really), and that what is required is a long period of economic development to bring the requisite conditions into being. This assumption is disproved by the experience of Russia and China, which were far less economically developed at the time of their revolutions than Egypt today. We have already discussed the disarticulated development in the countries oppressed by imperialism and how, under these conditions, economic growth creates new problems instead of providing a solution – it is that growth that has brought Egypt and Tunisia to where they are today. Whether because of Amin's developmental theory, or because of his own understanding of the socialist experiences in the Soviet Union and China, the implicit starting point for this line of argument is that revolution and socialism are not an option.

There is another major problem with Amin's program, one that, to be fair, is shared by almost all of those who call themselves leftists or socialists in general: no mention of half of society, women. Both everyday life and the goals of political Islam have made women's status and treatment one of the sharpest immediate issues facing Egyptians, Tunisians and the Arab revolts as a whole. Yet most of the traditional left and secularists in these countries try to avoid the issue.

For instance, in Tunisia and Egypt, the supposed secularists allowed Islamists to use both legal means and violence to ban the film *Persepolis*, the story of a girl seeking to flourish as a person under the Islamic Republic of Iran. To take another very well known and telling example, in Tunisia, Amina Sboui, a high school student, posted a picture of herself topless on the Net, declaring "My body belongs to me and is not a source of honor for anyone." At that time she was associated with the European Femen group (women who bare their breasts to display slogans against religion and patriarchy) and was sentenced to four months in prison for writing the word Femen on a cemetery wall. As a Tunisian author put it, Amina Sboui did what no one else had been able to do since Ben Ali: unite the whole political spectrum and official society – against her.²⁶ Earlier, when a young Egyptian woman posted a nude picture of herself for similar reasons, the April 6 Youth Movement, the most prominent of the "revolutionary youth" organizations in bringing about Mubarak's ouster, not only denounced her behavior but said she couldn't possibly be a member of their organization because she was an atheist.²⁷

These would be mere anecdotes if they were not revealing of the implicit stance of the left and even many middle class people who want to live a secular lifestyle themselves while acknowledging the authority of religion to determine public life and the lives of others. This is not just a hypocrisy worse than piety; it is a symptom of an acceptance of the legitimacy of the rules of patriarchy, at the core of the rotten social relations and thinking that enslave the Arab world, where transgressive behavior by women really does defy the whole social and ideological order in a very immediate way, and the whole world order more generally.²⁸

A particularly grim example is this: Egypt is undergoing an epidemic of rape and public (and publicly tolerated) sexual abuse. The rival bands of brothers – the bearded Muslim preachers and the braided generals – have both explicitly justified, undeniably provided the climate for and perhaps organized the Tahrir Square rape of

women demonstrators.²⁹ This is a horrendous manifestation of what Avakian analyzes as the effects produced by the fundamental contradiction of capitalism in today's imperialist world, between socialized production and private appropriation. On the one hand, capitalist development breaks down old social relations and pulls women into public life, while on the other traditional values and privileges reassert themselves and are violently reinforced – not only in the Arab countries but globally.

To be sure, there are some differences between different kinds of societies. The Islamists seek to codify into law and intensify an already existing and worsening situation. But even at best, most of the “secular” forces who call for rights for women do not boldly challenge them on this, even if the legal equality of women happens to be a part of their program. This is especially striking because of the way that liberals in the West often use the medieval forms of oppression in the oppressed countries in order to promote Western imperialism's interests and political programs, while obfuscating the more modern forms of women's oppression.

Here there are two main points. One is that women are oppressed in every country worldwide. “While they may appear very different, the burkha enforced by fanatical Islamic fundamentalism, on the one hand, and the ‘thong,’ widely advertised and promoted as ‘sexy underwear’ for women, in ‘modern’ capitalist society, on the other hand, are both hideous symbols and embodiments of the degradation of women.”³⁰ The Islamists argue that a woman's body is like a piece of chocolate: isn't it better to keep it wrapped up, fresh and safe away from covetous eyes? The prevalent answer in the West is: chocolate sells better when it makes men drool – the display of women's bodies enhances their market value. Where – in what society on today's earth – can a woman be a person and not a piece of candy?

The second point is that to the degree that women do have more choices in the imperialist countries, and that some rights do exist – that it's “easier to be a woman” in London or New York than in Cairo or Delhi – this is not due to the supposed superiority of Western culture but to the fact that imperialist development – the accumulation of capital in the imperialist countries and the kind of development forced on the countries they oppress – is what makes this possible, although these rights are relative and right now violently contested.³¹

Despite widespread participation of women in the anti-regime struggles, nowhere amid these Arab revolts has the emancipation of women become the broad rallying cry it needs to be. The oppression of women is decisively intertwined with radical challenges to the whole system of social relations. A movement with the emancipation of women as a core part of its identity could actually confront both “outmodeds,” including in areas and among social strata that are now Islamic fundamentalist strongholds, bring forward a force of women and men and begin to transform the political landscape. An approach exemplified by the slogan “Unleash the fury of women as a mighty force for revolution” could help bust through the stranglehold of the “two outmodeds” on politics and too many people's thinking.

PART TWO

What Would a Real Revolution Look Like?

As we discussed above, the causes for the Arab Spring are deep and multiple, and they have fueled sharply contradictory movements, currents of thinking and complex contradictions. But underneath all of this is a basic reality that the people of these countries find the organization of society extremely unjust, that their countries are trapped in backwardness and dictated to by reactionary cliques at home and neocolonial foreign powers, and that the existing conditions of life are intolerable. Hundreds of thousands and even millions have shown they are willing to struggle and sacrifice to end this state of affairs. But this wellspring of desire for revolutionary change will be ultimately hemmed in or even perverted unless it becomes linked to a true understanding of why these societies are the way they are and, most importantly, what can be done to transform them in a truly liberating way.

In this sense, while the upsurge of struggle has been a long-overdue and welcome factor in the world, the basic situation of the people in the Middle East and North Africa and their need for a wholly different society is hardly unique to this section of the globe. Everywhere the question is whether it is possible for the oppressed people to rise up against the existing social conditions and defeat the exploiters who alone benefit from these conditions and the governments and armies backing them up. And whether on the basis of defeating these enemies it is possible to build a really liberatory society that will not only meet the material needs of the people but be able to open a whole new horizon in human history. In fact, there has been a whole century of struggle in which people have fought to bring about this revolution, the communist revolution.

We cannot review the whole history of this revolution here.³² There were tremendous achievements, especially the new states representing the rule of the masses of people that came out of the revolutions in Russia and China, a whole different type of economy not based on exploitation, and huge steps forward in changing the way people relate to each other. This process was full of fury and drama and had pinnacles of success as well as low and even tragic moments in the course of its overall positive history. It should not be surprising that the rulers of the contemporary world, the capitalist-imperialist ruling class and other exploiters and reactionaries associated with them, would consider this experience a “horror” for humanity and do their best to slander it and distort and cover over the real history. This is why Avakian’s summation of the experience of the first stage of communist revolution is of such crucial importance to the oppressed people and everyone who is looking for a way forward to a completely different kind of society. This new synthesis is based on the real experience of the great and overwhelmingly positive efforts of making revolution in the 20th century, while also taking into account the serious shortcomings and real criticism of these efforts and incorporating further understanding from other spheres of human endeavor such as science, culture and intellectual pursuits. The result is a new synthesis of communism that puts the proletarian revolution on a more scientific basis, making this revolution both more realizable and more desirable.

The most important thing about socialism is that along with the profound improvements in the life of the people, it is a transition toward a whole new epoch in human history:

“Communism [is] a world where people work and struggle for the common good.... Where everyone contributes whatever they can to society and gets back what they need to live a life worthy of human beings... Where there are no more divisions among people in which some rule over and oppress others, robbing them not only of the means to a decent life but also of knowledge and a means for really understanding, and acting to change, the world.”³³

The opponents of revolution have tried to make everyone believe that the communist goal is worse than an impossible dream. They argue that attempting to move society in that direction can only result in tyranny and begin to stomp out all individuality. But a thorough study of the actual history of revolution has shown that this is a lie. It has been possible to build socialist societies that not only increasingly met the basic needs of the people but also began to change the way people looked at each other. Instead of the capitalist watchword of “Me first,” the slogan “Serve the People” became the standard which inspired millions, as we saw in revolutionary China. There is no “unchangeable human nature” but rather the possibility for humanity to transform conditions and to transform itself. Avakian’s new synthesis of communism shows how we can do even better in the next stage of making proletarian revolution by learning from and avoiding errors and shortcomings that marked the experiences of the first socialist states.

To take one crucial sphere, Avakian’s new synthesis involves a different conception of the importance of not only allowing but encouraging dissent and intellectual ferment in the socialist society, a rejection of the idea of an “official ideology” to be imposed on the whole society, and a recognition of the importance of the struggle for truth, which, in many ways, is a different approach toward the step-by-step elimination of classes and the differences between mental and manual labor on which classes are based.

The revolution must have at its core and driving force that section of the population, the proletariat and other oppressed, who are the victims of exploitation and reaction and who are most burning for revolutionary change. But this revolution must not be about revenge, or simply replacing the power of the former exploiters with the power of those who suffered. It is about leading society through a whole complex historical world process until the communist goal can be achieved.

Today we are in a situation where the past efforts of proletarian revolution have been defeated but the need for revolution is greater than ever and the underlying forces pushing people toward revolution continue to operate. But for the possibility and desire for revolution to lead to successful revolution, there must also be a revolution in theory, in ideology, through which there emerges a dynamic core of revolutionary communists determined and capable of leading the masses in seizing power and embarking on the long process of transforming society. This is the importance of what Avakian has been doing, and this is why it can in a certain sense be compared to Marx’s theoretical breakthroughs that laid the basis for the successful revolutionary battles and the formation of socialist states in the 20th century. Learning this science as it has developed today, taking a firm hold of it, and wielding it to examine and answer the problems of how to make revolution, is the task for those everywhere who want to fight for a new world.

The new synthesis of communism provides the basic approach, a scaffolding, for addressing the problems of

society in the Arab countries and working out the plan for their solution through revolution.

In broad strokes it is possible to see two major and closely related features of revolutionary transformation that need to be at the center of any genuine revolutionary program. First, there is the whole spiderweb of connections to the world imperialist system that keeps these societies economically, militarily, politically and culturally entrapped and dependent. A real revolution cannot just try to tinker with these chains, or even worse, try to figure out how to somehow “use” this or that connection to the imperialist world system as some kind of leverage or advantage. The modern imperialist-centered petroleum industry, to take one clear example involving a number of countries in the region, is a major chain on the people and the whole society and most definitely not a potential vehicle for “national liberation.”³⁴ After all, is oil-rich Algeria any closer to breaking free of French domination, not to mention a reversal of the status and conditions of the masses of people, than it was a few decades ago? The same goes for Tunisian programs that propose stepping up the export of potash and other minerals, setting up more dead-end call centers, exporting more cash crops, developing the demeaning, mind-dulling and polluting tourism “industry,” or any other way of looting a country’s resources and the people’s abilities and talents for the sake of fattening foreign capital, consequently worsening the horrendous inequalities that already enslave humanity.

The other immediate objective of the revolution is to unleash a whole process of social transformation which will begin to sweep away the reactionary, patriarchal and backward social relations that continue to downpress the masses of people and the whole society. These two tasks can only be achieved together, because social transformation is impossible without national liberation and only the thorough transformation of these societies can really free them from their foreign yoke. Regardless of the stages that might be involved, this means taking the path to socialist revolution.

“First, socialism is a new form of political power in which the formerly oppressed and exploited, in alliance with the middle classes and professionals and the great majority of society, rule over society with the leadership of a visionary, vanguard party. This new form of state power keeps old and new exploiters in check. It makes possible a democracy that a) unleashes the creativity and initiative of people in all kinds of directions and b) gives the masses of people the right and ability to change the world and to engage in meaningful decision-making, that promotes the most far-reaching debate, and that protects the rights of the individual. This new socialist state... is a launching pad for revolution elsewhere in the world.

“Second, socialism is a new economic system where the resources and productive capacities of society are socially owned through the coordination of the socialist state, where production is consciously organized and planned to meet social need and to overcome the inequalities of capitalist class society...

“Third, socialism is a *historical period of transition*, between capitalism and communism, a period of revolutionary struggle and experimentation to transform all the economic structures, all the social institutions and arrangements, and all the ideas and values that perpetuate the division of society into classes.”³⁵

This kind of state and this revolution are not about “nationalizing” the dependent, distorted and disarticulated economy that presently exists and not about finding “our place” in the global division of labor. Seizing all of the capital and assets belonging to the foreign imperialists is a giant and necessary step that must be taken for a revolution to take place. But it is only that, a step, and it will be a big challenge, no doubt, to build a new and viable economy that is stepping outside the world imperialist system. Yet without aiming for that the game is lost in advance.

There are great resources in the Arab countries that in a different socio-economic system can play a different, positive and dynamic role. The agriculture that is failing to feed the people under conditions of imperialist domination can not only do that, but also provide a basis for a different type of national economy.

The key problem is not “underdevelopment” but the way that production for profit rather than human needs and the supremacy of the world market have guided development in some areas of the economy and dictated stagnation and abandonment in others. This has led to an irrational and soul-destroying accentuation of pre-existing regional equalities – for instance, between Upper and Lower Egypt, the Nile Valley and Cairo versus governates like Faiyum, and in Tunisia, the extreme differences between the coastal areas and the interior.³⁷

As exciting and sophisticated as Cairo is, the city’s size alone – not to mention its chaotic, unplanned, misery-producing and, literally as well as figuratively, choking form of development – reflects the oppression and enforced backwardness that afflicts so much of the rest of the country, from which youth could only seek to flee. This is only an extreme example of the situation in many Arab countries. These disparities are to a large

extent the product of these countries' subjugation to whatever happens to be profitable for imperialist capital and the market. They are unsustainable in human as well as ecological terms.

A real revolution will make it possible to mobilize the people from these backward regions and to build a new economy where there is a dynamic relationship between overall state planning on a national level, which must have as one of its aims the overcoming of regional inequalities and economic imbalances, and the building up of initiative and self-reliance at the local and regional levels as well. It would take agriculture as the key to breaking with the world market and enabling all-around socialist development, with the emphasis on feeding people. There has to be a commitment and planning, including new forms of collaboration and innovation among different sections of the people – from experts to common people – so as to put an end to today's situation where the more a country like Egypt or Tunisia develops its agriculture, the less able it is to feed its people. These two countries once produced food in abundance. Today they have to import food because water, land and rural people have been assigned to production for the world market. They export cotton, wheat and out-of-season fruit and vegetables while millions of people eat bread made with half-rotten grain and not much else, and those who cannot produce profit for the world market do not get to work at all. This is not so much an economy as a prison, where what determines the lives of the inmates is the need to export and in other ways acquire foreign currency to pay for things that could have been produced locally in the first place, to the benefit of the people and the planet.

Egypt has had the good fortune to have the Nile River, with its seemingly inexhaustible flowing waters. Not every country has similar resources, but we could consider this situation as a negative example of how the profit system turns advantages into their opposite: How much water farmers get is determined by capital and power relations that crush them and prevent their land from being fully productive. Irrigation as now practiced can be a source of wealth but also brings about the destruction of the soil (through the accumulation of salt, for example). Millions who spend their days knee-deep in water suffer from horrible water-borne diseases that revolutionary China eradicated a half century ago. Their children die because they can't get water fit to drink. There is little economic incentive to stop the vast leaking of irrigation canals and other forms of wasting water; much of this water is effectively "exported" because it is used to farm water-intensive exports like flowers. Finally, the development of irrigated agriculture in Egypt has come at the expense of potential agricultural development in the other countries along the Nile and its sources, and thus is a continuation of the oppressive relations colonialism imposed over the region.

In light of all this, even one of Nasser's proudest achievements, the building of the Aswan High Dam, has to be seen as problematic,³⁷ an example of the path that a socialist Egypt would not take. Nasser sought to make the Nile and its fertile land a source of wealth equivalent to oil in countries like Algeria. In a paradoxical way this has come true: dictated by the laws of capitalism, like Algeria's oil, the way the Nile valley has been handled has led to a crippling economic dependence, a greater polarization of wealth and unbearable lives for the vast majority.

A radically different and environmentally sustainable economy needs to be built which will: 1) Not be based on exploitation and provide the material conditions for advancing toward classless society. 2) Meet the needs of the people, help overcome the regional imbalances, the conflicts between industry and agriculture, stand up to imperialism and be self-reliant. 3) Serve as a model and a practical base for further revolutionary advances in the region and in the world as a whole. The whole idea of what constitutes "development" will take on a radically new and different meaning when "progress" is no longer judged in accordance with the criteria of the world imperialist system and the rules set by its institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. In this kind of a revolutionary society state ownership and state planning become central tools for fulfilling revolutionary goals and social transformation.

This would mean rethinking urban development and the relationship between the countryside and big cities in light of what is most needed, from the point of view of rational, long-term and integrated development in human terms and in terms of the environment, and not just what is most profitable.

The State

In most of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, the state can best be described as neo-colonial. The whole state, not only the government but the military and security forces and the administrative bureaucracy, has been directly and indirectly created, shaped and tutored by the world imperialist system and powers such

as France, Britain and, of course, the U.S. These states are completely beholden to and serve the domestic and foreign ruling classes. They enforce the dominant property relations to guarantee the “most favorable investment climate” for international and local exploiters. It is the state that must carry out imperialist-ordered programs such as IMF austerity and it is the state that is ready to use brutal violence to suppress the people. The reactionary state can never be decisively severed from the imperialist body to which it is joined. The experience of the past decades in the Arab countries as well as the world as a whole, from Nasser to Muammar Qaddafi to Hafez Assad, has shown again that a state apparatus organized to protect an exploitative system cannot be the vehicle for thorough revolutionary transformation.

Because the state is both the concentration of the socio-economic system and its main pillar, the destruction of the capitalist state must be the goal of any real revolution. In the place of such a reactionary state a completely different kind of state must be created, from top to bottom, in which the formerly exploited led by a genuine communist vanguard can unite around itself the great majority of the population. Such a state can only be a form of the *dictatorship of the proletariat* appropriate to a given country.

Once a revolutionary state based on the formerly exploited and oppressed has been established, whole new vistas can be opened up for social transformation, which will both *require and make possible* a state – and a society – which are vigorously resisting and opposing the current imperialist-dominated world order. For example, once the power and ownership of the landed elites and the stranglehold of the profit system over inputs and distribution have been broken by revolution, self-sufficiency in agriculture can be achieved rapidly by relying on the masses of people and the country will be in a much better position to resist food blackmail and other forms of pressure.

The so-called “models” that some are promoting – such as the Venezuelan regime under Hugo Chavez and his successor Nicolas Maduro – are all different variations of leaving the old state fundamentally intact and hoping to find a means of accommodation with world imperialism, for example through the sale of oil in the case of Venezuela and Ecuador. The results are that these societies are not fundamentally transformed and remain susceptible to all sorts of pressures. These two great tasks of the revolution – rupturing with the existing network of the oppression of nations by imperialism and unleashing a process of social transformation – are inextricably linked together.

Many will object that what we are arguing is an impossible dream. It is a difficult, very difficult path, that will require tremendous struggle and sacrifice and ultimately require the victory of the proletarian revolution on a global scale. But the truth is *there is no other path to genuine social emancipation and the end of the oppression and inequalities of nations*. What is really impossible, and what has been shown again and again to be so, are the wishes and schemes of those who argue that there is some path forward without shattering the existing reactionary set-up.

Women as a Driving Force for Revolution

The question of the role of women in today’s society, and a vision and program for how this should change, is at the very center of the questions that have been posed by the emergence of the Arab Spring and at the very heart of what kind of revolution is needed and what kind of society is desirable and possible.

The woman question has emerged as perhaps the sharpest fault line in the Arab countries. The fact that the subjugation of women is so thoroughly built into the reactionary and oppressive structures and the whole system of exploitation makes the fight against the oppression of women a driving force that must be at the center of any real revolutionary change. Here we can see not only why real revolution is so necessary but how profoundly revolution can transform society even in its initial stages, and how the fight for the complete emancipation of women will also be crucial for advancing the revolution as well.

Once the old state and its apparatus of repression has been dismantled and new organs of revolutionary power established, many of the most egregious crimes against women can be very rapidly stopped cold. For example, mass mobilization of women and men backed up by the authority of the state can very quickly end the scourge of female genital mutilation, the rape epidemic, and wide-scale prostitution. The brave and vital initiatives taken by women’s groups and others to protect women in Tahrir Square during demonstrations and more generally in downtown Cairo have revealed a felt demand for such actions and provide valuable experience with how they can be carried out in a way that unites even some initially backward people against anti-woman violence. But these actions also demonstrate the limited effect – like scooping water out of a leaking

boat – if such efforts are not part of building an overall revolutionary movement aiming to set up a new and liberating state power that can dig up the social and ideological foundations underlying this criminal behavior, transforming society and the people.

With a revolutionary state complete legal equality regarding marriage, divorce, property and inheritance rights – never achieved under Bourguiba or Mubarak, despite their undeserved reputations to the contrary – can be quickly achieved and enforced. Full access to birth control and abortion must be guaranteed to all in fact as well as in law. In revolutionary China, for example, prostitution was basically eradicated within a few years of victory and the stigma lifted from the women who had been driven by poverty and reactionary social relations into this practice, and they were provided meaningful ways to take part in building the new society. Carrying this out means mobilizing people to challenge the reactionary ideas and value systems that have kept women down. It will involve a revolution in culture and thinking as well.

These kinds of changes alone could propel countries of the Middle East and North Africa far ahead of the situation of women in the most “advanced” imperialist countries. But far more importantly is how the long term fight to overcome the millennial oppression of women can be a central and driving factor in the struggle for humanity to get beyond oppression, exploitation and classes once and for all. It will be a real struggle to transform the family and ensure that marriage is based on love and mutual respect. The traditional family is currently a bastion of patriarchy and backwardness, and this needs to be subjected to criticism and radically transformed. Conventional gender roles and the conception of what it means to be a man or a woman will be a battleground in the culture and among the oppressed themselves. These struggles and debates among the people and social experimentation are not only necessary to keep the revolution from being dragged backward – even more importantly, they must be part of the motor driving it forward.

The fight over the role of women in society will concentrate and characterize the future socialist society as a revolutionary transition to a wholly different society.

Neither the imperialists nor the Islamic fundamentalists can offer the millions of women a real way out. But the revolution does, which is why rebel women, especially the youth, can be drawn to a liberating vision and program of revolutionary communism.

Mobilizing the Positive Forces

Each country will have its own situation and needs, but everywhere revolution faces the same sort of problems. Everywhere you look in today’s world, there is enormous and terrible waste – people whose abilities are thwarted and beaten down; a whole gender held back; land and other resources misused; and technology that cannot fully play its role as a positive factor unless it is used according to socialist principles and not for the accumulation of capital.

The potential for transforming society in the Arab countries comes from within them – the most important resource for producing and further revolutionizing these societies is the millions of exploited and downtrodden themselves. This is a vast force for revolution, for change, for working collectively in the interests of the whole society, but it is a force that is stifled, held back, and stunted by imperialism and reaction, or to put it another way, by the “two outmodeds.” We could see the glimmer of this potential power in the upsurges that swept away Ben Ali and Mubarak. But when political power is actually in the hands of the people led by a genuine vanguard revolutionary party, then this transformative potential can really be unlocked.

The desperation of unemployed and underemployed youth was a central factor fueling the Arab Spring. Hopelessness can be transformed into hope, and the formerly frustrated youth can enjoy the immense satisfaction that comes with laboring and struggling in common for the benefit of all society. But this requires a completely different type of socio-economic system.

And it is not only those who are now on the bottom of society who have a crucial role to play in building up a wholly different, liberating society. Today there are a great many young women and men who have been educated in the arts and sciences who find insufficient productive outlets for their energies and creativity. A revolutionary society can do far more than just provide employment for the educated youth who are now driven abroad in search of a livelihood, often wasting their talents and training. Building a revolutionary socialist society will require more than just skill sets and technical education. The long-term goal of reaching the classless society of communism means breaking down the terrible divide between mental and manual

work, so that the people as a whole will acquire the great fruits of the common culture of humanity, learn the scientific method of understanding both the physical world and society in order to transform them, and be full of wonder at the world, not out of superstitious belief and the fog of ignorance but because of the challenge and excitement of being part of society's ever-expanding knowledge of the actual world in all of its complexity and grandeur.

The intellectuals and educated youth will have a vital role to play in this process and will also find personal fulfillment and an outlet for their individuality and creativity, which is smothered in today's society. And it will be done not by reinforcing a privileged status for a relative few but as part of taking the whole of society forward to a far-better place.

Dissent

One of the features that the people find intolerable and played such a central role in the demands of the Arab Spring has been the lack of rights and any meaningful participation in political life. This is not mainly a question of elections, whether "sham" or "real," which have never been the vehicle for effecting fundamental change. One of the things that electrified the world was that Avenue Bourguiba and Tahrir Square were not only focal points of resistance, but also "free zones" full of debate over the direction of the movement and society as a whole. All sorts of people, women as well as men, including people brought up to keep silent in the face of the educated classes, spoke up to debate and criticize anything and anyone felt to be standing in the way.

Under the reactionary rule this kind of activity was met with police charges, thugs on camel-back, television blackouts and secret informers. In the socialist society of the future this kind of ferment will not only be "tolerated," it must be welcomed and fostered by the leaders of the society and its revolutionary institutions. Protest and mass upheaval, a spirit of daring to think, to re-evaluate, to criticize, will exist on a scale rarely seen and involve the masses of people normally locked out of intellectual and political life as well as the intellectuals who will continue to have a crucial role to play in the conditions of the new society.

The state power will protect the rights of the people to carry out these kinds of struggles. Opposition to socialism can be expressed as long as these opponents do not try to actually overthrow the system by illegal means. Avakian's vision of socialism is one where controversy, dissent, struggle over right and wrong, and mass debate are woven into the fabric of the society, not the exception. Resources (publications, Web sites, television stations, meeting halls and so forth) must be made available so that these rights are real and meaningful, unlike in bourgeois democracy where money, connections and ownership empties "free speech" of most of its meaning.

This orientation is not a pious wish to be cast aside at the first difficulty. In the future socialist societies there will certainly be vicious enemies at home and abroad that will do everything to bring back the reactionary system, but all too often the real existence of such enemies and the need to combat them has been seen as a reason to resort to heavy-handed methods rather than to rely on and bring forward the masses of people.

The new socialist societies of the 21st century must be marked by an unprecedented expansion of individual rights throughout the population. The state itself will be qualitatively different from existing states today in that the socialist state will be a result of the revolution of the masses. But this will not change the fact that there will still be contradictions between the socialist state and the people as long as it is still necessary to have any state at all. The democracy that will flourish and the guarantee of individual rights will be part of the struggle to keep the social transformation moving forward and will create more favorable conditions for the advance of the revolution.

Take, for example, the important question of the fight for a scientific world outlook and opposition to religious outlooks that haunt the thinking of the masses. In basically all of the Arab countries, whether by law or just the weight of family and tradition, the media and sometimes thugs, people are not encouraged to explore and debate alternative outlooks, and those who don't believe are often cowed into silence. There must be a strict separation between religion and the state. The educational system must treat religion according to the same scientific standard used to examine all other social phenomena.

A radically different socialist society will handle the discussion over religion much differently. We know that for a long time many people will reject the scientific world view of communism and cling to religion. Freedom of religion will be respected and no one will be pressured to pretend to be something they are not. On the other

hand, the communists will not back away from the struggle over religion and world outlook more generally, because it will be impossible to achieve a communist society until people look at the world as it actually is and on that basis transform it. This struggle in the sphere of thinking between believers and revolutionary communists can be a real and exciting school where millions can participate, learn and transform.

What's Missing: Revolutionary Communists

The central element missing in the Arab countries today is an organized core of revolutionary communists. This has nothing to do with the fossilized “left” parties or other tendencies that have, in their own way, whether young or old in their membership, become institutions of the old society. It is not even about making a radical critique of the society. It is about the emergence of a force in society that firmly grasps the need to lead the masses in an actual revolutionary overthrow of the existing state(s) and has the determination and scientific understanding necessary to build the type of radically different society we have been discussing.

The possibility of real change can be glimpsed and then lost sight of. People’s activism, initiative and courage are related to whether or not they believe that their sacrifices may lead to results that are worth it. When the ruling classes can no longer rule in the old way because they are divided and in disarray and their power structure has lost its legitimacy, this crisis is not automatically resolved in the interests of the people and the new order can be as bad or worse.

This is the kind of situation Avakian addresses in his message to the Egyptian people after the fall of Mubarak. “In Russia, in February 1917, another brutal despot, the Czar (absolute monarch), was overthrown by the uprising of the people. Here again, the U.S., British, and other imperialists, and the Russian capitalists, tried to continue the oppression of the Russian people in a new form, using the mechanisms of ‘democratic rule’ and elections which, while allowing for some broader participation of different parties, would still be totally controlled by the exploiters of the people and would ensure their continuing rule, and the continued suffering of the masses of people. In this case, however, the masses of people were enabled to see through these maneuvers and manipulations, to carry forward their revolutionary rising, through many different twists and turns and, in October 1917, to sweep aside and dismantle the institutions and mechanisms of bourgeois dictatorship and to establish a new political and economic system, **socialism**, which for several decades continued to advance in the direction of abolishing relations of exploitation and oppression, as part of the struggle throughout the world toward the final goal of communism. **The crucial difference was that, in the uprisings in Russia, there was a core of leadership, communist leadership, that had a clear, scientifically grounded, understanding of the nature of not just this or that ruthless despot but of the whole oppressive system – and of the need to continue the revolutionary struggle not just to force a particular ruler from office but to abolish that whole system and replace it with one that would really embody and give life to the freedom and the most fundamental interests of the people, in striving to abolish all oppression and exploitation.**

“Even though the revolution in Russia was ultimately reversed, with capitalism restored there in the 1950s, and today Russia no longer seeks to disguise the fact that it is a capitalist-imperialist power, the lessons of the Russian Revolution of 1917 hold valuable, indeed decisive lessons for today. And the most decisive lesson is this: When people in their masses, in their millions, finally break free of the constraints that have kept them from rising up against their oppressors and tormentors, then whether or not their heroic struggle and sacrifice will really lead to a fundamental change, moving toward the abolition of all exploitation and oppression, **depends on whether or not there is a leadership**, communist leadership, that has the necessary scientific understanding and method, and on that basis can develop the necessary strategic approach and the influence and organized ties among growing numbers of the people, in order to lead the uprising of the people, through all the twists and turns, to the goal of a real, revolutionary transformation of society, in accordance with the fundamental interests of the people. And, in turn, when people massively break with the ‘normal routine’ and the tightly woven chains of oppressive relations in which they are usually entrapped and by which they are heavily weighed down – when they break through and rise up in their millions – that is a crucial time for communist organization to further develop its ties with those masses, strengthening its ranks and its ability to lead.

“Or, if such communist organization does not yet exist, or exists only in isolated fragments, this is a crucial time for communist organization to be forged and developed, to take up the challenge of studying and applying communist theory, in a living way, in the midst of this tumultuous situation, and to strive to continually develop ties with, to influence and to ultimately lead growing numbers of the masses in the direction of the revolution

that represents their fundamental and highest interests, the communist revolution.

... To all who truly want to see the heroic struggle of the oppressed masses develop, with the necessary leadership, in the direction of real revolutionary transformation of society and genuine liberation: engage with and take up the emancipating viewpoint and goals of communism, and the challenge of giving this organized expression and a growing influence and presence among the struggling masses.”³⁸

What Will Come Out of the Arab Revolts?

The last few years have provided rich lessons, positive and negative, about the powerful impact a relatively small minority can play in relation to the rest of society. When generally aligned with the basic interests of the people, the persistence of youth and others was a mood-creating factor throughout Egyptian and Tunisian society. If they had waited for the masses in general, or for the majority, to consciously decide on the need, possibility, modality and timing of social change, Mubarak and Ben Ali would still be sitting in their palaces and most people would still be thinking there was no alternative. But this period has also provided grievous lessons.

A revolutionary crisis cannot become a real possibility of making revolution without the work of a revolutionary party and the emergence of a revolutionary communist movement among the masses – a movement guided by communism as a science and as a goal, one that even if small seeks every opportunity to have a major impact on all of society and build strength so that when conditions are ripe it can win power. Events in 2013 have brought out the urgency for such a movement: the period of turmoil opened up by the Arab Spring will ultimately be resolved, and without the emergence of a different leadership and direction, without revolutionary communist leadership, there will be a reactionary resolution, as we see taking shape and being tested in different forms today.

The history of the 1979 revolution against the Shah of Iran and its aftermath is very relevant now. Comrades from Iran who went through this experience of a revolution that was hijacked, perverted and defeated have summed up these bitter lessons. Egyptians, Tunisians and others who have illusions about Islamist forces, as well as those who are willing to put themselves in the hands of the pro-imperialist militaries to prevent the afflictions suffered by the Iranian people since then, should take heed.³⁹

But if a revolutionary movement were to arise with sufficient force to begin to break the hammerlock of the “two outmodeds,” and even more if there were a revolution in any country, this would produce a real and much-needed change in today’s difficult regional and world situation. It could help advances in making revolution in other countries that could in turn reverberate back onto the situation where the breakthrough first occurred. After all, if what started in Sidi Bouzid, an isolated town in a small country, could sweep across the region and impact people around the world, think of what could happen if something truly revolutionary emerged, a movement fighting for a way out in opposition to the horrors most people now think are the only possibilities.

There is the argument that if liberals, reformists and revisionist “communists” cannot get a hearing in society there is no way that revolutionary communism could connect with masses. But trying to have a capitalism without vicious exploitation and oppression of nations or a “humanist” Islamic rule without the oppression of women – these are the solutions that are unrealizable and the sooner a section of potential leaders and activists are won to understand and act on this reality the better. Trying to avoid controversy will not fool people or appease their religious prejudices, and will only guarantee that much of their thinking, shaped by the prevailing economic and social relationships, will always remain in contradiction to their deepest aspirations and fundamental interests.

The great advantage is that a fundamental framework exists in the world, the new synthesis of revolutionary communism developed by Avakian, which can enable revolutionaries in every country to see, in a basic way, the kind of revolutionary transformation that the world needs and that is possible. Anyone who wants to fight for the liberation of the masses must engage with the most advanced scientific understanding that has come forward. Because the revolutionary communist outlook, method and analysis corresponds to reality, it can provide answers to the problems that have impelled people into motion.

The revolutionary communist current must establish itself and take root among a growing number of people, from the bottom and throughout society, who take up this cause and play the conscious, active role in changing the world that no other outlook and movement can offer them. If so many people have been willing to sacrifice

their lives without a clear vision of what sacrifice could bring about, imagine what could happen if a scientific vision of a possible new and liberating society were to motivate a growing number of people and become a force in the struggles around all of the problems and issues facing everyone in society that, in the wake of the Arab upsurge, millions are discussing and debating.

The intensification of history that is a hallmark of profound societal crises can rapidly bring millions of people to a basic understanding of what needs to be done. But this can happen if and only if a political force emerges that can fight to shed a true, that is, scientific light on the nature of the problem and its revolutionary solution, raising peoples' sights to a vision of a different world, one that is viable and desirable, and pointing to how to get there. Under conditions as they now exist in the Arab countries, even small groups of people with a revolutionary communist understanding could begin to move people very broadly. Handfuls today can become thousands leading millions.

This makes the task of engaging with and grasping the new synthesis of communism a crucial and urgent task, especially in the cauldron of revolutionary aspirations and intensified dangers that is the Middle East and North Africa. ■

Footnotes

(All website references listed in the footnotes have been retrieved as of January 6, 2014)

1 The Egyptian army has enjoyed a certain prestige among the people because of its historical role. The 1952 military coup overthrew the British-dominated monarchy and in the following years under Gamal al-Nasser stripped the pro-British feudals of much of their land and power. But Nasser always relied on foreign capital and military protection from one or the other great power amid a changing and complex world situation, marked by intense rivalry between the weakened British and French imperialists on the one hand and the immensely strengthened U.S. imperialism on the other, and the emergence of the USSR as an imperialist power following the restoration of capitalism there in the form of "socialist" state capitalism. Nasser's successor, General Anwar Sadat, was more successful than Nasser in dealing the Zionist invaders a setback, in 1973, but the Egyptian military used that as the occasion to negotiate its surrender to Zionist demands and U.S. tutelage. This process culminated in the 1979 peace accords with Israel that included the formal relinquishing of major aspects of Egyptian sovereignty over the Sinai Peninsula and the Canal and initiated a de facto alliance with Israel against the Palestinian movement. It would be only a slight exaggeration to say that "Israel and the Egyptian army are one hand". When the generals led by Abdul-Fattah Al-Sisi stepped back in to rule directly on July 3, 2013, the Israeli ambassador to Egypt said, "Al-Sisi is not a national hero for Egypt, but for all Jews in Israel..." (Cited by Ray Bush in the editorial of the August 2013 "virtual issue" of the *Review of African Political Economy*, <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/spissue/crea-si.pdf>).

2 Starting in the late Mubarak years and through the 2012 election of Morsi, the Revolutionary Socialists argued that the Brotherhood should be supported ("Sometimes with the Brotherhood, never with the state"), an analysis that reduced the state to Mubarak and the generals most closely identified with him. Then, after the military coup, they complained, "Mohamed Morsi and the Brotherhood betrayed the revolution. They did not implement even one of the demands of the revolution for social justice, freedom, human dignity or retribution for the martyrs of the revolution." (Sameh Naguib, "Egypt: Four days that shook the world," July 3, 2013, <http://socialistworker.co.uk/art/33815/Egypt%3A+Four+days+that+shook+the+world>). *International Socialist Review* editor Ahmed Shawki hailed the army takeover as "an acknowledgement of the fact that the popular will of Egypt will not tolerate the Morsi government anymore." (Ahmed Shawki, "All of Egypt is Tahrir," July 5, 2013, <http://socialistworker.org/2013/07/05/all-of-egypt-is-tahrir>)

Then switching sides again, long after leading liberals and many others who demonstrated for Morsi's removal began to distance themselves from the military's massacre of Muslim Brotherhood supporters, they finally denounced "military rule," while also awakening to the fact that the Brotherhood was "sectarian" (condemning the Islamist-led burning of Christian churches in the wake of the coup). Yet they continued to maintain that Morsi's removal was the result of the "revolutionary wave of June 30" – which cleared the path for the coup. ("The military's reign of terror in Cairo," August 14, 2013, <http://socialistworker.org/2013/08/15/the-militarys-reign-of-terror>) In short, if the RS's political positions have been inconsistent, it has consistently endeavored to ride on the shifting political tides and justify these switchbacks as "Marxist" (in reality, Trotskyist) political tactics.

Meanwhile, in a more sober mood not long after the initial intoxication with the "success" of the pro-coup demonstrations, Naguib concluded that because the rulers of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates backed Morsi's ouster and are promising to bankroll the new Egyptian government, revolution will not be possible in Egypt until the fall of these regimes. This probably means never, since conditions for Egypt, with its vast downtrodden masses in the countryside and cities, are far more favorable to revolution than in those countries whose particular feature is the lack of such conditions. Naguib complains that the other factor impeding revolution in Egypt is the weight of the countryside and especially southern Egypt, "where the Islamist movement has most of its support." ("The Egyptian Revolution must spread to win," July 16, 2013, <http://socialistworker.co.uk/art/33902/The+Egyptian+Revolution+must+spread+to+win>). Also see

“Revolutionary Socialists’ Letter to Supporters, August 15, 2013, <http://socialistworker.co.uk/art/34144/Egyptian+Revolutionary+Socialists+letter+to+supporters>.)

We’ll look more at the question of Islamism and poverty further on, but here we’ll pose two questions: Is it true that poverty and lack of “development” has been nothing but an obstacle to revolution? And if it is true that Islamism (not just in the countryside, in reality, but throughout society) is a problem, why haven’t the Revolutionary Socialists opposed it – to this day?

The Revolutionary Socialists have always followed the tactics of opposing whatever they determined to be “the main enemy” at any one moment. But what strategy – what goals – were these brilliant tacticians trying to accomplish, other than “an unmissable opportunity to grow,” as Naguib describes the situation today? Isn’t that the very definition of opportunism?

3 Naguib, “Egypt: Four days that shook the world.”

4 “The assumption and argument is that because the masses in their millions are acting, whatever they are doing must be righteous, just, and ultimately in their interests... This populist epistemology is an approach where truth is determined by what people think, that is, by public opinion. It does not apply science to understand objective reality in its underlying workings and dynamics; it does not challenge, refute, and transform people’s false ideas and ways of thinking that are out of sync with objective reality; and therein ultimately leaves the world ‘as is’.” “Millions of people can be wrong – the coup in Egypt is not a people’s revolution,” *Revolution*, #312, voice of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, no. 312.

The figures of 17 million (or 33 million people, as many claim) on the Egyptian streets beckoning the generals to step in is pure fantasy, seeking refuge from today’s difficult political situation by appealing to the idea that millions can’t be wrong and exaggerating the number of millions many times over, and ignoring the millions supporting the Muslim Brotherhood (the wrong millions). This has been a problem all along. Tahrir Square can’t hold even a million people. The claim about “millions” that were raised in January 2011 to counter Mubarak regime arguments that he had the support of the “silent majority” was an early sign of a wrong understanding (the idea that political legitimacy comes from a majority support) that has left many revolutionary-minded people totally disoriented. This is especially now that the people are so bitterly divided.

5 Some people have raised the concept of a “deep state,” meaning a cabal of die-hard reactionaries encrusted in the armed forces and security services. This tends to see the state as split between an elected part, which can be changed to serve the people’s interests, and an unelected part, which represents reactionary interests and resists change. The state apparatus as a whole is an instrument of the dictatorship of the ruling classes over the people, and elections are designed to serve that dictatorship, including by setting the terms in which the people can participate in the political process. (We’ll have more to say about the question of elections later.) There is a distinction between the state apparatus and the government of the day, but any government that does not meet the interests of the ruling class is not going to last – Morsi, for example. Ironically, Morsi facilitated the changes in the armed forces command that brought into place the line-up of generals who overthrew him. Complaints that Morsi left untouched the armed forces, police, judiciary and other structures developed under Mubarak are “unfair,” in the sense that he never had that option. But it is also important to recognize that the Muslim Brotherhood sought to share power with the old regime forces and was allowed – or rather maneuvered – into government on the bet that this would help restore the legitimacy of a state millions of Egyptians could no longer accept.

6 Bob Avakian has been the chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA since its formation in 1975. Avakian played a decisive role in analyzing the counter-revolution that took place in China after Mao’s death in 1976 and in rallying communists around the world to carry forward Mao’s revolutionary heritage. For the past several decades he has been scientifically examining the whole experience of building socialism in the USSR and China, in addition to other developments in human knowledge such as the sciences, history and culture. On this basis, he has developed the new synthesis of communism.

As he wrote, “This new synthesis involves a recasting and recombining of the positive aspects of the experience so far of the communist movement and of socialist society, while learning from the negative aspects of this experience, in the philosophical and ideological as well as the political dimensions, so as to have a more deeply and firmly rooted scientific orientation, method and approach with regard not only to making revolution and seizing power but then, yes, to meeting the material requirements of society and the needs of the masses of people, in an increasingly expanding way, in socialist society – overcoming the deep scars of the past and continuing the revolutionary transformation of society, while at the same time actively supporting the world revolutionary struggle and acting on the recognition that the world arena and the world struggle are most fundamental and important, in an overall sense – *together with* opening up qualitatively more space to give expression to the intellectual and cultural needs of the people, broadly understood, and enabling a more diverse and rich process of exploration and experimentation in the realms of science, art and culture, and intellectual life overall, with increasing scope for the contention of different ideas and schools of thought and for individual initiative and creativity and protection of individual rights, including space for individuals to interact in “civil society” independently of the state – all within an overall cooperative and collective framework and at the same time as state power is maintained and further developed as a *revolutionary* state power serving the interests of the proletarian revolution, in the particular country and worldwide, with this state being the leading and central element in the economy and in the overall direction of

society, while the state itself is being continually transformed into something radically different from all previous states, as a crucial part of the advance toward the eventual abolition of the state with the achievement of communism on a world scale.” (Bob Avakian, “Making Revolution and Emancipating Humanity,” *Revolution* no. 105, October 21, 2007).

7 Bob Avakian, “There Is No ‘Permanent Necessity’ for Things to be This Way – A Radically Different and Better World Can be Brought Into Being Through Revolution,” *Revolution* no. 195, March 17, 2010.

8 “By the mid-2000s, Islamic banks operating in Egypt controlled around 10 per cent of the commercial deposits in the country’s banking system... eight of the twenty richest families in Egypt throughout the 1990s and 2000s, with vast and interconnected equity stakes across the private sector, had direct links to either the Muslim Brotherhood or other Salafist groups. More recently, Islamic mortgaging has emerged as the key player in one of the country’s most strategic and growing industries. By the 2000s, Islamism was establishing itself at the high end of the Egyptian social ladder.” Tarek Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2010, pp. 109-110.

9 As many as ten million people, former tenant farmers and their families, were forced off the land over the last two decades. This is out of a population of about 90 million. (Bush, editorial, *Review of African Political Economy*, August 2013.)

10 This argument is made by Gilbert Achcar in *The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising*, Saqi Books, London, 2013, pp. 250-261.

11 “According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Neither Marx nor I have ever asserted more than this. Therefore if somebody twists this into saying that the economic factor is the only determining one, he is transforming that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various components of the superstructure... also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases determine their form in particular.” (Friedrich Engels, “Letter to J. Bloch,” September 21-22, 1890, *Historical Materialism (Marx, Engels, Lenin)*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1972, p. 294).

12 Chris Harman, *The Prophet and the Proletariat, Islamic Fundamentalism, Class and Revolution*, Socialist Workers Party, London, 1999. Also available online at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/harman/1994/xx/islam.htm>. This is the theoretical basis for the support for Islamists that is the calling card of the International Socialist trend, although such thinking is hardly confined to Trotskyists.

13 Samir Amin has been one of the most prominent theorists among opponents of imperialism for decades and a guiding light of the World Social Forum. Yet he backed the French invasion of Mali and the coup in Egypt with the argument that since Islamism keeps countries weak, a military move against the Islamists is a blow to U.S. domination. This should be called out as a betrayal from someone like Amin who considers himself a Marxist, but unfortunately it is considered common sense by many Egyptians and others. (For Amin’s writings on Islamism over the years, see the Monthly Review web site. For similar writings and his position on Mali, pambazuka.org; on the coup, “The Egyptian nation and its army,” <http://www.ahewar.org/eng/show.art.asp?aid=1791>.)

This position is related to Amin’s views on imperialism and capitalist development. He was associated with Andre Gundar Frank whose book *The Development of Underdevelopment* (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1966) put forward the thesis that imperialism prevents the economic development of countries like Brazil, a kind of inside-out version of the classical reactionary developmental theory which held that economic development would provide the answer to such countries’ problems. Neither theory holds up well in light of Brazil’s situation today.

The wrong idea that imperialism precludes development influenced Amin’s view of the Chinese revolution, where he saw economic development as the key issue and failed to properly notice the difference between Mao’s project of balanced and articulated development in the service of overcoming class society and Deng Hsiao-ping’s project of development at any price. Although Amin associated himself with Maoism, he ended up backing the “capitalist roaders” whose coup overthrew socialism and reversed the direction in which Mao led China.

In lending his prestige to the military coup in Egypt, Amin wrote that it was carried out by “the Egyptian nation and its army.” The imperialist-dependent Egyptian *ruling classes* have an army; its job has nothing to do with the interests of the masses of Egyptian people or the Egyptian nation. Its weapons are for killing Egyptians or for show, like its second-rate American-supplied aircraft stripped of technology potentially useful against Israel, or maybe to be unleashed against other, weaker neighbors. Egypt’s army is specifically organized not to fight against a border state that has invaded it repeatedly and is the only real foreign threat. As for the idea that there is something special about the Egyptian army because most of its members are conscripts, with that argument the U.S. forces in Vietnam could also have been called a “people’s army.”

14 Bob Avakian, “Views on Socialism and Communism: A Radically New Kind of State, A Radically Different and Far Greater Vision of Freedom,” revcom.us/bob_avakian/views.

15 For instance, see Robert Dreyfuss, *Devil’s Game, How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam*, Metropolitan Books, New York, 2005. The effects of the crushing of the secular Palestinian liberation movement, including Israel’s systematic murder of Palestinian intellectuals, are still painfully felt in the Arab countries today.

16 Bob Avakian, *Away with All Gods! Unchaining the Mind and Radically Changing the World*, Insight Press, Chicago,

pp. 101-106. In the following pages, Avakian goes on to discuss Iran, the PLO and Nasser.

17 For one of many examples of this “anti-imperialist” Islamist discourse about the social destruction caused by the free market and the uprooting of the peasantry, the corruption brought by the West and the hypocrisy of its ideals and practices, the ravaging of the environment and the “wretched” conditions for women under “modernity,” see the writings of the Moroccan sheik Abdessalam Yassine, such as the pamphlet “The Believing Woman in a Turbulent World” (no publisher given but informally circulating) translated into English from a longer book written in 1993. This position has acquired legitimacy among some people who consider themselves feminists and anti-colonialists.

18 Avakian, “Views on Socialism and Communism.”

19 As quoted in the *Constitution of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, 2008 (quote originally published 2004).

20 Raymond Lotta with Frank Shannon, *America in Decline*, Banner Press, Chicago, 1984, p. 103.

21 A landmark investigation and analysis of the relationship between Egypt’s internal economic and class structure and its insertion into the global imperialist economy was written by two Egyptian authors writing under the pseudonym Mahmoud Hussein, who were then very influenced by Maoism as they understood it. They developed the thesis that Egypt was marked by an incomplete transition to capitalism, with both elements of highly developed monopoly capitalism subordinated to imperialism and the persistence of feudal and other pre-capitalist features, with both aspects working to perpetuate backward social relations, political institutions, customs and ideas. They also argue that the country’s notable religiosity reflected that objective situation. *Class Conflict in Egypt 1945-1971*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1974.

22 “The crisis of rural society is one of contemporary Egypt’s many paradoxes. While Egyptian agriculture is one of the most productive and intensive in the world, its peasants are among the poorest. Some 50-80 percent, according to various analysts, live below the poverty line. Further, while Egypt has become one of the world’s biggest exporters of agricultural products, it remains one of the world’s biggest importers of agricultural foodstuffs.” *La crise de la société rurale en Egypte*, Habib Ayeub, Editions Karthala, Paris, 2010.

23 “Egypt’s economy has grown by about 5 percent in real terms each year since 1980. It is the ambition of all developing countries to achieve such a level of growth, especially where it outstrips the increase in population. Yet sustained economic growth singularly failed to deliver employment and poverty reduction. The NDP [Mubarak’s ruling party] robber barons were successful in rewarding themselves – real estate, land, cement and steel, and of course the military too – after all, did not the military get its ‘toys for the boys’ to a value of U.S. \$1.3 billion per annum from the United States, as well as guarantees for its own enormous business ventures in land, real estate and manufacturing? But urban and rural poverty – the abjection of the majority of Egyptians from the wealth that they have produced – is the biggest indictment of the last 30 years. At best, Egypt has developed but Egyptians have not! Unemployment levels might be as high as 50 percent, food inflation of 20% accelerates poverty and child hunger, and bread riots around the bakeries of Cairo in 2008 were an early indicator of tipping points to come.” (Ray Bush, “Egypt: a permanent revolution?,” *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 38, No. 128, June 2011.)

24 One of the most vivid expressions of that has been in literature. The last decade saw the emergence of a genre called the house novel. The most famous, Alaa Al-Aswany’s *The Yacoubian Building*, was the Arab world’s best-selling novel for two years (2002-03) before being made into a film and then a television series. Hamdi Abu Golayyel’s *Thieves in Retirement* appeared the same year. Both use an apartment building and its inhabitants as a metaphor for Egyptian society. Aswany presents a panorama of all of the country’s social classes in connection with a building in downtown Cairo, while Abu Golayyel focuses on Bedouin immigrants in the poor southern suburb Helwan, once touted as an example of the paternalistic concern of the Nasser regime for the welfare of the working class. Both authors deliver an implacable portrait of a society where the doors and windows have been nailed shut and the suffocating stench of rot fills every room from top to bottom. The cruelty and corruption of the regime has poisoned every aspect of life, even, and perhaps most painfully, the most ordinary relations between people. (Published in English by Harper Perennial [New York] and American University in Cairo Press, respectively.)

25 Rephrased and condensed from the article “Liberal Capitalism, Crony Capitalism and Lumpen Development,” an article originally published in *Pambazuka* no. 607, November 11, 2012 (<http://pambazuka.org/en/category/features/85513>) reposted on fsm2013.org.

26 Hele Beji, “Amina, L’histoire en marche,” *Le Monde*, June 15, 2013 (http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2013/06/15/amina-l-histoire-en-marche_3430135_3232.html). It should be added that in all of today’s male-dominated societies, including Tunisia and France, two countries where the Femen have been active, public nudity can’t usually escape the “male gaze” and the objectification of women, so it can’t be a general tactic for women’s liberation.

27 Cairo Journal, “Nude Blogger Riles Egyptians of All Stripes,” By Liam Stack and David D. Kirkpatrick, *New York Times*, November 17, 2011. Also, see the interview with Aliaa Magda el-Mahdy reprinted in Smain Laacher’s *Insurrections arabes*, Libella, Paris, 2013.

28 See the chapter “La haine du corps des femmes” in Laacher’s *Insurrections arabes*. This Algerian-born French sociologist is a champion of the Enlightenment, but has the consistency to point out that Diderot, for example, fully shared the Islamic view that women are “complementary” and not equal to men. Saying that even the most reputedly nationalist and secular Arab leaders such as Nasser and Boumediene (or Bourguiba) were unabashed supporters of patriarchy,

tribalism and Islam (p. 142), he criticizes today's revolts for not yet going from opposition to "tyrants" and "modes of government" to the kind of "radical challenge to the social order" that would seek an end to men's tyranny over women in every aspect of life. He also condemns Western cultural relativists for not judging Arab social movements by whether they are revolutionary or counter-revolutionary in regard to women (pp. 279-281). He vehemently denounces the cultural relativist claim that one should avoid the allegedly "Western gaze" on the question of women's liberation in the neo-colonial world – oppression is oppression no matter who is looking at it. Why is it that an avowed democrat can take such a stand, while so many self-proclaimed "socialists," "Marxists" and "communists" fail that test?

29 You might think that after the coup they helped bring about, the police would end their strike against protecting women from abuse and rape in the streets. This hasn't happened. As crowds filled downtown Cairo streets from wall to wall during the Eid festival marking the end of Ramadan, many women and girl children were subjected to sexual violence, often by very young boys. A member of one of several groups working to stop this horror said, "People now feel like it is their right to commit harassment. If you steal someone's mobile phone, you run straight off because you know you are a criminal. Now when people harass, they don't run away any more. They just stand there." Many people, especially women, are volunteering to join the anti-sexual violence patrols. But the authorities are still standing aside. (*Egypt Daily News*, August 14, 2013. <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/08/14/i-saw-harassment-eid-patrols-show-worrying-trends-in-a-national-problem/>)

30 "A Declaration: For Women's Liberation and the Emancipation of All Humanity," *Revolution*, no. 159, March 8, 2009.

31 "Capitalism has not brought about the emancipation of women, nor can it. Capitalism has merely changed the forms in which women are oppressed and has masked the structural nature of this by allowing women, like men, to see themselves as isolated individuals – thereby obscuring the systematic and systematic subjugation they, and others who are oppressed, face. While the fight for equality for women is an absolutely essential part of liberating women, by itself it is not nearly radical enough. If the fight for equality is restricted to the narrow horizons of the capitalist world, and if the system of capitalism itself is left intact, women can become, 'at best,' the 'owners' of themselves as commodities, or they can gain control over others, treating them in effect as commodities – but they can never break out of the narrow and constricting confines of this exploitative set-up." Ibid.

32 See "You Don't Know What You Think You 'Know' About ... The Communist Revolution and the REAL Path to Emancipation: Its History and Our Future," *Revolution*, No. 323, Special Issue, November 24, 2013. See *Communism: The Beginning of a New Stage, A Manifesto by the Revolutionary Communist Party* (RCP Publications, Chicago, 2009). See revcom.us/Manifesto/Manifesto.html. Also, "Set the Record Straight" at thisiscommunism.org. Finally, Bob Avakian, "The Cultural Revolution in China... Art and Culture... Dissent and Ferment... and Carrying Forward the Revolution Toward Communism," in *Demarcations, A Journal of Communist Theory and Polemic*, No. 2, Summer-Fall 2012, demarcations-journal.org.

33 "The Revolution We Need... The Leadership We Have, A Message, and a Call, from the Revolutionary Communist Party," *Revolution* no. 170, July 19, 2009.

34 Raymond Lotta, "Hugo Chavez Has an Oil Strategy...But Can This Lead to Liberation," *Revolution* no. 94, July 1, 2007.

35 Raymond Lotta, "North Korea Is Not a Socialist Society," *Revolution* no. 301, April 14, 2013.

36 In his article "Social and political geography of the Tunisian revolution: the alfa grass revolution" in the August 2013 edition of the *Review of African Political Economy* cited above, Habib Ayebe uses the metaphorical comparison between Sidi Bouzid, the desperate city in the interior where Mohamed Bouaziz set himself on fire and ignited the Tunisian revolt, and Sidi Boussaid, a wealthy area north of Tunis, to explore the monstrous disparities between the country's exported-oriented, coastal north-east, and landlocked south, central and western Tunisia. He links the diversion of water for the production of dates and olive oil for export and for tourism, with the crushing of the small-scale farmers who used to feed themselves and the country. While few countries enjoy the agricultural potential of Egypt, Ayebe demonstrates that Tunisia's dependence on food imports is not the inevitable result of geography and climate.

37 The question of water resources and their economic, social and environmental implications in Egypt is discussed at length in Ayebe's *La crise de la société rurale en Egypte*.

Ayebe also draws up a brief balance sheet on the failures of Nasserism to bring fundamental change (p. 135): no real industrialization much less overall economic development, no full employment, no improvement in the standard of living of the peasantry despite extensive attempts at agrarian reform, Israel seized and occupied the Sinai peninsula after the devastating defeat in the 1967 war that spelled the beginning of the end of Nasserism, and the liberation of Palestine was abandoned. The previously cited *Class Conflict in Egypt 1945-1971* gives a more theoretical analysis of Nasserism. Avakian discusses scientific and incorrect summations of Nasser in *Away with All Gods! Unchaining the Mind and Radically Changing the World*, Insight Press, Chicago, 2008, pp. 107-109.

38 "Egypt 2011: Millions Have Heroically Stood Up... The Future Remains to Be Written," *Revolution* no. 224, February 11, 2011.

39 *From Iran to Our Revolutionary Comrades in the Middle East and North Africa*, a statement from the Communist Party

of Iran (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) on May First 2011. It points out that in Iran, “The revolutionary crisis that had gripped the society was solved negatively and brought three decades of catastrophe for the working class and the people of Iran and had tremendous negative impact on the trend of revolution in the Middle East as well as the world and enhanced the counter-revolutionary atmosphere.” It also explains, “If the people lack a revolutionary communist movement that could push forward the answer for ‘what do we want’ from the position of the proletariat and other oppressed and exploited of the society and lead the masses to fight for that goal; if we lack that, the reactionary classes and their representatives will impose their own agenda on the masses and tell them ‘what they should want’...

“These are two radically different roads. If the second road wins out, undoubtedly the face of this region and the world will radically change in favor of the peoples of this region as well as the world over. But to make the second road win out, millions of people should come to know what a real revolution is and what is the character of the society they need and want and what kind of class leadership can lead the way towards reaching it. Without millions becoming conscious in this way and getting organized to fight for this goal, the enemies can sell anything to people in the name of ‘revolution.’ This we saw in the case of the Iranian revolution of 1979. As a result in Iran, basically the same situation remained and even became worse.” (For the entire document, see sarbedaran.org and click on “other languages”. <http://sarbedaran.org/language/khatabEn.htm>)

Egypt 2011: Millions Have Heroically Stood Up... The Future Remains to Be Written

**A Statement by Bob Avakian
Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA**

(First appeared, *Revolution* no 224, February 11, 2011, revcom.us)

Millions of Egyptian people from all walks of life, drawing inspiration from the people of Tunisia, have heroically risen up, defied the hated regime of Hosni Mubarak and forced Mubarak to resign. This has shattered the notion that “things can never change.” It is a powerful demonstration that **there is no permanent necessity to the existing conditions under which the great majority of humanity suffer so terribly.** Oppressed people and people who hunger for an end to oppression, in every country all over the world, have deeply shared in the joy and hope of these massive uprisings. And the stirrings of revolt continue to spread.

At the same time, while Mubarak has stepped down, the same basic forces that have so cruelly ruled over and exploited the Egyptian people remain in power. And, despite their honeyed words of praise for the masses of youth and others who have risen up, despite their promises of “freedom” and “democracy,” in reality they are determined to bring about a “transition” that will ensure that there is no fundamental change – that whatever new arrangements are engineered in the political process will still keep the masses of people in Egypt, in Palestine, and other countries of strategic importance for U.S. imperialism, in unbearable conditions. After all, the armed forces in Egypt – which are now supposed to carry out this “transition” – are the same armed forces which for decades faithfully and brutally enforced the rule of the Mubarak regime, while the heads of this military enriched themselves through becoming major exploiters of the Egyptian people; and the imperialists of the U.S. – who fully backed Mubarak and his cronies and kept them in power for 30 years, without any regard for the suffering of the people – are the very same imperialists who are now seeking yet again to call the shots and give the ultimate orders in terms of what the “transition” in Egypt will be.

The plans and designs of these oppressors and exploiters are NOT what the masses of people desperately want and need. Theirs is the cry of “freedom,” and the struggle must be carried forward until real freedom is achieved – freedom from the rule of the imperialists and their local henchmen and junior partners, freedom from all forms of oppression and exploitation. Freedom from both the outmoded forces which would enslave women, and the people as a whole, in medieval darkness and oppression – and from the outmoded forces who would enslave people in the name of “democracy”...“freedom”...and capitalist-imperialist exploitation marketed as “progress.”

It has frequently happened in history, as has been the case in Egypt (as well as Tunisia), that the domination of imperialism and the rule of local exploiters has taken a concentrated form in the regime of a “strong man” butcher. This was the case, for example, in Iran, with the torture-chamber rule of the Shah, in the Philippines with the tyranny of Marcos, and in Indonesia with the long monstrous reign of Suharto – all brutal dictatorships put in power and long kept in power by U.S. imperialism. In Iran in the late 1970s, in the Philippines in the 1980s, in Indonesia more recently, massive uprisings of the people forced the U.S. imperialists to throw aside these hated tyrants and to allow some changes. But in every case, the ultimate result was not one which led to real “freedom” for the people – instead they have continued to be subjected to cruel oppression at the hands of those who replaced the old, hated rulers, while these countries have remained within the overall framework of global imperialist domination and exploitation. But historical experience has also shown that the continuation of oppressive rule, in one form or another, is NOT the only possible outcome.

In Russia, in February 1917, another brutal despot, the Czar (absolute monarch), was overthrown by the uprising of the people. Here again, the U.S., British, and other imperialists, and the Russian capitalists, tried to continue the oppression of the Russian people in a new form, using the mechanisms of “democratic rule” and elections which, while allowing for some broader participation of different parties, would still be totally controlled by the exploiters of the people and would ensure their continuing rule, and the continued suffering of the masses of people. In this case, however, the masses of people were enabled to see through these maneuvers and manipulations, to carry forward their revolutionary rising, through many different twists and turns and, in October 1917, to sweep aside and dismantle the institutions and mechanisms of bourgeois dictatorship and to establish a new political and economic system, socialism, which for several decades continued to advance in

the direction of abolishing relations of exploitation and oppression, as part of the struggle throughout the world toward the final goal of communism. **The crucial difference was that, in the uprisings in Russia, there was a core of leadership, communist leadership, that had a clear, scientifically grounded, understanding of the nature of not just this or that ruthless despot but of the whole oppressive system – and of the need to continue the revolutionary struggle not just to force a particular ruler from office but to abolish that whole system and replace it with one that would really embody and give life to the freedom and the most fundamental interests of the people, in striving to abolish all oppression and exploitation.**

Even though the revolution in Russia was ultimately reversed, with capitalism restored there in the 1950s, and today Russia no longer seeks to disguise the fact that it is a capitalist-imperialist power, the lessons of the Russian Revolution of 1917 hold valuable, indeed decisive lessons for today. And the most decisive lesson is this: When people in their masses, in their millions, finally break free of the constraints that have kept them from rising up against their oppressors and tormentors, then whether or not their heroic struggle and sacrifice will really lead to a fundamental change, moving toward the abolition of all exploitation and oppression, **depends on whether or not there is a leadership, communist leadership**, that has the necessary scientific understanding and method, and on that basis can develop the necessary strategic approach and the influence and organized ties among growing numbers of the people, in order to lead the uprising of the people, through all the twists and turns, to the goal of a real, revolutionary transformation of society, in accordance with the fundamental interests of the people. And, in turn, when people massively break with the “normal routine” and the tightly woven chains of oppressive relations in which they are usually entrapped and by which they are heavily weighed down – when they break through and rise up in their millions – that is a crucial time for communist organization to further develop its ties with those masses, strengthening its ranks and its ability to lead. Or, if such communist organization does not yet exist, or exists only in isolated fragments, this is a crucial time for communist organization to be forged and developed, to take up the challenge of studying and applying communist theory, in a living way, in the midst of this tumultuous situation, and to strive to continually develop ties with, to influence and to ultimately lead growing numbers of the masses in the direction of the revolution that represents their fundamental and highest interests, the communist revolution.

In my writings and talks, in *Communism: The Beginning of a New Stage, a Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, and in other major documents of our Party, we have striven to draw as deeply and fully as possible the critical lessons from the historical experience of the communist revolution and the socialist societies it has brought into being – the very real and great achievements, and the serious errors and setbacks – and to learn from the broader experience of human society and its historical development, in order to contribute all we can to the advance of the revolutionary struggle and the emancipation of oppressed people throughout the world. As the Constitution of our Party states:

“The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA has taken the responsibility to lead revolution in the U.S., the belly of the imperialist beast, as its principal share of the world revolution and the ultimate aim of communism....

“The emancipation of all humanity: this, and nothing less than this, is our goal. There is no greater cause, no greater purpose to which to dedicate our lives.”

It is in this spirit, and with this orientation and goal in mind, that I extend heartfelt support and encouragement to the millions who have risen up. To all who truly want to see the heroic struggle of the oppressed masses develop, with the necessary leadership, in the direction of real revolutionary transformation of society and genuine liberation: engage with and take up the emancipating viewpoint and goals of communism, and the challenge of giving this organized expression and a growing influence and presence among the struggling masses. ■

Letter to Participating Parties and Organizations of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

by the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

May 1, 2012

[**Publication Note:** This letter was originally distributed only among the Participating Parties and Organizations of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM). In making this letter available publicly, what had been an Introductory Note at the beginning was instead included here as an Appendix, and for purposes of clarity some minor editing was done in that Appendix and in the main text of this letter.]

Dear Comrades,

We are writing you at a time when the shared experience of working together in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement has brought us to a sharp juncture where the forces formerly united in it are dividing out over cardinal questions. We face a moment where two-line struggle has to be joined over the most fundamental questions of what ideological and political line will define the international communist movement, if there is to be genuine communism in today's world.

The formation of RIM in 1984 was the start of a very important role that it played for two decades as the embryonic center of the world's Maoist forces – that is, those who at that time were committed to carrying forward the legacy of Mao Tsetung to advance communism, after the defeat of the revolution in China in 1976. As we all know, for several years now RIM has no longer been functioning as such a center. The reasons for this are part of the current dispute, while the great need for the unity of revolutionary communists on an international level *based on principled cohesion around a correct ideological and political line*, is all the more important now. But such unity must and can only come about through fierce two-line struggle.

The failure to carry this process forward has done real damage. Look, for example, at the upsurges that have taken place in North Africa and the Middle East in 2011 and whose sequels are continuing in complex and contradictory ways, and see the consequences of the lack of an international force of communists clear on and fighting for a fundamentally revolutionary line in opposition to false “solutions”. In that upsurge, as well as in other upsurges of the masses such as the Occupy movements which have arisen mainly in the imperialist countries, it is easy to recognize the great need for the clear and sharp projection of a revolutionary communist line and the need for the communist forces to join their efforts to affect an increasingly complex situation, bringing forward forces who can lead these struggles onto a path that can break out of the current framework humanity is locked within. The alternatives that are being presented to the masses all over the world are in most cases one or another variant of systems dominated by outmoded ruling classes, which do not lead people in the direction of breaking free from the domination of the system of capitalism and imperialism, and onto the road to socialism and ultimately communism.

Without a genuinely revolutionary communist trend which is capable of presenting a viable and truly liberatory vision and program and on that basis forges links to and leadership of masses caught in horrendous circumstances all over the world, the people are and will continue to be stuck between reactionary alternatives. Establishing revolutionary communist organization and leadership which can take root in particular countries, in the context of a common ideological line on a world scale, will be a crucial part of bringing forward a new stage of proletarian revolution.

The simple fact is that there can be no viable framework for the organization of communists internationally without confronting these questions of ideological and political line that go to the very core of what communism is, breaking with conceptions that are in contradiction to communism. The international communist movement needs to advance, and the basic political and theoretical scaffolding that has been developed with the new synthesis of communism by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the RCP,USA, serves as the basis for such an advance.

Most fundamentally, things have come to an impasse not because of the obstruction of one or another Party, or the inactivity of the CoRIM [Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement] in the face of the acute differences over line, nor even fundamentally because of the very real betrayal of the revolution in Nepal with all of its negative fallout (about which we will have more to say below). Rather, the crisis of RIM and the international communist movement more generally arose because the understanding on which the movement was based – what we have called Marxism-Leninism-Maoism – is “dividing into two”: its revolutionary, correct and scientific kernel is both validated and is advancing to new levels, while secondary but nonetheless real and damaging errors in politics and theory have been identified and can and need to be struggled against as part of making the leap that is required. That is the approach that Bob Avakian and our Party have taken and have called on others to join with us in filling that great need. In opposition a line and outlook has consolidated that raises these very same errors to a principle and constructs a “Maoism” which has only an empty shell in common with the revolutionary communist politics and ideology that Mao represented and forged, while this wrong line denounces the new synthesis of communism as “counter revolutionary”.

I. COMMUNISM AT A CROSSROADS

After the coup d'état in China the formation of RIM gave heart and orientation to revolutionary communists all over the world. The RIM went into a political and ideological battle united and basing itself on what was, at that time, an advanced understanding reflected in the *Declaration*¹. With this basic foundation uniting them, comrades from different countries engaged in revolutionary communist practice in accordance with the strategy and stage of development of the revolutionary process in their particular countries. In some instances, in accordance with the basic character of the country and the concrete conditions, most notably in Peru and Nepal, comrades were able to make real breakthroughs in leading masses in people's war. But comrades in different countries encountered serious obstacles as well, and in some places the revolutionary process was reversed or stagnated, which has had an impact on RIM as a whole. There is a real need for a scientific examination of all of this experience, in different countries and on a world level. Even more, there is a need to situate those experiences and what should be learned from them in the larger context of summing up the whole sweep of the communist movement, and the historical and present developments of communist theory and join the struggle over the different lines that have emerged over what lessons should be drawn from this experience, as well as from social and scientific experience more generally.

Our Party has for several years been calling attention to the crossroads facing the international communist movement, presenting our understanding of the nature and cause of the present crisis, inviting and insisting that comrades engage with the new synthesis brought forward by Bob Avakian. In truth, there has been far too little examination of the real obstacles and contradictions in the process of making revolution, referring both to the more recent experience of RIM but, even more importantly, summing up and learning from the proletarian revolution as a whole. Nevertheless, while the necessary debate has hardly begun, there have been continuing and sharpening divergences within the international communist movement and, flowing from this, different proposals of what needs to be done.

In 2009, we issued *Communism: The Beginning of a New Stage, A Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, which summarizes our evaluation of the overall goal of the communist revolution and an assessment of the current crossroads facing the communist movement.² The orientation is sharply summed up in Chapter V: Communism at a Crossroads: Vanguard of the Future, or Residue of the Past? In 2009 we sent a letter to all the participating parties and organizations in RIM, asking for their evaluation and response to this *Manifesto*. To date, only a few have responded to this request. This is unacceptable, a concrete manifestation of the wrong approach to advancing the international communist movement at this key juncture. Instead some of those who have refused to engage any of this are issuing calls to form a new international communist movement based on what they call “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism,” with no discussion of what they understand to be the content of MLM and, in particular, a shocking lack of delineation with the revisionist line that has been in command in the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) since 2005, which is not surprising since the UCPN(M) was a signatory to 2011 Call.³

There is something ironic and wrong in claiming the banner of MLM, while avoiding Mao's key point that “the correctness or incorrectness of ideological and political line decides everything” and refusing to approach all key questions seriously in that light. The international communist movement has often seen this kind of approach to seeking unity without principle, of blurring the distinction between Marxism and revisionism,

and proceeding on the basis of pragmatism – which always means, in fact, accepting revisionist positions. There is the history of the Second International when “comrades” ended up supporting their own imperialist states in gunning down the workers in the “enemy” countries in World War I. There is the whole experience of many forces such as the Vietnam Workers Party and others which argued in the 1960s for the “unity of the international communist movement”, which meant demanding a stop to the struggle led by Mao, against modern revisionism centered then in the Soviet Union. In more recent decades there have been several other international initiatives, such as those of the Belgium Workers Party or the Communist Party of the Philippines, which tried to erase the struggle against revisionism and/or substitute some criteria other than revolutionary communism as the basis of unity.

What Is the New Synthesis of Bob Avakian?

Over a whole period of time Bob Avakian has developed the new synthesis of communism which has a great deal of substance and involves many different elements. Avakian himself and our Party have directly addressed the content of the new synthesis in a number of published documents.⁴ The essential points have been summarized in *Communism: Beginning of a New Stage: A Manifesto from the RCPUSA*. It is helpful to examine how the *Manifesto* presents this:

“In terms of philosophy and method, this new synthesis is, in a meaningful sense, regrounding Marxism more fully in its scientific roots. It also involves learning from the rich historical experience since the time of Marx, upholding the fundamental objectives and principles of communism, which have been shown to be fundamentally correct, criticizing and discarding aspects that have been shown to be incorrect, or no longer applicable, and establishing communism even more fully and firmly on a scientific foundation.

“In the original conception of human society’s historical development toward communism, even as formulated by Marx, there was a tendency – although this tendency was definitely very secondary – toward a somewhat narrow and linear view. This was manifested, for example, in the concept of the ‘negation of the negation’ (the view that things proceed in such a way that a particular thing is negated by another thing, which in turn leads to a further negation and a synthesis which embodies elements of the previous things, but now on a higher level). This concept was taken over from the philosophical system of Hegel, whose philosophy exerted a significant influence on Marx (and Engels), even while, in a fundamental sense, they recast and placed on a materialist foundation Hegel’s view of dialectics, which was itself marked by philosophical idealism (the view that history consists in essence of the unfolding of the Idea). As Bob Avakian has argued, the ‘negation of the negation’ can tend in the direction of ‘inevitable-ism’ – as if something is bound to be negated by another thing in a particular way, leading to what is almost a predetermined synthesis. And when applied to the historical sweep of human society, in such a way that it verges on being simplistically formulaic – as in the construct: primitive classless (communal) society was negated by class society, which in turn will be negated by the emergence once again of classless society, but now on a higher foundation, with the achievement of communism throughout the world – the tendency toward reductionism with regard to the extremely complex and variegated historical development of human society, the tendency toward a ‘closed system’ and toward ‘inevitable-ism,’ become more pronounced and more problematical.

“Again, this was a secondary shortcoming in Marxism, at its foundation (as Bob Avakian has also argued: ‘Marxism, scientific communism, does not embody, but in fact rejects, any teleological...notion that there is some kind of will or purpose with which nature, or history, is endowed’). But tendencies of this kind asserted themselves more fully with the development of the communist movement and were particularly noticeable, and exerted a negative effect, in the thinking of Stalin, who in turn influenced Mao’s philosophical views, even while Mao rejected and ruptured in significant ways with Stalin’s tendencies toward ‘woodenness’ and mechanical, somewhat metaphysical, materialism. The new synthesis of Bob Avakian embodies a continuation of Mao’s ruptures with Stalin but also in some aspects a rupture beyond the ways in which Mao himself was influenced, even though secondarily, by what had become the dominant mode of thinking in the communist movement under the leadership of Stalin.

“Internationalism. In the early 1980s, in the work *Conquer the World?*, Bob Avakian made an extensive critique of erroneous tendencies in the history of the communist movement, and in particular the tendency toward nationalism – toward separating off the revolutionary struggle in a particular country from, and even raising it above, the overall world revolutionary struggle for communism. He examined ways in which this tendency had manifested itself in both the Soviet Union and China, when they were socialist countries,

and the influence this exerted on the communist movement more broadly, including in the sometimes pronounced moves to subordinate the revolutionary struggle in other countries to the needs of the existing socialist state (first the Soviet Union, and then later China). Along with this, Avakian made a further analysis of the material basis for internationalism – why, in an ultimate and overall sense, the world arena is most decisive, even in terms of revolution in any particular country, especially in this era of capitalist imperialism as a world system of exploitation, and how this understanding must be incorporated into the approach to revolution, in particular countries as well as on a world scale.

“While internationalism has always been a fundamental principle of communism since its very founding, Avakian both summed up ways in which this principle had been incorrectly compromised in the history of the communist movement, and he strengthened the theoretical foundation for waging the struggle to overcome such departures from internationalism and to carry forward the communist revolution in a more thoroughly internationalist way.

“On the character of the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist society as a transition to communism. While deeply immersing himself in, learning from, firmly upholding, and propagating Mao’s great insights into the nature of socialist society as a transition to communism – and the contradictions and struggles which mark this transition and whose resolution, in one or another direction, are decisive in terms of whether the advance is carried forward to communism, or things are dragged backward to capitalism – Bob Avakian has recognized and emphasized the need for a greater role for dissent, a greater fostering of intellectual ferment, and more scope for initiative and creativity in the arts in socialist society. He has criticized the tendency toward a ‘reification’ of the proletariat and other exploited (or formerly exploited) groups in society – a tendency which regards particular people in these groups, as individuals, as representative of the larger interests of the proletariat as a class and the revolutionary struggle that corresponds to the fundamental interests of the proletariat, in the largest sense. This has often been accompanied by narrow, pragmatic, and positivist outlooks and approaches – which restrict what is relevant, or what can be determined (or is declared) to be true, to what relates to immediate experiences and struggles in which the masses of people are involved, and to the immediate objectives of the socialist state and its leading party, at any given time. This, in turn, has gone along with tendencies – which were a marked element in the Soviet Union but also in China when it was socialist – toward the notion of ‘class truth,’ which in fact is opposed to the scientific understanding that truth is objective, does not vary in accordance with differing class interests, and is not dependent on which class outlook one brings to the pursuit of the truth. The scientific outlook and method of communism – if it is correctly taken up and applied, as a living science and not as a dogma – provides, in an overall sense, the most consistent, systematic, and comprehensive means for arriving at the truth, but that is not the same thing as saying that truth itself has a class character, or that communists are bound to arrive at the truth with regard to particular phenomena, while people who do not apply, or who even oppose, the communist outlook and method are not capable of arriving at important truths. Such views of ‘class truth,’ which have existed to varying degrees and in various forms in the communist movement, are reductionist and vulgar materialist and run counter to the actual scientific viewpoint and method of dialectical materialism.

“As a related part of the new synthesis, Bob Avakian has criticized a one-sided view in the communist movement toward intellectuals – toward seeing them only as a problem, and failing to give full recognition to the ways in which they can contribute to the rich process through which the people in society overall will come to a deeper understanding of reality and a heightened ability to carry out an increasingly conscious struggle to transform reality in the direction of communism.

“Again, as the Constitution of our Party explains:

“This new synthesis also involves a greater appreciation of the important role of intellectuals and artists in this whole process, both pursuing their own visions and contributing their ideas to this broader ferment – all, again, necessary to get a much richer process going....

“In short, in this new synthesis as developed by Bob Avakian, there must be a solid core, with a lot of elasticity. This is, first of all, a method and approach that applies in a very broad way.... A clear grasp of both aspects of this [both solid core and elasticity], and their inter-relation, is necessary in understanding and transforming reality, in all its spheres, and is crucial to making revolutionary transformations in human society....

“Applied to socialist society, this approach of solid core with a lot of elasticity includes the need for

a leading, and expanding, core that is clear on the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the aim of continuing socialist revolution as part of the world struggle for communism, and is determined to continue carrying forward this struggle, through all the twists and turns. At the same time, there will necessarily be many different people and trends in socialist society pulling in many different directions – and all of this can ultimately contribute to the process of getting at the truth and getting to communism. This will be intense at times, and the difficulty of embracing all this – *while still leading the whole process broadly in the direction of communism* – will be something like going, as Avakian has put it, to the brink of being drawn and quartered – and repeatedly. All this is difficult, but necessary and a process to welcome.

“As a unifying theme in all this, Avakian has stressed the orientation of ‘emancipators of humanity’: the revolution that must be carried out, and in which the masses must be the conscious driving force, is not about revenge nor about changes of position within a narrow framework (‘the last shall be first, and the first become last’) but is about transforming the entire world so that there will no longer be people who are ‘first’ and others who are ‘last’; the overthrow of the present system, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the continuation of the revolution in those conditions is all for the purpose and toward the aim of abolishing all oppressive divisions and exploitative relations among human beings and advancing to a whole new era in human history.

“Strategic approach to revolution. Avakian’s new synthesis has regrounded communist work in, and has enriched, Lenin’s basic understanding of the need for the masses of people to develop communist consciousness not only, or mainly, through their own immediate experience and struggles but through the all-around exposure of the nature and features of the capitalist-imperialist system and the clear setting forth of the convictions, aims, outlook and method of communism, which is brought to the masses, in a systematic and all-around way, by an organized vanguard party, linking the struggle at any given time with, and diverting and directing it toward, the strategic revolutionary goal, while also ‘setting before the masses’ the essential questions and problems of the revolution and involving them in forging the means to resolve these contradictions and advance the revolutionary struggle. With the leadership of Bob Avakian, the basic strategic orientation necessary for carrying out revolutionary work in an imperialist country, to hasten while awaiting the development of a revolutionary situation and the emergence of a revolutionary people, in the millions and millions, and then to seize on such a situation when it does finally come into being – and to be able to fight and win in those circumstances – has been developed and is continuing to be further developed.”

The *Manifesto from the RCP, USA* makes a basic evaluation of the whole first stage of the communist movement and where we need to go from here:

“The first stage of the communist revolution went a long way, and achieved incredibly inspiring things, in fighting to overcome the very real obstacles it faced and to advance toward a world where all relations of exploitation and oppression would be finally eliminated and people would enjoy a whole new dimension of freedom and would undertake the organization and continuing transformation of society, throughout the world, with a conscious and voluntary initiative unprecedented in human history. But, not surprisingly, there were also significant shortcomings and real errors, sometimes very serious ones, both in the practical steps that were taken by those leading these revolutions and the new societies they brought forth, and in their conceptions and methods. These shortcomings and errors were not the cause of the defeats of the initial attempts at communist revolution, but they did contribute, even if secondarily, to that defeat; and, beyond that, this whole experience of the first stage – with both its truly inspiring achievements and its very real, at times very serious, even if overall secondary, errors and shortcomings – must be learned from deeply and all-sidedly, in order to carry forward the communist revolution in the new situation that has to be confronted, and to do even better this time.”

It is from this perspective of building upon the initial achievements of the communist revolution and most especially doing even better this time that we need to examine how the international communist movement can emerge from its current crossroads and provide direction to revolutionaries and people all over the world who find the current world order intolerable and are increasingly seeking out a solution. In this light it is particularly necessary to understand the process that has gone on within the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, why it has no longer been able to fulfill the role of an embryonic political center and what needs to be done for the international movement to be rescued and revitalized in the conditions of today.

In the *Manifesto from the RCP, USA* an analysis is made of two erroneous trends from within the international communist movement which make up a kind of “mirror opposites” and which, together, stand in opposition to the new synthesis that Avakian has brought forward and represents Communism in the world today. These tendencies are, on the one hand, those who have “an approach to communist theory and principles as some kind of dogma, akin to religious catechism” and, on the other hand, those who ignore or dismiss scientific communist analysis of the profound contradictions that have given rise to the danger of capitalist restoration in socialist society, and who attempt to substitute in place of that analysis an approach based on bourgeois-democratic principles and criteria, and bourgeois-democratic notions of legitimacy. These “mirror opposites” share a number of political positions and methodology which have been present in RIM such as:

“Never taking up – or never engaging in any systematic way with – a scientific summation of the previous stage of the communist movement, and in particular Mao Tsetung’s pathbreaking analysis concerning the danger of and basis for capitalist restoration in socialist society. Thus, while they may uphold – or may in the past have upheld – the Cultural Revolution in China, they lack any real, or profound, understanding of why this Cultural Revolution was necessary and why and with what principles and objectives Mao initiated and led this Cultural Revolution. They reduce this Cultural Revolution to, in effect, just another episode in the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat – or, on the other hand, reinterpret it as some kind of bourgeois-democratic anti-bureaucracy movement which in essence represents a negation of the need for a communist vanguard and its institutionalized leading role in socialist society, throughout the transition to communism.

“The common tendency to reduce ‘Maoism’ to just a prescription for waging people’s war in a Third World country, while again ignoring, or diminishing the importance of, Mao’s most important contribution to communism: his development of the theory and line of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, and all the rich analysis and scientific method that underlay and made possible the development of that theory and line.

“Positivism, pragmatism, and empiricism. While again, this may take different expressions in accordance with different particular erroneous viewpoints and approaches, what is common to them is the vulgarization and degradation of theory – reducing it to a ‘guide to practice’ only in the most narrow and immediate sense, treating theory as, in essence, a direct outgrowth of particular practice, and attempting to establish an equivalence between advanced practice (which itself, especially on these people’s part, involves an element of subjective and arbitrary evaluation) and supposedly advanced theory. A scientific communist, materialist and dialectical, viewpoint leads to the understanding that practice is the ultimate point of origin and point of verification of theory; but, in opposition to these narrow, empiricist distortions, this must be understood to mean practice in the broad sense, encompassing broad social and historical experience, and not simply the direct experience of a particular individual, group, party, or nation. The very founding, and the further development of, communist theory itself is a powerful demonstration of this: From the time of Marx, this theory has been forged and enriched by drawing from a broad array of experience, in a wide range of fields and over a broad expanse of historical development, in society and nature. Practice as the source of theory and the maxim that ‘practice is the criterion of truth’ can be, and will be, turned into a profound untruth if this is interpreted and applied in a narrow, empiricist, and subjective manner.”

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRISIS OF RIM

What is cited above, stands as a succinct summation of the current juncture in the international communist movement and in RIM in particular. The current crisis of RIM is not taking place in a vacuum – nor is it even principally a result of RIM’s own internal dynamics. It needs to be considered in relation to objective world developments, which then have had their reflection and consequences amongst the ranks of the communists. For several decades the entire experience of proletarian revolution has been the target of a relentless attack led by the triumphalist imperialist ruling classes who have proclaimed the “death of communism”. Slander and distortion of the great experience of struggling to transform the world through revolution has been echoed and relayed by the great bulk of public opinion makers through the mass media, academia, political parties and mass organizations. This process has been so relentless that verdicts of the bourgeoisie on the communist project are bandied about everywhere and go essentially unchallenged in public discourse.

New generations are propelled to struggle against the people-devouring capitalist system and all of the myriad abuses and horrors that are created by this system, or are propped up and living in symbiosis with it. However,

even the great majority of those who are fighting the abuses of this system and are looking for some explanation for the state of the world and a means of transforming it are left clueless, cheated of the historical truth of the great accomplishments of the first wave of proletarian revolution or even convinced that this tremendous effort was a “failure” or worse. Without revolutionary communism new fighters will remain with lowered sights, confining their efforts to what is in reality the impossible task of trying to reduce the inequalities, injustice, and spiritual bankruptcy of the 21st century world while leaving the wellspring of the present world order – the capitalist and imperialist system – intact.

The theoretical framework for a new stage of proletarian revolution has been laid, but for this stage to reach fruition – and anything less will only mean continued misery for the masses of people and continued frustration for those who are searching for a way out – there is a great need for new batches of women and men to be won to the necessity, desirability and viability of constructing a new communist social system all over the globe. Without winning over new initiators of a new stage of communism there will, quite simply, be no new wave of proletarian revolution. Oppression does lead to resistance, as Mao taught. But whether this resistance actually leads to the overthrow of the existing political and economic order and lead to the necessary transformation of social conditions depends, on the correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line.

The Coup in China and the Formation of RIM

Although the response to the revisionist coup in China was foundational for the RIM, it is worthwhile revisiting it, not only because most of those now involved in political life have no direct knowledge of that period but also because all of us, old and young, have been constantly bombarded with lies and distortions on this subject for more than three decades.

The revolution led by the Communist Party of China had achieved nation-wide victory in 1949 and a new socialist system was fought for and put into place, bringing about enormous benefits to previously downtrodden masses in China. But Mao Tsetung did not rest content with these tremendous accomplishments. As he was learning from the actual contradictions of socialist society in China, he was also examining the previous historical experience which had resulted in the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union after Khrushchev came to power in 1956. Determined not to repeat this negative experience and searching for the ways to lead the masses in continuing to make revolution under conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Mao led a kind of revolution within the revolution aimed at preventing China from being dragged back to capitalism by a new bourgeoisie born from within the Communist Party itself and feeding on the remaining inequalities and birthmarks of the old exploitative society. Mao initiated the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the mid-1960s bringing forward an unprecedented explosion of transformative revolutionary energy from among the masses of people in China and also served as a clarion call to revolutionaries and oppressed the world over. The GPCR pointed to the possibility and means of actually transforming society in a fundamental way which would free it from all previous systems of exploitation and the material and ideological scars from centuries of class division. Mao Tsetung was analyzing the problems of the proletarian revolution on the theoretical level and arming a new communist movement politically and ideologically with the revolutionary communist viewpoint.

The attraction of revolutionary China and with it, Maoism (called Mao Tsetung Thought at that time), was immense: Guerrilla fighters against colonialism in Africa, many European revolutionary intellectuals from the within the very institutions that were supposed to churn out loyal functionaries and ideologues of the bourgeois system, revolutionary young workers on the barricades of Paris in May 1968, participants in India’s Naxalbari movement or land struggles in Brazil, in the convulsions that accompanied the creation of Bangladesh out of what had formerly been East Pakistan, in the midst of the Black liberation movement in the U.S. and in the fight against imperialist aggression in Vietnam: in all of these places and many, many more a new generation of revolutionaries was greatly influenced by the revolutionary energy and communist ideology coming out of China. It was taking place in a situation where the Soviet Union had gone from being a socialist state and revolutionary bastion and inspiration to revolutionaries and oppressed all over the world to a revisionist society standing as an obstacle to revolution. Out of those turbulent times and the worldwide two line struggle that Mao was leading against modern revisionism, many came forward to embrace what was then known as Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, which had been identified as a completely new and higher stage of Marxism-Leninism⁵ even if their understanding of MLM at that time was primitive and contradictory. A Maoist movement emerged internationally with the Communist Party of China as its ideological center even though the movement had no formal structure.

The material loss of the socialist bastion after 1976 and its rapid transformation into the ugly capitalist

monstrosity that is China today was accompanied by an attack on the basic theses of Mao. Although launched by the new reactionary rulers in China, it dovetailed with the more generalized ideological assault on genuine communism from the bourgeoisie and its ideological representatives world wide. It is impossible to overstate what all this meant to the communist forces at the time and the revolutionary movement more generally. Confusion and demoralization was widespread. Many sought different forms of accommodation with the imperialist and reactionary dominated world. Some others, such as Enver Hoxha the leader of Albania, who had supported Mao in the practical struggle against the Soviet Union but never really understood or accepted his core theses or grasped the revolutionary communist theory Mao was taking to new levels – ended up viciously attacking Mao Tsetung Thought and furthering the ideological, political and practical decomposition of the existing communist movement.⁶

For many in the Maoist movement of the time, what they understood as Maoism or Mao Tsetung Thought was difficult to separate from a kind of revolutionary nationalism, essentially limited to developing and waging revolutionary struggle against imperialism and semi-feudalism. Many of these comrades never really understood or shared Mao's orientation of taking the revolution forward in the direction of the goal of communism.⁷ In class terms, this thinking actually represented the orientation and outlook of sections of the national bourgeoisie in the oppressed countries, for whom the communist movement was seen as a vehicle for fighting against the imperialist domination of their countries and some reactionary domestic class forces tied to imperialism. In the West, there was real attraction to the experience emanating from China among different strata who saw the experience of socialism there as pointing the way for solving many of society's harsh inequalities and giving voice to the formerly oppressed. This included some from the intelligentsia who were attracted to Mao's unleashing of the masses in the Cultural Revolution against the capitalist roaders in the Party and Mao's criticisms of Stalin and the Soviet experience but who did not really understand, and in reality ended up opposing, Mao's framework of upholding and strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat. In fact, today's very much in vogue French philosopher Alain Badiou, a leader of an MLM grouping in France in the 1970s, is an example of those whose early enthusiasm for Mao was mixed with a rejection of the basic Marxist-Leninist understanding Mao was carrying forward. Later Badiou, and many others like him "resolved" this by abandoning any pretext of Maoism altogether, and Badiou has coupled this with postulating a "communism" that is in its essence, nothing more than glorified bourgeois democracy.⁸

In the aftermath of the counter-revolutionary coup in China, these kinds of wrong political tendencies that had been partially held in check by the ideological and political strength of Mao's China mainly abandoned any pretense of Maoism. The majority of communists either themselves blindly tailed the new revisionist rulers of China and took the path into the swamp, or in some other form abandoned the outlook and objectives of the communist revolution.

It was in this critical and dire situation that early efforts to regroup the remaining communists began shortly after the coup in China, leading to the formation of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement in 1984. It was essential to fight to preserve and advance the revolutionary forces that had not been swallowed up by the wave of demoralization and capitulation that followed the coup in China. The work of Bob Avakian was decisive and central in this process, in particular in formulating a penetrating criticism of the revisionist coup-makers in China (along with their 'centrist' obfuscators), and systematizing, popularizing and defending Mao Tsetung's contributions to the science of revolutionary communism.⁹ While today it is obvious that capitalism is in the driver's seat in China, even though it is ruled by a Party that has maintained the name communist, it took real science to analyze and synthesize these developments on the level of communist theory and Bob Avakian led a major struggle in the RCP,USA to take the correct line on this and then to fight for this in the international communist movement.

The questions involved in understanding the coup in China required going deeply into what Mao had analyzed about the contradictory nature of socialism, about the material and ideological basis for the emergence of a bourgeoisie "right in the communist party", about the communist goal and the means of getting there, and, underlying all this, Mao's development of dialectical materialism. But this, unfortunately, is very different than how most forces in the communist movement, even those who opposed the coup makers, approached analyzing the coup in China. There were many (as noted in the earlier cited passage from the *Manifesto from the RCP,USA*) who continued to view Maoism as essentially a recipe for waging people's war in a third world country and either failed to absorb or even rejected his most essential contributions concerning continuing the revolution under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat, so central to Mao's overall development of Marxism to a new level.

At the time of the coup in China it was not yet possible to see sharply that a whole stage of proletarian revolution had come to an end. There was a necessary fight to carry forward the proletarian revolution from the heights it had achieved under the leadership of Mao Tsetung and the tremendous accomplishments of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976. There was a great need for Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought¹⁰ to be upheld and defended and there was a need for the remaining embattled forces of the Maoist movement to be rallied and given leadership.

There were always very divergent and contradictory understandings of how and on what basis it would be possible to advance the communist movement in the conditions existing at the time, and precursors existed of what have now developed into the incorrect lines evident in the international communist movement today. In retrospect we can see even more clearly the importance of the work that Bob Avakian had begun of interrogation and evaluation that would eventually come together in what is now the new synthesis. Bob Avakian's work *Conquer the World?, the International Proletariat Must and Will* represented a particular nodal point in this process. In this work Avakian began summing up the experience of proletarian revolution from the period of Marx up through the coup d'état in China.¹¹ In contrast to this, others tried to resolve the defeat by getting Maoism "back on the map" sidestepping the crucial task of addressing the significance of Mao Tsetung's greatest contribution to the science of MLM and the actual synthesis that had been achieved.

Nevertheless, despite existing differences, a generally correct and guiding understanding was spelled out in the *Declaration of the RIM* and guided the work of its leading Committee, even though there were differences and struggles within the CoRIM on major points of line throughout this period. Most especially, the *Declaration* was based upon the recognition of Mao Tsetung's great development of Marxism in many spheres, especially his breakthrough analysis of the contradictions remaining in socialist society; the re-emergence of a capitalist class from within these contradictions, headquartered in the Communist Party itself; and the need to continue to carry on the proletarian revolution throughout the whole period of socialist transformation toward overcoming the birthmarks of the old capitalist society and achieving communism. The regroupment of revolutionary communist forces determined to carry forward the great achievements of the communist revolution and especially to go forward along the path charted by Mao Tsetung was a powerful rejoinder to the reactionary chorus of the death of communism and an important factor in strengthening the hopes and confidence in the future of the communist cause at a very dark hour.

Despite the unevenness and contradictions we will examine below, the advanced understanding reflected in the *Declaration* around which RIM united also gave further impetus to different kinds of revolutionary practice including, where appropriate to the situation in particular countries, communists took up or prepared for armed struggle for the seizure of power. Where the conditions did not yet exist, or had not yet been brought into being, for launching and carrying out people's war on a correct basis (as well as in those countries where such conditions did exist) other forms of mass mobilizations were carried out, such as opposing imperialist war and wars of aggression, and in many cases working to develop new revolutionary communist organization with a correct program and strategy. Participants in RIM led masses to give political support for the advances and to rally in the face of setbacks of the revolutionary movements in different parts of the world. This took on particularly powerful expression first in Peru and later in Nepal.

However, in the several decades since the formation of RIM important debates have taken place in the international communist movement and divergent understandings emerged and sharpened.

Further positive and negative experience of waging revolutionary struggle under contemporary conditions was obtained and this, too, has given rise to further discussion and debate, especially as the revolutions in Peru and Nepal first helped rekindle hope among the revolutionaries and oppressed but then both ran into an impasse and major questions of line came to the fore. Throughout this whole period differences existed, sometimes becoming very sharp, of how and even whether to confront the challenges. Today these differences are crystallizing into opposing lines.

As we have noted, the last several decades were also a period of unrelenting ideological assault on the communist project. The collapse of Soviet social-imperialism and its bloc (socialism in name but imperialism in essence and in deed), following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 accelerated this even further as the Western imperialists sought to portray what had in fact been social-imperialism as "communism". Some collective efforts were made by RIM to respond to these attacks, but a strong tendency also existed to feel that the ideological dispute would be settled by progress in the practical struggle, especially the advance of people's wars. This had serious negative consequences, both internal to participating parties and organizations, and in

the ability of RIM to counter the reactionary ideological offensive of the imperialists with a vision of a viable and liberatory communism.

With the notable exception of the work being done by Bob Avakian, generally speaking comrades in RIM paid little heed to the effect of this ideological offensive, and continued on with the pragmatist and empiricist approaches to their work. Within the RCP,USA itself this was a major feature of the revisionist line which was going counter to Avakian's line and leadership. The cultural revolution in the RCP,USA, discussed in its *Manifesto*¹² in essence revolved around the very same questions that are now at the heart of the struggle in RIM, in short the new synthesis brought forward by Bob Avakian. The fact that there was a need for such a cultural revolution in our Party is actually an expression of the same crossroads that the whole international movement must confront.

It is not possible nor desirable to answer either the attacks of the enemy or the legitimate questions of the masses by simple repetition of previous understanding, even the most advanced version of that understanding that Mao brought forward (and, of course, that kind of empty dogmatism does not and cannot actually reflect Mao's revolutionary approach, but rather inevitably guts and renders it a sterile caricature). There are answers to the vexing questions of what can be learned from the past experience, of what can be done to enable the next stage of proletarian revolution to advance further toward communist society. But as Avakian has put it in discussing the need to understand the loss in China, to find the answers you have to dig for them.

Indeed, if revolutionary communists fail to examine the tremendous experience of proletarian revolution and the actual, material conditions that these revolutions faced, including in their contradictoriness, it will, more often than not, pave the way for the familiar political somersault in which empty lip-service to prior understandings flips over into a rediscovery of the bourgeois democratic denunciations of classless "totalitarianism" and the worship of the bourgeois democratic political philosophy and institutions that both mask the domination of the exploiting classes and serve the consolidation and perpetuation of the bourgeois system and all of the oppression, injustice and horror that flows from it. Indeed, this is part of what we have been seeing in RIM organizations in the last period, most notably – but not only – in Nepal, where failing to give any serious attention to these life and death questions helped leave comrades politically and theoretically disarmed in the face of the "democracy" assault by enemies of communism from inside the movement as well as from the imperialist bourgeoisie and their various political representatives and apologists.

III. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EMERGING LINE DIFFERENCES AND THE RECENT DEBACLE OF NEPAL

While differences over line and methodology, including differences over how to sum up the first stage of communist revolutions in Soviet Union and China, were developing over time and in relation to actual developments in the world – including how RIM responded to the setback in the revolution in Peru, which we will speak to later in this letter – this process took a leap with the emergence of a revisionist line within the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), and the response to this development on the part of participating parties in RIM. The line developed by the leadership of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist),¹³ in essence, abandoned the People's War in that country and with it the revolutionary struggle to transform that society as part of transforming the world, instead opting for participation in the reactionary state apparatus and seeking a slightly improved place in the imperialist-dominated world order. The line questions that are at the heart of the crisis of the revolution in Nepal are themselves conditioned by and partial reflections of the overarching line questions that face our movement as a whole.

If we review the history of the emergence of a revisionist line in Nepal we will see that it has very much to do with the contradictory understanding of Maoism which existed and had developed further within RIM and more generally in the international communist movement. This has very much involved the summation (either explicitly or implicitly) of the first stage of communist revolution, of the need for a communist vanguard, of the viability and desirability of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and of whether or not the goal of communist society must be reaffirmed – and on the basis of scientific understanding of that goal and process – further deepened and developed. This goal must, in fundamental terms, guide choices of strategy and programme. Furthermore, the response and reaction to the development of a revisionist line (or perhaps better put, general *lack of response* to the revisionist line) on the part of many RIM participants is itself a reflection of deep and developing differences over fundamental questions of line. These differences touch not only questions of line

on the state and revolution but also on the nature of proletarian internationalism and how to approach major questions of political line, that is to say, either in light of scientific communist principles and theory and the Marxist method more generally or according to non communist standards and approaches such as *Realpolitik* with its underlying instrumentalism, pragmatism and empiricism.

Let us consider how the revisionist line in Nepal emerged in a full-blown way. Baburam Bhattarai, a top leader of the CPN(M), developed and strongly fought for a series of positions that went against the basic revolutionary communist understanding on a whole series of questions. In an article entitled “On Building a New Type of State”¹⁴ he echoed the arguments of the bourgeoisie and the revisionists and opportunists who argue that the experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union and China had been fatally flawed and had evolved into a “dictatorship of the party” and a “dictatorship of the single leader.” Bhattarai also argued that in Nepal, instead of striving to complete the new democratic revolution (a new type of bourgeois democratic revolution, under the leadership of the proletariat, aimed at overthrowing imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism as the first step in establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, and which clears the path for pushing forward into the socialist stage) it was necessary and desirable to go through a special “sub-stage”, aimed at abolishing the country’s monarchy and bringing about a transitional state and a period of democracy without clarifying where this democracy would lead or what would be the *class character* of such a transitional state. Bhattarai argued that it would be necessary to install multi-party democracy, in fact just another name for the bourgeois-democratic system which has proven to be such a useful vehicle to insure the domination of the bourgeoisie and other reactionary classes. Bhattarai’s repackaging of the socialist goal as really only a version of bourgeois democracy went hand-in-hand with, and laid the basis for, rejecting the path of new democratic revolution leading toward socialism and substituting instead the goal of establishing a (bourgeois) democratic republic.

Many of these arguments against the experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat were almost a direct repetition of arguments made in 1990 by K. Venu, leader of the Central Reorganisation Committee, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), even down to using the same worn-out quotation of Rosa Luxemburg about the the “dictatorship of the party” which remains a favorite of Trotskyites and social-democrats the world over.¹⁵ The CRC had been an early and active member of RIM and it was necessary that RIM criticize the reflection in its ranks of the anti-communist offensive that had reached a high point with the collapse of the Soviet-led bloc. Bob Avakian, at the request of CoRIM, wrote a major piece refuting K. Venu’s arguments against the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat entitled “Democracy: More than ever, We Can and Must Do Better Than That.”¹⁶ Unfortunately, many comrades in RIM did not give adequate attention to the struggle against K. Venu and the pivotal question of the proletarian dictatorship at the center of that struggle, and were also not vigilant when Bhattarai’s “New State” article appeared. For many comrades, questions of what to do after seizing power were not seen to be of much importance, when, according to this view, virtually all attention needed to be focused solely on the problem of how to launch and carry forward people’s war. This was a further illustration of the dangerous tendency toward belittling revolutionary communist theory that has existed in the RIM. Failing to pay attention to and enter into the struggle over such cardinal questions over a whole period of time has contributed greatly to the situation we are in today. It is particularly remarkable that the CPI (M-L) (Naxalbari) which came out of the CRC and had even written its own criticism of Venu, however belatedly (8 years later), was unable to see the similarities between Bhattarai’s positions and Venu’s liquidationism.

Inside the CPN(M) there were attempts to develop new thinking that took into account changes in the world and the problems that the revolution in Nepal was encountering. But these were still being done largely within the incorrect framework of confounding communist ideology and program with bourgeois democracy. And this was accompanied by focusing on immediate tactics divorced from the actual goals of the revolution. CPN(M) Chairman Prachanda sometimes tried to distance himself from Bhattarai’s loud and aggressive repudiation of the experience of proletarian revolution, but Prachanda also shared some of the same underlying assumptions and together with his own pragmatism and eclecticism, this left him unable and/or unwilling to develop a real struggle against Bhattarai’s unabashed revisionist positions. Furthermore, struggle that did take place with Bhattarai was focused on secondary matters and did not get to the heart of his revisionist line. Prachanda had increasingly trained the Party in a pragmatism and eclecticism, especially the eclectic combination of opposites – “two into one” – which he called “fusion” in opposition to the Maoist concept of “one divides into two”.¹⁷ The result of this was that Bhattarai’s basic theses were adopted by the Party as a whole at the Party Central Committee Meeting in October 2005, even if a thin veneer of eclecticism was maintained.

For our part, our Party began to wage a sharp and serious struggle against the developing revisionist line, beginning in October 2005, prior to the April 2006 anti-monarchy movement and subsequent ceasefire. The RCP,USA issued a private letter to the Nepal Party leadership critiquing the above-cited article by Baburam Bhattarai that contained a series of revisionist theses concerning the nature of the state, the construction of a special stage of anti-monarchical struggle in place of the new democratic revolution, the history of the communist movement and other points. The letter of the RCP also sharply criticized what was, at the time, a little-noted proposal that had been made by CPN(M) Chairman Prachanda for the merger of the People's Liberation Army with the reactionary Royal Nepal Army. A second letter was sent just after the November 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and a third shortly after the 2008 elections. Copies of all of these letters were distributed to participating parties and organizations of RIM. In 2009 a decision was made to release all of these letters publicly along with a fourth.

Any honest review of the content of those letters shows that the RCP had been able to identify the basic questions of political and ideological line that were at stake in Nepal. A few other forces in the ICM also made criticisms of the Nepalese comrades.¹⁸

Despite the dismissive accusation that these RCP letters were merely re-stating the "ABC's of Marxism" – abstract principles that bore no relation to the practical necessities on the ground – the arguments made in these letters were both substantial on questions of principle and very relevant to the immediate juncture facing the revolution. We felt that it was our internationalist responsibility to struggle very hard against the line that our scientific method told us was leading the revolution to defeat.

Once CPN(M)'s wrong ideological and political position was thus solidified, the practical implications came rapidly. Various agreements were made with reactionary, pro-imperialist political parties to accept a bourgeois-democratic framework. After the absolute monarchy was forced to back down as a result of the People's War and an upsurge in the urban areas also involving middle class strata as well, the Party leadership acted to consolidate this "sub-stage". The Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in November 2006 by which the People's War was formally ended, organs of political of power established by the revolution were abolished, the People's Liberation Army was locked down in cantonments under the supervision of the United Nations, and the Party agreed to take part in and swear allegiance to the new bourgeois institutions including the provisional government. The international community, that is, the network of imperialist and reactionary states and international institutions, such as the UN and the IMF which had been vicious opponents of the people's war and exploiters of the Nepalese people – were presented by CPN(M) as necessary and helpful allies for the reconstruction of the country. And while this process went on, most of the parties of RIM applauded or, at best, were silent. All of the major leaders of the CPN(M) also went along. Among the most enthusiastic supporters of this revisionist dismantlement of the revolution are most of those who are now so loudly accusing Bob Avakian and the RCP,USA of "revisionism" and having a "counter revolutionary" line such as CPI (M-L) (Naxalbari), and PCm (Italy).

The advances as well as difficulties in the revolution and the severe crisis of the old regime did present the CPN(M) with big challenges and new and complex problems. But a wrong theoretical framework and wrong methodology adopted by the Party leadership made it impossible to correctly confront these complexities and chart a course which could lead to the completion of the new democratic revolution and the creation of a radically different type of state. Furthermore, the Party's line had wrongly accepted a bourgeois democratic framework as the source of "legitimacy" which left it dependent on the outcome of elections and reaching agreements with bourgeois political parties and imperialist and reactionary powers. The various steps that the CPN(M) took during these crucial years were not just a series of mistakes; they were a response to objective developments but with a non-communist line, outlook and methodological tools.

The revolutionary struggle in Nepal had inspired great hope and enthusiasm among genuine revolutionary communists and millions of oppressed people around the world. On this basis, RIM and its participating parties built mass political support for the People's War in Nepal among the masses and spread the lessons of the struggle the world over.

The advance of the People's War to the threshold of Kathmandu Valley¹⁹ had brought into sharp relief the question of what kind of state power could be forged. What was needed was a state that would both rely on and enable the most oppressed masses to transform social conditions while embracing the extremely divergent and contradictory social forces and streams of activity which could involve many who do not share, or do not share fully, the orientation and goal of proletarian revolution. Communists needed to focus on and correctly answer

cardinal questions: Could the revolution actually achieve nationwide state power and what would it look like? How could it do better than the previous socialist societies rather than model itself on bourgeois revolutions of the 18th century? What would be the underlying economic relations established and enforced by the new state? How could it welcome dissent and diverse initiative *without giving power back* to the exploiters via multi-party democracy as Bhattarai and Prachanda advocate and practice? How could one correctly draw forward and lead the middle strata who were concentrated in the capital, without letting their (wrong) conception of Nepal's problems and solutions set the terms and vision for what kind of new state needed to be established?

While mastering this process will not be easy in Nepal or any other country, we believe that the orientation at the heart of Avakian's new synthesis, solid core with a lot of elasticity, speaks to this dynamic in a basic way. This includes the need for a leading and expanding core that is clear on the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the aim of continuing socialist revolution as part of the world struggle for communism, and is determined to continue carrying forward this struggle, through all the twists and turns. At the same time, there is the need for acting on the understanding that there will necessarily be many different people and trends in socialist society pulling in many different directions – and leading in such a way that all of this can ultimately contribute to the process of getting at the truth and getting to communism.²⁰ How this will work out in any country will surely be full of surprises and complexities we can only imagine now: as Lenin quoted Goethe, theory is gray, but green is the tree of life. Unfortunately, the UCPN(M) has rejected the basic framework which has emerged for navigating this process.

Exactly because the People's War in Nepal was a profound revolutionary process, it inevitably ran into new and unforeseen territory. It was necessary for all of the parties and organizations in RIM as well as its leading committee to learn all that could be learned from this new revolutionary experience coming forward in Nepal. Every party and organization needed, to the extent of its ability, to enter into a dialog with the Nepalese comrades and each other, over how best to understand this experience and what light and what questions it posed for revolutionary communism in general.

To the extent this process took place, it enriched RIM and its participating parties. But here too the long-standing problems in both line and methodology interfered with this process even at an early stage and grew increasingly worse. Here, too, a kind of "mirror opposites" played a role. For example, at several points in the course of the People's War the Party leadership felt it necessary to carry out negotiations with the enemy, including a temporary ceasefire. There were those in RIM who considered such a tactic wrong, even capitulationist, *ipso facto*, regardless of the specifics of the situation and how it might fit into an overall strategic plan for developing the People's War to final victory. Later, when the CPN(M) took a leap in a wrong direction with the adoption of the Bhattarai sub-stage thesis, these kinds of tactics such as ceasefire, etc., took on new meaning as part of a strategy that explicitly renounced dismantling the old state apparatus. As we know, many in RIM either applauded or remained silent as these revisionist theses were formulated and later put into practice. What links both the earlier facile dismissal of any discussion of negotiations with the later acceptance of the dismantlement of the revolution is the failure to examine questions of strategy, line and policy in light of the actual material conditions facing the movement but more importantly to evaluate how they serve or hinder the longer-term objectives.

Given the reality of the very important and positive role that the Nepal revolution had played in a period of difficulty for the international communist movement and given the history of its relation with RIM there is no doubt that the triumph of a revisionist line in Nepal would have, and has had negative repercussions on the RIM, as well as tragic implications for the Nepalese masses.

What is particularly disturbing is that the objective blow of the domination of the revisionist line and its capitulationist consequences was coupled by a self-imposed wound by much of the rest of RIM of justifying or apologizing for the political developments in Nepal or, upon seeing that things were going in the wrong direction, not taking responsibility to wage the struggle deeply against these wrong lines and falling into a kind of passive determinism. Little attention was given to the revisionist positions coming from the Nepal Party, even when these positions were identified and polemicized against by our Party and a few others as this process unfolded. Instead, communist principles and its basic theory were suspended until the results of these policies were to be "seen in practice".

When the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006 led to the CPN(M) election victory the following year and Prachanda became the Prime Minister of the new Republic, most comrades in RIM, to paraphrase Lenin, suspended disbelief and joined in the exuberance of what even revolutionary comrades in Nepal were

considering “the election miracle”.

As the ugly consequences of the revisionist line became more and more flagrant, when betrayal followed upon betrayal and broken promise followed upon broken promise, even many comrades in Nepal who had initially gone along with the revisionist line went from discomfort to real hatred of what they correctly perceived as betrayal of the revolution. But even these opposition forces have as yet been unable to make a decisive rupture with the revisionist trajectory and framework. They have been dragged along by the leadership of the Party, eclectics, and the whole momentum of the revisionist line and practice, even if many have been kicking and screaming, while the fruits of the revolution have been abandoned and a new facade on the reactionary order has been cemented into place brick by brick.

One would have hoped that the comrades of RIM parties and organizations would have firmly opposed the revisionist line coming from the Party leadership and in so doing give real internationalist support to the masses in Nepal and the revolutionaries in the Party who were so clearly in need of assistance by waging struggle over the line that was leading to objective betrayal. But unfortunately such help was very rare indeed. In fact, many seemed to feel that it was up to the comrades in Nepal alone to determine what line was correct, and that so long as that Party said in words it was not abandoning the goals of the revolution we should continue to tell the world that there was no reason to be concerned. This is actually a profound betrayal of the masses in Nepal and in the world as a whole, leaving people disarmed as to the stakes and unable to play a role in fighting against the revisionist line.

But many others in the ICM, including many in RIM, instead of being able to help the comrades in Nepal sort their way out of the eclectics as well as bald revisionist lines in which they were enmeshed, contributed to these same eclectics by embroidering new levels of wishful thinking masquerading as political analysis and engaging in plain old double-talk.

Given that the revisionist line in Nepal ended the People’s War and disbanded the People’s Liberation Army perhaps it seems paradoxical to point out that the tendency to reduce all of MLM to the waging of people’s war actually blinded some to understanding what was happening in Nepal. Instead of looking at the actual content of the CPN(M)’s program for society, many comrades focused on Prachanda’s promises to “prepare an insurrection” which were often repeated to masses in Nepal, revolutionary-minded Party members and ICM comrades. However, few seemed to notice that the insurrection he promised, to paraphrase Clausewitz, would in reality mean only a violent means of obtaining the same non-revolutionary objectives of establishing a bourgeois democratic republic that the Party had been pursuing by other, in this case peaceful, means. From this political goal flowed the whole conception of an “insurrection” whose success would be based on support from major sections of the officer corp of the reactionary army while the People’s Liberation Army was being de-legitimized by the whole peace process.²¹

IV. RIM’S PARALYSIS IN RELATION TO NEPAL

It was not inevitable that most of RIM would applaud or stand silent as the CPN(M) slipped deeper and deeper into revisionism. Indeed, had more determined criticism arisen from more quarters our movement would be in a much different situation today – better equipped to deal with the ideological and political challenges and better prepared to confront the crossroads in the communist movement.

The extreme failure of RIM to respond energetically and correctly to the emergence of the revisionist line in Nepal was not inevitable, but it is, unfortunately, *consistent* with underlying and long-standing erroneous ideological and political tendencies that have grown over time within RIM and the ICM more generally. Particularly stark is the avoiding of fundamental questions concerning what type of society we are fighting for? What kind of economic system needs to be established? What will be the relationship between a new state and the existing imperialist-reactionary world order? What are the responsibilities toward the revolution in other countries? What will be the nature of the new state power? What will be the role of the vanguard party? How will the state be similar to and different from previous socialist states? What is the role for the intellectuals and other middle strata especially in the urban centers? What is the answer to those who argue that pure democracy is the solution to the problems of society?

Unfortunately, while Bhattarai took the ideological struggle extremely seriously, others have acted as if it were of no importance.²² Even when the real questions have been sharply focused upon in the work of Bob Avakian and specifically in relation to Nepal in the many documents produced by the RCP,USA, the main

response has been silence. And this silence has been justified, in part, by the mistaken belief that political and ideological questions would be sorted out “in practice”, without the hard work of actually examining real life contradictions in light of our revolutionary science.

Silence and “ignore-ance”, however, are not neutral. What they mean is that the dominant ideas in bourgeois society go unchallenged. It means ignoring how these same ideas are incorporated into the thinking and practice of communists themselves. In relation to Nepal it has meant being disarmed ideologically and politically in the face of a powerful and seemingly successful revisionist line and program – until now, when the bitter fruits of this line and approach have become all the more evident to all who have eyes to see. And yet even today, there are those in our movement who seek to bring together an amalgam of Maoist forces without actually confronting the revisionist content of the political line that has led to the debacle in Nepal.

What at first may seem incongruous is that among the forces in RIM who applauded or observed in silence as the Nepal revolution has been going down the drain are many who in the past had opposite political positions. For example, rather than openly support Bhattarai-type renunciation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, some others who went along or said nothing during the UCPN(M)’s revisionist turnaround, have been happy to ignore the problems of socialist revolution and/or simply repeat rote formulas from the past. Among the most enthusiastic supporters of the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Nepal are those who had previously argued (or at least refused to break with those who argued) in relation to the line struggle over the setback of the revolution in Peru, that even *considering* the viability of any negotiation, even on a tactical level, was rank betrayal. How is it possible for someone to switch so suddenly and so easily from one wrong position to another equally wrong, or worse, position? As we shall see later, this has a lot to do with deeply entrenched errors in politics and ideology including what methodology is used to understand and act in relation to objective reality.

V. PERU AND THE CONSECRATION OF POLITICAL TRUTH

The movement’s poor response to revisionism in Nepal was, in many respects, foreshadowed in RIM’s contradictory and largely inadequate response to the developments that took place in the Communist Party of Peru following the capture of the PCP Chairman Gonzalo in 1992 and the emergence of what came to be called the Right Opportunist Line(ROL). It was quite correct and an expression of proletarian internationalism to rally forces all over the world to come to the aid of the PCP under these circumstances and to wage a campaign to defend the life of Chairman Gonzalo in the face of his arrest and imprisonment. But there were other internationalist tasks that fell to the communists, in RIM especially, and it was in relation to these where differences began to emerge.

About one year after Gonzalo’s capture and presentation before the press where he had proclaimed that his capture was only a “bend in the road” and that the people’s war should continue to go forward, documents and videos attributed to Chairman Gonzalo were released which argued for ending the People’s War. An argument was made that the conditions for carrying forward the revolution, in the face of the capture of Gonzalo and other top leadership and changed international conditions, were not favorable and this necessitated a major retreat (for ten or twenty years), and a call was made “to struggle for a Peace Accord” with the Fujimori regime in Peru. Most of the leadership of the Party outside of the prisons denounced the call for peace accords as an enemy-organized “hoax”. They denounced those in the prisons advocating this as revisionist capitulators, and refused to even consider that Gonzalo might be making such arguments. Supporters of the PCP attacked anyone who felt it was necessary to investigate the actual circumstances surrounding the call for the peace accords and to understand and proceed from actual reality to the best of their ability.

The position of the CoRIM, which our Party supported, was to argue that there needed to be an investigation into the actual circumstances concerning the call for negotiations (for example, the actual position of Chairman Gonzalo). Above all the call for negotiations needed to be evaluated on the basis of revolutionary communist principles and an examination of the concrete conditions not primarily on the *authorship* of the line (“line not author” was the formulation that was adopted). The adoption of the essentially correct document “Rally to the Defense of Our Red Flag Flying in Peru” was the culmination of a vigorous process of investigation and struggle. But it should be remembered that adopting this position was no easy matter. This basically correct method of coming to correct conclusions was opposed by some, and overall involved a great deal of struggle throughout the RIM.

Unfortunately this was not the approach taken by the leadership of the PCP outside of the prisons. The Party

leadership failed to address the political arguments of the ROL of arguing for peace accords, which under those circumstances and with that approach could only lead to the defeat of the revolution. Instead the Party leadership essentially restricted its criticism to the denunciation of the proponents of the ROL in the vilest of terms while continuing to insist that Chairman Gonzalo's involvement in the ROL was essentially impossible and could only be an enemy "hoax".

Meanwhile, the PCP's supporters abroad (known as the Peruvian Peoples Movement or MPP) took the same harmful position and raised it to the level of lunacy. All those who did not embrace the "hoax" theory were themselves accused and defamed as aiding and abetting the imperialist and reactionary "hoax". RCP,USA chairman Bob Avakian was a central target of their vituperative and outrageous attacks. Indeed, examining the pros and cons of the arguments of the ROL – and concluding that the ROL did represent an incorrect line and analysis regarding the prospects for carrying forward the revolution that needed to be combated for the revolution to advance – was considered, somehow according to this strange logic, to be giving aid and comfort to the enemy. The more facts that came to light pointing to the possible involvement of Gonzalo in the ROL (such as the series of PCP leaders who were arrested and claimed that Gonzalo had convinced them of the need for a Peace Accord), the more frantic and vitriolic the MPP and some others became. It was in these circumstances that some in RIM first openly invoked the doctrine of "political truth" in this affair. Regardless of the actual facts involved, this doctrine argued that it was politically true that Gonzalo was not behind the Peace Accords and communists internationally were duty-bound to propagate this "truth" and to not fall into what some called "journalistic truth". While few were as bold or consistent as to openly proclaim political truth as a philosophical principle, this same approach often guided or at least interfered with the thinking of many other comrades as well. Really this was nothing different than the concept of truth as a "vital organizing form of experience" that Lenin had criticized so thoroughly in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.²³

Even forces that had been fighting for a correct line such as the RCP,USA were not unaffected by this powerful negative current. One example was the adoption of the Millennium Resolution in 2000, which made opportunist concessions to the hoax theory and other non scientific propositions. Our Party erroneously accepted this resolution in the perceived interest of achieving a certain superficial unity of the movement to project out into the world, which did real harm and strengthened the wrong understanding on a number of important questions, including the line struggle regarding the revolution in Peru – although our Party did quickly recognize this error and move to make the parties and organizations of the RIM aware of this.²⁴

The point is that responding to the emergence of the Right Opportunist Line in Peru required that all communists, and especially RIM, adopt a communist approach to line struggle and act on a scientific basis to analyze and change the world. But this approach was adopted unevenly in RIM and openly attacked by many, which weakened the ability of RIM and the international communist movement generally to draw correct conclusions and aid the comrades in Peru under very difficult conditions. This approach left the masses all over the world without adequate communist leadership to understand what had happened in Peru and what conclusions should be drawn. It also went against the requirement to take a scientific approach to reality, including those parts of reality that are unpleasant, or may run counter to the advance of the revolutionary movement at any given time. What had been a positive feature of the basis for regrouping the Maoist forces after the coup in China – communists confronting the reality of a revisionist coup in China – was being undercut by this whole instrumentalist approach to negative developments, not caring what impact this would have on the ability of the masses to take up the challenges of emancipating humanity.

It is worth underlining that the whole method and approach referred to above contributed to the great difficulties that the PCP itself was facing on the ground. The insistence on the "hoax" theory rang more and more false as evidence continued to mount about Gonzalo's position as the likely author of the ROL, and a whole series of PCP leaders either accepted the ROL position or else condemned Gonzalo as a traitor for authoring the ROL. The PCP membership had never been educated in any thoroughgoing way as to why the call for a Peace Accord was wrong, nor on how to carry forward the revolution under these changed conditions. Instead the leadership had relied on simplistic denunciations of betrayal. The remaining PCP leadership outside of prison seemed to believe that the political battle over the call for a Peace Accord could be sidestepped or ignored while advancing the People's War on the ground. This whole approach did more and more damage, contributing to the situation where the People's War itself was eliminated as a contending force for nationwide state power, the great bulk of its forces destroyed or demoralized, and those remaining reduced to small pockets of rival groupings, some of whom are themselves demanding peace accords.

Unfortunately, this whole chapter in the common experience of RIM has not been adequately summed up.

Some comrades have refused, to this very day, to condemn the handful of PCP supporters abroad whose deep vitriol against comrade Avakian and the CoRIM was matched only by their heights of fantasy about the current state of the people's war in Peru. The greater problem, however, is not the tolerance of vicious opportunists by some but rather the far more prevalent attitude of simply ignoring the whole experience in Peru and in particular the wrong method and approach that was far too much accepted, and adopted, within the RIM.

In actual fact, the People's War in Peru was one of the most important revolutionary struggles over the last few decades. The revolution in Peru encouraged the hopes of people all over the world and it was a living illustration of the great potential of the masses to be led to struggle for communist revolution. At the same time, the experience in Peru also reveals, especially in light of further developments and examination of line, serious contradictions and errors in the line of that Party, including on the level of epistemology. In an effort to struggle for a more correct method and approach including over how to practice proletarian internationalism in these circumstances, our Party issued a document calling for further discussion over the Peru experience and identified problems in the approach of RIM including tendencies toward instrumentalism.²⁵ Unfortunately, this document went mainly ignored within RIM.

There is both a scientific need and a revolutionary moral requirement to have a more complete and correct summation of the whole experience of the Communist Party of Peru. It is a sad commentary on the state of affairs in RIM that more than a few comrades went from ignoring or even tailing some seriously wrong positions of the PCP when the successes of the People's War provided a kind of "capital" but when the movement in Peru began to appear more a burden than an asset, these same comrades took the irresponsible attitude of dropping any concern for what had been an important effort to make communist revolution in contemporary conditions and which had played a major role in the collective experience of RIM. And it is not surprising that key figures in the call for a new international organization are among the worst offenders.

VI. PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM : TWO OPPOSING CONCEPTIONS

Two different and opposing lines on the nature of proletarian internationalism has very much been at the heart of sharpening differences within RIM and the ICM. This explains to a large degree the opportunist efforts to build "unity" of communist forces internationally by avoiding crucial questions of ideological and political line. A wrong understanding of "proletarian internationalism" also helps explain the history we have reviewed above when many have considered it fine to tail first one then another wrong line in the ICM as long as that line appeared to be "getting somewhere".

A deeper and more scientific understanding of proletarian internationalism is a core element in the new synthesis that Bob Avakian has been bringing forward. Avakian's view of proletarian internationalism is very much linked to an understanding of the communist revolution as essentially a process taking place most fundamentally on the world scale.

Avakian's understanding is both consistent with and develops further Marx and Engels' original theorization of the proletarian revolution. However, differing understandings of proletarian revolution have been contending throughout the history of the communist movement.

Proletarian internationalism was central in Lenin's thinking, including as he confronted the problems of beginning proletarian revolution in Tsarist Russia amidst the catastrophe and crisis that the first imperialist world war had wrought. Avakian's *Conquer the World?* was a key work in excavating basic teachings of Marx and Lenin, criticizing erroneous trends of thinking within the communist movement and putting the understanding of proletarian internationalism on a more scientific footing. As part of this, Avakian addresses the difference between Lenin's understanding of internationalism and that of the Irish revolutionary John Connolly. Connolly argued that internationalism was the support or aid that one revolution extends to another, unlike Lenin's more scientific understanding, in his own words, that the revolution in each country should be seen as "my share in the preparation, the propaganda and the acceleration of the world revolution."²⁶ Avakian developed this further, emphasizing that while political power can and must, as a general rule, be seized first in one or several countries, the revolution in a given country needs to be seen in the context of a single world process which is the most determinant factor in shaping the terrain on which the revolution is advancing.

Despite the fundamentally correct and scientific orientation of Marx and Lenin, the opposite view also has long and deep roots in the communist movement, which was particularly ardent during the period of Stalin's leadership in the USSR and the serious errors that took place in this regard. These included treating, in practice,

the necessary defense of the socialist country as the equivalent of the advance of the world revolution. In fact, as Avakian analyzed over a long period of time, the defense (both by the masses in that country and by the communists and revolutionary masses worldwide) of the socialist state, while essential, is subordinate to the overall process of world revolution. Further, Avakian recognized that some of the measures taken by the socialist state to defend itself in a hostile imperialist-dominated environment, such as the need to practice peaceful coexistence, objectively come into contradiction with the larger task of advancing the world proletarian revolution, even when such measures are correct and necessary. This is much different from the argument that the socialist state has an identity of interests with the international proletariat, as was the understanding during the period of the Comintern (the Communist International, which was brought into being shortly after the October Revolution in Russia and continued in existence until the Second World War).

In the sphere of proletarian internationalism it is to be noted that Mao's rupture with Stalin and the experience of building socialism in the USSR was less complete than in a number of other spheres. This could be seen in some of the questionable foreign policy measures adopted by Mao involving a series of reactionary states in the Third World, such as the Marcos regime in the Philippines, the Shah of Iran, Mobutu in Zaire (Congo), etc., and efforts to develop a worldwide united front with the US-led bloc of imperialist countries against Soviet social-imperialism, portrayed as "the main danger."²⁷

These problems were not only evidenced in practice, they also took on a theoretical formulation as well. Mao had argued during the period of new democratic revolution that, "thus in wars of national liberation, patriotism is applied internationalism."²⁸ In fact, this formulation confounds two different questions: the stage of the revolution in China which needed to carry out new democratic revolution, and the ideology and orientation of the communists which could not be "patriotism". Mao's formulation "patriotism is applied internationalism" had a great deal of influence on the newly emerging Maoist movement in the 1960s and 70s. One reason is that this viewpoint dovetailed with spontaneous tendencies that existed, especially but not exclusively in the countries where revolution required going through a stage of new democracy, to confound the ideology of nationalism and anti-imperialism with the proletarian internationalist world view, to make a kind of "two into one" of these two ultimately opposite world views.

Within RIM and the ICM there has been discomfort and disagreement and little desire to engage and struggle over this important analysis by Avakian and his drawing of a sharp line of distinction between nationalism and communism as the orientation of communists, even when necessarily and correctly waging a struggle for new democracy.²⁹ This kind of appeal to nationalism also explains why some forces in RIM have continued to insist on repeating empty exhortations about "revolution is the main trend" and "Africa, Asia and Latin America remain the storm centers of the world revolution" when even the most cursory study of the actual conditions of revolutionary struggle in the world today shows that in even the most viciously exploited and oppressed countries the revolution is not only not surging ahead but is confronting the same fundamental questions facing the whole international communist movement, questions whose correct resolution is crucial to enable future advance.

The Outlook of the National Bourgeoisie

Throughout the history of the communist movement – and the Maoist movement has been no exception – there has been a recurrent problem in failing to distinguish clearly between revolutionary communism and bourgeois democracy. There is a great deal to be learned positively, once again, from Mao's last great battle against the revisionists in the final stages of the Cultural Revolution. The revolutionaries in China carried out a very rich discussion and struggle over the phenomenon of some forces who during the new democratic stage of the revolution, joined the Party "organizationally but not ideologically", and linked this to the phenomenon seen in socialist revolution of bourgeois democrats becoming capitalist roaders.³⁰ (However, this is another important development of Marxism by Mao and his followers that went largely ignored by much of the Maoist movement.

While Mao's theses on the new democratic revolution are widely known and often cited among Maoists, in reality this has often been approached in a dogmatic and formalistic way without really struggling to understand the dynamics of the relationship between these two stages of revolution in the oppressed countries, their interpenetration of these two stages, and how this takes shape in varying and different ways in the contemporary world. Meanwhile, empty repetition of rote formulas covers over an actual content of limiting the struggle to national and democratic rights.

Different political tendencies, and ultimately different classes, have differing understandings of what are the

fundamental problems of society and, flowing from this, what are the fundamental solutions that need to be provided. For the proletariat and its political representatives, the revolutionary communists, the fundamental problems that need to be solved are exploitation, oppression and class divisions generally and all that is bound up with this. From this flows the need for world proletarian revolution, including the crucial component of new democratic revolution. But if the problem of society is seen from the class interests and world view of the national bourgeoisie and its political representatives (regardless of their personal class background or social condition), that is to say, if the problem is seen as a society in which commodity production is stifled and bourgeois competition does not take place “fairly”, it is quite natural that a bourgeois-democratic revolution will be seen as the solution.

James Connolly or Lenin what kind of international organization?

In a certain sense the failure of RIM to take a firm and scientific stand in relation to events in Nepal, as well as real difficulties and opposition earlier to taking a responsible stand in relation to the two-line struggle in Peru after Gonzalo’s capture, is very much linked to the wrong understanding of internationalism we have been discussing. Instead of grasping the central ideological and political role of RIM and the need for it to collectively confront new difficulties and challenges from a revolutionary communist standpoint, a different type of logic set in: RIM was seen by many as an organization to promote the Connolly conception of internationalism of extending assistance of one revolution to another – and please don’t interfere in the activities of another Party, even if that Party is destroying the revolution. Often this included the belief that the people on the ground are necessarily the ones most capable of understanding the line questions, and that people outside the country must not challenge what people on the ground are saying, no matter what line they are advocating, or the method they are employing to try to arrive at the truth.

Within RIM these two different understandings of proletarian internationalism, these two different understandings of MLM, were coexisting from the beginning, occasionally coming into sharp contradiction. The understanding Avakian fought for provided the orientation that also enabled and led our Party to make its contribution to the formation and development of RIM. The RIM *Declaration*, despite reflecting some aspects of compromise, reflected on the whole a generally advanced and correct understanding of these questions. But there was always a strong counter-current which reflected the James Connolly conception of internationalism and, to the extent these ideas had any basis in Mao, they built upon what actually were weaknesses in Mao’s understanding and practice, not his strengths.

Within RIM there was also a distorted and pragmatist understanding of the relation between practice and the truth, according to which advances in practice would automatically be translated into theoretical advances or the correctness or incorrectness of theoretical propositions could be determined by examining their successes (real or supposed) in practice. And as we have seen, practice itself was often narrowly defined, quite literally, to mean only armed struggle. If we look at the draft “Proposal” that has just been brought to our attention as we finalized this letter (see Appendix below), we see this kind of vision fairly clearly spelled out: “a potential new wave of the world proletarian revolution develops and emerges, with the people’s wars led by Maoist parties as its reference points and strategic anchor. The realization of this potential ultimately depends on how successful the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist parties are in fulfilling their revolutionary tasks at the national and international level. The pooling of their understanding and experience and the development of their capacity to take a united revolutionary message to the rebellious masses all over the world, have decisive importance.” The essential task of the ICM in this impoverished view of things is the “pooling of understanding and experience”. What understanding is to be “pooled”? How is experience to be summed up, for example the “experience” of a Maoist-led government in Nepal? The very conception of “pooling understanding” is a combining of “two-into-one” worthy of Prachanda and his “fusion” theory and is an open appeal for pragmatism. What happened to the primacy of political and ideological line so central to Mao?

It is not surprising that such wrong political and ideological currents existed within RIM. These problems have their antecedents in the history of the Maoist movement, of the international communist movement more generally particularly but not only during the period of Stalin’s leadership, and they have their material bases in society itself. But what is to be deplored is a stubborn tenacity to hang onto and insist on these wrong approaches when something more correct has been available. In so doing, previous secondary errors in understanding take on a whole different dimension. Avakian has been able to identify and criticize these erroneous ideological trends (including their philosophical, epistemological and methodological elements). This is a crucial part of the new synthesis putting communist theory on a more scientific basis. It is exactly

because the new synthesis put its finger on these deep and persistent errors that some who consider these errors to be so central to their understanding of “Maoism” feel the need to leap out with their outrageous charges of “counter revolutionary”.

Like the nationalism and concessions to nationalism which we have discussed above, other related ideological and methodological diseases include empiricism, pragmatism, instrumentalism and the political application of *realpolitik* (analyzing and evaluating political developments not on the basis of revolutionary communist principles and with a scientific method but from the narrow, pragmatic perspective of how a political decision or practice could, in the short run, have perceived beneficial results). Avakian described instrumentalist thinking as an approach where the conclusion is tautologically connected to the beginning premise. “In other words you set out to ‘interpret’ – and you end up bending reality in a certain way to make it ‘useful’ to the objectives that you have... It’s a kind of circular tautological approach in which you start with certain objectives or premises and then you interpret reality to be a verification and vindication of those objectives or premises, rather than objectively and scientifically investigating reality, analyzing and synthesizing and, through the back and forth between theory and practice, arrive at a deeper appreciation of reality and an enhanced ability to transform it.”³¹

VII. WHAT KIND OF UNITY DO THE COMMUNISTS NEED?

Throughout the history of RIM there was tension between correctly building RIM on the basis of its political and ideological line, as expressed in its most concentrated form in its *Declaration* and the document *Long Live Marxism-Leninism-Maoism!*, and a wrong tendency to build RIM mainly on the basis of its “forces” and, in particular, the strength of the People’s Wars in Peru and Nepal. Later, this wrong secondary approach was also expressed in the belief of some that RIM should incorporate new participants not on the basis of the overall political and ideological positions of these organizations but rather on whether these parties were seen as successfully carrying out armed revolutionary struggle under a banner of Maoism, without a real discussion of what the content of that meant. In a certain sense this is another expression of the Movement is everything, the final goal nothing, as Lenin had so sharply criticized the revisionist Bernstein in the period of the first world war. This wrong approach has been more stubbornly clung to and insisted upon in the face of the need to advance the theoretical foundations of our movement beyond the initial unity of these above mentioned documents and when the very real changes and challenges posed in the objective world require further ruptures.

If one examines the May 1, 2011 Call for a new international communist organization,³² as well as the most recent document of the draft Proposal (see again the appendix below) this type of approach is striking. As we have seen, the 2012 document has taken this approach to its logical conclusion in which people’s wars are “the reference points and strategic anchor”. No real effort is made to express the political and ideological criteria for any such regroupment. In the 2011 document a false (and frankly ridiculous) picture is painted in which people’s war is advancing in Peru, the Philippines and Turkey, and that, somehow, this will serve as the basis for regrouping the communists. As CPI (M-L) (Naxalbari) puts it in arguing for this type of approach, “This [unity] must necessarily be broad enough, in the topics selected as well as participation, so that the present reality of the international Maoist movement is properly represented. Through this process the points of unity and differences can be identified and a relatively advanced platform can be arrived at, to become the basis of reorganization.”³³ In other words, rather than focus on the lines of demarcation that have emerged and are sharpening, we must first decide who should be included in this discussion and then look for the lowest common denominator of political line that can keep these forces “united”. The signatories to the May 1, 2011 Call included the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), so we can understand what the “relatively advanced platform” is likely to look like and what kinds of revisionism it will tolerate. However, the paltry May 1 Call does have some unifying threads, which reflect precisely some of the features of the “mirror opposites” referred to in the *Manifesto from the RCP, USA* quoted earlier: including talk of Maoism with no discussion of Mao’s most important contribution on continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and reducing Maoism to people’s war. In many ways, this 2011 Call is a concentration of all that was wrong and secondary in the previous functioning of RIM and can only lead backward. Now we see, with the latest 2012 Proposal, just where it leads to: denouncing Bob Avakian’s new synthesis as “counter revolutionary”.

VIII. STAGES, CONTINUITY AND RUPTURE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARXISM

We have already discussed above how Bhattarai and Prachanda were, in their own fashion, offering a summation of the first stage of the communist revolution and proposing lessons, albeit very wrong and unscientific ones. It can also be seen that Chairman Gonzalo of the PCP had also begun examining some of this experience and had developed a series of formulations, some of which came to be incorporated in what the PCP called Gonzalo Thought.

For example, Gonzalo tried to answer the very important question of why the revolution in China had been overturned by focusing overwhelmingly on the problem of arming the masses under socialism. While the problem of leadership of the armed forces in a socialist society is a major problem and has contributed to counter-revolution, it cannot be said to encompass the whole question of the political and ideological line resulting in reversals of previous socialist societies. For example, even if there are armed militias (as Mao's followers in China sought to develop) who leads them? How can it be assured that these forces will be used to support a genuine proletarian line? What about the even greater force of the central army of the socialist state – still needed in a world where powerful, antagonistic imperialist states are a major force? But instead of picking up on the orientation and basic discoveries of Mao concerning the class struggle under socialism and how to wage it, Gonzalo developed an alternative line of “people's war until communism” envisioning armed struggle as a permanent and even decisive element in the whole transition period to communism. This was linked to the PCP's understanding of political power. The PCP had very correctly popularized the quotation of Lenin that without political power all is illusion. But at the same time the achievement of political power tended to become itself the final goal as reflected in the PCP's statement that political power is the most important thing in Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.³⁴ Our Party noted that, as important as political power is in the revolutionary process, it needs to be seen in the context of political power for whom and for what?³⁵ which we believe is consistent with a correct interpretation of Mao's theses. This is an important example, but only an example nonetheless, of diverging responses to the experience of the first wave of the communist revolution.

There were many other questions as well in which different and contradictory understandings concerning the goal of communism, the nature of the socialist transition period and other crucial questions began to appear in sometimes embryonic form. Unfortunately most of the forces in RIM and the ICM did not pursue this line of interrogation.

On one level, all communists accept in words at least that Marxism is something that must develop. The question is in what direction will change occur: with the new synthesis Marxism becomes more scientific, more true, more revolutionary, more capable of guiding the struggle forward to the emancipatory goal and on that basis attract increasing numbers of masses of people in the world. But if communists fail to respond to the great needs and ultimately end either tailing the non-liberating non-solutions of the bourgeois era, or dogmatically wall themselves off from the real problems of revolution and what passes for Marxism, or MLM changes by shriveling up and dying, our science will become a pale shadow of its revolutionary past, incapable of responding to new challenges and new contradictions.

We have seen that, apart from Avakian and advocates of the new synthesis, it has mainly been the leaders of the UCPN(M) or, in other words, the right, who have addressed questions emerging from the first stage of communist revolution. Of course, the answers that the UCPN(M) leaders have advanced all go in the direction of liquidating the communist project. Among those in RIM who have more tended to the dogmatic, “left” in form position, few have presented arguments in writing. One exception to this is the Communist (Maoist) Party of Afghanistan. Although it is necessary to strongly protest the venomous and gratuitous attacks the C(M)PA makes, especially against comrades from the Communist Party of Iran (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist), the C(M)PA article “The Communist Party of Iran (MLM) has fallen into the lost road of ‘post MLM’” does shed light on the ideology and politics involved in these efforts to “regroup the ICM”.³⁶ The C(M)PA's main point is to argue that it is wrong to recognize that a stage of the communist movement has ended and it is necessary to usher in a new one, and similarly it is wrong to believe that the understanding of communists must also reach a new level.

The C(M)PA's “Post MLM” article puts it this way: “New synthesizes such as Gonzalo Thought or, a new path such as Prachanda Path or an ism such as Avakianism are not like following up and further developing Marxism Leninism Maoism. Rather it stands for a brand new post Marxism, Leninism, Maoism mental weapon

and framework. This is exactly why we consider it as a line that is much more of a side-spinning deviation in contrast with what was exposed by the wrong line of the Communist Party of Peru called Gonzalo Thought and way deeper and further than the deviationist Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) called Prachanda Path.”

This statement that Bob Avakian’s new synthesis, mis-labeled “Avakianism”, is a “way deeper” deviation than that of the UCPN(M), is itself astounding. Who has aborted a revolution? Transformed the goal of the struggle to perfecting bourgeois democracy? Which line has effectively turned its back on the struggling masses all over the world? Nevertheless, there is something important to be considered underneath the C(M) PA’s denunciation: a wrong understanding of the process through which Marxism (or any science for that matter) develops from a lower to a higher stage. In reality, Avakian’s new synthesis is not a departure from Marxism as the C(M)PA suggests, but rather a further development of Marxism. But the C(M)PA understands this whole process wrongly.

Here is how the C(M)PA explains the development of Marxism from one stage to another:

“Also, in the qualitative level of changing, while the qualitative changes are the major aspect of the phenomenon changing into another phenomenon, there also are quantitative changing of types as well. This is the way in which through the process of quantitative changing, the qualitative changes are accumulated as well, and also qualitative changes get accumulated eventually. During the qualitative level of changing, a qualitative leap takes place that changes the fundamental contradiction of the phenomena and turning it into a new phenomenon.

“The theoretical framework founded by Marx is also not an exception in regard to this law. Since the time of Marx and Engels, this mental weapon has passed through two levels of progressive development that were Leninism and Maoism. This is not intended to underestimate the importance of the new qualities of Leninism and Maoism. Our intention is to clarify that in Marxism Leninism, the continuation of Marxism and generality of Marxism Leninism is the essence of changing. Breaking off from original Marxism is not the major factor. Also in Marxism, Leninism, Maoism, the continuation of Marxism, Leninism in Maoism and generality of Marxism, Leninism, Maoist is the essence of changing. Breaking off from Marxism, Leninism is not the major factor. This is why the different levels of Marxism, Marxism Leninism are fundamentally different levels of development of a single ideological weapon.”

The C(M)PA touches on the important question of the relationship between continuity and rupture in the development of the revolutionary communist science from a lower to a higher level. In an overall sense, the principal aspect is continuity – that is, the upholding and enriching of the propositions, theses, methods of analysis first developed by Marx and later raised to successively higher levels by Lenin and Mao and today by Avakian, while rupture, which involves (although not exclusively) the rejection of those elements of the previous understanding that are discovered to be wrong, or partially wrong, is in an overall sense secondary in the process through which Marxism has taken leaps which does involve synthesis. On one level, this seems to be what the C(M)PA is arguing in the above cited passage and with which we would agree – there is a single continuity of Marxism, and it does represent a single ideological weapon. But this correct observation must not be used to negate that Marxism has gone through leaps in the course of its developments and these leaps also involve rupture with what were previously understood truths. Achieving synthesis involves both rupture and continuity, whereby the whole, including even previous positive elements, are recast. In the C(M)PA discussion, reaching a new stage is a very mechanical process essentially resulting from the accumulation of incremental advances in understanding. This leaves out the central role of synthesis in reaching a higher level of understanding, especially at key nodal points in the development of our revolutionary science. “As Bob Avakian has expressed it, communism is an integral philosophy and political theory at the same time as it is a living, critical and continuously developing science.”³⁷

The C(M)PA constructs a Great Wall between rupture and continuity. First, to note what should be obvious: rupture and continuity are a unity of opposites. It is the dialectical inter-penetration between them that needs to be grasped. In the development of Marxism it is necessary to stress that without rupture there can be no continuity.

If Marxism does not rupture with those aspects and elements that are wrong, one-sided and unscientific, Marxism cannot maintain its continuity with its scientific kernel. If Marxism does not weed out its own previous wrong understandings as they are discovered in the course of social practice and the advance of human knowledge more generally, if it is not in this sense continually re-examining and probing its premises, it ceases to be a science at all. This is what Avakian has been doing in criticizing those secondary but nonetheless

real and damaging elements in the previous understanding and practice that has actually gone against the basic scientific understanding of Marxism. And the result is not simply to add corrections or amendments to the existing body of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism: the previously existing understanding itself is recast, a new synthesis emerges.

The C(M)PA's mechanical description of quantitative advances in understanding leading to qualitative leaps and its efforts to apply this to the development of Marxism is very much linked to the erroneous viewpoint that the application of Marxism in a specific country will automatically lead to the corresponding advance in theoretical understanding. Among many of the supporters of the PCP at the height of its struggle, that argument was never far below the surface: because the Peruvian revolution was advancing, the recognition of this advance would also prove the universal validity of Gonzalo Thought. Conversely, some comrades have argued that because there has not been a successful socialist revolution since China, there cannot be a leap in the realm of theory. This kind of thinking is heavily marred by nationalism and empiricism.

Let us return to the C(M)PA's arguments about the quantitative and qualitative additions to Marxism. In fact, qualitative breakthroughs are not only the result of an accumulation of partial truths, although that is definitely involved. At certain nodal points in the development of any science, accumulated experience, further debate, the influence of discoveries and controversies in other fields will require re-examination of some of the postulates and previous understandings.

That the C(M)PA would object so violently to the process of reaching and uniting around a new higher understanding of Marxism, is not so puzzling. Indeed, in the process to form RIM itself and in the subsequent adoption of the formulation of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism the problem of stage and leap in our understanding was directly struggled out. There were those even inside RIM who fought tooth and nail that Marxism-Leninism-Maoism was not a higher development of Marxism-Leninism.³⁸ Very much at the heart of this refusal was a stubborn denial of the critique that Mao developed of Stalin's errors in many fields: in understanding the class struggle under socialism, the difference between the contradictions among the people and the contradictions between the people and the enemy, failing to see the unity and struggle of opposites as the central law of dialectics, and so on. To the extent that lip service was given to the contributions of Mao, these were seen as the simple additions to the existing body of theory. There was a refusal to recognize that these additions also involved rejection of certain ideas and the recasting of others. Sometimes it was even accepted that Mao understood some aspects better than Stalin but this was to be explained, according to this view, simply by the fact that Mao lived later than Stalin and that further experience had been accumulated – as if further experience alone would necessarily lead to a more advanced understanding.

In reality, new experiences of making proletarian revolution generally do not lead to a single new explanation but to different, contradictory explanations. They lead to two-line struggle. In our view, the coup d'état in China was a tragic and unfortunate "testing" of Mao's whole thesis concerning the danger of capitalist restoration in socialist society and the need for continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. It both confirmed his basic thesis and also provides a great deal of material for the further development and recasting of the understanding he developed. But this is not how many others looked at it, and indeed it is not the conclusion that necessarily imposes itself spontaneously. Enver Hoxha and many others considered the loss in China "proof" that Maoism was of no use whatsoever.

Today revolutionary communism has again reached a new stage in its development through the elaboration of Bob Avakian's new synthesis. Like previous advances in our science it involves both continuity and rupture and the recasting of the ensemble. The new synthesis provides genuine continuity with Mao by going beyond Mao, and identifying elements, albeit secondary, which are actually in contradiction to the overwhelmingly scientific aspects of Mao's teachings. In the words of Avakian himself (as cited in the *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*): "It is very important not to underestimate the significance and positive force of this new synthesis: criticizing and rupturing with significant errors and shortcomings while bringing forward and *recasting* what has been positive from the historical experience of the international communist movements and the socialist countries that have so far existed; in a real sense reviving – on a new more advanced basis – the *viability* and, yes, the *desirability* of a whole new and radically different world, and placing this on an ever firmer foundation of materialism and dialectics... So we should not underestimate the potential of this as a source of hope and of daring on a solid scientific foundation."

In the course of this letter we have discussed some of those elements that are incorporated into the new synthesis. For a more comprehensive treatment we refer again to the *Manifesto from the RCP, USA* and other

documents.³⁹ The discarding of the notion of class truth and what Avakian refers to as the “reification of the proletariat” are part of the philosophical and epistemological elements of the new synthesis. The present two-line struggle that is shaping up in the ICM involves these ideological questions as well.

Avakian has also identified and criticized quasi-religious elements that have co-existed and interfered with correctly understanding Marxism as a science. Notions such as the “negation of the negation” which Marx and Engels borrowed from Hegel, or the often repeated statement of the “inevitable victory of communism”, have always existed as a counter-current in revolutionary communism. Within RIM some of these wrong ideas were taken to new heights by Gonzalo’s concept that “the revolution is on rails” or that “billions of years of matter in motion are leading to communism.”⁴⁰ This kind of thinking cannot be dismissed as mere empty triumphalism seeking to buck up the courage of the comrades and the masses. Quasi-religious notions stand in the way of looking at revolutionary communism as a science and helping it advance as a science which can approximate reality more fully and serve as an even better tool for transforming the world.

In this light there is also an important discussion between the role of Marxism as a science and its relation to the proletariat as a class. Within RIM a wrong and mechanical understanding of this has been widely adopted. Some of this was discussed in our debate with Ajith of the CPI (M-L) (Naxalbari) in *Struggle!*,⁴¹ concerning the relationship between partisanship and the truth in Marxism. Marxism is partisan to the interests of the proletariat, but it is not true because it is partisan. Indeed, the fundamental reason for Marxism’s partisanship lies in the objective position of a class (the proletariat) whose ultimate interests lie in leading the transformation of society beyond the realm of commodity production, and everything ultimately bound up with this.

It is only in this sense that Marxism can be considered to be partisan. It is not and must never be presented as, a reflection of the consciousness of the workers at a specific moment or in a specific country nor as an ideology which reflects the immediate or particular or corporate interests of the workers. This is an important point in Avakian’s criticism of “reification of the proletariat”, meaning a failure to conceive of the proletariat in its abstract, higher than life quality as a class occupying a certain position in relation to the mode of production and in the overall historical development of class society, but instead to look at the proletariat as a conglomerate of concrete or actual workers found in a specific country or situation. It is the objective role of the proletariat as a class, and its fundamental interests as a class, in abolishing all relations of exploitation and oppression, through the advance to communism, on a world scale – and not the proletariat as a whole in this or that country, at any particular time – to which communism fundamentally corresponds, and which it serves.

Here again we see both continuity and rupture. Marx and Engels first emphasized the world- historic task of the proletariat of ushering in a whole new epoch in human history. Both Lenin and Mao upheld this concept and defended it against revisionist distortion, and in so doing further enriched it. For example Lenin’s important work *What is To Be Done?* insists on communists being a tribune of the people and not a trade union secretary and Lenin’s whole discussion of the role of consciousness reflects a very important correct understanding. It is no surprise that that work is one of the most ignored and/or distorted and attacked of Lenin’s writings, precisely because it does go directly against the economism and narrowness that has so often masqueraded as communism. Similarly Mao led the CPC to emphasize, popularizing a citation from Marx, that “the proletariat can free itself only by freeing all of mankind.” But it is also true that there were secondary trends in the CPC (not to mention more egregious errors of this type during the USSR under Stalin’s leadership and his insistence that “communists are made of special stuff”) to lose sight of this, or to attribute a kind of “special place” in relation to reaching the truth, to specific people from an exploited class position or representing that section of the masses – a kind of “reification”.

Avakian’s criticism of the reification of the proletariat is thus a criticism and rupture with some of the secondary non-scientific understanding and practice of Mao and his predecessors in their understanding of the relationship between the proletariat as a class and the revolutionary process. At the same time, Avakian is upholding the correct scientific kernel that runs through the whole development of revolutionary communism and takes it further. His whole emphasis on communists being emancipators of humanity is a good example of both continuity with a theme that has run through the whole history of communism since Marx but which also has required rupture with counter-currents linked to mechanical materialism and concepts of class truth and a reified proletariat.⁴²

IX. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR A NEW STAGE OF COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

Despite the wishful thinking or self-delusion of some comrades, we have a great deal of work to do if the communist movement is to answer and defeat the slanders of our enemies; provide a scientific summation of the whole first wave of proletarian revolution; bring forward new initiators of a new stage of this revolution; and present a viable, attractive and convincing vision of the society that we are fighting to bring into being.

Thanks to Bob Avakian's new synthesis there is a basis to both scientifically and enthusiastically uphold the great achievements of the communist movement while rigorously criticizing those elements that are incorrect and actually run counter to communism – such as class truth and the related concept of reification of the proletariat, nationalism, pragmatism and positivism – as well as secondary but real errors in carrying out the dictatorship of the proletariat in the previous socialist societies. Indeed, these two tasks are inextricably linked: without criticizing past errors we will not successfully defend our achievements. Without basing ourselves on our achievements we will not correctly see the actual mistakes that need to be overcome to do better next time. These political and ideological tasks are present on a world scale and in every country.

It is neither possible nor desirable to simply turn back the clock and try to reconstruct RIM or some other international organization on the basis of previous criteria and certainly not by seeking to organize forces while opposing the necessary and critical focus on cardinal questions of ideological and political line. Any lingering doubts anyone might have on this subject should be dispelled by the 2012 "Proposal" (referred to in the Appendix below). It represents a whole wrong political and ideological line which is now being articulated and fought for. It is an attempt to "regroup communists" without and against revolutionary communism as it has been further developed through the new synthesis.

The authors of this Proposal hope to avoid, and prevent substantive discussion of the new synthesis even while hurling charges of "counter-revolutionary" and asking others to sign-on to this latest crusade. They want to claim the achievements of RIM while turning their back on the revolutionary thrust that the formation and development RIM historically represented. In reality, if the "Proposal" were to be adopted it would only negate the real accomplishments of RIM and work against the whole purpose for which RIM was founded. Such an approach could only lead to a setback at a time when the proletarian revolution has a great need for an advance. A framework for that advance exists.

There is a pressing objective need for a thoroughgoing debate amongst those who have made up the international communist movement and others as well. It is a debate whose successful conclusion can also deeply intersect with and effect the political growth of a new generation coming forward in struggle, which, to paraphrase Mao, is seeking philosophy but needs to be won to revolutionary communism. On the other hand, a failure to adequately confront the political and ideological questions of the hour, or to draw the wrong conclusions, will further accelerate the downward slide of the communist movement.

Only on the basis of achieving a deeper level of political and ideological unity will it be possible to take a further look at how the practical unity of the communist forces can best be further advanced. The question of choosing between being "the vanguard of the future" or being reduced to being the "residue of the past" is acutely posed – and the outcome of this struggle will have tremendous implications. It is necessary that all of the forces who have made up RIM and the international communist movement devote the attention and energy that is commensurate with both the extreme dangers of allowing the current slide to go unchallenged and, on the other hand, the real possibility and great need of ushering in a new stage of the communist revolution. Indeed, this discussion is already overdue and there can be no good reason or valid excuse for ignoring it.

A two-line struggle has now sharply emerged from amongst those forces who have made up the RIM. There can be no turning back.

To quote the conclusion from the *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*:

"To the revolutionaries and communists everywhere, to all those who thirst for another radically different and

far better world: Let us not retreat into and retrench in the past, in whatever form – let us instead go forward boldly toward the goal of communism and the emancipation of humanity from thousands of years of tradition’s chains.”

The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA – May 1st, 2012

Appendix

As we were finalizing this Letter to Participating Parties and Organizations of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, we learned of the existence of two new documents being circulated for signature by “a few RIM parties,” entitled *On the World Situation* and *A Proposal for a Conference to Build a New MLM International Organisation*. While these documents do not attempt any substantive engagement with the analysis and arguments our Party has made over a number of years, they have the audacity to characterize Bob Avakian’s new synthesis as “revisionism” and furthermore declare that not only did our Party “deviate from the path of revolution and communism” but has a “counter-revolutionary line ... responsible for the current crisis and collapse of RIM”. These documents also list, in second place, criticism of what they call the “Prachanda-Bhattarai line” in the UCPN(M); but, as will become clear, this is actually just a “throwaway” line, designed to cover the authors of these documents own tailing and apology for the revisionist line in the UCPN(M) over a whole period of time and continuing, in a new form, until today. The clear target of these documents is Bob Avakian and his new synthesis of communism.

The content of these documents serves as a perfect example of the very problems of ideological and political line, and corresponding method, all too prevalent in RIM for a number of years, which our letter is addressing. It has been a correct principle of communists to not lightly brand forces in the communist movement as “revisionist” or “counter-revolutionary”, and especially to not do so without making an argument as to why their line is revisionist or counter-revolutionary. Such a conclusion should only be announced after rigorous examination of the political and theoretical questions involved, and after real effort has been made to carry out principled struggle to win over those who are falling into one or another erroneous line. The struggle for more than five years our Party has been waging against the revisionist line in the UCPN(M) is an illustration of this correct approach. However, those forces behind this current effort to form a new international organization have proceeded according to a different logic, one far removed from fundamental principles of conducting two-line struggle within the ICM. They declare, like the Red Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*, “first the sentence, then the trial”. This approach is not an accident. Hurling the most extreme and unfounded charges without even the slightest effort to substantiate them, and a reckless disregard for the truth, are themselves indicative of a political and ideological line, consistent with the kind of “communist movement” the reorganizers would like to develop and reflective of their conception of the future society that such an approach would bring into being.

Until now, many comrades have sat on the sidelines as the political and ideological struggle has been sharpening. The leaders of this new “initiative” are not troubled by this lack of substantive engagement, because they are trying to substitute a different criterion for “unity”, in particular a demagogic and pragmatist appeal to taking Maoist-led people’s wars as “its reference points and strategic anchor”, as opposed to Mao’s stress on “the correctness of the political and ideological line”. However, it is important to stress that this is not, as some may have thought, only a pragmatist effort to avoid lines of demarcation and cobble together a shattered unity of the communist movement. While such an approach would be bad enough and doomed to failure, the actual content and goals are much worse. Their central goal is to oppose and combat the advance and development of a viable revolutionary communism in the world today.

While we are not going to attempt here to address everything that is wrong in these documents, we believe what we have already written, in our letter, will provide important criteria and standards for evaluating the ideological and political line that they are advocating.

These new documents declare the end of RIM. Yet the cardinal issues of communism that have been at the heart of the impasse of our movement for several years are hardly addressed, let alone thoroughly struggled over, by most of the parties and organizations of the RIM. It is the purpose of our letter to go directly at those very questions. ■

Footnotes

1. See *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* (1984).
2. <http://www.revcom.us/Manifesto/Manifesto.html>.
3. It seems that some section of the UCPN(M) may have signed the joint 2012 document referred to above which denounces the “Bhatterai-Prachanda” line. However, we are still not aware of any thorough criticism of that line or decisive rupture with the practice of the UCPN(M).
4. “What Is Bob Avakian’s New Synthesis?” By Lenny Wolfe. revcom.us/a/129/New_Synthesis_Speech-en.html and Making Revolution and Emancipating Humanity, Part 1 by Bob Avakian. <http://revcom.us/avakian/makingrevolution/>.
5. See in particular the Report of the 9th Party Congress of the Communist Party of China (1969).
6. See “Beat Back the Dogmatic Revisionist Attack on Mao Tsetung Thought” in the *Communist*, No. 5, May, 1979.
7. The proletarian revolutionaries in China described the transition to communism based on Marx’s citation in *The Class Struggles in France, 1848-50*: “This socialism is the declaration of the permanence of the revolution, the class dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the abolition of class distinctions generally, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionizing of all the ideas that result from these social relations.”
8. “Alain Badiou’s ‘Politics of Emancipation’ A Communism Locked Within the Confines of the Bourgeois World” by Raymond Lotta, Nayi Duniya, and K. J. A. *Demarcations* no. 1. www.demarcations-journal.org.
9. See *Revisionists Are Revisionists and Must Not Be Supported; Revolutionaries are Revolutionaries and Must be Supported*, published in *Revolution and Counter-Revolution: The Revisionist Coup in China and the Struggle in the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, RCP Publications, (1978) and *Mao’s Immortal Contributions*, RCP Publications, 1979.
10. In the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement*, RIM described the third stage of revolutionary communism as Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought in keeping with the nomenclature that had been adopted by the Communist Party of China under Mao’s leadership. In 1993 the RIM united in referring to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in the document *Long Live Marxism-Leninism-Maoism!*
11. Bob Avakian, *Conquer the World? The International Proletariat Must and Will*, special issue of *Revolution* (propaganda organ of the central Committee of the RCP,USA) no. 50, RCP Publications, 1981. Available on line at http://www.revcom.us/bob_avakian/conquerworld/index.htm.
12. See Chapter VI, “A Cultural Revolution within the RCP,” in *Communism: The Beginning of a New Stage, Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*. www.rev.com.us/Manifesto/Manifesto.html.
13. As part of the revisionist transformation of the Party’s line and practice, the Party adopted the name Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in 2009 after uniting with another Party which had not taken part in the People’s War in 2009.
14. *The Worker*, Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), no. 9.
15. “Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen Party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule. Among them, in reality only a dozen outstanding heads do the leading and an elite of the working class is invited from time to time to meetings where they are to applaud the speeches of the leaders, and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously—at bottom, then, a clique affair— a dictatorship, to be sure, not the dictatorship of the proletariat, however, but only the dictatorship of the handful of politicians, that is a dictatorship in the bourgeois sense...”. (Luxemburg 1918:118) Footnote taken from Bhattarai ‘New Type of State’, Luxemburg, R. (1918), “The Russian Revolution”, in Gupta, S.D. (ed.), *Readings in Revolution and Organization: Rosa Luxemburg and Her Critics*, Calcutta, 1994.
16. *A World to Win*, no. 17, 1992. Later republished in *Phony Communism Is Dead... Long Live Real Communism*, RCP Publications, 1992. <http://www.revcom.us/avakian/index.html>.
17. See “On the Importance of Summing Up the Experience of Socialism” by Revolutionary Communist Organization, Mexico, in *Struggle!* no. 8, June 2006 for a pertinent criticism of “two into one.”
18. See the letters from the RCP,USA to the UCPN(M). <http://revcom.us/a/160/Letters.pdf><http://revcom.us/a/160/Letters.pdf>.
19. This is not to imply that the revolution was necessarily on the verge of military success in the 2005 period. There were also real difficulties, as shown by the reactionary regime’s capacity to withstand attacks on its well-fortified strongholds and where the benefits of the regime’s connections to and support from imperialists and reactionaries would come more into play. These realities “fed into” other line questions as well, both in Nepal and more generally. For example, the understanding of the UCPN(M) leadership concerning the need and form of what they called “an insurrection” to finish the revolution was predicated on support from a section of the officer corp of the enemy’s armed forces. This also interacted very much with the more general question of what type of state, with which socio-economic program, would be brought into being by such an “insurrection.”

20. *Constitution of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, RCP Publications, 2008. <http://revcom.us/socialistconstitution/index.html>.
21. See *Revolution*, No. 200, May 16, 2010. "On the Critical Crossroads in the Nepal Revolution, and the Urgent Need for a Real Rupture with Revisionism." See also an article by K.J.A. "Save the Revolution!" May 2010. Reprinted at www.thenextfront.com.
22. This reminds us of Chang Chun-chiao's warning to comrades in China when he said that many people considered the Party-wide campaign to "study the dictatorship of the proletariat" as a "flexible task" while the capitalist roaders were quite clear on the life and death nature of this debate and considered fighting for a revisionist line an inflexible task.
23. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. Chapter 5.
24. A few months after the adoption of the Millennium resolution the RCP,USA made a self-criticism in a letter circulated to RIM parties and organisations for having accepted that resolution.
25. "The Movement and the Bend in the Road," in *Struggle!*, no. 6, August 2005.
26. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. Foreign Languages Press, Peking 1972, p. 80. "The Socialist, the revolutionary proletarian, the internationalist, argues differently. He says: "I must argue, not from the point of view of 'my' country (for that is the argument of a wretched, stupid, petty-bourgeois nationalist who does not realize that he is only a plaything in the hands of the imperialist bourgeoisie), but from the point of view of my share in the preparation, in the propaganda, and in the acceleration of the world proletarian revolution. That is what internationalism means, and that is the duty of the internationalist, of the revolutionary worker, of the genuine Socialist."
27. These theories became consolidated as the "Three World's Theory" by the revisionists in China after Mao's death. But many of the threads and policies that went into this thinking were already evident in the policies carried out in China during Mao's lifetime and were consistent with an understanding that had been prevalent in the ICM since the 1930s.
28. Mao Tsetung, *Selected Works*, Vol 2, The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War.
29. In addition to the above mentioned *Conquer the World?*, see also *Advancing the World Revolution*, "On the Principle Contradiction on the World Scale", and many other articles from BA over several decades. http://www.revcom.us/bob_avakian/advancingworldrevolution.htm.
30. Text 38: From Bourgeois Democrats to Capitalist-Roaders and Text 39: Capitalist Roaders Are the Bourgeoisie Inside the Party. From *And Mao Makes Five*. Edited and with an introduction by Raymond Lotta, Banner Press, 1978.
31. Bob Avakian, "Getting Over the Two Great Humps: Further Thoughts on Conquering the World," excerpted in the RCP newspaper *Revolutionary Worker* October 1997-January 1998 under the title "Getting Over the Hump," and October 2003-January 2004 under the title "On Proletarian Democracy and Proletarian Dictatorship – A Radically Different View of Leading Society." Available <http://revcom.us/avakian/index.html>.
32. "People want revolution, Proletarians want the Party of the Revolution, Communists want internationalism and a new international organization." Widely reprinted – for example, see *Maoist Road*, no. 1, 2011.
33. "On the Present Situation of the RIM and the Challenge of Regrouping Maoist Parties at the International Level." CPI (M-L) (Naxalbari).
34. This formulation can be found in a number of PCP documents, including the Party's General Line document.
35. Avakian, "Views on Socialism and Communism, A Radical New Kind of State, A Radically Different and Far Greater Vision of Freedom." <http://www.revcom.us/avakian/index.html>.
36. "The Communist Party of Iran (MLM) has fallen into the lost road of 'post MLM'," a public document from the Communist (Maoist) Party of Afghanistan.
37. From the *Constitution of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, RCP Publications, 2008. <http://revcom.us/socialistconstitution/index.html>.
38. This was true in particular of MB Singh of the Communist Party of Nepal (Mashal) and the Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist.
39. "What Is Bob Avakian's New Synthesis?" By Lenny Wolfe. http://revcom.us/a/129/New_Synthesis_Speech-en.html and Making Revolution and Emancipating Humanity, Part 1 by Bob Avakian. revcom.us/avakian/makingrevolution/.
40. From his speech to the 1979 major party meeting before the launching of the People's War.
41. "Response to the article 'The Current Debate on the Socialist State System'" in *Struggle!*, no. 8, June 2006. Also published in *Demarcations* No. 2 www.demarcations-journal.org.
42. Some have argued, or questioned, whether Avakian's emphasis on the "emancipation of humanity" is a reflection of a kind of "humanism" and a departure from the proletarian class viewpoint and method. In fact, it is the proletarian interests in the most fundamental and largest sense, and the world outlook and method that corresponds to that, which we are upholding and fighting for, and which forms the basis for the movement for revolution we are working to build. On the other hand, it is a reified, narrow and economist vulgarization and fundamentally reformist reduction of the interests of the proletariat – involving not the struggle for communism but something far short of that, chained within the confines of bourgeois relations and the reality of an imperialist-dominated world – which the new synthesis brought forward by BA is in opposition.

The New Synthesis of Communism and the Residues of the Past

by the Revolutionary Communist Organization, Mexico

(First appeared in Spanish, *Aurora Roja* no 17, May 2012, <http://aurora-roja.blogspot.mx>)

The Earth can rise on new foundations. Bob Avakian's new synthesis of communism gives us a new and essential theoretical guide for the revolutions of the 21st century that can put an end to the misery, oppression, and degradation suffered by the majority and open the road to unprecedented advances toward a communist world: the free association of human beings without divisions of class, nation, gender, or between mental and manual labor, where human beings transform the world and themselves based on a deeper, more scientific understanding of reality. In these days, when everywhere you hear the erudite preaching of the intellectual hitmen of the ruling class saying that communism "failed", that it was "horrifying" and that we have no other future other than the one offered by this horrible capitalist-imperialist system, the new synthesis represents renewed hope for the emancipation of the masses all over the world.

This new synthesis invites and promotes criticism, dissent, and debate, and calls on everyone to grapple with the many unresolved problems of the new stage of the world proletarian revolution. Nevertheless, in many cases it has had to confront, not reasoned criticism of its content, which – correct or incorrect – always contributes to the process of clarifying questions, but rather a barrage of insults, gossip and personal attacks coming, in the first place, from some organizations who call themselves "communist" and "Marxist-Leninist-Maoist". Mao put it well when he said that at first, nothing that is advanced has been applauded but rather has been heaped with scorn. Faced with the big questions of how to bury this rotten system and create a new world, the communist struggle has always advanced through the struggle over ideas and opposing positions: new advances break through either in opposition to positions dogmatically holding on to the past, or positions that throw out the scientific, revolutionary heart of communism in the name of "new conditions". Understanding this, as Engels said, one cannot feel much regret that the inevitable struggle has broken out. By developing and carrying through to the end the two-line struggle that has been unfolding in the international communist movement, we can further deepen our understanding of what corresponds to the real world and what does not, what contributes to emancipation and what does not, and unite and temper new initiators of a new stage of the world communist revolution.

Here we are focusing on four, among many, important questions in the present struggle, examining the positions of the new synthesis and of its detractors with regard to: 1. the socialist transition to communism; 2. the state and the armed struggle; 3. international communist organization and internationalism; and 4. the scientific method of communism as opposed to pragmatism and instrumentalism. We'll take on the arguments developed by some critics of the new synthesis. As far as the insults, personal attacks, and gossip about who supposedly did what to whom, for those who have the emancipation of humanity in mind and not petty group interests, it is sufficient to say that such methods of "struggle" have nothing to do with scientific communism.

1. Are a scientific summation of the experience of socialism and a conception of how to advance further and better this time needed now?

Are a scientific summation of the experience of socialism and a conception of how to advance further and better in the communist revolution needed now? Yes. It is necessary, among other reasons, because the socialism that existed in Russia and China was defeated and there are no longer any socialist countries in the world, because the ruling classes have taken advantage of these setbacks to broadly propagate the idea that socialism didn't work, because it is essential to learn from both what is correct and what is mistaken in the historical experience of socialism and the international communist movement in general in order to not repeat past mistakes and to be able to advance further and better than even the best of the past, and because there have been important changes in the world in recent decades that require analysis in order to correctly guide the communist revolution today. It is to this need – to sum up the positive and negative lessons of the previous experience of the communist movement and socialist societies, to analyze the new conditions in the present

world, and to learn from other spheres, that Bob Avakian has dedicated more than 30 years of intensive work. This has borne fruit in the new synthesis, which includes, among many other elements, a deeper understanding of the communist goal and what that implies for socialism to be, indeed, both a transition toward a communist world and a society in which the great majority would like to live.

However, this need for a summation of past experience and new development of communist theory for the resurgence and advance of the communist revolution today is not seen by some who declare themselves to be communists but who are blinded by a method that is not very Marxist and not very scientific. There are more than a few who think that the question of socialism and communism should be *avoided*, that “that’s for later” and that the “practical successes” of the movement in mobilizing masses in people’s wars or other struggles will resolve these problems. As is summed up in *Communism: the Beginning of a New Stage, A Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, a key document in the present struggle in the international communist movement, there are, in sharp divergence with the new synthesis, “two opposing tendencies – either to cling religiously to all of the previous experience and the theory and method associated with it or (in essence, if not in words) to throw that out altogether”, that is, to also abandon the principally positive aspects of the previous experience and embrace bourgeois democracy.”¹

Although any analogy has its limitations, it’s as if we had built a large and impressive building – socialism – with many innovations and extraordinary breakthroughs, as well as some secondary but important defects, and later, as the result of a big earthquake, the whole structure collapsed. Faced with this big setback, the dogmatists tell us, ‘Let’s build it again just like it was, there’s nothing to be worry about.’ The kindred spirits of the democracy of the present capitalist system tell us, ‘Forget about it, the structure’s no good,’ leaving us no alternative other than to live ‘outdoors’ in the present oppressive system. The new synthesis, on the contrary, applies a scientific method: let’s learn from the positive and negative lessons of this experience, and also learn from other sources, and conceive and get to work on building a new building that is more resistant to disasters and is better suited to the aims of the communist revolution.

2. Do the defeats of the first experiences of socialism mark the end of the first stage of communist revolution or not?

In two articles, the Communist Party of Afghanistan (Maoist) [C(M)PA]² argues essentially that the communist revolution up until now can’t be divided into two stages, that a qualitative development of the science of communism is not needed now, and that Bob Avakian’s new synthesis is a “rupture” with Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM), a “post-MLM” ideology, and is therefore erroneous.

Recognizing or not recognizing that the restoration of capitalism in China beginning in 1976, after the previous restoration in the Soviet Union (1956), marks the end of a first wave of the world communist revolution that began with the First International and ended in a situation where there are no longer any socialist countries or a communist international is intimately bound up with recognizing or not recognizing that these events demand a scientific summation from communists of the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the communist movement overall, in order to be able to advance further and better in this new stage.

In its first letter, the C(M)PA argues that “The only criterion given for this division [into two stages] is the new synthesis of Bob Avakian and its outcome, the publication of RCP’s *Manifesto*”... This is simply not true. The two documents that the C(M)PA is commenting on (the *Manifesto* cited above and the *Constitution of the RCP, USA*) clearly state that “With the reversal of socialism in China after 1976, coming a couple of decades after that had happened in the Soviet Union in the 1950’s, the first wave of socialist revolutions was ended and, today the world is left without any socialist states.”³ Instead of criticizing the real position of the RCP, USA, they invent a false and absurd argument, a method that, unlike the scientific and critical method of communism, does not contribute to clarifying arguments and reaching truth.

Then they go on to state that “This division in two stages is not compatible with the different phases of the evolution of capitalism” or “with the different phases of the evolution of the science and the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat”. This is not to the point, because what is being discussed is not the evolution of capitalism or of Marxism, but instead the development of the *world communist revolution*, which, although related to the evolution of capitalism and of communist ideology, is a distinct process with its own particularity. In fact, when comrade Avakian first raised the “end of a stage” of the communist revolution and the beginning of another, he specifically stressed that he was not referring to stages in the development of capitalism or in the

science of communism.⁴ The C(M)PA doesn't recognize the particularity of these different processes. Is it true or not true that the temporary defeat of socialism mentioned above represented a *profound, qualitative change in the process of the communist revolution* that separates one stage in this process from another? The C(M)PA avoids this question instead of answering it.

In the second document, the C(M)PA continues with the same muddle of the evolution of capitalism, communist ideology, and the process of communist revolution, adding that there hasn't been just one first wave, but rather several waves of the communist revolution up until now, that these waves of proletarian revolutions haven't ended because "Despite the grand changes that have occurred, still the socio-economic order... i.e. the capitalist order – its foundation and basis are still intact," and "Although the waves of proletarian revolution from Marx's time to the defeat of the revolution in China have dwindled, still they have not ended completely."⁵ And it proceeds to give examples of revolutionary struggles since that time.

In this second document, at least the C(M)PA begins to recognize that what is being discussed are waves (or stages) of the proletarian (or communist) revolution, recognizing implicitly and with no self-criticism that its first article distorted Avakian's position. However, it continues to avoid the question of whether or not the restoration of capitalism in the previously socialist countries represents a qualitative change in the communist revolution marking the end of a stage.

On the one hand, they talk about a multiplicity of waves, apparently identified with the Paris Commune, the October Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, and the Cultural Revolution. It's true that these four revolutions mark high points in the world communist revolution. And if the defeats of the first socialist experiences had been followed by new victories in establishing or reestablishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, these defeats might not have marked the end of the first stage. This wasn't "predetermined"; many factors in the class struggle and the development of the world imperialist system played a role, but what in reality has happened is a period of more than three decades in which there are no socialist countries or communist international. Talking about past victories doesn't answer the question of whether or not this big setback represents the end of a stage (and it reflects, among other things, a non-materialist and un-dialectical reluctance to talk about setbacks).

On the other hand, they say that people's wars were developing for several years first in Peru and later in Nepal and that armed struggles continue in India and the Philippines, so "where the hell do you see that the complete ending of a wave of the proletarian revolution?"⁶ But no one is saying that all revolutionary struggle has ended: the question under debate, again, is if the restoration of capitalism in the previously socialist countries represents a qualitative change that marks the end of a stage in the world communist revolution. When they say that revolutionary struggles have not ended and that the capitalist order is still intact, they essentially argue that the proletarian revolution continues and continues to be necessary. They confuse the end of its first stage with the end of the communist revolution itself! Those of us who are in favor of the new synthesis think the proletarian revolution is more necessary than ever and that it represents the only hope for the oppressed and, in the final analysis, for humanity as a whole, but *in order for that hope to be fulfilled, we must recognize the implications of the qualitative change that occurred with the defeat of socialism and the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union and China and scientifically sum up the lessons of the first stage of the communist revolution as well as changes in the world since that time in order to be able to make new advances in communist theory and practice and to forge the vanguard of the future revolutions, instead of ending up as a residue of the past.*

Although they don't respond directly to the question under debate, it's clear that the C(M)PA denies that the restoration of capitalism in the previously socialist countries represents a qualitative change in the world process of the communist revolution and that it marks a new stage in that revolution. To which we can only remark that there are none so blind as those who do not wish to see. Although the C(M)PA formally recognizes that capitalism was restored in the previously socialist countries, it downplays the importance of this profound and qualitative change in the process of the world communist revolution. The method they apply to reach this conclusion is a dogmatic one that doesn't distinguish the particularity of the contradiction when confounding the process of the world communist revolution with other related but distinct processes and when failing to clearly analyze the stages in this process, confounding the end of a stage with the end of the process itself. In fact, qualitative changes due to the intensification or temporary mitigation of the contradictions in a complex process, or the disappearance of some and/or the appearance of other new ones, tend to mark stages in that process – in this case the temporary disappearance of the contradiction between the socialist system and the imperialist system with the restoration of capitalism in the socialist countries, the related crisis in the international communist movement, and other changes mark the end of a stage in the world communist

revolution – and, “If people do not pay attention to the stages in the process of development of a thing, they cannot deal with its contradictions properly.”⁷

3. Are qualitative advances in the science of communism needed in order to lead a new stage of the proletarian revolution or does the previous theoretical framework suffice?

The importance of recognizing the end of one stage and the beginning of another is that it is a material fact, although we may not like it, and it makes new advances in the science of communism necessary, on the basis of reconfiguring and recasting the positive experience from the past, learning from what was negative, analyzing new conditions, and learning from other sources in order to develop an understanding capable of correctly guiding the communist revolutions to come. This is what Bob Avakian has been doing, by developing the new synthesis, and it is what he has encouraged others to do as well; the need to do this is precisely what is denied by the C(M)PA and other dogmatic tendencies in the present international communist movement.

Although the C(M)PA recognizes the need to develop the science of communism as a general abstract principle, it considers that “A correct basic understanding of Marxism Leninism Maoism is the reliable foundation and base for communist revolution,”⁸ that, before summing up the experience of socialism, it is more important to first sum up the experience of the regrouping of Maoist parties in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM),⁹ and that “Based on this summing up we can – and we must – review the Chinese revolution and Mao Tsetung, and this time not from the perspective of establishing international Maoism with paying attention only to their positive aspects – a level that already we have gone through – but from a critical perspective to look at its mistakes, shortcomings and possibly mistakes of the Chinese revolution and Mao Tsetung himself. *That is a work that never has been done before on an international level...*” [Emphasis added] They then say that the same thing can be done for the times of Lenin, Marx and Engels, on the basis of “reliance on the existing theoretical framework without claiming that it is complete.”¹⁰

It is little less than incredible that after 30 years of work and the publication of literally dozens of books, pamphlets, and speeches by Bob Avakian, carrying out precisely a critical evaluation of all this experience, it is said that “This is a work that never has been done before on an international level”. If there is disagreement with the *content* of this summation – and it is evident that there is – we’d like to hear the pertinent arguments, but please, don’t try to pretend that this work doesn’t exist! Or perhaps they consider that this hasn’t been done on “an international level”, because they and similar forces haven’t participated in the study and debate of this work, because they consider it to be of little importance? This has been their own mistaken decision, in spite of repeated calls to comment on these and other questions. The importance and correctness of new advances in the science of communism don’t depend essentially on who has participated or not in their elaboration but rather on whether or not they correspond to objective reality and to the advance toward communism.

It is evident that, for the C(M)PA, critical summation of the experience of the first stage of the communist revolution in general and of the experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular is not an urgent task, it can be postponed until an indeterminate future, after summing up the experience of the RIM, and meanwhile, the “existing” theoretical framework is sufficient, i.e. the theoretical framework of almost 40 years ago, or a distorted and incorrect understanding of that framework. (It is undoubtedly important to *also* sum up the experience of the RIM. As we will see below, line differences related to the ones we are commenting on here made it impossible for the RIM as a whole to join together to defend communist principles in the face of the two line struggle in the Communist Party of Peru, as well as the adoption of a revisionist line by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in 2005. But how can it be that this could somehow have justified *not* critically summing up the previous experience of the communist revolution for decades and doing everything possible to ignore and finally to try to discredit the person who has done so? How is it possible for this to justify the insistence on *continuing* to persist in the same error?)

The C(M)PA condemns the new synthesis as “post MLM”, by which they mean to say that in their opinion the new synthesis is a “rupture” from the science developed by Marx, Lenin and Mao and a repudiation of their contributions as “part of a past that is no longer relevant.”¹¹ Here we see again the C(M)PA’s method of attributing an absurd argument to their adversary and then proceeding to “refute” it, instead of criticizing the actual analysis and especially the best arguments that are raised to defend it.

For the C(M)PA, the “relevance” of the past is a question of *repeating it without criticism*, since by their own

admission, quoted above, “already we have gone through” a “level” of “paying attention only to their positive aspects” and the task of approaching it “from a critical perspective” remains as a task for some indefinite time in the future, and this is, from their point of view, the “existing theoretical framework” that should be sufficient for now and for an indeterminate further period of time. This is not a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theoretical framework, but rather a *dogmatic* framework created by the C(M)PA and others, who have abandoned the critical spirit of Marxism, arguing that for the time being it’s enough to repeat some¹² theoretical formulations from 40 years ago with no critical reexamination.

It is evidently because of an appreciation of the profound “relevance” of the first stage of the communist revolution and the “the rich body of revolutionary, scientific theory that developed through the first wave of socialist revolutions”¹³ that Bob Avakian has not contented himself with repeating some phrases from the past but instead has deeply examined that experience as well as the theoretical advances associated with it in order to come to the conclusion that, in its principal aspect, that theory is fundamentally correct and scientific, but secondarily it contains erroneous aspects that need to be discarded, and it must be developed further to embrace new phenomena and to grapple more deeply with how to prevent capitalist restoration and advance further toward communism, among other problems. As such, and as opposed to the distortions by the C(M)PA, the new synthesis actually represents principally a continuation and development in new conditions of the communist science developed since Marx up through Mao, and secondarily yes, it is a criticism and rupture with secondary but important erroneous elements that objectively contradict its principally correct and scientific character.

More fundamentally, the whole way of posing the problem expresses a dogmatic and religious approach. How can the correctness or incorrectness of the new synthesis be determined? The C(M)PA’s method is essentially to determine its truthfulness according to its supposed degree of correspondence or rupture with the previous “doctrine”. A *scientific* approach would require examining to what degree the new synthesis does or does not correspond to *material reality*. For example, if we examine the real experience of socialism with the method of dialectical materialism, is Avakian right or not to uphold the essential elements of the theory of Mao on continuing the revolution under socialism, such as the persistence of antagonistic class struggle, the engendering of a new bourgeoisie among part of the leadership of the communist party, the material base for the restoration of capitalism in the existence of “bourgeois right”, the inequalities and other relations and ideas inherited from capitalism and the need to mobilize the masses to transform all this step by step? On the other hand, is Avakian right or not when he criticizes nationalist tendencies in China and the Soviet Union expressed, for example, in “the sometimes pronounced moves to subordinate the revolutionary struggle in other countries to the needs of the existing socialist state”?¹⁴ Is he right or not in proposing an orientation of a “solid core with a lot of elasticity”, combining a solid core that struggles to advance toward communism with a lot of elasticity, not just permitting but also promoting dissent and criticism including criticism of the party and of socialism, or in criticizing the concept of “class truth” and arguing for a greater role for the intellectuals in socialism? Here we are only mentioning some of the pertinent questions.

The C(M)PA *doesn’t discuss these questions, and rejects the new synthesis without analyzing or responding to its content*.¹⁵ It is as if physicists, when evaluating the new theory of relativity of Einstein, were to oppose it because of its “rupture” with the theory of Newton, instead of examining to what degree the previous Newtonian theory, and the new theory of Einstein, did or did not explain the phenomena of nature. New theoretical advances in science may represent more or less continuity or rupture with the previous understanding (we repeat: the new synthesis, is principally a continuation and development of the scientific essence of Marxism, and secondarily a necessary rupture with erroneous elements), but the essential question from a scientific point of view is not this but rather whether or not the new theoretical development provides a more correct explanation of reality and therefore a greater capacity to transform it.

There is nothing sacred about Marxism (and in fact, treating it as something sacred goes against the scientific method, the dialectical materialist method, of Marxism). If there were facts that demonstrated the falsehood of fundamental principles of Marxism or of Marxism itself, it would have to be discarded. However, as Bob Avakian demonstrates in his response to Karl Popper, a bourgeois critic of Marxism, central principles of Marxism have repeatedly been proven to be true in social practice, and there are no facts that contradict or demonstrate the falsehood of these principles.¹⁶ However, there are important secondary elements in Marxism or Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (such as tendencies toward nationalism when dealing with the contradiction between the defense of socialist countries and the advance of the world revolution, the idea of the “inevitability” of communism, etc.) that are wrong and contradict the scientific essence of Marxism, and therefore a rupture

with these elements is really essential.

With its false characterization of the new synthesis as a total rupture and repudiation of the previous science of communism,¹⁷ what the C(M)PA is actually defending, as are other representatives of the dogmatic tendency in the movement today, is their opposition to the need for these ruptures and, in general, their opposition to the need for a qualitative development of the science in order to be able to correctly lead a new stage of the communist revolution.

4. Can there be a communist movement that doesn't grapple with communism?

We need to pose the question: can there be a communist movement that doesn't grapple with communism? because we find ourselves in a situation where a large part of the communist movement *doesn't concern itself with communism or the problems of the socialist transition to communism*. You can try to deny the existence of the end of a stage, you can try to deny that there is a pressing need to develop the science of communism, but as soon as you walk out of your "communist church" and talk to others about socialism and communism, you run into questions like "if socialism was so good, why was it defeated?" There are answers to this question and others like it, but to find them, as Avakian says, "you have to dig for that answer and you have to keep on digging..." and this is what the dogmatic tendency says is not necessary now. So they talk a lot about "people's war" and very little about what its goal should be, with the hope that the "practical advances" of the movement will make these difficult ideological and political problems disappear. On the other hand, the other erroneous tendency, of throwing out all the previous experience as essentially negative, either tries to avoid the topic or presents socialism and communism as something that is less and less distinguishable from present day bourgeois democracy. And among those of both tendencies, or mixtures of them, it is not uncommon to find the cruder argument of "Why talk about socialism now? We can talk about that when we take power."

So it is important to ask, why is it so essential to grapple with the more scientific understanding of communism that the new synthesis offers us and to popularize it among the masses?

First of all, because if the struggle today isn't guided by a correct understanding of the goal (as well as other cardinal questions), *it won't lead to achieving that goal*. All of us have started out on a trip at some time, either long or short, and it wouldn't occur to anyone to think "I'm at the beginning of my trip, so I don't care which way my destination might be." Nevertheless, that's the logic of those who think the questions of socialism and communism, so sharply posed by the temporary defeat of socialism, "aren't on the agenda" now. It's a bourgeois slander that communism claims that "the end justifies the means". What is true, on the contrary, is that the end determines or should determine the means, and if you don't have clarity about the goal, you will not adopt methods that are appropriate for achieving it.

We have the bitter lesson of the people's war in Vietnam,¹⁸ which was advancing in the 1960s during the period when the two line struggle erupted in the international communist movement. Mao's line, in the process of developing the theory of continuing the revolution under socialism, faced the line of the revisionists or false communists in the Soviet Union who had restored capitalism, mainly in the form of state capitalism under the leadership of a now revisionist "communist" party. The Vietnam Workers Party (VWP) took a centrist position, arguing for unity from a nationalist, pragmatic position. When the Soviet revisionists went from conciliating with western imperialism under Khrushchev to ever greater confrontation on an imperialist basis under Brezhnev and, in that context, due to their own imperialist ambitions, they started to give more military aid to Vietnam, the VWP increasingly united with Soviet social-imperialism.

Taking a centrist position and fighting for unity between what was objectively state capitalism with a socialist signboard in the Soviet Union, and what was genuine socialism as a transition toward communism in China *objectively represented a position of ignoring the difference between capitalism and socialism, and whether the people's war that was being waged in Vietnam was going to lead to socialism or to some type of capitalism*.

And today we can see the results of this nationalist, pragmatic line, for all those who care to see. At the cost of millions of lives, the Vietnamese people won the people's war against US imperialism... but their revolution never took the socialist road. First they were dominated by Soviet social-imperialism, and with the fall of that empire, the country returned to the fold of the imperialist bloc headed up by the United States. And there are the workers in Vietnam today, exploited wage slaves in factories that belong to the imperialists.

Why did it end up like that? It wasn't mainly because of personal dishonesty of the leaders, but rather due

to the ideological and political line that was leading the party. The class struggle under socialism in China demonstrated that many of the elements who degenerated and became revisionists were, in fact, bourgeois democrats who had joined the party organizationally but not ideologically. Many made contributions in the period of democratic revolution against imperialism and feudalism, but they opposed continuing the revolution under socialism and defended the revisionist line. Their essential goal was not communism and the elimination of classes, but simply to achieve an independent, modern and prosperous country. This was also the orientation of the VWP, and the position in the international communist movement today that ignores the need to grapple with the questions of the socialist transition to communism and capitalist restoration *also reflects deviations toward nationalism, pragmatism, and bourgeois democracy*, especially among those of us communists who are waging the struggle in “third world” countries. The importance of grappling with socialism as part of the world transition to communism is not seen essentially because there is another goal: *how to improve the position of “my” country to some degree in the world capitalist-imperialist system by means of revolution and some kind of state capitalism.*

Secondly, there will not be any communist revolution without convincing an important section of people who presently think that communism “failed” or was worse than capitalism, and that is not going to be achieved simply through the “practical successes” of a movement that isn’t grappling with communism. *Theoretical* work is required in order to understand the truth about these questions more deeply, and *ideological* struggle with the masses is needed in order to counter the anticommunist ideological campaign of the enemy (as well as the predominance of bourgeois ideology generally). We’ve already seen in the case of Cuba that making a revolution and only talking about some supposed “communism” afterwards also only leads, in the best case scenario, to a revisionist state capitalism.

Finally, a real communist movement prepares the proletarians and other masses *to rule* and genuine socialism as a transition to communism needs to involve ever wider sections of the masses in ruling the new society and in the struggle to advance toward communism. This also won’t happen if you are evading the “difficult” questions about socialism and communism, as well as other cardinal questions of the revolution.

5. If you’re not grappling with how to eliminate the “four alls”, you are not fighting for communism

In the development of the communist movement of the past century, there was increasing influence of a mechanical materialist view that tended to identify socialism simply with state property, economic planning, and the leadership of a “communist party”, which doesn’t provide a basis for distinguishing between revisionist state capitalism and socialism, since these are characteristics of both. Faced with these errors from the period of the Third International, and even more with the profound jolt of the restoration of capitalism in the form of state capitalism under the leadership of a *revisionist* communist party propagating bourgeois ideology with an apparently Marxist discourse, the work of theoretical *excavation* in order to *rediscover* to a large degree the profoundly revolutionary essence of Marxism regarding socialism was crucial. Mao and his comrades began this work and it has been continued by Bob Avakian. It has included returning over and over again to a profound and essential quote from Marx:

This socialism is the *declaration of the permanence of the revolution*, the *class dictatorship* of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the abolition of *class distinctions generally*, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionizing of all the ideas that result from these social relations.¹⁹

What does this mean? That socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat is and can only be an *historical period of transition toward communism* which, as Avakian says, “leads to what we Maoists call the ‘four alls’ – that is, the abolition of all the class differences among the people. The abolition or the end to all the production or economic relations underlying these class differences and divisions among people. The ending of all the social relations that go along with these economic or production relations. Oppressive relations between men and women, between different nationalities, between people of different parts of the world, all that will be put an end to and moved beyond. And finally, the revolutionizing of all the ideas that go along with this whole way, this whole capitalist system, these whole social relations.”²⁰

If we look around us, present-day societies are like a pyramid, with a small group of big capitalists and other exploiters at the top. The socialist revolution makes possible great transformations and liberating advances by

removing the top and establishing an economy and a society serving the needs of the people and the world revolution, instead of the profits of a few. Nevertheless, the rest of the pyramid is still there, to put it that way, with many inequalities and relations inherited from the old society, as well as the corresponding ideas. The abolition of the four ills implies getting rid of all of that step by step, taking apart the whole pyramid and the corresponding ideas, and finally arriving at abolishing, among other things, the exchange of commodities through money, eliminating the contradiction between mental and manual labor, sharing both kinds of work among everyone; overcoming the socialist principle of payment according to work performed and applying the communist principle “From each according to their ability; to each according to their needs”; not only overcoming national oppression but transcending nations themselves; eliminating every trace of the oppression of women by men and patriarchal ideology; and much more. In short, it means achieving a free association of human beings in the whole world, without exploitation, oppression, or social inequalities, without classes, nations, or states, in which there “will be collective and cooperative principles aiming for the common good and at the same time, within that, individuals and individuality flourishing in a way that has never been possible before.”²¹

Is this the final goal? Or is the goal just a planned economy that provides better conditions for the masses? Or can't we tell the difference? “There is the question of are we really going to transform society... A society that not only meets the needs of the masses of people, but really is characterized increasingly by the conscious expression and initiative of the masses of people. This is a more fundamental transformation than simply a kind of social welfare, socialist in name but really capitalist in essence, a society where the role of the masses of people is still largely reduced to being producers of wealth, but not people who thrash out all the larger questions of affairs of state, the direction of society, culture, philosophy, science, the arts, and so on.”²²

It was the great discovery of Mao – now ignored or repudiated by a significant section of so-called “Maoists” – based on summing up the experience of the restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union and the class struggle under socialism in China, that the inequalities and relations inherited from the old society that persist in socialism – what Marx called “bourgeois right” or “birthmarks” of the old society inside the new²³ – , as well as the corresponding ideas, not only have to be transformed and eliminated in order to reach communism, but they also, together with imperialist encirclement, constitute the basis in socialist society for the persistence of antagonistic class struggle and the formation of *a new bourgeoisie among some of the high-level leaders of the communist party itself*, the “capitalist roaders” *who apply a policy of defending and widening these inequalities, relations, and ideas inherited from the old society, instead of restricting them step by step*. If this position, this line, is able to carry out a coup and take command of the communist party and the socialist state, *capitalism will be restored*, even if it is in the form of a state capitalism still calling itself “socialist” with the leadership of a revisionist party that still calls itself “communist”, and this is exactly what happened in the Soviet Union in 1956 and in China in 1976.

The founders of socialism didn't foresee this complexity of the transition that was revealed by the initial experiences of socialism, and in 1936, Stalin erroneously analyzed that there were no longer antagonistic classes in the Soviet Union. With this fundamentally mistaken idea, he interpreted the opposition and struggle that in fact persisted as being only a product of agents of imperialism and the overthrown exploiting classes; he confused contradictions among the people with contradictions between the people and the enemy; and he increasingly relied on the repressive forces of the state in the class struggle, instead of relying fundamentally on mobilizing the masses and leading them to take up ideological and political struggle in order to continue advancing toward communism.

Mao, on the other hand, came to a more correct understanding of the persistence of antagonistic class struggle in socialism, and discovered in the Cultural Revolution a form for unleashing the initiative and rebellion of the masses in socialism so as to learn to distinguish and analyze the positions that defended the relations and ideas inherited from the past with “Marxist” and “communist” arguments, to criticize and to overthrow the communist leaders on the capitalist road, to increasingly struggle themselves with the problems of the communist transition, and to carry out many new and path breaking transformations of the productive and social relations, as well as ideas.

These tremendous theoretical and practical breakthroughs are today the “forgotten legacy” for the dogmatic tendency and the more openly bourgeois-democratic tendency in the international communist movement that, in spite of differences between them, share the characteristic of “Never taking up – or never engaging in any systematic way with – a scientific summation of the previous stage of the communist movement, and in particular Mao Tsetung's pathbreaking analysis concerning the danger of and basis for capitalist restoration in

socialist society.”²⁴

After 10 years of the Cultural Revolution, after twice defeating attempts at revisionist coups, after unleashing millions to debate, criticize, and influence the direction of society in a way never before seen in history, after creating unheard of socialist new things, nevertheless, with Mao’s death, a new revisionist clique was able to jail his followers (the “gang of four”), militarily defeat the people’s militias who rose up against the usurpation, and restore capitalism.

In light of this experience and other discoveries, if you have your eyes on the goal of communism, it should be evident that there is much more to understand, much more to develop, to be able to do better at exercising the dictatorship of the proletariat and to be able to advance further toward communism in this new stage of the world proletarian revolution. In these times of “The common tendency to reduce ‘Maoism’ to just a prescription for waging people’s war in a Third World country, while again ignoring, or diminishing the importance of, Mao’s most important contribution to communism: his development of the theory and line of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat”²⁵ we cannot overemphasize the fact that the lines in opposition to grappling now with the problems of the socialist transition to communism remain within the limits of the capitalist system in one way or another and don’t correspond to a struggle capable of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat once again and leading the masses to exercise state power to advance further and better toward communism. If you’re not grappling with the *goal* of the communist struggle, if you’re not grappling with how to eliminate the “four ills”, *you are not fighting for communism*.

6. A new profoundly revolutionary and liberating society: a solid core with a lot of elasticity

Unlike those who argue that the “existing theoretical framework” from the last century is sufficient, as well as those who want to throw out past experience as principally negative, the new synthesis brings forward a deeper understanding of the contradictions in the world-historical process of transition from the world capitalist-imperialist system to the world communist system, a summation of secondary but important errors of the past, and a new theoretical framework, orientation and method for how to advance further and better in this new stage of the communist revolution.²⁶

A central contribution of comrade Avakian about how to deal with the contradictions of the socialist transition better is the **solid core with a lot of elasticity**: “...you have to have a solid core that firmly grasps and is committed to the strategic objectives and aims and process of struggle for communism. If you let go of that you are just giving everything back to the capitalists in one form or another, with all the horrors that means. At the same time, if you don’t allow for a lot of diversity and people running in all kinds of directions with things, then not only are people going to be building up tremendous resentment against you, but you are also not going to have the rich kind of process out of which the greatest truth and ability to transform reality will emerge.”²⁷

This is something profound, new and important. In dialectical relation with a solid core that struggles for communism, you need to not only allow but to encourage dissent, debate, diversity, “elasticity”. Why? Because this diversity exists in socialist society and if you don’t recognize it and handle it correctly this leads to “tremendous resentment” and very harmful consequences. Because, although you need the leadership of a communist party, you also need to constantly draw in ever broader sections of the masses to rule the new society and to grapple with the problems of the transition to communism, and this can’t be achieved by ordering people around, but only through debate, dissent, and struggle. And because *there is no predetermined map for how to get to communism*, this process involves many complex and difficult problems which will have to be solved, and the dialectical relation between a communist solid core and the “elasticity” of a lot of diversity, debate and social experimentation is needed in order to come up with the appropriate answers. It will be very difficult to embrace all this in a broad sense and to guide it toward communism – in fact, Avakian emphasizes that at critical moments it will feel like being on the verge of being drawn and quartered – but this kind of rich and many-sided process is essential for being able to create a new socialist society where the great majority want to live and for moving this society, together with the advance of the world revolution, forward toward communism, and not letting it go backwards to capitalism.²⁸

The CP of Afghanistan (M), in the above-cited document, denounces the new synthesis in general as “crude humanism”, to which they counterpose, “including in socialist societies,” “the revolutionary class struggle” and the “continuation of class struggle.”²⁹ In reality, as we have seen, the new synthesis proceeds precisely

on the basis of recognizing the continuation of the antagonistic class struggle in socialism and how to deal with this and other contradictions of the socialist transition to communism better. They don't do us the favor of giving even one example of this supposed "crude humanism". Could this be because Avakian poses the struggle for the "emancipation of humanity" and not simply that of the oppressed classes? They don't say. What we can surmise, at least, from their defense of the "existing theoretical framework" of 40 years ago and the insistence on "class struggle" in opposition to a supposed "crude humanism", is that the C(M)PA does not agree with the criticism of the tendency toward "reification" of the proletariat in the communist movement of the last century.

The "reification" of the proletariat and other exploited groups is "a tendency which regards particular people in these groups, as individuals, as representative of the larger interests of the proletariat as a class and the revolutionary struggle that corresponds to the fundamental interests of the proletariat, in the largest sense."³⁰ This tendency has been expressed, for example, in the idea that people coming from the exploited classes will necessarily have a more revolutionary and "proletarian" position than those from other strata. Although it is true that the proletariat is the firmest social base for communist revolution, this cannot be mechanically applied to individuals' ideology and role: Marx, as Lenin observed, came from the bourgeois intelligentsia, and nevertheless he had the most consequently revolutionary position and the position most in accordance with reality from among the revolutionaries of his times. Another reflection of the same erroneous tendency was the idea in the Soviet Union that, by training technicians and others from among the workers and peasants, they were going to resolve the problem of transforming these strata. Although this was a necessary and important advance, there was not sufficient understanding of the need to continue to reduce the differences between mental and manual labor (which did not change even when the class origins of the new technicians were proletarian) and that these people were not necessarily going to play a role in line with the advance of the communist revolution just because they came from the working class.

This is also expressed in the conception of the goal of the struggle: is it only eliminating the oppression and exploitation of the previously oppressed and exploited classes (which is necessary, but not sufficient) or does it require the abolition of the "four ills", which implies the emancipation of all of humanity from all the relations and ideas characteristic of class societies? Unlike all other previous revolutionary classes, the proletariat does not seek to simply emancipate itself and establish its dominion over society but rather seeks to disappear with the disappearance of classes in general, since it cannot attain its emancipation "without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinctions and class struggles."³¹ Or as Avakian has formulated it so succinctly and profoundly: "Communism: A Whole New World and the Emancipation of Humanity – Not "The Last Shall Be First, and The First Shall Be Last."³²

Although the C(M)PA does not offer us examples or arguments about their disagreement with the content of the new synthesis, it is only one of the exponents of the general dogmatic tendency in the international communist movement, which has also had a lot of influence in our own organization, the Revolutionary Communist Organization, Mexico. Given that the C(M)PA doesn't offer any more concrete arguments, we would like to share with the reader some arguments from our own ranks and from others that, most likely, have their counterpart in one way or another in the dogmatic conceptions expressed by the C(M)PA and others in the international movement.

One argument is that talking about the errors of the past will only strengthen the anticommunist offensive of the bourgeoisie. This offensive is real, and as Avakian says, there are "real sharks"³³ who seek to take advantage of the errors of the communists, but a *scientific* approach capable of grasping the problems as they really are in order to come up with real solutions requires clearly identifying both what has been (principally) correct and what has been (secondarily) erroneous in the previous theory and practice. By approaching this experience in a scientific way, you can distinguish between lies and distortions on the one hand, and what were really errors on the other, as well as understanding the conditions in which these errors were made, the errors of method that were involved, and drawing the appropriate lessons. All of this actually *strengthens* the ability of communism to respond to the anticommunist offensive and also contributes to developing an understanding that is more in accordance with reality in order to lead the struggle for communism. The method of not openly criticizing past conceptions but instead saying something different as if it were a continuation of the past when in fact it is not (or worse yet, simply repeating what is erroneous) represents a quasi-religious approach to Marxism that has done a lot of harm in the movement.

Another argument is that by encouraging dissent, capitalism will be restored even more quickly; and it has

been argued that Mao tried to do something similar with the policy of “letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend” in the 1950’s and that it didn’t work, the right took advantage of it and it had to be ended. It’s true that the old and the new bourgeoisie will try to take advantage of openings for dissent in order to restore capitalism, and it’s also true that this kind of approach *demands much more of the communists*, in terms of convincing others by the strength of their arguments. Nevertheless, experience has demonstrated that erroneous tendencies toward trying to deal with the complex contradictions of socialism by mandate leave the masses unconscious and disarmed, lead to treating contradictions among the people antagonistically, put a “chill” in the atmosphere by suppressing the necessary ferment of diverse ideas and scientific, artistic, and cultural work, and create a rigidity of thought that is incapable of correctly handling the contradictions of the socialist transition, which are complex and whose resolution isn’t “obvious” in most cases.

We need to study the experience of the “hundred flowers” more, but it can be said that although reactionaries inside and outside the party took advantage of the opening, this in fact *helped* to clarify various positions under debate that Mao and the revolutionaries were then able to criticize more deeply and combat more fully. And this was far from the “end” of dissent in Maoist socialism: the Cultural Revolution, among other things, involved debate and dissent on a grand scale.

The new synthesis and the solid core with a lot of elasticity represent a qualitative advance beyond even the best of past experience, and a scientific summation of that experience indicates that the “elasticity”, the dissent, debate, the diversity of social experimentation it proposes is essential for elucidating the complex problems of the socialist transition, for educating the masses and the communists themselves in the confrontation between different points of view in the struggle between communist advance and capitalist regression, and for continuously expanding the participation of the masses in ruling the new society, making full use of the possible contributions of the most diverse sectors of society as long as an expanding solid core is constantly seeking to “embrace” all of this in the broadest sense and struggling for it to contribute to advancing toward the communist goal.

It has also been argued that this will allow a greater role for intellectuals and artists (and in fact the new synthesis proposes a greater role for intellectuals and artists under socialism), who have not suffered and who therefore are going to fight for restoration, as opposed to the workers and peasants who have suffered and because of that will fight in favor of socialism and will have more truth on their side (that is to say, an expression of the “reification” of the proletariat and other oppressed, already discussed, as well as the position of “class truth” that Avakian has criticized). Although communism corresponds to the overall interests of the proletariat as a class, this doesn’t mean that individuals who are proletarians or are from other oppressed groups necessarily have a better or a more correct position, and although the scientific viewpoint and method of communism provides the most comprehensive, systematic, and consistent means to arrive at the truth, people who do not apply it and who are even against it also discover truths. The case of Lysenko in the Soviet Union illustrates how harmful the idea of “class truth” is and the importance of basing ourselves on objective truth, regardless of who discovers it. There was a controversy in the Soviet Union when it was socialist between the agronomist Lysenko, who argued in favor of the theory of “the inheritance of acquired characteristics”, which science has in fact demonstrated is false, and other scientists who argued that this theory was wrong. Stalin and other leaders of the party intervened in support of Lysenko, who was in favor of socialism and communism, against other scientists who had more backward political positions, in part also for pragmatic reasons, because this theory promised to solve the acute problems in agriculture more quickly. In reality, the scientists who were more opposed to socialism were right about this question, and failing to recognize this did a lot of damage, not just because it didn’t work but also because the same wrong method was applied in other cases³⁴ and it became part of the leading orientation for the sciences and the methodology of the party.

On the other hand, as part of combating capitalist restoration and advancing toward communism, it is essential to live with and transform the intermediate strata. As Avakian points out, “this is once again a unity of opposites – *living with* and *transforming* the middle strata. If you set out only to live with them, you will end up surrendering power back, not to the petty bourgeoisie but in fact to the bourgeoisie; things will increasingly be on their terms. On the other hand, if you seek only to transform the petty bourgeoisie (speaking broadly, to refer to the intermediate strata of various kinds), you will end up treating them like the bourgeoisie and driving them into the camp of the bourgeoisie, seriously undermining the dictatorship of the proletariat, and you will end up losing power that way, also.”³⁵

The orientation of solid core with a lot of elasticity interpenetrates with an epistemological rupture with wrong tendencies in the international communist movement toward “political truth” and of identifying the “truth” with apparent immediate advantages for the revolutionary forces, by insisting, on the contrary, on the scientific method of dialectical materialism and the need to base ourselves on objective truth, including the “truths that make us cringe” about errors the international communist movement has made, and by insisting that “Everything that is actually true is good for the proletariat, all truths can help us get to communism”.³⁶

Recognizing more deeply that the socialist transition to communism requires the resolution of many unresolved contradictions and that in order to do that you need the dialectical interaction between a solid communist core and a lot of “elasticity”, dissent, and social experimentation in order to find the appropriate answers is also related to the philosophical rupture with the tendency toward “inevitablism” that can be found even in the *Communist Manifesto* as a secondary element, contrary to the overall scientific method of Marx and Engels and that has reached more extreme expressions of mechanical materialism and quasi-religious concepts of predetermination, such as the ideas expressed by Abimael Guzman, better known as “Chairman Gonzalo” of the Communist Party of Peru (CPP), that “we are condemned to victory” or “It took the Earth fifteen billion years to generate communism.”³⁷

7. A solid core without elasticity that “imposes” communism: “Advancing” with the errors of the 20th century

This mechanical materialist and determinist methodology is related to a different conception of how to resolve the problems of the socialist transition toward communism: the line of “people’s war until communism”, expressed without very much theoretical development by the Communist Party of Peru (CPP) and taken up by some of the present detractors of the new synthesis. While criticizing this erroneous conception, we would like to point out that the people’s war in Peru led by the CPP and its Chairman Gonzalo represented an important advance in the world communist revolution, that gave new hope to the oppressed around the world. It deserved and received the support of communists, revolutionaries, and progressive people everywhere. A deeper analysis to draw lessons from this rich experience is still very much needed. Here we are not attempting to make a more overall summation of the line of the CPP under Gonzalo’s leadership before he put forward the right opportunist line of negotiating an end to the people’s war from jail.³⁸

Regarding the line of “people’s war until communism”, to begin with, the conception of the problem is wrong: “The bourgeoisie, when it loses power, gets into the Party; it makes use of the army and seeks to usurp power, destroying the dictatorship of the proletariat in order to restore capitalism...”³⁹ There is no distinction here between the problem of representatives of the old

overthrown bourgeoisie who join the Party and the problem of the *new bourgeoisie* that is engendered under socialism and in particular among some leaders of the communist party, due to the persistence of “bourgeois right” – the inequalities and relations inherited from the old society in the production and social relations – as well as the corresponding ideas. Actually, you can find some of the same conception in various documents at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, but the understanding of Mao and his comrades continued to develop further as they analyzed how the contradictions of socialist society itself generated new bourgeois forces.

As Chang Chun-chiao, Mao’s comrade in the struggle against the revisionists who ultimately seized power after the death of Mao, pointed out, when China was still socialist: “We must be soberly aware that there is still a danger of China turning revisionist. This is not only because imperialism and social-imperialism will never give up aggression and subversion against us, not only because China’s old landlords and capitalists are still around and unreconciled to their defeat, but also because new bourgeois elements are being engendered daily and hourly, as Lenin put it.”⁴⁰ And Chang proceeds to closely analyze how the persistence of bourgeois right in the production relations under socialism gives rise to a new bourgeoisie, as well as the struggle over continuing to restrict bourgeois right or to consolidate and expand it. When speaking of the need to eliminate the “four ills” mentioned above, he says, “In all the four cases, Marx means *all*. Not a part, a greater part, or even the greatest part, but *all*!” And he contrasts this necessity with those communist party members who “approve of the dictatorship of the proletariat at a certain stage and within a certain sphere and are pleased with certain victories of the proletariat”, but when a certain point is reached, they oppose continuing to restrict bourgeois right: “As for exercising all-round dictatorship over the bourgeoisie..., sorry let others do the job; here is my stop and I must get off the bus. We would like to offer a piece of advice to these comrades: It’s dangerous

to stop half-way!” And in regard to the leading revisionist capitalist-readers he says: “You wanted to restrict bourgeois right? They said it was an excellent thing indeed and should be extended. They are a bunch of past masters at defending old things and, like a swarm of flies, buzz all day long over the ‘birthmarks’ and ‘defects’ of the old society referred to by Marx. They are particularly keen on taking advantage of the inexperience of our young people to boost material incentives to them, saying that like strong bean-curd cheese, it stinks but tastes fine.”⁴¹

This Maoist understanding developed in the class struggle under socialism is what Bob Avakian rescued, defended and systematized in the wake of the coup in China: “It is precisely the top leaders of the Party who take to the capitalist road that constitute the greatest danger to socialism and must be the main target of the revolutionary struggle... The contradictions of socialist society itself – the remaining division of labor, differences in income, the persistence of commodity relations, etc., as well as the continuing influence of bourgeois ideology – provide the basis not only for bourgeois elements to be constantly generated in society generally, but especially for them to repeatedly emerge at the top ranks of the Party *and* for them to mobilize a social base for counterrevolution. This does not mean that all leading people, by mere virtue of their position, are bound to become bourgeois and turn traitor to the revolution. But it does mean that some of them – in particular those who take to the bourgeois style of life and adopt a revisionist ideological and political line – will do so and that they will then have both the necessity and the opportunity to rally a following for an attempt to seize power and restore capitalism. This, as Mao summed up, will continue to be the case all throughout socialism, until the contradictions of socialism are resolved through the revolutionary advance to communism.”⁴²

The coup in China itself demonstrates the correctness of this analysis: those who seized power were not representatives of the old overthrown bourgeoisie, still camped out in Taiwan, but instead they were principally representatives of the new bourgeoisie, emerging under socialism. The formulation cited from the CPP disregards all this development of Maoist theory and, frankly, represents a regression in the direction of the errors of Stalin, who conceived of the danger of restoration as coming from direct representatives of the old bourgeoisie and of the imperialist countries. Although the CPP, unlike Stalin, does recognize the persistence of antagonistic classes under socialism, it pays no attention to how the relations in socialist society itself (the relations inherited from capitalism that need to be transformed toward communism) constitute the material basis for the emergence of a new bourgeoisie and for capitalist restoration. This is not a minor matter. If you conceive of the problem as simply representatives of the old overthrown bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie internationally, then simply getting rid of those representatives, in one way or another could seem to be a direct and effective solution: as the saying goes, “kill the dog and you get rid of the rabies.” But if you understand that the contradictions of socialism itself constantly regenerate the danger of capitalist restoration, that there’s a constant struggle between advancing further toward communism or returning to capitalism and that it isn’t possible to “stop half-way” without returning to capitalism, then you see that the problem is much more complex.

In this light, it isn’t surprising that the CPP stated that “it is false that [Stalin] resolved things by administrative means”,⁴³ which was presented as being consistent with Mao’s position, but was actually a disagreement with the evaluation of Mao who observed that “At that time [the 1920s] Stalin had nothing else to rely on except the masses, so he demanded all-out mobilization of the party and the masses. Afterward, when they had realized some gains this way, they became less reliant on the masses”.⁴⁴

Based on this erroneous understanding of the problem, the CPP’s “Gonzalo Thought” proposes, on the one hand, “the armed organization of the masses, the people’s militia that swallows up the army.” The need to maintain a professional army under socialism, due to an important degree to imperialist encirclement and aggression, is a contradiction of great importance under socialism but, as we have seen, it is far from the only one. It is also correct to give emphasis to developing militias, but this cannot provide a complete solution to this problem. In reality, the revolutionaries in China did promote the militias and some of them rose up against the regular army when the coup happened, but they couldn’t prevail against the greater strength, weaponry, training, and discipline of the regular forces. More importantly, simply arming the masses doesn’t guarantee *what line* they will follow: in fact many armed masses in the militias went with the tide of the new revisionist line in power.

From this partial proposal, they go on to other profoundly erroneous and harmful proposals: the “militarization of society”⁴⁵ and the idea that the contradictions of socialism will be resolved with “revolutionary violence”:

“we will maintain the continuation of the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat with revolutionary violence through cultural revolutions, and we will only get to communism with revolutionary violence, and as long as there is any place on Earth where exploitation exists we will finish it off with revolutionary violence.”⁴⁶ In the first place, presenting the Cultural Revolution as if it were essentially “revolutionary violence” is a crude distortion of the theory and practice of the Cultural Revolution, where Mao repeatedly insisted on *not* resolving contradictions through violence, which was possible because the proletariat still held state power, and the violence which was unleashed went against Mao’s line and harmed the development of the Cultural Revolution. Instead of frankly presenting this disagreement with Mao, an opposing view is presented as if it were in agreement with Mao’s position, which is an erroneous method that, as mentioned above, reflects the legacy of previous erroneous tendencies in the international communist movement of a dogmatic and religious attitude toward Marxism.

Revolutionary violence is necessary, without a doubt, in order to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism, to defend socialist countries from capitalist-imperialist aggression, to reestablish socialism after a restoration of capitalism, and to defeat armed attempts to overthrow the socialist state. However, simply “cutting off heads” cannot be the main way of resolving the problems of the socialist transition. For one thing, the new bourgeoisie is not a static and unchanging target nor is it easily distinguishable. The forces who make it up do not speak openly in favor of capitalism: they are leaders of the communist party itself who persist in defending a line that in reality will lead to restoration, at certain times some can be won at least in part to the revolutionary line while others cannot, and in fact the relative strength of such a line and whether or not it has the ability to usurp power changes in relation to the objective situation in the world and within the country. On the other hand, the essential problem, as we have seen, doesn’t reside in these people as individuals but rather in a line that has a material basis in socialist society. Experience has shown only too well that when you get rid of some revisionist leaders, others emerge, so in addition to mobilizing the masses to overthrow revisionist leaders, it is crucial to work on the roots of the problem by raising people’s ability to distinguish between the revisionist line and the communist line, as well as understanding the profound necessity and finding the appropriate forms for continuing to transform the “four alls” toward communism.

The use of violence as the principal means for resolving these problems of line, consciousness, and the transformation of the four alls is, in fact, harmful, as the negative experience of the Soviet Union illustrates. It necessarily leads to confusing contradictions between the people and the enemy with contradictions among the people, because there can be and will be people who oppose necessary socialist transformations who are not actively working to overthrow socialism, as well as many people who follow an incorrect line at a given time who can and should be won to the revolutionary line. In both cases, these are contradictions among the people that should be handled with ideological and political struggle and not with “revolutionary violence”. Conversely, armed attempts to overthrow socialism must be defeated. In addition, the use of violence as the principal means for resolving contradictions under socialism “chills the atmosphere”, putting an end to the great debates, dissent, and line struggle that are essential both for finding correct solutions to the complex problems of the socialist transition and for developing the ability of ever greater numbers of people to distinguish between communism and revisionism: between the line that proclaims a position with Marxist phrases that objectively leads back to capitalism and the line that’s struggling for appropriate steps forward in the transition to communism at a given time, something which is not a simple matter.

The CPP and its chairman were either unaware of or rejected the analysis by Mao and his followers of the complexity of this transition and the need to eliminate the “four alls”. In the quotation above, communism is spoken of as if it were simply a question of abolishing exploitation. Although this is fundamental, the socialist revolution, with the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the conversion of the means of production into property of the whole people and collective property, basically eliminates exploitation, although in cases in which the revisionist line is expanding the inequalities of socialist society instead of restricting them, it “smells of exploitation”, as Mao’s followers said. But as we have seen, there is a much longer road (and a whole historical period) to cover in order to abolish the “four alls” in the entire world in order to reach communism, which isn’t taken into account when frankly ridiculous things are said like “Chairman Gonzalo... will take us to Communism”.⁴⁷

Similar to how it is proposed that the complex contradictions of socialism be resolved by means of an apparently simpler but fundamentally mistaken method of imposing things through violence, an attempt was also made to resolve the problems of the two line struggle in the CPP by means of subordinating the entire party to its chairman Gonzalo, in a profound deviation from democratic centralism and the principle that the

individual (including the chairperson) is subordinate to the collectivity and the Party. A revolutionary leader can play an extremely important role in lifting up the vision of others when struggling for an understanding that corresponds to material reality and the advance of the communist revolution. If it had not been for Lenin's struggle, the revolutionary crisis that gave rise to the October Revolution would not have been taken advantage of, and Mao commented that "There were times in the Cultural Revolution, especially at the beginning, when I was the only one who agreed with my opinion." However, this role is not essentially due to some personal quality of the revolutionary leader but rather to the *line* that they defend: their understanding of the problems that the communist revolution faces and how to correctly solve them. Individuals follow and apply one or another line, but individuals as such do not have lines, which are, in reality, a product of a collective process of a party or of the international movement. In some cases, individuals may come to synthesize and concentrate key elements of the communist science and in such cases this should be recognized, but there isn't anyone who is immune to making mistakes in regard to the problems of the communist revolution or even adopting "solutions" that in fact go against the advance of that revolution. This, among other reasons, is why collective leadership, the subordination of the individual and even the chairperson of a party to the collectivity, and the most lively and critical debate in that collectivity are essential.

It seems that the profoundly erroneous practice in which members of the CPP swore loyalty to their chairman Gonzalo was, to an important degree, based on the logic that he, as a person, was the guarantee of the correct line and of victory, as was said many times. But no one, in and of themselves, can be the guarantee of a correct line: a correct line is the product of a process of correctly applying the scientific method of dialectical materialism to develop concepts that reflect or basically reflect material reality and how to transform it. A correct or basically correct line is essential to win victory, but there can be no "guarantee" of victory, since the revolutionary forces can be defeated, not principally due to their errors but rather to an unfavorable balance of forces, and other factors can also intervene.

What happens with the imprisonment of Gonzalo? The same mistaken logic according to which he is the guarantee of a correct line and of victory leads to thinking that the people's war cannot continue since he, the guarantee, is not present, and it is Gonzalo himself who issues the call to negotiate the end of the people's war and poses an erroneous analysis, a revisionist line, in the face of the real difficulties arising from his capture and that of other party leaders, as well as the difficulties in the international situation.

This line has already caused considerable damage in Peru and in the world, but these metaphysical and mechanical ways of dealing with contradictions lead to even worse things when dealing with the problem of forging a new society. As Avakian points out in regard to a different case of a solid core without elasticity: "We can see the negative, extremely negative, expression of not correctly grasping and handling this [the diversity of socialist society and how to live with and transform the middle strata -OCR] in the experience – which I won't attempt to go into in any kind of full way here, but briefly – the experience of Pol Pot in Cambodia, where instead of this kind of approach they had this whole approach that involved real irony, as well as real disaster. They had peasant masses who had not undergone any real radical transformation in their thinking, despite certain changes in their material conditions: the peasant masses, especially in the base areas they established during the war against the Lon Nol regime and the U.S. (which installed and backed that regime), were led by intellectuals who had that problem, the very real problem that I've spoken of in other talks and writings—the phenomenon of education on a narrow foundation (I'll come back to that point shortly, because it is actually a very important point). And the Khmer Rouge, under Pol Pot's direction, took the rest of Cambodian society and attempted to pound and flatten it down to the level of the peasantry—as the peasantry was then—in the name of, and somehow as a supposed means for getting to, communism. To wildly understate it, they did not grasp solid core with elasticity or the "parachute point" [i.e., the diversity of socialist society -OCR] at all. And this led to real disasters and, yes, real horrors."⁴⁸

Gonzalo's line was not the same as Pol Pot's, but his orientation of "people's war until communism" is also an expression of overlooking the complex contradictions of the socialist transition to communism and thinking that a solid core without elasticity can simply impose its solutions on the diversity of socialist society. This is to insist on repeating and deepening errors of the 20th century and to reject and throw away the essence of Mao's greatest contribution to communist science, the theory of continuing the revolution under socialism (and all this in the name of supposedly "imposing Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, principally Maoism"). If applied, this line can only lead to disaster and not to emancipation.

8. Elasticity without a solid core: “Advancing” toward the 18th century, or there’s no better communism than bourgeois democracy

While some advocate a solid core without any elasticity, others have become enthusiastic about “elasticity”, rediscovering bourgeois electoral democracy and throwing out the need for a solid core fighting for communism, and in particular the need for the institutionalized leadership of the communist party in socialism. Such is the case with chairman Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai, leaders of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [CPN(M)] – now the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [UCPN(M)] – and the revisionist line adopted by this party in the Central Committee meeting in October, 2005.

The new revisionist line of the CPN(M) completely ignores the real contradictions of the socialist transition to communism, the abolition of the “four alls”, that we have already examined, and reduces the essential problem in socialism to “bureaucracy”. In this way they replace a serious analysis of the real contradictions of socialist society with the commonplaces typical of bourgeois, social-democratic and revisionist analyses that are not able to find any problem other than “bureaucracy”. For example: “When democracy does not take root in the entire oppressed classes, then bureaucratic tendencies emerge in the Party, state, and the society as well...”⁴⁹ Although problems with bureaucratic methods of work have existed and will exist, as we have seen, the problem of the class struggle under socialism is much more profound than this.

This goes hand in hand with a profound distortion of the experience of socialism, ignoring the struggle of the masses under the leadership of revolutionary communists to continue advancing toward communism, especially in the Cultural Revolution in China, against the capitalist roaders among other party leaders who finally were able to carry out a coup d’état, imprisoning and killing the revolutionaries and restoring capitalism. Instead of this reality, they give us an invented history of the slow and gradual bureaucratic degeneration of the proletarian party and state as a whole, without any distinction between communists and revisionists or between socialism and capitalism: “in the past the proletarian state powers instead of serving the masses and acting as instruments of continuous revolution turned into masters of the people and instruments of counter-revolution, and rather than moving in the direction of withering away transformed into huge totalitarian bureaucracies and instruments of repression”.⁵⁰

Such “analysis” of “totalitarian bureaucracies” is simply the bourgeois criticism of socialism, constantly spread through thousands of media, transplanted into supposedly communist literature. Therefore, as Lenin commented about the revisionist criticism of the fundamental ideas of Marxism in his times, “it is not surprising that the ‘new, critical’ trend in Social-Democracy should spring up, all complete, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter. The content of this new trend did not have to grow and take shape, it was transferred bodily from bourgeois literature to socialist literature.”⁵¹ Or as we say in this computer age, “copy and paste”.

By redefining the problem of the socialist transition to communism as “bureaucracy” instead of the abolition of the four alls in the entire world, and by distorting the real class struggle in the first socialist countries, the CPN(M) comes to the same old conclusion that the “solution” is “democracy” and in particular “multiparty competition”: “If they are not to face competition among the masses to remain in the leadership of power, then there remains a material basis, in which the relation between the Party and the masses becomes formal and mechanical, consequently it provides an opportunity for bureaucracy to breed from within the Party itself... Hence, we believe multiparty competition for the people’s government and, along with this, the people’s right to supervise, control, and intervene, including recalling of their representatives from power, provides a kind of hook in the hands of the masses that can drag the wrongdoing comrades into their court.”⁵²

They say that without this electoral competition “there remains a material basis” for bureaucratic degeneration, with the implication that with such competition such a basis no longer exists, shutting their eyes to the material basis for capitalist restoration in the very relations, inequalities, and ideas of socialist society itself, inherited from capitalism, as well as the fierce struggle during the entire socialist period between the struggle to advance further toward communism or return to capitalism. Based on ignoring the real problem, they find the “solution” in “multiparty competition”, which is nothing more than the bourgeois electoral democracy that has never led, in any case in history, to dragging anybody in power into the masses’ “court” and has been used a great deal to drag the masses and communists who are in the process of degenerating into revisionists into the “court” of the bourgeoisie. And the CPN(M) has demonstrated this in full by ending the people’s war that it led for 10 years, turning in their weapons, dismantling their base areas, participating in elections, and entering into and heading up a government together with several parties of the big bourgeoisie allied with imperialism. There they offer us the spectacle of supposed communists sending Nepalese soldiers to fight side by side with U.S.

imperialism in the war of aggression in Afghanistan, at the same time as they undo the agrarian revolution previously promoted by the party, returning the land in various areas to the old landlords. This is the bitter fruit of “multiparty competition”.

As Avakian underlines in his profound criticism of essentially the same line brought forward before by K. Venu: the “‘model’, where the communist party’s ‘right to govern’ is ‘strictly based on the electoral support gained by its platform just like any other platform’, would, at best, translate into a situation where rival power centers, coalesced around different platforms, would compete for the votes of the masses. The results of this (again, at best) would be some sort of ‘coalition’ government, in which ‘socialists’ and ‘communists’ of various kinds would be involved together with representatives of various other, more openly bourgeois and petit-bourgeois, ‘democratic’ trends, and in which the fundamental interests of the masses would be ‘compromised away’ and no radical transformation of society would be carried out (and any attempt at this would be quickly suppressed by this ‘coalition’ government). Hasn’t there been enough – indeed far too much! – experience all over the world, to graphically illustrate this?”⁵³ Avakian mentions, for example, the Indonesian experience where this type of bourgeois parliamentarianism led to the massacre of thousand of communists and other people. Recent experience in Nepal has also clearly demonstrated the correctness of his analysis, where the deals and agreements with bourgeois parties in Nepal have led to sacrificing the masses’ fundamental revolutionary interests for crumbs consisting of positions in a bourgeois state.

These days a large part of the planet’s population lives in “democracies” with electoral competition among different parties where *it is proven year after year that it’s no good*. Where in the world or throughout history have elections organized according to the bourgeois model resulted in meeting the real needs of the masses, instead of all kinds of deceit, illusions, and repression? Nowhere. Where has there been greater democracy *for the masses of people*, a greater possibility of transforming society in the direction of eliminating all kinds of social inequalities, a greater possibility of participating in administration of the state, a greater expression of the opinions of the *masses*, than in the socialist experiences led by a communist party, and especially the most advanced experience to date, the Cultural Revolution? Nowhere.

The seizure of power by the proletariat is only the first step of a long and difficult struggle that faces encirclement from imperialist countries that are determined to crush it, that faces the deception of a new bourgeoisie that speaks in the name of a supposed “communism”, that faces the complex struggle to advance the world revolution at the same time as overcoming the four ills, involving and training increasing numbers of the masses to actually *govern and transform* the new society, instead of simply voting to “decide” which group of double-dealers are going to crush and oppress them from the government during the next 4 or 6 years. Faced with these challenges, the leadership of a communist party is absolutely necessary under socialism; you can’t do without a solid core that is struggling for communism, although this core, as Avakian argues, must encourage and lead in the broadest sense of the word even greater elasticity than even the best of the past. This includes a larger role for elections with the participation of various candidates representing different forces and positions, and the orientation of exercising communist leadership fundamentally through ideological and political struggle and not principally through monopolizing positions of authority. However, the “option” of returning to the nightmare of capitalism that still predominates in the world and is going all out to undermine and overthrow socialism, will not be put to a vote, after all the sacrifice the people have made in order to free themselves from that nightmare. These kinds of proposals are quite frankly *criminal*.

The CPN(M)’s “democracy of the 21st century” is just a remake of the deception of “pure” democracy, “above classes”; that is, the theory of bourgeois democracy recycled from the bourgeois theorists of the 18th century. As Avakian emphasizes, “In a world marked by profound class divisions and social inequality, to talk about “democracy” – without talking about the class nature of that democracy and which class it serves – is meaningless, and worse. So long as society is divided into classes, there can be no “democracy for all”: one class or another will rule, and it will uphold and promote that kind of democracy which serves its interests and goals. The question is: *which class* will rule and whether its rule, and its system of democracy, will serve the *continuation*, or the eventual *abolition*, of class divisions and the corresponding relations of exploitation, oppression and inequality.”⁵⁴

As the *Manifesto from the RCP, USA* states: “Very significantly, these “mirror opposite” erroneous tendencies have in common being mired in, or retreating into, models of the past, of one kind or another (even if the particular models may differ): either clinging dogmatically to the past experience of the first stage of the communist revolution – or, rather, to an incomplete, one-sided, and ultimately erroneous understanding of

that – or retreating into the whole past era of bourgeois revolution and its principles: going back to what are in essence 18th century theories of (bourgeois) democracy, in the guise, or in the name, of “21st century communism,” in effect equating this “21st century communism” with a democracy that is supposedly “pure” or “classless” – a democracy which, in reality, as long as classes exist, can only mean *bourgeois democracy*, and bourgeois *dictatorship*.⁵⁵

We don’t need a solid core without elasticity that “imposes” a distorted, and ultimately a revisionist, conception of “communism”, nor do we need elasticity without a solid core, which embraces bourgeois democracy and leads to strengthening bourgeois dictatorship. The lazybones dogmatism of the C(M)PA variety, which is not only content with providing nothing new after almost 40 years but also warns us against the dangers of developing anything new, also has nothing to offer. We need a solid core with a lot of elasticity; we need the new synthesis, which opens up new vistas of a new and liberating society where the great majority would want to live and of how to advance better and further in the world-historic transition toward communism. This is the communist theory that can and must guide a new wave of communist revolutions, or there won’t be any such wave.

9. There will be no emancipation for anybody without smashing the bourgeois state: lessons from Nepal

The other fundamental aspect of the revisionism of Prachanda and the CPN(M) beginning with the adoption of their new line in 2005 was to replace the line of developing the people’s war for the seizure of power, culminating in the new democratic revolution and advancing to the socialist revolution, with the supposed “tactic” of fighting for a “democratic republic” and a “transitional state” together with various other parties that the CPN(M) itself had characterized as bourgeois and pro-imperialist, to “restructure the state”, and excusing this with the need to struggle against the monarchy, which has now been deposed. This is the line that guided the peace agreement, the end of the people’s war, the proposal to combine the revolutionary army with the reactionary army, and the participation of the CPN(M) in the elections, in which they won a plurality of votes and formed a government with the bourgeois parties.

The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA thoroughly criticized this new revisionist line, that had already become evident in the writings of Bhattarai, in a letter sent to the CPN(M) in October of 2005, that is, at the time when the CPN(M) was just officially adopting this line and before its disastrous practical consequences became evident.⁵⁶ The CPN(M) rejected the RCP, USA’s criticism, saying that it was simply repeating the “ABC’s of Marxism”, refused to respond to subsequent letters, and followed the road into the revisionist swamp in which they are to be found at present. In addition to the questions of the socialist transition that we have touched on, the central question in this struggle was whether the immediate goal was to “restructure the state” or to destroy it, to smash it.

As one of the letters from the RCP, USA, emphasizes: One of the phrases that recurs in CPN(M) writings like a leitmotif is the call to “restructure the state.” In fact, this very phrase sharply sums up what is wrong in the CPN(M)’s political program. It is worthwhile reviewing the much-maligned “ABC’s of Marxism” in this regard. In summing up the experience of the different revolutions in 19th century Europe, Marx made the very profound observation that “all revolutions *perfected* this machine instead of smashing it” (our emphasis). What did Marx mean by this?

In particular he was referring to the fact that the several rounds of revolution in Europe and especially France (1789, 1830, and 1848) had resulted in transforming the state machinery to correspond with the capitalist economic base and “perfecting” its ability to fulfill its role as the enforcer of bourgeois dictatorship. Quite clearly Marx is referring to the abolition of the monarchy in much of Europe and the generalization of bourgeois democracy as the “perfection” of the capitalist dictatorship that the state represents. Later Marx specifically draws the lesson of the Commune which was not, in its essence, an effort to further perfect the bourgeois state apparatus in France but rather a first, albeit halting, sometimes irresolute, and ultimately unsuccessful effort to *smash* the bourgeois state machinery and replace it with a different state emerging from the proletarian revolutionary struggle.

At stake in the present debate in Nepal is whether, when all is said and done, the 10 years of People’s War will have served to *smash the reactionary state machinery or perfect it*. To put it quite bluntly, if the result of the war is the consolidation of a bourgeois republic, the tragic result will be that the sacrifice of the people will

have served not to establish a new form of proletarian rule but only to “modernize” and “perfect” the very instrument that keeps them oppressed.⁵⁷

This “tragic result” is exactly what is happening today in Nepal, the result of adopting a revisionist line on socialism and communism, as we have seen, and the closely related result of adopting a revisionist line of fighting to “restructure” or perfect the old state instead of continuing the struggle to destroy it.

The correct communist criticism by the RCP, USA has been attacked from the “left” and the right, without anyone trying to refute the content of their position.

On the one hand, some attacked the CPN(M) before their about-face to a revisionist line, for applying some ceasefire tactics, insisting in the name of a supposed “Maoism” – in reality a “left” infantilism—that any ceasefire and any negotiation is equivalent to betrayal, without having enough coherence of principle to brand Mao himself a traitor, given that he established a ceasefire and negotiated with the Kuomintang in Chungking. At that time Mao emphasized that in combating the enemy, “How to give ‘tit for tat’ depends on the situation. Sometimes, not going to negotiations is tit-for-tat; and sometimes, going to negotiations is also tit-for-tat.”⁵⁸ Mao clearly explains that the negotiations had the political aim of further isolating the Kuomintang and preparing the civil war that finally led to the victory of the Chinese Revolution. The question for communists in evaluating ceasefire or negotiation tactics is whether these serve to strengthen the revolutionary armed struggle and finally destroy the bourgeois state or if they lead to liquidating the people’s war that is necessary in order to smash it. The Chungking negotiations clearly had the aim, and the effect of strengthening the people’s war and contributing to the victory of the revolution. Although we haven’t investigated enough to evaluate each one of the tactics adopted by the CPN(M) before the change in their line, it is clear that the ceasefire tactics in that period had the political aim of isolating the enemy and strengthening the people’s war. With the revisionist about-face and the change in the strategic goals of the CPN(M), all their tactics since then have been in the service of aims that don’t go beyond the suffocating and deadly confines of the world capitalist-imperialist system. Similarly, the “peace accords” proposed by the right opportunist line (ROL) in Peru were part of a whole revisionist line, as the comrades of the present Communist Party of Iran (MLM) analyzed correctly at the time.⁵⁹

It’s worth mentioning that the simplistic and dogmatic approach we’re discussing here wreaked havoc in the case of Peru as well. Without a doubt the situation was very difficult, with the detention of Chairman Gonzalo and later the proposal for peace accords coming out of prison and attributed to him, but without reliable proof initially that he was, in fact, the author. However, the response of the leadership that was determined to continue the people’s war to simply denounce this as a “hoax” without responding with arguments or developing the two-line struggle against the ROL (recurring in some versions at least to the same argument that any negotiation is betrayal and that Gonzalo “could not” do that, in addition to the strange argument that developing the two-line struggle against the ROL was “conciliation”) left the party and the masses disarmed politically, while this right opportunist line developed political argumentation in one document after another and there were more and more indications that Gonzalo was, in fact, the author of the peace accords proposal and of the ROL.

On the other hand, even some of the protagonists of the infantile attacks mentioned above, displaying their lack of principles, have “suspended judgment” in the face of the electoral “successes” of the UCPN(M) and are seeking unprincipled unity with this party, now led by a revisionist line. The practical impact of revisionism has provoked protest and opposition inside the UCPN(M) but unfortunately, up till now, as far as we know, this opposition has not gone beyond criticism of some of the tactics, instead of repudiating, criticizing, and thoroughly struggling against the revisionist line adopted in 2005. To speak frankly, although Prachanda and others talk about preparing the “insurrection” and even if they were to again take up some kind of armed struggle, as long as this is still in the service of the line of “restructuring” the reactionary state and fighting for a so-called socialism with bourgeois democratic “multiparty competition”, *it will not lead to liberating anyone.*

10. Unity for the emancipation of humanity or unity without principles in order to have “material force”?

We have observed from different angles, as the *Manifesto of the RCP, USA*, also points out, that the two erroneous tendencies that are opposed to the new synthesis – again, “either to cling religiously to all of the previous experience and the theory and method associated with it or (in essence, if not in words) to throw that

out altogether”⁶⁰— although they appear to be such different and mutually-opposed tendencies, in reality have some features in common. Some participating organizations in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) have been in a hurry to show this in practice, by attempting to unite both wrong tendencies (and eclectic mixtures of both of them) in a new “Marxist-Leninist-Maoist” international organization, outside the RIM and in opposition to Bob Avakian’s new synthesis.

The first call on the part of some forces in the RIM to “achieve a new unity of the international communist movement based on Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and build the international organization that we need today” appeared on May 1st, 2011, signed by the Maoist Communist Party-Italy, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), the Communist Party of India (ML) Naxalbari, the Maoist Communist Party, Turkey and North Kurdistan, and five organizations that do not participate in the RIM. They tell us, among other things, that “In Nepal, 10 years of people’s war have created the conditions for the advancement of Nepali revolution. This revolution is now at a complex crossroads and must be supported against the counter-revolution waged by internal and external enemies as well as against the reformists who try to undermine it from within.”⁶¹

So they’re talking about a “people’s war” in Nepal in 2011 with a vague reference to “reformism” without mentioning that it was *liquidated* with the 2006 peace accords by the revisionist line in command of the UCPN(M), which also appears as a signatory of the document. This was two years after the letters from the RCP, USA criticizing the revisionist about-face of the UCPN(M) were made public, all of which were surely received much earlier by the participants in the RIM. In a new document of May 1st, 2012, signed by the Maoist Communist Party-Italy (MCP-Italy), the Communist Party of Afghanistan (Maoist), and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Naxalbari, [CPI(ML)N], they now mention the revisionism of Prachanda and Bhattarai and call on the Maoists in the UCPN(M) to rebel against them, without saying anything about the *content* of this revisionism, their line of “restructuring” instead of smashing the old state and their revisionist line on socialism of “multiparty competition” and bourgeois democracy. This is a disservice to comrades of the UCPN(M) who are opposed to Prachanda’s line who unfortunately until now have limited their opposition to proposing different tactics instead of thoroughly criticizing the opportunist about-face in the line of the party beginning in 2005.⁶²

Why do they first cover up the liquidation of the people’s war in Nepal by the revisionist line in command of the party and later offer the label “revisionist” without saying anything even briefly about the content of that line? The Maoist Communist Party-Italy (MCP-Italy), which has played an important role in these efforts, has given us a clue by saying “We do not need to unite the parties on a document but to create an international center that will be a material force” and “Whatever your views on “revisionism” of Prachanda, now you can not create an international organization without the UCPN (M).”⁶³ We should thank the MCP-Italy for such a frank formulation of the kind of unprincipled unity that characterizes this whole project. Unity “on a document” would hold at least the possibility of some unity on the basis of shared principles. But, this is considered to be unnecessary. What matters is “material force” and since the UCPN(M) has “material force”, although it follows a revisionist line, it should be part of this “new unity of the communist movement”.

And this from people who call themselves Maoists, when it was Mao who emphasized so much that the correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line determines everything. The line, that is to say, the understanding of how the world is and how to transform it, what the problem is and what the solution is, determines if an organization really will be able to contribute to advancing the communist revolution or in fact is going to turn into a revisionist obstacle to that revolution. There is no doubt that the UCPN(M) has material force, but it is material force that is now in the service of a line that *is objectively opposed to the emancipation of the masses of Nepal and of the world, that opposes destroying the old state and establishing real socialism.*

Does this matter to us? Does it matter if the understanding you have of the world and how to transform it could in reality lead to emancipation or if it corresponds to keeping the masses forever enslaved under this system? The formulations cited from the MCP-Italy tell us in essence that this doesn’t matter, that what matters is having “material force” and influence now, without worrying about the problem of material force *for what goal.*

If we really want to lead the struggle of the masses for their emancipation from the misery of this system, we need to concern ourselves in the first place with establishing and uniting the communists around a line that really corresponds to the material world and really will be able to lead a revolution that liberates the people, and demarcates from false solutions that, although they may call themselves communist, like the revisionist line of the UCPN(M), in reality represent a betrayal of the masses and the revolution. Or as Lenin put it: ““before we

can unite, and in order that we may unite, we must first of all draw firm and definite lines of demarcation.”⁶⁴

This is exactly the approach that was applied to form the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM). The *Declaration of the RIM* established a basis of unity around fundamental principles and demarcating with the main forms of revisionism, and the different parties and organizations that accepted those principles united; later another document, *Long Live Marxism-Leninism-Maoism!*, was added. This is an approach based on principles, motivated by how to really achieve emancipation.

The end of a stage in the world communist revolution and the beginning of a new one, as well as new changes and events in the world in that context, have demanded and do demand an advance beyond the relative basis of unity reached in the RIM’s fundamental documents. On the other hand, divergences in the RIM that have been sharply expressed in particular around events in Peru and Nepal, and now around the new synthesis, have become more pronounced. There have been many calls exhorting parties and organizations to write and debate these differences, with very little response. Avakian in particular has called several times for others to comment on the new synthesis and for those who are in opposition to it offer criticism of its content. Such criticism, on the basis of principles, whether correct or incorrect, will contribute to the struggle to clarify what is essential: a deeper and more correct understanding of how to understand the world and transform it and, on that basis, the ability to achieve that in practice. The response to this request, in most cases, has been either silence or a series of personal attacks, distortions, and slanders against Bob Avakian for daring to propose how to advance further and better in emancipating the people and for asking others to express their opinions on the content of that proposal, either in favor or against it. Other RIM organizations, such as the Communist Party of Iran (MLM), who have expressed agreement with the new synthesis, have also had to put up with a barrage of personal attacks and distortions of their positions, as can be seen in the CP of Afghanistan (M) document cited above.

In this regard, we must insist that debate and two-line struggle, even when this becomes very sharp, are indispensable and contribute to clarifying what corresponds to reality and the interests of the masses and what does not, as long as the struggle focuses on principles, on the “big questions” of how to advance proletarian revolution, and the real position and best arguments of your adversary are taken into account. However, methods of “struggle” based on distorting or inventing supposed positions of your adversary, spreading stories and gossip about who supposedly did what to whom, and personal attacks and slanders are extremely harmful: they conceal and cloud the questions of principle under debate, demoralize the masses or educate them in the same methods of discrediting and slander that the bourgeoisie uses, and they objectively help the class enemy, facilitating their attacks on revolutionary leaders, which they can disguise as “quarrels among revolutionaries”. These are opportunist methods of struggle that every revolutionary should repudiate and criticize.

Given the divergences of principle in the RIM, the MCP-Italy, C(M)PA, and CPI(ML)N propose forming another international organization of “MLM Communists” without resolving any of the questions under debate and without clarifying a principled basis of unity for this new organization. They simply declare that “To build this new international organization we must break with revisionism in all its aspects and particularly with those that have led to the current crisis and collapse of the RIM, namely the post- MLM ‘new synthesis’ of Bob Avakian in the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, and the revisionist line established by Prachanda/Bhattarai in the UCPN(M).”⁶⁵

We have already seen that at least for the MCP-Italy “breaking with the revisionism” of Prachanda does not necessarily mean that the UCPN(M) guided by this line since 2005 doesn’t fit into their new “international organization of MLM communists” and the C(M)PA assures us that “Only four years have passed from the final defeat – or approximate final phase of victory in Nepal...”⁶⁶ This statement is almost unbelievable: They don’t take a position! The end of the people’s war because of a revisionist line adopted by the UCPN(M) might represent “final defeat” or, perhaps on the contrary, it is the “approximate final phase of victory in Nepal”. They speak of the “revisionist line established by Prachanda/Bhattarai in the UCPN(M)”, while “suspending judgment” and “waiting to see” if the outcome of the policies adopted on the basis of that line represent “final defeat” or “the approximate final phase of victory in Nepal”. What is really needed from the point of view of communism and internationalism is to struggle for the comrades in Nepal (and the communists around the world) to repudiate and thoroughly criticize the revisionist line adopted by the UCPN(M) in 2005, as the RCP, USA has done since that time. On the contrary, the course of action of the MCP-Italy and the C(M) PA regarding this question of such importance for the RIM, the international communist movement, and the people of Nepal is another indication of their international “MLM” project’s lack of principles.⁶⁷

What’s even more important and outrageous, they brand Bob Avakian’s new synthesis as “revisionist” and try

to split the RIM, calling publicly for the formation of another international organization, *without having made any criticism of the content of the new synthesis*. This is completely opposed to the communist method that should be applied when there are sharp differences over line in a communist party or international communist organization. With the correct communist method, you seriously analyze the other position, you show, with arguments, how it doesn't correspond to reality and the advance toward communism, and you struggle, on that basis, to unite all who can be united around a more correct line. Only on the basis of reasoned criticism and a principled struggle is it correct to characterize another position as revisionist and only once the two line struggle has been carried through to the end is it appropriate to take organizational measures, if it has been proven that the other line is in fact opposed to revolutionary advance and its defenders cannot be won over. It is crucial to proceed in this way because this is the only way that a more correct understanding of the objective problems that the opposing position treats incorrectly can be clarified, and only in this way is it possible to unite all who can be united around a correct line. This is the method that was applied, for example, in Marx's struggle with the anarchists, Lenin's struggle with the revisionism of the Second International, and Mao's struggle with the revisionism of Khrushchev and the capitalist roaders in China. It is the method the RCP, USA, and others fought to apply to the two-line struggle in the Communist Party of Peru, as well as in the more recent line struggle in Nepal. It is the method summed up in the principles of: "Practice Marxism, not revisionism; unite, and don't split; be open and aboveboard, and don't intrigue and conspire."⁶⁸

As we have shown on the basis of analyzing the documents of the C(M)PA and others, the "reorganizers" are not applying Marxism and consequently they go in for splitting the RIM and resort to the personal attacks, gossip, and rumours that fill the pages of *Maoist Road/Via Maoista*, instead of developing two-line struggle around the key questions taken up by the new synthesis. These are very harmful and unprincipled methods, which should be criticized and repudiated by all communists, regardless of their position on Bob Avakian's new synthesis.

To top it all off, while attempting to split the RIM, they try to blame Avakian for the "crisis and collapse" of the RIM. The present crisis in the RIM was not caused by Bob Avakian's new synthesis. It has emerged because of the two-line struggle in the face of objective problems in the class struggle and in particular because of the refusal to take up principled debate over these problems on the part of the lines opposed to the new synthesis. This is taking place in the context of the objective need to develop communist theory and practice in the face of capitalist restoration, the end of the first stage, new conditions, and the demands of the new stage of communist revolution. The dogmatic tendency, reflected for example, in the positions of the C(M) PA or in another form in some of the formulations of "Gonzalo Thought" that we have examined here, denies that this objective necessity exists, seeking refuge in a distorted version of "Marxism-Leninism-Maoism" that ignores or misrepresents Mao's greatest contribution and throws out the revolutionary and scientific essence of communism. Others, like the line in command of the UCPN(M), in the name of new conditions, in essence attack and throw out all the previous experience of socialism as principally negative, presenting the bourgeois democratic theory of the 18th century as the new communism of the 21st century.

This hodgepodge of erroneous tendencies has found a point of "unity" in opposing Bob Avakian's new synthesis that **has** sought to meet the objective need for further development of communist theory and has forged a new communist theoretical framework that strengthens its scientific foundations. The problem does not lie simply in their opposition to what objectively represents a great hope for the oppressed masses and the communist revolution throughout the world, but rather in their refusal to debate and seriously argue their opposition, as well as in the methods of misrepresentation, intrigue, and splitting that they have employed. If we have given particular attention here to the C(M)PA's positions, it is not because they are the worst example of this, but rather exactly because at least they have responded with *something*, although they don't get into criticizing the *content* of the new synthesis. Instead of carrying the two-line struggle through to the end, these forces have preferred to simply try to liquidate and split the RIM without further ado, and form another organization without even specifying its ideological and political basis of unity, except for a so-called "Marxism-Leninism-Maoism" that tries to conciliate opposing positions on socialism, the state, people's war, and other questions.

11. Science or pragmatism?

Although these forces try to avoid taking a consistent position on the big questions posed by the end of a stage and the beginning of a new one, all of us face them. They are unavoidable; they are part of the objective situation we confront. It is enough to go out and talk to people about communism to become aware of the

disenchantment with or rejection of communism on the part of many people, including many progressive and revolutionary-minded people, due to the enemy's anticommunist offensive that takes advantage of the material fact that the first experiences of socialism were finally defeated. You cannot truthfully and successfully combat this anticommunist offensive without deeply summing up the lessons of the first stage, but even more importantly, without adequate answers to these profound questions of the proletarian revolution, it isn't going to be possible to get beyond this reactionary system.

The organizers of this new international "communist" organization imagine that they will be able to avoid these thorny problems by attracting people on the basis of their movement's "material force", making a big show of their real or imagined "practical successes". In their view, so blatantly expressed in the above quote from the MCP-Italy, what's important is having "material force" and getting more people, it doesn't matter what line and goal this is all for. It is tremendously important to develop material force and win over everyone possible *for a line that can really resolve the objective problems of how to advance the world communist revolution*. Winning people to an organization that does not have, and doesn't see the need to develop, real solutions to these problems on the level of theory is, regardless of the subjective intentions of those who do it, a *cruel deception* that promises emancipation but will not be able to get beyond the suffocating confines of this oppressive system. This unity without principles, the idea that you can get around the need to find solutions to the problems posed by the first stage of the communist revolution, and the urge to win people on the basis of the real or imagined "material force" of the movement are expressions of pragmatism, the bourgeois philosophy that what matters is what "works", what gives immediate practical results that are apparently favourable, and it isn't important to understand more deeply why and for what. Or as the architect of capitalist restoration in China, Teng Hsiao-ping said, black cat, white cat, it doesn't matter as long as it catches mice; i.e. capitalism, socialism, it doesn't matter as long as we get economic growth and other results. Or as they say here in Mexico, "let's see which one is gum and sticks."

Pragmatism is a suitable philosophy for the bourgeoisie, and you hear their representatives praising some people for their "pragmatism" and criticizing others for their "lack of pragmatism". It corresponds to, or has a material base in, the nature of the capitalist market, where anarchy reigns. When the capitalists put their merchandise on the market, they can't be sure what's going to happen, and even the biggest ones may go bankrupt. Although they do market studies and things like that, a deep and scientific understanding of the essence of capitalism isn't what they need for their purposes: instead they need to see "what works", that is, what will yield a profit. It's a short-term philosophy that, like the capitalist market, gives precedence to immediate results: as long as they make a profit and the economy grows, it doesn't matter that the kind of growth is causing global warming and leading us toward planetary disaster.

Pragmatism does not lead us to the truth. For example, in the middle of the last century, they developed a drug called Thalidomide that "worked": it helped people to fall asleep and to control nausea in pregnant women, and clinical tests showed no toxicity in the people who took it, including at high doses. It works! It was approved, sold to many people... and only later the human tragedy of thousands of babies born with birth defects was discovered. They were satisfied with the immediate "successful" results, and they didn't look into the essence of the problem, in order to understand that drugs that are not toxic for adults may cause deformities in fetuses.

We are emphasizing that pragmatism in the communist movement is a cruel deception, because it attracts and excites people with real or imaginary immediate results that are supposedly for their emancipation and, without science, like with thalidomide, they only come to realize the tragic results later on, when it is too late. Again, there's the example of Vietnam (and also Cuba and Nicaragua) of what happens with the pragmatic line of sidestepping questions of principle, including the need to distinguish between capitalism and socialism, in the name of "advancing in practice". And then we have the "success" of the UCPN(M) in administering the reactionary state on the basis of ignoring the "ABC's of Marxism", in the name of successful "tactics". In all these cases, it is a cruel deception and betrayal to throw away the possibility of a whole new world so that supposed "communists" can be part of suppressing and repressing the masses through the state, and that is the "most" that pragmatism can achieve.

The pragmatism and lack of principles that characterizes this new international organization project is a continuation of the positivism, pragmatism and empiricism that the *Manifesto from the RCP, USA* correctly analyzes as another feature that both erroneous tendencies in the international communist movement share. It has been argued, for example, that the lines identified with Gonzalo or Prachanda are "correct" because of the practical advances at the time in the people's wars in Peru and Nepal, or that Bob Avakian cannot have a correct

position because he isn't leading a people's war. On that basis, we'd have to throw out the work of Marx, because he too never led a people's war and he had little influence in the Paris Commune, although he drew deep and scientific lessons from that experience. And as we have seen, Gonzalo and the CPP, although they were right about some important questions, also spread some profoundly mistaken positions, including in the period of the advance of the people's war in that country. (And let us say in passing that it's a good thing that Avakian and the RCP, USA are not trying to start armed struggle now, since *a revolutionary situation doesn't exist at present in the United States*. As Lenin correctly insisted and as was proven gain in the "armed actions" of small groups in various imperialist countries in the 60s and 70s of the past century, launching armed struggle when there is no revolutionary situation only leads to the isolation and destruction of the revolutionary forces. The RCP, USA's position, which is available for anyone who would like to comment on it instead of inventing absurd arguments,⁶⁹ is, in basic terms, to do everything possible to accelerate and prepare for the emergence of a revolutionary situation, which is what constitutes the material basis for them to then lead the masses in revolutionary armed struggle to destroy the old state and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Pragmatism, which directly and narrowly identifies what is "correct" with apparent successes in immediate practice, amounts to "the vulgarization and degradation of theory – reducing it to a 'guide to practice' only in the most narrow and immediate sense, treating theory as, in essence, a direct outgrowth of particular practice, and attempting to establish an equivalence between advanced practice (which itself, especially on these people's part, involves an element of subjective and arbitrary evaluation) and supposedly advanced theory. A scientific communist, materialist and dialectical, viewpoint leads to the understanding that practice is the ultimate point of origin and point of verification of theory; but, in opposition to these narrow, empiricist distortions, this must be understood to mean practice in the broad sense, encompassing broad social and historical experience, and not simply the direct experience of a particular individual, group, party, or nation."⁷⁰

An empiricist approach imagines that a correct theoretical framework is developed simply on the basis of summing up the experience of struggle of one party or one country, instead of recognizing the need to sum up historical and international experience – which the experience of a particular party is part of, but only one part – as well as learning from other spheres: philosophy, science, culture and art, etc. A positivist approach imagines that concrete practice directly provides us with correct theory, without recognizing the need for a qualitative leap to rational knowledge on the basis of embracing and *synthesizing*, drawing lessons, again not only from immediate concrete practice, but rather understanding this in the context of its interpenetration with and relation to broad social and historical experience and theory developed on that basis. An empiricist and positivist approach is like setting out to erect large buildings on the basis of simply summing up your own construction experience, without taking into account the broader experience synthesized in the principles of engineering and architecture, the study of soils, earthquakes and hurricanes, etc.

The C(M)PA gives us a good example of this narrow empiricist and positivist approach when they argue against the so-called "absolute role of theory" of the Communist Party of Iran (MLM) and of the RCP, USA: "Clearly, the highest point in the progression of the communist revolution in Marx's time, the Paris Commune, was not indebted to the theoretical framework placed in it upfront by Marx. In fact Marxists did not have a clear role in initiating and leading the Paris Commune. Instead Marx's theoretical progression and in particular, the theory of proletarian dictatorship, was very much indebted to the revolutionary practice at the Paris Commune, and Marx, through summing up this practice, developed the Dictatorship of Proletariat and built and structured it within Marxism."⁷¹

They talk as if Marx had only posed (and only could have developed) the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat once there was the practice of the Paris Commune, which is not true. It's enough to just observe that the quote cited above about "the dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary transit point" to put an end to the four alls comes from *The Class Struggles in France from 1848 to 1850*, published in 1850, that is to say, *two decades before the Paris Commune*, which demonstrates that, although Marx summed up new important lessons from the Commune, a scientific method, learning from all the diverse social practice, can and should in a certain sense "go ahead" of revolutionary practice, and should propose and lead the struggle for things that have not yet been realized in practice (and if this weren't the case, there could be no communist theory, since no one has experienced future communism). Marx could correctly and scientifically pose the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat *before that dictatorship existed in practice*, precisely because he didn't rest content with a narrow empiricist summation of the practice of the immediate struggle in one or another country. He came to this understanding as part of establishing, for the first time, a scientific theoretical framework for understanding the development and revolutionary transformation of society. He developed this on the basis of

a profound study and analysis of philosophy, political economy, the class struggle, and social development. The C(M)PA's argument, on the other hand, is the pragmatic, empiricist and positivist idea that treats theory as "in essence, a direct outgrowth of particular practice" and rejects the need for the revolution to be guided by the most advanced scientific theory developed starting from the broadest social practice (and not just the immediate practice of a particular party) and of human knowledge in diverse spheres.

This kind of method has ill-fated consequences. One of the reasons for the early defeat of the Commune was precisely the fact that it did not have Marxist leadership, it arose separately from grappling with the most advanced revolutionary theory of the times, and this is what the C(M)PA would have us do again, waiting for immediate practice to give us the answers to the big questions posed by the end of one stage and the beginning of another, with their false tale of how the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat developed. We should not repeat today in another form the negative side of the Commune that contributed to its early defeat; on the contrary, we should struggle for the scientific theory of communism, as it has developed up until now with the new synthesis, to guide revolutionary practice and to continue to develop, and we should struggle against the pragmatism and empiricism that they advise.

12. Base ourselves on objective reality or invent a reality that is more to our liking?

We have repeated the phrase "real or imaginary successes" several times deliberately, because in addition to pragmatism, another thing the tendencies opposed to the new synthesis share is instrumentalism, which is part of the harmful legacy from the international communist movement of the past as well. Instrumentalism is the method of "making reality an 'instrument' of our objectives, of distorting reality to try to make it serve our ends, of 'political truth'."72

This can be seen in the 2011 and 2012 May 1st documents cited above, that paint us a pretty picture in which "the revolution emerges more and more clearly as being the main trend in the current world",73 in which people's wars are advancing in several countries, in which the rebellions in the Arab countries have "paved the way for new anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist, anti-feudal, new-democratic revolutions", constituting "a new front in the battle between imperialism and the peoples. They join those existing in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine," and there are "exciting uprisings of the proletarian youth, which shakes the imperialist citadels..." and so on.74

The instrumentalist method behind this kind of "analysis" is that of highlighting and exaggerating positive aspects in the situation and omitting or minimizing negative aspects, thus creating a so-called "reality" in agreement with the desires and objectives of the authors, which in turn it is hoped will motivate people to act in accordance with these desires and objectives. They may or may not have "success" in motivating some people with their rose-colored reality, but no communist revolution will be made with this kind of instrumentalist and subjectivist method.

We won't dwell on the details, but we invite the reader to compare the idea that the Arab rebellions have "paved the way" for the new democratic revolution with Avakian's statement on Egypt, which praises the very positive aspects of this uprising and extends his "heartfelt support and encouragement to the millions who have risen up", while also pointing to the need for a communist vanguard guided by the most advanced theory, without which the perspective can only be the substitution of one regime by another while remaining inside "the overall framework of global imperialist domination and exploitation."75 Or to compare the one-sided representation of the significance of recent rebellions in the imperialist countries with what Avakian has written on the "Occupy" movement, which again welcomes the principal positive aspect of these struggles, at the same time as he criticizes the idea of a "horizontal" movement that has a strong influence on many of these movements and denies the need for leadership.76

By characterizing the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan as a "front in the battle between imperialism and the peoples," the instrumentalist approach ignores the problem that a large part of the forces on the battlefield are reactionary Islamic forces (including Al Qaeda and the Taliban) who do not represent the interests of the people's struggle against imperialism. "What we see instead in the contention between the jihad and imperialist aggression "are historically outmoded strata among colonized and oppressed humanity up against historically outmoded ruling strata of the imperialist system. These two reactionary poles **reinforce** each other, even while opposing each other. If you side with either of these 'outmodeds,' you end up strengthening both."77

The height of instrumentalism is when they tell us that "The people's war in Peru, initiated under the leadership of the Communist Party of Peru led by chairman Gonzalo remains an ideological and strategic beacon for

the whole international communist movement.” On the one hand, they combine two into one in the relation between theory and practice: an “ideological beacon” would necessarily have to be an *ideology*, and we have analyzed above some of the aspects in the ideology of “Gonzalo Thought”, including before Gonzalo called for peace accords, that deviated from reality. On the other hand, by identifying the “people’s war” as an “ideological beacon”, they avoid the uncomfortable problem of the present situation in Peru, in which, after Gonzalo’s detention and the call for peace accords and for a protracted “strategic retreat”, the majority of the revolutionary forces have been defeated or have become demoralized, and the few redoubts continuing some form of armed struggle are divided into rival factions, some of which also call for a peace accord. As we have mentioned, the line of denouncing the call for peace accords as simply a “hoax”, instead of criticizing and refuting the content of the revisionist line that proposed them, left the party and the masses disarmed politically and ideologically and contributed to this outcome. It was precisely in this context that some forces in the RIM put forward the instrumentalist argument that, regardless of the facts, the “political truth” was that Gonzalo could not be behind the call for peace accords. That is, to put it more bluntly, we should proclaim as “true” what is convenient for our revolutionary objectives, even if this does not correspond to the facts.

The complex problems of the world-historic transition from the capitalist-imperialist system to world communism will not be resolved by inventing or trying to “impose” a reality that is more to our liking, but rather through striving to bring our ideas into correspondence with the contradictory material world, grasping the motion and development of the profound contradictions beneath the surface of events at a given point in time, and grasping both the favourable aspects and the problems, both what is correct and the errors, and not avoiding or covering up unpleasant facts like the errors of the international communist movement. As Avakian emphasizes, “The dynamic of ‘truths that make us cringe’ is part of what can be driving us forward. This can help call forth that ferment so that we can understand reality. This is scientific materialist objectivity. If you go deeply enough and understand that these contradictions now posed could lead to a different era based on the resolution of those contradictions, then you want to set in motion a dynamic where people are bringing out your shortcomings. Not that every mistake should be brought out in a way to overwhelm everything we’re trying to do, but in a strategic sense [we should] welcome this and not try to manage it too much – you *want* that, the back and forth.”⁷⁸

According to the “official optimism” of these instrumentalist approaches, any recognition of the difficulties in the objective situation (for example, talking about the defeat of socialism and its causes), is seen as “pessimism” and “revisionism”. With this outlook, recognizing that something is difficult is tantamount to thinking it is impossible (as in the confusion cited earlier of the C(M)PA between the end of a stage in the communist revolution and the *end of the communist revolution*). Why should the communist movement pretend that the world-historic transformation that is necessary, possible, and so urgent, is relatively easy, that we always march forward in a straight line, that revolution is always the main trend, that the masses are always ready and the only question is the will and determination of the communists? On the contrary, this world-historic transformation “can only come about on the basis of proceeding from the actual material conditions and the contradictions that characterize them, which open up this possibility but which also embody obstacles to the achievement of this radical social transformation; and it requires a scientific understanding of and approach to these contradictory dynamics – and the leadership of an organized group of people that is grounded in this scientific method and approach – in order to carry through the complex and arduous struggle to achieve this transformation through the advance to communism throughout the world.”⁷⁹

13. Nationalism or internationalism?

In the course of this text we have pointed to several common and shared aspects of the dogmatic and the more openly bourgeois-democratic tendencies opposed to the new synthesis: they reject the pressing need to scientifically sum up the experiences of socialism and the previous stage of the communist revolution overall, they ignore any serious consideration of Mao’s theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, they reduce “Maoism” to a mere recipe for the armed struggle, they are stuck in one or another model from the past and they apply a pragmatic and instrumentalist method.

Another common denominator is nationalism. As we’ve already said, in addition to pragmatism, in the past and today, nationalism is another source of the refusal to grapple with the problems of the socialist transition to communism characteristic of these tendencies. In the oppressed countries in particular, practice has demonstrated that two types of revolutions and revolutionary movements are still possible in the epoch

of imperialism: revolutions and revolutionary movements that don't go beyond the world capitalist system (bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the old type, to use Mao's term) and the new democratic revolution that breaks with the world capitalist-imperialist system, leads to the socialist transition, and is part of the world communist revolution. As we know, the Chinese Revolution was an example of the second type. Although they are very different from one another, the revolutions in Vietnam, Cuba and Nicaragua turned out to be revolutions of the first type: just, popular revolutions that should be supported at the time, but that didn't break with the framework of the world capitalist-imperialist system and therefore ultimately did not liberate the particular country from imperialist domination, much less take the socialist road toward communism.

What marks the difference between one type and the other, as the examples cited illustrate, is not whether or not the leading forces call themselves communists but rather whether they do in fact lead this first stage of the revolution as a subordinate part of the world communist revolution aiming toward the abolition of the four ills in the whole world. A line that doesn't distinguish between state capitalism and socialism, between revisionism and revolutionary communism, that believes that the problems of the transition to communism can be postponed until after the seizure of power, will end up in revisionism that aborts the proletarian revolution, as in Vietnam. If you aren't grappling with the world-historic transition from the world imperialist system to world communism, you won't go beyond a revolutionary nationalist position limited to the goal of achieving the liberation of "my country" as an end in itself (which, ironically, can't achieve even that in the imperialist epoch).

This is the problem (in addition to pragmatism and instrumentalism) with all the hype on the part of the organizers of the new international organization about "people's war" *isolated from and as a substitute for taking up the problems of the socialist transition*. Frankly, as has been demonstrated by various other bourgeois and revisionist forces, armed struggle isolated from or opposed to the goal of communism *is not people's war* and in the final analysis *will not liberate anybody*.

This is also the problem with the formulation of the Communist Party of Peru and others that "The fundamental thing in Maoism is Power".⁸⁰ It's completely true that "without power, all is illusion" and, as Avakian says, "It is **right** to want state power. It is **necessary** to want state power. State power is a **good** thing—state power is a **great** thing—in the hands of the right people, the right class, in the service of the right things: bringing about an end to exploitation, oppression, and social inequality and bringing into being a world, a communist world, in which human beings can flourish in new and greater ways than ever before."⁸¹ However, if power is taken as the fundamental thing in Maoism (and even more so if one conceives the whole science of communism as "principally Maoism", as in another erroneous formulation of the CPP), not only does this lead to denying Mao's greatest contribution, the theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, but it also leads to locating the final goal of the struggle as being seizing and exercising state power instead of communism, where there will no longer be any state power, which objectively reflects, especially in the oppressed countries, a deviation toward revolutionary nationalism, which recognizes the need to combat imperialism but not the need to arrive at the abolition of classes.⁸²

The C(M)PA accuses "Bob Avakian's synthesis" and the RCP, USA, of having "a narrow nationalist and supremacist vision" for propagating their *Manifesto* summarizing their viewpoint regarding the foundations of communism and the new synthesis and analyzing the line struggle in the international communist movement, instead of limiting themselves to talking about the RIM and its *Declaration* in a situation characterized by the C(M)PA itself as "crisis and collapse" of RIM, and for not dedicating more pages to the RIM in the *Manifesto*.⁸³ On the contrary, the "narrow nationalist vision" corresponds to those who, faced with a proposal about how to advance the communist revolution better and further presented for commentary and debate, do not respond to its content and instead *find the very act of making such a proposal and presenting it for debate to be an act of "supremacy"*, hegemonism, "the RCP's complete disregard of the existence and efforts of RIM", etc. If you present me with a proposal, you are exercising "supremacy" over me and showing "complete disregard" for me! What sort of internationalism is this? Where is there any concern for the emancipation of humanity in this? If you are seeking the emancipation of humanity, and you understand that this requires knowing the world as it really is, then any serious proposal would be of great interest. If you are stuck in the past, in dogmatism and nationalism, you find the very act of making a proposal that contradicts that dogma to be an act of "supremacy".

Far from a "narrow nationalist vision", the new synthesis of Comrade Avakian has deepened a more correct understanding of the material and philosophical basis of internationalism, by analyzing "why, in an ultimate and overall sense, the world arena is most decisive, even in terms of revolution in any particular country, especially in this era of capitalist imperialism as a world system of exploitation, and how this understanding

must be incorporated into the approach to revolution, in particular countries as well as on a world scale”,⁸⁴ by criticizing nationalist deviations of subordinating the world revolution to the defense of a socialist country, and by insisting that internationalism is not something that the proletariat of one country extends to another but rather it proceeds, in the words of Lenin “from my share in the preparation, in the propaganda and in the acceleration of the international proletarian revolution”.

What does it mean to apply internationalism and what does it mean to apply nationalism? Devoting resources and effort that they were in great need of, as the RCP, USA, did, to promote the creation and development of RIM, or staying on the sidelines to later launch accusations of “hegemonism”? Promoting, the campaign to “Move heaven and earth to defend the life of Chairman Gonzalo” when he was captured and a year later, faced with the proposal for “peace accords”, struggling to fulfill the internationalist duty of the RIM to analyze the situation and the two-line struggle in order to reach scientific conclusions, or insisting that such an analysis was a matter exclusively for people in Peru and/or clinging to the “political truth” that Gonzalo had nothing to do with the opportunist line expressed in “Take up and Fight for the New Decision and the New Definition!” and other documents in spite of growing evidence to the contrary? Developing a communist criticism of the opportunist line in Peru or following at the tail of the simplistic position of denouncing it as a “hoax” and limiting criticism to epithets like “black vomit”, which robbed the CPP and the masses of a scientific analysis of the difficult situation and how to deal with it? Criticizing on the basis of principles and reasoned argumentation the revisionist about-face in the line of the CPN(M) from when it was first adopted, or not taking a clear principled position on it? Insisting on debate to arrive at a scientific summation of the lessons of the important experiences of the people’s war in Peru and in Nepal or jumping from promoting one or another struggle depending on narrow calculations of the benefits of prestige and “material force” without ever summing up anything scientifically? Finally, it is proof of Avakian’s firm *internationalist* orientation that not only has he recognized the need to further develop communist theory in order to advance the communist revolution in this new stage, not only has he repeatedly called for others to contribute to this same effort, but also, when others launched vicious personal attacks on him and made it very clear that they were not going to tolerate these questions even being debated, he did not waver and refused to sacrifice these needs of the struggle for emancipation to narrow group interests of maintaining “good relations” in the RIM.

Comrades,

We are immersed in a two-line struggle in the international communist movement over the road forward for the world communist revolution and the emancipation of humanity. The RCP, USA, has been extremely forthcoming in describing, in their *Manifesto*, the profound struggle in their own ranks against revisionism. In the Revolutionary Communist Organization, Mexico, as mentioned above, we have also gone through a sharp struggle, principally against dogmatic tendencies to cling religiously to the experience, theory, and methods of the communist movement of the last century, which oppose grappling with the new and profound contributions of Bob Avakian’s new synthesis. Like other supporters of the new synthesis in the international communist movement, we continue to welcome all reasoned criticism, we continue grappling with the new synthesis, and we see very clearly that much more remains to be done. The contributions of many more are needed to develop the theory and practice of communism that are necessary to be able to correctly lead the new stage of the world communist revolution.

Unprincipled unity with the dogmatic and the more openly bourgeois-democratic positions that we have sketched here can only lead to being left behind as a residue of the past and worse, a knife in the back of the masses, who urgently need communist revolution to liberate themselves from this system of horrors. The road to that emancipation demands a rupture with these erroneous tendencies in our own thinking and in the communist movement in general; it demands carrying the two-line struggle through to the end, grappling seriously and critically with the new synthesis of communism and its application to revolutionary practice everywhere, and building the vanguard of the future on that basis, in each country and on a world level, that measures up to the challenges of the new stage of communist revolution and the possibility and necessity of achieving new and historic advances in the struggle for world communism and the emancipation of humanity.

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– May, 2012

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C(M)PA, “The Communist Party of Iran (MLM) has Fallen into the Lost Road of ‘Post MLM’”; and “Special Meeting of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Parties and Organizations of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement – May First 2012”. The original Spanish version is available online on the webpage below.

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Footnotes

1 *Communism: the Beginning of a New Stage, A Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, Chapter V. “Communism at a Crossroads: Vanguard of the Future, or Residue of the Past?”, RCP Publications, Chicago, 2009. This is an essential document for a brief summation of key aspects of the new synthesis and for understanding the current struggle in the international communist movement. This and other documents from the RCP are available free on their website: revcom.us.

2 “Our Position on the New Line of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA in its Manifesto and Constitution”; and “The Communist Party of Iran (MLM) has Fallen into the Lost Road of ‘Post MLM’”, in *Maoist Road/Via Maoista* No. 1, June 2011.

3 *Constitution of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, RCP Publications, 2008, p. 36. A similar formulation is found in the Manifesto from the RCP, USA, at the beginning of “III. The End of a Stage — And what Conclusions Should, and Should not, Be drawn from this Historical Experience”.

4 Avakian, Bob, “The End of a Stage – the Beginning of a New Stage”, *Revolution*, Fall 1990: “When I speak of a ‘stage’ in this context, I’m not referring to a new historical epoch in the same sense in which Stalin characterized the present epoch as that of imperialism and the proletarian revolution... Nor am I referring to the stages in the development of our revolutionary science”. (Our translation from the Spanish edition, p. 8).

5 *Maoist Road/Via Maoista*, op. cit., p. 43.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

7 Mao Tsetung, “On Contradiction,” *Selected Works*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1967, Volume I, p. 325. See this for Mao’s complete explanation regarding analysis of the stages of a complex process.

8 *Maoist Road/Via Maoista*, op. cit., p. 45.

9 The Revolutionary Internationalist Movement was formed in 1984 as a regrouping of communist parties and organizations on the basis of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (then called Mao Tsetung Thought) after the restoration of capitalism in China in 1976.

10 *Maoist Road/Via Maoista*, op. cit., p. 48.

11 “Our Position”, op. cit., p. 40.

12 We emphasize “some” because the formulations of Mao’s theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat are conspicuously absent in the proclamations of the C(M)PA and others, including when they call for a new communist international organization.

13 *Constitution of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, p. 37.

14 *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, op. cit., “IV. The New Challenges, and the New Synthesis”.

15 On the contrary, it condemns its supposed “humanism” without giving any examples and offers us supposed “arguments” like how many times the names of Marx, Lenin and Mao appear in one part of the documents they comment on (without informing the gullible reader that they are mentioned many times in the Appendix of the same document) and it affirms without any basis to do so that to speak of a “new theoretical framework” or “new synthesis” necessarily means that Marx, Lenin and Mao are no longer considered to be relevant.

16 See the section “Marxism as a science — Refutation of Karl Popper” in Bob Avakian, *Making Revolution and Emancipating Humanity*, available at revcom.us, or in the pamphlet, *Revolution and Communism: A Foundation and Strategic Orientation*, p. 18-30.

17 Far from being “determined to erase all past development”, as the C(M)PA imagines, Avakian and the RCP, USA, have emphasized the defense and popularization of the achievements of socialism in the past as an important aspect of ideological struggle among the masses against the class enemy’s anticommunist offensive, and they have made important contributions in this regard, as opposed to many supposed “communists” who prefer to ignore these thorny questions.

18 See “Vietnam: Miscarriage of the Revolution”, *Revolution* (magazine), July-August, 1979.

19 Marx, Karl, “The class struggles in France 1848 to 1850”, *Marx, Engels Selected Works (MESW)*, Vol. 2, p. 282.

- 20 *BASics, from the talks and writing of Bob Avakian*, RCP Publications, Chicago, 2011, Chapter 2, #3, p. 34.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 68.
- 23 As Marx correctly pointed out regarding what we now call socialism, “What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it *emerges*.” Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program,” *MESW*, Vol. 3, p. 17.
- 24 *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, op. cit., Chapter V.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 We can’t include a summation of even the principal elements of this here, and we refer the reader to the *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, cited above and to “Re-envisioning Revolution and Communism: What is Bob Avakian’s New Synthesis?”, at revcom.us.
- 27 *Basics, from the talks and writings of Bob Avakian*, op. cit., p. 59.
- 28 Avakian has explored various aspects of the application of this new conception to the socialist transition (it is also applicable to the struggle under capitalism) that we can only mention briefly here, like encouraging criticism and dissent, including criticism of the communist party and its leaders, allowing the publication of some reactionary books as objects of criticism and debate, criticism of the concept of an “official ideology” in socialism, providing communist leadership fundamentally through ideological and political struggle and not by monopolizing leadership positions in the new society, a larger role for elections and socialist rule of law, among others. For a concrete and at the same time inspiring vision of this new lively and liberating society, we highly recommend the *Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America (Draft Proposal)*, from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (RCP Publications, Chicago, 2010). While it proposes a Constitution specifically for a socialist republic in what is now the United States, it has many universal aspects.
- 29 *Maoist Road/Via Maoista*, op. cit., p. 41.
- 30 *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, op. cit., Chap. 4.
- 31 Engels, Frederick, “Preface to the English Edition of 1888”, in Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1970, p. 13.
- 32 *Basics*, op. cit., p. 33. The capitalization is due to the fact that this is the title of a talk.
- 33 “Bob Avakian in a Discussion with Comrades on Epistemology: On Knowing and Changing the World”, *Observations on Art and Culture, Science and Philosophy*, Insight Press, U.S.A., 2005, p. 58.
- 34 See for example, Avakian, *Dictatorship and Democracy, and the Socialist Transition to Communism*, available at revcom.us.
- 35 Avakian, *The Basis, the Goals and the Methods of the Communist Revolution*, available at revcom.us.
- 36 “Bob Avakian in a Discussion with Comrades on Epistemology: On Knowing and Changing the World”, op. cit.
- 37 “*Por la nueva bandera*”, *Guerra popular en el Perú, El Pensamiento Gonzalo*, compiled and edited by Luis Arce Borja, Brussels, 1989, p. 144. Our translation. In addition to the idea of predetermination implicit in the formulation that the development of the earth necessarily leads to communism, in reality science indicates that the Earth has only been in existence for 4 or 5 billion years.
- 38 By now there is overwhelming evidence that Abimael Guzman/Chairman Gonzalo was and is the author of this line. See “A Serious Analysis of the Situation of the Peruvian Revolution and its Needs”, *A World to Win*, No. 32.
- 39 “Bases de discusión” en *Guerra popular en el Perú, El Pensamiento Gonzalo*, op. cit., p. 370. Our translation.
- 40 Chang Chun-chiao, “On Exercising All-Round Dictatorship Over the Bourgeoisie”, *A World to Win*, No. 14, p. 47.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 53.
- 42 Avakian, Bob, *Mao Tsetung’s Immortal Contributions*, RCP Publications, Chicago, IL, 1979, p. 299-300.
- 43 “Bases de discussion”, op. cit., p. 313. Our translation.
- 44 Mao, quoted in *Mao Tsetung’s Immortal Contributions*, op. cit., p. 147.
- 45 “Bases de discussion”, op. cit., p. 370.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 310.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 369.
- 48 Avakian, Bob, “The Basis, the Goals, and the Methods of the Communist Revolution”, *Revolution* No. 48, available at revcom.us.
- 49 July 1, 2006 Letter from the Central Committee, Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) to the Central Committee, Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, available in revcom.us. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) changed its name to the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) when uniting with Mashal, a grouping that they had previously

identified correctly as revisionist.

50 Bhattarai, Baburam, “The Question of Building a New Type of State”, *The Worker* No. 9, February, 2004, p. 34. This article published in the official organ of the party developed several of the revisionist theses adopted by the party in 2005.

51 Lenin, *What is to Be Done?*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1973, p. 8.

52 “Letter”, op. cit.

53 Avakian, Bob, “Democracy: More than Ever We Can and Must Do Better than That!”, *A World to Win*, No. 17, p. 66.

54 Quoted in *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, op. cit., footnote 15, available at revcom.us.

55 Ibid., Chapter V.

56 These letters are available at revcom.us with the title: “On Developments in Nepal and the Stakes for the Communist Movement: Letters to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, 2005-2008 (With a Reply from the CPN(M), 2006)”.

57 Ibid., Letter of 19 March 2008, p. 30. See the original for footnotes of the quoted text.

58 Mao Tsetung, “On the Chungking Negotiations”, *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung*, Volume IV, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1961, p. 56.

59 Union of Communists of Iran (Sarbedaran)/UCIS, “It Is Right to Rebel!”, *A World to Win*, No. 21. The UCIS later played a key role in the formation of the Communist Party of Iran (MLM).

60 *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, op. cit., Chapter V.

61 “People want revolution, Proletarians want the Party of the Revolution, Communists want internationalism and a new international organization”, May 1st, 2011.

62 This is evident, for example, in some articles reprinted from Nepal in the publication *Maoist Road/Via Maoista*, No. 1, June 2011.

63 *Maoist Road/Via Maoista*, op. cit., p. 34.

64 V. I. Lenin, “What is to be Done?,” *Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 4, p. 329.

65 “1st Resolution passed by the Special Meeting of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Parties and Organizations of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement – May First 2012”.

66 *Maoist Road/Via Maoista*, op. cit., p. 44.

67 We should add that the C(M)PA also brand Gonzalo Thought as “post-MLM” in their articles, while the MCP-Italy has presented itself as a great defender of Gonzalo Thought, which is another example that this project is not based on any principles other than their opposition to the new synthesis.

68 Mao Tsetung, quoted in *The Tenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Documents)*, FLP, Peking, 1973, http://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/cpc/10th_congress_report.htm.

69 Like the “argument” of the C(M)PA in “Our Position”, op. cit., that the RCP, USA is “pacifist” because the formulation on the need for armed struggle in their Constitution is supposedly vague when they say: “To seize power, the revolutionary people must meet and defeat the enemy”, and “In this struggle for revolutionary change, the revolutionary people and those who lead them will be confronted by the violent repressive force of the machinery of the state which embodies and enforces the existing system of exploitation and oppression; and in order for the revolutionary struggle to succeed, it will need to meet and defeat that violent repressive force of the old exploitative and oppressive order.” (*Constitution of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, p. 9) It is very difficult to believe that the C(M)PA really thinks that the RCP, USA proposes to “seize power”, “defeat the enemy”, and “defeat that violent and repressive force” through peaceful means: on the contrary, this is a deliberate distortion of their position, which is also expressed elsewhere in the same Constitution in these terms: “The revolution would have to overthrow the state machinery of these capitalist-imperialists and bring into being a new state power that serves the revolutionary interests of the formerly exploited class, the proletariat, in emancipating all of humanity – in moving society, and the world, toward the abolition of class divisions and oppressive and exploitative relations as a whole. This revolutionary state would be the dictatorship of the proletariat—a state that would be radically different from all previous forms of states.” (p. 5, emphasis in the original). Again, could it really be the case that the C(M)PA cannot understand On the other hand, the C(M)PA complains that there is no mention of a “general armed insurrection”, ignoring the analysis of the RCP, USA, regarding the probable development of the armed struggle in that country when a revolutionary situation does arise: “what would be required, on the part of the revolutionaries in an imperialist country, in order to have a chance of winning, would be to wage a more protracted struggle than the kind of mass insurrections that Lenin himself led in Russia in 1917.” One may disagree with this position, but a minimum of intellectual integrity would require at least citing the real position of the RCP, USA, instead of distorting it. See “On the Possibility of Revolution” in *Revolution and communism: A Foundation and Strategic Orientation* (p. 85), a document that is specifically cited in the *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, on which the C(M)PA is commenting. Available at revcom.us, *Revolution* #102.

70 *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, op. cit.

71 *Maoist Road/Via Maoista*, pp. 47-48.

72 *Basics*, op. cit., p. 116.

73 *Maoist Road*, op. cit, p. 4.

74 All phrases in quotes are from the “1st Resolution”, op. cit.

75 Avakian, Bob, “Egypt 2011: Millions have stood up with heroism... The future remains to be written”, *Revolution* No. 225.

76 Avakian, “A Reflection on the “Occupy” Movement: An Inspiring Beginning...And the Need to Go Further”, *Revolution* No. 251.

77 *Basics*, op. cit., p. 20-21.

78 *Basics*, op. cit., p. 116.

79 *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, op. cit.

80 “Bases de discusión”, op. cit., p. 313, our translation.

81 *Basics*, op. cit., p. 43.

82 It should be said that the proletariat can and must unite with forces who represent revolutionary nationalism without itself deviating from proletarian ideology of internationalism toward nationalism, and this is something which is complex and difficult but necessary in order to achieve victory in the new democratic revolution, break with the world capitalist-imperialist system, and undertake the socialist transition toward communism together with the advance of communist revolution in the world.

83 “Our position”, op. cit., p. 40-41.

84 *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, op. cit.

Reviewing the Differences between the Communist Party of Iran (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) and the Communist (Maoist) Party of Afghanistan

– by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Iran (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist)

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Some time has elapsed since the publication of issue 3 of *Shola*¹ [the official publication of the Communist (Maoist) Party of Afghanistan – C(M)PA], which carries a critique of our Party's line in an article entitled, "The Communist Party of Iran (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist - CPIMLM) has fallen into the wrong path of post-Marxism-Leninism-Maoism". In this article, *Shola* criticizes the new synthesis of communist theory by Bob Avakian and attacks our Party for its support of the new synthesis.

After the appearance of *Shola*'s article, some comrades who are more familiar with the history of the C(M) PA and its views were assigned to prepare a reply to that article. In June 2011, the 7th Plenum of the Central Committee (CC) of the CPIMLM studied this reply and made recommendations on the basis of which the reply was reworked and became more comprehensive. Due to factors related to the priorities of our Party, the publication of this reply was delayed. Although the reply could have been improved by taking into consideration the recent articles published by the C(M)PA, nevertheless, in order to prevent further delay we've decided to publish the reply as it is. During this period, we have become even more convinced that the ideological and political chasm between our Party and the C(M)PA is indeed deep and that this is a reflection of the two-line struggle that has been going on in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) over the past few years. This two-line struggle became more open and sharper, especially following the major capitulation of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) over a revolution that had gone right to the gates of victory. The development of a deep political and ideological rift within RIM made it practically impossible to maintain its organizational unity. (See our analysis of RIM in *Haghighat* 58.)

We hope that the present document, through studying the differences between us and the C(M)PA, can shed light on the nature of the deep political and ideological chasms between the parties and organizations of RIM, and in doing so also illuminate the dangerous situation in the international communist movement (ICM).

The *Shola* article is a critique of a document of the CPIMLM Central Committee entitled, "The Communist Movement at a Crossroads: Withering or blossoming?" (From here on we will refer to this as the "Crossroads" article). What is being attacked by *Shola* is in fact the body of theory that Bob Avakian, the Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party (USA), has brought forth as the new synthesis. *Shola* is angry because our Party, and specifically the "Crossroads" article, emphasizes the correctness of these theories and the role of the new synthesis in dealing with the life-and-death crisis of the international communist movement. *Shola* tries to wrap its anger in a thin disguise of "internationalism" and its concern for the situation of RIM, but from the beginning we face sheer nationalism spouting out every step of the way. The article starts with this introduction: "The Iran-ization of American post-Marxism-Leninism-Maoism", which is a title more suited to anti-communist journals. *Shola* over and over again attacks "Crossroads" for being "Iranian bombast" and "Iranian-ism". The sorry state of *Shola*'s method and style of work does not end here. Many times *Shola* "interprets" the new synthesis arbitrarily and then "criticizes" its own interpretations of the new synthesis. One must appreciate the role of debate and polemics in raising collective consciousness. However, criticism must have two features: first, it should be substantiated and scientific, and second, the line and theory being criticized must be presented with the utmost honesty, as its author or authors have developed and defended it. It is wrong to make a critique based on arbitrary "narratives" or "interpretations" of those lines and theories.

If the above-mentioned method is not observed and adhered to, then criticism will become something like issuing a moral fatwa that must be accepted by the "disciples", without any need for substantiation, proof or even hearing the defense. This kind of method would turn off the advanced minds that are in search of truth and would excite the backward strata and nourish a non-proletarian and non-revolutionary sentiment among the masses. Method is also part of line, and it has a class character.

Let us concentrate on the main issue that provides the fuel for this method of "critique". The C(M)PA has centered its critique on three subjects:

First, they claim that the theories of the new synthesis and the recent documents produced by the RCP(USA) and more openly the documents of our own Party and the “Crossroads” article totally discard the theoretical and thinking framework of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, and therefore are “post-MLM”.

Second, they claim that there has been no important change in the objective situation since the restoration of capitalism in China, and therefore there is no need for the development of the science of MLM.

Third, they claim that our Party has an absolutist approach to the role of theory and that we negate the role of practice.

Is the New Synthesis a Total Negation of the Thinking and Theoretical Framework and Approach of MLM?

Explaining why the C(M)PA thinks that the line of our Party and the RCP is “post-Maoist”, *Shola* argues: “Because according to this line the new synthesis of Bob Avakian theoretically constitutes the beginning of a new stage outside the framework and foundations of MLM and is seeking to create a new non-MLM theoretical framework and foundation. In other words, this is not a strategic orientation to develop the theoretical framework that ‘Marx brought forth and later was developed by Lenin and Mao’. Rather, it is seeking to refute the totality of that framework and create a new one. This strategic orientation has been expressed openly and nakedly in the document of the CC of the CPIMLM [i.e. the “Crossroads”].” [The text in square brackets has been added by the translator for clarity.]

To demonstrate our “nakedness”, *Shola* quotes “Crossroads”:

“The advances of the first stage were based on the theoretical framework that Marx brought forth and later was developed by Lenin and Mao. The current period also needs a new theoretical framework, which must be brought forth based on a critical summation of theoretical and practical achievements and shortcomings of the past. The new period cannot be a repetition of the past and cannot advance on that basis.”

Our judge jumps out at this great blasphemy and announces:

“What is meant here is the elimination of the entire theoretical framework of MLM and its replacement with another theoretical framework. In other words, not just the elimination of Maoism and the Chinese revolution and the Cultural Revolution in China, and even not just the elimination of Leninism and the Russian revolution, but Marxism itself is also under attack – an undertaking that was not even dared by Mansour Hekmat and the Workers Communist Party.” [Mansour Hekmat was one of the founders of the Communist Party of Iran in the early 1980s which later, after the fall of the Soviet imperialist bloc in the 1990s split into different factions, and he himself founded the Workers Communist Party of Iran. He and others had founded the CPI based on liquidating the theoretical and practical achievements of both the Soviet and Chinese revolutions – and in particular he led a vehement assault on the Chinese revolution and Mao Tsetung.]

Our reply to this “critique” is as follows:

First, the new synthesis does not discard the theoretical foundations of MLM. Rather, it’s the only school of thought in the communist movement today that is the scientific continuation of MLM and generally of Marxism. This continuation has become possible by rupturing from the erroneous aspects of MLM as well as from aspects that, while they had been correct at their time, are no longer correct. The new synthesis represents the dialectical continuation of Marxism and a Marxist affirmation of Marxism.

Second, it is impossible for any science to develop without rupturing from its erroneous aspects or aspects that no longer correspond to reality. The development of a science is impossible without rupturing from itself (i.e. its erroneous aspects). To treat the development of science as a gradual, incremental increase in knowledge is a mechanical outlook. The development of a science proceeds through the contradictions within that science and through its ruptures from itself. This is true of any science, including Marxism. Therefore, *Shola*’s expectation that Marxism can develop by preserving itself in its entirety (“the theoretical framework that ‘Marx put forward and later was developed by Lenin and Mao’”) is futile, and at best mechanical. Indeed, the explanation of “Crossroads” about the movement and dynamics of development of Marxism is correct and dialectical, and this is the only method through which MLM can continue and be safeguarded from a freefall into the abyss of revisionism.

It is appropriate now to look at some of the *official* and *original* documents from the RCP(USA) and the

writings of Bob Avakian himself, and on that basis, and not on the basis of narratives and verdicts of the C(M) PA, to discover the relationship between the new synthesis and the principles of MLM. To this end, we will refer extensively to an article entitled “The Re-envisioning of Revolution and Communism: What is Bob Avakian’s New Synthesis?”² (we would like to remind that the first section of this article was published in Farsi in the same issue of *Haghighat* that carried the “Crossroads” document, and other sections were published in subsequent issues of *Haghighat* in Farsi.)

This article as well as other documents by RCP(USA) and works of Bob Avakian explicitly state that the framework of the new synthesis “... definitely comes out of and builds on what has gone before, this advance has also involved real ruptures with the past understanding and experience as a crucial element.”

This article explains the relationship between the new synthesis and 160 years of the history of Marxism and the socialist revolutions:

“160 years ago, Marx and Engels proclaimed in *The Communist Manifesto* that the workers of the world – the international proletariat – had nothing to lose but their chains and had a world to win. That Manifesto put forward the basics of the pathbreaking theory that would guide that struggle.... Twenty-five years later, the first, brief attempt at proletarian revolution occurred with the Paris Commune; and nearly 50 years after that, the first real breakthrough – the first real consolidated socialist revolution – was made in the Soviet Union, under the leadership of Lenin and, after Lenin’s death, Stalin. This was followed in China – where the revolution came to power in 1949 and where 17 years later the leader of that revolution, Mao Tsetung, launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution...”

The “Re-envisioning” article explains the end of the first wave of communist revolutions as follows:

“This whole first stage of the communist revolution came to an end in 1976. When Mao died, there was a counter-revolutionary coup in China that imprisoned and/or executed those who had stood with him in leading the Cultural Revolution. The policies that they had fought so hard against were put into effect, and capitalism was restored. Today there are no genuine socialist countries in the world. And people all over the world feel, and struggle with, that weight every day – whether they know it or not.”

The new synthesis is a product of efforts to respond to these conditions and the challenges they pose. The question is: what does it take to transform this situation and advance again? How to open up a new stage of revolution?

“Re-envisioning” writes:

“In this situation, Bob Avakian has led in defending, upholding and building on the monumental achievements of those revolutions and the illuminating insights of its greatest thinkers and leaders. But he has also deeply analyzed the mistakes, and the shortcomings in conception and method that led to those mistakes. And on that basis, he’s forged a coherent, comprehensive and overarching theoretical framework – that is, a synthesis. While this definitely comes out of and builds on what has gone before, this advance has also involved real ruptures with the past understanding and experience as a crucial element, which is why we call it the new synthesis.”

The new synthesis is based on dialectical materialism from Marx to Mao. But it also ruptures with secondary metaphysical aspects that had penetrated into that. Let’s see how the dialectics of “continuity” and “rupture” is presented in the “Re-envisioning” article. The article explains the forging of dialectical materialism and historical materialism and explains that Marx and Engels “... set the theoretical foundation – they lit the way. But there were, not surprisingly, limitations in the way that Marx and Engels went at this, and these problems got compounded by serious methodological shortcomings on the part of Stalin.... What’s worse, these errors came at the very time an advance in understanding was urgently called for. Mao – the leader of the Chinese Revolution – fought against some of these problems, but Mao himself was straining against an inherited framework and was not free from its influences. And these shortcomings had consequences.”

It has to be said that a large part of the influential mistakes in the international communist movement are not related to the founders and thinkers of the scientific theories of communism – Marx, Lenin and Mao. In fact they fought against such errors. However, within their own thinking too there were elements of those wrong tendencies that later one or another section of the communist movement took up and developed into full-blown lines. But today, largely due to their own efforts we are in a position to recognize their secondary errors, criticize them and prevent full-blown erroneous lines from gaining justification by referring to these secondary errors. In fact, those parties and organizations in RIM who have called the new synthesis “revisionist” are

themselves representatives of these developed erroneous lines.

As is emphasized in the “Re-envisioning” article, Bob Avakian identifies four weaknesses in communist philosophy and makes a deep critique of them. They are as follows:

1. Idealistic and even pseudo-religious forms of thought that penetrated into the essence of Marxism and were not ruptured with in the past.
2. The need for a qualitatively deeper understanding of how matter and consciousness interact with each other and transform each other.
3. A series of problems related to pragmatism and associated philosophical tendencies.
4. The need for an epistemology or path towards achieving the truth that is different in essential ways.

By doing all this, Bob Avakian puts Marxism on a more scientific foundation.³

We can see that the new synthesis not only does not discard the theoretical foundations and principles of MLM, but based on defense of the foundations and principles of MLM it goes way beyond the imaginings of any orthodox MLM. However, this is done through identifying mistakes and shortcomings in MLM and weeding them out and in this way rendering it more scientific and correct. The C(M)PA repeatedly equates “framework” with principles and fundamentals. But in the new synthesis this term is not used as equivalent to foundations and principles. In fact, putting the principles and foundations in a new framework saves them from the revisionists. Bob Avakian himself explains what he has done:

“This new synthesis involves a recasting and recombining of the positive aspects of the experience so far of the communist movement and of socialist society, while learning from the negative aspects of this experience, in the philosophical and ideological as well as the political dimensions, so as to have a more deeply and firmly rooted scientific orientation, method and approach with regard not only to making revolution and seizing power but then, yes, to meeting the material requirements of society and the needs of the masses of people, in an increasingly expanding way, in socialist society – overcoming the deep scars of the past and continuing the revolutionary transformation of society, while at the same time actively supporting the world revolutionary struggle and acting on the recognition that the world arena and the world struggle are most fundamental and important, in an overall sense – together with opening up qualitatively more space to give expression to the intellectual and cultural needs of the people, broadly understood, and enabling a more diverse and rich process of exploration and experimentation in the realms of science, art and culture, and intellectual life overall, with increasing scope for the contention of different ideas and schools of thought and for individual initiative and creativity and protection of individual rights, including space for individuals to interact in ‘civil society’ independently of the state – all within an overall cooperative and collective framework and at the same time as state power is maintained and further developed as a *revolutionary* state power serving the interests of the proletarian revolution, in the particular country and worldwide, with this state being the leading and central element in the economy and in the overall direction of society, while the state itself is being continually transformed into something radically different from all previous states, as a crucial part of the advance toward the eventual abolition of the state with the achievement of communism on a world scale.” (From *Making Revolution and Emancipating Humanity*, part 1 – cited in *Haghighat* 54, page 17)

Here it is also necessary to deal with the analogy that the C(M)PA has used in order to highlight the extent of our “sins”. The C(M)PA accuses our party of having done what “... even Mansour Hekmat and the Workers Communist Party did not dare to do...” What the C(M)PA means is that Mansour Hekmat and the Workers Communist Party of Iran “at least” kept “Marxism”, while our Party has thrown in the dustbin the entire framework of Marxism!

In fact, the C(M)PA has put their finger on an important example, because this example shows where a dogmatic understanding of Marxism would lead, and this should be a lesson to the C(M)PA and others.

The Communist Party of Iran (MLM) has been unique in systematically critiquing the world outlook, positions, methodology and generally the political and ideological line of Mansour Hekmat. But our point of departure in dealing with this liquidationist trend (by liquidationist we mean they liquidated correct theories and practices from Marx to Mao) has not been a dogmatic and religious-style defense of the “past”, nor has it been by way of ignoring the shortcomings and deviations that existed in the theory and practice of the communist movement from Marx to Mao. What made it possible for our Party to scientifically and powerfully assess and criticize this trend was learning from the methodology and summations of Bob Avakian in assessing the theory and

practice of the first wave of the communist revolutions. At the time these views were reflected in works such as *Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions, Conquer the World: The International Proletariat Must and Will, and Advancing the World Revolution: Questions of Strategic Orientation*.

The Communist Party of Iran under the leadership of Mansour Hekmat was founded based on discarding the fundamental lines of demarcation of the new communist movement that had been forged in the 1960s internationally. Those lines of demarcation had been drawn in the midst of and as a result of one of the greatest struggles within the ICM over the nature of socialism. Over this same question (i.e. what is socialism?) and as a result of the struggles that the Chinese communists under the leadership of Mao waged against the revisionists who had seized power in the USSR under the leadership of Khrushchev, the international communist movement split. It was on the basis of this struggle – meaning the struggle over communism on a world scale – that a new communist movement was born in Iran and all over the world. The fundamental question at the heart of this historic split was: *what is socialism and how can it be built?* Mansour Hekmat treated this great struggle as “a struggle between Chinese and Russian nationalists” and muddled its fundamental achievements. Mansour Hekmat’s rejection of Mao’s line of demarcation with the Soviet revisionists was not due to some peculiar enmity he had against Mao! Hekmat rejected Mao because of his outlook and understanding of the nature of socialism and how it can be achieved; his outlook and understanding on the possibility of achieving socialist revolution and constructing it in a world surrounded by capitalism was close to that of the Soviet revisionists. Hekmat developed a kind of critique of the Soviet experience which in fact demonstrated his bourgeois outlook and understanding of socialism and the political and economic nature of socialism and the real contradictions of this world – a historic transition period. Hekmat founded a Party that gave unclear and incorrect answers to the most important problems of the international communist movement and the revolution in Iran. This type of approach opened the door in his Party for the growth and prevalence of a social-democratic version of “communism”.

The CPI under Hekmat’s leadership, instead of analyzing and taking a position against the restoration of capitalism in socialist China, chose the “simple path” of rejecting this great socialist revolution, a revolution whose pinnacle was the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, an unprecedented revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat that aimed at making hundreds of millions of the Chinese masses, as well as proletarians around the world, conscious about the real meaning of socialism and communism, and mobilized them to master this understanding and fight to prevent the restoration of capitalism in socialist China. By eliminating the history of the socialist revolution in China and the restoration of capitalism there, the CPI did not relieve itself of the objective necessity of dealing with the problem of capitalist restoration in the ex-socialist countries. This Party also went wrong when trying to sum up the theory and practice of the socialist revolution in the USSR and followed the same erroneous approach, with the result that it ultimately adopted the simple and pragmatic solution that “there was never socialism there” either. In an idealist/dogmatic fashion, the CPI called for a return to Marx and the Marxism of that earlier period, claiming that it had not yet been applied to change the world. This Party, on the basis of eliminating the experience and history of two major efforts by the proletariat in making socialist revolution and building socialist society, wound up presenting the revolutionary experience of the twentieth century and the history of the international communist movement (except for the immediate period after the victory of the Russian revolution) as “all dark”.

In contrast to that, the method and approach of survivors of the Union of Iran Communists (UIC) was that the restoration of capitalism in China was as important as the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union; that it had a deadly impact on the international communist movement and the revolutionary trend in the whole world; and that the UIC had to settle accounts with this matter theoretically, ideologically and politically. The result of this search was to rediscover and recognize Mao’s theories on the nature of socialist society and the class struggle under socialism, all of which had objectively pushed the body of Marxism to a higher level, which was expressed by the terminology “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism”.

We recount this experience in order to draw a lesson and see the truth of what objective necessity imposes upon us. The question is: do we recognize necessity and are we able to change it by applying a correct and scientific line, or not? Attempts to erase the question or resort to partial and simple answers will inevitably lead to a retreat to the ideas and methods of the bourgeoisie, and no one is immune to this: neither those who whimsically and irresponsibly throw into the dustbin the great achievements of humanity in changing the world and feel satisfied, nor those who worship the past with a rock-solid “faith”. Those communists who follow either of these approaches will turn into a residue of the past rather than becoming a vanguard of the future communist revolutions.⁴

Let's emphasize one point before we continue. If our Party had come to the conclusion that the foundations of Marxism are no longer applicable for correctly analyzing the world and changing it through revolution, undoubtedly we would have announced it with courage and scientific humility, because it would be impossible to change the world without theories that correctly reflect it. For us, theory is a telescope and microscope helping us to understand the phenomena we are dealing with and to discover the possible pathways for their transformation, which are embedded within those very phenomena. A dogmatic and static approach to a living science is useless for changing the world. The dynamism of Marxism stems from the fact that it is a "this worldly" school of thought, and is related to the revolutionary transformation of the world. No permanent and static framework of any kind can be attributed to Marxism. Unless of course, this is done with a religious approach to Marxism, which is not a new matter in the ICM. The ICM and the parties and organizations who identified themselves with it have been guilty of taking such an approach in different forms at different times. In fact, rejecting a religious approach to Marxism has been one of the hallmarks of the new synthesis. The new synthesis considers rupture with such an approach a necessity for developing Marxism. Without breaking with a religious approach to Marxism, one cannot grasp and apply it, develop it and put it on a more correct footing. Although a religious understanding of Marxism has been a strong current among communists, nevertheless no Marxist will openly announce that Marxism is a religion. The point is that having a general belief in a science is one thing, having a scientific approach towards it and applying it correctly is another matter. Unfortunately, not taking the scientific and dynamic character of the communist theories seriously has deep roots within the communist movement, and in fact proclamations of the scientific character of Marxism have become mere decorations. One of the reasons for the influence of a non-scientific approach to this science in the communist movement is the prevalence of religious-style thinking all over the world today. But there is more to it than this. The spread of a deterministic approach in the communist movement since Stalin is another important factor responsible for this malaise.

In conclusion, we want to refer to one of Bob Avakian's latest works where he says, "... I've also made allusion to something which is very important to grasp as a basic point of orientation: Communism, from the time of Marx to now, has undergone many transformations itself in its understanding, even while its fundamental principles and objectives, and its basic scientific grounding, method and approach, remain essentially the same."⁵

Continuing, Bob Avakian stresses that the new synthesis must be approached not "...as some kind of 'magic formula' but as embodying the essential method and approach to confronting and struggling through the contradictions that have to be faced in advancing to communism – precisely in order to go forward on the revolutionary road leading to communism – and, in the course of this, to continue to develop the science of communism."

Marxism is Thrown to the Wind!

Shola accuses us of "blasphemy" because we have stated in "Crossroads" that a new stage in communist revolution has begun which cannot be a mere repetition of the previous period and cannot proceed on the previous basis. *Shola* is outraged, and proclaims that by this our Party intends "...a total elimination of the theoretical framework of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and its replacement with a new framework instead", and that "therefore" the new synthesis is "post-Marxism-Leninism-Maoism".

The history of the communist movement is full of these types of cries that warn against throwing out Marxism. Thirty years ago, when Bob Avakian was summing up Stalin's serious errors, and was demonstrating the significance of Mao's rupture with the Soviet model of socialism, many in the ICM cried out and mourned the death of "principles". But in fact Avakian's bold summations were crucial for consolidating the theoretical framework of MLM and revalidating socialism as the only real alternative to the capitalist system and all the horrors it represents. In fact, those who cried and mourned in the face of these summations were the ones who were trampling on Marxism. Or when Bob Avakian in *Conquer the World*⁶ criticized erroneous aspects of Lenin's article "Left Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder", many rightist pseudo-communist currents who took refuge in Lenin's statements in order to falsely claim that the communists should take part in bourgeois parliaments and that this is "part of the theoretical framework of Leninism", were outraged. Rather than explaining why they think "taking part in parliament" is tantamount to and a requirement for preparing the revolution, they preferred to "argue" that since Bob Avakian had not led any revolution therefore he was not qualified to say what was wrong in Lenin's article. But what Bob Avakian did was damned important for defending Leninism and safeguarding its proletarian revolutionary essence from the invasions of bourgeois

democrats disguised as communists.

There is no way to deny the historic role of the RCP(USA) under the leadership of Bob Avakian in forging a correct line for the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement. In the end, the leaders of those parties who opposed and resisted this correct line and fought against it under the banner of orthodox MLM wound up crushing the revolutionary principles of Marxism underfoot one by one. These various tendencies that reacted against Bob Avakian's summations in *Conquer the World?* have existed throughout the entire period of RIM, in an embryonic form or sometimes as a more developed line. Later, they leaped out and developed and formed a pole.⁷

When we say, "the current period needs a new theoretical framework", *Shola* interprets that as a total negation of the fundamentals of MLM. Not only does *Shola* not try to understand the concept of a "new theoretical framework" but it also fails to honestly reflect the way our "Crossroads" article has defined it. *Shola* outrageously ignores all the relevant issues in this article and uses a certain "new theoretical framework" measuring rod (with a meaning rendered to it by *Shola* itself) to deal with the whole article and the concepts put forward in it.

In this manner, *Shola* presents its own understanding of MLM and clearly demonstrates that the C(M)PA believes in an eternal framework for MLM and considers any trespassing away from that framework a negation of this science and a deviation from its fundamentals. We should not reduce communist theories of social revolution to a set of dry, rigid formulas that are contained within the walls of some unchanging framework, nor should we learn the theory and apply it in that kind of way. We also have to have a dialectical materialist approach towards Marxism itself. Even our understanding of dialectical materialism has gone through changes, and has become more and more scientific. This is only normal, because this methodology has not fallen from the sky and is a product of human efforts in the realm of ideas. Experience gained through struggle to change the world creates the ground for the expansion of our knowledge and provides material for cleansing it of mechanical materialism and idealistic dialectics. Astonishingly, one can find Marxists who exclude Marxism from this process. Fortunately, in the history of social development, great teachers have stepped forward who have been able to lead transformations and developments in dialectical materialism as well. Lenin attached great importance to developing the understanding and grasp of dialectics while science was developing in different areas. (See Lenin's articles on dialectics and "Notebooks on dialectics".) It was in line with this type of thinking that Mao took a revolutionary approach to dialectics and its laws and stressed what is central to dialectics, i.e. the contradictory nature of all phenomena and processes.

Shola insists so much on the literal meaning of the term "framework" that it develops its whole critique based on this terminology. This itself shows the method of thinking of *Shola*. By adopting this method, *Shola* washes its hands of engaging the content of the new synthesis and closes its eyes to its essence and principal arguments.

What is a "framework" in science and how does it relate to the fundamentals of the science?

Changing the "framework" means the *foundations* of scientific theory remain, but for it to remain as a living and valid science it has to rupture from secondary errors within it that keep it from being unleashed. Those aspects that no longer represent the material world, i.e. objective reality, should be tossed out and those aspects of the material world that this science has not covered should now be covered. Doing all this – in a correct way, and not a revisionist way – leads to the formation of a new theoretical framework, which rests on the same foundations.⁸

It is not this or that theoretician who arbitrarily challenges one or another theoretical framework, rather it is objective reality that challenges the framework. This situation leads to a crisis in science. In this process theoreticians emerge whose powerful scientific thinking enables them to see this problem and take up the challenge of dealing with it. When such development happens, the only correct approach is to see whether their analysis of the problem (the illness) is correct, and if correct, whether the solution they put forward (the cure they prescribe) is correct and is headed in the right direction.

Changes in the material world challenge our theoretical framework. This has numerous aspects:

First, we have applied our communist theories, bringing forth tremendous changes in the world. In this process the principally correct essence as well as shortcomings of our theory and practice have been revealed. Does *Shola* accept this truth?

Second, human thought has expanded in different directions as a result of scientific experiments and production

efforts, becoming more scientific, which in turn helps us to achieve a better understanding of the problems of social revolution and its complex dimensions. Darwin's discovery of evolution played a tremendous role in the development of Marx's thinking and even on the way Marx formulated the mechanisms and dynamics of the capitalist system. Does *Shola* oppose this truth?

Third, the material world has gone through many changes in different aspects and for other reasons too. The movement of capital has caused tremendous changes in the structure of different societies. For example, compared to the early 20th century, the world in general and different countries have become qualitatively more integrated. This brings the necessity of reviewing the class analysis and path of revolution in these countries. How does *Shola* look at this reality?

One of the signs that a science needs to develop is when different interpretations of it start to proliferate. Over time, a science that has had an important role in changing the material world shows its incorrect and incomplete aspects and no longer reflects the material world as clearly and as sharply as it once did. This has happened to Marxism. For the bourgeoisie, it is useful for Marxism to remain in this state, because in this way anyone at all can claim to be a Marxist based on his/her interpretations and every kind of bourgeois path and politics can be passed off and justified as "socialist". The shortcomings of the previous socialist revolutions and the erroneous elements in the theoretical body of MLM are minor. Nonetheless, they are minor elements that cannot be ignored, because they have weakened Marxism and have been harmful to the program of communist revolution. Furthermore, this has offered an opportunity to the bourgeoisie to launch effective anti-communist attacks and become a cover for wrong and capitulationist lines under the guise of Marxism, or Marxism-Leninism, or Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. We have witnessed the presence of similar tendencies within RIM as well.

Every revolutionary communist in Iran and Afghanistan and around the world knows (or should know!) the extent to which Lenin's views on participation in parliament and the concept of the "democratic republic" have been used to conciliate with the bourgeoisie, or how Mao's concept of "two-stage revolution" and "defeating the enemies one by one" have been used to collaborate with native reactionary forces.

Revisionist currents that have arisen from the Maoist parties have justified their alliance with different factions of the reactionary classes by using Mao's concept of "destroying the enemies one by one". Hasn't Afghanistan witnessed many such trends? How did the Rahaii Organization and SAMA (National Liberation Organization of Afghanistan, one of the left-secular united front organizations that was organized and led by a section of the movement that considered itself Maoist) try to justify their unity with the Islamists (jihadists)? They didn't just say, "We are bourgeois and because of this we are uniting with jihadists"! Did they? The Rahaii Organization was a follower of the capitalist roaders in China and was in no way a representative of Mao's revolutionary communist line. But its leaders knew how to use the weak link in "Mao Thought" and dispense with the revolutionary communist essence of his thinking in order to justify their revisionism. The rightist line that developed in the Union of Iran Communists in 1980 considered it necessary to defend "anti-imperialist aspects" of the reactionary Khomeini. This tendency, which was not limited to the UIC but had many adherents in the Left movement in Iran, had two "theoretical" sources: first, Mao's concept regarding the "dual character" of the national bourgeoisie in China, and the necessity of creating a united front with that class in order to achieve the victory of the revolution against feudalism and imperialism. (It is interesting to note that after the rise of the "reform faction" of the Islamic Republic headed by Khatami and his victory in the presidential elections in the 1990s, some remnants of the right opportunist line in the UIC who had also opposed Sarbedaran's armed uprising for the overthrow of the Islamic regime of Iran [in 1983] used this same logic to call for support for Khatami.) Second, the dominant thinking in the communist movement since the Comintern period (from the time of Lenin's leadership) has advocated the need to unite with "anti-imperialist" currents (which are also anti-communist).⁹ It should be pointed out that most of the Trotskyist currents in Europe and North America (which are very much anti-Mao) use the same thinking and tradition to defend the Islamic Republic, and based on this same understanding they are now shifting to the support of the "Green Movement" led by Moussavi. And as with any split among reactionaries, these forces also split over which section of the regime they should support. As for the events in Syria, some are supporting Bashar Assad "against imperialism" while others support the "Revolution" (meaning support for the Free Syrian Army). This trend sees any kind of "anti-imperialism" as worthy of support and views the overthrow of so-called anti-imperialist regimes such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, whose anti-imperialism is extremely reactionary, as a "betrayal" of the anti-imperialist movement in general.¹⁰

At a time when the political scene in the Middle East is marked by the dynamics of conflict between the two poles constituted by imperialism and Islamic fundamentalism, and millions of oppressed masses have been caught up in and used as “cannon fodder” by these two poles, the political line of defending the “anti-imperialism” of the Islamists is extremely reactionary. It leads to the abortion of any social revolution. In this region, the so-called anti-imperialism of the Islamists cannot help the cause of emancipation from imperialism even a bit. In fact, it strengthens the imperialists’ grip, just as the imperialists’ “war against terror” strengthened these native reactionary forces. Isn’t this experience enough to see the reality that Islamism and imperialism represent two reactionary poles, and the struggle against them cannot give precedence to one over the other, as both represent a rotten social system that needs to be overthrown? *What does the Communist Party Maoist of Afghanistan have to say about this?*

Many rightist deviations in the Left movements in the world (whether under the label of Leninism, Maoism or Trotskyism) use Lenin’s article on “Left Wing Communism” in order to argue that their participation in a bourgeois parliament in a non-revolutionary situation is justified and necessary. So what is the correct approach to those with this rightist line who justify their wrong line by referring to articles like these? Is it enough just to say that they are “mis-using” the words of Marx, Lenin or Mao? If we leave it at this we will fall into a methodology similar to that deployed by the Islamists themselves, who in debates to defend their “faith” invoke supposedly different “interpretations” of the Quran. It is undoubtedly correct to argue that Mao’s policy of forging a united front with the national bourgeoisie in China was based on preserving the independence of the Communist Party of China and its reliance on the Red Army under the leadership of the CCP, and Lenin’s practice in the Russian revolution was a reflection of his correct theories and politics. But this is not enough. While Mao’s analysis with regard to how in the oppressed countries the national bourgeoisie belonged to the camp of the people may have been correct at the time, it does not correspond to today’s reality in the world and to the position of this bourgeoisie. Furthermore, generalizing Mao’s view concerning “defeating the enemies one by one” is wrong, and Mao himself had a tendency to generalize the experience of the anti-Japanese war (as a result of Japanese attacks on red base areas under the control of the CCP, the Party and the Red Army proposed a peace deal with Chiang Kai-shek [the leader of the reactionary Kuomintang] for unity to defeat the Japanese Army). One should not turn that experience into a general rule. The rightists within the “Maoist” trend have always used this kind of wrong generalization to justify their rightist deviation. To contest these facts is useless for the proletarian revolution. We must face the truth.

Bob Avakian saved “Maoism” from the claws of the Chinese revisionists and their international supporters. The publication in 1980 of *Mao Tsetung’s Immortal Contributions* by Bob Avakian was an important step on this road. In addition, the book *Revolution and Counter-revolution in China* summed up the two-line struggle within the CCP, which was a concentrated reflection of the class struggle in socialist China. This book documents this struggle in a series of articles from both sides (both the communists and the revisionists). It is in this book that Deng Xiao-ping’s 20 point program and his revisionist plans for the restoration of capitalism have been exposed, and the struggle that Mao and the “Gang of Four”¹¹ waged against it is documented. The world-historic significance of these events would not have been established without the efforts of Bob Avakian and the RCP, and they could have been buried. And the bourgeois-democrats who called themselves “Maoists” would have been able to easily roam about and turn Mao into a simple bourgeois-democrat. Moreover, Bob Avakian also salvaged Mao’s criticism of Stalin and developed this even further – much further than Mao. He did this at a time when the world’s so-called Maoists viewed Mao’s criticisms of Stalin “with suspicion”. At a time when the Maoists of the “Third World” would smirk at any talk of revolution in the imperialist countries and when the Maoists of the imperialist countries conceived of their task as simply supporting the revolutionary front in the “Third World”, Bob Avakian systematically developed the path of revolution in countries like the US. At a time when the idea that “the path of socialism goes through democracy” has been a prevalent view in the international communist movement (and the Communist Party of Nepal Maoist, now the Unified Communist Party of Nepal Maoist, was one of the defenders of this concept), Bob Avakian systematically developed and further clarified Marxist theory on the question of dictatorship and democracy. In opposition to those who were attacking the experiences of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR and China, Bob Avakian, instead of returning to the bourgeois democracy of the 18th century, criticized the shortcomings of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR and China through analyzing the great experience of the proletariat in the 20th century and further developed the theories on proletarian dictatorship and democracy.

This sharpening of the blades of Marxism upsets even some of the parties and organizations within the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, because it closes space to dissimulations regarding revolution and

communism. Revolution, particularly socialist revolution, is a conscious act. Since both reality (independently existing reality) as well as consciousness are changing, it is not possible to make revolution on the basis of a metaphysical understanding that “Marxism has discovered the truth, and the task of the communists is to apply it”. If this were the case, the two major revolutions in USSR and China would not have been defeated. Truth is not something to be discovered once and for all. Rather, it is an unending process of struggle between matter and consciousness, subject and object, freedom and necessity.

Is There a Material Basis for the Development of Science?

Shola writes: “The socio-economic system... meaning the capitalist system, despite the great developments it has gone through, is still the capitalist system, and its foundations objectively exist, and the need of the working class, as a class, to change from a class in itself to a class for itself still exists. The capitalist-imperialist system is still in existence, and we are not facing a post-capitalist or even post-imperialist system, such as ultra-imperialism.”

The question, however, is not the “objective existence” of this system! The question is the state of this continuously changing objective existence and our curve of knowledge about it. As we all know, capitalism turned into capitalist-imperialism, and there were many changes within the working class in the imperialist countries. Without understanding these changes and conceptualizing them, it would have been impossible for Lenin to make revolution. Theory had to advance in order to produce *revolutionary* practice. Without advancing theory, it would have been impossible to struggle against opportunism and revisionism, because there would not have been any criteria for demarcating with revisionism. The task of science is to analyze objective reality and the way it changes, and the reasons for these changes.

Let’s look at some of the changes that have taken place in the past few decades, and let’s see how realistic *Shola*’s analysis is that this world has not changed much.

First, let’s look at the restoration of capitalism in once-socialist China. *Shola* says, “From the standpoint of the existence of proletarian political power, the waves of proletarian revolution begun in the time of Marx vastly and deeply weakened following the defeat of the revolution in China, but did not completely end.”

With this kind of analysis, *Shola*’s demonstrates one of the following two problems: either they are not aware of the history of the world when socialist revolutions came to power and socialist countries were constructed; therefore not being able to grasp what the existence of the proletarian dictatorships represented even while most of the world was under the rule of imperialism and reaction! Or: by this type of evaluation they simply manifest a certain class outlook: they look at that history with the world outlook of the national bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, and therefore generously poo-poo the significance of the loss of those countries.

The overthrow of socialist rule in China in 1976 and the restoration of capitalism there not only eliminated the world’s last socialist bastion against capitalism, but it turned China from a bastion of world revolution into a reserve of world imperialism, and subsequently into one of its pillars. This event has had a tremendous effect on the balance of revolution and counter-revolution on a world scale, including for example with regard to the increase and spread of the reactionary Islamic movements. Does the C(M)PA really think that the transformation of China did not lead to a qualitative change in the objective situation of the world?!

The defeat of the old anti-colonial national movements in the 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s and their replacement with tribal religious wars was another of the major changes that took place. The communist movement was dealt a blow in different corners of the world and detrimentally marginalized. Instead of communist movements or even national movements, the Islamic forces, with religious tribal programs and outlooks, influenced the masses.

The end of the contention between the two imperialist blocs led by the US and USSR opened the gateways to a new round of imperialist capitalism’s invasion of every corner of the world, which led to an unprecedented level of integration of the entire world, creating tremendous disintegration and instability in the socio-economic fabric of different countries. These developments had undeniable effects on the social fabric and class configurations of all countries, especially “Third World” countries, and this in turn has important implications for the strategy of revolution in every country.

As a result of capitalist globalization, new strata of bourgeois compradors came into existence, and the life of the lower strata of the bourgeoisie, or the “national bourgeoisie”, became completely dependent on the

dynamics of the world capitalist system. The effects of globalization changed the fabric of the countryside as well as fuelling the further migration of men and the feminization of the peasantry. The cities and proletariat in the cities expanded, and here too poverty and labor became increasingly feminized.

In the Middle East, one of the major events after the 1970s has been the rise of Islamism. Different factions among the Islamic forces (whether in or out of power) came to constitute a new comprador bourgeois strata in these countries. Disruption in the imperialist-led development process since the mid-1970s propelled these strata into an antagonistic position vis-a-vis those strata of the comprador bourgeois class who then had a monopoly on political power. This new comprador elite consisted of Islamic capitalists, politicians and intellectuals who had new demands and ambitions for a redistribution of economic and political power, although within the same framework of the capitalist-imperialist system.

The rise of these political forces came to pose great challenges to the communist movement. An erroneous political analysis of the rise of Islamism and its relation to the workings of the global capitalist system and a wrong analysis of the class character of these Islamist forces and the reactionary nature of their contradictions with imperialism caused tremendous harm to the communist and Left movements, and even dragged the anti-imperialist forces in Europe and the United States to the defense of the Islamic forces against imperialism. Two important changes in the objective situation internationally rendered the Islamic forces in the Middle East and North Africa more powerful: first, the post-1970s disruption of imperialist-led economic development brought about social disintegration within these countries; second, the transformation of nationalist movements into new collaborators of the world capitalist system, and finally the restoration of capitalism in China in 1976 weakened and discredited the “Left” and “secular” rivals of the Islamic forces.

Bob Avakian was the first person in the international communist movement who boldly and clearly analyzed the nature of these Islamic movements and the strata and classes involved.¹²

But most of the MLM parties in RIM were oblivious to this analysis and to the need for a revolutionary policy on this matter, while in fact the rise of Islamic fundamentalism was an important obstacle to the spread and development of the communist movements in so-called “Muslim” countries.

We would like to pose this question to C(M)PA: what has been C(M)PA’s analysis of the phenomenon of Islamist movements, the class nature of the forces involved (especially the Taliban) and the nature of the contradiction between these forces and imperialism? How has their analysis of the class nature of the Islamist forces figured into developing a strategy and tactics of proletarian revolution in Afghanistan? And which MLM theories have been tools of the C(M)PA in developing such analysis and synthesis?

Shola believes that it is wrong to talk about the end of the first wave of proletarian revolution that began with the Paris Commune and continued with the October revolution in 1917, the October revolution in 1949 in China and the “revolution within the revolution” in 1966 in socialist China – a stage marked by the theories of Marx, Lenin and Mao (MLM). To this effect *Shola* argues,

“... The emergence of the capitalist system, the class fabric of this system and the class struggles within it was the objective basis for the emergence of Marxism. Capitalism in Marx’s time was free market capitalism. The development of the capitalist system to the stage of imperialism and new class fabrics and struggles was the objective ground for the development of Marxism to Marxism-Leninism. The development of the proletarian revolution in countries under imperialist domination and, more importantly, the defeat of the revolution in the Soviet Union and the struggle to prevent the restoration of capitalism in revolutionary China formed the objective ground for the development of Marxism-Leninism into Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. ... In relation to these objective foundations, up to now there have been three stages of development in the science of communism, meaning, first, the stage of Marxism, two, the stage of Marxism-Leninism, and three, the stage of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.... Therefore, there is neither an objective basis for conceptualizing the whole period of Marx, Lenin and Mao as a revolutionary wave (the first wave of proletarian revolution), nor any subjective principles.”

Apparently, the C(M)PA acknowledges stages in the development of Marxism, but their method and argument regarding whether or not Marxism needs further development is similar to the method and arguments of the Communist Party of Nepal (Mashal), led by Singh. (This Party was a participating member of RIM.) Singh believed that Mao Tsetung had not developed the science of Marxism to a third stage, and Mao could not have done so because, in Singh’s view, the science of Marxism develops only when capitalism develops to a qualitatively different stage. The argumentation of the leader of the Mashal Party didn’t just reflect his

metaphysical method, but mainly showed that Singh did not grasp the tremendous significance of the discovery of the laws of the class struggle under socialism by Mao Tsetung and the theory of “the continuation of class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat”, or from a bourgeois standpoint he simply did not care. For the Mashal Party, the restoration of capitalism in a socialist country and its transformation into a social-imperialist country was not part of “objective changes in the world”, so for Marxism there was no necessity to deal with that, and when Marxism, through Mao Tsetung, rose up to this challenge and dealt with this necessity, it was such a minor matter that it could not be considered a “development of Marxism”! For Mashal, this didn’t represent an “objective challenge” on which the future of the world and of billions of people hinged. For Mashal, this problem was not relevant to today’s revolutions, and the communist movement should not have concerned itself with it. For Mashal’s “objective” was whatever appeared on its political and ideological “radar”, and not reality itself.

Contrary to the understanding of the C(M)PA, not only are the changes that have taken place on a world scale (we have already mentioned a few) important, but delving into these changes also opens up the possibility of developing Marxism. No revolutionary party can ignore the importance of grasping these changes and their implications for revolutionary strategy and tactics. Any communist party or organization that is serious about carrying out revolution in their country and in the world has to address the challenges posed by these changes. Otherwise, it will cease to exist as a revolutionary communist current. Now, don’t we have the right to ask, what kind of thinking is it that avoids dealing with these tremendous material changes and the challenges they pose to us? Tremendous changes in the objective situation have challenged the previous theoretical framework of Marxism. The works of a materialist thinker such as Bob Avakian constitute a response to these changes and put communist theory on a more correct and more scientific foundation. Otherwise, Marxism will turn into a religion and ritual, and inevitably will lack the power to guide us in changing the world through revolution.

Now let us deal with the relationship between theory and practice and the C(M)PA’s contention that our approach is that of “absolutizing theory”.

The Relation between Theory and Practice

The relation between theory and practice is another subject of critique by *Shola*. *Shola* thinks that our Party has an “absolutist” view towards the role of theory, and writes: “On the relation between theory and practice we have two famous formulas. One is that: theory is a guide for practice. And the other is: practice is the origin of theory as well as the criteria for its correctness or incorrectness. Only by taking up these two formulas can we correctly define the role of theory and practice. But the document by the CC of the CPIMLM has an absolutist view of the role of theory.”

The criticism of *Shola* mainly revolves around this statement in the “Crossroads” article: “Contrary to a vulgar understanding that theory should walk behind practice, it is theory that should walk in the forefront and lead practice. Today, all communists of the world should act upon this.”

Our Response to this Critique

The problem of a correct understanding of Marxism cannot be solved with formulas. The revisionists too utilize these formulas but with their own understanding on the relation between theory and practice. These same formulas that we and *Shola* apparently have unity around are actually full of tension, and empiricist and positivist trends have their own interpretations and understanding of them.

Social practice is the starting point and the end of theory (or knowledge). Theory is *acquired* through social practice or people’s engagement with the objective world outside the mind for the purpose of understanding and changing it. And finally, the correctness of theory is also measured by that objective world. Our knowledge totally originates from social experience which comes from the practice of class struggle, of production and of scientific experiment.

The positivists either cross out the adjective “social” or understand it very narrowly. “Social practice” means a practice that is beyond the direct practice of an individual, group or nation. In our epoch, social practice means world practice. Our revolutionary theories are not principally a result of our own practice, but are abstractions of world-historic practice. Theories acquired from social practice in turn become a guide for carrying out other social practice. Mao Tsetung defended and developed this fundamental theory of Marxist philosophy.

He emphasized that social practice has the primary and decisive place in the process of acquiring knowledge.

The next important point in the relation between theory and practice is that human knowledge (which the ability of human beings to change their conditions is part and parcel of) does not leap out spontaneously from social practice. This knowledge is *acquired* through mental work and synthesis. To do this, one should have the approach of going from the appearance to the essence and of discovering the internal and non-apparent relations of the phenomena in order to make a rational leap in knowledge. Only through theoretically distilling practice can human beings pass on their experience so that practice develops in a spiral path instead of getting lost in a vicious circle. If practice is not subjected to analysis and synthesis, the experience will not be transferable and in the final analysis will be lost. Today this law applies seriously to communism.

In fact, a social practice that is not summed up or that is summed up incorrectly will be lost. This is a danger hanging over the experience of the socialist revolutions of the 20th century, and among the communists of the world it is only Bob Avakian who has summed up correctly those experiences and in this way has made it possible not only to keep those experiences from being extinguished but also to preserve their deep lessons as well as to recognize their mistakes and shortcomings. Through synthesizing these experiences, Bob Avakian has produced a more scientific and more precise rational knowledge of what is communism and what is the complicated road to achieve it. In fact, the principal “field” of Bob Avakian’s new synthesis is these same socialist revolutions of 20th century – revolutions that drastically changed the face of history. Here too we can see that in the development of the new synthesis, social practice has had the primary and decisive place.

In fact, later developments by the RCP (in the field of revolutionary theory and practice in the USA) were influenced by the summations that Bob Avakian was making of “fields” other than the immediate field of struggle in the USA. For example, the RCP’s rupture with economism became possible with discovering the meaning and content of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China. Or the vanguard role that the RCP played in relation to RIM (both theoretically as well as organizationally) would not have been possible without Bob Avakian’s summations of the ICM’s experiences, including the dissolution of the Comintern by Stalin and later the lack of initiative on the part of Mao Tsetung regarding the reorganization of the ICM, as well as the recognition of some nationalist tendencies in the thinking of Mao himself.

The subsequent development of all the Maoist parties was influenced by how they summed up the class struggle in China and its outcome. All of them had to explain why the communists in China were defeated and why the dictatorship of the proletariat was overthrown and capitalism restored there. The Trotskyists used this event to argue that this was another sign that socialism in one country or in countries with backward productive forces is “impossible”. Some Maoist currents such as the Communist Party of the Philippines believed that defeat was due to the “leftism of the Gang of four” who wanted to impose advanced socialist relations on China. Some others saw the defeat as a result of a “one party state” and the lack of “democracy” in that country (for example K. Venu the leader of the Central Reorganization Committee of the Communist Party of India Marxist-Leninist, today called the “Naxalbari” group, and Baburam Bhattarai, a leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Gonzalo, the leader of the Communist Party of Peru, believed that in order to prevent capitalist restoration in the socialist countries there has to be “people’s war until communism”. And so forth.

All of the above summations were wrong, and they existed and influenced the RIM parties – in one form or another – and their vision of the process of revolution in their countries. In other words, their summation of China had a decisive impact on their practice.

Another related and important aspect of this discussion of theory and practice is that knowledge or theory is relative truth. This “relativity” is completely bound up with the reality “outside” theory, or the objective world, which is referred to as “absolute truth” in Marxist philosophy. At each point, our knowledge of the objective world and its processes is relative. This relativity is due to the fact that human beings are limited as well as the fact that the objective world is in a constant state of change. With human beings’ growing understanding of objective phenomena, the degree of “relativity” decreases. In other words, the knowledge curve changes. On this subject Bob Avakian says: “... Even though since Marx there has not been a fundamental change in the principles, goals, basic scientific groundings, method and approach of communism the understanding of communism itself has gone through a lot of changes.”¹³

To conclude, the *criteria for the correctness or incorrectness of theory* are not the previous frameworks of those theories. Rather, the measuring rod is the objective world itself or the absolute truth of which theory is its relative reflection.

Empiricist Understanding of Practice

In socialist China, the struggle against empiricism was given a lot of importance. The study of Marxism by the masses of workers and peasants was emphasized because "...those who are contaminated by empiricism overlook the guiding role of Marxism in practice and do not pay attention to the study of revolutionary theory. They are content with passing successes and partial truths. They are poisoned with narrow-minded and unprincipled practicalities and lack a correct and solid orientation. They lack a will and are slaves to political charlatans – i.e. the false Marxists. In order to overcome empiricism the basic method is to consciously study Marxism."¹⁴

In order to "prove" the correctness of "Prachanda Path", the leadership of the CPN(M) too resorted to empiricist interpretations of the relationship between theory and practice. For example, one of their arguments was the repeated victories being achieved in the ten-year long people's war (1996-2006) in Nepal under the leadership of Prachanda and what they called "Prachanda Path". With this same methodology, they concluded that since the "dictatorship of the proletariat" in socialist China was defeated, it must have been wrong. And on that basis they proposed that a "New State" should base itself on electoral democracy between the Communist Party and bourgeois parties.¹⁵

If we extend this positivist method we should believe that "Only what IS is desirable and possible" – including the class system of oppression and exploitation. The CPN(M) replaced the universal truths that have been acquired from the vast practice of world-historic class struggles with its own limited and partial experience. Mao warned against this deviation, pointing out:

"Those who have gained experience should increase their theoretical readings and seriously study; only in this case they will be able to systematize and synthesize their experiences and raise it to the level of theory; only in this way they will not mistake their partial experiences with universal truth and will not fall into empirical mistakes."¹⁶

Undoubtedly, the lengthy practice of individuals or parties in revolutionary struggle is a very valuable experience but if this is not synthesized correctly not only will it not become a "guide" for revolutionary practice but it could end up guiding counter-revolutionary practice. We can see that with empiricist interpretations one cannot correctly understand the relationship between theory and practice. Yes! Prachanda was able to use the people's war as leverage in the CPN(M)'s dealings with the parties of the state of Nepal. But the drunkenness of those "Maoists" was short-lived, and they who had been so excited, instead of expressing their distaste at these dealings, whispered: "Oh! What a great practitioner! What a great victory!"

In fact, the practice/experience of Nepal did prove the correctness of theory, but not of the "theories" of the CPN(M) which they claimed had been born out of their own practical experience. The Nepal experience once more proved the correctness of those theories that have come out of *other* practice – from the experience of the victorious proletarian revolutions and the bitter defeats of the communists in other places and other times.

"Theoretical Big Talk" but "Small Organizational Body"!!

Shola angrily evaluates our emphasis on the importance of theory as "theoretical big talk ... which itself is a form of theoretical sluggishness", and it adds: "this theoretical big talk only covers over the main shortcomings of this party – having dangerously small organizational body and thick intellectual fabric, being vastly separated from its class social base with a small degree of having a 'hand on the fire from afar' and having practical paralysis – and creates a kind of false and baseless satisfaction for its leadership which in turn results in deepening and developing aforementioned shortcomings further."

Let us assume that the entire horoscope presented by these white-bearded wise men on our party and "its organizational body" corresponds to reality. But we would like to pose to these respected comrades this question: did the strong "organizational body" of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and its vast links with its "social base" prevent it from betraying the revolutionary dreams and aspirations of that same social base? Let us look at the experience in Afghanistan: did not the likes of "SAMA" and the "Rahaii Organization" use these same kind of pitiful pragmatist arguments, such as "having a hand on the fire from afar" or "practical paralysis", against the communists in order to justify their right opportunist line of aping and following the reactionary Islamic currents? And by the way, what is your summation of the fact that many of the left and the communists fought and sacrificed under the flag of the Mujahedeen during the war against the Soviet army

[Mujahedeen is the generic name for Islamic forces in Afghanistan who fought the Soviets as part of the US-imperialist-led forces – trans.]. Was the nature of this struggle revolutionary or counter-revolutionary? How was joining the war fronts led by the Islamic forces justified and which theories was it based on? You have been engaged in that bitter experience not so much “from afar”. So what is your summation of those “theories” which were wielded to justify and produce that kind of practice?

We would like once more to remind *Shola* that: political and ideological line is decisive in the character and practice of any party. Theory and practice are not separable. The practice of economists and pragmatists is also based on theory, as is the practice of the communists. The revolutionary slogan of “be realistic! demand the impossible!” has as much theoretical basis as the pragmatist slogan of “the possible is what IS”. Both are formulations based on practice. One correctly reflects reality and the other is wrong. One is a guide to revolutionary practice and the other a guide to capitulationism and class reconciliation. If practice is not guided and based on revolutionary theory, then it definitely will proceed on the basis of non-revolutionary theory and consequently will become non-revolutionary, and even counter-revolutionary practice. This is true even of practice by revolutionaries. Theory is always a guide to practice, and all practice is based on some theory. The meaning of the Marxist word “praxis” expresses this inseparability. Therefore, we had better ensure that this “guide” is correct (and its surpassing the practice is part of its being “correct”) in order to really light up the path of practice. This is a very simple but powerful truth. Downplaying this truth is tantamount to downplaying the role of the conscious element and would lead to crossing it out. If theory tailed practice and the objective situation, how could it play the role of a guide?

Shola claims that our Party denies the role of practice in producing theory and has fallen into absolutism regarding the role of theory. By this *Shola* means that practice is primary over theory and our party gives priority to theory and this has become a justification for our so-called “inaction” and “practical paralysis”. Another level of *Shola*’s argument on the relation between theory and practice is that grand theories can come only out of grand practice and it concludes that the “field” of struggle in the USA is so pitifully dismal that it is impossible for communists from there to develop communist theories.

In order to argue for the viewpoint of the primacy of practice over theory, *Shola* gives an example of the development of Marxist theory – a wrong example. *Shola* claims that the theory of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” was developed by Marx after the Paris Commune (1871), and that this theory was indebted to the practice of the Commune. *Shola* has invented this history, which does not correspond to reality. Marx in his famous work “The Class Struggles in France from 1848 to 1850” wrote that the “dictatorship of the proletariat is a transition point” for achieving communism. This was 20 years before the Paris Commune!

In addition to the fact that *Shola* distorts history in order to “prove” its point of view, this is a sign of *Shola*’s positivist understanding of the relationship between theory and practice. *Shola* thinks that a specific theory could only be an outcome of a specific practice, while Marx concluded the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat through broad study of the history of social development of human beings and the emergence of classes and its expression in philosophy and politics, etc. Positivist tendencies consider only those practices that have produced “positive” results as a measurement for the correctness of a theory. The reality is that: First, practical defeats are not necessarily a reflection of errors or shortcomings of a theory. Second, even defeated examples of practice are sources for measuring, rectifying and developing theories. One disastrous example in Afghanistan was the unity of the Rahaii Organization and SAMA with the Islamic forces (which in reality was unity with the feudal and comprador system of Afghanistan). This is a very important source for studying and criticizing their theory of “national resistance”, which led to such a disastrous practice.

Dogmatism Makes Marxism Brittle

Dogmatism is not able to understand that knowledge is relative. In periods when this relative knowledge becomes insufficient and wrong, dogmatists are not able to recognize this reality and deal with it. Dogmatism makes Marxism brittle and turns it into something lifeless. Dogmatists repeat with religious faith that they are Marxist and revolutionary but are not able to deal with the problems of revolution or explain the complicated phenomena that emerge in class struggle. Dogmatism paralyzes the revolutionaries practically too, because revolutionary practice means changing the world and changing the world is not something that can be done by will power. For this, one has to grasp its inner contradictions and the possibility of overthrowing it and act on that basis. Theory has to reflect the outside objective world. If theory becomes frozen then it will lose its connection to that outside world. Dogmatism is in fact a form of idealism. Lenin says, since Marxism is

not a dogmatic soul and is a living guide to action, because it is engaged with the material world and social conditions and because its aim is to change this – for all these reasons any sudden change in the material conditions of society inevitably influences Marxism and is reflected in it. For these reasons Marxism and Marxists experience crisis – a crisis of development. Dogmatists don't like the word crisis because they only see the negative aspects of it. They cannot see that a fever is a reaction by the body to deal with it. Marxists want to respond to this challenge because they want to change the material reality.

When Theory Tails Practice

The ICM has always witnessed currents that have contempt towards theory and worship the poverty of theory. Economist and pragmatist leaders always prescribe and inject the masses with “palpable” and “close to the heart” theories and turn the masses into “infants”, and this is the same method that the bourgeoisie uses for controlling the masses. On the other hand, the communist leaders from Marx to Mao have explicitly expressed the importance of the role of revolutionary theory. Lenin laid out the crucial role of revolutionary theory in the extraordinary Marxist classical work *What Is to Be Done?* One of the components of Marxism developing into Marxism-Leninism is the advanced understanding that Lenin presented in this work. Clearly this development was not connected to a change in the “objective situation” or changes in the capitalist system. Rather, it was a product of better understanding the necessities of the class struggle and communist revolution. In *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin explained his advanced understandings in opposition to and struggle against the economists, who claimed their empiricist views to be Marxist and wanted to impose them on the revolutionary movement. They tried to do so by resorting to the statement of Marx that “every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programs”.¹⁷ They used this statement to attack the crucial importance of revolutionary theory in developing the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and to justify their own “economist” (or reformist) line. Lenin responded to them: “to repeat these words at a time of such theoretical confusion is like wishing mourners at a funeral ‘many happy returns of the day!’”¹⁸ But Lenin did not rest with this biting analogy. He continued and explained that actually, this quote from Marx is taken from the Gotha Programme where he warns “If you must unite, Marx wrote to the party leaders, then enter into agreements to satisfy the practical aims of the movement, but do not allow any bargaining over principle, do not make “concessions” in questions of theory.”¹⁹ And at the end he concludes that, “without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement”²⁰.

Lenin's approach that the “element of consciousness” is decisive in the success of proletarian revolution is one of the cornerstones of Leninism and was decisive in the victory of the Russian revolution. But it was buried by right and left currents within the Bolshevik party and during the Stalin period. In the Comintern, the economist and pragmatist lines spread dangerously and left deadly impacts on the ICM.

Mao dealt with the problem of revolutionary theory and the necessity of developing it on a qualitatively higher level than Lenin in solving the problems and contradictions faced by the Chinese revolution, especially in dealing with the restoration of capitalism in the USSR and the complexities and problems of socialist construction. But even before the victory of the revolution, continuous emphasis on and attention to the question of theory and line struggles within the party was a high priority for Mao in leading the revolution and maintaining the revolutionary character of the party. The Cultural Revolution and many of his theories in this sphere, including “grasp revolution promote production”, are part of his further advancing of a “What is to be done”-ist understanding under socialism. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution represented a great struggle against economist views that appeared under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat and helped to advance the grasp and understanding of the role of consciousness in the revolutionary transformation of that society.

Mao never tired of repeating that “the correctness or incorrectness of political and ideological line decides everything”. This thesis of Mao is an expression of the importance of revolutionary theory in changing society and the world. Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. The character of any practice is decided by the political and ideological line leading it. No other criteria, such as the degree of mass support or firepower, can ever replace this.

Contrary to widespread belief, Mao's famous work “On Practice” was not written in order to emphasize that practice is more important than theory. He wrote this during the campaign to rectify the party's style of work and in struggle against dogmatists and subjectivists who, without looking at “objective reality” and by merely using the method of quoting out of context of time and place, weaved opinions. It was actually a struggle against those who had a religious and non-scientific approach to Marxism. In opposing them, Mao applied

dialectics, explaining the relationship between matter and consciousness and their constant transformation into each other. He threw light on the importance of the superstructure, politics and consciousness in leading revolutionary practice for changing the world, concepts that Mao revived, applied and developed not only in relation to revolutionary war but also in the process of constructing socialism and conducting the Cultural Revolution.

Unfortunately, despite these great efforts by Lenin and Mao in raising the level of understanding of the communist movement about the decisive role of consciousness, the tendency to downgrade the role of theory and slavishly worship practice without paying attention to its character (which is decided by the leading political and ideological line) developed increasingly, eating away at the ICM from the inside, like termites. The prevalence of this kind of thinking was on the one hand a way of emptying the revolutionary essence of Marxism, keeping only the shell. On the other hand, it became an obstacle for Marxism to influence the new generation of fighters in each and every country.

Let us look again at *Shola's* pronouncements in order to understand how it sees the relationship between theory and practice: "These syntheses (new synthesis of Bob Avakian) practically do not arouse as much militant passion and thinking endeavor as 'Gonzalo Thought' and 'Prachanda Path' did – neither internationally nor within US society itself, because its direct fields of practical and mass [struggles] in the US are so non-exciting and tedious, they are incomparable with those passionate direct fields of practical and mass [struggles] of 'Gonzalo Thought' and 'Prachanda Path'."

We would like to suggest to the Communist (Maoist) Party of Afghanistan that, instead of becoming so excited by "passionate direct fields", pay some attention to the class character of those fields. In the case of Nepal ask yourselves: which theory led this party in the reactionary direction? What was the path that led the leaders of this party to trample upon the principles of communism and revolution and go on joining the system of oppression and exploitation? Swamp is swamp, and the path leading to it must be exposed and not extolled.²¹

This experience demonstrates that we should never forget that all theories have their roots and basis and foundations in practice, and in front of all practice marches a definite theory and politics that shows the way to practice. The question is, where does each theory lead and what is the class character of the practice that is being carried out? Mao said: you are always applying politics whether you are conscious of it or not. The new synthesis of Bob Avakian is deeply anchored in and based on the revolutionary practice of our class worldwide – especially the socialist revolutions in the USSR and China, and later in efforts to find out why capitalism was restored there. This is the greatest revolutionary practice of our international class, its peaks. It is not without reason that the revisionist theories of the CPN(M) too developed through a wrong and anti-communist summation of these experiences, which in turn shaped that Party's capitulationist practice. No kind of trick can hide the truth that within RIM two lines – Marxist and revisionist – emerged in summing up the state under the proletarian dictatorship in the USSR and China, the content of proletarian dictatorship and democracy, and the path of constructing socialism in a world dominated by imperialism.

The experiences of the 20th century socialist revolutions are the greatest practical sources of enriching Marxism and bringing about the new synthesis. These great practices and their positive and negative lessons have to be captured by theory to open the way for further revolutionary practice of the internationalist proletariat. The guiding theories of those great practices have divided into two. This division into two is a source of the development of theory, of it becoming more correct and more liberatory and therefore more powerful. The correct aspect, which is the main aspect, must be taken up, and along with developing correct analyses of the changed objective situation, be recast in a new framework of Marxism. This path has been taken by the new synthesis, with great strides, and it is developing further, and we must selflessly help to build it up.

Mao said: Pay Attention to Historical Experience

Bitter experiences warn us to look at theoretical poverty as a sickness in the communist movement. *Shola's* warning about "theoretical absolutism" is a deadly prescription. Let us compare the problem of lack of practice and will and courage in the struggle with that of theoretical poverty and see which one of them has been the bigger problem overall. Even a glance at some contemporary historical experience in the region in which Afghanistan and Iran are located shows that theoretical poverty and the lack of revolutionary theory and revolutionary theoreticians have been very big and deadly problems. This is a region full of sacrifice, of enduring hardship and the torture and imprisonment of revolutionaries. But the partial learning of Marxism

as well as theoretical sluggishness, combined with relying on ready-made theories, quoting them blindly and turning them into articles of faith, has eroded the communist essence of the movements. In this region during the last turbulent decades, the masses have repeatedly rebelled, but every time the rebellions have been wasted under the banner of nationalist and Islamic forces and as a result have not become revolutionary movements either.

Let us look at Iran. Does the history of tens of thousands of communists and revolutionaries passing through and resisting medieval prisons and torture chambers and finally being executed demonstrate practical idleness? Why in 1979 was a reactionary Islamic force able to push aside all the other forces, including the communists, and hijack a great revolution in the making, which had led to the overthrow of a powerful, imperialist-dependent regime? Why did many of the organizations that had ruptured with Soviet revisionism and the Tudeh party become disoriented and fall into disarray? Why did the Union of Iran Communists analyze the nature of the contradiction between the Islamists and imperialism as “anti-imperialism” and fail to grasp the reactionary character of this contradiction? Was all this because of practical sluggishness on the part of the communists?

The left movement of Afghanistan is another very important example from recent decades. Its practice and fate during the anti-occupation war against Soviet social-imperialism was another bitter experience of the communist movement, and it is very important to sum it up. Unfortunately, as far as we know, no one has made a serious summation of this movement. The question goes begging, why in the 1980s did that big force that had come out of the Maoist movement of the 1960s – under the guise of a “resistance war” – become the reserve of reactionary Islamic forces, whose articles of faith included the enslavement of women and the spread of religious obscurantism? Should this be summed up or not? Why did a big section of that movement – *i.e.* the Rahaii Organization – become a follower of the revisionists in China and finally enter into cooperation with the Pakistani state and the CIA? Why did another important part of that movement – SAMA – openly and formally raise the slogan of an Islamic Republic or Islamic government?

Remembering this history is bitter. Summing up this history is an urgent task for the communists. The questions crying out to be dealt with are: which theoretical justifications were used by forces who considered themselves “left” or “revolutionary” for uniting with the social program of the Islamist and Jihadi forces? Why did their nationalism, under the guise of giving priority to a “national resistance war” or “anti-imperialist struggle”, permit them to unite with a religious feudal-patriarchal social program? Why couldn’t those forces who considered themselves communist and revolutionary link the war against the occupying Soviet forces with the vision of smashing the ruling class system and realizing new-democratic revolution and socialism in Afghanistan? Which “Leninist” and “Maoist” concepts were misused by these “left” forces in order to justify their reactionary practice of uniting with the Western imperialist and local Pakistani powers? When a country is occupied (even in a socialist country, such as the USSR by the Hitler army during WW2), is the character of the war a national and patriotic war or does it have class character? Shouldn’t an anti-occupation war be carried out within the framework of proletarian revolution and based on its vision and social program? Should the masses be mobilized around this vision and goal and the anti-occupation feelings and demands be situated and defined within this framework, or vice versa? What are differences between these two approaches in political line and practice?²² Why weren’t communist schools set up in opposition to religious schools? The false mask of “communism” and “socialism” worn by the Soviet imperialists was a big problem for the communists in Afghanistan. What was their approach to this problem? Did they learn from Mao, and explain to the masses that the Soviets were false communists? Did they expose that the USSR’s betrayal of the proletarians and peoples of the world actually began by overthrowing socialism in the USSR itself, subjugating the proletariat and peoples within the USSR itself? Did they use this as an opportunity for spreading real communism? Or did they mainly resort to the spontaneous nationalist and traditionalist feelings of the masses and try to preserve the honor of communism and the communists through sacrificing in the national resistance war against the occupying forces? Some of these “left” people went as far as joining Islamic prayers in order to win the trust of the masses rather than struggling against religious obscurantism.

Don’t we need to ask why Islamism spread like a prairie fire in this region and the communist movement went along to the brink of death? How did the “national resistance movement” in Afghanistan get turned into a war of one imperialist power against the other, and in the final analysis the “supportive” power had as much role in destroying the people and the country as the occupying power? Finally, is Bob Avakian’s analysis of the unity and contradiction of Islamism-imperialism, which are two outmoded strata, and how siding with one leads to reinforcing the other, a correct reflection of reality and a guide to our practice in the complicated political theatre of the Middle East and the world?

One might ask: what is the use of providing correct and revolutionary communist answers to these biting questions? And how would this serve practice (of course, liberatory and revolutionary practice, and not reactionary practice)? We would say at least the new generation of fighters will learn from this bitter experience to vigorously and obsessively interrogate and consciously evaluate the class-social content behind every banner and behind every proclamation of “national resistance” and “liberation front” and “liberation organization” and any “war”, so that they do not step into practices that are reactionary and destructive. But the “use” of this kind of summation is more than that. And in fact it is very much needed for planting the pole of revolution and communism in the theatre of Afghanistan, Iran and overall in the Middle East.

Let us now go to Kurdistan. Is there any doubt about the sacrifices and heroism of the revolutionary *Peshmerga* fighters of Kurdistan? Why did the Kumala Ranj-e-daran which had been formed by the communist generation of the 1960s turn into a representative of the bourgeois-feudal classes of Iraqi Kurdistan in unity with US imperialism?

In Nepal, the communists did not suffer from lack of practice. They were not afraid of the armed-to-the-teeth enemy. They showed practical conviction to the liberatory cause. They formed a people’s army and mobilized the workers and peasants in revolution. Was it because of their shortage of practice that this revolution stopped in the middle of the road and succumbed to some handouts from the capitalist system?

The “Crossroads” article of the CPIMLM CC tries to deal with these kinds of problems. What do we expect from all these experiences? These experiences, with so many losses, are calling on us to wake up. All these experiences, so much heroism and sacrifice, are enough to put aside pretenses and confess to the theoretical backwardness of the whole movement. Posturing and answers that only cover the effects are no longer a solution. If we limit ourselves to self-satisfying answers, we will not be able to lead the desperate masses who constantly rise in revolt or to lead the searching minds of the young generation who seriously want to look at the problem of liberating this world from the enslaving chains of reaction and imperialism.

There has always been two-line struggle between Marxism and revisionism over different aspects of communist theory and practice: in philosophy, over organizing revolution, on socialist economy and the dictatorship of the proletariat, etc. These debates are not unrelated to actual life nor divorced from it. Wherever revisionism prevails, it will have a deadly and destructive impact on revolutionary practice. No one should doubt this. Despite a mass of new problems confronting the communists since the defeat of the proletariat in China, unfortunately some communists, including the C(M)PA, do not see the necessity of dealing with them.

Without Theoretical Work, No Communist Vanguard Can Remain a Vanguard

The economists, in order to downplay the importance of revolutionary theory, usually equate theoretical work to academic enterprise and scholasticism. But ongoing theoretical work and the study of theoretical issues in different fields of science and new scientific discoveries and achievements is one of the major responsibilities of revolutionary communists. Any communist party that downplays this work and looks at it as a negative endeavor will commit serious errors and will turn into a backward and dogmatic party, because understanding the system ruling the world and changing it is no simple matter. It requires ongoing and updated thinking – it requires a world view, political strategy, military strategy, tactics, philosophy, ideology, an analysis of emerging contradictions and a summation of achievements as well as mistakes and setbacks. This is not some lock whose key is made once and from then on you only need to get the eternal key and use it. No doubt theoretical work that stands apart from the practice of changing the world would turn into its opposite and instead of opening the gateways for revolution would turn into an obstacle. But at the same time the separation of theory from practice should not be looked at narrowly and in an empiricist way. Rather, we must look at the biggest and most important revolutionary experiences to shed light on smaller fields. Consider, for example, those who want to develop communist theory without paying any attention to the great experience of the two socialist revolutions in the Soviet Union and China (principally China). This is an example of the separation of theory from practice.

Yes, theory is a guide for our practice, and since it is guiding our practice we had better ensure that we have a correct analysis of the class structure and concrete situation in our societies. For example, let’s look at Afghanistan. How is the scene of class struggle in Afghanistan to be analyzed? How do you analyze the similar nature of the reactionary forces within the “resistance” on the one hand and the regime and the ruling system and imperialist occupiers in Afghanistan on the other? Is it correct to set priorities over which one should

be overthrown first by a revolution? And finally the question is, what kind of practice and its highest form (revolutionary war) needs to be waged in order to realize the immediate as well as long-term interests of the workers, peasants and women in Afghanistan? And what kind of program and canvas of social transformations should guide that practice?

The war in Afghanistan is not only a military war. It is a complicated class war with two outmoded social forces occupying the political scene. The task of the revolutionary proletarian forces is to change this unfavorable polarization and enable the masses to fight under the banner of a political line and horizon that represents their interests, instead of becoming the cannon fodder for one or the other of these reactionary forces.

The proletarian revolutionary force has to boldly put forward its political, ideological, social and economic alternative in opposition and against these two (rotten) outmoded forces and *continuously* and *comprehensively* demonstrate its political and ideological demarcation from those two outmoded forces through agitation, propaganda and initiating movements of resistance and other specific campaigns, such as a campaign against war, campaigns against religiosity and patriarchal social relations. If a practice or a war of resistance does not carry with it this content, it cannot be considered a revolutionary practice or a war of resistance that represents the interests of the oppressed and exploited people. A revolutionary proletarian force must constantly propagate those political, ideological and social views that represent and project the future social system it is fighting for and tirelessly take it to the masses, even before initiating the people's war. Specifically, in countries such as Iran and Afghanistan in which the ruling classes fortify their rule and their hold over a section of the masses through enforcing religious morality and the enslavement of women, waging war against religious morality and the enslavement of women is an indispensable component of carrying out the class struggle, and in reality without this talking about the preparation of people's war is meaningless. This line is especially crucial for arousing and organizing women as a key social force in the proletarian revolution. Communists must boldly propagate their emancipatory world view and a morality that flows from the communist world view and method, including atheism and opposition to religious beliefs and illusions of god. The proletariat, youth and women should be the pillars for this movement.

Precisely because in Iran and Afghanistan the system uses religion to impose its oppressive and repressive social and cultural relations on the society, every progressive social movement has to confront and fight against theocracy. Otherwise, it will not be possible to develop a culture of daring, audacity and righteousness in the fight against these regimes and the imperialists. This is the most important form of "cultural revolution" amongst the masses in opposition to the reactionary "cultural counter-revolution" of the Islamists. This is part and parcel of critiquing the old state and the struggle to overthrow it. Avoiding this kind of struggle will lead to reformism in the fight against the old state.

The particularity of the state in Iran and Afghanistan is that they are theocratic states. Therefore, in order to challenge and fight against the oppressive, degrading, humiliating relations and values imposed by the system in these two countries, the masses need to consciously and scientifically attack religion to get a sense of the emancipatory power of atheism. The goal of this "cultural revolution" is to introduce to the masses the kind of society that the communists are fighting for. This is a kind of practice that can project the future too. This kind of "cultural revolution" would be like a shock to the thinking of the masses and would bring ferment among them to consciously take their destiny into their own hands. In order to build a revolutionary movement in countries like Iran and Afghanistan – and even in the US where religious fundamentalism is one of the top weapons of the bourgeoisie for imposing capitalist-imperialist rule – carrying out this kind of ideological struggle is crucial and decisive and should not be considered a minor and secondary field of struggle. Rather, in order to change the aforementioned unfavorable polarization dominating the Middle East (the polarization of imperialism–Islamism), it has a decisive and strategic importance. Engaging in such a struggle would enable the masses of different classes and strata to see that the communists are not just an "oppositional" force against the ruling classes, but rather they are a serious and determined force with a clear vision of a totally different social system that they are fighting to establish.

Revolutionary practice means the presence of the nature and character of the future society in our words as well as our practice today. If our theories are wrong, our practice would not achieve the goal of "social transformation". One should look for the footprints of liquidationism [liquidating the fundamentals of MLM – trans.] here and not in the new synthesis. The footprints of revisionism are to be found in the line that promotes the choice between the "bad and worst" amongst the enemy forces, not Bob Avakian's criticism of Lenin's "Left-wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder". The footprints of liquidationism can be seen when the filthy remnants of the past passionately push their medieval ideologies or promote imperialism, the communists raise

a white flag or with magnifiers in hand, look for progressive bits and pieces within the “national bourgeoisie” or the reactionary Islamists. Revisionism should be exposed where joining the bourgeois state becomes the goal of the “people’s war”. This situation should be challenged and transformed radically.

Dictatorship of the Proletariat

The Communist (Maoist) Party of Afghanistan claims that the RCP’s documents are “pale” (*i.e.* weak) on the subject of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It would suffice to make a quick comparison between the documents published by the RCP in the past one year with those of the C(M)PA in the past 10 years or compare the new synthesis documents published in the last few years with the combined documents of all the participating parties and organizations of RIM in the same period to see how baseless this verdict is.

Instead of issuing arbitrary verdicts, isn’t it better for the C(M)PA to put its efforts first of all into engaging with whether Bob Avakian’s evaluation of some shortcomings and mistakes in the thinking of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao and his analysis of the mistakes committed in the experience of socialist construction in the USSR and China are correct or not? Is his evaluation of the achievements of those experiences being the principal aspect correct or not? And secondly, whether an organic combination of all this analysis has given rise to the emergence of a more scientific, more correct, thus more powerful Marxism, or are these merely some attempts within the old framework?

In many of his writings, Bob Avakian emphasizes the necessity for the leadership of a vanguard party and the establishment of the state of the proletarian dictatorship throughout the whole period of socialist transition [to communism], and he points to the material foundations and basis for this necessity. For example, he talks of the “actual dynamics of the material reality with which we are confronted and what pathways for change are there”, and he emphasizes: “... it really is either/or...: either it’s the seizure of state power by masses of people, led by a vanguard of this kind, and then the advance to communism throughout the world, and the final abolition of state power and of vanguards; or it’s back to capitalism, or the perpetuation of capitalism without ever having a revolution in the first place. Those are the choices. Why? Because that’s the way reality is, that’s the way human society has evolved. All we’ve done is recognize it and act on it. This underscores yet again the importance of a materialist understanding and of proceeding from where we are, where the historical development of human society has led (once again not “was bound to lead” but has led): what pathways that opens for change, in fact for a profound transformation and leap, in human society and its interaction with the rest of nature.”²³

In the same article he talks about the new synthesis of the “dictatorship of the proletariat”: “what we are talking about is not the stereotypical vision, and is not even the pre-new synthesis version of the dictatorship of the proletariat. We are talking about an emancipating vision on a whole new level.”

Bob Avakian points out that the “Constitution for a New Socialist Republic in North America (draft program)” is an example of the application of the new synthesis vision of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This document is of great importance for the whole ICM and has been published in our Party’s central organ – *Haghighat* #57, 58, 59 and 60 – with an explanatory introduction by *Haghighat*. Grappling with this document by comrades of the international communist movement would undoubtedly shed light on the achievements and shortcomings/mistakes of the past socialist states as well as on a more emancipatory model of that state in a future that is possible and should be presented/introduced to the world even right now.

It is worthwhile to review the struggle between the RCP and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) over the class content of the state in general and that of the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular. This two-line struggle started with an internal letter from the RCP to the CPN(M) in 2005, which was distributed publicly in 2009 under the title “On Dangerous Developments in Nepal”.²⁴ Our Party published the first part of this document in that same year.²⁵ It should be pointed out that in this struggle, the majority of the participating parties and organizations in RIM did not take any explicit or implicit position. The leadership of the CPN(M) also did not respond to this letter until July 2006, but the practical consequences of the CPN(M)’s line had already begun to assert itself. One of the key theses of the CPN(M), which had been ratified through a resolution by its Central Committee, was the concept of the “New State”. The resolution announced that the immediate goal of the revolution in Nepal was to establish a “transitional republic” instead of carrying out New Democratic Revolution (a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat that Mao advanced for countries dominated by imperialism). The ratification of the central thesis of the “New State” and the goal of establishing

a “transitional republic” by the CPN(M) became a very important factor in the political scene of Nepal. A series of agreements were signed with reactionary parties that paved the way for co-opting the CPN(M) into the reactionary ruling system and overturning the achievements of ten years of people’s war.

In response to the RCP, the CPN(M) wrote:

“... this republic, with an extensive reorganization of the state power as to resolve the problems related to class, nationality, region and sex prevailing in the country, would play a role of a transitional multi-party republic. Certainly the reactionary class and their parties will try to transform this republic into a bourgeois parliamentary one, whereas our party of the proletarian class will try to transform it to a new democratic republic.”²⁶

This is a totally anti-Marxist viewpoint, because it denies the fact that any state is the instrument of the rule of this or that class. This Marxist law is not a lifeless dogma, rather it is a fact that has been proven many times by historical experiences on a world scale and has been summed up scientifically. The RCP letter poses this question to the CPN(M): “Which class will the army and the other organs of institutionalized power serve in the ‘transitional republic’?”

These letters by the RCP emphasize the class nature of the state and point out that any state will necessarily be of a definite class character and will carry out the interests of a definite class: the interests of the proletariat or the interests of one or another reactionary class (or a combination of them).

To emphasize the class nature of the state, the letter dated October 2006 quotes Bob Avakian: “In a world marked by profound class divisions and social inequality, to talk about ‘democracy’ – without talking about the class nature of that democracy and which class it serves – is meaningless, and worse.”²⁷

***Shola* and the “Main” Deviation in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement!**

Shola writes: “The post Marxism-Leninism-Maoism raised by the Revolutionary Communist Party USA and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Iran (MLM) are the deepest and most extensive deviation in terms of their theoretical dimensions to have been expressed in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement. This deviation is more dangerous than other deviations in Nepal and before that in Peru. And because of this we think that in the framework of the struggle against the expressed deviations amongst the participating members of RIM, struggle against this Post M-L-M is the main task today.”

Reading these lines one expects an exposition of the key components of the “deviations in Nepal and before that in Peru” by *Shola* in order to be able to compare them with the “deepest and the most extensive” one “expressed in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement”! But there is no need to wait, because *Shola* is not concerned with clarifying lines at all and only issues verdicts of blasphemy.

In any case this is by far the clearest position they have ever come up with in a major political and ideological two-line struggle that has arisen in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM).

With the prevalence of the revisionist line in the CPN(M) and consequently its freefall into the swamp of reconciliation with the local and international bourgeoisie, this two-line struggle became sharper. As a result of the April 2008 elections in Nepal, the CPN(M) became a ruling party in the country’s reactionary system. The Central Committee members of the party one after another promised the ruling classes of Nepal and the so-called “international community” (meaning the imperialist and reactionary countries such as the US and Britain ... China and India, etc.) to remain loyal to and serve this bourgeois state. The people’s revolutionary power that had been built through 10 years of people’s war was dismantled by the Party. The old police forces were returned to the liberated areas in the countryside. The People’s Liberation Army was disarmed and its members were walled off in specific areas, while the imperial army, now under the name of the Nepali Army, stayed put in their previous positions. And all this took place under the leadership of a Minister of defense from the “Maoist” party. The leadership of the Party openly opposed the communist principle of the need to smash the bourgeois state machinery and establish a proletarian state. Baburam Bhattarai, a Party leader and the current Prime minister of Nepal, in a speech addressed to a gathering of the World Bank, declared that he more than anyone is loyal to the principles of liberal capitalism. And while the so-called communist parties from around the world were sending messages of congratulations to the CPN(M), these events were creating serious doubts among the world’s revolutionary communists (such as Bob Avakian, who does not “arouse any passions” in C(M)PA) because these revolutionary communists understood what a blatant betrayal had been committed against the

masses of workers, peasants, and women of Nepal, as well as the international proletariat.²⁸

What defines the revisionist line of the CPN(M) is its opposition to the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat and its replacement with the theory of “democracy of the twenty-first century” and its replacement of the theory of smashing the old state of the exploiting classes with that of taking part in the old state and dissolving within it – theories which led to a great betrayal stopping the revolution of the workers and peasants of Nepal.

With this horrendous setback, it became clear that at the heart of the line divisions within the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement lies the question of communism, communist revolution and its future: Will communism be redefined in a variety of bourgeois frameworks and become a mere thin cover for non-communist and non-revolutionary visions and paths? Or will its buried principles be rescued and developed, putting the communist theories on a more scientific and clearer basis, so that once again they become a sharp weapon in the class struggle?

In this great struggle, three theoretical poles took shape, clearly putting forward their lines on communist theories and communist revolution. On the one hand, there is the line of the CPN(M) leadership that laid out the pragmatic and eclectic “Prachanda Path” in opposition to the central task of seizing political power and in rejection of the achievements of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the socialist countries of the 20th century, replacing the dictatorship of the proletariat with the bourgeois line of “democracy of the 21st century”.

On the other hand, Bob Avakian’s line systematically sheds light on the class character of the state and applies it in charting the path of revolution in the imperialist countries. And more importantly, basing himself on the theoretical and practical achievements of the socialist revolutions of the 20th century and rupturing with their negative aspects, he recasts the communist theories and puts them on a more scientific basis, which includes a new understanding of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

There is a third line as well. This line believes that all that previous experience and science of M-L-M is sufficient to make revolution. This line takes refuge in religious glorification of the past heritage and chooses a middle ground, now hitting on the nail and now hitting on the horseshoe. This trend shows a lot of unity with the revisionist and bourgeois-democratic pole represented by the CPN(M) leadership. To justify this kind of unity, they weave together many “revolutionary” arguments and use 10 years of people’s war waged by the CPN(M) as justification for their sitting between Marxism and revisionism.²⁹ Consider once again the argument made by *Shola*, cited above, that the new synthesis “... do(es) not arouse as much militant passion and thinking endeavor as ‘Gonzalo Thought’ and ‘Prachanda Path’ did – neither internationally nor within US society itself because its direct fields of practical and mass [struggles] in the US are so unexciting and tedious and are incomparable with those exciting direct fields of practical and mass [struggles] of ‘Gonzalo Thought’ and ‘Prachanda Path’.”

First of all, one wonders on what basis, on which investigations and observations, *Shola* issues its verdict that the new synthesis does not invoke “militant passion” in the world and in the US? Is one to assume that *Shola* has complete mastery over the theater of class struggle in the US and the world, so that its verdict is based on fact? Secondly, it would be better if *Shola* explicitly said which “direct fields of practice” in Peru and Nepal it is referring to?

After 1992, with Gonzalo’s call to turn the process of the revolutionary war into a peace process, the people’s war in Peru was dealt significant blows, and for several years now it has been remnants of the PCP carrying out scattered military actions with the aim of strengthening the “peace line”. The people’s war in Nepal, since 2006 based on the principles of “Prachanda Path”, was put to rest and the Nepal party entered into the reactionary state. Now the question is, what does *Shola* mean by “passionate practical fields”? Don’t you see the logical and inevitable consequences of that “path”? Have you shelved the Maoist principle of “correct political and ideological line is decisive”? *Shola* should know that several years before writing these words, “Prachanda Path” surrendered the Nepali revolution and dragged it into the mud. It is really astounding that the comrades of the C(M)PA are still joyous about it! Come to your senses and ask yourselves what is the meaning of all this?!

This contradiction shows how using criteria with ambiguous content (“direct fields of ...”, etc.) can only lead to **opportunism of the worst sort, i.e. eclecticism**. Based on the truth that “the political and ideological line” is decisive, the RCP comrades had predicted the practical consequences of the line of the CPN(M). When life showed its actuality, the parties and organizations of the RIM were expected to act upon their internationalist duty and enter into struggle against this political and ideological line and the disastrous path taken by the CPN(M). Instead, what followed was an avalanche of congratulations and complements for

the victory of the CPN(M) in the election and its entry into the reactionary state. This showed the serious retrograde trend amongst the communist parties and organizations of RIM. The irony is that some of the forces who did not support the ten years of people's war in Nepal (when the revolutionary line still dominated the CPN(M)), or hardly ever mentioned it at all, suddenly grew excited by the auctioning of the Nepali revolution in the political trading market. Maybe this is what *Shola* means by "Prachanda Path" arousing "passion and endeavor" internationally!

Shola announces that the reason why it thinks "Prachanda Path" has been able to create "militant passion and thinking endeavor" and the "new synthesis" has not been able to do so is that the "direct fields of practical and mass [struggles] in the US" are "non-exciting and tedious" compared with those led by "Prachanda Path"! But the comrades of the C(M)PA know well that at one point the "direct practical fields" dominated by the Jihadist forces, which used a barrage of rockets and bullets (donated by the Western imperialist powers) against the Russian social-imperialist army, aroused a similar passion among fighters in Afghanistan. Certainly the most honest of those fighters, especially those armed with a communist class outlook, do not get passionate about that episode and do not remember it with a sense of elation but rather regret the sacrifices in the battlefields that were led by the political and ideological line of the reactionary Islamists.

The "new synthesis" deals with these kinds of problems and catastrophes. So it is better to learn from it rather than labeling it "the main danger".

The comrades of the C(M)PA have been very lenient and forgiving politically and ideologically towards the setback in the class nature of the revolution in Nepal. They should seriously explain what is the meaning of closing their eyes when a revolution that was on the verge of victory was taken to the slaughterhouse? What is the meaning of silence when the CPN(M) declared the criminal bourgeois democracy valid against the dictatorship of the proletariat and called pursuing the goal of communism impossible in today's world situation? And worst of all, what does it mean to label those comrades who have fought against this retrograde trend and have made great efforts to prevent the CPN(M) from going down this path into the swamp as the "main danger", the "main deviation" and even "counter-revolutionary"? Really, what is the story here?

Distorting Maoism and Reducing it to National Liberation and Armed Struggle

Let us cast aside the pretension of being Marxist and Leninist and Maoist. Let us instead, try to grasp the meaning of these concepts and their application, because one of the facts of our times is that an astounding amount of confusion prevails around these concepts. The situation is similar to the time when Marx, in reaction to widespread opportunism disguised as Marxism, said: "If this is Marxism, then I am no Marxist."³⁰

The chaos in this respect is worse than at any time in the history of the communist movement. This reality requires rigorously focusing on the content of these concepts.

In most of the experiences that we pointed to, a very stunted grasp and in some cases an opportunistic reading of Mao's theories prevailed. Unfortunately, most of those who declared that they were pro-"Mao Tsetung Thought" and "Maoism" turned Mao into a revolutionary democrat and his theories into theories of "national defense" and "national democratic revolution" or at best reduced them to military theories and new democratic revolution. But even Mao's valuable theories in these spheres have been imprisoned in the narrow cage of nationalism and militarism, with the result of changing their quality and even turning them into their opposites.

Even in RIM there has always been an uneven understanding of "Maoism", particularly in regards to the understanding of the theory of "continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat" and the understanding of the dynamics of class struggle under socialism and the world-historic process of achieving communism worldwide. Unfortunately, *Shola* too has a tendency to reduce Maoism to "people's war". As we pointed out, not only do they measure all "deviations" from Marxism with the criteria of practice, and particularly the practice of people's war, but they also understand Maoism itself as such. One can clearly see from the *Shola* article that it believes those movements that carry out a people's war or something resembling it are more Maoist.

Shola declares our Party and the RCP,USA as non-Maoist and so-called "post MLM" and grants degrees and scores to different parties and individuals. But what scale does *Shola* use to grade and score? The entirety of the *Shola* article and its grading of the theories and amount of "passion" that they may or may not arouse in the *Shola* author provide the answer: all parties are measured and evaluated by *Shola*'s scale of "people's war".

Shola goes so far as to compare the value of the experience of the Paris Commune with the bigger scale and longevity of present-day armed struggles!

With this kind of logic, one can understand why *Shola* does not see the fundamental problem with the CPN(M) leadership adopting a bourgeois political and ideological line, changing their orientation and world outlook, but it does see the problem in ending the armed struggle. But ending the people's war was only a consequence of the change in the political program, and not turning away from "war" for its own sake. The political analysis of the CPN(M) was that the revolution could not be carried out. On the basis of this evaluation, they put aside the revolution and adopted a program of taking part in the republican state of the bourgeois-landlord classes, dependent on India and imperialism. A specific theory was guiding that capitulation in practice. With hindsight, one can see that there was a strong tendency in that Party to see the "people's war" as a necessary means to enter and be admitted into the old state by the ruling classes in India and Nepal. Once they achieved this through "people's war", there was no need to continue it.

Reducing Marxism and in general a revolutionary line to armed struggle has deep roots amongst the revolutionary communist parties, and those in RIM were not immune to it either. The struggle against the Soviet revisionists, who were prescribing a "peaceful path" for revolutionaries all over the world in the 1950s and 1960s, certainly had something to do with the growth of this tendency. After the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, the Soviet revisionists and their dependent parties promoted a peaceful path of struggle and a "non-capitalist" road of development, advocating cooperation with ruling states. It was following this line that a big part of the left movement in the Arab world and Southeast Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh) became reserves of the states that were on the so-called road of "non-capitalist development", and in Iran the Tudeh Party became a defender of the "White Revolution of the Shah and the people". In the fight against this capitulationist line, and influenced by Mao's call, the revolutionary communists the world over underlined the necessity of seizing political power through revolutionary violence, and this became a recognized dividing line between Marxism and revisionism. This was a very positive development. However, it had a negative aspect too, which was the tendency to reduce the line of demarcation between Marxism and revisionism to this. A one-sided emphasis on this aspect as well as a warped understanding of Mao's theses on new-democratic revolution by the nationalist forces spread confusion about the content of Maoism. In the 1950s and 1960s, not only genuine communists but also many petit-bourgeois democrats as well as nationalist forces seemingly upheld "Mao Tsetung Thought" and played an important role in spreading a distorted understanding of Mao's thoughts.

In socialist China, following the struggle against the Soviet bourgeoisie, a great class struggle against the "capitalist roaders" within the Communist Party of China itself commenced. The "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" was a revolution led by Mao and revolutionary communists within the CPC to prevent yet another catastrophe, the restoration of capitalism in socialist China. This revolution was able to prevent the restoration of capitalism for 10 years and it was able to demarcate a model of emancipatory socialism against the phony socialism in power in the Soviet Union, which led to rejuvenating and giving birth to a new communist international movement. Mao's analysis of the complicated and contradictory nature of socialism and the light he shed on different aspects and dynamics of the class struggle and the contradictory nature of the Party and state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, etc., advanced communist theories miles ahead and further developed them. The waves of this revolution reached all over the world. This revolution showed how Mao Tsetung's theories are way beyond mere revolutionary armed struggle and new-democratic revolution in semi-feudal countries dominated by imperialism. But radical nationalists were deaf to this and continued on their own path along with using – in fact misusing – and distorting Mao's theories.

Empiricist Outlook

In *Shola's* article there is a weird paragraph: "In general we must say that these syntheses, on the positive and dynamic side, show a certain partial qualitative rupture with the errors of the periods of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tsetung, as well as partial findings about the shortcomings of that period. But these ruptures and findings must pass through hard tests in the theoretical and practical struggles in order to develop to the level of an "ism" following Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and for Avakian's contributions to reach the level of the contributions of Marx, Lenin and Mao."

Before proceeding, let us concisely put it that neither we, nor in our opinion Bob Avakian himself, are worried about whether the new synthesis should become a new "ism", and we should not label it as such. Rather, the

concern is whether these theories are correct and can become our guide to change the world, and whether they can become our weapon to transform the communist movement into a powerful pole of attraction amongst the rebellious masses all around the world?

The relative correctness of these theories can be determined on the basis of the practical experience accumulated thus far and based on our present theoretical level. We should not slip into relativism in this regard. There is no doubt that the new synthesis has to go through many fields of practical and theoretical struggles to be tempered and become even more correct and scientific, not with the goal of becoming another “ism” but for being a theory to change the world.

Is *Shola* trying to say that we should not give permission for developing communist theories to those who have not led a successful revolution or are not engaged in a people’s war? It seems that is what *Shola* is implying. So we would like to clearly put forward our position.

Bob Avakian is a great theoretician of communism. In the US he is famous for the fact that he has always stood by the oppressed and fought for their emancipation. Today, in no other imperialist country is there such a party as the RCP, as most of the communist parties of the new communist movement that came to life in the 1960s following the great rupture of socialist China from the capitalist Soviet Union have either died out or become parliamentary parties. This situation of the RCP is because of the theoretical and practical leadership of Bob Avakian. After the seizure of power by the revisionists in China in 1976, most organizations and parties of the new communist movement tailed the revisionist rulers of China or in one form or another became reformist parties and organizations. Bob Avakian led the exposure of the new revisionist rulers in China internationally. He went beyond merely exposing the “Three Worlds Theory” of these usurpers and reminded the communists the world over that these “capitalist roaders” had been exposed and targeted during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China (from 1966 to 1976) for their economic and social program by Mao and his followers in the CPC. Avakian rescued the immortal contributions of Mao Tsetung from the claws of the new revisionist rulers of China and their international followers. He dug out from under the rubble Mao’s great ruptures from Stalin and **even went beyond Mao in summing up the experience of socialism in the USSR, what Mao and Maoists had not been able to sum up due to their time and subjective limitations.** Without the theoretical and practical endeavors of Bob Avakian and the RCPUSA, the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement could not have been formed. It is this kind of background which enabled this great theoretician to identify the dangerous situation that the international communist movement is facing and required him to search for the fundamental causes for this situation and to deal with them.

In the midst of this situation, one can hear the cry of hundreds of millions of human beings who repeatedly rise up under the assaults of the capitalist monster. And in the absence of genuine communist parties and leaders (not those who decorate their mixed bag of nationalism and bourgeois democracy with communist icing), these masses get influenced by Islamist and other reactionary forces and their energy and sacrifices are wasted or even worse, in the end reinforcing their chains of enslavement. Under such conditions, instead of advising a leader like Bob Avakian to “slow down” we should tell him: faster, better and more! And we must help him do so.

But *Shola*, on the contrary, says: why hasn’t Bob Avakian walked through the passage of “theory to practice and practice to theory”, and: he has adopted “... the method of Mullah Sadra who spent years thinking in a cave”, and: he has reached “... once and for all the latest desired theoretical conclusion”!

Does *Shola* mean that the passage from practice to theory ought to be made by the practitioners themselves? Was it wrong for Marx and Engels to sum up the Paris Commune? If the lessons of the Commune were summed up by the Communards themselves and by the anarchists who were in leadership of the Commune, would that summation have been more correct and valid? Definitely not!

It is clear that Marx could not be part of all the world-historic class struggles. But he did sum up this history and presented it in a historical materialist way. And surprisingly, he did this through “years of thinking” but not à la “Mullah Sadra’s” method but through the scientific method of working with ideas. And fortunately his “Cave” was the library of the British Museum, which was a big reservoir of works and research. To do this work, Marx not only reached out to history books but also studied and learned from the summation of bourgeois scientists. An empiricist outlook undoubtedly disapproves of such a method. Lenin, who was only one year old at the time of the Paris Commune, had to sum that up further to be able to come up with *State and Revolution*. From an empiricist viewpoint, it was not permissible for Mao to sum up the Soviet socialist economy under Stalin, because he only had his hand “on the fire from afar”. According to this perspective, after the “capitalist

readers” coup in China and the restoration of capitalism there, Bob Avakian had no right to identify the true nature of the new rulers in China and sum up the experience of socialism and its overthrow there.

Under the crisis-ridden conditions of the internationalist communist movement, which began with the restoration of capitalism in China, many communist organizations and parties took refuge in the “caves” of nationalism and bourgeoisie democracy and wasted the forces of the communist movement in the fields of other class forces. But Bob Avakian and the party he led threw themselves into work in the international field in order to prevent this retrogressive trend to the extent that they had the knowledge and ability to do so. The new synthesis, in addition to being based on summation of the experience of socialism in the twentieth century, is also closely linked with the victories and setbacks of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement and the Maoist movement in general.

With regard to RIM, *Shola* writes: “Before anything else there is a need to sum up our Movement, and if the Movement does not reach such a summation it cannot reach any other correct summation either. Such a summation is the key theoretical link in rebuilding and developing the whole Revolutionary Internationalist Movement. It is based on this summation that we can – and must – revisit the revolution in China, the Communist Party of China and Mao Tsetung and to do this in the next round not from the point of view of consolidating Maoism internationally and their main positive aspect which we have done that already in the last period, but this time around look at them with a critical eye and pay attention to the shortcomings, errors and possibly deviations in the Chinese revolution, in the Communist Party of China and Mao Tsetung himself, a work that up to now has not taken the form of an international movement.”

This judgment by *Shola* that, “if the movement does not reach such a summation it cannot reach any other correct summation either”, is another strange one. It is not clear at all whether *Shola* considers the content of the “new synthesis” incorrect or thinks that Bob Avakian doesn’t have the credentials needed to carry out this task or is critical of the prioritization in terms of dealing with the problems at hand? What does *Shola* mean by saying that these summations have not taken the form of an “international movement”? If by this the C(M)PA comrades mean that RIM should have had a unified and common summation, they should be reminded that RIM participants were divided over these same summations, and as a result two lines, Marxism and revisionism, have emerged. In order to re-forge international unity it is necessary to establish the correct line through the storm of two-line struggle. Any participant in RIM must acknowledge this reality and determine its approach towards the important two-line struggle that has been engaged. If *Shola*’s view is that the Movement should have issued a permit for Bob Avakian to do theoretical work – for example, through resolutions and approvals – we should say that at a time of breaking with revisionism, one should not wait for resolutions and permissions, as in breaking with Marxism revisionism too will not be hindered by any resolution.

Shola’s resorting to these arguments will damage both the ICM as well as their own Party. We would like to suggest that the C(M)PA comrades pay attention to the new synthesis critique of empiricist and pragmatic methodologies, which have had such deep roots in the history of the ICM.

The empiricism of *Shola* is so thick that it tends to limit the link between practice-theory-practice to the experiences of individual parties and even of individuals. For example, in an astounding and weird way *Shola*, assuming that our Party has only “a hand on the fire from afar”, labels as “inflated and vaunting” our summations and theorizing of our Party’s theory and practice from before the 1979 revolution, then in the tumultuous period of class struggle right after that, the Sarbedaran Uprising, the period of suffering security blows from the Islamic Republic, the struggles in Kurdistan, and so on.

If our Party had been completely vanquished, and the C(M)PA had summed up the line and practice of our Party, and based on that had shown the road forward to the remaining communists in Iran, that would have been neither “vaunting” nor “having hands on the fire from afar”. Rather, it would have been exactly what internationalism is supposed to be. And in that case your Party being “Afghanistani” would not be a factor in determining the correctness or incorrectness of those summations. Here it is worthwhile remembering another example of the internationalist character of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA. When the Union of Iran Communists [the precursor to the CPI(MLM)] was dealt a mortal blow, the RCP took it upon itself as a task to analyze the defeat of the revolution in Iran and to critically examine the line and practice of the UCI. When there were few remaining UCI members able to rebuild the organization, this critical study played a decisive role in its solidity. This critical examination was reflected in a UIC document entitled “With the Weapon of Criticism”.

We would like to go further in criticizing the empiricism and dogmatism of *Shola* and ask: whose theories are more correct, the theories of the SAMA practitioners who were fighting in the fields of the “anti-Russian

resistance war” under an Islamic flag and supposedly in the service of the liberation of the peoples of Afghanistan, or the theories of your Party today? [We know that the leaders of SAMA considered themselves to be “communists” but hid this fact behind “democratic appearances” as they themselves put it]. If we are to consider valid only those summations of SAMA’s line which directly poured out of the mouth of those who practiced that line, then we know what they have said. And if today you make a summation of that catastrophic experience, should we call that “inflating and vaunting” or a path-breaking inspiration for the oppressed and exploited masses of Afghanistan as well as the world over?

Nationalism and Internationalism

Another issue that has irritated *Shola* is that our “Crossroads” article is written as a call to the “Communists in Iran”, even though it is about the international communist movement and the threats it is facing. According to *Shola* this document should have been written and addressed to RIM as an internal document, and since this was not the case it is “Iranian-ism”, nationalism and a step in the direction of dissolving RIM.

Shola writes: “Basically this is an international subject and discussion and it has to be presented as an international discussion and arguing with the international communist movement and not merely addressed to ‘all Communists in Iran’. It was necessary to present its arguments first internally to the participants of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, including C(M)PA, and not to all communists in Iran in a sudden and open manner.”

The criticism that the “Crossroads” statement should not have limited its focus to the “communists in Iran” is reasonable and even acceptable. But in no way was it “Iranian-ism” and nationalism. Rather it was exactly internationalism. Because communist parties in every country should see the revolution in that country as part of the world revolution and carry out their tasks based on that and build the communist movement in their respective countries as a detachment of the international communist movement. *Shola*’s accusations force us to say that if we had more of this kind of “nationalism” the international communist movement would not be in the sorry state that it is in now. It is amazing that our striving to implement an internationalist line and taking “this line” to the movement of “our” country is considered nationalism. *Shola* may challenge the content of our document but may not treat as “nationalism” our efforts to popularize and apply that content in the country in which making revolution is – as Lenin put it – our “share” of carrying forward the world revolution.

Regarding the point about issuing a document like “Crossroads” openly, we say that this was not wrong. Rather, it was very proper and even late. We must also mention that it was not a sudden approach at all. At least since 2008, we have been discussing the new synthesis in our Party and more broadly with the parties and organizations inside and even outside RIM. We have even taken part in conferences organized for discussing the new synthesis and have expressed our views.

Even before issuing “Crossroads” our Party’s position was very clear on the retreat of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the reasons and basis for this backward retreat, as was our position on the situation in the communist movement, on RIM and on the views of Bob Avakian and their development into a new synthesis. “Crossroads” was not the first time that we declared our orientation but was rather a continuation of that and an application of the line that we defend. And it does not mean an end to our struggle and discussion with other parties inside RIM or those outside it. We also do not separate the process of carrying out a revolutionary line inside or outside the country, and we also believe that these life-and-death issues of line could not be resolved through organizational arguments (or excuses).

It seems that this accusation by *Shola* against our Party is not just a reaction to our position on the new synthesis but is a conscious and planned action with the purpose on the one hand of hiding its own nationalist orientations and on the other of arousing certain nationalist sentiments – both of which accord with *Shola*’s overall line.

Look at these lines by *Shola*: “First of all ... the fact that this document only addresses ‘all the communists in Iran’ before anything else means that it considers that the task of approaching all other communists of the world has been accomplished by the publication of the *Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*. This is nothing but an expression of total tailing and accepting the *Manifesto from the RCPUSA* without any observations or amendments.”

Shola’s borrowing and even copying some of the most familiar lingo and slanders of the nationalists and their repetition of these in this article is really unfortunate and regretful. This is another warning sign of a

retrogressive trend in the world outlook among communists that we are witnessing. Our party is a defender of the new synthesis of Bob Avakian and will do whatever it can to promote and popularize it, and will not be intimidated by the poisonous atmosphere being generated. And for the comrades of the C(M)PA, it is better to engage these theories and not worry about our “tailing”. Utilizing nationalist discourse and methods to attack the new synthesis will not help the struggle. It would be helpful if the comrades of the C(M)PA remembered the polemic a while back that was waged against their Party. In that polemic, opponents of the C(M)PA slandered them and said that the relationship amongst RIM parties was one of “religious mentoring” and that the C(M)PA was tailing “foreign line setters”. Instead of grasping the class and ideological nature of these kinds of slanders and rebuffing them, *Shola* astonishingly resorts to these same methods and uses them in political struggle with us! What can we say to this except that this shows that *Shola* shares the same outlook and goes along with and is in hasty retreat in the face of all this?

Adopting this kind of approach, *Shola* wants to send a message to its opponents that the C(M)PA is obeying no “mentor” or “foreign line setters”, and to prove this it is willing to use the same kind of literature and method as theirs against the communists. This is an undeniable retreat in the face of nationalism, and not only does it not lay the ground for unity with the communists, but on the contrary it prepares the ground for arriving at unity with nationalists.

Shola puts forward a certain system of thinking. Pragmatic and empiricist tendencies and an ideologically nationalist orientation govern this article, which has turned Marxism into a dogma and venomously attacks any line that would adopt a scientific approach towards Marxism and its development. The specific conditions and situation in Afghanistan – i.e. the imperialist invasion and occupation along with the influences of the Islamic reactionaries – have created a favorable atmosphere for the growth of nationalist solutions and alliances. Undoubtedly, it is not easy to resist these pressures and to persevere in presenting the masses with a revolutionary communist alternative. And there is no doubt that the defeat and retreat in Nepal has had its negative impact on the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement and its participating parties and organizations. But these same very tough and complicated conditions more than ever make it necessary to urgently develop revolutionary communist theory and make this weapon sharper than ever.

In the history of Marxism, especially at sensitive periods in the internationalist communist movement, there have been many struggles between those who fought for a correct understanding of Marxism and to develop it on the one hand and on the other hand those who treated Marxism as a useful tool to be bent and shaped at will and have dragged it down to the level of pragmatism and nationalism.

Our hope is that the Communist (Maoist) Party of Afghanistan will pay attention to the dire situation of the international communist movement and will join the discussion and struggle over the correctness or incorrectness of the theories of the new synthesis and will revise harmful methods that are not beneficial for launching rich and inspiring theoretical wrangling, because we have no other choice than to scientifically take the communist theories to a higher level of clarity and correctness, forcefully popularizing them, helping the renewal of existing communist parties, while helping give birth to new revolutionary communist parties all over the Middle East and the world. Carrying out this task is impossible without the theories of the new synthesis. ■

– **Central Committee of the Communist Party of Iran (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist)**

June 2011, reviewed 8 March 2013

Footnotes

1 *Shola*'s paper is available at: http://www.Sholajawid.org/farsi/tazaha/HKI_hamBa_beraha_raft.html.

2 “What Is Bob Avakian’s New Synthesis?” By Lenny Wolfe. http://revcom.us/a/129/New_Synthesis_Speech-en.html.

3 For an in-depth discussion of how the new synthesis builds on the principally correct foundations of Marxist philosophy while criticizing its secondary weaknesses, see the articles in *Haghighat* on “Digging into the new synthesis”, especially part 1, “Is Marxism determinist or teleological? Questions and answers with Comrade M. Parto”, *Haghighat* no. 51. This is a series of articles that deal with different aspects of the new synthesis and important theoretical issues in Marxism. This and all future article references to *Haghighat* are in Farsi only.

4 For more on this subject, see the article in *Haghighat* no. 6, 3rd series, “Comotions around a death ... History of a Commotion”.

5 Bob Avakian, “Birds Cannot Give Birth to Crocodiles, but Humanity Can Soar beyond the Horizon, part 2, Building a movement for revolution,” in *Revolution*, 8 March 2011, www.revcom.us.

6 In this work, Bob Avakian, while defending the theoretical framework of Marx, Lenin and Mao, also criticizes the secondary weaknesses and mistakes in some of their works. These mistakes have become a reference point for revisionists

and left nationalists and pragmatists.” For example, Marx’s view on the national question and national defense is reflected in his summations of the Paris Commune (*The Civil War in France*). The national question and the relation of the struggle in one country to the struggle on a global scale was not established correctly either by the leaders of the Paris Commune (in the outlook and policies of the Commune leaders, who sought to appeal to the soldiers of the reactionary army on the basis of patriotism) or by Marx and Engels in their writings on the Paris Commune. As for the First World War, the majority of the Second International, led by Kautsky, joined the ranks of the “defenders of the fatherland” and betrayed the proletariat. In their effort to justify the line of “defense of the fatherland”, they used many quotes from Marx and Engels. Avakian summed up that Lenin, in refuting this line, correctly pointed out that these quotes from Marx and Engels were taken out of context and belonged to the period when capitalism was still free-market capitalism and had not yet developed into capitalist-imperialism. Lenin asked pointedly: the victory of which bourgeoisie is in the interests of the international proletariat?! But as Avakian observed, this was not the only issue: the outlook of Marx and Engels on the national question and the relation of the revolution in one country to the world revolution had limitations, and socialists who had betrayed the proletarian revolution were able to use some quotes from them to justify their positions. For example, writing on the Paris Commune, Marx and Engels said the proletariat is the best savior of the nation and a force to regenerate the nation. And in 1891 Engels talks about defending the fatherland during a war between Germany and Tsarist Russia. Bob Avakian says, “. . . as should be clear by now, we have to emphasize again that with all the points that are being focused on, of how there was primitiveness in Marx’s observations, there was also a great deal of historical sweep and farsightedness. But in an overall sense, and viewing it in that way dialectically, it is a verification and an example of the Marxist theory of knowledge and the relationship between practice and theory and the ultimate dependency of theory on practice, that practice is the ultimate source and point of determination of theory and of truth.” (*Conquer the World: The International Proletariat Must and Will*).

On summing up other problems in the history of the international communist movement, Bob Avakian refers to Lenin’s article “Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder” (vol. 31, *Collected Works*, English p. 77, Progress Publishers) and to an article that Lenin wrote in the last years of his life, “Better Fewer, but Better” (*Collected Works*, vol. 33, English pp. 487-502).

Avakian emphasizes that these works are very important and that we can learn from them, but that we also have to look at why various types of revisionists have been able to use them to justify their conciliation and capitulation. Avakian says that it is true that the revisionists, by taking some of these quotes out of their historical context, distort Lenin and use this for their conciliatory and capitulationist policies, but the reality is that this is not just a matter of “distortion”. In both these articles, Lenin slips into bourgeois logic, and it’s time to sum this up.

For example, in “Left-Wing Communism”, in the section on England, Lenin advises the communists in England to use parliamentary forms for their struggle and calls for the workers to support the Labour Party candidates (the “Left” faction of the bourgeoisie in Britain) against the right-wing candidates. With bourgeois logic, Lenin says, “If I come out as a communist and call upon the workers to vote for Henderson against Lloyd George they [the workers – BA] will certainly give me a hearing.”

This work of Lenin has been propagated and practiced by different types of revisionists and by the leaders of the communist movement in different periods as a work of “brilliant strategy and tactics”. This was part of the process of burying Lenin’s *What Is to Be Done?*

This problem is repeated in “Better Fewer, but Better”. For example, the revisionists in China have used this article extensively to justify their “three worlds” theory (for example, see *Peking Review* no. 45, 1977). In this article, Lenin divides up the imperialist states on the basis of the shares they won in the world war. Avakian continues his summation and extensively criticizes the policies of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union under Stalin during the Comintern (Communist International) period as marked by: “. . . bourgeois democracy, economism, national chauvinism, national defencism in imperialist countries, etc. These erroneous lines were continued and deepened and carried to a much more profound level during World War 2. . . . To put it in a nutshell, World War 2, on the part of the Soviet Union, was fought on a patriotic – that is bourgeois-democratic basis. . . . on the basis of Russian patriotism, overwhelmingly. And internationalism was flushed down the drain on a pragmatic and nationalist basis in order to defend the nation and beat back the attacks on it at all costs.” (*Conquer the World?*)

When Avakian gets to Mao Tsetung, he criticizes a subject that is very familiar to revisionists and pragmatists . . . making use of contradictions among the enemies! And, defeating our enemies one by one!

Bob Avakian refers to Mao’s article entitled “On Policy” (vol. 2, Mao’s Selected Works). This article was written in the period of Japan’s invasion of China (at a time when large parts of the country had been liberated by the Red Army under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party). At a time when the CCP had its own army, base areas, and a revolutionary state, the policy of “defeating our enemies one by one” was correct. But in this article Mao tends to generalize that experience and turn it into a principle. This tendency was turned into a line by various kinds of revisionists, left nationalists and pragmatists, who pass off their conciliation and capitulation as being “Maoist”. One of the reasons for the anger of the so-called “Maoists” at Avakian (“Maoists” both in the Third World countries and “Maoists” in Europe, where they conceive that Europe’s problem is the “North American superpower”) is because of his summation of this erroneous element in Mao.

7 For example, one of the strong tendencies within some of the parties and organizations of RIM was to see the 1949 Chinese revolution as a “bourgeois-democratic” revolution while Mao himself had called the new state in China which was established in 1949 a form of proletarian dictatorship. Another tendency was to reduce Mao’s contributions to the

development of the theories of the communist revolution to his military theories and to “strategy of people’s war”. There was a strong tendency among RIM parties to bury Mao’s ruptures from the theory and practice of Stalin on the nature of socialist society, the character of socialist planned economy, the difference between the critics of socialism and the enemies of socialism, and the clarification of the relationship of Marxism to other sciences and Mao’s formulation that Marxism “embraces but does not replace”, as well as his ruptures with mechanical materialism in philosophy and Stalin’s metaphysics, etc., etc. Without these ruptures, Mao Tsetung would not have been able to develop a more advanced and more scientific understanding of the nature of socialist society and its dynamics and limitations and lead the construction of a socialist society which was qualitatively more advanced than the first socialist society (the Soviet Union). The understanding of RIM parties of the theoretical and practical contributions of Mao Tsetung, which had brought about a rupture and leap in communist theories and advanced our understanding of the nature of the communist revolution, was uneven. For example, most of the parties in the international communist movement viewed the Cultural Revolution in China as the implementation of the “mass line” or “democracy” (for example, the parties and organizations from Nepal and India who were in RIM). In fact, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was a revolution to prevent the restoration of capitalism in China and to guarantee that the society stayed on the path towards communism. Mao Tsetung emphasized that the fundamental goal of the Cultural Revolution was to revolutionize the thinking of the masses of people on a broad scale so that they would be able to distinguish Marxism from revisionism and understand why the danger of capitalist restoration still exists under socialism. In the RIM, summation of the experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union and China went on at an elementary level, but even on that level there was strong resistance. For example, the section in the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* that criticized Mao for not taking initiative to form a communist international was strongly challenged. Right from the beginning there was very intense struggle over summation of the Comintern, the 7th Congress of the Comintern, which during the period leading to World War Two divided the imperialists into “democrats” and “fascists” and assigned the world’s communists the task of uniting with the “democratic imperialists” and their lackeys (for example, for the communists in India to unite with British colonialism and Indian feudals). Important theoretical differences also existed on the issue of what was imperialism, which led to diverging political conclusions on the nature of the reactionary classes and different strata of the bourgeoisie in the countries dominated by imperialism. There were tendencies among RIM parties to reduce the concept of “imperialism” to simply being a “foreign enemy”, without grasping imperialism’s organic relationship with the class system formed in the countries dominated by imperialism and the ruling classes in these countries. As a result, countries under the domination of imperialism were viewed as a homogeneous bloc vis a vis the imperialist countries. Differences arose not merely over theoretical formulations but also over how communists view the experiences of the socialist revolutions of the 20th century, so as to make the past serve the future.

8 For example, we can refer to efforts by the anthropologist and paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould who tried to develop a new synthesis of Darwin’s conceptualization of evolution. Many orthodox Darwinists (such as Richard Dawkins, the author of a good book called *The God Delusion*) did not accept Gould’s criticism of the shortcomings of Darwin’s theoretical conceptualization of evolution. But their approach was not, Gould has thrown out Darwin! – because they have a good understanding of Darwin’s theory and all the debates and issues surrounding it. Some other scientists who were incapable of opposing Gould’s scientific criticism attacked him ideologically, saying that Gould was trying to impose Marx’s methodology onto the theory of evolution. But the reality is that without developing a more scientific understanding of evolution this theory would be vulnerable to attacks by its opponents. More importantly, this would have a negative influence on a scientific epistemology and methodology, on world outlook, and it would definitely influence the medical sciences as well.

9 See the book or the movie *Ten Days that Shook the World* and how the representatives of the Comintern analyzed the Islamic currents in the Central Asian Republics of the USSR.

10 For example, see the debate between Sami Ramadani and Simon Assaf from the Socialist Workers Party in Britain: <http://socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=27876>.

11 The “Gang of Four” is the term the revisionists in China use to refer to four Maoist leaders in the Communist Party of China (Chiang Ching, Chang Chun-chao, Yao Wen-yuan and Wang Hung-wen) who were Mao’s comrades in leading the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the years 1966-1976. They were arrested in a military coup shortly after the death of Mao in 1976 and put on trial. The international media reported this trial as an important international event. The sessions of the trial coincided with a trip by Deng Xiao-ping (the revisionist leader who took power in China) to Washington D.C. and the announcement of “economic reform programs”. Chiang Ching (Mao’s wife) and Chang Chun-chao (a leading theoretician of the CCP whose works contributed greatly to the development of Maoism) stood firm on their positions and lost their lives in prison. The other two apologized and after a period of time were released.

12 Bob Avakian analyses: “What we see in contention here with Jihad on the one hand and McWorld/McCrusade on the other hand, are historically outmoded strata among colonized and oppressed humanity up against historically outmoded ruling strata of the imperialist system. These two reactionary poles *reinforce* each other, even while opposing each other. If you side with either of these ‘outmodeds,’ you end up strengthening both. While this is a very important formulation and is crucial to understanding much of the dynamics driving things in the world in this period, at the same time we do have to be clear about which of these ‘historically outmodeds’ has done the greater damage and poses the greater threat to humanity: It is the ‘historically outmoded ruling strata of the imperialist system’, and in particular the US imperialists.” (*Bringing Forward Another Way*).

13 Bob Avakian “Birds Cannot Give Birth to Crocodiles But Humanity Can Soar Beyond the Horizon, Part 2: Building a

Movement for Revolution,” *Revolution*, 8 March 2011.

14 “Overcome Empiricism”, *Peking Review* 27 October 1972.

15 Baburam Bhattarai, “New State” in *The Worker*, organ of the CPN(M), February, 2004. Bhattarai along with Prachanda were members of the Standing Committee of the CPN(M). In this article he evaluates the experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the socialist countries of the USSR and China as negative and declares that the future socialist state must institutionalize electoral competition among different parties. This article puts an extended democracy (including electoral competition) at the center of the socialist transition period and says that this extended democracy would be a “guarantee” for preventing capitalist restoration. He goes on to say that after socialism is established, the standing army should be dissolved and a militia will replace it. He considers the Paris Commune with direct election and recall of officials as a more positive example than the experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR and China. These views have been analyzed and criticized by the RCPUSA in *Revolution* no. 160 (29 March 2009). It should be mentioned that in 2009 the CPN(M) changed their name to the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).

16 Mao Tsetung, Volume 3, “On Rectifying the Party’s Style of Work”, February 1942.

17 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., PLPH, Moscow, 1951, Vol. II, p. 15.

18 V. I. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*, Foreign Language Press, Peking, 1973, p. 29.

19 *Ibid.* p. 29.

20 *Ibid.*

21 The imperialists invited Prachanda and Bhattarai to Europe and organized “democracy” classes for them as they had done with the leaders of the FMLN in El Salvador. What is Prachanda’s vision for Nepal? He himself said he wants to turn Nepal into the Switzerland of Asia! Almost everybody knows that Switzerland did not become such because of its dairy and mountains. Switzerland is one of the most important banking and money investment centers of the world capitalist system. This pitiful day-dreaming is merely a reflection of a mental state of a degenerated bourgeoisie of the countries dominated by imperialism. He once was a communist with inspiring internationalist ideals. The Nepal revolution had aroused and organized hundreds of thousands of women and men, of workers, peasants, and intellectuals who were ready to fight with their lives on their fingertips for overthrowing the oppressive and exploitative system of capitalism. And it had given hope to and inspired millions of others within Nepal itself and in India and all over that region and the world. This revolution was aborted in the middle of the road by the revisionist line of its leadership. When the leadership of this party started to retrogress, the biggest support for revolution in Nepal and the only internationalist path and way was to fight against the line of this leadership. The only way to preserve RIM as a political and organizational center of the ICM was to unite around fighting against this revisionist line in an all-around way. Among the parties and organizations of RIM, our party and the RCP took up this task, and most of the others, instead of accompanying us, took the path of the middle of the road. This was a sign of the sorry state of the ICM.

22 In a document entitled “4 Philosophical Talks” (1987) which studies the philosophical roots of the right opportunist deviations of the Union of Iran Communists in the period between late 1980-1981, we said: “Even when carrying out a national liberation struggle, the communists are the representatives of the future communist society. Today they are representatives and vanguards of the international proletariat in each country. Here we can clearly see the attraction and pull of respecting what exists and only maneuvering within that framework. . . . In every oppressed country it is very easy for the communists to become like the revolutionary democrats. Not because they don’t think about communism or think that proletarian internationalism is bad. The point is that their political work among the masses is presented in terms of political power, new democratic revolution, national independence from imperialism, etc., and often the goal of all these things is forgotten . . .”

23 Bob Avakian, “Birds Cannot Give Birth to Crocodiles But Humanity Can Soar Beyond the Horizon, Part 1: Revolution and the State”, *Revolution* no. 218, 28 November 2010.

24 RCP Letters to CPN(M): <http://www.revcom.us/a/160/Letters.pdf> – *Revolution* 160, 29 March 2009.

25 The first part of the document “Downward spirals of the revolution in Nepal”, Sarbedaran archives. http://www.sarbedaran.org/archives/etelaiye/rcp2nep2009f_p1.htm

26 RCP Letters to CPN(M): <http://www.revcom.us/a/160/Letters.pdf> – *Revolution* 160, 29 March 2009.

27 *Ibid.*

28 See RCP Letters to CPN(M) and the Letter of the CPI(MLM) to the CPN(M), Nov 2006. http://www.cpimlm.com/showfile.php?cId=&tb=hagh3_s&Id=369&pgn=1. See also: “Revolution in Nepal, great victory or a big danger”, *Haghighat* no. 40.

29 This polemic was written in June 2011. Today there is a group calling for the “reorganization of RIM”, consisting of the C(M)PA, CPIML (Naxalbari), Maoist Party of Italy, and others. They oppose the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and support the new party in Nepal, which aims to reorganize the CPN(M) and is led by some of the former UCPNM leaders who have broken with the Prachanda/Bhattari party. The leaders of this new party believe that the main reason for the setback of the revolution in Nepal was “betrayal of Prachanda” and not the political and ideological line that they had developed and adopted together. The line of the leaders of the new party is so eclectic that it is not able to draw a clear line of demarcation with their revisionist and counter-revolutionary leaders. For more information see a report published in *Revolution* paper on the founding congress of this new party: <http://www.revcom.us/a/296/critical-crossroads-in-nepal-en.html>

30 A famous comment in a 1883 letter by Marx written to Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue and reported by Engels.

On the “Driving Force of Anarchy” and the Dynamics of Change

A Sharp Debate and Urgent Polemic: The Struggle for a Radically Different World and the Struggle for a Scientific Approach to Reality

by Raymond Lotta

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The world is a horror. More precisely, the world created and reinforced by *capitalism-imperialism* is one of unjust wars and brutal occupations, of life-crushing poverty and savage inequality, of the pervasive subordination and degradation of women. This is a world—and here it is proper to speak of the planet—on which accelerating environmental crisis is not only part of the warp and woof of everyday life, but threatening the very ecological balances and life-support systems of Earth. The suffering of world humanity and the perilous state of the planet are, at their core, the outcome of the workings of the fundamental contradiction of our epoch: between highly socialized, interconnected, and globalized forces of production, on the one hand; and relations of private ownership and control over these forces of production, on the other. But locked within this contradiction is the potential for humanity to move beyond scarcity, beyond exploitation, and beyond social division—the potential to organize society on a whole different foundation that will enable human beings to truly flourish.

Which is to say, the world as it is... is not the way it must and can only be.

What is the problem before humanity; what must be changed in order to solve this problem; and how can that change come about? Communism is the science that enables humanity to understand the world, in order to change it—to understand the world ever more deeply, in order to transform it ever more profoundly in the direction of a world community of humanity. As with all sciences, communism proceeds from the world as *it actually is*, from the *necessity* (the structures and dynamics) that actually confronts humanity. Within reality lies the real basis to overcome exploitation and oppression, and to bring a radically different world into being through revolution.

And this brings me to the focus of this polemic.

In the international communist movement, there is sharp debate about the nature and process of working out of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism: between socialized production and private appropriation. The debate pivots on the forms of motion—and what is, overall, the principal form of motion—of this fundamental contradiction.

This debate involves crucial questions of political economy. But it also, and centrally, turns on issues of method and approach. Are we going to scientifically confront, analyze, and on that basis transform the world that actually exists, in its changing-ness and complexity? Or are we going to use Marxist terminology as an essentially pragmatic tool to locate sources of change and seek guarantees that history will “work out” for us, that the masses will prevail, by constructing a metaphysical framework of politics and philosophy?

What kind of international communist movement will there be: one rooted in science and proceeding from the world as it is, or one that proceeds from “narratives” that force-fit reality into a reassuring belief system?

The defeat of the Chinese revolution in 1976 marked the end of the first stage of communist revolution. This first stage saw the creation of the world’s first socialist state in the Soviet Union (1917-56) and a further leap and advance with the establishment of revolutionary state power in China and the carrying forward of that revolution (1949-76). In the wake of the counterrevolution in China, Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (RCP), began a process of sifting through and scientifically studying the incredibly inspiring accomplishments of that first stage of communist revolution, as well as its shortcomings and real errors, some very serious. Upholding the basic principles of communism and advancing the science in qualitative, new ways, Avakian has forged a new synthesis of communism out of a scientific summation of the revolutionary experience of the communist movement and by learning and drawing from broader streams of scientific, intellectual, and artistic thought and endeavor. Avakian has radically reenvisioned the socialist

transition to communism and, at the same time, put communism on an even more scientific foundation. This new synthesis provides the framework to go further and do better in a new stage of communist revolution in the contemporary world.

The new synthesis of communism has developed in opposition to, and has been opposed by, two other responses to the defeat of socialism in revolutionary China: the one, a rejection of communism's basic principles and an embrace of bourgeois democracy; the other, a rigid and quasi-religious clinging to previous socialist experience and communist theory that rejects a thoroughly scientific approach to summing up the past and further developing communist theory.¹

That is the backdrop of this debate. But the issues of political economy and methodology being joined in this polemic are not esoteric ones limited, or only of relevance and interest, to the international communist movement.

This debate encompasses issues of concern, theorization, and contention in broader progressive political and intellectual-academic circles, issues of profound import and moment. Is capitalism actually a system—with systemic drives and with systemic outcomes, that is, with its own laws of motion? How do we understand the scope for conscious human initiative, given capitalism's structural dynamics? What is a scientific approach to understanding and changing society? And what indeed constitutes human emancipation in this epoch?

A passage from *Birds Cannot Give Birth to Crocodiles, but Humanity Can Soar Beyond the Horizon* by Bob Avakian concentrates a critical point of departure:

[T]his is how things actually are in regard to the present circumstances of human society and the possibilities for how society can proceed and be organized: It is a matter of either bringing about a radical alternative to the presently dominant capitalist-imperialist system—an alternative which is viable, and sustainable, because it proceeds on the basis of the productive forces at hand and further unfetters them, through the transformation of the social relations, and most fundamentally the production relations and, in dialectical relation with that, the transformation of the superstructure of politics and ideology—creating, through this transformation, and fundamentally the transformation of the underlying material conditions, a radically new economic system, as the foundation of a radically new society as a whole; either that, or, what will in fact assert itself as the only real alternative in today's world—being drawn, or forced, into a society proceeding on the terms, and locked within the confines, of commodity production and exchange, and more specifically the production relations and accumulation process and dynamics of capitalism....²

I. A Crucial Breakthrough: the “Driving Force of Anarchy” as the Decisive Dynamic of Capitalism

A. Background

In the early 1980s, the RCP initiated important theoretical work and research into the political economy of capitalism and how the contradictions of the world asserted themselves and interacted. The question was being posed about the dynamics of capitalism and how this sets the “stage” on which the revolutionary struggle takes place, both in relation to the concrete world situation at the time and in relation to the larger question of the historical transition from the bourgeois epoch to the epoch of world communism.

Central to this theoretical work was an insight brought forward by Bob Avakian. He had identified the “driving force of anarchy” as the principal form of motion of fundamental contradiction of capitalism, setting the overall terms for the class struggle.

The delineation of the “driving force of anarchy” as the principal dynamic of capitalism set off no small amount of upset and outrage from various quarters of the international communist movement (here I am referring to the Maoist forces and formations of the period, not to the revisionist communist parties associated with the then-social-imperialist Soviet Union, which had long given up on revolution).

It was argued by some in the Maoist movement at the time that this understanding effectively liquidates the role of the masses and of class struggle in history. Others held that since the exploitation of wage-labor, of the proletariat, is the source of surplus value (profit), and since maximization of profit is the *raison d'être* of the bourgeoisie—then it follows, logically and historically, that the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, rooted in the production of surplus value, is necessarily the principal dynamic of capitalist development.

The argument was also made that it is a core principle of Marxism that the masses make history, and that oppression gives rise to resistance that can be transformed into revolution—and so the class struggle and its revolutionary potential must be the principal form of motion.

It is objectively true that the masses make history. But it is also true that objective conditions actually set the overall framework for the class struggle, and that the *masses cannot make* history in their highest interests and humanity cannot get to communism without leadership, concentrated in the vanguard party, that bases itself on the most advanced scientific understanding of how the world is and how it can be transformed in the interests of emancipating world humanity.

This debate has surfaced anew, though now in the context of ideological struggle over whether the new synthesis of communism brought forward by Bob Avakian is the framework for a new stage of communism. At stake is the actual *need* and *basis* for all-the-way communist revolution in today's world, in order to truly emancipate humanity and safeguard the planet... and the need for an unsparingly scientific approach if that revolution is to be made and carried forward.

B. Digging into the Political Economy

The basic change wrought by bourgeois society is *the socialization of production*. Individual, limited means of production are transformed into social means of production, workable only by collectivities of laborers. Production itself is changed from a series of individual operations into a series of social acts, and the products from individual products into social products.

These products were now in fact the product of a single class, the proletariat.³

The proletariat, the class that is at the base of collective, socialized labor, carries out production in factories, sweatshops, mines, industrialized farms, and other industrial-agricultural-transport-storage-distribution complexes. It works in common networks and webs of production on the vast, socialized, and increasingly globalized means of production that capitalism has brought forth. It utilizes the social knowledge developed and transmitted by previous generations.

But this socialized production is owned, controlled, and deployed by a relatively tiny capitalist class. The proletariat and this form of socialized production are in fundamental contradiction with capitalism's private appropriation of socially produced wealth—in the form of private capital.

In *Anti-Duhring*, Frederick Engels shows that the contradiction between socialized production and capitalistic appropriation of the product of socialized labor manifests itself and moves in two forms of antagonism.⁴

One form of motion is the *antagonism of proletariat and bourgeoisie*. With the rise and development of capitalism, wage-labor had become the main basis of modern social production. These wage-laborers are separated from—they do not own or control—society's principal means of production. These means of production are concentrated in the hands of the capitalist class. Possessing only their labor power (their capacity to work), wage-laborers must, in order to survive, sell their labor power to capital. Labor power becomes a commodity under capitalism.

Employed by capital, these wage-laborers set in motion these socialized means of production. But the product of that social labor and the process of social labor are controlled by the capitalist class. Capital subordinates living labor to the creation of value, and aims to extract maximal surplus labor (surplus value)—the amount of labor above and beyond the labor time embodied in their wages (corresponding to what is required for the producers to live and maintain themselves and families, rearing new generations of wage-laborers).

The struggle between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, along with other struggles arising from various social contradictions conditioned by and incorporated into the development of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism on a global scale, exert a profound influence on economy, society, and the world.

Let's take a few examples of how the class contradiction and other social contradictions are part of the ongoing necessity faced by capital:

A major concern of ever-more mobile manufacturing capital is social stability. There are tremendous competitive pressures goading capital to move from Mexico, to China, to Vietnam, etc., in search of cheaper production costs. But cost is not the only calculation; decisions are also influenced by factors of "labor unrest" and organization. Or consider the neocolonial state shaped and propped up by U.S. imperialism through the post-World War 2 period: one of its important functions was and is to enforce conditions of social order

to facilitate deeper penetration by capital. There is the situation in Western Europe today, where the whole austerity offensive has been carried out with a calculus that includes anticipation of mass response. Going back to the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S., the hiring patterns of U.S. industry, the location of factories, and urban social policy were very much conditioned by the threat (and reality) of uprisings and rebellions by the oppressed Black masses. Again, the class contradiction and other social contradictions are part of the ongoing necessity faced by capital.

The antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is one form of motion of the fundamental contradiction.

The other form of motion of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism is the *antagonism between the organization of production at the level of the individual workshop, factory, enterprise, and unit of capital, and the anarchy of production in society overall.*

The individual capitalist strives to organize production efficiently in order to recoup investment costs and gain advantage and market share vis-à-vis other capitals. And to do so, the capitalist undertakes the scientific and “despotic” organization of production: input-output analysis, strict accounting, optimal scheduling, speed-up, stretching of work, and extreme surveillance and control of the worker. This takes place at all levels of private capital up through the contemporary transnational corporation (think Wal-Mart and the organization of its supply chains).

But as highly organized as production is at the enterprise level, there is, and can be, no systematic and rational planning at the societywide level. This has to be explained.

Under capitalism, the vast bulk of products that form the material basis of the social reproduction of society are produced as commodities. That is, they are produced for exchange (for profit). Buyers and sellers of these or those commodities—whether of means of production that are inputs into the production process or means of consumption—are taken as a given. But there are *no direct social links* between the agents of production; social production is not coordinated as a social whole.

Built into capitalist commodity production is a contradiction that has to be continually resolved. On the one hand, individual producers carry on their activity independently of one another: the many different labor processes that constitute the productive activity of society are *privately organized*. On the other hand, these individual producers are mutually dependent on one another—they are part of a larger social division of labor. How then does capitalist society’s economic activity get coordinated? How do the different pieces fit together?

The answer is that these privately organized labor processes are linked together and forged into a social division of labor through exchange. Exchange is the exchange of commodities, and commodities exchange in definite proportions: they are bought and sold at prices that reflect the labor time socially necessary to produce them. This is the law of value, and social labor time is the regulator of prices and profits.

The *quest for profit* dominates privately organized labor processes. Profit determines what gets produced—and how.

In response to the movement of prices and profit, capital moves into high-profit sectors, and out of low-profit sectors. If an investment does not yield a satisfactory profit, or if a particular commodity does not get sold at a price that can cover its production cost, then capital is forced to raise efficiency, or to shift into another line of production. The movements of prices and profits communicate the “information” on which production decisions are based. The market regulates in this way and also dictates reorganization... and so the auto industry closes inefficient plants, retools, cuts its labor force; companies get swallowed up and workers are forced to change jobs. Thus the social division of labor is forged and re-forged.

This is blind and anarchic regulation. It is hit-and-miss, too-much-and-too-little: a process of over-shooting and under-shooting of investment; of discovering, *after the fact*, what the market will clear or not clear, and whether the labor process under the command of this or that capitalist is actually needed or up to competitive standard. Marx says of the regulating role of the market based on the operation of the law value: “the total movement of this disorder is its order.”⁵ As Engels puts it in his exposition of the two forms of motion: “anarchy reigns in socialized production.”

Individual capitals produce and expand as though there were no limit (again, presupposing the necessary buyers and sellers). Why? Because, as Marx explains in *Capital*, “[T]he development of capitalist production makes it constantly necessary to keep increasing the amount of capital laid out in a given industrial undertaking....

Competition compels [the individual capitalist] to keep constantly extending his capital, in order to preserve itself...”⁶

The fundamental contradiction of capitalism between socialized production and private appropriation develops through these two forms of motion: the contradiction between bourgeoisie and proletariat, and the contradiction between organization in the unit of production-enterprise and anarchy in production in society overall. Each of these forms of motion has its own effects and each interpenetrates the other.

But in an ongoing way, as long as the capitalist mode of production is dominant on a world scale, it is the anarchy of capitalist production that brings about the fundamental changes in the material sphere that set the context for the class struggle. Movement compelled by anarchy, the anarchic relations among capitalist producers driven by competition, is the principal form of motion of the fundamental contradiction. This was an important breakthrough in understanding made by Bob Avakian:

It is the anarchy of capitalist production which is, in fact, the driving or motive force of this process, even though the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and proletariat is an integral part of the contradiction between socialized production and private appropriation. While the exploitation of labor-power is the form by and through which surplus value is created and appropriated, it is the *anarchic relations between capitalist producers, and not the mere existence of propertyless proletarians or the class contradiction as such*, that drives these producers to exploit the working class on an historically more intensive and extensive scale. This motive force of anarchy is an expression of the fact that the capitalist mode of production represents the full development of commodity production and the law of value. Were it not the case that these capitalist commodity producers are separated from each other and yet linked by the operation of the law of value they would not face the same compulsion to exploit the proletariat—the class contradiction between bourgeoisie and proletariat could be mitigated. It is the inner compulsion of capital to expand which accounts for the historically unprecedented dynamism of this mode of production, a process which continually transforms value relations and which leads to crisis.⁷

The understanding of the primacy of the “driving force of anarchy” was further theorized, applied, and extended in *America in Decline*, which carried forward and advanced Lenin’s systematization of the dynamics of imperialism and proletarian revolution.⁸

With the rise of imperialism, accumulation takes place in the context of the qualitatively greater unification and integration of the world capitalist market—**no longer principally a function of the circuits of trade and money but now of the internationalization of productive capital (the production of surplus value)**. And accumulation takes place in the context of the political-territorial division of the world among the great powers and the shifting relations of strength among these powers in the world economy and **global system of territorially-based nation-states**.

Accumulation in the imperialist era has particular features. It proceeds through highly mobile and flexible forms of *monopolized finance capital*; through the *division of the world into a handful of rich capitalist powers and the oppressed nations* in which the great majority of humanity lives; and through geo-economic and geo-political rivalry concentrated in the rivalry and struggle for global supremacy among imperial national states.

The antagonism between different national imperialist capitals, and the struggle over the division over the world, chiefly grows out of, extends, and is a qualitative development of the contradiction between organization at the enterprise level and the anarchy of social production. This antagonism led to two world wars in the 20th century. At the same time, the fundamental contradiction is also manifested in class terms. Among its key forms of expression are the contradiction between the proletariat and bourgeoisie in the imperialist countries, the contradiction between the oppressed nations and imperialism, and the contradiction between socialist countries and the imperialist camp (when socialist countries exist, which is not the case now).

One or another of these contradictions may become principal over a period of time, that is, one or another may influence the development of the others more than it in turn is influenced by them—and thus most determine how the fundamental contradiction develops at a given stage.

From the late 1950s until the early 1970s, for instance, the principal contradiction on a world scale was between imperialism and national liberation in the Third World. Revolutionary storms had swept through Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This contradiction was creating qualitative new necessity for the imperialist (and local) ruling classes and influencing the accumulation of capital on a world scale.

U.S. imperialism, in particular, was developing and applying, on a vast scale, doctrines of counterinsurgency. The Vietnamese liberation struggle was inflicting major setbacks on the battlefield; the war absorbed a huge fraction of the U.S. ground forces and spurred massive increases in U.S. military expenditure, which in turn contributed to the weakening of the dollar (and dollar-gold standard) internationally. During this period, the U.S. was promoting aid and development programs in South America, like the Alliance for Progress, the main aim of which was, in conjunction with repression, to stabilize social conditions and counteract the potential for revolution.

At any given time, the class struggle may be principal, locally (nationally) or globally. But generally, and in a long-term, overall sense, until the capitalist mode of production is no longer dominant on a world scale, the driving force of anarchy of the world imperialist system is and will be the principal form of motion of the fundamental contradiction. It is the *driving force of anarchy*—the underlying dynamics and contradictions of capitalist accumulation on a world scale, the various expressions of that, including but not only inter-imperial rivalry, and changes in the material and economic-social and, increasingly, natural-ecological conditions of life—that *sets the primary stage and foundation for the transformation of society and the world*.

And transforming society and the world on the basis of reality as it is, and not what we would like it to be, is precisely the point:

It is only *in the realm of the superstructure* that the contradiction between socialized production and private appropriation can be resolved. It is only through the conscious struggle to make revolution, to decisively defeat the bourgeoisie (and all exploiting-ruling classes) and dismantle its apparatus of control and suppression. It is only through the conscious struggle to constitute a new revolutionary state power that is a base area for the world revolution and on that basis creating a new socialist economy that operates according to different dynamics and principles than does capitalism (the law of value no longer commanding), and carrying forward the all-around struggle to transform society and people's thinking.

It is only through conscious revolution, based on a scientific approach to understanding and changing the world, that the fundamental contradiction of the bourgeois epoch can be resolved.

The historic mission of the proletariat is to abolish capitalism, to put an end to *all* exploitation and oppression, and to overcome the division of human society into classes, and to create a world community of humanity.

II. A Refusal to Come to Grips with the Nature of Capitalist Accumulation— Or Why the “Capitalist Is Capital Personified”

The identification of the “driving force of anarchy” as the principal form of motion of the fundamental contradiction has occasioned criticism and, at times, vitriolic attacks from some within the international communist movement.

One line of criticism unfolds this way: since a) the “ceaseless striving for more surplus” is of the essence of capital; and since b) this surplus rests on the exploitation of wage-labor; and since c) this exploitation calls forth resistance from the exploited—it therefore follows that the antagonism and class struggle between the proletariat and bourgeoisie stands at a deeper level of determination than does the anarchic interplay among capitals in the motion and development of the fundamental contradiction.

There is an apparent logic to this argument. But that is exactly the problem with the argument: its superficiality. It begs the question: *why* must capital “ceaselessly” accumulate? Is it merely the fact that there are proletarians to exploit (and opportunities to exploit)? I will come to this shortly.

Now some of the critics acknowledge the existence and force of competition but ascribe to it a secondary role. Competition is construed as something “external” to the deeper essence of capital, to the wage-capital relation. Some invoke Marx's passage from Volume 1 of *Capital* where he references the “coercive laws of competition” but points out that “a scientific analysis of competition is not possible before we have a conception of the inner nature of capital.”⁹ And they raise the objection that the anarchy of capitalism is ultimately rooted in capitalism's exploitative character—with some even attributing this view to Engels.

But Engels does *not* locate the anarchy of capitalist production in exploitation of wage-labor and extraction of surplus labor as such, but rather in the particular dynamics of capitalist commodity production. Let's examine what he actually says:

[T]he capitalistic mode of production thrust its way into a society of commodity producers, of individual producers, whose social bond was the exchange of their product. But every society based upon the production of commodities has this peculiarity: that the producers have lost control over their own social interrelations.... No one knows whether his individual product will meet an actual demand, whether he will be able to make good his costs of production or even to sell his commodity at all. Anarchy reigns in socialized production.¹⁰

This general character of commodity production that Engels pinpoints takes a qualitative leap with the development of capitalism. On the one hand, commodity production becomes generalized, with the full monetization of the means of production and the transformation of labor power into a commodity. On the other, capitalist commodity production is carried out on the basis of unprecedented scale of production; the advance, and continuous advances, in technology; the dense network of interrelations among producers, now global; and the “scientific” and “rational” organization at the level of the individual unit of capital. And yet and still, the “social bond” of the individual producers, to use Engels’s phrase, remains the exchange of products—only now it is highly socialized production for exchange.

As for the argument that Marx treats competition in (secondary) relation to the “inner nature of capital,” here we must take note of an important aspect of Marx’s method in *Capital*. In Volume 1 of that work, Marx scientifically penetrates to and identifies the basic nature of capital, distinguishing capital from other forms of wealth and abstracting from the interrelations of the many capitals.

Capital is a social relation and process whose essence is the domination of labor power by alien, antagonistic interests and the reproduction and expanded reproduction of that relation. The most fundamental law of the capitalist mode of production is the law of value and production of surplus value. The most important production relation of capitalism is the relation of capital to labor. And exploitation of wage-labor is the basis of the creation and appropriation of surplus value.

This is scientifically established. But the critics want to explain anarchy on the basis of the exploitation of wage-labor, as this exploitation is foundational. This is not science. It is not proceeding from reality and the fundamental contradiction in its complexity, and the “real movement of capital,” but rather from a reductionist view of reality, a distortion of reality to serve the narrative of the primacy of the class struggle.

Which brings us back to the question: *what drives the exploitation of wage-labor?* Or to pose it differently: is there a compulsion to exploit wage-labor on a wider and more capital-intense basis? The answer is, yes, there is such compulsion, and it derives from competition.

Capital lives under the constant pressure to expand. In order to survive, it must grow: capital can only exist if more capital is being accumulated. At the concrete level, “capital-in-general” exists, and can only exist, as many capitals in competition with each other, precisely because capitalism is based on *private* appropriation. Marx explains:

Competition makes the immanent laws of capitalist production to be felt by each individual capitalist as external coercive laws. It compels him to keep constantly extending his capital, in order to preserve it, but extend it he cannot, except by means of progressive accumulation.¹¹

Competition, the “battle of competition” as Marx describes it, compels individual capitals to cheapen production costs. This mainly turns on raising the productivity of labor and extending the scale of production and achieving what are called “economies of scale” (lower cost per unit of output) through mechanization and technological innovation, as well as organizational innovation.

The technological and organizational transformation of production demands more capital, which requires a growing mass of surplus value out of which to finance investment—thus the drive for more surplus value. The needs of accumulation are increasingly met through loan capital and the credit system, which enables capital to finance new investment and move into new lines of production—but this too is premised on an expanding pool of surplus value. In other words, for capital in its different forms, there is an underlying drive to expand, to increase capital accumulation. All of which is bound up with competition.

Those who move first to innovate are able to gain temporary advantage (extra profit), while those who fail to act and stay with the pack lose market share and position. Take the U.S. auto industry relative to the more innovative Japanese auto manufacturers from the late 1970s onward. Japanese capital was pioneering more efficient methods of production, which ultimately became generalized. This broke the monopoly of the “Big

Three” auto manufacturers (in the U.S. market in particular) and forced the adoption of labor-saving technology. The “coercive laws of competition” impose the imperative on individual capitals: “expand or die.” The reciprocal interaction of private capitals forces *the continual revolutionizing of the productive forces as a matter of internal necessity and self-preservation*. This is what accounts for the dynamism of capitalism. This is why capitalists cannot simply exploit and then just turn their wealth towards consumption—that is, if they are to remain capitalists. Because something deeper is at work: “as capitalist,” in Marx’s memorable and profoundly scientific phrase, “he is only capital personified.”¹²

This is also why capitalism does not achieve a steady-state equilibrium. As explained earlier, it is through the blind competitive interactions of individual capitals that norms of social production (efficiency, etc.) are established, and that capital is allocated into this or that sector (in response to price and profit signals). These norms of production, in turn, must be obeyed... if particular capitals are to stay competitive.

But individual capitals develop unevenly, the one overtaking the other; new lines of production open, only to be glutted; new capitals form and old ones split apart on the basis of colliding claims to surplus value produced throughout society; and new competitive hierarchies are established. New technology develops, and this opens up new arenas of investment; technology becomes a battleground around which new capitals form, split apart, or collapse. Think about the shifts that take place in the global computer and high-tech industries.

The accumulation of capital is a dynamic and disruptive process of expansion and adjustment and crisis.

More on Competition

In the *Grundrisse*, Marx explains that competition “executes” the laws of accumulation: “Competition generally, this essential locomotive force of the bourgeois economy, does not establish its laws, but is rather their executor.”¹³

What is this executor role? Competition impels growing concentration (new productive capacity, enlargement of the scale of production) and growing centralization (mergers, takeovers, etc.) of existing capitals. Competition impels increasing mechanization and specialization and complexity of social production and a rising organic composition of capital (more investment in machinery, raw materials, etc., relative to living labor), which underlie the tendency for the rate of profit to decline. The laws of accumulation driven by competition lead to the creation of a “reserve army of labor” (an important component of which are workers displaced by mechanization).

Competition involves the movement of capital from one sphere to another, in search of higher profit; it involves rivalry for market shares; it involves technical change that transforms the conditions of production.

In sum, capital necessarily exists as many capitals in competition, and *competition has determining effects*.

Competition is rooted in the private-ness of capital: in that private organization of discrete labor processes, organized around the production of profit (surplus value), but which are objectively interlinked with one another, with other privately organized labor processes. Competition and private-ness are rooted in the existence of independent sites of accumulation and discrete centers of decision-making in what is in fact an interdependent and integrated economic formation—where production is production for an anonymous market.

The very dynamism of capitalism arises from technical change embodied in the competitive process. That is the reality of capital accumulation.

Our critics are in a tight spot. They have to explain away the manifest dynamism of capitalism that arises from the expand-or-die urging that competition imposes on capital. They have to explain this dynamism by some other means in order to keep the class contradiction as the principal form of motion. So they trundle out another argument: worker resistance is actually the fount of innovation and mechanization. On this account, the capitalist invests to displace workers, to compress wages, and/or to better control a recalcitrant workforce. On this account, there is not the compulsion of competitive interaction, but rather the deliberate choice of technique and/or strategy to contain labor.

Let’s return to the example of the Japanese auto industry to reveal some of the problems with this argument. The adoption of “just-in-time” production, of “responsible” work teams, the practice of keeping inventories tight (to reduce cost), and extensive robotification by Japanese capital constituted a critical transformation in modern manufacturing. But it would border on the absurd to argue that this was governed by the necessity to stave off or cut off resistance by workers; if anything, the Japanese proletariat was fairly docile at the time.

What in fact was going on in this period of the 1970s through the mid-1980s was that competition and geo-economic rivalry were intensifying in the Western imperialist bloc. Japanese imperialism, as well as German imperialism, was making competitive inroads at the expense of U.S. imperialist capital, even as this rivalry was subordinated to and conditioned by the more determining strategic global rivalry at the time: between the U.S.-led and then Soviet-led imperialist blocs for world supremacy.

Now it is certainly true that an important aspect of the “rationalization” of production, the organization of “supply chains” and forms of “subcontracting,” the use of information technology, etc., serves the role of disciplining and controlling labor. But this is not what fundamentally drives innovation.

The dynamic of capitalism is not one in which the capitalist strives to maximize surplus labor according to his own desire for profit. It is not a dynamic in which the capitalist has the freedom to invest or not to invest, save for the limiting factor of resistance of the worker. In that case, the “logical” move would be for capitals to band together, agree to invest and produce at certain levels, normalize profit rates, make concessions, and achieve social peace. But that does not happen, because there is *compulsion* to invest, to expand, to win market share... on pain of ruin.

To return to Avakian’s critical insight cited above: “Were it not the case that these capitalist commodity producers are separated from each other and yet linked by the operation of the law of value, they would not face the same compulsion to exploit the proletariat—the class contradiction could be mitigated.”

The capitalist is subject to the “coercive laws of competition.” The capitalist is compelled to cheapen costs and is the instrument of technical progress. As “capitalist, he is only capital personified.”

III. The Driving Force of Anarchy, the World Created and Ravaged by Capital

The denial, by the critics, of the “driving force of anarchy” as the principal form of motion of capital makes it impossible for them to deeply and comprehensively understand major trends in the world and the stage on which communist revolution must be fought for and conducted. The “narrative” of class struggle and worker resistance not only obscures the major and unprecedented challenges before this communist revolution, but the great potential for revolutionary struggle as well. This is what I want to illustrate and explore.

A. The environmental crisis

On May 9, 2013, the Earth Systems Research Laboratory in Hawaii recorded that the carbon dioxide levels in Earth’s atmosphere had reached 400 parts per million. The last time Earth supported so much carbon dioxide was some three million years ago, when there was no human life on the planet. Climate science has established that a rise in the Earth’s temperature beyond two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels could lead to irreversible and devastating climate change.

The capitalist industrial revolution beginning in the 1700s, the leap to imperialism in the late 19th century, and the enormous acceleration of environmental stresses of the mid-20th century through today have created a dire environmental emergency.¹⁴

The impacts are already with us: extreme climate events (unprecedented floods, cyclones, and typhoons), droughts, desertification, Arctic ice melting to its lowest levels. Meanwhile the imperialists continue to make staggering investments in fossil fuels, with an ever-increasing share going to so-called “unconventional” oil and gas reserves (hydro-fracking, deep offshore, tar sands, heavy crude, and shale oil, etc.). Global climate negotiations, most significantly Copenhagen 2010, go nowhere.

On the one hand, oil is foundational to the profitable functioning of the whole imperialist system. Six of the 10 largest corporations in the U.S., and eight of the 10 largest in the world, are auto and oil companies. On the other, oil is central to inter-imperial rivalry. Major capitalist firms and the major capitalist powers—the U.S., China, the countries of the EU, Russia, Japan, and others vie with each other for control over the regions where new fossil-fuel sources are to be found: in the Arctic, the South Atlantic, and elsewhere.

Rivalry among the great powers for control of production, refining, transport, and marketing of oil is in fact rivalry for control over the world economy. U.S. imperialism’s military depends on oil to maintain and extend empire, to wage its neocolonial wars and to maintain its global supremacy. And, right now, one of U.S. imperialism’s global competitive advantages is exactly its growing fossil-fuel capability: in 2012, the U.S.

posted the largest increase in oil production in the world, and the largest single-year increase in oil output in U.S. history.

None of what is happening (and not happening) in the sphere of energy can be understood outside the framework of the drive for profit and intense competition and rivalry at the enterprise, sectoral, and national-state levels in the world economy and imperialist interstate system.

The most salient characteristic of recent climate negotiations is the fact that they have been sites of intense rivalry among the “great powers”—on the one hand, unwilling and unable to make any substantive moves away from reliance on fossil fuels; and, on the other, pressing climate-change adaptation into the tool-box of competitive positioning (the Europeans and the Chinese, for instance, having advantage in certain renewable energy technologies).

And not just energy: the major powers are engaged in sharp global competition for the planet’s minerals and raw materials. It is a scramble for the reckless plunder of Earth’s resources, or as one progressive scholar has called it, “the race for what’s left.”

The emergence of China as the world’s *second largest capitalist* economy, with its demand for resources and its growing international reach, is a major element in the ecological equation. Its growth has been fueled by the massive inflow of investment capital over the last 20 years, and that growth has been a major, if not the major, source of dynamism in the world economy. And China is now the largest emitter of carbon dioxide.

The real threat of unstoppable climate change is part of a larger environmental crisis. The planet is not only on a trajectory towards massive extinction of species but also the collapse of critical ecosystems, especially rainforests and coral reefs, with the threat of cascading effects on the Earth’s global ecosystem as a whole. There is the real possibility of Earth being transformed into a very different kind of planet... one that potentially could threaten human existence. No one can predict the precise pathways and outcomes of what is happening. But this is the trajectory that we, and planet Earth, are on.

Why are tropical forests being wiped out by logging and timber operations? Why is soil being degraded and dried out by agribusiness, and oceans acidified? Why is nature turned into a “sink” for toxic waste? Because capitalism-imperialism invests, speculates, trades, and roams the globe treating nature as a *limitless input* to serve *ever-expanding production for profit*.

The short-term desideratum of expanded accumulation has long-term environmental consequences—but these are not of immediate “consequence” in the competitive battle. Individual units of capital seek to minimize costs to stay competitive, calculating with great precision (organization at the enterprise level). But the effects of production activities, like pollution, that fall outside the sphere of economic calculation of these units of private ownership do not “register” on the profit-and-loss ledger. These social and environmental costs are “externalized”: off-loaded on to society and the planet, and pushed off into the future (anarchy at the societal and planetary level).

The calamitous environmental effects of globalization have been greatest in the oppressed nations, yet caused disproportionately by the imperialist countries. Between 1961 and 2000, the rich countries generated over 40 percent of the environmental degradation around the world while shouldering only 3 percent of the costs of ecosystem change.¹⁵

When capitalist firms cut down rainforest in Indonesia for timber, and plant trees to produce palm oil for bio-fuels—a highly volatile sector of the world economy reflecting intense competition between world energy and food markets—the carbon released into the atmosphere and the destruction of habitat of the Sumatran tigers are not part of the cost-benefit calculus of these capitals.

Now if someone is going to argue that the environmental crisis is principally the result of the class contradiction, that this crisis is the product of worker, peasant, or mass resistance, or the quest for labor-saving technology to control labor, I for one would be quite intrigued to hear someone make the case, although it strains credulity.

The inability of capitalism to interact with nature in a sustainable way... the devastation capitalism has caused nature... and the acceleration of planet-engulfing and planet-threatening environmental crisis are all rooted in the anarchic interactions of highly organized, private aggregations of capital, facing the compulsion to profitably expand or die—and rivalry at the global level.

At the same time, it is crucial to understand that the ecological crisis is impacting, and will impact, the class

struggle in manifold ways. To begin with, environmental destruction is a fault-line of the global class struggle and a focal point of important mass resistance, especially in the oppressed nations, often connected with peasant and indigenous peoples' struggles, but also in the imperialist citadels.

Further, the kinds of instabilities and "environmental security crises" (as the imperialists call them) that might be set off by environmental degradation could very likely trigger massive social crisis, and could be an accelerant of revolutionary crisis.

Millions could be flooded out of densely settled delta regions like Bangladesh, prompting vast migrations. The effects of climate changes on agricultural systems, especially in the oppressed nations, will, similarly, cause enormous economic and social strains. According to some impact estimates, by the later decades of this century, 29 countries in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean and Mexico will lose 20 percent or more of their current farm output to global warming.¹⁶

And in the imperialist countries: Hurricane Katrina in the U.S. saw the intersection of global warming with the sharp oppression of Black people, and presented great necessity and opportunity to advance the movement for revolution in the "belly of the beast." The Fukushima reactor meltdown and resulting contamination—and Japanese imperialism's vast network of nuclear power and its robust export of nuclear reactors has been one of its global competitive advantages—is also expressive of the kinds of dislocative events that will likely increase in the future.

The underlying causes and monumental implications of the environmental crisis do not register and cannot be fathomed through the narrow, economist filter of the class contradiction as the ongoing principal form of motion of the fundamental contradiction. Yet this crisis, driven overwhelmingly by the anarchy/organization contradiction, will be a major factor setting the stage on which the class struggle will unfold.

B. Urbanization and Slums

As the 21st century opened, and for the first time in human history, more than half the world's population lives in cities. For almost four decades, cities in the oppressed nations have been growing at a breakneck pace. This is chaotic and oppressive urbanization. More than a billion people live in squalid slums-shantytowns within and surrounding cities in the Third World—and this population will likely double by 2030—while an equal number eke out a desperate living in the so-called informal economy.

What is driving this urbanization? For one, leaps in the industrialization of agriculture and the transnational integration of food production and transport, with imperialist agribusiness grabbing up land and consolidating holdings, have undermined rural livelihoods based on small-scale subsistence agriculture.

Imperialism has been transforming national systems of agriculture into globalized components of transnational production and marketing chains, more detached from local populations; and, increasingly, agriculture is becoming less "foundational" to many national economies of the Third World. And the imperialist-led conversion of land previously serving food production into land serving production of ethanol and other crop-based fuels has further exacerbated these trends.

At the same time, environmental devastation, droughts, and civil wars (often fueled or taken advantage of by the great powers, as in Congo) have brought ruin to agricultural systems—and driven people into the cities.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) insisted, as a condition for loans, that governments of many poor countries eliminate subsidies to small rural landholders, and also "open up" economies to food imports from the West to expand markets and to allow for further capitalization of agriculture. This has put incredible pressures on the rural poor, ruining livelihoods.

Vast swaths of humanity flee the poverty, devastation, and despair of the world's countryside.

Finally, China's rapid capitalist growth has siphoned hundreds of millions of peasants into the cities; this, the largest rural-to-city migration in human history, is propelled by the churning of market forces in China's countryside and the pull of jobs, often cheap-labor (sweatshop) manufacturing, in China's cities.

These phenomena are fundamentally governed by the needs, imperatives, and unforeseen consequences of accumulation on a world scale, particularly deepening imperialist penetration of the oppressed nations and globalization of production.

Urbanization and "shantytown-ization" cannot be scientifically explained as a primary consequence of the

class contradiction. It's simply not true that class resistance in the countryside has propelled these social-demographic shifts. Is the argument of our critics that peasant revolts in the countryside were posing a threat to the social order such that the only way to stanch them was through the expulsion of peasant labor by means of undermining subsistence agriculture?

Is the argument that urban upheaval had brought about such levels of instability that the exploiting classes somehow have had to spur mass migrations of peasants into the cities in the hope that this might be a conservatizing and counterrevolutionary influence? This is not scientific methodology.

A brief historical aside and question: Would the partisans of this view argue that World War I was driven by the need to divert or re-channel the class struggle within the European countries—or was this war driven, as indeed it was, by intensifying inter-imperial rivalry and in particular contention over the colonies (even as Europe was the main theater of battle)?

The urbanization, proletarianization, and shanty-townization taking place in the oppressed nations, owing to the anarchic workings of capital, are having very contradictory effects on the masses: economically and ideologically. The uprooting of traditional ways of life in the countryside by imperialism and the instability attendant to urbanization of sections of masses who are not being incorporated into the “formal” economy have fed the growth and appeal of Islamic fundamentalism, Pentecostalism, varieties of religious millennialism, etc. These trends provide a coherent reactionary ideological and moral compass in conditions of uncertainty and dislocation.

Again, the underpinnings of what is actually happening, and the challenges this actually poses in terms of transforming society and the world, cannot be comprehended scientifically if the motion and development of the fundamental contradiction is viewed through an economist lens.

C. The Global Crisis of 2008-09

I have written on the factors propelling this crisis.¹⁷ Briefly, to identify some key dynamics of a particular trajectory of growth that turned into its opposite:

- The collapse of the Soviet-led social-imperialist bloc in 1989-91 gave new freedom to the Western imperialist powers, especially the U.S., to expand and restructure capital.¹⁸ In particular, a massive *new wave of globalization* ensued—on the level of production, trade, and finance. One of the most significant features of world growth and expansion leading up to the crisis has been the deepening integration of the world capitalist economy, central to which has been the fuller integration of the export-producing countries of the Third World into the world capitalist market, and the forging of a globally integrated, cheap-labor manufacturing economy.
- China has been at the epicenter of this process of *heightened globalization*, serving as a “workshop-sweatshop” for world capitalism in dialectical relation to which a powerful capitalist economic base is being forged. The generation of massive trade surpluses has amplified China’s global reach and its role as major purchaser of U.S. Treasury debt and financier of the U.S. deficit (with the growing leverage that goes with that).
- On the platform of more globalized production and super-exploitation, the financial services sector in the advanced capitalist countries mushroomed. Growth in these countries became increasingly finance-led and credit-driven. The U.S. has been at the epicenter of this process of *heightened financialization* (with the mortgage-backed securities market a concentrated expression of this parasitism).
- The dynamic interrelationship between the U.S. and China was a decisive link in the growth of the first decade of the 21st century. Or, to put it differently, there is a profound link between the agony of super-exploited labor in the bowels of the new industrial zones of China and what was going in the stratosphere of high finance.
- These interrelated processes of globalization and financialization ultimately led to unsustainable imbalances and instabilities:
 - > bloating of the financial sector relative to the productive base in the U.S. and the more general imbalance between the financial system (and its expectation of future profits) and the accumulation of capital: the structures and actual production and reinvestment of profit based on the exploitation of wage-labor
 - > feverish expansion of credit leading to heightened financial fragility
 - > U.S. consumption and borrowing stimulating China’s growth but China’s breakneck manufacturing growth further fueling U.S. trade deficits and intensifying competitive pressures throughout the world

economy, with productive capacity growing rapidly in China.

- U.S. imperialism has attempted since 9/11 to parlay superior military strength into forging a world order in which its global supremacy over rivals and against any obstacles to its domination (including reactionary Islamic fundamentalism) is locked into place for decades to come. But the weight of militarization, the deficit and destabilizing costs of financing this militarization, became a contributing factor to crisis.
- The crisis exploded and was focused in the financial centers of world capitalism. The financial institutions had attempted to reduce risk, and profit from risk, by dispersing more varied and complex financial instruments over a wider field of international investors—but this ultimately acted to draw investors and governments into a vortex of vulnerability and crisis.

The dynamics that spurred growth generated new barriers to the profitable accumulation of capital. In sum, the crisis is a concentrated, though highly complex and fluid, expression and outcome of the anarchy of capitalist production.

But some of the critics cannot let go of easily earned theoretical fallacies when it comes to analyzing crisis.

Some have argued that the class contradiction, particularly in the form of resistance to globalization and the IMF, has been a major driving factor behind this crisis, affecting structural adjustment plans and so forth. Indeed, there was a major wave of resistance to globalization. But a) significant as that had been in the 1990s, this opposition and struggle did not rise to a level that qualitatively impinged on the motion and development of world accumulation; and b) in fact, as sketched out above, the crisis that erupted in 2008-09 has deep determinants in the contradictions of a particular trajectory of expansion, marked by that dynamic of heightened globalization and heightened financialization.

The argument is also posited that collusion is principal among the imperial powers, this flowing from the joint need of capital to exploit labor power. But rivalry, propelled by uneven development and the shifting tectonic plates of the world economy, has been a major feature of contemporary imperial interrelations. This rivalry has mainly expressed itself economically and geo-economically, and not so much in the military realm.

This crisis broke out in the context of major shifts in the competitive relations and strengths among the great powers, among which: the “rise of China” and its transition towards becoming an imperialist power, with its influence reaching beyond East Asia to the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa and its growth now influencing the international division of labor; European Union market enlargement and regional currency integration providing a framework for advantage in scale and efficiency for globalized West European capital, and for pressing a monetary challenge to the dominance of the dollar; and a re-assertive Russian imperialism.

The crisis has in turn had repercussions not just for the stability of the world imperialist system but for ongoing power shifts and rivalries within it. Two of the more salient: the crisis has exacerbated contradictions between the U.S. and China, with the U.S. more aggressively seeking to counter China’s rise and growing reach; and the crisis has posed new difficulties for the EU imperial project.

IV. The Stakes: A System That Cannot Be Reformed... The Revolution That Is Needed

In *Birds Cannot Give Birth to Crocodiles, But Humanity Can Soar Beyond the Horizon*, Bob Avakian makes the point:

[W]e may not like all this, but that’s where we are. We may not like the fact that capitalism and its dynamics are still dominant in the world, overwhelmingly so at this time, and set the stage for the struggle we have to wage—we may not like this, but that’s the reality. And in that reality is the basis for radically changing things. It’s in confronting and struggling to change that reality, and not through some other means. It’s through understanding and then acting to transform that reality along pathways that the contradictory character of that reality does open up—pathways which must be seized on and acted on to carry out that transformation of reality.¹⁹

Avakian is not only commenting on the work of analyzing the dynamics of capitalism and how the contradictions in the world assert themselves and interact, and grasping why the “driving force of anarchy” is indeed the principal dynamic of capitalism. He is also focusing up a fundamental issue of science, of communism as a science: “whether” as he writes, “you proceed from objective reality and recognize the basis, within the contradictory dynamics of that reality, for radical change—or whether you’re just proceeding from a set of

ideas, including an idealized vision of the masses, which you are trying to impose on reality...’’²⁰

In coming to grips with capitalism-imperialism and its functioning, we are dealing with its necessity—with particular laws of operation and laws of motion. These laws are independent of the will of individuals and independent of the will of a class, even one (the capitalist-imperialists) that possesses the greatest arsenal of repression and force in history.

Capitalism is not a system based on greed, or the “will to exploit.” It is not a system based on the profit motive as “first principle”—squeeze what you can from the workers. It is a mode of production based on the exploitation of wage-labor and driven by the inner necessity to expand. Not to grasp this is to objectively deny the need for revolution—if this system is not governed by necessity, by underlying laws and imperatives of accumulation, then perhaps... perhaps it can be reformed.

These laws and in particular the compelling force of anarchy do not, contrary to the charges of the critics, “liquidate” the class struggle. Rather, and to reiterate: this is what sets the primary stage for what has to be done to transform society and the world. If that is grasped, then it becomes possible, as Avakian emphasizes, to discover the pathways for radically transforming this reality. It becomes possible to seize and carve out freedom, because this mode of production and its laws are dynamic, are contradictory. And this opens up vast possibilities for the conscious factor, to act, on the basis of scientifically understanding reality—in its complexity and changing-ness.

There are diverse channels for change and for sudden eruptions. This scientific orientation is critical in building the movement for revolution, for a revolution that is *total in its scope*, and for recognizing and acting on the need and potential for that revolution—and the challenges before it. The environmental crisis is momentous in this regard.

There are the challenges posed by how the fundamental contradiction between socialized production and private appropriation *actually* develops. The growth of Islamic and other fundamentalisms at the same time that the productive forces have grown more socialized and the world more intertwined is a case in point. This “perverse” working out of the fundamental contradiction illustrates that its motion and development is not a linear process of modernization, proletarianization, and secularization. Rather, it is a complex process of changes in class and social configuration, of ideology and social movements interpenetrating with economic transformation, with need for a liberating morality and the question of uprooting patriarchy getting profoundly posed.

We are living in a period of transition with the potential for great upheaval: global capitalism in flux, heightening inequality and dislocation, environmental degradation, the horrors visited upon women, half of humanity. Capitalism in the imperialist era is a mode of production that is at once in transition to something higher and violently straining against its limits.

Are we going to invent realities and verities, and construct narratives that the class struggle is always principal, in order to console ourselves and ward off the real challenges? Or are we going to confront reality in order to transform it?

What is at stake is a materialist understanding of the world, of what must be changed in people’s thinking and society, and how. Anything other than a truly scientific approach is going to leave the world as it is. What is at stake is the communist revolution that humanity needs: to resolve the fundamental contradiction of the epoch and to emancipate humanity and safeguard the planet. ■

Footnotes

1. For background, see *Communism: The Beginning of a New Stage, A Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA* (Chicago: RCP Publications, 2009), especially sections III-V.
2. Bob Avakian, *Birds Cannot Give Birth to Crocodiles but Humanity Can Soar Beyond the Horizon* (hereafter referred to as *Birds Cannot Give Birth to Crocodiles*).
3. As capitalism emerged and developed, a vast global peasantry continued to play an important part in world production, and was quantitatively dominant, but pre-capitalist relations of production became increasingly subsumed by, subordinated to, and penetrated by capitalism.
4. Frederick Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), pp. 316-324.
5. Karl Marx, “Wage-Labor and Capital,” in Marx-Engels, *Selected Works I* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), p. 157.

6. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1967), p. 555.
7. See Bob Avakian, “Fundamental and Principal Contradictions on A World Scale” *Revolutionary Worker*, September 17, 1982.
8. Raymond Lotta, *America in Decline* (Chicago: Banner Press, 1984), pp. 40-56.
9. Marx, *Capital*, 1, p. 300.
10. Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, p. 322.
11. Marx, *Capital* 1, p. 555.
12. Marx, *Capital* 1, p. 224.
13. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 552.
14. See the special issue of *Revolution*, “State of EMERGENCY: The Plunder of Our Planet, the Environmental Catastrophe, and the Real Revolutionary Solution,” April 18, 2010.
15. R. Kerry Turner & Brendan Fisher, “Environmental economics: To the rich man the spoils,” *Nature* 451, 28 February 2008, pp. 1067-1068.
16. William Cline. 2007. *Global Warming and Agriculture: Impact Estimates by Country* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development and Peterson Institute for International Economics).
17. See, for instance, Raymond Lotta, “Shifts and Faultlines in the World Economy and Great Power Rivalry: What Is Happening and What It Might Mean,” *Revolution*, July 24, 27, August 3, August 24 (2008), especially Part 1; and Raymond Lotta, “Financial Hurricane Batters World Capitalism System Failure and the Need for Revolution,” *Revolution*, October 19, 2008.
18. The reader is encouraged to study the discussion in *Notes on Political Economy: Our Analysis of the 1980s, Issues of Methodology, and The Current World Situation* (Chicago: RCP Publications, 2000), Part 1, pp. 7-30, where the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA identifies problems in the analysis it made in the 1980s of the motion of the U.S.-led and Soviet-led imperialist blocs towards world war. Methodological lessons are drawn out as part of a deepening grasp of the scientific method.
19. Avakian, *Birds Cannot Give Birth to Crocodiles*.
20. Avakian, *Birds Cannot Give Birth to Crocodiles*.