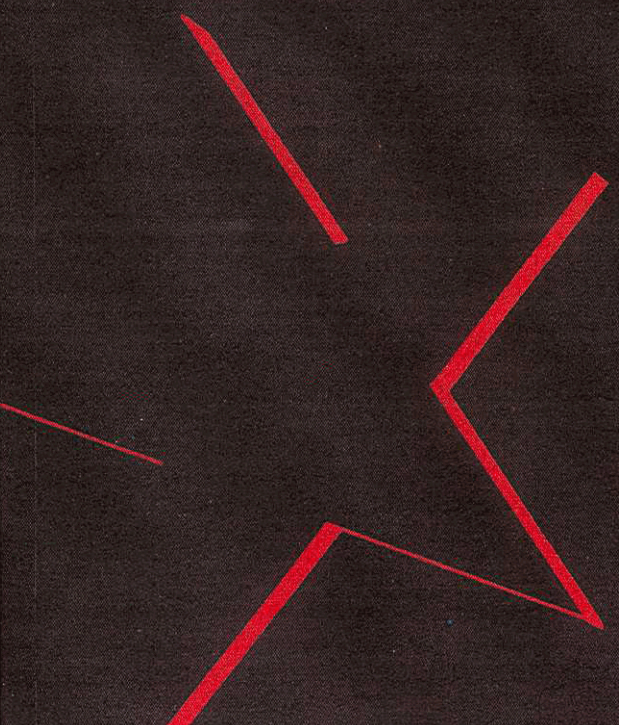


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CONQUER THE WORLD?



The
International
Proletariat
Must and Will

by Bob Avakian

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In this talk, I will address a number of general themes and then some attempts will be made to develop particular points within those general themes. Now this is likely to be—in fact you can almost guarantee that this is going to be—somewhat scattered and hopefully, in a way, a little bit trippy. But we'll see what happens. The basic purpose and nature of this is to lay out some ideas about some points that have been spoken to in the literature, in the reports from the Central Committee that people have seen and been studying over the past two years or so; it's in the character of and has the purpose of an informal talk to try to develop some of these ideas, to try to give some play to some thinking on these ideas, many of which are explicitly only tentative theses. The attempt is not being made to present worked out ideas. And that's going to be true generally of the whole talk and will also be particularly obvious in relation to certain specific points. So it shouldn't be seen even as a "worked out personal opinion," let alone any kind of a systematic presentation of the line and views of the organization overall on these questions, but should be taken more as

something informal to stimulate some thinking, study and discussion, and hopefully some further development on a number of these points.

So with that introduction, there are basically going to be five main points. The first one is: Further historical perspectives on the first advances in seizing and exercising power—proletarian dictatorship—and embarking on the socialist road.

Number 2 is: More on the proletarian revolution as a world process.

Number 3 is on the subject I call: Leninism as the bridge, which will be clear when we get into its content.

Number 4 is: Some summation of the Marxist-Leninist movement arising in the 1960s and the subjective factor in light of the present and developing situation and the conjuncture shaping up.

Number 5 is: Some questions related to the line and work of our Party and our special internationalist responsibilities. These are the five main points and there'll be a conclusion attempting to tie together some of the main themes of these different points. So to begin:

I. Further Historical Perspectives on the First Advances in Seizing and Exercising Power—Proletarian Dictatorship— and Embarking on the Socialist Road.

First, some thoughts about the Paris Commune. In reading over Marx's most systematic summation on the Paris Commune, *The Civil War in France*, which also has an introduction by Engels, it's striking in light of all the experience and development not only in the practical struggle but in the theoretical realm since then that Marx's summation is at one and the same

time extremely far-sighted and rather primitive (and this goes also in general for Engels' introduction highlighting Marx's summation).

This is not too surprising given that the Paris Commune was the first actual successful seizure of power and lasted only approximately two months before it was drowned in blood. It's also not surprising in that

the First International of which Marx was, at least in an ideological sense and a general theoretical sense, the leader and in which he was also very active in a practical way, was itself a *mélange* of a number of different tendencies. Scientific socialism hadn't thoroughly differentiated and distinguished itself from a number of utopian and other forms of unscientific socialism, even within the First International itself, which is a point the ramifications and implications of which will be touched on a little bit later.

In terms of his being farsighted, if you read what Marx has to say it's very clear that he was able to draw out and concentrate a lot of key lessons from a very brief and primitive experience of two months of power in just Paris—I mean it's a significant city, but still just one part, even if it's a very significant part, of France. And the decisive lesson that was both drawn out and driven home much more sharply by Marx at that time—that the proletariat cannot lay hold of the ready-made state machinery but has to smash and dismantle it and create its own machinery, its own revolutionary dictatorship—this was obviously an example of Marx's scientific method. And based on that farsightedness, Marx was able to draw out that lesson and to illustrate it with a number of particulars from the brief and somewhat diffuse experience of the Paris Commune.

But at the same time, while the summation that Marx made in terms of what it contributed to the long-term struggle and the overall goal of the international proletariat was, like the Commune itself, immortal, looking at it in terms of the experience since then and what's been summed up out of that experience, you can see some of its limitations. For example, this comes through in a number of the comments that Marx makes about the bureaucracy, the standing army, the question of universal suffrage and recall of officials, the question of no officials being paid higher wages than those of a working person, the way in which education and religion and culture in general are dealt with.

For instance, he says at one point that the priests (he says it more poetically than this but basically the point is that the priests) will be left to stand or fall, that is, they will be able to eat or not eat, on the basis of whether or not they can actually win support from their parishioners and they will not receive state subsidies. This was one of the experiences of the Commune. Well, obviously, historical experience has shown us that's far from enough of a radical rupture to deal with that problem (and that's just one small example). It's not that Marx said exactly that it was, but his summation did not go farther than that. And the same thing is true where he says that one of the great things that the Commune had to offer, it's real strong selling point, to put it crudely, to the peasantry was that it would be able to reduce significantly the bureaucratic encumbrance and parasitic body on society as a whole represented by the bureaucracy and thereby would be able to essentially cheapen the cost to the peasantry of the state apparatus. This is linked closely with the question of whether or not a standing army is necessary, whether or not you can trim down full-time

officials in the bureaucracy so simply, as Marx seemed to feel and seemed to conclude from the experience of the Commune, and whether it would be possible to pay government officials wages no higher than those of a workman as was done by decree in the Commune.

All these things, by historical experience and particularly in that experience where the proletarian dictatorship was consolidated and existed over a period of time and where the socialist road was embarked on, have not been possible so far. Even where a correct line has been carried out, even where policy can't be attributed to errors or to right deviations, it has not been possible to do all these things in the way that Marx, drawing on the experience of the Commune, thought not only possible but necessary key weapons in ruling and transforming society. Life has proved not to be so simple as that and in fact the possibilities for the proletariat in Paris to win over the peasantry, not just in the short run but to win over and maintain their support through all the twists and turns of the struggle, were not nearly so great nor was the question nearly so simple as Marx seems to treat it in *The Civil War in France*, the concentrated summation of the Commune.

And similarly, the question of the nation and the relationship of the struggle in a particular country to the international struggle was not clearly handled, not only in the Commune itself—in the outlook and policies of the people who were leading the Commune at the time, for example, in their appeals to the soldiers of the reactionary army on a patriotic basis—but even to a certain degree in the writings of Marx and comments of Engels in summing up the Commune. The distinction between the nation and internationalism was not as clearly drawn as it has been learned that it must be drawn. Of course, on the one hand this was in the era before imperialism but, on the other hand, France was an advanced capitalist country on the threshold of advancing to the imperialist stage (and it should be said in passing here, that Marx's references to "imperialism" in *The Civil War in France* do not represent the same analysis of a new and special—in fact the highest and final—stage of capitalism as done later by Lenin).

Here I'll just interject a comment which will probably get me in trouble with somebody somewhere, but one of the things that is rather clear to me in reading over Lenin's polemics on the question of "defense of the fatherland" during World War 1 is that he has to do a great deal of work against Kautsky and others who were the accepted authorities on Marxism—much more so than Lenin—and who had all the quotes in stock to pull out of the cupboard to justify their opportunist lines, whether it was social-democracy or social-chauvinism. In reading this over it's clear that, on the one hand, Lenin correctly made the terrain of the argument that people were misrepresenting and misusing quotes from Marx and Engels because they were dealing with statements by Marx and Engels before the era of imperialism when the only question, as Lenin said, is the victory of *which* bourgeoisie would be more favorable for the proletariat as a whole internationally. But it's also clear, or at least in my opinion it's clear, especially if you deal with

Engels who lived more than a decade longer than Marx, that not only was it a question of being quoted out of context, out of condition, time and place, but also this approach of determining which bourgeoisie's victory (or defeat) would be more favorable was still being applied when it was becoming no longer applicable. As late as 1891, for example, Engels was still talking about defending the fatherland in Germany in a war against the Tsar.

In other words, Lenin was correct—both in principle and also in tactics—in making the terrain of battle the fact that Marx and Engels were being distorted and quoted out of context, that is out of epoch. But it is also true that there's a little bit of dragging some of this approach behind them, beyond the point where it is still applicable—particularly in the case of Engels all the way to 1895 (or at least 1891 when he made his last major statement that I know of on this question), and some of this is reflected a little bit in the writings of Marx and Engels on the Commune where they talk about the question of the working class being sort of the savior of the nation, the force to regenerate the nation.

Threads of that line and statements to that effect can be found in the summation; these were also commonly-held views among the Communards who themselves were not clear on the question of a radical rupture with the Republic; this was revealed even in the way they drew up their calendar which apparently was a continuation of that of the Republic. In other words, all the radical ruptures on the question of the nation *vis-à-vis* internationalism were not thoroughly made. Again, of course, the question of imperialism as analyzed by Lenin had not become fully developed and so was not, therefore, fully clear. But, with the further experience since then, it can be seen that there is in general a tendency in Marx's summation of the Commune to extrapolate and generalize too much from that particular experience, and, more particularly, looking at it from the perspective of historical experience and its summation since the Commune shows the limitations of the approach of viewing things from the standpoint of which bourgeoisie's victory would be most favorable for the international proletariat. We should remember that this was in the context of the war between Germany and France when Marx and Engels initially supported the right of self-defense, if you will, of Germany, and then, at a certain point, said "now they've gone over to aggression and so you can't take a position of defense of the fatherland anymore in Germany." The Communards took up the stand of defense against Germany in the face of the capitulation of the French government (which entrenched itself in Versailles in opposition to the Paris Commune), and were then forced in that context into a civil war against the French bourgeoisie as represented and coalescing around Thiers who decided at that point to make an arrangement with the German leader Bismarck in the effort to crush the Commune, which they succeeded in doing, as we know. So this is an extremely complex situation and trying to approach it from the point of view whether a nation has a right to self-defense begins already, in my opinion, to verge on turning into its opposite.

Interestingly enough, there is a comment by Lenin, I

think, about how Germany had already passed into the era of imperialism before it ever got its nation together, and that's one of the examples of what Lenin meant when he said that the boundaries in nature and society are conditional and relative. If you're going to wait for Germany to get itself fully together as a nation before you say the question of its right to defense of the fatherland is over and done with, you will still be waiting because Germany is still not united, and a lot of people, a lot of social-chauvinists, are playing on that point right now. Anyway, you're talking about the bourgeois epoch, the formation of nations, and all these things are relative and conditional—there's not some perfect nation waiting to be formed—and the essence of the problem has long since become one of imperialism and not of nations in these advanced countries. In my opinion that was already becoming the case by the last several decades of the 19th century, even by 1870.

We can see some confusion in Marx and Engels, again especially viewed with the perspective we have from history and the lessons summed up from history, on this question of the nation and on whether or not it is correct to view the working class as being the inheritors and those best carrying forward the tradition, the "best" tradition, of the nation. This question is not completely clear, even in Marx, although it hardly needs saying, but should be said, just in case what I'm arguing might lead to any confusion, that Marx and Engels, both in their summation of the Commune as well as in their practice around the Commune itself, were obviously outstanding supporters and promoters of proletarian internationalism: that's clear all the way through the summation of the Commune. Theirs is not a summation done from the narrow point of view of the French nation, but there is that confusion.

Returning to a more overall vantage point, it is important to note that Marx wrote in this very summation that the proletarians "will have to pass through long struggles, through a series of historic processes, transforming circumstances and men" and even before that, 20 years earlier in 1851, he had declared "we say to workers, you will have to go through 15, 20, 50 years of civil wars and international wars, not only in order to change existing conditions but also in order to change yourselves and fit yourselves for the exercise of political power".² This was, again, extremely insightful on the part of Marx and shows that he didn't have a simplistic view of the process of transforming the world and achieving communism (and certainly the dialectical materialist method he used in summing up the Commune is not at all a simplistic one) even though some of the criticisms that I have just raised are, I think, valid—in terms of his overestimating, perhaps, the ease with which certain problems could be dealt with and resolved.

This itself is sort of a unity of opposites: On the one hand, even in the summation of the Commune as well as more generally, Marx was aware of the fact—and I think this is very, very significant, something worth pondering and this ties in with the "two radical ruptures," property relations and ideas—that it's not enough and it's not simply a question of having to go

through all this struggle and turmoil to change existing objective conditions. He says straight up, you must change *yourselves* and fit yourselves for the exercise of power. I think that's a statement that shows a tremendous historical materialist outlook and method and historical sweep and this infuses the summation of the Commune. Nevertheless, what I am saying is that, viewed with historical perspective, we can see that there was, on the other hand, an underestimation of the complexity and difficulty of resolving a lot of these questions—which should not surprise us, but which needs to be summed up, especially if we are trying to get, at the same time, a more sweeping and a more particular view of some of the problems that are involved in advancing from the bourgeois epoch to the epoch of communism worldwide.

In general I think this problem is tied in with the fact that, as much as Marx and Engels did take note of and stand on the side of the oppressed in China, India and other parts of the world where the people were rising up against colonial domination and exploitation, still, largely (and correctly so from a scientific standpoint and in terms of where the major and most advanced political movements and struggles were at that time), they were considering the problem of, particularly the *socialist* revolution, the seizure and exercise of power and transformation of society by the proletariat, in a European context overwhelmingly—though not exclusively. Therefore, a lot of the complexity that has now come to characterize the proletarian revolution and the development of socialist society and the transformation toward communism in the world was something which did not fully confront them, because in fact there has been a *shift* in the general historical sense, over a period of time, from West to East of the focal point of not only revolution in general but even of proletarian revolution. (This is not to say that there has been a permanent, unalterable shift—history remains to speak on how all this will work out—and I'll return later to correct and incorrect viewpoints of what the shift I am referring to implies—but there has been this shift.) And that has introduced even more complexity into the question of how to make the transition from the old order, sometimes even pre-capitalist order predominantly, not to capitalism but precisely to socialism and on the socialist road toward communism.

So just to make the point in another way, Marx did not fully grasp the meaning and implications of even what he himself had commented on earlier, both at the time of the Commune and 20 years earlier when he talked about the 15, 20 or 50 years of civil war. We've seen it's been more than 15, 20 or 50 years since then and still this process he's describing is only in its infancy in a historical sense. So it's not surprising that he did not fully grasp the meaning and implications of what he himself said about how not only the changing of conditions but the changing of the proletarians themselves would have to go on in a historical, sweeping way before they would be able to be fit to rule, let alone to carry through the full transition to communism.

And in fact, all this is, in an overall sense, actually a confirmation of the Marxist theory of knowledge. Because the primitiveness of many of Marx's par-

ticular observations reflect the primitiveness, the early stage of development, of the world historic process of proletarian revolution—which is not to fall into mechanical materialism and say that whatever was known was all that could be known. On the other hand, 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. And it does reflect the primitiveness, the early stage of development of the world historic process of proletarian revolution toward the long-term goal of communism. This was, after all, the first practical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was a revolutionary movement of the proletariat still mainly, largely confined to Europe and stepping on to the stage of history still wearing much of the costume of the bourgeois republic and bourgeois democracy out of which it was issuing.

Now it's interesting in this light to look again at a commentary on the Paris Commune made by Mao which was referred to in past reports from the Central Committee, in particular the one in 1979.³ In particular it's very interesting to examine some points of Mao's that were not referred to at that time. If you remember Mao was drawing out the point in his characteristic way, "If the Paris Commune had not failed, but had been successful, then in my opinion, it would have become by now a bourgeois commune. This is because it was impossible for the French bourgeoisie to allow France's working class to have so much political power. This is the case of the Paris Commune."⁴ I can just see Enver Hoxha and assorted types going wild over that kind of statement and retorting: "As if the proletariat has to ask the bourgeoisie for permission to have power." But in fact Mao's is an historical materialist summation and even though he doesn't fully develop it, he goes on to talk about the Soviet Union and how Lenin's Soviet was transformed into Khrushchev's Soviet and begins to draw together the threads of his analysis of the restoration of capitalism with the rise to power of the bourgeoisie (this is in the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, when he's already made the essentials of that analysis and is beginning to synthesize some points to a higher level).

He then goes on; this is the part that in the '79 Report was not quoted but which I think is particularly important and useful for us to focus on, both because we are and should be more acutely aware of the problem he is dealing with and because it will further deepen our own understanding of the bedrock importance of proletarian internationalism. He is talking about how the commune in Shanghai is not a viable form, but that poses a problem because the masses in Shanghai (despite what is said now) like the Commune, so what are we going to do? It's a tactical problem because it's too advanced a form and we can't popularize

it throughout the whole country at this time.⁵ (They did actually try to implement a lot of the measures of the Paris Commune; for example, they tried for a while to implement the principle of appointment and recall of officials by the masses, the principle of no wages for officials higher than a worker's wages, etc., and they had to sum up that they had to drop back a bit from some of those advanced positions and consolidate what they could. They basically adopted the form of the revolutionary committees that had been instituted elsewhere in the country as organs of power rather than the commune form. We also refer to this in our article against Bettelheim in *The Communist*.)⁶

The point I want to go into now is not Mao's summation that the commune form was not powerful enough a weapon or organ or form for suppressing counter-revolutionaries in China itself. But listen to this, it's very interesting, he says, "Britain is a monarchy. Doesn't it have a king? The U.S. has a presidential system. They are both the same, being bourgeois dictatorships. The puppet regime of South Vietnam has a president and bordering it is Sihanouk's Royal Kingdom of Cambodia. Which is better? I am afraid Sihanouk is somewhat better..." He goes back, and after continuing in this vein for awhile, says, "Titles must not be changed too frequently; we don't emphasize names, but emphasize practice; not form, but content. That fellow Wang Mang of the Han Dynasty, was addicted to changing names. As soon as he became emperor, he changed all the titles of government offices, like many of us who have a dislike for the title 'chief.' He also changed the names of all the counties in the country. This is like our Red Guards who have changed almost all of the street names of Peking, making it impossible for us to remember them. We still remember their former names. It became difficult for Wang Mang to issue edicts and orders, because the people did not know what changes had been made. This form of popular drama can be used either by China or by foreign countries, by the proletariat or by the bourgeoisie." "I remember reading something, was it PL or it might have been those people COUSML, or whatever they are calling themselves now, who were seizing on this saying, 'Now this is absolutely outrageous, here is this Mao hung up on all these names and the formalities of all this stuff, whether or not he's going to be recognized by all these bourgeois countries; how much he's degenerated from the revolutionary'... they once pimped off. This is obviously missing the content for the form, because while he's talking about the question of names and all that, he's obviously making a point about whether or not that form—or more fundamentally in another sense the content—of the Commune, is applicable in the current conditions of China.

Then he goes on and talks about it in the larger, and for us right now, more interesting context of a socialist country in a world where there's still largely an imperialist encirclement. He says, "The principal experiences are the Paris Commune and the Soviet. We can imagine that the name People's Republic of China can be used by both classes. If we should be overthrown and the bourgeoisie came to power [how far-

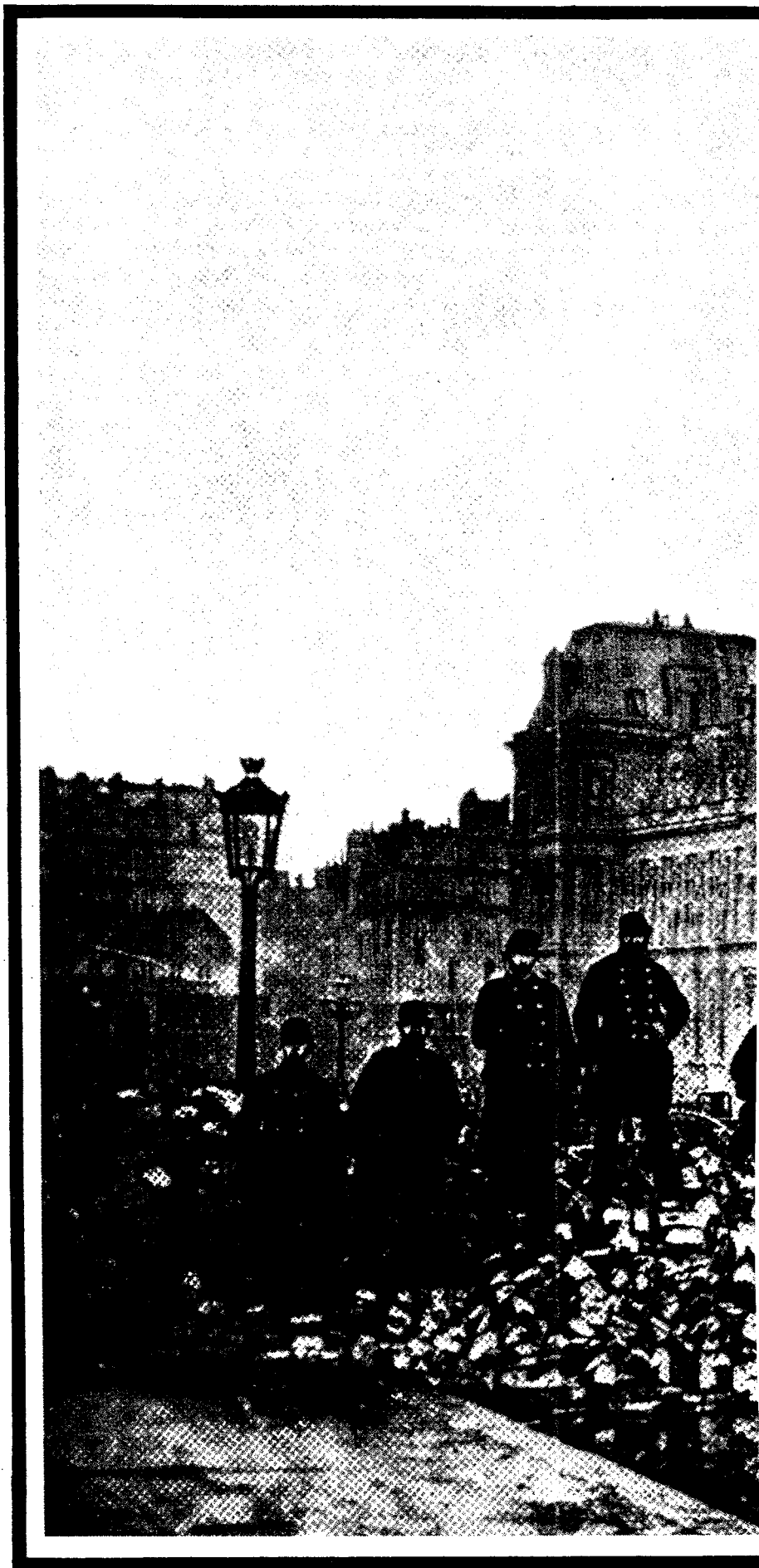
sighted is this—BA] they would have no need to change the name but would still call it the People's Republic of China. The main thing is which class seizes political power. This is the fundamental question, not what it's name is." He goes on: "I think we should be more stable and should not change all the names. This is because this would give rise to the question of changing the political systems, to the question of the state system and to the question of the name of the country. What would you want to change [the name] to, The Chinese People's Commune! Should the Chairman of the People's Republic of China then be called director or commune leader? Not only this problem but another problem would arise. That is, if there is a change it'd be followed by the question of recognition or non-recognition by foreign countries. When the name of a country is changed, foreign ambassadors will lose their credentials, new ambassadors will be exchanged and recognition will be given anew. I surmise that the Soviet Union would not extend recognition. This is because she would not dare to recognize, since recognition might cause troubles for the Soviet. How could there be a Chinese People's Commune? It would be rather embarrassing for them but the bourgeois nations might recognize it."

So what he's dealing with is not really the name at all. He's saying, "look, we live in a world where we're surrounded by imperialism and it's one thing to have a People's Republic but if you try to have a commune you're going to run into the problem of the state, both in terms of internal class enemies and in terms of the external, the international class enemies, and that's too advanced a form, we'll be crushed." He says, "they won't recognize us," and so on, but it's his own way of getting at a much more profound problem—and it is obvious if anyone's a Marxist-Leninist that what he's really dealing with is that question: what form is most appropriate for the class struggle in China and the suppression of enemies there and the class struggle internationally?

He then goes on to make a very important point, which I want to come back to several times here. He says, "If everything were changed into commune, then what about the party? Where would we place the party? Among commune committee members are both party members and non-party members. [Here he's talking about the Shanghai Commune—BA] Where would we place the party committee? There must be a party somehow! There must be a nucleus, no matter what we call it. Be it called the Communist party, or social democratic party, or Kuomintang, or I-kuan-tao, it must have a party. The commune must have a party, but can the commune replace the party?"⁸

Here, obviously he's dealing with the fact that as long as there are classes and class struggle, there's going to need to be a state and there's going to need to be a party. And, he says, "there must be a nucleus no matter what we call it." Again he's getting to the essence of the matter—there's still the contradiction that not everybody's a communist. When we get to communism nobody exactly knows how the contradiction between advanced and backward will exist, but it will. But in that stage, as we understand it, there will

Revolutionary troops of the
Paris Commune, 1871.





not be the same kind of need for a party because the meaning of communism is that there will not be social classes and there will not be the kind of social divisions there are now, and there will not be a party to play the vanguard role in that sense—and until that's the case we won't have communism. But he's saying at this stage we cannot abolish the party, the party is absolutely essential, just as the state is.

I think it is very interesting to reflect on this. Not only is he saying—if you take in the whole what I've been pulling snatches from—that the Commune, had it survived, would have been turned into a bourgeois commune by now, regardless if it kept the name Commune, but he's also saying, if you look at it historically, at least to me this is the implication we should draw out of it, that not only with respect to the French bourgeoisie but internationally, the conditions were such that it was very unlikely that a proletarian dictatorship could have then existed and survived, and that the question of a proletarian dictatorship existing and surviving surrounded by an imperialist world by and large is an extremely complex and difficult one and cannot be handled by conservative or by infantile means. It has to be handled by advancing the class struggle to the maximum degree at every point and consolidating rather than losing everything at certain points, in this sort of wave, or, better yet, spiral development of things. That is what becomes necessary.

So those are a few scattered points on the Paris Commune. In moving on we can say that Lenin relied to a considerable degree on Marx and Engels' summation of the Commune in formulating his understanding of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a transition to communism—especially as the question of seizing power came immediately on the agenda, that is in Russia itself in 1917—and this is given concentrated expression in *State and Revolution*. There and later also in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, in particular, he speaks correctly for example of the fact that nowhere in capitalist society is diplomacy carried out openly in front of the masses and by involving the masses. It's always carried out in secret, through secret treaties, through government appointees and officials who operate in secret in terms of not sharing their knowledge openly with the masses. And it is true that when the Soviet Union was established, when the proletariat came to power with the Bolsheviks at the head, they did in fact open up and reveal the secret treaties of the imperialists. In fact there were even some heroic examples of mass initiative; untrained sailors, for example, spent sleepless nights on end figuring out how to decode secret codes so that they could reveal the machinations of the imperialists to the world. Not only for the survival of the Soviet Republic, which was very much bound up with this, but for the general advance of the struggle internationally. And this they did do, as they said they would.

But at the same time it has to be summed up that even under the leadership of Lenin and even when the line was most revolutionary, they were not able to conduct diplomacy completely out in the open either; in fact, they were not able to do so qualitatively more than capitalist states in the world. A cynic of today

reading Lenin on this point would be able to say, "Ah ha, you haven't been able to do it either, so there's another example of where there's not really any difference. . . ." And while that's obviously wrong, it is not an insignificant fact that nowhere in the world up to this point has the proletarian state been able to carry out diplomacy openly in the main, and, reflecting back on the Commune, it's rather obvious that had it survived and had to deal with this kind of tense and complex situation, it would not have been able to do so either—one could say that with a great deal of certainty.

It's also not insignificant, and this is closely related, that every socialist state so far existing has, and I believe correctly and out of necessity (unavoidably in other words), had to maintain a large standing army separate from the armed masses as a whole. And this of course relates to what Lenin, also in *State and Revolution* and elsewhere, emphasizes as one of the touchstone points, one of the hallmarks of the genuine proletarian dictatorship. What is the essence of it? That it is ruled by the armed masses themselves. But, in fact, nowhere has it been yet possible to have rule, strictly speaking, by the armed masses. It has always been necessary to have, if you want to put it that way, a professional army, a separate standing army, an armed body of men and women separate and in a certain sense above the masses and this would be true even if the masses were organized broadly into militias, which has been the case when there's been the revolutionary line in command.

Why is this so? As an aside we can refer to the article in *Revolution* magazine about the Spanish Civil War and the Spanish revolution⁹—or the revolution that was not carried out in Spain. One of the essential things pointed out was that it became necessary in opposition to some of the anarcho-syndicalist and other lines to actually establish a single unified army to actually defeat the reactionary armed forces (who coalesced and were centered around Franco). It might have been nice in the abstract, but not nice in concrete reality, to wish that it would not have to be the case; but it was. The reason I say "not nice in reality" is because the tendencies to deny the necessity or undermine the actual moves toward establishing a centralized command (in that sense an overall centralized standing army to fight and defeat the enemy) could only contribute toward defeat.

Now it's also true—and this is something that has many lessons for the Spanish Civil War and for history generally, and history is also replete with this lesson—that this is a contradiction that is repeatedly played on by revisionists and similar bourgeois forces of one kind or another to, in fact, stifle and suppress the revolutionary initiative of the masses and to take the revolution away from them and either drown it in blood and/or suffocate it in bureaucracy. This is a real contradiction. It can't be wished or willed away, because it is a contradiction. It has to be resolved as part of a much larger process and much more fundamental contradiction.

And here, a recent comment by a leading comrade of our Central Committee is most relevant. In responding to and as a retort to the most recent writings of Bettel-

heim in which he's, as it was put, finally "dropped the other shoe" and come to the conclusion that from the time of the early '30s and the consolidation of Stalin's leadership, the Soviet Union was capitalist and not socialist, our comrade pointed out, "If the Commune could be considered the dictatorship of the proletariat, then the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership can be correctly considered socialism." And just to illustrate what is meant by that, I might add that after all here was the Paris Commune, a dictatorship of the proletariat with no Marxists! That is, there was not in any sense a Marxist leadership of the Commune, and yet it was treated, and correctly so, by Marx as an example of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Engels summed up later and said: if you people who are afraid of authority and tremble at the words dictatorship of the proletariat want to know what it is, look at the Paris Commune; there was the dictatorship of the proletariat. From an overall historical standpoint, that was a correct and a very important stand. And the same can be said of the Soviet Union under the leadership of Stalin (more on that later).

But the immediate point here is that this gives us some historical perspective and gives us an understanding and illustrates the need to combine a sweeping historical view with the rigorous and critical dissecting of especially crucial and concentrated historical experiences, and to draw out as fully as possible the lessons and to struggle to forge the lessons as sharply as possible as weapons for now and for the future. And here I'm talking specifically about the immediate future, with the full focus on the conjuncture that is now shaping up. And this, after all, is the importance of summing up history. It is important to go deeply into it in its own right and to explore and dissect it from a critical scientific standpoint. But ultimately the purpose of that is to advance the overall revolutionary struggle toward the final goal, and if you lose sight of that, especially right now in the short term as well as in the long term, then it turns into academic exercise for its own sake, then theory degenerates and you become unable to determine and distinguish correct from incorrect. And this is a tendency which exists now, around and about, and it's important to warn against it.

So that's a few thoughts on the Paris Commune and Lenin's summation of the Paris Commune. Now in terms of the Soviet Union, having just spoken to that, here I'm not going to attempt a thorough summation of a number of points I'm going to raise; but rather, I'm just going to try to touch on some main points and indicate some main questions for further study, investigation and struggle. Again, here is a question which is, especially in the present and developing situation, in the context of the conjuncture shaping up, of pressing importance, both in terms of summing up the crucial, historic lessons and of defeating erroneous and opportunist positions of various kinds from various directions on the nature and the role of the Soviet Union in today's situation. For example, I'm sure most of you are aware that the Communist Workers Party has openly reversed itself not only on the question of China but also on the question of the

Soviet Union; they now say both are socialist; they reversed themselves, insofar as they ever were stumbling toward at least aspects of a correct understanding of what socialism is, as distinguished from capitalism. Now they have comforted themselves and are attempting to build support among a social base with the idea that, after all, socialism is attainable because you can get a subway ride in Moscow for 7 cents. So both from a sweeping historical standpoint and from the standpoint of the immediate struggle in the world and the complexity of it and the many different forces in the field, it's crucial to dig more deeply, even more deeply than we've been able to do in the past (although our efforts have contributed, for example *Red Papers* 7¹⁰) and it's necessary to go much deeper into some of these crucial questions relating to the Soviet Union.

I'd like to begin by talking a little about some of Lenin's views on the question of the Soviet Union, particularly in its first desperate years and then as it began to become clear to him that, for the very immediate future at least, the Soviet Union was going to have to go it alone—not in the sense that it had no international ties or international allies, or wasn't part of the international proletariat or had no support, but in the sense that it was going to be, after all, the only victory of the proletarian revolution to be consolidated out of the whole conjuncture which shaped up around and immediately after World War 1. So, first, some brief examination of some of the key points of Lenin's views when he still expected the quick spread of the revolution, especially in Europe (in particular Germany), and saw it linking up with the anti-colonial struggles in the East (though exactly in what form and how those struggles would be developed toward socialism, was something about which he was not entirely clear). But, if you study over not only what was produced by the Communist International but also Lenin's own statements and writings in particular at that time, there was a very definite tendency towards viewing the development of the world revolution as, if you want to put it that way, a quantitative adding on to the existing Soviet Republic in Russia, that is, there would be development from that republic, almost literally and geographically, to a world soviet republic.

Now this, it must be clearly said, was not a question of chauvinism, because Lenin fought tooth and nail within the confines of the existing Soviet Republic, as well as internationally, against chauvinism, against chauvinist deviations and for genuine equality between nations, and for the unity of the international proletariat toward communism. Rather, it was a question of seeing the development and the rapid spread of the proletarian revolution to many parts of the world as being much more imminent than, unfortunately, it turned out to be. Though it was a mistaken view, its positive aspect—and this is something I want to reiterate later—was a great deal of impatience in trying, as the same leading comrade of ours referred to earlier said, to squeeze everything possible out of that conjuncture.

Now in this context I think it's important, and it's only in this context that I think it can actually be correctly evaluated, to look at Lenin's work *Left-Wing Communism* a little bit, in other words, no more than

the few very brief and scattered remarks that I made on Marx's *The Civil War in France*, the summation of the Commune. I'm not going to attempt to make any kind of thorough summation of *Left-Wing Communism* but rather to make a few points to be part of a deeper summation of *Left-Wing Communism* in the context of the larger questions being touched on here.

I think it has to be said, first of all, that in re-reading it recently I was struck by the fact that overall it's a very important work, particularly in the context of ripening possibilities for revolution. It is rich in many important lessons and principles that have to be grasped and applied correctly, and in a genuinely creative way—that is, a Marxist-Leninist sense of creative, not a revisionist, Khrushchevian sense of creative which as someone pointed out, is the view that it's alright to "creatively develop" Marxism-Leninism by discarding any of the principles that are uncomfortable to revisionists, but if you actually try to take the principles that have been forged and develop them through application to the present situation then you're a dogmatist and "how dare you-ist." But looking at *Left-Wing Communism* I was struck by the fact that there are many basic principles and lessons that are not only correct in the general sense but crucial, especially in the context of an approaching and developing revolutionary situation.

What Lenin is trying to call attention to and trying to focus on explicitly in this work is how to make the transition from the more normal kind of situation to the full development of a revolutionary struggle in the circumstances where a revolutionary situation is ripening but the masses have not yet come over to the revolutionary position. This, in an overall sense, is the problem Lenin is grappling with, but a number of points have to be made in this connection. First of all, it has to be understood in the context precisely of such a situation and of such a conjuncture—if not an historic conjuncture on a world scale, at least a conjuncture in the more limited sense of the sharpening up toward and the development of a revolutionary situation. And, it has to be said that these attempts to make the maximum gains possible infuse the overall thrust of this work. This is generally what is correct in *Left-Wing Communism* and it is based on certain expectations. But some points and approaches and even certain questions of method were wrong, even given the situation, reflecting on the one hand a certain lack of understanding of some of the concrete situations on the part of Lenin, but on the other hand going so far or trying so hard to take the lessons of the successful revolution in Russia and apply them to other circumstances in the crush and crunch of this still sharpening situation—to "squeeze as much as possible out of that conjuncture" (to use that very descriptive phrase)—that certain errors were actually made by Lenin, and in certain instances in any case, things begin to turn somewhat into their opposite in terms of tactics he urged.

For example, let's take the case of England which is the subject of a chapter in *Left-Wing Communism*. Lenin talks about the formation of the British Communist Party which is still in its infant stages (in fact

the party had not yet been formed) and the whole question of the Labor Party, the fact that a lot of the liberals are gravitating toward the Labor Party, that things are polarizing with the question of the Labor Party and its phony socialist leaders coming to the fore. He's drawing from the experiences of the Russian Revolution—whose particulars were unfortunately lost sight of in this instance—and drawing the general lesson concentrated in the famous phrase that everyone who's been around long enough to talk to the right-wingers in the movement has heard about supporting the Labor Party like a rope supports a hanging man: Force them to take power, because they don't want to take power, while maintaining your independent stand and your right to criticize, and when the masses all desert them as they see that the Laborites will not in fact implement socialism, they will come over to the communists and a revolutionary position. Well, some tactics of that kind were in fact correctly employed in the Russian revolution *vis-a-vis* the Mensheviks, the Socialist Revolutionaries and other forces who at one time or another or in one situation or another had the allegiance of crucial sections of the masses—for example the workers in the Soviets and the peasantry. But with regard to Merry Old England, with its long tradition of corruption and bourgeoisification of the working class which, along with its whole bourgeois parliamentary tradition, Lenin was well aware of, the situation was different.

You know Stalin once said in *Marxism and the National Question* that "In Russia, there is no parliament, thank God."¹ (I was never exactly clear who was saying "thank God," since Stalin put this in quotes, but I always thought it was Stalin.) But anyway there is a point there that if you have those parliaments for a long time and you begin to get workers' deputies it becomes a millstone around the neck of the proletariat and of the revolutionary movement. It really is sort of a "thank god" situation if you don't have a parliament most of the time. In Russia the parliament (or the Duma) was a concession wrung out of the ruling classes and the Tsar in particular at certain crucial periods of upsurge and ripening of a revolutionary situation. It didn't really have time to be taken over and utilized by the ruling classes for the purpose of stupefying, and lulling and corrupting and corroding the outlook and tenseness of the masses. They always had this in mind, but they didn't have the time the British bourgeoisie had to perfect it as a means of stupefying the masses.

In Britain that parliament went along with the whole bourgeoisification of the proletariat and unfortunately it turned out to be the case, insofar as and to the degree that attempts were made to apply what Lenin says there (and in my opinion it could not have been otherwise in following such tactics), that confusion and disorientation set in, particularly among the advanced sections of the proletariat. Because it was not the same situation as Russia, it was not a case that parliament came into being right at those times or where, because of revolutionary upsurges these were new opportunities, or in any case, new necessity in regard to the parliament. In fact, while there was a

revolutionary mood of a kind, a rebelliousness in England in the aftermath of the war, there was *not* the same kind of bringing to a head of the contradictions and the development of a revolutionary situation as there had been in Russia just before.

Frankly, there is a certain bourgeois logic to Lenin's argument here. He even goes so far as to say at one point, that if you support Henderson and Snowden (who were the leaders of the phony socialist Labor Party) and if they gain the victory over Lloyd George and Churchill, then the majority of workers will, in a brief space of time, become disappointed in their leaders and come over to support the communists. Lenin says, and here's where I think bourgeois logic begins to assert itself and even a certain amount of opportunism frankly, "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."¹² Well, they may or they may not, but that's not the question—that may be a tactical consideration, but it has to be based on something more fundamental. Lenin here is basing his argument on an erroneous assessment, and here is where he was trying so hard that he fell over backward, that's the only way I can put it, because he is not unaware of some of the points that I've been discussing, he reflects to a certain degree here an understanding of the role that parliamentarism has played in the British working class and in British society. In fact, he even says to the effect that exactly because of the history of parliamentarism, it's all the more necessary to carry out the parliamentary form of struggle in Great Britain—and I think that is wrong, bourgeois logic and trying so hard that he fell over backward.

Now these errors might not be so important if everybody—and I mean the leaders of the international communist movement and down to all the modern-day revisionists of various kinds almost without exception—hadn't insisted on reprinting and disseminating *Left-Wing Communism* as "the great work of strategy and tactics" which must be applied to the letter, and if it hadn't been used, as it has been used by such types, as a recipe everywhere for revisionism, and if it hadn't in fact been made front and center while *What Is To Be Done?* was largely buried or distorted in its meaning. But unfortunately, *Left-Wing Communism* has been seized on to promote revisionism, and the kind of mistakes in it that I've pointed to are given concentrated attention and expression at the same time that the correct things about it, which are the essence and main aspect of it, are taken out of context and turned into a recipe for revisionism, for economism, parliamentary cretinism, tailism and being the tail on the bourgeoisie generally. Everyone that's ever been in the movement and around these various forces more than a few months has been smacked in the face with quotations from and references to *Left-Wing Communism* in this kind of way, and it's time to sum this up correctly and uphold what's correct and say we have a few criticisms, on the other hand, to make about this—which are what I've just summarized.

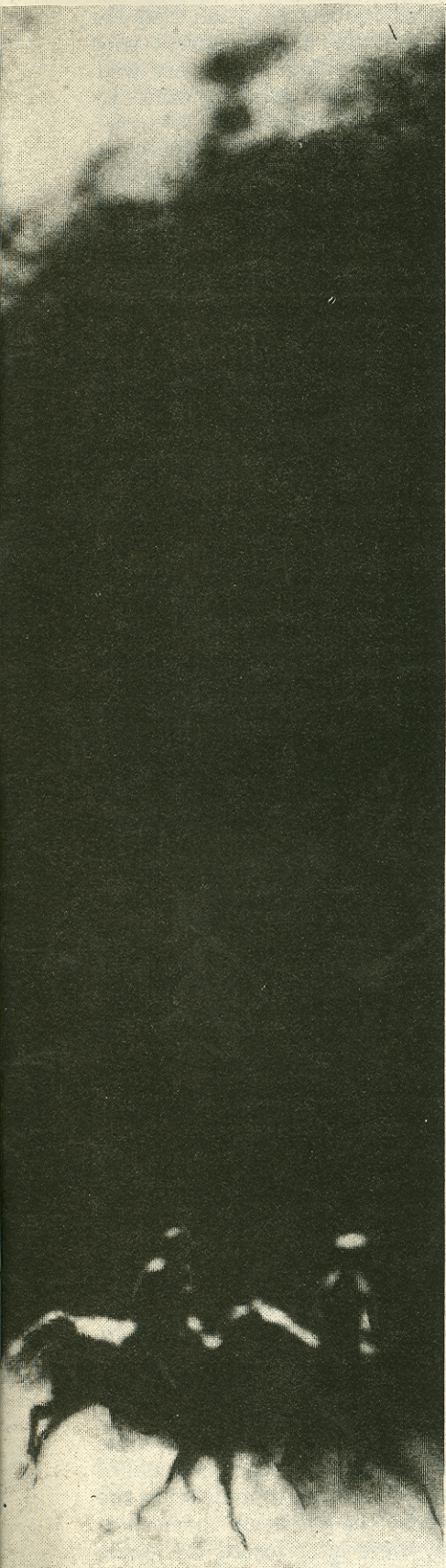
In general we could say that some things that did apply then or mainly applied then and/or reflected errors

to a certain degree, even if secondarily, have been carried along and built up as articles of faith and become in fact articles of faith of revisionism, for example, the emphasis on trade unions and work in them, which can also be found in *Left-Wing Communism*. It's not that Lenin does not recognize the limitations and shortcomings of trade unions, and certainly of trade unionism, and that he doesn't recognize the fact that in large part, especially in the West, the unions are controlled by outright reactionaries, not mere reformists. But there is a certain orientation that the trade unions, especially in the West, are, after all, the key mass organizations of the proletariat and that it is necessary to work in and win the trade unions to the cause of socialism. To the degree that this represented truth or much more of the truth at the time of *Left-Wing Communism*, at this stage of the proletarian struggle and of the situation of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries in particular, it certainly needs to be looked at critically and afresh now, as we and some others have begun doing.

So that's just some brief remarks on some points having to do with Lenin's views when he still expected the rather immediate victory or spread of the proletarian revolution to other parts of Europe, in particular Germany, and also the linking up with the anti-colonial struggle in the East. But then it began to become clear that the revolution in the West, in particular and above all in Germany, had been delayed, and probably would be delayed for a while, in fact longer than had been anticipated earlier by Lenin and others. Lenin certainly continued to view things in terms of, and to base himself strategically on, the world revolution and, further, he insightfully recognized the beginning developments toward the shifting of the focal point of revolution more and more to the East, which has been an undeniable phenomenon since Lenin's time. Lenin was not, however, being one-sided about this or adopting a "third worldist" position, that is, writing off revolution in the West or seeing the only possible thrust of revolution coming from the East or suggesting that revolution in the West would only be possible after the flame of revolution had lit up the entire East (and then perhaps things would develop in the West to where a proletarian revolution could become possible). This was *not* Lenin's view and when it is attributed to him represents a vulgarization of his actual view, although he did correctly recognize the developments which were really only beginning to assert themselves, that is, the shift of the revolutionary center more and more toward the East.

Now in this light it's interesting to look at one of Lenin's last attempts, in the essay "Better Fewer, But Better,"¹³ particularly the last part, to grapple with the question of what are they going to do given the fact—this is in 1923—that revolution in the West and Germany in particular is not going to succeed quickly and come immediately to the aid of the Bolshevik Revolution. It's very obvious in reading that he really is grappling with this question without having forged or synthesized a thoroughly consistent program, and he's already right up against some of the problems of the proletarian movement in the West. For example, in





Soviet Red Army during the Civil War.

the Communist International one of the main leaders of German communism (so-called) wants to have a proviso that they can assure the workers in Germany that if there's a revolution their wages won't be lowered. Well, this certainly helps Lenin to begin realizing some of these problems—you know it's not that much different than a lot of people nowadays. Lenin had begun to come up against the fact that they were going to be going it alone, perhaps not for decades, but for a period of time. Previously, the idea that revolution in the West, and Germany in particular, was going to immediately come to their aid was always the expectation of Lenin, and that's something we have to grasp. It wasn't only the Trotskyites who had the orientation that the revolution in Russia needed to and would have the revolution in the more advanced countries and in particular Germany come to its aid if not to its rescue—perhaps “rescue” is too strong a term and does fit more the Trotskyite view—would come to its aid and that in turn they would seize power in Russia and that would be the spark to proletarian revolution in the West, and as power was captured in the West that would be the ground on which they would have a viable basis to build socialism and to carry forward toward the world soviet republic. This was Lenin's idea until it clearly had to be summed up that this was no longer an immediate prospect.

Now Lenin was, and I'll come back to what it's in opposition to a little bit later, willing to put the Soviet revolution on the line and risk it in the short run for the victory of revolution in Germany and other parts of the world, in particular other parts of Europe which he saw as most strategic, correctly so at that time, immediately coming out of World War 1. He was willing to do it. During the latter part of 1918 and 1919, with revolutionary stirrings and uprisings spreading in Central Europe, Lenin repeatedly underscored the necessity of assisting these struggles to the maximum, including by force of arms and troops. In fact, in 1920 the Red Army drove on Warsaw (though it was later repulsed) and this was clearly linked with creating more favorable conditions for the German revolution. Again this orientation was not based on a sort of Trotskyite fatalism—that all was lost unless revolution occurred in the advanced countries—but grew out of the recognition that this was indeed the responsibility of the proletariat in power and would lay the most solid basis to build socialism in the Soviet Union. Lenin was perfectly willing (as opposed to the idea that you can't export revolution) to export revolution, but he wanted to make sure that there would be somebody to use it if he exported it. In the conditions of the '20s, he summed up that, unfortunately, there would not be yet. This is something that has also been lost sight of to a large degree since Lenin's time, and things have gone too far in the direction of promising the bourgeoisie in power that we won't export revolution to their countries. It's not as easy to uphold that principle when you're actually faced with the necessity of maintaining power and advancing in a particular country, but, nevertheless, it has to be upheld.

But getting back to “Better Fewer, But Better,” one of a number of things which I think are of long-term

importance in trying to understand this problem more deeply, again especially if you look over the last section of that essay, is that there is an overemphasis and a general identification of industrialization and the predominance of industry in the country with socialism. This is a theme also found in other well-known and not only important but inspiring works by Lenin (for example, in “A Great Beginning,” which was written a couple years earlier, in 1919). Now you have to be careful in making this criticism because Lenin did say “in the final analysis” and “in the long run.” And of course it is true that you can't conceive of socialism triumphing and winning complete victory on the basis of backward, even pre-capitalist agrarian production as the main form of production. But there was a little bit too much the tendency toward one-to-one identification of industrialization, the dominance of industry over agriculture, with socialism—in other words, the idea, looking at it from the other side, that without the dominance of industry socialism was not viable, and this view was in general currency in the socialist and communist movement. And while it's true in the long-term, there's a lot that we've found out that goes on between here and the long term.

At the same time and related to this is the question of the peasantry. Now because of the way in which the Russian revolution developed, as opposed to, for example, the Chinese revolution, there really was not the long term and deep-going planting of roots in the countryside in Russia, although there was in the context of the 1905 revolution and again during the war, particularly with the peasants in uniform and in the upsurges and the victories of the 1917 revolution, the phenomenon, as Lenin commented on, of revolutionary workers going back to the villages they'd come from or going out to the villages generally and doing revolutionary work among the peasantry and linking up with the peasant uprisings. But there was not this long-term deep-going planting of roots among the peasantry that necessarily went on in the Chinese revolution because it was not correct to center that revolution in the countryside in Russia, as proved to be correct and necessary in China. Lenin's attitude toward the peasantry which he was very open about, was one of trying—and we can use the phrase in a political sense—to “learn warfare by making warfare.” For example, on the eve of October as they were seizing power, he devoted himself to assiduously, vigorously and rigorously studying the literature of the Socialist Revolutionaries, who had a base among the peasantry, and ended up adopting their program to win over the peasantry—but it was a very quick and concerted effort to come to know the peasantry in a very concentrated way, and to win it over in a very concentrated way.

So, this problem with the peasantry is not surprising given that the Bolsheviks had not expected a revolution in Russia necessarily to come first or, even if it came first, to come and then be on its own without the aid of the simultaneous or quickly-following revolution in the West. They had not devoted the attention to the peasant question which they were later forced to devote once they were confronted with the actual situation of hanging on to power and attempting not only to win a

civil war and at the same time defeat foreign intervention, but to consolidate and begin to rebuild the economy and head out on the socialist road. Lenin studied the peasant question vigorously and certainly recognized the importance of it and the need to win the peasantry. He studied the experience of cooperatives and stressed, for example, the qualitative difference in the role that cooperatives—and he's talking in particular about cooperatives in trade more than cooperatives in production in these early years—could play in being a sort of transition, under the proletarian dictatorship, toward socialist economy in the countryside and in the country overall. But with all that he didn't work out a complete policy on the question of the peasantry and how the peasant question would figure into the overall socialist transformation, and to a certain degree this is based on the factors that I discussed earlier about the nature and expectations of the Russian revolution and the Russian revolutionaries and, to a certain degree, on this notion of the identification of industrialization and the predominance of industry over agriculture as being an essential of socialism.

Now it's true that Lenin argued against the theory of the productive forces and in particular against the Mensheviks, Kautskyites and so on who were making the traditional argument that it was impossible to have socialism in Russia because it was too backward and you have to have the necessary level of technique of civilization—in the sense of productive forces and science—before socialism is possible. And Lenin in "Our Revolution"¹⁶ takes them on and says, "Well, okay, but why can't we first seize power and then create the civilization; where in your dusty books does it say that we have to do it the other way?" And I'm sure he was fully prepared, even if they found the quotation, to say that they weren't going to do it that way in any case, that if they had a chance to seize power, they would and then go about solving that problem—which was the Leninist and correct Marxist orientation.

But even here—in rereading it I was struck by this—it's clear that he's refuting them but also accepting a certain amount of their terms. He's saying, "Well, okay, so you do have to have a certain level of civilization," then he puts in parenthesis, and this is important, "although nobody can say just what that level is" which is also a refutation on a more profound level, it's a dialectical statement as opposed to mechanical materialism; he's saying, "Well, yes, it's true but let's not get too mechanical and too absolute about it." But at the same time, he is, to a certain degree, saying, "Okay, well and good, but why can't we first seize power and *then* outdo the capitalist countries and capitalism in general in creating a higher level of technique and (in that sense) civilization." And it's not by any means that Lenin had the view of the revisionists because this was exactly in refutation of them as their views posed themselves sharply at that time. But in scrounging around and looking for things in Lenin to justify themselves, it is not that the revisionists, the Chinese revisionists, for example, right after seizing power, were without anything to pull out of Lenin to marshall as evidence for their line of putting emphasis on production, technique, and out-

producing the advanced capitalist countries as the guarantee against restoration.

At the same time Lenin, both in the essay, "Better Fewer, But Better," and in general during this period of the last few years of his life did put a lot of emphasis on the necessity, and correctly so, of making use of rifts among the imperialists, because he correctly recognized that this was a life-and-death struggle and gave concrete leadership. It wasn't a question of principle in the abstract, but upholding principle while at the same time having that principle be applied in practice, because the principle without the practice degenerates as a principle and also has no effect—at least no positive effect. This should not be a way of saying: who cares, principle, schminciple, the only thing is practice, in the narrow sense. It's a question of the synthesis of the two, of winning the masses, a question of actually seizing power, making revolution and transforming society; that's the ultimate test and Lenin treated it as the *ultimate* test. He treated it as a test and he also treated it ultimately, and not narrowly in an empiricist or mechanical revisionist way, but as we said in our last Central Committee report, he was interested in winning and this we should learn from him. In this context he grappled with the question of how to make use of the rifts among the imperialists, but he saw this and put this in the context of the expectation, if not immediately, still fairly soon, of an upsurge in the world revolution and, if you want to put it this way, he saw it more in terms of "marking time" until there was another upsurge in the world revolution, than a long-term strategic policy of making use of these rifts.

Now along with this, his analysis of world forces, for example at the Second Congress of the Communist International, in terms of states and peoples and classes has also been seized on by the Chinese revisionists of late. They say, for example in *Peking Review* No. 45 from 1977, their major theoretical statement on the "three worlds" theory, something like, well, Lenin had his own version of the "three worlds." At that time he divided the world into three, too. What should we learn from Lenin? We should learn to divide the world into three. But, there is an element of truth in that if you read the essay they're referring to, Lenin did say that among the victor imperialist states there are the ones that won big; there are the ones that didn't win so big; then, finally, there's Germany which got creamed, there's us that made revolution and all the colonial and dependent peoples. He did make an analysis like that—not, however, to figure out which bourgeoisies it was best to suck up to, but how to make use of contradictions among them and, even more strategically and fundamentally, where to expect and where to concentrate work to develop a revolutionary upsurge in the next period. But, again, it's not that the Chinese revisionists, in scrounging around and looking for a Leninist cover—to the degree they want any (and that's decreasingly so) for their reactionary and counter-revolutionary international line as formulated, at least heretofore, in the "three worlds" theory, it's not that they can't find any elements of that in Lenin. Of course, as Lenin himself once said, you can always

find any quote out of context to justify anything, which is one of the things that makes life so frustrating. But these are some problems, we are not simply dealing with distortion, there are some things, certain elements which begin showing up, that can be marshalled for wrong arguments.

In a certain way a salient example of this is the policy that was applied towards Germany in the early years of the Soviet Republic. It was in general a correct policy, that is, the Bolsheviks recognized that Germany had to seek friends in funny places, strange places because of its defeated status and the way it was being pounced on by the other imperialists to get the spoils of the victory (from having put down Germany's attempt to redivide the world in its favor and having redivided it in their own favor). Germany was open to and had the necessity, just as the Soviet Republic did from a qualitatively different position, of forming some kind of agreements and alliances. These were, for example, agreements in the military sphere: Germany wasn't allowed by the allies to have armies so it basically trained the core of the leadership of its army and developed a lot of its weaponry in Russia while the Russians learned some of the same things building up their army, all of which was necessary and correct in that sense. But what began to creep in already, and what is troublesome and what has to be summed up for its key lessons, is that there was a tendency—which would develop much more fully later and turn into or toward an antagonism—to not correctly handle, and in a certain way to even deny the existence of, the contradiction between the state interests, if you want to put it that way, of the proletariat in power and the overall world revolutionary interests of the international proletariat.

Here I just want to point out that the worst thing of all in this regard is to think that the two are not in contradiction and in fact became one and the same. This became a little bit the current—and more than a small trickle, but a regular current—in Soviet policy at the time. It's not that they wrote off revolution in Germany, far from it, especially in the late teens and the first years of the twenties; it's that the idea of the two being the same began to creep in as justification for what they were doing, when it should have been justified simply on the basis that it was necessary and wasn't, in and of itself, harmful to the revolution in Germany or world revolution for Soviet Russia to have those dealings with Germany. In other words what I have been describing became part of the notion that by doing this and by dealing with Germany the influence of the Russian revolution will be spread and it will make the work to build revolution in Germany easier. Well, while that is an aspect of the situation, there is an aspect of truth to that, in fact it's the secondary aspect. It's not a question of infantile-ism and refusing to have such relations out of pristine purity; nevertheless it must be recognized that there's a certain legitimacy being bestowed upon, or a certain confusion being furthered about, the nature of that regime in Germany. But that's not even the most important point: so what, in a certain sense, because the communists have the task and the possibility to do their exposure and carry

out the kind of work to overcome what problems that might pose. It's the same situation that was posed in another context, in another way, with the opening to the West of China in the '70s. As for revolutionaries in the West, some handled it fairly well and learned to handle it better, and some learned how to ride the circuit back and forth to Peking and degenerated. The same problem was posing itself at that time—the early, desperate years of the Soviet Republic.

To think that somehow what is in fact a contradiction and therefore has the potential, if not correctly handled, to become antagonistic is *not* a contradiction, to think that the state needs of the proletariat in power, if you want to put it that way, the need for the proletariat in power in Russia to make use of rifts among the imperialists in order to maintain power on the one hand, and the interests of the international proletariat, as represented in its need to win power in Germany, on the other hand, are one and the same, is the worst of all things. That is when it really begins to turn into its opposite because then the revolutionary edge is not only blunted but begins to become destroyed, and you begin to think that you can somehow ride the coattails of the authority and influence and respectability that's being earned by the diplomacy of the socialist state. On the other hand, it is a fact that there will also be a tendency among the diplomats and, overall, the political leaders in this socialist state to want to cool down revolutionary sentiments and revolutionary developments in the country with which they are of necessity (and even out of desperate necessity) carrying out these diplomatic arrangements and agreements, because revolution doesn't come such that one day you're doing diplomacy and the next day you wake up and you can have a revolution. It goes through a series of developments—back and forth, twists and turns—and through all that the two, the diplomacy and the state needs as I've defined them, on the one hand, and the development toward a revolution, on the other, come frequently into very sharp contradiction.

Now just in passing, one thing that should be said is that in Lenin himself, and not simply later in the Soviet Party and the international movement, there is a wrong view, a view contrary to a certain degree to Leninism, in fact, on the question of the Versailles Treaty and how to deal with it in Germany, which is not totally unconnected with these things I've been discussing. Earlier Lenin took and fought for a basically correct position, for example in *Left-Wing Communism*, on the question of the Versailles Treaty where he said that on the basis of internationalism German communists should not put themselves in a position of allowing the bourgeoisie to corner them into coming out and saying they're against the Versailles Treaty and should determine their attitude toward the Versailles Treaty on the basis of the interests of the international proletariat and the world revolution. But then there begins to creep in the view, even somewhat appearing in Lenin and certainly carried forward after him, of pushing the communists in Germany a little bit—and this is not accidental and ties in somewhat with his sort of early and partial analysis of the three parts of the world, if you will—to raise the national

banner in Germany against the Versailles Treaty and against the victors' feast at the expense of Germany.

Now I have put this view out a number of times in the past to different people and I'll just repeat it again: I never could understand why, when you're talking about imperialists and if you're *in* an imperialist country, the mere fact that it's a loser or has been knocked down to second rate should make you the big partisan of defending the fatherland. In other words, the view that, "Well, my imperialists got whipped so now it's okay for me to defend the fatherland," is something I can't quite grasp the correctness of from a Marxist-Leninist standpoint. And I say a Marxist-Leninist standpoint even if Lenin fell into it to a certain degree, because there is Leninism and there is Lenin, just as there is (even though the Chinese revisionists have said it) Mao Tsetung Thought and then there's Mao Tsetung and the two are not necessarily the same on every point. It isn't always the case that Mao upheld Mao Tsetung Thought—though where we think he deviated from it certainly would be the opposite of where the Chinese revisionists would think so. And the same for Leninism: every act of Lenin is not necessarily Leninism. But there is Leninism, all the same. And I think this is an important point—this idea that begins to creep in, that if your imperialist comes out the loser then it's okay to support it: "after all, we're just second-rate imperialists here, we only got a little chunk of Africa or all we got is a little island here or there and we're the underdog; therefore, why can't we support the fatherland and see if we can get more; then, if we get more, everybody can oppose us." What kind of logic that is doesn't need saying.

The important point to grasp is that there really is a problem or contradiction that has to be grasped deeply and in an all-around way. It can't be avoided or brushed aside or answered as one Menshevik who was in our Party—and we know how deep and sincere this was—tried to brush aside the question, before China went revisionist, of what will we do in the next world war, what stand are we going to take including if China's attacked by the Soviet Union? After some go-around and discussion—and I must say this was at a Central Committee meeting—he just said, wanting to waive all discussion, "Well, what's the big problem, they'll go to war, we'll carry out revolutionary defeatism and overthrow our bourgeoisie. . . so let's move the agenda." Well, unfortunately, the world's not that simple and we know where the people that wanted to move the agenda in that way moved their agenda to.* And there is a problem, a contradiction that has to be grasped deeply and in an all-around way. The world, including the situation of the proletariat, really is different when the proletariat seizes, and particularly if it holds power in one or a few countries.

And this is a point to be returned to somewhat in the context of the remarks I'm going to make today, but it's also something that obviously needs to be delved into, dug into, reflected on, grappled with and struggl-

*This refers to a group of revisionists, dubbed "Mensheviks," who sided with the revisionist coup in China and split from the RCP, USA in late 1977.

ed over much more fully and in an all-around way within the whole international communist movement. For example, I was in one discussion with someone who pointed out, "Well, the position of the proletariat is that it has nothing to lose but its chains, but if it has a country does it have nothing to lose but its chains?" There is a problem to think about, and to think that there's no contradiction between a proletariat having state power and the advance of world revolution means that you can only incorrectly handle what is a very profound and, at times, extremely acute and potentially antagonistic contradiction.

Just to finish up on this aspect of the commentary on some of Lenin's views: Lenin died, as we know, before the fuller development of these contradictions. He died without ever coming fully to grips, without facing in the fullest sense nor obviously finding a basic resolution to these contradictions in a period of growing turmoil. He had of course been basically unable to function politically to any significant degree for the last couple of years before his death and then, especially with his death, there was a tremendous line struggle that went on inside the Soviet Party. I'm not going to even attempt to try to get into much of that now, it's something that also has to be studied and summed up and struggled over much more deeply. But, without repeating everything that's said in the last Central Committee Report in the document "For Decades to Come on a World Scale,"¹⁸ (the part in particular "Outline of Views on the Historical Experience of the International Communist Movement and the Lessons for Today") where evaluation is made of Stalin, it is a fact of history that at that juncture after the death of Lenin, and when the question was very sharply posed of what road to take in the Soviet Republic at that time and the question of whether in fact the socialist road could be embarked on and, if not what must be done, basically, and in the main, Stalin represented the most correct and principally the correct position at that time. This was so in general, but especially as against the position of Trotsky, Bukharin, *et al.* who either openly or in a "left" form counseled and fought for capitulation to the bourgeoisie and reactionary class forces in Russia and internationally.

But having said that the essential question was whether or not it was possible to have socialism in one country—the debate over which, in one sense we're all familiar with—it's necessary to say, immediately and on the other hand, that to a large degree the *question was being begged*. I say the question was begged to a certain degree, that is the question of socialism in one country, since much of it hinges on *what in fact is socialism*.

And again, the point has to be stressed that Trotsky, Bukharin, *et al.* were fundamentally wrong and were either in a "left" or openly right form advocating capitulation. But that also does not exhaust the question and isn't the most profound or the highest level of understanding that can be achieved around this question, as experience and the theoretical and ideological struggle based on that experience has shown. And out of all this has been forged and is continuing to be forged more deeply a more correct understanding on this question.

To put it this way, Stalin saw and presented

socialism as the elimination of classes, or at least antagonistic classes. Now this definition isn't some capricious invention of his, it was in fact the more or less accepted view of socialism, including, by and large, on Lenin's part. We have to understand that it's not so much that later on Stalin invented a new definition of socialism, this was the definition, and when Stalin talked about socialism in one country he was talking about the elimination of classes, or antagonistic classes in any case—it's not just that later when he said we have socialism and said at the same time that antagonistic classes had been eliminated that somehow he had smuggled in a new deviation from what had been the accepted Marxist-Leninist view up to that point.

And this, ironically, has been somewhat obscured since the leader who had led the way in forging a higher, and the highest, understanding of this up to this point has been Mao. Mao was in fact a continuator of the experience of the Soviet revolution and of the building of socialism in the Soviet Union, even though he looked deeply into and set about attempting to sum up deeply and to correct a lot of the errors that were contained in the Soviet experience and the leadership, particularly by Stalin, of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist transformation in the Soviet Union as far as it went. Mao went deeply into some of the errors, especially as it became clear that capitalism had been restored in the Soviet Union under the leadership of Khrushchev; he dug deeply into this whole experience and brought into light and focused on a lot of errors that had been made in the way that the question of classes and class struggle was handled or was not recognized and was not correctly handled under socialism after a certain point. But at the same time, Mao was in fact (and correctly) a continuator of the experience that was first initiated with the seizure of power with the Russian revolution and the beginning of the socialist transformation and the embarking on the socialist road in Russia. So the way that all this has come to us has been in the tradition and carrying forward the legacy of Mao.

To put it another way, we read back into history by first becoming familiar with Mao's summation of what socialism is—that there are classes and class struggle and that's the central question under socialism—and with his criticism, therefore, of Stalin's erroneous analysis of how classes (or at least antagonistic classes) had been eliminated with the achievement of basic socialist ownership and the elimination of private ownership in the old forms. And so it appears, perhaps, that Stalin was deviating from the previously accepted notions or norms of Marxism-Leninism by saying that the bourgeoisie had been eliminated when that was actually more of a continuation of the tradition and not a deviation on Stalin's part. Mao in fact was making a leap beyond and to a certain extent away from that, a radical rupture beyond it—on the same road as a continuator of that same historical experience—but a leap beyond and in that sense away from it (though not, certainly, a reversal of it). Stalin presented socialism as the elimination of antagonistic classes, and it's this that he said was possible in one country. And we have

to say with historical perspective—Mao's contributions and what's been learned by forging ahead on that road by continuing in the direction pointed by Mao—that this notion of socialism, and particularly in the way Stalin presented it, was linked to his mechanical materialist and general metaphysical tendencies, that is, not simply the view that socialism meant the elimination of classes but how Stalin saw that elimination of classes coming about and how he presented the socialist transformation, about which I'll say a few points briefly.

But first, just a side point: if it can be said that Lenin recognized, in a certain sense, the contradiction involved in keeping power and maintaining the proletarian dictatorship in one country while attempting to jockey and maneuver until reserves came forward in the other parts of the world for the world revolution and if, on the other hand, he tended to see the world revolution in a certain sense as the extension, almost literally and geographically, of the first existing Soviet Republic, and in that context saw the Soviet Republic as the temporary center of sorts from which the world revolution would expand outward or to which, from other parts of the world, there would be added additional Soviet republics; it has to be said that with the further development of the Soviet Union, of the beginning of the socialist transformation in the Soviet Union with the leadership of Stalin, this erroneous idea became more pronounced, while at the same time the fact that things would not develop that way became more pronounced. And, at the same time the tendency to say that there was an absolute identity of interests between the Soviet Republic as a proletarian state and the overall advance of world revolution became more pronounced, more marked and tended to a large degree, particularly in the late '30s, to turn rather sharply towards and into its opposite.

Now, what strikes me in recently re-reading the major documents at the time of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928 is that, on the one hand, there is a general overall revolutionary framework and a definite revolutionary thrust to the overall proceedings and line of the Congress, there is a real grappling and attempt to come to terms with the question of how to make revolution in both the advanced capitalist countries and the colonial and dependent and backward countries. On the other hand, it's marred by a great deal of economist tendencies and mechanical materialism which show up much more strongly later. Perhaps it's an irony of history, but we could say with a certain amount of historical perspective, that in a certain sense, and this is somewhat pointed to in that outline at the last Central Committee, while they correctly predicted at the Congress—and in general the communist movement and the Soviet leadership were predicting—the breakdown and the end of the temporary stabilization and expansion that the capitalist countries experienced in the '20s, it was not entirely for the correct reasons. Their prediction was borne out, but that divided very sharply into two because a lot of the basis on which they were predicting it had to do with erroneous notions that were tied up with the whole concept of the "general crisis of capitalism" in

the imperialist stage and with the advent of the first proletarian revolution in Russia. This "general crisis" theory postulated a linear straight-line down descent of capitalism in the imperialist phase based on the somewhat mechanical notion that the ground was being cut out and cut away from imperialism (even almost literally in a geographic sense) in the world. So their prediction divided very sharply into two. Perhaps, had they been *incorrect* on an important question like that, it would have been negated with a more correct methodology as to how to approach the problem . . . but we'll leave that for further speculation another time.

In the Sixth Congress, while there is this revolutionary thrust despite the errors and tendencies toward mechanical materialism, economism and so on, there is a very clear line that says that the interests of the building of socialism in the Soviet Union and of the world revolution are one and the same, identical. At that time, leaving aside certain agreements still being maintained with Germany which were of a secondary character, the Soviet Union was not in a position to and therefore was not making a real attempt to develop a lot of relations and agreements with a number of the different major imperialist states. They had agreements of a minor sort but that was exactly of a very minor and secondary character in what was going on in the Soviet Union. For a number of reasons including, principally, an overall correct revolutionary orientation, they were putting their emphasis on making revolution and supporting revolution in the imperialist-controlled world and not on making use of contradictions among the imperialists and reaching agreements with certain imperialists as against others.

So therefore the fact that there was indeed a contradiction, as I said, at times a very acute and potentially antagonistic contradiction between the maintaining of power in one socialist state and the advance of the world revolution overall, could in a certain sense be mitigated and buried under the fact that the Soviet national interests, or the national interests, if you will, of the proletariat in power in the Soviet Union went parallel with world revolution at that time and the policies that were being adopted by the Soviet state did not come sharply into conflict with the overall revolutionary struggle in other parts of the world. Yes, it came into conflict here and there but as a secondary matter. Nevertheless, even though the world revolution was promoted overall and the attempt was made to support and advance it, things were presented in terms of an absolute identity of interests and at the same time it was already beginning to be said—and this became much more fully the line later and has been maintained and deepened as the line down to today—that the leading edge, or the cutting edge, of the world revolution was first the building and then the defense of socialism (real or alleged) in the Soviet Union (that is, the socialist road really being embarked on and advanced on for a certain period and then only being alleged and "socialism" being used as a cover for capitalist restoration and imperialism later on).

Now all this, in turn, was linked with the way Stalin saw and went about leading the transformation,

especially the economic transformation toward socialist ownership, in the Soviet Union. Again, in a *heightened* way even beyond the tendencies for this in Lenin, socialism was identified overwhelmingly with industrialization. And industrialization, so long as it was under state ownership, was seen as the key to socialism and the identity between the two (that is industry under state ownership and socialism) was made very close—a very close and nearly one-to-one connection. And at the same time the approach to agriculture and the collectivization policy involved a number of serious errors. This is not merely, unfortunately, a slander by Trotskyites and even more openly reactionary enemies of socialism and of the Soviet Union when it was socialist. The policy carried out toward agriculture and the Soviet Union's experience, even under Stalin, was something Mao increasingly and ever more deeply criticized. Agriculture was carried out in a way to establish the basis for accumulation for industry in large part by soaking the peasantry.

As Mao put it, you want the hen to lay eggs but you don't feed it; you want the horse to gallop but you don't give it fodder and so on. Basically they took a tremendous amount from the peasantry as the basis for a breakneck industrialization program at the same time as they were carrying out rapid and wide-scale collectivization of agriculture; this was all a package program for the socialist transformation. And again the point here is not to go into and thoroughly analyze this, but more to point here to the *need* to go into and much more thoroughly analyze all this. In the comments and criticisms made by Mao in places like the *Ten Major Relationships* and consistently throughout official (for now) Volume 5 of Mao's works and also in the CIA-collected *Miscellany of Mao Tsetung Thought* and in the *Chairman Mao Talks to the People* collection¹⁷ there is a consistent thread of criticism of the Soviet policy toward the peasantry. If you want to put it in a rather stark form, to a significant degree, they carried out industrialization on the backs of the peasantry while at the same time carrying out collectivization. And all this in turn was linked to how Stalin saw socialism, and here I'm not talking about the point stressed earlier of seeing socialism as the elimination of antagonistic classes, not *just* that, but the whole ensemble of envisioned features of how he saw socialism, including the necessity for the predominance of industry in a very short time.

Stalin did—it's important to point this out—struggle against a lot of the leftist deviations; he wrote articles like "Dizzy With Success"¹⁸ and other things against these deviations when they represented a tendency within what was a genuine revolutionary upsurge at that time of the late '20 and early '30s, going along with the whole tenor and orientation of the Sixth Congress. You can see reflected in the economic policies, in the superstructure, the novels that were written and in other things, that this was a genuine revolutionary upsurge that had an internationalist character of a general kind to it. The thrust that came through was, "We are transforming the world in order to build a new world." There was a lot of heroic, self-sacrificing and largely class-conscious struggle on the

part of a number of advanced workers and elements among the peasantry, intellectuals and so on. And, as far as investigation reveals up to this point, this was linked with and largely under the leadership of Stalin. It was not opposed to Stalin; it was not a case of Stalin fighting to beat it down; it was more linked with Stalin. And again, Stalin fought very hard at the same time against the rather obvious and sharp expressions of "left" deviations, that is, a tendency to collectivize everything, as he put it, down to the church bell in the village, and to collectivize everybody's hens and everything else. This was a natural deviation, somewhat similar to those that arose in the course of the Great Leap Forward in China. Stalin attempted to correct these "left" excesses at the same time the general upsurge then of socialist transformation with the general characteristics I've mentioned was largely identified with and led by Stalin.

At the same time, having said all that, one gets the impression that the breakneck industrialization and collectivization and even a certain extracting of the surplus for industrialization from the peasantry to a degree that Mao correctly criticized was justified to a large degree in Stalin's thinking because he envisioned, with the carrying through of these policies, the elimination of private ownership in the old form and thereby really the end of capitalism, or any real basis for capitalism within the Soviet Union itself, except ideological survivals. So its like the old saying (I think it was even used to justify some of this): "When you cut down a forest a lot of splinters fly." In other words, yes, unfortunately, there'll be a lot of side effects to this that may cause problems but if they're correctly handled it will be worth it because once we've uprooted private ownership then really we've advanced to a whole new stage where the question of restoration from within, any material basis for that, has been all but uprooted. So, if you're looking at it that way, which is how Stalin was looking at it, then these kind of breakneck policies and measures which perhaps strained in particular the peasantry beyond a certain limit can still be felt to be justified.

Now, again, to bring in another aspect of this and to look at it from another dimension, in terms of the philosophical outlook and methodology: I was reading the *Textbook of Marxist Philosophy* which was produced by the Leningrad Institute of Philosophy in 1937. It is an attempt to give a fairly major and thorough summary of the development of Marxist philosophy. Some parts of it are very good and it does again reflect a real revolutionary kind of orientation when it was written, but at the same time some of the mechanical materialist tendencies in it—especially now in light of all the contributions of Mao and the struggle around that—are rather striking. In particular the way in which the contradiction between quantity and quality is handled and how that is linked up with a mechanical approach to the economic transformation of ownership as being the alpha and omega of socialist transformation. All that is rather striking, and it's sort of like we're proceeding from this quantity to that quantity and at a certain point we'll achieve the qualitative transformation of socialist

ownership and of the material base of society overall.

But in a certain sense an even more crucial political angle on this is given concentrated expression in Stalin's statement in 1931 that the imperialist countries are decades ahead of us, and we have to make good this difference within one decade or else we'll perish.¹⁹ This was not simply a general, abstract statement about the need to surpass the technology of capitalist countries but an already beginning recognition that the question of war was coming on the agenda and a view that in such a war production and weapons would be decisive. And the policy got more and more crude as time went on, at least the expression of it, and it became more and more crude where at one point Stalin did literally say (and unfortunately I don't think I'm mistaken) that whichever side produces more motors in World War 2 would win the war. That's just a crude expression of an underlying general view that we've got to make good this difference and surpass the countries in technology in ten years or else we're done for anyway.²⁰ And you can see how that dovetails with and sort of interpenetrates with these other views that have been touched on and criticized in terms of the overemphasis on industrialization, the policy of taking too much from the peasantry, and so on and so forth.

What has to be brought out in addition is the political dimension of this inside the Soviet Union itself. In delving into and attempting to sum up this crucial experience of the transformation of ownership the clear impression emerges that particularly in the countryside there was a lot of resistance especially from the Kulaks, of course, but I also get the impression that while large sections of the peasantry were mobilized there was also resistance and passivity among large sections even of the middle-peasants and others who should have been allies and should have been motive forces in this. And while it is not entirely wrong in and of itself, it became necessary to send wave after wave of advanced workers in particular into the countryside to lead the battle in a political and sometimes literally physical sense against the Kulaks and even, unfortunately, broader strata, at times at least, who were putting up resistance to the collectivization.

And you get the impression that through this whole industrialization policy, the way in which collectivization was carried out, through the battles of this kind that had to be waged to do it, that by the time it's completed, by 1934, more or less, there is a sense of a political exhaustion, perhaps even in certain ways a physical exhaustion, but to a large degree a *political* exhaustion, on the part of the advanced elements inside the Soviet Union. That's not to deny the fact, and it would be idealist and metaphysical to not recognize—that everything develops in a wave-like fashion—or even better said in a spiral-type motion—and things are not always at a high peak and can't always be at a high peak. It's not particularly surprising on the one hand that there would be this kind of political exhaustion, but on the other hand, rather than there being a period like Mao called for of upsurge and then consolidation and the preparation for another upsurge, it seems like this increasingly merged

with erroneous tendencies asserting themselves more sharply in the leadership of Stalin and others through a complicated series of struggles which I, at least, don't by any means completely understand.

But what emerges from studying the Soviet Union in this period is the impression that by the middle '30s and from the middle '30s on, already large sections even among the *advanced* in the Soviet Union were confused, demoralized and somewhat passive politically. Somebody who became a renegade but had been a supporter of the Soviet Union at one point reported on the very sharp contrast between the earlier period of the '20s and '30s and the situation in around 1936. (Renegades' observations are not always, and certainly not automatically, without any merit.) He called attention to the fact that earlier he had met people from different levels of leadership cadre as well as masses who had a lot of enthusiasm, fighting for the future, but after the mid-30s, especially among the cadre, all that he met were sycophants and cynics and most people were both. Unfortunately, regardless of the character of this particular person, I think there was a great deal of truth to this; this in fact was becoming a more and more predominant pattern particularly among the cadre. And this links up with developments in leadership and leading lines.

To step back for a second, you'll recall Lenin had not been completely free of some of these same tendencies, that is, the notion that the viability of the proletarian dictatorship—the socialist state—depended on higher technique, a higher productive base than capitalism in general and the imperialist stage in particular. Even though, as noted, Lenin did say "in the final analysis" and so on he nevertheless did have this tendency to make that identification too direct and immediate. Lenin obviously did not live to grapple with the fuller development and implications of this contradiction. And as I mentioned before even in Lenin's famous response to the Mensheviks, Kautskyites, *et al*—why can't we *first* seize power and then create the kind of civilization that you say is necessary, though you can't say exactly what level it is—even this can be seen to have a rather sharp contradiction in it, refuting them on the one hand but accepting certain bases of their orientation on the other. But this became much more pronounced both as the contradiction developed more fully and frankly also under the leadership of people, including Stalin, who were not as thoroughly dialectical nor as thoroughly materialist in their approach to problems and their attempts to resolve problems as Lenin had been. And increasingly from the mid-30s on (again this is noted in the outline presented at the last Central Committee meeting of our Party) wrong lines and policies were increasingly in command in the Soviet Union and in the international communist movement.

This was exemplified by the international policy adopted increasingly by the Soviet Union and given concentrated expression in the line adopted by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, the line of the united front against fascism as represented in the Dimitroff report and so on. This took some rather grotesque forms. Some of them have been sharply criticized and dissected for example in the article in

Revolution magazine on the Spanish Civil War. The examples can be multiplied on and on but even a beginning study of this period with open eyes and an open mind reveals very quickly the depth of the deviations from internationalism and from Marxism-Leninism generally that was already taking hold. Litvinov was a Soviet leader closely associated with a lot of these open rightist policies in the international sphere in terms of bourgeois diplomacy in dealing with the Western states. In 1936, for example, Litvinov was dealing with the French government at a time when there was a tremendous upsurge of the French proletariat—not a revolutionary upsurge but the very pronounced upsurge that *perhaps* (it needs to be examined more closely) had revolutionary potential or certainly represented a very radical uprising by significant sections of the French proletariat which threw the bourgeoisie into panic; they were on the verge of a great deal of chaos and crisis. This was successfully cooled out by the CP and others. Litvinov in the midst of this comes out with a statement saying that the Soviet government certainly hopes that France can resolve its problems and maintain security and stability and so on.²¹ (Some of this needs to be checked more deeply, but unfortunately I don't think the essence is distortion.) Now this is where the earlier error of covering over or at least not recognizing the contradiction between the need to maintain power in one state and the overall advance of the world revolution has gone over to the point that this contradiction has begun to assume antagonistic form because it's not recognized and/or not correctly dealt with.

In a certain sense you could say about the Soviet Union and the international communist movement, and particularly looking at the Soviet Union after the mid-'30s, that it was in some important ways comparable to China after its Eighth Congress in 1956. The Eighth Congress was where the revisionist line was dominant throughout and overall, and where the formulation was officially enshrined that the principal contradiction was between the advanced socialist system and the backward productive forces, where the dying out of classes and class struggle was proclaimed in the reports by Liu Shaoqi and by Deng Xiaoping and was generally the tenor and tone and orientation of that Congress. Despite such similarities, there are important differences: in China the Great Leap Forward occurred after the Eighth Congress and there was struggle, partial reversal and then the much higher upsurges of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution; in the Soviet Union after the mid-'30s there was not that kind of development.

The outline ("For Decades to Come on a World Scale") analyzes the content of these wrong lines, policies and overall orientation: bourgeois democracy, economism, national chauvinism, national defensism in imperialist countries, etc. These *erroneous* lines were continued and deepened and carried to a much more profound level during World War 2. That outline also mentions Stalin's speeches on the Great Patriotic War (and just reading the description of them in that outline doesn't give you a sense as to what depths they sunk—and that's the only way it can be described from

a Marxist-Leninist standpoint). This is a correct and a necessary characterization of the policy during World War 2 despite a more "Leninist" interval in the first phase of the war, that is, the phase before the Soviet Union was directly involved in any significant way (leaving aside a brief war with Finland). Then the war was characterized as inter-imperialist and basically portrayed in the same light as World War 1. Although there was superficially a "Leninist" orientation and correct stand taken on the war, even then it was marked by a certain amount of pacifism. But more than that, as that outline pointed out, it was overall and fundamentally a superficially "correct" policy taken for the same *wrong* reasons as the earlier and later policies during the attempt to carry out the "Collective Security" with Western imperialism and the whole united front against fascism line of the Comintern. All these policies were frankly a rationalization for and an attempt to make the communist movement's policy an extension of the international policy and line of the Soviet Union. The line in the "Leninist" interval in the first phase of the war, while it had some superficial aspects that seemed more correct, was not fundamentally better than that policy before the war broke out and the policy as it further degenerated after the Soviet Union entered the war.

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. It has to be said here that *Red Papers 7* is wrong in the way that it upholds the necessity for conducting the war on this basis; in fact it was not necessary nor correct to conduct the war on a patriotic and a bourgeois-democratic basis. But this was the logical extension of wrong views, lines and policies and the generally wrong orientation that had been adopted and which led overall to the growing strength of the bourgeois—largely new bourgeois—forces within the Party and the state at the same time that concessions were made to the old bourgeois forces within the Soviet Union, including among the peasantry—and especially in *Russia*, because the Russian nationality was singled out as "first among all" Soviet peoples by the end of the war.

There was all that stuff about Ivan the Terrible coming on top of Alexander Nevsky and on and on which were such grotesque expressions of this in the cultural sphere. And all of a sudden all these old priests are lumbering out again; after being correctly put to slumber, they were allowed to come out with their medals and icons and robes and obscurantism; these and all sorts of things represented, reflected and were part of the attempt to mobilize the nation on a 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.

This has to be said because some of the more acute (or maybe we should say less obtuse) opportunists have made their *own* summations of the experience of the Soviet Union and the international communist movement during the period of Stalin's leadership in particular, and have seized on the irony that at the

very time when the Soviet Union's prestige in the world and among a lot of progressive mankind was at the highest, its internationalism was at the lowest and its tendency toward revolution was the most degenerated. And you frequently run into this strange sort of circular and self-contained logic that is employed in defending the Soviet Union's policies. Basically the argument is that whatever the Soviet Union did was good and you start from there and get back to there.

For example, whatever the Soviet Union did that turned more revolutionary elements away from it when it was carrying out the collective security in the late '30s (or, for that matter, turned more bourgeois-democratic elements away from it when it made the pact with Germany)—all of it is justified on the most contradictory bases which can only be reduced to "it was good for the Soviet Union." Actually, perhaps it's possible to see more justification for the pact with Germany than the earlier attempt to carry out collective security. But, you see, the whole movement is so steeped in this *Nazi* preoccupation that when one gets to that phase of history with lots of people, science goes out the window and all of a sudden it's "Nazis" and "ruling the world" and "democratic liberties down the drain" and all sorts of horrors that, on the one hand, were real enough but are characteristic of *imperialism* and not something with a German accent.

This really has to be gone into because confronting scientifically what the Soviet Union's lines and policies were, confronting the fact that the reputation of the Soviet Union was revived and built to its highest point precisely at a time when it was going furthest away from internationalism has been gotten around by many old arguments. Any of us who have been around very long have all argued at one time or another that the proof of the fact that the people in the Soviet Union all supported *socialism* was: look how heroically they fought, even behind the lines, against Germany. But unfortunately it is a fact that people can be mobilized to do that on a basis of nationalism and patriotism, and there are plenty of examples of this in history, even modern history. Maybe in some ways they can be mobilized this way more easily in the short run than they can on the basis of socialism and internationalism. But that does not at all prove—it begs, or avoids anyway—the question of *what* the people were fighting for. The Yugoslavian masses, for example, supported Tito against Stalin on a nationalist basis. Well, that doesn't prove that there was socialism in Yugoslavia or that the people there were heroically fighting for socialism; they were "heroically" fighting, but they were not fighting for socialism. And to a large degree that was also the case in the Soviet Union during the course of the war.

I remember one time I had an argument with a member of the Black Panther Party when Huey Newton had come up with the idea that they were going to satisfy the needs of the masses by running little factories—sweatshops to make clothes—and give them to the people. And so I brought up the almost facile, but true, objection, "Hey, that sort of smacks of capitalism." And the response was, "Well, it *would* be

capitalism and it *wouldn't* be revolutionary except that *we're* doing it and *we're* revolutionaries." While I found that logic not very convincing in the case of the Panthers, nevertheless, for a lot of emotional reasons and because of the fact that the Soviet Union *was* the first socialist state and it *was* under attack by imperialism and it *was* fighting for its life and so on, that same sort of logic has deeply embedded itself in and become a part, even almost unconsciously, in the thinking of some people who went through that period. It was the case to a large degree that whatever the Soviet Union did, if somebody else did it you would denounce it but because the Soviet Union did it and the Soviet Union was socialist, it took on a different character *ipso facto*, by mere virtue of the fact that the Soviet Union was doing it. And the question was again begged as to who was doing what and what did it prove.

If you want to see what it's like, you can see the inverse of it with all the Albania-philies now. When they attack the "three worlds" theory, then the defenders and apologists of the *Chinese* revisionist line, who are the opposite pole of the same stupidity (and who are not without a brain) come forward and say, "But what about World War 2 and the anti-fascist war of the Soviet Union—didn't *they* do that?" And then the Albania-philies come back and say, "Ho! this is ridiculous. Everybody knows World War 2 was completely different because...because...because that was the *Soviet Union* and those were *Nazis*." If you want to know what it was like, that's what it was like. And you still can see it.

Sometimes the argument is made: "Yes, but look, you can say what you want about what the Soviet Union did in World War 2, but look at the prestige that the communists got all over the world as a result of what the Soviet Union did, how it led the fight against the Nazis, look at the public opinion that was created for what the Soviet Union stood for." But that, too, begs the question: the prestige of the communists for *what*? Representing what? Was it really *communism* that was gaining in support and prestige, and what was it that the Soviet Union stood for that the public opinion was being built up around? This is a problem.

I once said in an argument of this kind that often times, and particularly with some of the ideological crippling that went on during this period in particular (and its legacy has continued, unfortunately) it's the case that everybody in the street, advanced and backward, progressive and reactionary, and so on knows a lot of basic truths about what the proletariat in power has done and what its experience has been before the communists know it. For example, to move that from the abstract realm and make it very concrete, almost everybody who was around at the time knows the Soviet Union carried out a policy putting its national interests above everything else in and around World War 2, and only some communists are the ones who won't accept it, can't face up to it and will go for *any* sort of rationalization to try to justify not having to come to terms with a basic simple fact. Yes, there's a limitation to common sense, but every common man and woman in the street who even read the newspaper and could follow world events to a minimal degree knows this truth. And

yet it's embarrassingly true that a lot of the communists steeped in that tradition and that methodology are the last ones to come around beginning to accept that fact.

Well, that's a little aside, but there is a lesson there that we should grasp more deeply. Particularly in light of the present developing situation it is fundamental to see that all this that we've been talking about was strongly linked to the wrong view of the development of things internationally through spirals to the sharpening up of conjunctures, it was linked to the erroneous views of "general crisis." Here it's interesting to note that if you look at the book by R. Palme Dutt, *Fascism and Social Revolution*,²² you can see how that quickly gave way to the united front against fascism—the Dimitroff line—and to the terrible errors that were made and deviations that were fallen into (around Spain to take one key example). And you can see the tendencies to mechanical materialism, bourgeois democracy, economism and so on. I was struck re-reading Dutt's book recently—not having read it for maybe a decade—that it really, literally says that capitalism can no longer develop the productive forces—period, end of point—and if capitalism continues with its inexorable logic, mankind will be dragged back to primitive village life with labor-intensive, scattered production. But before that'll happen, Dutt says, they'll destroy the whole world with war because, after all, capitalism tends to destroy the productive forces and war is just the most extreme expression of that. It's just extremely crude mechanical materialism; now that's not so surprising, there's lots of that, but that this book got such currency in the international movement—even though it was criticized, still it wasn't just regarded as the work of a quack—reflects something significant.

In Dutt's book the line is not that there are some states that are fascist and bad and others that are democratic and good, but that every capitalist society is inevitably heading towards fascism, it's only a question of degree and quantity, how far along they are towards that; all of them are equally bad, equally responsible for the war that can be seen to be shaping up. It says that the bourgeoisie in this period is totally incapable of holding up even its own historic contributions, economically in terms of developing the productive forces, or politically in terms of bourgeois democracy and upholding the interests of the nation, and that it falls on the proletariat to uphold and carry forward these things; and socialism is sort of made a two-into-one with that, even though this line overall has a "left" opportunist character to it. You can see that once you've made upholding bourgeois democracy and the interests of the nation the centerpiece of everything then, if after all there is among the bourgeoisie the tendency to defend the nation and to uphold bourgeois democracy, at least in certain conditions, it's not a big leap, it's just the opposite pole of the same stupidity, to say that we should ally with the bourgeoisie or those bourgeois forces who will in fact uphold the interests of the nation and who will in fact uphold bourgeois democracy—in other words, the united front against fascism line.

Now it's true and it should be said again that a lot of

this was rationalization for and an extension of Soviet foreign policy and an attempt to mobilize the working class in various countries as a pressure group on the bourgeoisie in support of Soviet diplomacy and Soviet international dealings. But insofar as Dutt's line should be taken seriously in its own right, there is an easy flip from the Dutt line where the whole bourgeoisie is condemned for abandoning its own historical role in terms of the nation, developing the productive forces, and democracy and therefore all should be overthrown; from this mechanical materialist, really unbelievably crude, almost *silly* point of view, it's an easy flip over to where certain sections of the bourgeoisie or the bourgeoisie in certain countries should be aligned with because they at least have a tendency to uphold the nation, bourgeois democracy and perhaps the productive forces.

Here: an interesting question that struck me in going back and reading over the "National Nihilism" article.²² In that article there are all sorts of horrendous quotes from the Comintern in the late '30s where they're trying to wiggle out of the Leninist policy against defense of the fatherland in imperialist countries in imperialist wars. And at one point they come right out and say, look, back in earlier times the working class had a lot of bitter feelings about the nation because they were basically on the outside looking in but now they've made it to where they've got trade unions and a role in parliament and so on, and now they have a real stake in the nation, so therefore it's different. At first when you look at all these statements by the Comintern referred to above about how the workers now have a stake in the nation and so on, you say, "What an outrage and what a distortion;" but what's even more provocative is to ask the question: was this in fact a reflection of an attempt by the Comintern to make itself the spokesman for and to rally as its social base that section of the workers—the more bourgeoisified and aristocratic section even in the midst of this depression—who *did* in fact fit this description and did have the very sentiments that the Comintern was talking about? That's a question that needs more exploring but it is, in fact, among such workers that you would find more receptivity for the line of promoting bourgeois democracy, economism, national chauvinism, defense of the fatherland, and so on. Maybe it's not simply a distortion but a more conscious intent on the part of the Soviet leadership and the Comintern to mobilize that section of the working class or to appeal to *that* section of the working class as pressure on the bourgeoisie in those countries to come to terms with the Soviet Union on the basis the Soviet Union was seeking.

There is another important point in connection with Dutt's book and the line of the Comintern. In talking about the German workers and the respective social bases of the Communist Party and the Social Democrats during the '20s and '30s, basically he says that the reason that we didn't succeed here, the reason we didn't make revolution here is because, "the goddam social democrats, they fucked it up. And you know how they fucked up? You know what they did? They acted like social democrats." That sort of argument was often characteristic of the Comintern. It's very frustrating to read that kind of summation as a supposedly

materialist and dialectical analysis of why you didn't have revolution in Germany—that the Social Democrats didn't act like communists. Well, okay, that's the way it is, and you learn to use Marxism like a scythe to cut through it. But what strikes you at a certain point reading this is that in fact the CP had a lot of its base *not* among the more unionized workers who were in this position the Comintern was talking about in the quotes above, but in fact among workers who perhaps more tended to be unemployed, were less stable, at least in the bourgeois sense of what that means. A lot of the CP's base was the kind of people you see come alive in the novel *Barricades in Berlin*; they were not necessarily your skilled craftsmen or members of the social-democratic union and the church and so on and so forth.

The international movement was paralyzed by its own wrong, mechanical materialist, metaphysical and trade unionist, economist tendencies to where it thought that it couldn't do anything basically *until* it won over the social base of the social democrats. This is not the same thing as the correct understanding that it is necessary to win over at least a good part of that social base in the course of building a revolutionary movement, but was rather presented metaphysically, statically and as a question of winning them all at one time. It was supposedly necessary *first* to win over that base before you could do anything rather than mobilizing the communists' own base, rallying around it the forces that could be drawn to it and on that basis building a revolutionary movement and seeking the ways to win over at least a large part of the social democrats' base. The CP was paralyzed by it and that's something that needs to be summed up a lot more deeply.

But to return to the policy of the Soviet Union in relation to World War 2: the victory of the Soviet Union, on a patriotic basis, doesn't justify the old "proof" that the masses there supported socialism. And as I said, we can point to the example of Yugoslavia where the masses supported Tito against Stalin on a nationalist basis, and to those who have a one-sided view of the question of democracy, democracy among the masses, relying on the masses, and so on and so forth, it can be pointed out that when the open break came between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union after the war, the Tito-ites openly carried out their polemics with the Soviet Union in front of the Yugoslav masses. They took all of Stalin's attacks on Yugoslavia, printed them up in hundreds of thousands of copies along with their response, and distributed them broadly for the Yugoslav masses. And overwhelmingly the Yugoslav masses supported Tito and not Stalin, which proves not very much of anything; because the problem is that that doesn't tell you what kind of line people were being mobilized behind. It does tell you one thing: tailing behind the masses, the idea that, in a mechanical sense, just letting everybody know what's going on and having their say, does not guarantee that the truth and the interests of the proletariat, which are the same in a fundamental sense, are going to win out in the short run. Because whatever Stalin's errors, Tito was in fact qualitatively worse and was a revisionist and indeed a lackey of imperialism and was not in any sense opposing Stalin from a more revolutionary

standpoint or fighting for a more revolutionary direction within the international communist movement.

This I think gives more insight also into the question of China. Albania and Enver Hoxha notwithstanding, Mao was most certainly *not* Tito. But the Chinese Party, I think we can see in retrospect, was full of Tito types. And one thing that struck me in reading their latest resolution summing up some important questions on the Chinese party history and on Mao in particular is that these revisionists in power there are not without any basis when they accuse Mao of departing from the common course that they were all on—in other words, actually going beyond the framework of the new-democratic revolution onto the socialist road and continuing the revolution towards communism. By the end Mao certainly did stand out as one of the few—and of course the leader—of the veterans who really were striving for a communist world, surrounded by a bunch of people who never went beyond wanting to have the chance to rule over a powerful, modern China assuming its “rightful place among nations.” It was Mao who “departed” from this. So this is something like another side, in a provocative way, of the question of bourgeois democrats turning into capitalist roaders as the revolution enters and deepens in the socialist period.

The Chinese revolution, in particular in its first stage, did not require in some important ways a radical or thorough rupture with much that was wrong or had become wrong in the international communist movement—in particular the international communist movement’s departure in significant aspects from Leninism, as for example concentrated in the united front against fascism. Because to take the united front against fascism—and I think it’s interesting and it could be well explored more deeply—the focus was overwhelmingly on Europe. And I think that that’s not entirely accidental, for two reasons. One, because it reflects the exigencies of Soviet foreign policy at the time and their attempts to deal with the Western imperialist democracies; and on the other hand, if you were going to make a case about how much more terrible the fascist states were than the democracies, you’d make it better in Europe where there was more democracy than you would if you went in some of the colonial countries and started arguing about how great British imperialism was for India, for example, as compared with Japanese imperialism and its colonies.

So in the colonies, while it wasn’t fully developed, the general line was the united front against imperialism and it was correct in China as the conditions developed there to develop a united front against Japanese imperialism as the main enemy, which meant in fact, through the medium of Chiang Kai-shek, a united front of sorts with British and U.S. imperialism, or at least a neutralization of them, in the sense of putting them aside and not making them an immediate target or enemy in that stage of the struggle. In these circumstances that was correct and did not prevent the Chinese revolution from going forward.

Now a lot of the policies that became increasingly associated with this, of subordinating yourself—not just *allying* on one level or another but actually *subordinating* yourself—to the bourgeois forces, to even the

comprador elements and their imperialist masters, those kinds of policies would have killed revolution in China. And it’s over those kinds of questions that Mao came into sharp conflict with the Comintern and Stalin in the form of Wang Ming inside China itself, who as everybody knows who cares to know, was pushing Stalin’s and the Comintern’s line inside China, was pushing capitulation to and subordination to the Kuomintang and ultimately U.S. and British imperialism. Over those questions Mao waged very sharp struggle.

I’m certainly not saying Mao was an opportunist, or a narrow pragmatist or nationalist, but there is something to materialism and there is something to the fact that the questions that most sharply pose themselves to you, especially in the crush and press of revolutionary struggle, are the ones that you’re going to go into more deeply, to begin with at least. I think that’s reflected in the fact that over those points of subordination and capitulation to bourgeois allies there was a lot of rupturing but not over the basic orientation of taking up the defense of the nation and a lot of other things which weren’t wrong—at least they weren’t wrong in principle—when applied in the colonies, but were wrong in principle as they were applied where, in fact, their main emphasis was given, in the imperialist countries, especially the ones that the Soviet Union was seeking to ally with.

At the end of all this, coming out of World War 2, the future road of the Soviet Union was very acutely posed, that is, the question of the capitalist road versus the socialist road. In a certain sense we could say that it was a question of *retaking* the socialist road and that to do this would have required something on the order of or like the Cultural Revolution in China, but as we know this did not happen. Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe we can refer first of all to Stalin’s statement (which apparently he made to Djilas, who was a renegade, but I think it’s correct to assume the statement was made) where Stalin, commenting on World War 2, said that this war is different than others in the past because wherever anyone’s army reaches, he can impose his social system there. Now we have to say that there is an aspect of truth in what Stalin says but the question that immediately poses itself is, what kind of system can be imposed with this view? And, again, this is not to raise the objections that revolution cannot be exported, socialism cannot possibly come if it comes through the Red Army of Russia as the main armed force in the particular circumstances rather than the people of the nation concerned or something like that; but still, the question is: with that view of imposing a social system by that means, what kind of social system can be in fact imposed?

It’s not accidental that there never really was, as Mao did point out, a real effort or any real progress in mobilizing the masses themselves in revolutionary struggle and to become masters of society, without which the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialism (even in the relative sense in which we have to understand that those exist and not as some abstract absolute), nevertheless even in that sense, they are not possible without that kind of line and without that





China, 1935—Battle for the
Luding bridge during the Long
March.

kind of mobilization of the masses and conscious struggle. So it's not surprising that this did not happen. In fact, it has to be said bluntly that socialism *never* existed in these Eastern European countries (Albania is a different case whose history needs to be looked at separately) and it was never created through class-conscious struggle of the masses there with a proletarian vanguard, and that's the only way it's possible—without that it obviously couldn't exist.

As mentioned, in the aftermath of World War 2 in the Soviet Union, reviving socialism would have required nothing less than something like the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. But soon after that and in particular after Stalin's death, what was required was a whole overthrow of the entire social system with the forging of a new vanguard—something qualitatively different from the Cultural Revolution which was a mass upheaval, but under the dictatorship of the proletariat. In fact, rule was seized by the bourgeoisie and consolidated fully and restoration of capitalism undertaken with a vengeance. And here a point should be briefly underlined that attention was called to in that outline presented at the last Central Committee: that the socialist camp was in fact riddled with contradictions and more than that, the contradictions within it were coming to a head at the very time when it was at its height, that is, in the 1950s, more or less.

Now in our reply to Enver Hoxha, "Beat Back the Dogmato-Revisionist Attack on Mao Tsetung Thought,"²⁴ we call attention to the question of "state of the whole people" and "party of the whole people." And in the context of talking about the fact that there is the continuation of classes and class struggle under socialism, we point out that in a certain sense Stalin's policy or understanding on this represented a muddle, in that he said, on the one hand, there were no antagonistic classes and no one to suppress, other than foreign agents in the Soviet Union itself, but that the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat were still necessary because of foreign imperialist encirclement and the infiltration of its agents. We point out that really that's an argument that leads toward Khrushchev's point, because Khrushchev never said you don't need a state, he just said that because there are no longer antagonistic classes in the Soviet Union, you don't need a dictatorship of the proletariat; you just need a state to deal with the foreign enemies. Stalin didn't go that far; Stalin said, well, we still need a state to deal with foreign enemies so we still need the dictatorship of the proletariat even though there are not antagonistic classes within the Soviet Union. We summed it up by saying that Stalin's position is a muddle, whereas Khrushchev resolved the muddle; and in that contradiction Stalin's muddle is infinitely preferable to Khrushchev's resolution, but it's still a muddle and not very good.

And I think that's not only correct on the question of the state, and therefore along with it the party, of the whole people (Khrushchev's famous "two wholes"). In examining it more deeply, it is also largely the case that on Khrushchev's famous "three peacefuls," that is, peaceful competition, peaceful coexistence and peaceful transition to socialism, this again can largely

be described as a case of Khrushchev's resolving Stalin's muddle. Khrushchev's resolution is infinitely and qualitatively worse than Stalin's muddle, but Stalin's policies were a muddle of the same sort; if you read Stalin's policy statements after World War 2, even allowing for a certain amount of diplomatic doubletalk and so on (which may or may not be necessary but can't be ruled out in principle in any case), it still becomes clear that he himself at times, particularly after the War, is promoting these "three peacefuls" in various forms, not only peaceful competition and peaceful coexistence but peaceful cooperation.

In fact, a question which I am grappling with and is worth pondering is: if Stalin had succeeded, for example, in forcing on Mao the policy that he attempted to enforce, that is, of killing the Chinese revolution after World War 2 and getting Mao to enter, in a subordinate position, into a coalition government with Chiang Kai-shek, would the U.S. have then turned on the Soviet Union to the same degree that it did? Because in other places where he was able to, Stalin did what he could do (and in some cases it wasn't insignificant) to kill the revolutionary struggle of the masses in order not to bring down the wrath of U.S. imperialism. I think we have to face up to this in the case of Greece and a number of other places. I don't claim at this point to have unravelled this muddle, but it's certainly not so clear-cut as perhaps we have thought in the past and some still want to cling to; and I think that at best it's a question of Stalin's muddle and Khrushchev's resolution.

The reason I say *muddle*, though, is that particularly after the U.S. adopted a more hostile policy toward the Soviet Union, more specifically in the Korean War and so on, at the time of Stalin's last major work, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*,²⁵ he is again talking about the inevitability of war among the imperialists and saying that it's necessary to eliminate imperialism before war can be eliminated. But exactly what that's all part of and how it links up with his views on revolution is not at all clear, because at the same time, that is at the 19th Congress of the Soviet Party in 1952,²⁶ he's pushing the same line about the working class in the capitalist countries becoming the inheritors of the banner of democratic liberties and the banner of the nation and a lot of the same stuff that we're familiar with and which was very clear in the U.S. party. I was just reading William Z. Foster's *History of the Three Internationals*,²⁷ and the whole end of it is all the same peaceful transition, two-stage (non-) revolution, democracy going over someday into socialism and maybe we'll have to curb the monopolies if they get uppity after we've basically implemented socialism and so on and so forth. All of that stuff's in there and he was not that distant from the line that was being promoted by Stalin, even shortly before his death. So this needs to be looked at; it's pointed out in the outline I've referred to a number of times. It's said that Stalin's *Economic Problems*... needs to be looked at again in this light and I think all this needs to be much more critically and much more deeply summed up, not just by ourselves but through struggle in the whole international communist movement.

So if you say all that, everything that's been said here today, then why do you say that the Soviet Union was socialist during this period? And I think, in what might seem like an irony, it's precisely because, in an overall sense, *line is decisive*. Here we have to briefly raise the question, what is capitalism and what is socialism, and understand more deeply how line is key after all. A lot of people talk about capitalism and socialism, capitalism restored or not in the Soviet Union, socialism advancing or not in the Soviet Union and so on, but one of the problems is that there is often not a very clear understanding of what after all capitalism and socialism are.

What is capitalism? What is capital? I want to read here something I wrote in response to the idea that even under socialism, capital is the dominant economic relationship. In refuting that idea I wrote the following: "Capital is a social relation and a process, whose essence is indeed the domination by alien, antagonistic interests over labor power and the continual (and extended) reproduction of that. But, to get to the heart of the problem here, if ownership has been (in the main) socialized, if a correct line is in command (irrelevant for the calculations of the kind that say that capital in any case is dominant under socialism but truly at the heart of the matter)—which means that the division of labor as well as differences in distribution are being restricted to the greatest degree possible—then how is the relationship and process capital? It is true that the division of labor characteristic of capitalism (and previous class society in general) has not been completely overcome, that it may still have considerable influence and in any case is only restricted to a certain degree, while bourgeois right is dominant (or at least very influential) in distribution, but if the motion is toward eliminating these things, then how can it be said that a force opposed to the proletariat has domination over its labor power or even a force alien to it, in the fundamental sense?"

Now the point here is *not* that we should use what's said there, having drawn on the experience in China, as a stiff yardstick to put down on the Soviet Union. The point is *not* that, during the period of Stalin's leadership and in the 1930s in particular, there was an attempt to restrict bourgeois right in a significant way in distribution, nor that there was an attempt to make all possible strides toward overcoming the division of labor. This was not so, because the necessity for doing that and the way in which that interpenetrates with the question of ownership—not just the form, but the content—and all these points that were focused on very sharply by Mao especially in the last few years of his life, those questions were in fact not well understood or grasped; and that's partly a question of the limitations of historical experience and partly a question of the methodology of Stalin and the Soviet leadership at that time. But nevertheless, the essential question that should be focused on, the question I was driving at in what I just read, is precisely what is capital?

There never will be a time, as far as I'm concerned—and we pointed to this in the article criticising Bettelheim²⁸—when in the most literal and absolute

sense there is appropriation by the direct producers of the product of their labor. Even under communism things will go to society as a whole; this is a point Marx made in criticizing the Gotha Programme. Things will go to society as a whole and there will always be some form of exchange between a particular unit of production and the rest of society, however that works out; it's never going to be that people simply appropriate in the most literal sense directly what they produce. And there will always be in one form or another political representatives; despite all the science fiction and everything else, I do not believe that the highest level that can be achieved is where everybody puts on their TV, listens to a big debate and pushes a computer, yes or no, up or down, kill 'em, throw 'em out, make 'em president or whatever; I don't believe that's the way that decision-making is going to be done under communism. There will be political representatives and struggle among them, and the masses will be decisive, yes, but not in the literal, direct, good old town meeting tradition.

I think it was a correct thrust of the Four (following Mao) in China that they raised the question of political leadership and line being essential. And as to the question of socialism in the Soviet Union, well, it's ironic but in a certain way intention does count for a lot. Because in the period, and particularly up to the early '30s, what was the leadership in the Soviet Union trying to do? I'm sure the Trotskyites would love to hear this because it sounds extremely subjective, but what the leadership was trying to do and what the masses were being mobilized to do is extremely important, because what is capital? Is capital simply the fact that you work in an office and have more influence than I who work in a factory? That doesn't make you capitalist, that's not capital.

The essence of capital is that the labor power of the workers is controlled by a force alien to them and it's handed over to an alien force; and if it's alien (and even beyond that, antagonistic) it means that that labor power is controlled and utilized on an expanded basis to reproduce relationships which are alien to them and opposed to them; otherwise capital has no meaning. And it is not identical with a mere division of labor, though capitalism cannot be completely overcome and the bourgeois epoch cannot be completely transcended till that kind of oppressive division of labor is transcended. Of course, I don't believe there will ever be a complete or absolute elimination of all division of labor either, but the division of labor characteristic of capitalism and class society will have to be transcended. But even the mere existence of the division of labor characteristic of class society, though it must be transformed throughout socialism, is not identical with nor the same thing as capitalism. And the question is, what were the Soviet masses being mobilized to do at least up through the early '30s? They were being mobilized to transform society in the direction of socialism, and for the purpose of contributing to the world revolution; and for that reason I believe that that was not capital, but socialism was in fact the dominant relation.

I think this helps us to understand why it is that

Mao could say that in China, the policies of the revisionists largely dominated during a period before the Cultural Revolution, that the majority of factories were following the revisionist line; but still not say—and he never did say—that China was not *socialist* in that period. Now how could that be? Well, these people who are anarcho-syndicalists, which Bettelheim tends toward (and others following him), think the ultimate purpose of world revolution is to control your factory. Mao was much more profoundly correct, and through struggling through some of these questions my own understanding has been deepened of the fact that line is decisive. It is precisely a concentrated expression of economics because what is the question—the question is what are you working for, what is your labor power being applied to.

With all the mistakes and limitations, I think it's correct to say, from an historical standpoint, that the proletariat's labor power was not being controlled and utilized by an alien force in this period in the USSR and was not being utilized to reproduce relations where it was controlled by an alien force. Increasingly from the mid-'30s on, that question was thrown into serious doubt and perhaps that was being reversed all along the line; but again, as Mao said, the majority of the factories can be following a revisionist line, but if overall there hasn't been a thorough change in the superstructure, then it's wrong to say that the bourgeoisie has control of society and capitalism is already on the way to being restored if not already restored by that time.

At this point in the Soviet Union, the war—fought on a patriotic, basically bourgeois-democratic, basis—comes on the agenda; and the question of the nature of that society, as I said, is thrown up for grabs. After the war the monumental effort that would have had to have been made to put it firmly back (for the time being) onto the socialist road was not undertaken, let alone successfully carried out. Therefore it was, in a certain sense, ripe like a plum or ripe fruit to fall into the hands of the revisionists; and in fact they did resolve all the muddles and did thoroughly conclude the process—concluded it with a qualitative leap, however—of taking the Soviet Union onto the capitalist road. And here once more the crucial lesson is that we have to have both a sweeping historical view and at the same time rigorously and critically dissect crucial historical experience of the proletarian dictatorship and the journeys, the tortuous advances and then setbacks on the socialist road so far.

Well, that's some points on the Soviet Union. Now a few more points on the question of Mao, again making a general reference at the beginning to the summation and the outline of the last Central Committee on this question. First of all, it's necessary to say that Mao's contributions, which we referred to as immortal contributions, are indeed actually that, and this is a real and a true statement, not just a routine statement; it's not something we just have to say because then we're going to make criticism. Still less is it sentimentality or some such thing; in fact, it's not only true in general but it is extremely important to grasp and build on these contributions. But at the same time, as that outline pointed out, it is not enough just to stand with Mao; nor still

less is it sufficient or correct to retreat—and that's what it would be in this case—to Stalin.

Here we can look for a very brief second at Albania today—not the magazine but the place, the society—and we can say that to repeat, like Enver Hoxha, the errors of Stalin and to retreat to Stalin in the face of and against the advances that have been made is truly “first time tragedy, second time farce.” Just as an aside here it's interesting to note how Lenin during World War 1, in commenting on the so-called socialists, in places like Switzerland and some of the smaller countries in Scandinavia and so on, pointed out an unmistakable tendency which he characterized as the petty-bourgeois nationalism of petty states, the longing to stay aside from the great tumultuous events of the world and of world history and, interestingly enough, he called this the desire to exploit their privileged position. Now you might think that's kind of funny because you don't think of small states generally as having privileged positions in the world; they don't generally dominate large parts of the world; Belgium has had colonies and so has the Netherlands, but you don't generally think of them as being great world powers with a great deal of privilege. But what he's talking about, precisely in the case of Switzerland and some of these other countries, is their ability, for various reasons, to stay out of these world conflagrations like World War 1 and the socialists' desiring to preserve at all costs and take advantage of that privileged position. And in a certain sense I think there is an analogy there with Albania—whose objections to the “three worlds” theory are nationalist, fundamentally, and come down to the fact that Albania's own national interests are not served (at this point in any case) by the latest turns of the Chinese foreign policy, in particular as it has been implemented as a counter-revolutionary policy under the revisionists; and it's truly an example of the petty-bourgeois nationalism which has a strong material base in a state like Albania and which now dominates there.

But returning to Mao, it's important to apply again the same approach as was just stressed—that is, historical sweep combined with rigorous and critical dissecting of crucial historical experience—and by doing that we can see that, on the one hand, if we can say that the Commune, despite its weaknesses and even its lack of Marxist leadership, was after all the dictatorship of the proletariat; and if the Soviet Union, despite all of its weaknesses and the errors made under Stalin's leadership, was genuinely socialism looking at it overall; then certainly and in an even greater way the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in particular in the Chinese revolution was indeed the highest pinnacle yet reached by the international proletariat and the line of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat as forged by Mao and applied in the Cultural Revolution was a great and truly historic advance. On the other hand, there is a need even here for further destruction and radical rupture, and this has been touched on before.

Just to review it a bit and try to deepen some particular points, there was in Mao a tendency, which stands out sharply in opposition to his overall dialectic

tical approach and his contributions in that area, toward a somewhat linear approach to revolution, that is, a somewhat country-by-country advance, first to socialism and then to communism. And there was a view of revolution which was not the crudest expression—"to hell with the rest of the oppressed in the world, to hell with the international proletariat"—but was, in fact, something like "we have to advance the Chinese nation to socialism and on to communism and we have to at the same time support and do all we can to advance the world revolution so that the people of the whole world and of all nations advance to communism, too." I think that was a genuine view in Mao but it is not fully the correct view.

Under Mao—and not just out of the mouths of revisionists—one can find some instances of making not just a diplomatic (I was going to say ruse) tactic or necessity of "we can't export revolution"; sometimes it was even said, "it is absolutely impermissible for one country to touch a single hair on the social system of another country," etc.—to which you can only say, *why?* And why not, why shouldn't they touch more than a single hair on the social system if it's no good? And in fact this stands out in opposition to some better statements by Mao who at various times would say, for example in the late '50s, about the imperialists: we have our people among them, the workers and other revolutionary and progressive elements, and they have theirs among us, the counter-revolutionaries, bourgeois rightists and so on. So it's uneven; but there was, I think, undeniably that tendency, even though Mao called attention to the twists and turns, the tortuous path, the need for the final victory of the world revolution and really believed in and stressed those things—he didn't just say them as dressing or as camouflage—there still is to a certain degree and despite his overall tremendous contributions in the area of dialectics, a certain linear or, to put it another way, country by country, approach to revolution.

Without going into all of it, it's not too difficult to see that this was, in a certain way, a negation of the whole way in which the attempt was made to impose the Soviet model and the Soviet line at any given point on revolution everywhere in the world which would have stamped out the Chinese revolution. But it's a one-sided and not a thorough enough negation and not a thorough enough rupture forward in opposition to that tendency.

And there is, along with this, a certain tendency recurring in Mao to make a principle out of the policy of making use of contradictions among the enemies, defeating the enemies one by one. For example, this is put forward in a concentrated way in his essay written during the anti-Japanese war, "On Policy."²⁸ Making use of the contradictions among the enemy, defeating our enemies one by one, etc., was precisely a correct *policy* in those concrete conditions and it can be, under many different conditions, a correct policy. But it is wrong to elevate this to the level of a general principle.

Just to give a simple example, if everybody in this room but me is a counter-revolutionary and you constitute the main pillars of reaction in the world and I'm capable of whipping up on everybody all at once, why

should I defeat you one by one? There's no principle that says I should defeat you one by one; if I'm capable of defeating you all at one time, I should just take you all on and wipe you out and so much the better for the international proletariat. Now on the other hand, if I'm not capable, if a materialist dialectical analysis says that I can't do that and an attempt to do it, or even the attempt to take some of you on and try to avoid the others, would lead to me being thoroughly defeated and a setback for the international proletariat, then I should figure out how to make use of contradictions and together with the international proletariat (those not in the room—not forgetting those not in the room) deal with you one by one or at least differently in different situations and not all the same, all at the same time.

But there was a certain tendency in Mao to make a principle out of it. And while Mao was certainly *not* responsible for the counter-revolutionary international line of the Chinese revisionists in power now, there is on the other hand some aspect of truth to their tracing of elements of the general analysis of "three worlds" in the analyses made by Mao during various periods going back, for example, to his 1946 interview with Anna Louise Strong³⁰ where he lays out the whole thing about an intermediate zone between U.S. imperialism and the Soviet Union. Here Mao talks about the countries (except the Soviet Union) immediately subjected to the aggression of U.S. imperialism, lumping all of them, including the imperialist countries, together. This involves a frankly classless concept of aggression and, ironically, an error in the direction of blotting out the distinction between imperialist and colonial countries.

This is linked to the earlier point that because of the character of China and its history, especially, though not only, in its first stage of revolution, there was not the same (or there was a relative lack of a) need for a radical or full rupture with key parts of the wrong lines and deviations in the line of the Communist International—deviations from Leninism, particularly towards nationalism. For example, I have to look more deeply into the full text of it, but having read an excerpt from a law that was passed in the Soviet Union in 1934 on how traitors to the fatherland should be punished,³¹ it's rather striking when you see the accompanying statement that for a communist, defense of the fatherland is the highest principle. This is something that, unless it's a total distortion (because it is from a bourgeois source), is rather strikingly wrong and a striking deviation from Leninism toward nationalism.

In Section 7 of "For Decades . . ." a link is drawn between some of these errors on the part of Mao and the question of military strategy. In particular it talks about how in China it was extremely important to fight for the line of not striking out in all directions, not attempting to take all the big cities at once, not fighting the enemy on that kind of terrain with those tactics and policies, but drawing the enemy in and encircling it, fighting battles to your advantage, stressing at the first part of the war the strategic defensive, etc.

I should point out in passing that in *Mao Tsetung's*





Shanghai, 1967.
Proletarian
revolutionaries
distribute handbills
during the Cultural
Revolution.

*Immortal Contributions*³² there is a statement that's carried too far, the statement which refers to the fact that this policy of Mao's of stressing the defensive at the beginning of the war has great relevance for oppressed nations, for socialist countries that are invaded and generally for revolutionary forces that start out smaller and weaker than the counter-revolutionary forces. I think that's true in the first two cases but it can't be correctly said that it's generally relevant—by which is meant applicable—for all revolutionary forces that start out relatively weak compared to the counter-revolutionary forces. In an advanced capitalist country, the offensive right from the beginning and maintaining of the offensive is extremely important.

Here I should say that I'm not talking about military strategy nor certainly military plans, I'm talking about drawing out the political lessons that can be drawn from the military strategy, although I think it's important to refer to a saying that the Chinese brought up in opposition to the Soviet revisionists. It was a rhetorical question with an obvious answer: can the emperors be allowed to burn down whole villages and the people can't even light lamps? By that, what I mean in this context is that if the imperialists can plot nuclear war, there's no reason why we can't draw political lessons out of questions of military strategy. And the political point that I want to draw in particular, besides correcting that point in *Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions*, is refocusing attention on the question of what is there in the military strategy Mao fought for that might, spontaneously at least, lead him away from understanding that in the context of a world war it might be correct to in fact strike out in different directions, viewing the world as a whole; that is, to oppose the imperialists in general and to attempt to overthrow them wherever possible in *both* camps, of course taking into the account the particular situation in different countries.

Tactically, one bloc of imperialists or one imperialist power might even be the main enemy in a particular country while in another country, fighting in unity but through a different path, it might be the other bloc or the imperialist power heading the other bloc that is the main enemy, that has to be immediately fought against, rather than trying to line everybody up, peoples and countries together, against one bloc of imperialists, allying with the other bloc with the socialist country at the core of it. But the experience and strategy forged in the military sphere in China might tend to lead against that, because they had to fight so hard there, as pointed out, against the very line of striking out at once in different directions and attempting to take on a superior enemy in battles where you were bound to lose; and (although not accountable for it altogether) that may have fed into and interpenetrated with this tendency to make an absolute out of making use of contradictions, dealing with a superior enemy and in that way defeating enemies one by one.

Especially since it is necessary to make these criticisms of Mao, it is also necessary to restate and re-emphasize that Mao was overall and overwhelmingly a great Marxist-Leninist leader of the international pro-

letariat and proletarian internationalist. And while there may have been in Mao's analysis of world forces certain elements contained in the "three worlds" theory, Mao was not only *not* responsible for but fought relentlessly against the reactionary line of capitulating to imperialism and betraying revolution that has been embodied in the "three worlds" theory as put forward by the revisionists now ruling China, who have come to power precisely by overthrowing Mao's followers, and his line, after his death.

A question here: Since a lot of emphasis has been put on deviations from Leninism, specifically towards nationalism, would Lenin too have made these deviations from Leninism if he'd been around longer to deal with a lot of the real necessity that arose in the Soviet Union? Well, I don't know, but precisely it *does* depend on how he handled the sharpening of the contradictions which he only lived to see the emergence of; but it should be said, at the same time, that his methodological approach, his grasp and application of materialist dialectics, was head and shoulders (unfortunately) above his successors in the Soviet Union, and in particular head and shoulders above that of the main successor—Stalin.

Returning to the question of Mao: also linked to the general erroneous tendencies in Mao—too much of a country by country perspective, the tendency to see things too much in terms of nations and national struggle—something else that should be reviewed here briefly is confusion and some of Mao's errors on the question of internal and external, and in particular the internal basis of change and the external conditions of change and how this applies in the relationship between revolutions in particular countries, on the one hand, and the overall world struggle and the world situation, on the other. Here I don't want to repeat everything that's presented in a fairly concentrated way in the excerpt "On The Philosophical Basis of Proletarian Internationalism" that appeared in March, 1981 in the *Revolutionary Worker* (issue No. 96), but just simply to review again in passing towards some other points that, even in Mao, despite and in contradiction to his contributions to and development of materialist dialectics, there were some metaphysical tendencies which interpenetrated with nationalist tendencies on this question.

For example in "On Contradiction" the way it's presented is that China is the internal and the rest of the world is the external. And what we've emphasized in opposition to this is viewing the process of the world historic advance from the bourgeois epoch to the communist epoch as something which in fact takes place in an overall sense on a world scale, is a world process and both arises out of and is ultimately determined by the fundamental contradiction of capitalism which, with the advent of imperialism, has become the fundamental contradiction of this process on a world scale. If we want to look to see what is the underlying and main driving force in terms of the development of revolutionary situations in particular countries at particular times, then too we have to look to the overall development of contradictions on a world scale, flowing out of and ultimately determined by this fundamental

contradiction and not mainly to the development of the contradictions within a particular country, because that country and the process there is integrated in an overall way into this larger world process. It's not simply as it was in the feudal era or the beginning of the bourgeois era where you had separate countries more or less separately developing with interpenetration between them; now they've been integrated into this larger process. This was something that Lenin began to stress with his analysis of imperialism but was not fully developed by Lenin, at least in an all-around way and specifically in a philosophical sense; and it was gotten away from very sharply by the international communist movement after Lenin. And here again it was a case where there was not a radical rupture in a thoroughgoing way on the part of Mao.

All this, in turn, is linked with a wrong view of, or a wrong method of dealing with, the question of the development of conjunctures. It's not that Mao totally failed to grasp the question and the importance of conjunctures shaping up; certainly he grasped this in a certain way in relationship to World War 2, for example, and how that interpenetrated with the Chinese revolution. But we have to understand how Mao's approach to such historic situations reflected certain errors that go along with what I said earlier about this orientation as set forth in "On Policy," of attempting to line up all the progressive forces, or all the forces that can be lined up, against one main enemy, especially in the face of a developing conjuncture like that and in particular of a world war.

We also have to guard against a view that can develop spontaneously in the movement of presenting the course of the Chinese revolution as a "model" in the incorrect, metaphysical sense. In the main—although there are, very secondarily, some tendencies toward this in Mao—he overwhelmingly struggled against just such an error. But still it crops up and it goes along with the kind of error we've criticized in our own thinking, a notion of the "typical" motion of spirals or the "typical" development of things under imperialism.³² In particular, there is a tendency toward a kind of absolute, mechanical, metaphysical view that there are two types of countries in the world and one of them has one-stage revolutions and the other has two-stage revolutions and the way you make revolution in a country that has a two-stage revolution is the way they did it in China, more or less, with *some* concrete application to conditions in your country; that is, you put forward new democracy as your program, you go to the countryside, surround the cities from the countryside, wage protracted people's war and eventually capture power. I'm not saying that there's not a lot to that. First of all, there is a lot of concrete living reality and importance to the fact that there are two different types of countries in the world. But as Lenin said, these boundary lines are conditional and relative, not absolute; and, despite the general distinction, whether the revolutions there proceed in one stage or two is also relative and conditional, not absolute, and overall it is more determined by what's happening in the world as a whole than it is by what's happening in one country.

For example if the revolution in Germany had preceded revolution in Russia they would have handled the peasantry differently in the Soviet Union. They would have been able to handle it differently and there is no principle that says that they have to be nice to the peasantry, that's not the point. They would have been able to be "nice" to it in a different way. That is, they would have been able to neutralize and win over much of the peasantry without having to do a lot of things they did because they would have had a stronger material basis and therefore a stronger political basis. So these matters are not absolutes.

Furthermore Mao talked about how the anti-Japanese war was a long phase of preparation for the final victory of the Chinese revolution and he even put this in one of his characteristic ways by thanking Japanese imperialism for invading China and thereby hastening the Chinese revolution. Well of course that's not the way he really looked at it and if you're Enver Hoxha you wouldn't get what he meant. But the point is precisely that when Mao went to the Chingking Mountains in 1927 he did not know they were going to have an anti-Japanese war. Now it was correct to go to the countryside then and I'm not calling that into question. But it could have turned out differently, so that it would have been correct to come down out of the mountains.

It's not an absolute that they had to stay in the countryside for 20 years. The way things turned out it was correct and I'm not introducing agnosticism or relativism, but precisely because things are not predetermined, don't have a "typical motion" and because things do more get determined on a world scale, it was not preordained that they should have stayed in the countryside or up in the mountains for 20 years. Now, again, what I'm saying here does not negate the essential distinction between the two basic types of countries and two types of revolutions, nor the point stressed in "Basic Principles..."³⁴ that the countryside, political work and struggle and the role of armed struggle in the countryside is generally of great importance in the colonial and dependent countries. What I am urging is the need to have a dialectical-materialist and internationalist method and outlook in approaching the question of how to make revolution in particular countries and how that fits into the overall world situation and the world revolutionary struggle.

But there is the specific criticism to be made of Mao on the question of nations, national struggle and the world revolution: not only in the Anna Louise Strong interview and in "On Policy" but also in the General Line polemic,³⁵ the tendency shows up to see things too much country-by-country separated from each other, too much in terms of nations and national struggle, and too much in terms of identifying one enemy and rallying everybody against it. In the case of the General Line polemic, U.S. imperialism was seen as the main enemy at that stage and in the other imperialist countries the advice was to struggle against the monopoly capitalists and reactionary forces who betrayed the national interest, in other words who were allying with U.S. imperialism; overall this was not correct, even though from an historical standpoint

and in terms of the contribution they made to the struggle against revisionism and imperialism those General Line polemics should definitely be upheld.

The point precisely is that all this shows the need to learn both from the positive and the negative and be determined and deepen our ability to strengthen the application of the basic methodology of materialist dialectics

and Marxism-Leninism as a science, including the critical scientific spirit of Marxism-Leninism and yes, Mao Tsetung Thought. And all this is especially important in light of the sharpening of the world contradictions, and the shaping up of the historic conjuncture we're now entering on a world scale.

II. More on the Proletarian Revolution as a World Process.

Here I just want to make a few points briefly—specifically, more on the material basis of proletarian internationalism. The article which I referred to earlier was entitled “On the Philosophical Basis of Proletarian Internationalism” because it dealt with the question of internal and external (the internal basis and the external conditions of change of a thing); but of course philosophy is based on matter and the philosophical basis is the reflection of the material basis. This is all linked to a deeper grasp of this question of the fundamental contradiction of the bourgeois epoch on a world scale and how all this is integrated into this overall process; *and* further we have to grasp how this applies even to the situation of socialist countries existing during this period, that is, the period of worldwide transition from the bourgeois epoch to the epoch of world communism.

One of the main things that I've been grappling with and that came out in the 1981 May Day tape³⁶ and so on is the problem, if you want to put it this way, of the lopsidedness in the world. This is linked to the question of the contradiction of the forces and relations of production on the one hand, and this interpenetrating with the base and superstructure, on the other—both within specific countries, including socialist countries, and overall principally on a world scale. And all this has much to do with the complexity and tortuousness of the process of proletarian revolution towards the advance of communism worldwide.

What do I mean by this lopsidedness? Lenin, of course, insisted on the basic distinction between the handful of advanced imperialist exploiters and imperialist states and the great majority of the world's people in colonial and dependent situations. But the problem has developed in a more acute way in the sense that in a handful of advanced countries is concentrated—perhaps even in an absolute quantitative sense, but certainly qualitatively—the advanced productive forces in the world. In those countries, and not unrelated to this, the proletariat, broad sections of it and the masses generally, to put it in crude, simple terms, are sometimes not that hungry and not that desirous a lot of the time of radical change. There are strata and sections that are, but it's not that often that broad masses of people are demanding radical change in the whole social structure. On the other hand, there are vast areas of the world where the masses are living in desperate conditions.

Now one of the things that really infuriates me about these social chauvinists and people who say, “What's the difference, imperialist country or not imperialist

country, they're all on the capitalist road and they're all developing capitalism, some are 100 years behind the others, some of them are so many machines behind the others and so forth,” is that it's very easy for people sitting in one of these imperialist countries, even in the European imperialist countries, to say this. In these countries the trains run all on time, trucks drive the goods from one end of the country to the other and there's an integrated market (not that everything's smooth and even, because that's not the way of anything, and certainly not of capitalism) and if there's a serious crisis the unemployment rate is 8%. But in the vast bulk of the world 8% unemployment would be a miracle—it's 30 or 40% all the time, let alone when there's a really acute crisis. And outside of a few pockets, these places are extremely backward and the railroads don't even reach to most of the areas, much less run on time, and the goods aren't moving rapidly all over the country, and there is not an articulated economy (in the sense of the advanced capitalist economies where the linkages between different sectors and between investment and consumption make for integrated national economies).

It is an infuriating thing, this imperialist economist chauvinism where people say capital is capital, what's the difference what the nationality of the capital is. They think they're being very profound talking about production relations when they see it narrowly in a national framework and don't see that an extremely important production relation for the world as a whole is the production relation (which is what it is) between imperialism and these oppressed nations. That's also a production relation and it's a decisive one in the world as a whole and it's more important than the production relation between a factory worker and a warehouse worker in the imperialist countries.

In any case, on the one hand are these advanced countries where most of the productive forces are concentrated but the revolutionary sentiments and level of struggle of the masses and consciousness of the masses is generally, and most of the time—at least so far—not on a very high level. Which is not at all the same—perhaps it does need saying but shouldn't—as the line that revolution is not possible or there's no real prospect for it, even now, in these advanced countries.

And on the other hand, in most of the world the productive forces are backward; such development of the productive forces as there is is under the domination of finance capital and imperialism internationally, which distorts and disarticulates these economies. The people are in much more desperate conditions, much more

desirous of radical change; yet they are also in much more backward, primitive conditions, much less concentrated and socialized (about which there is in this sense something fundamentally important) and frankly, while desirous of change and capable of being rallied more readily to support for revolution, generally the stage of revolution there is one of bourgeois democracy, even if of a new type. And even if the possibility exists, and we should stress the possibility and not the certainty, that it can be developed under the leadership of the proletariat (that's another mechanical law of revolution that needs to be declared illegal, namely that any revolution against imperialism in those countries can only be led by the proletariat), nevertheless, there's a problem. While people are desirous of radical change and can be mobilized more quickly and readily for revolution, though not without contradiction and not simply and easily but more readily behind the banner of revolution, nevertheless the stage of revolution and the content of revolution, even if it is under proletarian leadership, generally corresponds to bourgeois democracy and to the stage of national liberation.

All this represents and makes for a further complication in the process of proletarian revolution throughout the world. In the West—and I am talking about the West in terms of the imperialist countries, including the Soviet Union—it's proven to be more difficult in this period to make revolution than in the East, the East being the colonial and dependent countries in what's been called the "third world." But it's also proven to be extremely difficult to lead and maintain revolution where it can be and where it has been more readily made, and there's no easy way out of this.

Of course, if we succeed in making a qualitative breakthrough (which it would be) in seizing power in one (or more) of the imperialist citadels, that would in fact be a new leap forward for the international proletariat and would create new freedom, although we should have no illusions that making revolution in an imperialist country means that the proletariat when it comes to power will inherit that country and its productive forces as they were, for example, five years before the revolution began—and probably the world war too. Nevertheless, that would still represent a qualitative leap of a certain kind. But it would not and could not change the fact or eliminate the problem that there is a further complexity because of this lopsidedness as I've described and referred to it.

All this then poses problems, yes, but what it also does, on the other hand, is to heighten the importance of internationalism and, at the same time, the importance of grasping and deepening our grasp of the whole motion of spirals leading to conjunctures when all the contradictions on a world scale are concentrated and heightened, including the possibilities for revolution. This is opposed to views which either deny, fail to grasp or, if recognizing some of this, deal incorrectly with the question of the spiral motion internationally toward conjuncture, and oppose to it erroneous notions such as those represented in the theory of general crisis, the linear type views to which I referred earlier.

So this poses problems but it deepens and heightens

the importance of our understanding of imperialism and our need to grasp this correct methodology and analysis precisely because, as I said, even if gains are maximized at every point—even at the decisive points of worldwide conjuncture—not all will be won at once, in one conjuncture or even, in all likelihood, in just a couple of go-rounds. Therefore, this problem of how to deal with this lopsidedness, how to make the greatest breakthroughs and then how to make socialist countries bases for the world revolution is going to be with us and is going to assume very acute form. We're not going to be able to just wish away the problems related to socialist states emerging in an imperialist-dominated world. In all likelihood, whether or not we make a breakthrough this time around in terms of a revolution in one (or more) of these imperialist citadels, even a relatively lesser one, there will still be these problems. Whether or not such a breakthrough is made, we're still not going to be able to wave away the problem that there's going to be imperialist encirclement and that the pressure, both material and ideological, that such encirclement is going to exert on the proletariat in power and on its socialist state will be immense.

It's a problem of how to actually carry out what's been forged to a higher level in the Party's *Programme*, that is, carrying forward the socialist transformation in that country (those countries) where breakthroughs occur as a subordinate part of, not just a base area in the abstract but as a subordinate part of, the world revolution. That's a question we have to begin grappling with right now, precisely because if we carry out the correct line with the correct methodology there may be—if not in the U.S. then in some other imperialist citadel(s), and perhaps in the U.S. itself—that actual leap forward of the seizure of power when the question will be very much and pressingly on the agenda. And, of course, these basic principles apply and are crucial for the international proletariat wherever (in whatever type of country) it makes the breakthroughs and establishes socialist states.

But beyond that there is a particular question I want to address: How far can you go within a single socialist country? Just to say that it's been proven and settled historically that socialism is possible in one country—even if we unpeg the question by coming to a deep understanding of what socialism is and say that there is a real socialist road and it's possible to go and stay on the socialist road, at least for a significant distance, to use the analogy of a road—it still hasn't even been settled that it's possible to have socialism in absolutely every country under every circumstance. The fact that it's been possible to do it in certain countries in certain times doesn't prove it's possible to have socialism in every "one country" at all times. But even more than that there is, I believe, and this is something I'm trying to come to grips with, and only beginning to grapple with, a limitation, though not an absolute limit in a mechanical sense, on how far you can go in a single socialist country.

Here I want to say that there's been the old charge that we've plead "not guilty" to and to which now we have to plead "innocent as charged": that's the old charge that's been hurled in a perverted way of course

by the imperialists that socialist countries in particular, as they frame it, have a need themselves to expand and conquer more of the world or else they run up against their limitations. And I think we have to plead innocent as charged to that. For a long time we've been denying it and pleading not guilty and charging slander. And now I think we have to plead innocent as charged and by that, of course, I'm talking about something qualitatively different from the need of the imperialists for spheres of influence to export capital, to exploit more people, to try to transform the world in their image, or better said, distort it under their domination.

We shouldn't get metaphysical here either on the other side, that is, be absolutist about the limitations on how far you can advance in socialist transformation in one country. But, still, there is a basic truth here and I'm not talking about the need, as is actually imperialist slander, of a socialist country as a *country* to have raw materials and to dominate more territory and to get the resources and people of different countries under its domination. I'm not talking about that—that's just the mirror the imperialists are holding up to themselves.

In terms of maintaining power and advancing further on the socialist road—and not just from the standpoint of a socialist state but in particular from the standpoint of the international proletariat—the question is much more that there is a limit, as I said, to how far you can go in transforming the base and superstructure within the socialist country without making further advances in winning and transforming more of the world; not in terms of conquering more resources or people as the imperialists do, but in terms of making revolutionary transformations. (This was just hinted at and pointed to in a general way in that letter, "On The Philosophical Basis of Proletarian Internationalism.")

As far as I understand it, the reason for this is, first of all, that there is the ideological influence, as well as the actual military and political and other pressure, from the imperialist encirclement. But there's also the fact that this is the era of a single world process and that has a material foundation, it's not just an idea. What may be rational in terms of the production, even, and utilization of labor power and resources within a single country, carried beyond a certain point, while it may seem rational for that country, is irrational if you actually look upon a world scale. And that reacts upon that country and becomes an incorrect policy, not the best utilization

III. Leninism as the Bridge.

By that I mean that in today's situation Leninism is the key link in upholding and applying Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought. To put it somewhat provocatively, Marxism without Leninism is Eurocentric social-chauvinism and social democracy. Maoism without Leninism is nationalism (and also, in certain contexts, social-chauvinism) and bourgeois democracy. Now those may sound like nice little axioms but they apply, and have real importance, and this is, in my opinion, a summation from experience of some

of things even within that country, and begins to work not only against the development of the productive forces but, dialectically related to that, against the further transformation in the production relations (or the economic base) and the superstructure.

It is not possible to go on forever in a linear country-by-country way, to go on a separate dialectic within the socialist countries, even with its twists and turns, even beating back at times capitalist restoration and supporting the peoples of the world: at a certain point this is going to turn into its opposite—for material reasons, as well as interpenetrating with ideological and political and even military reasons.

There's a truth here which, correctly grasped with materialist dialectics, strengthens proletarian internationalism and can strengthen, if applied consciously, the revolutionary struggle of the international proletariat overall through its unavoidably long, tortuous path and struggle marked by critical conjunctures, by sudden turns, dramatic upheavals and leaps.

This calls to mind that in the *Communists Are Rebels*³⁷ pamphlet, this question is put to the side, so to speak, and necessarily, overall, to focus on specific contradictions that are concentrated on there. For example, it simply says on page 11 in the pamphlet, "You are familiar with our analysis of how the class struggle within a socialist country interacts with the class struggle internationally and the fact that the fight against capitalist restoration in a socialist country and to achieve the advance to communism can only be successfully carried out in unity with the whole international revolutionary struggle and on a worldwide basis," which is not wrong overall, but at the same time, as is shown in the differences, that is, the advances from the Party's draft *Programme and Constitution* to their final versions, our understanding of precisely this point has been developed even qualitatively in a certain sense.

That is, we have sharpened our grasp of the fact that proletarian internationalism is and must be the *foundation* for the proletariat and its party in all countries. Before power is seized this is a crucial question, but even more so once power has been seized. And it's in the sense of all this that I say that we can and should willingly and defiantly plead innocent as charged to this allegation that we need to keep advancing and winning more of the world, or else our gains will turn into their opposite.

phenomena that exist in the world and around which there must be deeper struggle.

Now, having said that, by way of a rather sharp and provocative introduction, I want to say a few words more on the question of revolutionary defeatism in terms of its opposite, social-chauvinism. Just a brief comment in passing on reading over a particularly outrageous point in *Sooner or Later*³⁸ and an article printed by an Australian group which puts out a bulletin where they're having a debate on this very

question of social-chauvinism and the "three worlds" theory. Members of this Australian group are generally supportive of Mao and against the Chinese revisionists but they are apparently dividing sharply between Leninist internationalist policy and social-chauvinism, three worldism.

In one of the articles upholding the three worlds theory, as in the *Sooner or Later* pamphlet, one of the most nauseating things is to read this completely sophistic version of "internationalism." It says that it would be extremely narrow and nationalist of us just to struggle against our own bourgeoisie and not think about the whole world situation and the whole world struggle, which translated means: "It is narrow and nationalist of us to fight against and try to overthrow our own imperialism, our own bourgeoisie; to be internationalist we should *support* and prop up our own imperialism and our own bourgeoisie."

And in this Australian article it came out rather sharply because the author went into a whole nauseating, syrupy argument about how, "here we are and we're being exploited and oppressed by U.S. and Western imperialism and we could easily forget all about the people in other parts of the world who are being exploited and oppressed by Russian imperialism and the fact that it's posing the greatest danger to the people of the world, and we could just think about ourselves and the fact that our imperialism is exploiting us—that would just be nationalism." Immediately what leapt to my mind is that the real problem such people are focusing on is that "Russian imperialism is not giving *us* any of the benefits of its plunder in the world, but *our* imperialism is," and this, translated and boiled down to its essence, is the internationalism of these people. But moving on . . .

I want to say a few words about national nihilism and national pride. Here again is an example of where it's a fact that Lenin went against Leninism, even though we didn't say so in print, in publishing the national nihilism article. But some people (in particular the Marxist-Leninist Party, USA, formerly COUSML) did point out the contradiction. They dragged out this article by Lenin in 1914 called "The National Pride of the Great Russians"³⁹ in which, instead of saying they shouldn't have any, he went into this whole attempt to combine two into one, frankly. You can see the pressure was on him: the war had just started and there was not only severe repression for opposing the war but also a wave of patriotism (chauvinism) that swept through Russia. Now Lenin doesn't go against the revolutionary defeatist line, he upholds that line but he basically combines two into one in the sense of saying basically that it's because we have national pride that we can't stand to see Russia play this imperialist role in the world and be under the domination of these reactionary classes. Frankly, it's almost down the line the very arguments that he refutes, and rather powerfully, when they are put forward by Rosa Luxemburg under the pseudonym Junius, as exemplified in his article on the "Junius Pamphlet"⁴⁰ and, also, very powerfully and slashingly in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*.⁴¹ But in this 1914 article Lenin actually goes against the overall

thrust of Leninism on this crucial question.

As stressed before there is Leninism and there is Lenin, and if Lenin didn't always live up to Leninism, that doesn't make Leninism any less than what it is. And this, in a certain way, harkens back to the point referred to earlier on the general line put out by the Comintern—that is, the united front against fascism line—because this very article, "The National Pride of the Great Russians," and this very point were singled out and harped on by Dimitroff and used to build up this whole line in his report and the whole formulation of the united front against fascism to single out the fascist states as the main enemy.

In an imperialist country, the national banner is held firmly by the imperialists. Underlying this is a very important point of Marxist-Leninist political economy. Imperialist capital must operate on an international plane; it requires this as a condition of its reproduction. And it does at times, as Lenin pointed out, speed up economic development in some of the backward countries. But this occurs in the framework of domination and oppression and, closely related, for all its "internationalism," imperialist capital *remains profoundly national* and anchored in its national market, and thus has a profound material stake in defense of the interests of its nation. This is a crucial point analyzed and developed in a thoroughgoing way in the forthcoming *America in Decline*.⁴²

I think that the line put forward in the article in *Revolution*, "On the Question of So-Called 'National Nihilism,'" is not only correct but extremely important to grasp and to deepen. There have been serious problems on this, even among the best in the international communist movement, and there needs to be further destruction and radical rupture. It's a process we've only begun and we have to forge further ahead under the glorious ideological banner of "national nihilism." Now that's a central point about which a lot of people, either from the direction of so-called "Marxism" and so-called "Maoism," not only disagree but will openly often attack Lenin for, saying that Lenin is now passé or that this doesn't apply any longer.

Similarly with the phenomenon of economism, imperialist economism in particular, which is a phrase Lenin used a little bit differently than I'm using it here, but with basically the same central point in mind. He used it from the standpoint of referring to people who denied the right of political independence to oppressed nations, particularly the colonies. These imperialist-economists tried to bolster their arguments by pointing to the truth that no country unless it was really socialist (and we can see now more clearly that not even in an absolute sense is that true) but no country could be free of the entanglements and the domination of finance capital, at least in a qualitative way, unless it was socialist. From this truth they made the opportunist leap to saying that there was no use in talking about political independence and national liberation.

Lenin called this "imperialist economism" and said these people were incapable of grasping the dialectic between politics and economics and how in fact the question of the struggle for national liberation, in the

colonies particularly, was extremely important and couldn't be negated on the basis that ultimately it was impossible to be really independent without breaking completely with the domination of imperialism (finance capital) in the economic sphere. But here we're using the term, (though I won't go into it at real length since other things are being discussed and written about this) in a little bit different light, particularly with respect to those people who downplay the role of politics and internationalism in the imperialist countries.

Let's face it, economism is bad enough in any form, and even where the masses are suffering desperately, where the economic struggle takes on a much more acute form and becomes the struggle of people for bread, for fuel and literally to survive and has much more potential to become a sharp struggle and become part of a revolutionary uprising or revolutionary movement among the masses and to contribute to that movement, even in those conditions, which existed in Russia when Lenin was struggling against economism, all the things that Lenin stressed about economism are true. But it's so much the worse when you're talking about it in an imperialist country with not only a powerful labor aristocracy, but broad, thoroughly bourgeoisified strata, where it would be stretching it to even describe a lot of the so-called economic struggle as struggle, and *certainly* stretching things to call it any kind of significant struggle.

In that context, to preach economism to the workers and to focus their attention on the narrow sphere of their relations with their employer, or even frankly on the narrow sphere of their relationship with their own bourgeoisie, without focusing their attention on the world as a whole, is what I call *imperialist or chauvinist economism*. Such imperialist economism not only limits the movement to reformism but leads it into the service of counter-revolution, particularly the more so if it's a conscious policy. In fact; with regard to imperialist countries, if one takes the standpoint of the nation, especially in view of what was said earlier about lopsidedness and international production relations, it might be better to remain imperialist. But if one takes the stand of the proletariat—which can only mean the international proletariat—it would be better to make socialist revolution and turn an imperialist country into a base area for the advance of world revolution and the advance to communism. The point is not to blame the workers, even the backward ones, who are spontaneously economist, but to blame the communists who tail behind this and who promote this in the name of the working class and socialism and communism.

And here's just sort of a side point. Lenin, you know, raised the point in *What Is To Be Done?*: what is there in common between terrorism and economism? And Lenin was very clear that communists oppose the methods of individual terror, assassinations, etc. And genuine communists do oppose that, but they oppose it not because these things are super-revolutionary, as their adherents sometimes insist and as their bourgeois opponents sometimes claim, but because, in fact, they are not ultimately revolutionary, do not lead

to revolution and are not a strategy for revolution. It's not a question of condemning them, it's a question of recognizing and struggling against them as tendencies, because they are not a strategy for revolution and can't lead to revolution.

This is true even of those variations that attempt to take on an additional dimension and link up with anarcho-syndicalist tendencies and try to talk about the transformation of society and struggle more broadly than in just the military sphere, but which have in common with the economists, whether in capitalist or in socialist society, the fact that they leave aside, or at least significantly downplay, the crucial question of the superstructure, of politics, ideology, world affairs and internationalism. And as I said, there are those people who sometimes from the terrorist side and sometimes from the economist side (or often a combination of both), even if they talk about revolution in all society or even the world revolution at times, reduce things to the narrowest sense of how to transform production relations and how to control, even sometimes literally, a single factory and precisely leave aside and downplay the critical question of politics, ideology, world affairs and the superstructure—which is where these questions are in fact concentrated and fought out in a concentrated way.

That's a side point but an important one because this question of where do you concentrate the attention of the workers, as I said, is important in all countries. Economism is bad anywhere. But especially in the imperialist countries, downplaying the question of the superstructure, politics, ideology and focusing the attention of the workers narrowly on the sphere of their relationship with their own employers or even their own bourgeoisie and their own state is in fact a recipe for turning the workers against the rest of the international proletariat. Whether that's done with revolutionary rhetoric or even acts which in the form of terrorism take on a revolutionary appearance, still, at the essence and at bottom, it is a question of narrowing the workers' sights and turning them, not only away from revolution in general but against the rest of the international proletariat.

Now, I want to briefly touch on the question of the party, which is a much and, I would have to say, continually underrated point down to today in our own history. In concluding I will return to it in a little more depth. What I'm attempting to do here is sketch out some of the key points of Leninism that in fact make it the bridge, and what I mean by the bridge is precisely the bridge between Marxism and Mao Tsetung Thought, what today is the key link in giving Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought its overall integral character and synthesis as the science of revolution and the revolutionary ideology of the proletariat.

It's in this context that I'm leaping from the point of revolutionary defeatism versus social-chauvinism and the question of focusing the workers' attention on the question of politics and world affairs in opposition to economism, in particular to imperialist chauvinist economism. These are crucial points around which people who claim to be Marxists, claim to be Marxist-

Leninists, even claim to be Maoists frequently coalesce and make a stand in opposition to Leninism in one form or another, and often openly. And after all, the party is a sphere where Lenin's contributions and the Leninist line have been a qualitative advance in Marxism and the struggle of the international proletariat. Therefore, not surprisingly, it's also a sphere where, from the "classical Marxists" or the newborn "Maoist" forces, there is often sharp and bitter struggle in opposition to the Leninist line.

From the angle of the "Marxists," a lot of them reject the Leninist party and see in it, as I'll come back to a little bit later, the germ or the seed or the basis of the whole degeneration of the revolution in Russia, they see in it a dictatorship of the party and of a handful of bureaucrats. On the other hand, there are those

so-called and pretended "Maoists" who think that because of the experience of the Cultural Revolution in China the basic principle of the Leninist party, of democratic centralism and so on, has been superseded and surpassed and is no longer correct and applicable, and that some new form, that is, a new bourgeois-democratic form, can be found in which to eliminate in fact the role of the party. You will notice in that quote I read earlier about the Paris Commune, Mao makes the point that we have to have a party; even though he says sarcastically, "I don't care if it's a communist party or social democratic party," he is talking about a communist Leninist party and that's clear, and we can say that without fear of being confused with Enver Hoxha!

IV. Some Summation of the Marxist-Leninist Movement Arising in the 1960s and the Subjective Factor in Light of the Present and Developing Situation and the Conjuncture Shaping Up.

One of the things about which there is a great deal of confusion and therefore is a cause of demoralization to many revolutionaries—more than is objectively necessary—is the question of why the '60s movement receded into an ebb in the '70s, speaking in broad terms; and why and how the upsurge that characterized the '60s generally in the world and particularly in the "third world" turned into its opposite not just in particular countries, but in many aspects internationally.

This crucial question of what happened to the revolutionary movement particularly from the mid-'70s on, and why upsurges were not carried through, did not succeed fully, did not realize the potential they seemed to have at a certain point, and why generally there was an ability on the part of different imperialist forces and revisionism and social imperialism to regroup and to make some gains while the revolutionary movement in an overall way went into a temporary ebb, cannot be understood fully or resolved by looking at it country-by-country and trying to figure out what happened to the movement in this country and why didn't we go further here, or why were we set back there and so on. Again, it's another example of how things have to be looked at first, foremost and fundamentally on an international basis.

Here I just want to make a brief aside in relation to the comrades in China who, assuming that they are genuine and legitimate, have now apparently issued two pamphlets.⁴³ In this first pamphlet they sum up their understanding, so far, of the reasons for the revisionist triumph and the reversal in China: "Our reversal is the reversal of the perseverance of the Chinese Communist Party on the road of the Marxist-Leninist line, it is the reversal of Mao's revolutionary line of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat; it is also a reversal of the line of the revolutionary people of China and the world of combatting revisionism and preventing revisionism. And also because of this, the

more faults and mistakes we can consciously discover and point out in a more concrete way, the more beneficial for us it will be in taking warning from the past to be more careful in the future. Thus these faults and mistakes can be avoided, overcome and corrected one by one, so that our revolutionary cause can go through a thousand forgings and a hundred smeltings, and we can unyieldingly persist in carrying it out to the end."

It's in this same spirit that I want to raise that I think the essence of the problem was not addressed in that particular pamphlet, and that in essence secondary questions, and even in some cases erroneous analysis, were focused on and utilized in attempting to sum up these errors. In particular a certain circular and simplistic argument is made where it's suggested that the revolutionaries were too lenient with the counter-revolutionaries and let them get out of the net when they could have finished them all off with one blow. Of course it would be nice to think that it was that simple and that was the essential error that needed to be summed up—and next time the proletariat has power we'll just learn how to cut off more heads and to finish more counter-revolutionaries off at one stroke. But I think that precisely without breaking out of this framework the revisionist triumph cannot be understood.

Now it's very important that it's said in this statement that the loss there is not just the loss of the Chinese Marxist-Leninists or the Chinese people, but of the international revolutionary people, the international proletariat, and I don't want to underestimate the tremendous importance of a Marxist-Leninist stand and line being taken and put out, even to the world, and the attempt being made to forge a new Marxist-Leninist center there. What I'm saying is in unity with that spirit, but attention needs to be called to the deeper questions of why it was not possible to be

less lenient with counter-revolutionaries, why it was not more possible to ferret out and to defeat more of these at one blow, why compromises had to be made (and I believe they did have to be made in many cases) with vacillating elements or middle elements or centrist elements or people who, in any case, when the struggle reached another crisis or concentration point later on, proved to be counter-revolutionaries and sometimes even leading counter-revolutionaries. And, again, I believe the answer to this doesn't lie in the mistaken leniency of the revolutionaries or their lack of vigilance or the lack of military preparation on the part of the revolutionaries—some of these things, some more than others, may have real validity and relevance, some I think are basically off, particularly the charge of leniency on the part of the revolutionary leaders.

In any case, the answer to the reversal in China has to be sought, yes, in terms of the subjective factor as well as the objective factor, and it can't simply be an analysis that says, "Well, the international situation became more unfavorable so the revolution was bound to go down the drain." But neither do I think it can ignore the international arena; in fact it has to look *mainly* to the international arena in terms of understanding the objective factors contributing to the setback and, in terms of the subjective factor also, has to look to the ways in which a perspective of the whole international struggle was not thoroughly enough upheld and how *this* error influenced the terrain on which and the ground from which this battle was waged. That's not to say the leaders of this struggle, in particular Mao and the Four and especially those two among them who continued to uphold the revolutionary banner, were not, in a basic sense and overall, internationalists. But to the degree that they made errors it didn't lie in the realm of leniency against counter-revolutionaries, it lay in shortcomings in how the relationship between the carrying forward of the socialist revolution in China and the overall world situation and world struggle was viewed and handled.

Just another point in connection with this for further reflection. To put it somewhat provocatively in the form of a question: what is there in common between *Long Live The Victory of Peoples' War*⁴⁴ in the mid-'60s and the "three worlds" theory as put forward in *Peking Review* 45, the overall theoretical statement, if we can call it that, in 1977? In particular, what are some of the common points underlying them? In one of the excerpts reprinted in the *RW*⁴⁵ from something I wrote in connection with some of these questions the point is made, in stressing the need to learn from the impatience of Mao, like Lenin and Marx before him, that a lot of the views put forward in *Long Live the Victory of Peoples' War*, including some of the errors, reflect not only Lin Biao's tendencies but, by and large—though not some of the worst expressions—much of the thinking of Mao at that time. And I think, on the other hand, while there is a qualitative difference in every sphere, including the international line, it is also true as noted earlier that certain elements of the analysis—though certainly not the overall political line nor the ideological line—put for-

ward in the "three worlds" document also reflects to a certain extent, some of Mao's thinking and some of Mao's approach to these problems.

If you read *Long Live the Victory of Peoples' War*, it literally says that the touchstone, dividing line between revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries in the world at that time, is whether or not one dares to and does wage peoples' war against imperialism and whether one really supports it or not. That was made *the* dividing line, which in the particular circumstances then was a real dividing line (whether it should have been made the fundamental dividing line is at least questionable, but it was a real dividing line). But then the world changed and I think one of the things that happened was that the whole revolutionary current that was sort of drawn around and had its leading center in China and around Mao was frankly taken off guard by and did not correctly respond in significant ways to the shift in the whole world balance of forces. (This is not to invoke the revisionist formulation, "balance of forces," but there is something to "world balance of forces" viewed dialectically and materialistically.) The revolutionaries were taken off guard by the shift in the position, strategy and tactics and methods of the various forces. It was not the case in the '70s that the Soviet Union's way of opposing revolution in the world was consistently, or even often, expressed in terms of refusing to support armed struggles and liberation wars against imperialism. In fact, especially through the '70s as things were changing in the world, they supplied weaponry and gave material support in a big way to wars of national liberation—not without pursuing their own bourgeois interests even in narrow financial ways in many cases, though in some cases they even did this at immediate financial loss, having imperialist largeness of mind. But once the Soviet revisionists decided to enter this arena and switched from their policy of avoiding confrontation at all costs with the U.S., even avoiding support for liberation wars in order to avoid such confrontation, then they were able in a certain way to provide a lot more materiel and equipment and to make more headway with a lot of the non-proletarian leadership in many of these movements than the Chinese were, at least in the short run. And as the U.S. began to pull back from Vietnam, began to regroup, as the Soviets began to have the necessity, and also more possibility, to push out in the world, there was an inevitable shift in the revolutionary movement in the world.

This in particular had inevitable repercussions within China in response to it. It has everything to do with the way in which Mao came into contradiction with Lin Biao (and in which Lin Biao came into opposition to Mao) and in the ways in which Lin Biao's view of the world was no longer able, or the view put forward in *Long Live the Victory of Peoples' War* was no longer able, to draw a real dividing line between Marxism and revisionism. And, on the other hand, these changes in the world, part of the sharpening conjuncture, became a framework within which some of the erroneous tendencies on Mao's own part led him into some of the kind of errors that we're familiar with—now making the Soviet Union the main enemy

and seeking to develop a united front, similar to the anti-Japanese united front, but now more broadly on a world scale, against the Soviet Union.

In *Long Live the Victory of Peoples' War* it is said that U.S. imperialism on a world scale plays the role that Japanese imperialism played in China in World War 2. It isn't a very far leap from that, although it's carrying the error further and making it worse in the concrete conditions of the '70s, to say that the Soviet Union has become the main enemy on a world scale and that other forces should be allied with against the Soviet Union. What's missed here, what this and *Long Live the Victory of Peoples' War* have in common—and this becomes sharper again and more of a problem in the '70s as things do sharpen up—is that they fail to correctly grasp the spiral motion and development toward conjunctures. In that light in particular, both Mao's later views and *Long Live the Victory of Peoples' War* see the prospects for revolution as existing almost entirely in the "third world" and particularly do not correctly grasp the importance of the heightening of the contradictions and their gathering into a knot in the conjuncture. An underestimation of the possibilities for revolution in the imperialist countries is an error that is, on the one hand, common to both *Long Live the Victory of Peoples' War* and the "three worlds" theory but stands out more sharply in the more recent context of the actual development toward a world-wide conjuncture and toward heightened possibilities for revolution in the imperialist countries, which don't arise that often and which, therefore in a certain sense, take on all the more importance at times like this, and it is all the more of an error to miss or underestimate this.

But having said that, it is also important to reaffirm what was said in that excerpt referred to earlier, entitled "What's Wrong With Impatience in the Service of the International Proletariat"—this certainly applied to Mao in the 1960s, as reflected even in *Long Live the Victory of Peoples' War*, as well as Lenin and Marx before him. But more than that this obviously must apply to and be applied by people who are upholding and are carrying forward Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought now, because there is a need to stress again that the present and developing situation and the sharpening of the contradictions towards a conjuncture on a world scale represents heightened opportunities, as well as heightened difficulties and necessity.

And it's not as if we're talking in a vacuum or simply wishing for revolutionary elements to appear! These elements are *already* asserting themselves and developing. On the one hand, this is the case even in the sense of the trouble of both superpowers and both imperialist blocs in getting it together for the confrontation between them. This shows up all the time, for example, in such ways as the acuteness of how the nuclear issue poses itself in Europe and the kind of movement that this is giving rise to. Even if we take into account that the revisionists are attempting to fish in these waters, nevertheless the resistance is much broader than that. Or look at the ways in which the U.S. imperialists have real difficulty in holding their bloc together and overcoming or mitigating the

very sharp contradictions within it. Thus the contradiction between the reactionary Arab states and Israel is one that not only consistently asserts itself but is always assuming new and different forms. Of course, the perverted logic of these *Sooner or Later* types who have been declaiming against how the Soviet Union has everything going for it and the U.S. has all this trouble will now, as the Soviet Union starts having ever more open difficulties, just say "Good, that makes it so much the better for the united front." But from a Marxist-Leninist and proletarian internationalist standpoint it is a very good thing that both of these imperialist blocs, and both of these superpowers in particular, are having tremendous difficulty before the thing has even come to a head.

And it's not like we have to invent or search desperately for the favorable elements already developing beyond that sort of positive negative (the positive developments in a negative sense), that is, the difficulties of the enemy in merely pulling and holding their blocs together. There's also the more directly positive element of the mass upsurges, the resistance, even revolutionary movements and struggles in both the Western and the Eastern bloc. The U.S. on the one hand has El Salvador, the Soviet Union has Poland and Afghanistan.

Against these developments in particular, as well as the sharpening of the overall situation, the weaknesses in the subjective factor on an international scale and within the different countries stand out. But I hasten to add, this is not the time for handwringing, moaning, weeping and so on about the crisis of the Marxist-Leninist movement. As the *Basic Principles* document stresses, it's a time for stepped up efforts—on all levels and in all spheres, theoretical and practical and the dialectical relationship between the two—to rise to the challenges and opportunities. And this is not mere rhetoric or routine calls to communist duty.

Let's just take a few examples of the real challenges before the movement internationally and in the various countries, the rebellions in Great Britain and Northern Ireland; add to that the youth revolts, even the uprisings with anarchist trends in Western Europe in particular; all these are both an inspiration and a challenge. And it's precisely not easy to give Marxist-Leninist leadership to movements and struggles of this kind and it's also not easy to forge and develop and temper a Marxist-Leninist force, that is a party.

It should be said in terms of giving Marxist-Leninist leadership, that one of the reasons it is not easy is precisely that it means not suffocating but channeling the revolutionary sentiments and upsurges that are reflected here, channeling and developing and leading all these different strands toward proletarian revolution. But our basic orientation should be infused with the kind of thinking that would cause us to ask the question: How could anarchists be more revolutionary than Marxist-Leninists? It is not that these people are somehow too much out of control and too revolutionary. In fact there is nothing more revolutionary than Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, if it's really *that* and it's really that synthesis.

We have to find the ways of linking up with and giv-

ing Marxist-Leninist leadership, the ways to give real and full and the deepest revolutionary expression to these upsurges and forces that are newborn and coming into existence now. And while not looking to the past and focusing our attention there, but precisely looking to the future, we also have to find the way to make a call and to bring forward many of the best, both the best people and the best tendencies that were expressed in the '60s, precisely again, in light of the present and developing situation. All this is closely linked to our vision, to put it that way, of socialism and the transition to communism, as well as our summation—not a one-sided negation and in fact upholding an historical, sweeping view of the tremendous gains and at the same time grasping the lessons, positive and negative, of the Soviet experience and the Chinese experience and our historical experience in proletarian revolution and socialist transformation, overall. This is linked with the ability to draw forward the best in terms of people, in terms of forces, in terms of sentiments and in terms of political expression that arose in that period of upsurge in the '60s, and the necessary task of merging and fusing all that into the present, linking it with the present upsurge and the newborn forces.

All this is crucial in terms of the coming storm, because this coming storm will precisely not be an idealist or an idyllic vision or dream; whatever its particular features, it will be full of destruction and horror—and the more so, it has to be said, if advances of the revolution in the world don't develop far enough fast enough to actually prevent world war. What was stessed in that little article "Crowns Will Roll on the Pavements"⁴⁶ is exactly what the situation will be like. We're not talking about something pretty, but there still is the question of seizing and wrenching the future—or as much of an advance toward it as is at all possible—out of all the madness and destruction that will be there. This is precisely, if we're going to grow up, what we should grow up to.

This requires—and we should really grasp this generally as in the field of culture—a synthesis of revolutionary romanticism and revolutionary realism, a synthesis that lies precisely in the living science of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought. Somehow we have to find the ways to take this out, both to the newborn forces and also to the best tendencies, the best expressions, the best forces and the highest aspirations that were called forth in the upsurges of the '60s in the various countries and on a world scale, and infuse these with a real living, scientific content and in that way synthesize them and lead people forward to proletarian revolution, to wrench literally out of all this madness and horror as much of the future as at all possible. It's this kind of challenge, this kind of task that lies before the subjective factor, that is, the conscious revolutionary forces: to go as far as possible and to bring the subjective factor as far as possible in line with the development of the objective situation and the possibilities, the opportunities it poses within the different countries but overall on an international scale.

To return to an aspect of this for one second, I think

the point needs to be driven home about the '60s, and particularly the ebb of the '70s, that a summation of that is not simply a question and should not be seen in the light of consoling those people who wonder where all that went, or trying to pluck up the courage of those who are somehow still dragging on forward from the burst of energy they got then, yet are now running out of gas. But, on the other hand, it is crucial to make a scientific summation of that by focusing on the lessons that we've been drawing out and have been attempting to zero in on here, particularly looking at the international arena, the development of these contradictions on a world scale, the shift that took place in the international arena at that stage and how it affected the movement and the tendencies of that time. Why the Soviet Union was able to come forward in a certain way and make headway where before they had lost ground? On the other hand, why China and the line pursued by China, even the revolutionaries in China, ran into temporary and new difficulties and how do we understand the incorrect responses to that? How within the particular countries, for example just to take the U.S.—and certainly *it* can't be understood outside this context—the bourgeoisie was able to respond to the upsurges of the time and how the shift internationally affected the movement that erupted around the Vietnam war? How the bourgeoisie was able to maneuver, not only through repression, but also in bringing forward petty-bourgeois forces and building them up, for example within the Black liberation movement (which is an element we haven't focused in on enough in terms of summing this movement up)?

We must analyze how all these different things—not just within the particular countries but focusing, first of all and fundamentally, on the international arena, and then looking within that to the various countries—how on the one hand things came together in a certain way to lead in general to a temporary ebb (not uniformly and in every place in the same way and to the same degree, but generally an ebb); and yet, how there has never been, on the other hand, even in the '70s, a quiet moment or a time when in some part of the world there wasn't upsurge and struggle, and how already by the end of the '70s there were revolutionary movements once again shaking the foundation of imperialism in key and various parts of the world.

Imagine, for example, what it would have been like if the revolutionary line in China had been more clearly and firmly an internationalist one and, on that basis, if the revolutionary leadership had been able to mobilize the proletariat to keep power in China—which such a line could not have guaranteed but would have made more possible—and then things erupted the way they did in Iran, think about where we would be on that basis now! But even without that, even with the loss in China, think about Iran, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Poland, Afghanistan, England, Ireland, other parts of Europe, the resurgence beginning in the U.S. And, for god's sake, in New Zealand! I hope this is not taken for chauvinism against New Zealand but . . . nobody, even people in New Zealand, expected that and that just proves the point. And precisely what it proves is that a summation of why there was a temporary ebb will arm

us and equip us to be much better able to seize the opportunities that are sharpening and already are breaking through the surface, not just in one place, but in

one place after another, even if not without contradictions certainly.

So to the last point:

V. Some Questions Related to the Line and Work of Our Party and Our Special Internationalist Responsibilities.

First of all, a point on how to evaluate the battles around May 1st, the *Revolutionary Worker* and internationalism (internationalism on the one hand is an integral part of our overall work, certainly of May 1st and the *Revolutionary Worker* but, on the other hand, it is a key focus in its own right as well). I would like to make an analogy to the Great Leap Forward in China which also had its 3 banners of the Great Leap Forward, the people's communes and the general line for moving socialism forward. This is not an exact comparison and I don't want to encourage mechanical thinking, metaphysics, forcing analogies, cutting the toes to fit the shoes, and so on, but I'm still going to make the analogy which is that in a certain sense we also had our 3 banners: May 1st, the *Revolutionary Worker* and internationalism. And to be clear about it, my impression is that there's a lot of struggle still going on about: "did we really make leaps?" just like in China—"was there really a Great Leap Forward or was it a fiasco?" (Mao made the point in the middle of the struggle over the Great Leap Forward that Chin Shih Huang built the Great Wall in China and then he was overthrown, and now we've had the Great Leap Forward, are they going to overthrow us for that too?)

It seems to me that there's a question of how to evaluate these things and I think you can look at it this way. Mao talked about all the excesses and problems of the Great Leap Forward and how everything didn't work out the way that the revolutionaries were struggling to make it work out: a lot of the advances couldn't be kept on the level they were, some couldn't be consolidated at all, to take just one example, a lot of the canteens which they were trying to use to push things forward to more socialized forms of distribution collapsed and couldn't be maintained. Mao said, for example, I thought that steel could walk by itself, I forgot about the problem of transport, getting so carried away with trying to produce so many tons of steel. But the important thing, he said, was that the masses were mobilized and their political consciousness and activity was aroused and raised.⁴⁷ Drawing the analogy we're all familiar with of the Paris Commune, saying that Marx thought the Commune would be good, even if it only lasted a short period of time because it was the first proletarian dictatorship, Mao remarked that if you assess it from an economic standpoint the Commune wasn't worthwhile either.

The way I feel about it, we set out with the basic target in 1980 to have 10,000 people, mainly from the working class, out there leaving work, rallying and demonstrating on May 1st and making that kind of impact on the country and the world. And we fell short in a quantitative sense of that goal. We set out after that,

in trying to go forward from there, to expand distribution of the *Revolutionary Worker* on a regular basis to 100,000 weekly and it appears now that we're falling short of that and we have to consolidate on a lower level. And, we set out to make internationalism a clear line and standard in the movement, and I can't think of too much bad to say about that, we haven't done so badly at that, it seems, although there are still some backward forces who think we should talk about petty reforms or maybe psychological space and other equivalent problems.

But let's take the question of May 1st and the *RW*. On the one hand, we set out to reach this May 1st target quantitatively at 10,000 and there is an interpenetration with quality. We didn't succeed in that goal of 10,000, but we did succeed in making May 1st a big social question inside the proletariat in the U.S., even with international implications, not just among the left "movement," many of whom tried to ignore it or slander it, but especially among a good section of the masses, especially in the more advanced masses in the U.S. We did succeed in making that a big social question and in making a big impact politically on that day and then again the next year on May 1st. And we succeeded so well that we actually have a tactical problem, because this coming year May 1st falls on a Saturday and we don't know what to do. In a certain funny way that's a measure of whether or not and to what degree and how in fact we *did* make an advance. And May 1st is a big social question, especially in the more solid social base for a proletarian revolutionary internationalist line; it's something that already, I'm sure, people are looking forward to and increasingly will be; it's become a day where the question of revolution is put center stage, not literally in the majority of people's thinking, but on the minds of large numbers of people and with an impact on even still broader numbers.

In terms of the *RW*, we didn't succeed apparently in being able to consolidate on the level of 100,000. It is sort of like Mao with the steel: we went out there and put it out boldly to the masses and put the newspapers literally on the street and called the masses forward to take them, and there were inspiring examples over and over again of that happening. But, you know, like Mao said, he forgot that steel couldn't walk and apparently we forgot that papers don't pay for themselves. So we ran into some problems where we weren't able to consolidate on that level and maintain the distribution on that level, but we are going to be able to come out of it with a real leap quantitatively and, more than that, qualitatively. First off, the *Revolutionary Worker* and the whole central task has taken a qualitative leap in

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terms of our *own* grasp and application of it. And secondly the whole trend as concentrated around the newspaper and as represented by the Party has become a much broader force, a material and ideological force among growing numbers of the masses. If before, the central task was much less grasped and very much more unevenly applied, through the whole struggle, including the 100 Flowers* campaign, it certainly is true in a qualitatively greater sense that the central task and the work around the newspaper and the whole line it represents have become much more a real force, both in terms of our own grasp and application and in terms of its impact among the masses.

Similarly with internationalism. We have actually made internationalism a question throughout the U.S. and with an impact throughout the world; literally with no exaggeration it is an inspiration to people from all over the world that right in the heart of the U.S. there is an internationalist force. We made internationalism a decisive question, a question taken up by people who come into struggle around particular questions or issues, and a question to which generally broader forces, including in the "movement," have to respond or have to deal with. So I feel that we can find a narrow basis for assessing these things and saying they weren't worthwhile, but from any Marxist-Leninist standpoint, from any view of correctly assessing our overall goal, these were not only worthwhile but were indeed real important qualitative leaps that have to be built off.

Just to go back to the last point about internationalism and the full point about how the newspaper and the central task have taken a qualitative leap in theory and in practice, I think that the trend, as represented by our Party and as concentrated in the newspaper, has become a real political trend in the U.S. (from everything I can gather) and that's a growing thing, it's not just a flash in the pan. Now I would like to say that I think we should sharply contrast our trend not only to straight up bourgeois politics, but also, rather than simply contesting the phony communists and saying "they're not communists, we're real communists," we should to a certain degree and in a certain context, let the revisionists have the "communist" banner. And what we should say is, "yes, there are different tendencies: there's the socialists and the social democrats, some of them are in power in different countries, you can see what they do, they're more or less a straight up bourgeois trend; then there's the communists, that is, the revisionists, they're in power in some countries too, and in other countries they want to be in power on the same basis, you can see what they're about; and then there's our trend, which is the revolutionary communist/proletarian internationalist trend." I say this not at all facetiously.

To a certain degree the revisionists have the banner of communism—well, to a certain degree and only to a certain degree, we should say "yes, there's the social

democrats and the socialists, there's the communists, (that is the revisionists), and there's the revolutionary communist/proletarian internationalists," and push that trend out and make it even more of a force in that kind of way. Because that in a certain sense is breaking more out of doing this all within a more narrow context, and seeing the question of that trend becoming a big trend and an actual pole around which will gravitate and rally the advanced forces who are taking up revolution and internationalism more consciously. That's just something to think about. . .

I want to go back to this question of the Party and put it in the context, in particular, of the central task and then move on to conclude. The central task as we know is encapsulated in the formulation, Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power. There's a question of how to view this in its broadest implications: What do you mean by a task, in particular a central task, and what's its relationship to other tasks? The way I look at it, central task, in the sense that we're using it, is something which has to be viewed in an overall way and it's something which comprehends *all* of the work that's carried out in that entire process of Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power.

In other words, to me the central task is not creating public opinion now and then, (tomorrow or at some point) we will be seizing power. Nor can the central task be reduced to the work around the newspaper as the main weapon that we're using now. The central task is precisely a process (or corresponds to a process) which encompasses all the work we have to carry out in creating public opinion and seizing power—which, at different times and in different circumstances, finds more or less emphasis on different aspects of it, and includes a number of more specific tasks. Another way that we put this is: "preparing minds and organizing forces," which, should be pointed out, we consciously reversed from—and I hope genuinely rendered somewhat more profound—Lenin's formulation in an article where he talked about organizing forces and preparing minds. We put the two in the opposite relationship, preparing minds and organizing forces, which is more in line with Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power. But viewing the central task in this way enables us to grasp more firmly and deeply the role and the importance of party building.

I see party building as being in very close dialectical interpenetration with the overall orientation, the importance of which I've come to see even more deeply, of what I've formulated as "taking responsibility for the movement as a whole," that is, for the overall task of building a revolutionary movement. This has been a strength of ours historically, going back even to the Revolutionary Union before the Party was formed, a strength that not even the Mensheviks, and the conditions that made their influence grow in strength, were able to extinguish, though they were certainly able to suffocate and smother it to a significant degree.

To stress the importance of party building and to give it the kind of emphasis that unfortunately it has not been given—certainly not consistently—in our own understanding and in our own work, it must be said that Party building is not only a key part of the

* The "100 Flowers campaign" refers to a debate in the pages of the *Revolutionary Worker* in 1980 over the central task and, in particular, the role of the newspaper.

preparation of revolution; to put it another way, if you want to talk about preparing minds and organizing forces, it is *the* key part of organizing forces. The question need only be asked to answer itself: how clearly and how consistently have we grasped that and acted upon it as an organization overall?

This is very much linked in my mind to the question of what a revolutionary situation looks like in terms of its complexity and the diversity of the forces involved—the kinds of things we've been trying to stress and that are spelled out, or at least spoken to, in the *Programme*. Take the problems that were posed for the Marxist-Leninist movement in Iran with the upsurge and then the overthrow of the Shah, and the aftermath of that down to the present. Here I'm not talking in a narrow mechanical sense about the fact that there wasn't a party *per se* in Iran or putting emphasis on organization narrowly. But due to the savage repression by the Shah and other factors, the Marxist-Leninist movement there was fragmented and diffuse so that it was not a powerful trend as such within the society at the time when things developed to a revolutionary situation and the actual overthrow of the Shah. I'm not talking about already having the adherence of the majority (or the majority of the working class), I'm talking about being a major force politically in society as a whole. And one only needs to look at that to see how much further along the revolutionary movement would be in Iran were the Marxist-Leninist movement and a clear Marxist-Leninist line in particular, and an organized force representing that, much more of a force in the upsurge which overthrew the Shah. Which is not to get metaphysical and say, "only if we'd had this..."; nevertheless, it is a way of illustrating a point and urging us to maximize the freedom we have and to take every correct step and necessary step to greatly intensify and push forward our work in building the Party.

Now this point has been strengthened from the draft *Programme and Constitution* to the final. But concentrated attention and work is needed on this point from now forward. Attention needs to be focused on the question of why, in party building, *quality* is the key link; and that means in particular that line and the training of Party members and those drawn toward the Party in theory and in practice is the key link in party building. But also, and if secondary, still extremely important and interpenetrating with the qualitative aspect, is the question of building the Party quantitatively. To put it in simple terms, building its membership, bringing in new members continually, building up the quantitative aspect of the Party is crucial to being able, even first of all, to gauge the developments—specifically the mood of the masses—toward a revolutionary situation and of course to carry through whenever a revolutionary situation does develop—which, as we've seen from experience, can develop suddenly and without much warning—and certainly without permission!

The question of the relationship between the party and an overall upsurge in society has to be understood clearly. By that I mean you can't build the party in a hothouse, or by will or self-cultivation, and generally

you can't build the party, you can't bring people in and around the party—beyond a certain point in any case—in the absence of a general ferment in society and a general growth of the social movement and upsurge in society. I'm not saying you can't have a party and you can't build it at all, but there is a relationship there. And, again, it's not as if there isn't any ferment in the world as a whole and even in society in the U.S., in particular.

But with all that, there still is the basic truth and principle that the party is in fact the vanguard, it is not the same as and can't be reduced to whatever the level of struggle and consciousness is at any given time—even of the advanced, let alone of the broadest masses. In line with the central task and our understanding of it, as I touched on before, we should be able to see more clearly the importance of building the Party precisely as the vanguard, and this has to be developed and strengthened both qualitatively and quantitatively in correct relationship to political work among the masses, social upsurges and social ferment, social movements and social questions.

As I said, this is concentrated and comprehended in the central task as correctly understood, but it has to be grasped and acted upon that this is not only a key part of carrying out the central task, or to put it another way, preparing minds and organizing forces, but is *the* key aspect of organizing forces. This question, too, has to be taken to the masses, both in the form of addressing it openly in a concentrated way in the newspaper, and also not in a hothouse but precisely in correct and dialectical relationship with the growing ferment and upsurge in society and in the world, it must be made a question and a challenge particularly to the advanced who come forward, and especially from the proletarian masses.

The trend as represented especially by the newspaper has to be more than just a loose trend and a general sentiment; it has to have organized expression. People inside our own ranks and more broadly, particularly those who do gravitate towards this trend, have to grapple with and come to terms with the question that whether or not we can actually "do the dog," as we say, and whether or not we can, in any case, contribute the most to the overall international advance, has everything to do with how much this trend not only becomes a force politically and ideologically, but takes organized expression which furthers the dialectic of our being able in fact to both feel and quicken the pulse of the masses as the objective conditions provide more and more of a basis for that.

If these questions are not put out to the masses, as well as struggled out and grappled with within our own ranks, we cannot go into the storms that will be erupting ahead, including the possible development of a revolutionary situation in this country, as strong as we can and, in that sense, *must*—not only in this country but internationally as well. This is a question that has been underrated and which we cannot afford to under-rate any longer or fail to pay consistent and intensified attention to—without turning it into some kind of new gimmick or using it as a way of turning away from the road on which we've been taking not only crucial steps

but actual leaps. Rather, this is a further continuation and a deepening of the carrying out of the central task as understood in this broad and all-encompassing sense.

So in conclusion, then, I want to return to the theme running through all this: the crucial importance of our internationalist orientation and the way that infuses all of our tasks and the carrying out of our work in the light of our basic analysis of spirals leading to the heightening of contradictions and the shaping up of conjunctures on a world scale—which is not just a general analysis but a concrete analysis of developments in the world today and our special responsibilities. Not only does there have to be a clear identification of our trend, but we have to make a real living thing among the masses of the question that we have a Party which is ours and which we have to join and build and strengthen as a crucial part of preparation for revolution, without falling into the tailist notion of “it’s your Party” (i.e., the Party of the “average workers”) that the Mensheviks tried to carry out, that we have a Party that actually expresses our proletarian and internationalist outlook and interests, and whether it stands or falls and whether it can play its role depends on *us* and not just on *it* as an external abstraction, or at least an external to us—all this must be made a real living thing to the masses, particularly to the advanced.

Although I don’t want to force everything together, there is also the question of “roads to the proletariat” which touches somewhat on this question of party building as well as building the movement among the advanced forces more generally. This applies in the U.S., as raised in the talk “Coming From Behind to Make Revolution.”⁴⁸ But in closing I want to touch upon it in terms of its international dimension. It’s really not a principle that “no one can touch a single hair on the social system of anyone else or any other country,” or no one can “interfere” in anybody else’s internal affairs. There is the question of what methods we use in building the movement internationally, as well as in the different countries—that is, the correct versus incorrect methods. But part of that is precisely recognizing and taking responsibility for what kind of country the U.S., in particular, is. It is a country which has certain features we can seize on to turn into their opposites for the advantage of the international proletariat and to advance its struggle. It is the kind of imperialist country that not only plunders the whole world and squeezes the life out of people but also, at the same time, drives large numbers of people into it.

Take the example of Central America. The complexity and contradictoriness of things is such that sometimes people literally right out of the revolu-

tionary struggle in these countries are driven into the U.S. at the same time the U.S. is the target of the struggle they’re part of. And there’s a question of how that can be concentrated and spread back out on the other hand to places where the subjective factors and Marxist-Leninist movement are presently not strong.

It’s not a question of violating the “Bergman law” [a leader of the Menshevik clique]: that no one, least of all us, should think that we have anything to say to anyone else in the whole world, any ideas that anybody else might possibly find worth listening to. It’s not so much to violate that law as a matter of principle—though as a matter of principle it should be violated. It’s much more the question that if we are really grasping this proletarian internationalism and its material and philosophical basis, we have a responsibility to do this in a correct sense. Not that we tell everybody what to do. I mean, if we tell people and it’s good advice, that’s good and maybe they can use it to make advances; if we tell them and it’s not good advice, maybe they can negate it with good line. In any case, that’s not the heart of the question.

The heart of the question is we have a responsibility to figure out how to advance the movement internationally and that includes taking advantage of some features of this imperialist monstrosity and nerve-center that our Party is in, and working to strengthen the Marxist-Leninist movement where it is not as developed, at the same time as we learn from where it may be quantitatively and even, in a certain sense qualitatively, weaker overall (or where it may be stronger in an overall sense in a particular country). It’s not the question of petty competition and bourgeois rivalry, even turned inside out *à la* Bergman and false modesty. That is all beside the point. The question is how to carry out our responsibilities and how to turn something into a strength for the international proletariat out of the hideous features of this monstrosity of imperialism, and U.S. imperialism in particular.

In an overall sense, and to close with this, while we have to do everything possible toward revolution in the U.S., it’s not just *that* that we have to do. And it’s not just that our greatest contribution to the world struggle is to make revolution in the U.S. Even that’s too narrow, though in a more limited sense there’s truth to it. We have to look at it even more broadly. In fact, even seeking to make revolution in the U.S., even that has to be done as part of the overall goal and with the overall goal in mind, of doing everything possible to contribute to and advance the whole struggle worldwide toward communism and in particular to make the greatest leaps toward that in the conjuncture shaping up. □

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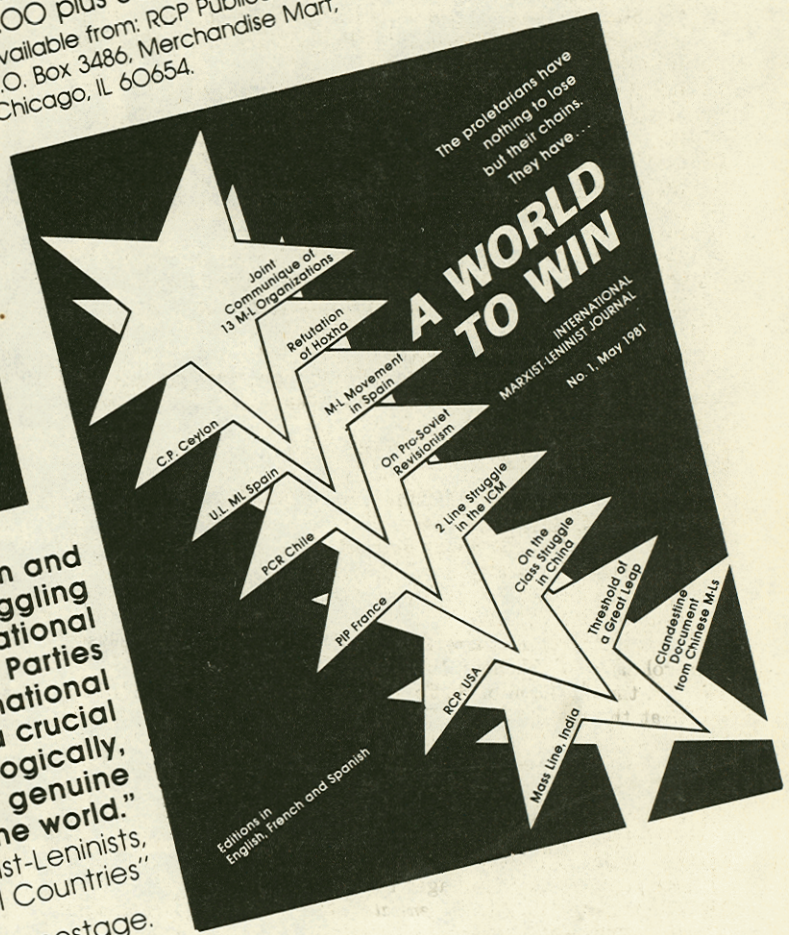
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