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OUR CLASS WILL FREE ITSELF AND ALL MANKIND

**Speech on the Celebration of the
Founding of the Revolutionary
Communist Party, USA by Bob
Avakian, Chairman of the Central
Committee of the RCP, USA,
October 1975**

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**WITH THE
LEADERSHIP OF OUR
PARTY, AND
TOGETHER WITH
OUR CLASS
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This pamphlet is a slightly edited version of a speech by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA. The speech was given in Chicago, October 1975, at a meeting celebrating the founding of the RCP, USA. Similar celebrations were held in many cities throughout the United States.

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Bob Avakian

(photo from May Day 1975, New York City)

As it has already been stated, this celebration is the same kind of celebration that's going on all across the country this week. I think it is important to say right from the start, as with everything in this world, the way we celebrate is also the direct opposite of the way our enemy, the capitalist class, celebrates. Because they are a bunch of decadent exploiters, any kind of celebration they have is always rotten and full of decadence, just like their whole system. But we're the class, the working class, that produces everything. We're not like them, we're not the class that represents the past, that tries to hold everything back. We're the class that represents the future. Therefore our celebrations are not only bright and full of the sense of the bright future we are going to bring into being, but our celebrations are celebrations of struggle.

The formation of the Party itself is a creation, is a product of the struggle of our class. It was forged in that struggle. So too is this celebration. One of the great leaders of our class, V. I. Lenin, who led the first revolution of the working class that took power and held power, said a revolution is a "festival of the oppressed."

And I think everybody knows what he's talking about that has ever been involved in any struggle. Not only in a revolution, because we haven't quite made that yet here (though that's where things are going, inevitably), but in every major battle when we stand up and fight back and begin to break the chains that they fasten around us — every one of those struggles is a festival of us, the oppressed.

Everybody knows there is the sense that at times even brings you to tears — when after so long they've told us we can't get together to fight and we'll never get united and we'll always have to go on living this way, go on letting them drag us through the mud — when we finally get together to rise up and fight back, everybody knows the joy. It is with that same spirit, the spirit of the "festival of the oppressed," that we're celebrating our Party.

It was already mentioned for example that the workers at the Capitol Packaging Plant have been on strike for over ten weeks. [The Capitol strike involved 227 Chicago workers, mainly women, and lasted 6 months in 1975-76 —Ed.] I was

over there talking to a couple of people on strike two days after they had voted down the offer from the company. And it has already been pointed out, the company expected the slaves to be good slaves and crawl back on their hands and knees into the plant. And people were laughing and throwing back their heads and clapping their hands at the whole situation. At the meeting where they voted people were jumping up and down, cheering and shouting exactly because they were getting that taste — that taste we all get when we fight back — the taste of not being a slave, not being down on your knees, but standing up and fighting back against them.

And the workers, the strikers there, were having a good laugh at the foremen and supervisors who came in their suits, expecting the workers to be crawling back, and had to do some work in their suits. I mean real work, because they were scabbing on the strike. Many people saw in the paper this time, in *The Worker* and in the national paper of our Party's Central Committee, *Revolution*, the picture of the miners on strike — over 1,000 demonstrating in the city of Charleston, W. Va. You couldn't mistake the same joy, the same sense of strength right there in the struggle. People rising up and fighting back. This is the kind of celebration we are having tonight when we celebrate the formation of our Party, the Party of our class.

This celebration is part and parcel of the struggle just as our Party is. Because everything we have has been won through the struggle of our class. So it is appropriate that we celebrate in this way and in this spirit. It's also appropriate because the Party whose formation we're celebrating, is a Party of struggle. A product of the struggle of the working class itself. The fact that our class continues to fight back against the oppression and exploitation that they continually bring down on us has brought the conditions into being that made it possible for the Party of the working class to be formed.

Party of Slaves

And the Party is already, and is determined to become even more, part and parcel of all the struggles of class because the

very life blood of the Party, the whole reason for its existence is that struggle for the emancipation of our class. The Party has to be bound up with every fiber of its being with the whole class and its struggle, and has to continue to deepen its ties with the whole class. Our Party is different than the kind of party that they always parade before us every so often whenever it's election time. You all remember election time — that's when we see the politicians come around. They're Democrats or Republicans and they promise you everything and give you nothing — except the back of their hand like they always have.

Well our Party is different; it's different for one basic reason — because our Party is a Party of slaves — that's right — that's who we are. In this capitalist system we are wage slaves and we are determined not to be slaves any more. But that's who we are and that's why when people talk about work many call a job a "slave". You go in there and basically you sell yourself. You don't have to stand on an auction block or literally be held in chains like the old days, but it's the same thing when you come right down to it, only under new conditions. You've got to go in there and sell yourself to the man, and everyone who's ever punched a time clock knows that's what it really is.

I remember one time I was working in this plant and this guy was standing behind me. It was a long hard day and we were punching out at the clock. He was an old guy, he'd been in the struggle a long time. And he laughed and he said to me just as he was punching the time clock, "I thought they said they ended slavery." Everybody's had that experience, everyone who's punched a time clock knows that's what it is, slavery under new conditions: we are wage slaves.

They pay us a wage and in turn for it they take and do with us whatever they want. They use us like animals, like extensions of a machine, like another tool sticking out from it, to get as much labor from us and money out of our labor as they can.

Our Party is not a Party that says it represents everybody. We're not a Party that stands up and says we represent both capitalists and the workers, and preaches the idea of har-

mony between capitalists and the workers, because there can't be harmony between the slaves and the slavemasters. There can't be harmony between the exploited and the exploiters because the slavemaster lives by exploiting the workers — the capitalist lives by exploiting, that's his whole existence. And we live for the day when we can break those chains of exploitation.

We are not a Party of both the slavemaster and the slave. We are a Party of the slave. We proudly and openly proclaim that. And more than that, we proudly and openly proclaim that our class which is now in slavery, wage slavery, is not going to put up with it much longer. We're going to break those chains. We are one mighty class that represents the majority. We're going to become the masters of this society and our class worldwide will be masters of the whole world. That's the spirit in which our Party is founded. I'm not talking about one or two people becoming masters. I'm talking about the working class, representing the great majority in this and every society, becoming masters, taking power throughout the world for the first time in history.

We Have to Struggle

Now the question before us is not whether we are going to struggle — that's not a question, that's not a choice, that's not open to us. Every day is a struggle to survive — to try to lift our heads, to live like people and not be driven down and forced to live like animals like they're trying to make us live. This system, this capitalist system of wage slavery, doesn't allow us the choice of whether or not we are going to struggle.

Everybody knows the fact that, young or old, we have to struggle to get a job and once you get it, you're driven even harder, sped up. People losing their hands, arms, even their lives, being driven behind the whip of these capitalists trying to make more profit for themselves.

We look to the future and what can we see under the present system? The same kind of set up, the same kind of situation for our kids. And the basic question is: do we want to live under this system generation after generation? Already we can look at the young kids out here, 11, 12, 13 and 14 years old

— people peddling junk to them and some of them getting hung up. Junk being shot into their veins. Their lives and their futures already being ruined before even growing into manhood or womanhood. And if they live that long and make it through these rotten schools and don't get thrown in jail for one thing or another, likely as not, sooner or later, they'll be put in uniform, dragged off, given a gun and told to die for the same dogs who've been making money off their parents and driving them into the ground, to conquer some other people and do the same thing to them. Then they try to use us and throw us away.

I was talking to the Vets about what's in their paper *Veteran*, organ of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. People know this. They go over to Vietnam or wherever else they send us to do their dirty work, to get shot up and disabled, and then they don't even want to give you benefits, "just crawl away and die"— that's their position.

This is the way they treat us. This is the way the slavemaster looks at the slave, simply as a way to make money. They don't care anything about us, but that's alright, because we don't care anything about them *either*. [Applause]

In our community they try to have us caught in a trap where on the one hand you have crime, young and old people scared to walk on the streets, and on the other hand you've got even worse violence and terror by the police, who'd just as soon shoot you as look at you. And that's not just because they are a bunch of dogs. Yeah, they're a bunch of dogs, but somebody is controlling the leash. [Applause] They're out there to keep us in our place because the system is based on exploiting us. They know slaves will rise up against slavery, that the exploited will always rise up. The police, courts and all the rest of it are there to try and scare us, to beat us back into place. They tell us, "You try to rise up and revolt against these conditions and we'll make it horrible for you, your family, your children; we'll even murder you, your kids, let your blood run in the streets if you rise up and fight back. Even for a little improvement in your life, let alone to do away with our system."

But we're not scared. We've been through this every day

since we've been born — this struggle to survive. They haven't been through it. It's going to come down to the final crunch and we're going to be ready. Our whole lives, our whole struggle is preparing us for the big struggle. No matter what they do, every time they beat us back and they bring down violence against us, we pick ourselves up and we go forward as we always have.

We've Fought for Everything We Have

The history of our class in this country is the history of struggle. We all should know about it and be proud of it, learn from it and build on it. Look at the display at the back of the room [history of workers' struggles in this country and internationally — Ed.] That's only a part of it, the struggles of our class in this country and every country. The mighty demonstrations — especially in the massive unemployment days of the 1930's — mighty demonstrations of unemployed workers numbering over the millions fought for and won unemployment compensation. They're trying to take this away, like they're doing with everything we win. But nevertheless it was a great victory. Fighting in the face of attempts to throw people out onto the streets, to let them starve and attempts to cut their wages. Fighting against all that. Fighting to keep wages up, against discrimination, against lynching, against the murder and the terror of the police.

And as part of our struggle, fighting in unity with fellow workers in all parts of the world. Such as the workers in Russia who opened up a new chapter in history, who stepped into the future of mankind in October 1917 when they seized power and began making a new society for the first time. For example, workers in Seattle at that time refused to load the guns that the rulers of this country were sending to the overthrown exploiters in Russia to try to beat back, overturn and defeat the revolution there. The workers of Seattle fought in support of the workers' revolution in Russia and this led to a general strike. They refused to load guns in solidarity and support with class brothers and sisters in Russia. This is the real tradition of our class, which they always try to keep hidden from us — but they can't keep this from coming out,

just as they can't keep down our struggle.

The struggle for education for our children, which they are also trying to cut back these days — even the fact that our kids get even the education they do is only because of the long struggle and the blood spilt by our class throughout the generations. In fact, the history of the struggle of our class, the working class, in this country has given to the international working class, to workers in all countries, two holidays celebrated every year by hundreds of millions of workers throughout the world. Mayday, May 1st, which grew out of the strike, the movement for the eight hour day in this country as far back as 1886; and International Women's Day, celebrated on March 8th throughout the world, which grew out of the struggle of women garment workers in New York City. This is the proud history they try to hide from us but which we are learning from and which we will build on to continue our struggle to victory.

It was through the struggle of our class that in the year 1919 the Communist Party of this country, the Party of the working class, was formed. It too at that time was the product of the struggle of the working class. At that time, and for many years, it led the working class in heroic struggle, in massive battles against the capitalist exploiters. Through the years of the 1930's, with 20 million unemployed, with millions thrown out of their homes and facing hunger, near starvation and actual starvation, the Communist Party (CP) led the workers in organizing industrial unions and winning unemployment benefits and many of the other gains our class has won.

Old Communist Party Gave Up the Goal of Revolution

But at the time that it led many of those battles, that Party, the CP, began to lose sight of the final goal of the struggle. It began to lose sight of the fact that although these battles were very important, just as we have to fight for a better life right now, that's not enough; we have to carry it through and get rid of the whole system or else one generation after another, our kids and the generation after that, will have to fight

the same battles all over again.

The old CP lost sight of this, and along with that, especially its leaders grew away and began to be alienated from, began to look down on, working people — the very people they were supposed to represent. They began to think that in fact the working class was not, after all, the revolutionary class. That the slaves, after all, were satisfied with their slavery. And they gave up the goal of revolution and turned their backs on the working class and more than that, they stabbed it in the back. So by the 1950s the old CP, which had been born out of the struggle of the working class and had led it forward for many years, had turned around and become the opposite of what it once was. It became a knife in the back of the working class, it became another weapon in the hands of our enemy, the capitalist class.

But despite that, the struggle of the working class continued to surge forward. Even without a party to lead it, the working class in the 1950s and 60s and early 70s waged many large, broad, militant and heroic struggles against exploitation and oppression. Along with this, in this same period there have been mighty mass movements involving literally millions of people against the many outrages and abuses we have suffered each day under this system.

Mass movements of Black people and other minorities, of women and of youth and students, the movement of broad sections of the American people against the war in Vietnam. Struggle which many people in this room tonight have gone through, out of which we have learned a great deal. And millions of more people will continue to go through this kind of struggle, because the system forces us to struggle every day.

The Science of Revolution — A Light in the Dark

Through the course of this many people began to see that it wasn't just one problem, not just one outrage, not just one way they were tormenting us, but that something was messed up with the whole system. That the whole thing stunk and was rotten. And through the course of this, many people wanted to know the answer to why this was. Why

everytime you turn around are they trying to take another slice out of you and draw even more blood? They began to sum up the experience we're going through, to see a common thread running through all these battles and the common enemy that they were all aimed against.

They looked at the struggle in this country and in the past and what was and is going on in other countries throughout the world. And they found something that was like a light in the dark — they found the science of revolution. This science, the science of our class, the working class, which in other parts of the world has enabled it to make revolution, will also enable us to take up and apply it to our struggle to do the same.

This science — theory that has summed up the history of our class' struggle — meant that people who were involved in many battles no longer had to struggle in the dark, blindly. We could have a light pointing out the actual nature, the actual features of the enemy we are up against. We can learn from the lessons of the struggle of our class in this country and the world, lessons that have been paid for in blood. This struggle we're going through today, they've gone through in other countries. Not exactly the same struggle, not exactly the same conditions, but basically the same struggle of the same two classes, the working class and the capitalist exploiters.

And people have shed their blood in this struggle and have picked themselves up, learned from mistakes, wiped off the blood and have gone forward. These lessons are summed up in the science of the working class, which was first founded more than 100 years ago by Karl Marx, and has been developed through the struggle since that time. It is a weapon to cut our way through, to hack our way through the chains of exploitation and oppression. To show us how to fight and just what is the nature of the beast that we are up against and how to deal with it.

This science isn't like what they portray to us on the TV or in the movies: some dude with spectacles down in some laboratories with funny things going on all over the place. This science is a living science, not stuck off in some laboratory;

it's based in real life, based on the hundreds of years of the real life and death, blood shedding struggle of our class and thousands of years of struggle of oppressed classes struggling throughout history. It enables us to understand what this struggle has developed from, what are the laws governing it — and everything in this world is governed by laws, I don't care what anyone says. And it's the grasping of those laws that moves things forward just as in curing disease. When you understand the laws of that disease, understand what makes people sick, you have the basis for curing it.

In ancient days, when mankind first stood up and began to leave the animal kingdom behind, stood on two feet and began using tools, he was afraid of fire and made up all kinds of stories about it because he didn't understand it. Then people thought it was the gods, and other things that didn't really exist. That's because they didn't understand the laws of it. But today things have gone forward and mankind has made tremendous progress and we can use fire.

Fire in a furnace can, for example, be used to take rock and ore and transform it into steel which is necessary for tremendous construction. Of course the steel doesn't do the construction by itself; it's the workers who use the steel and other things. But the steel goes in the buildings, and many of the things we use everyday — even this microphone and say, housing (lousy as it is, it's not the workers' fault). [*Laughter, applause*] Now we can make all sorts of things — metals, buildings, trains, airplanes, etc. Understanding the laws of fire has enabled mankind to create these things and use them to make progress to advance humanity.

The same thing is true with the science of revolution, the science founded by Karl Marx and developed by Lenin, called Marxism-Leninism, and later developed by Mao Tse-tung and sometimes called Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung Thought. This science is also a living science. It explains the laws governing society. The development of society, like fire and other things in nature, is governed by laws as well. And we can grasp these laws because we live life everyday, we struggle and we experience exploitation and we fight against it everyday. Once we grasp these laws on that

basis, there is nothing we can't accomplish through our struggle, nothing we can't transform and change in the interest of our class and the interest of mankind.

The Party — An Organized Force Representing Our Class

Now the Party is an organized force representing our class, rooted in our class, blood and blood with our class. It takes the science, the summed up experience paid for with the blood of our class through its many struggles. It applies this science in leading our struggles forward. It goes into the thick of those struggles. It's the Party of the slaves, made up of people who are suffering under this slavery.

We learn from the other people involved and try to draw on and concentrate all these experiences of millions and millions of people who are engaging in struggle and are learning from it every day. Just as this science is not some sort of formula stuck off in a laboratory, a lifeless formula that nobody can understand except a few mad professors, and just as this science is not a mystery to us, but a summation of our whole life experiences and our struggles, so the Party is not and cannot be some little sect, divorced from the life and struggle of our class. They try to talk about a communist Party like a witches' coven, or devil cult, where a few people meet in secret and mumble incantations. But that's not it. It's a Party that's out there, involved in all the struggles we're all going through.

The Party embodies the concentration of our experience, the lessons of our experience that we're gaining everyday in the struggle to survive and to go forward. The experience of the class in its millions, not just a few people. And on this basis it is able to give our class the unity of will and the unity of action that is necessary for us to carry forward the struggle and overthrow slavery, and unite into a mighty fist to do this. The Party can't be stuck off in a corner, can't be a little sect. It is not and will not be. It's a Party that must be linked increasingly more deeply and firmly with the whole working class in its millions. And the Party must continually deepen its determination to bring into its ranks more and

more workers who come forward to pick up the banner of our class and wage struggle for the freedom of our class.

The Party at its formation is now small, compared to the class as a whole in its tens of millions. And this celebration today is a celebration of hundreds. But the Party and the growing struggle we celebrate represents the working class — not just a small number, but the class in its millions and tens of millions. And the Party will grow together and go forward together with the struggle of our class and lead the class to its historic goal.

Can We Really Get United?

Now some people ask, can this really be done? People say we've heard a lot of talk like that before from a lot of people who come around talking about how we got to get together — like “get together with *me on top*. Give me a little *money* and we'll get everything together.” People have a lot of experience like this. And they say, can we really get united? The task we're talking about, ending this slavery, ending exploitation, building a new world on the ashes of the old, it's a big task, an historic task, a difficult task. Can it really be done? How will it be done?

Now I don't have a crystal ball — though I know some people who do — nothing in there except a way for them to make some money. [*Laughter*] No one can stand up and say this is exactly how we're going to do it next Tuesday or the Thursday after that. We can understand the basic laws that govern the development of this struggle. We can't crystal ball gaze and say exactly how it will happen.

What we do know for sure, is that we'll learn how to do it by doing it. We'll develop the unity, the understanding and consciousness not only of where the struggle has to go but how to do it in the course of building that struggle. Using that science to sum up our experience, then using that to build the fight, back and forth from struggle (or practice) to theory, back to practice and on and on. We learn in this way, in the course of slugging it out toe to toe with our enemy. Through our mistakes and setbacks we'll find the way to go forward and solve those problems. And that's what the process is

going to be. It's not an easy process.

Work is a struggle, life is a struggle, and winning our emancipation is going to be a struggle. Anybody that says different is jiving us, trying to get over on us. But just as surely as it is difficult, it also will just as surely be done. That's because the interest of the great majority of society, the development of society itself, the progress of mankind, demands that it be done. Furthermore, this whole system of capitalism forces us to struggle, drives us to unite together to fight back. We learn through our struggle that by ourselves, as one person, we can't accomplish very much, but when we get together and unite we can move forward. And we begin to understand through this that we must unite our ranks more broadly and firmly, gain a better understanding, so we can go forward, so we can break these chains.

Furthermore, in a certain way, against their own wishes, the capitalists unite us in production. You think about it. Take the steel mill over here with 10,000 people or more (when they're not laid off like they are now) working together to produce that steel. All of them having to unite to complete the total process. This is very different from the past when people in their workshops, tinkered out a pair of shoes, or metal plates, or what have you.

Of course they try to tell us that frequently it's still the same, that these companies have a bunch of workers all sitting in their little workshops building a color TV or whatever. You've probably seen that ad — the ad that Zenith has on TV, “The American Worker . . . blah, blah . . . Some people say he's not hard working anymore . . . To this we say bunk.” [*Laughter*] The whole point of this ad is that our slaves are good slaves — that's what they wish, but we know that reality is far different.

But let's say you're working in a plant on a conveyor belt — whether in Zenith or anywhere else, in auto or what have you. It takes people cooperating to get anything done. You can't take your little two feet of belt in front of you and say, “it's mine and I'm going to take it home.” It's not going to do you any good. [*Laughter*] You can't produce anything on two feet of conveyor belt. But when people work together things

get produced and things get accomplished and that's the real way things are built.

But of course, this is not under conditions where we do it voluntarily or consciously determining what we shall produce and how the whole process of production can be advanced to meet our needs and provide for the future. It's under conditions of slavery, where they make us do this, but nevertheless, in making us do this they've drawn us together and shown us that we need to cooperate, that we have to do things in common. They also create the conditions in which we raise the very basic question — what the hell are *they* here for! [*Long Applause*]

Our Common Work — Their Private Profit

Everybody knows the answer. But even on their part this process is not totally conscious. The capitalists don't consciously organize production and they can't consciously organize production for the needs and the interest of society as a whole. The capitalists that own those corporations are not thinking about the interests of society, they're not thinking about what people need. Each one of them is thinking about one thing, and the first question they're all asking when they see anything, whether it's a person or raw materials, a machine, or whatever — the first question they ask is, "How can I make money out of it?" That's the whole name of the game and that's how they try to run society. And those are the ideas they try to put into everybody's mind — that you are either a slave or slavemaster, you are either working for somebody or else you've got to make somebody work for you. And the first question they ask is, "How do you make money out of it?"

I was reading this article in *Fortune* magazine — that's a magazine put out by the people who make fortunes. [*Laughter*] But it's good to read because you should know your enemy, to struggle better against him. In this article I was reading they were talking about mining coal. They were talking about how to get coal out of the side of the mountain when they said, "a source of coal is discovered that is *workable* — that is, *profitable* . . ."

Right there you have the whole nature of the system. They aren't going to do anything unless they can get some profit out of it. You can be starving in the street, they aren't going to produce food unless they can make some money out of it. That's the first question, the first thing they go for — "how do you make money out of it — and if you can't make money out of it — let people starve, let their houses fall down. Let them have no health care for themselves and their kids. We're not producing for the needs of the people. We're forcing these slaves to produce to make us rich." And they cannot think of the needs of society, what's useful to society, what will advance it, because each of them is in competition with another one.

Each of them is in competition with the other, and each of them is constantly trying to make it over on the other and sell more than the other one. And in doing this they are constantly introducing new machines and throwing workers into the streets, trying to make the products faster and undersell their competition.

Those machines cost them money. But they can't make money out of a machine. You can spit on a machine, you can swear at it, you can beat it up and down, but it won't make any money for you. There's only one place you can make money — that's out of us. So they drive us harder to make more money for them. And each of them tries to expand production as if there were no limit to it — until it runs up against the limits of this set-up itself. A tremendous gulf develops between what's produced under these conditions and what we can buy with the wages we get from them. So the whole breakneck pace turns around. They lay us off and those left get driven even harder, and so the gulf gets bigger and so it goes, as we see now.

System Can't Meet People's Needs

This is not a system that can meet the needs of the people, that's clear. It's not a system that even considers the question of how to meet the needs of the people. Oh, it puts up a front. When the slaves start rebelling, they've got to throw a few bones and hope they get people fighting among them-

selves for these bones so they can fasten these slave chains even tighter.

Not only don't they consciously think about it, nor can they consciously think about how to organize to advance society, but all this process goes on behind our backs too. It all appears, from the time we first come up against it, as a force over and above us, that we can't understand and therefore can't consciously change. When you think about it, even the machines that are produced by the sweat and blood and labor of the workers — by our own hands — become, in the hands of the capitalists, weapons against us. When you go to work under these conditions the machine doesn't work for you, you work for it.

And so it seems you come into the world and you get to a certain age, depending how bad off your family is, and you've got to go to work. You got to go out and look for a slavemaster. They even make us go out and look for them. And then you work for as long as you can make money for them and it seems that's the way it is and will always be. You are born into this world and that's the way you'll go out. And this force seems to be above and beyond our control. Even the machines that should be working for humanity to make life better for humanity are turned upside down under the control of the capitalists, so in their hands we're forced to work for a machine and we're just an extension of it, like an animal tied to it.

This is the way it seems, and under the present relations this is the way it is. But this is not because of any forces beyond our control that cannot be changed. It's simply and only because of the economic relations and economic system of capitalism that we live under, and because of the rule, the dictatorship, of this capitalist class. Oh, they talk about democracy. But that democracy is only democracy for them. For us it's the whip and the bullet.

You know when I went to school they used to talk about the cradle of democracy — Greece. That's where democracy was first born. I remember that's what it said in my textbook. Later on when I went out of school I found out that Greece was a society where the great majority of people were slaves.

Democracy was only for the slave owners. And today though the form of slavery is different, it's the same damn thing. They make all the decisions. Oh yeah, you can vote. They come around and they say, "Which do you want, a Democrat or Republican. Do you want to go by hanging or slow poison?" [*Laughter, applause*]

And come election time they're all for the working man — and these days for the working woman. They're all for us. I'm waiting for one of them to stand up there and say "I'm for the abolition of capitalism. I'm for the ending of wage slavery. I'm for the working class to overthrow the system and free itself." You know when they'll say it? After we've done it! [*Laughter, applause*]

They'll be the rats crawling around in the sewers, and when it's all over they'll jump out and put on some ragged clothes — probably pre-dyed, pre-dirty jeans — and come out and say, "I'm a worker just like the rest of you all." But we'll deal with that then, when it comes up.

The fact is, and what they play on, is that as individuals we are powerless to change things. We can't use that two feet of conveyor belt before us by ourselves. The forces we have at our command in society, these machines and everything else that make society run, cannot be run by individuals working against each other, just for themselves. We have to cooperate. But together we are not powerless. In fact we are the mightiest, the most powerful class in history. We are the class that's going to transform all of society and advance humanity to a whole new stage.

"Best of All Possible Worlds?"

The capitalists try to present their system as the best of all possible worlds. I was watching TV — the World Series — it kept getting interrupted by this ad presented by Phillips 66. Some of you all might have seen it. They have this paperboy up there and he's doing his paper route and Phillips says: "To us he's just a paperboy, he organizes his own paper route, collects his own money and we just think of him as just a paperboy. But did you know that 50% of the people of the world have a lower income than this paperboy?" And then

they say, "Free enterprise, sometimes we forget how well it works."

And they must think we are awful dumb. But what this really shows is how desperate they are. They know we are catching on and people are beginning to see through their free enterprise system — which isn't free for anybody but them. What the hell — are we supposed to rejoice over the fact that half the people in this world make less money than a paperboy in this country? We're supposed to be glad about that? What kind of people do they think we are!

We're catching on to them. We realize this mere fact that half the people in the world make less than a paperboy in this country is also due to their free enterprise system, which isn't free for the majority. It is due to their *capitalist* system. They enslave us and others like us in countries throughout the world — they go all over the world scrambling, clawing and driving people into the ground, into the dirt, squeezing blood out of them, trying to make money out of them too. Those are our class brothers and sisters they're talking about in those other countries who make less than a paperboy here. We're not rejoicing over that. What we are rejoicing about, as we are tonight, is preparing for the day when we are going to put an end to that and an end to them because they're the cause of it.

The so-called free enterprise system is built so the capitalist can be free — free to enslave and exploit us. That's the only free part about it. Oh yeah, we're free too, they give us a choice. "You are free to work for me or starve." And when a crisis comes on like it is now, when they can't make enough profit out of people, you aren't even "free to work for me" — just starve. But as things develop and they can't get over with "this is the best of all possible worlds" — then they come up with their ace in the hole: "Well, it's the only possible world, so you might as well accept it because things can't be changed."

Now we've got this big hoopla about the Bicentennial. Every day we've got one minute. The interesting thing is what they're trying to do — what they're trying to say. It's a funny contradiction because they've got to say, "Back then revolution was a good thing. That's when we did it, 200 years

ago, so we should celebrate that. But we should not have any more revolutions — definitely not against us." That's what they're saying with the Bicentennial. That's their line. "The more things change the more they stay the same." That's what they're trying to say, "200 years ago we made a revolution."

And they did. They drove out England. And at *that* time it was a good thing. And the reason our class sees it as a good thing, is that it opened up the chance for society to develop. For production to go forward, to remove the restrictions that England was putting on the development of the economy here. And it made it possible not only for industry to grow but more importantly for the industrial working class — our class — to come into being, grow stronger and become more concentrated, to come on the stage more forcefully and strengthen its struggle toward the aim of overthrowing every exploiting class.

And that revolution back then, although it brought some progress, was one group of exploiters overthrowing another. They wrote "all men are created equal," while they were enslaving some of them in open form and some of them in disguised forms like today. These exploiters, they've had to talk about all men are created equal, but they don't believe it. In fact nobody can practice such equality as long as there are classes in society. As long as there is a situation where you either work for somebody or somebody works for you, how in the hell can there be equality? We can only get rid of all social inequality when we've done away with classes, done away with the situation where anybody has to work for anybody else, and we have created a situation where we all work in common for the common good of society and humanity.

Communism

And that's communism. That's all it is. They talk about how scary it is. It is a scary thing to them. It's not scary to us because we're the ones that are going to do it. We, the working class, are the ones that are going to bring it into being.

So they try to say, back then, 200 years ago, "revolution you see, was a good thing, but let's not have any more. We

should celebrate that one. It was good: it brought capitalism. This was good.” But they have a funny kind of contradiction, you see. Do they really want to tell us that they want to go back to how things were 200 years ago? Do they really want to tell us that they want to go back to no electricity, no TV, no radio, no trains, no airplanes, no flush toilets? Well if they want to . . . but that’s not what they want.

What they want is to have the same economic relations, the same political system, the same system of slavery they brought into being then, under today’s conditions. But that’s impossible. At that time their system of capitalism was young and vigorous, and it was the only possible step forward. And even then there was struggle against the exploitation that the system is based on. But today that system is rotten ripe with decay.

In fact, to keep them going in this system, the attempt to do that is what causes all the problems and sufferings today. We’ve gone beyond the period where people sat as individuals making a shoe, or Paul Revere working metal, taking a week to work out one metal dish or whatever. Now we turn out millions of those things in one day through the cooperative efforts of the workers drawn together in large factories. This is not a bad thing, it’s a good thing. The only bad thing about it is that they still have the control of it and they’re still forcing their economic system of slavery and their political dictatorship over us.

Under today’s conditions there’s only one class that can make use of these mighty productive forces — these large scale factories, these plants where there are tens of thousands of workers, and these machines created through the labor of the workers — can make use of this for the benefit of society. And that is the working class whose labor created them and whose labor makes them go.

We can’t do it as individuals, we can only do it in common. Because that’s how we built things — in common. You look at the car you drive, the shirt you have on or the chair you’re sitting on, or whatever else. You don’t know who mined the ore for your car, you don’t know who grew the cotton for that shirt. You’ve never seen that person. Nevertheless it took all

the cooperative efforts of thousands and millions of people to make all these things, to produce and distribute them.

That’s basically what a society is about. You don’t hear that in school. But basically a society is an organized way that people in that society produce and distribute among themselves the things that they need to live. In fact, in the ancient days when people had to work 16-18 hours a day just to produce enough to live and a little bit more, back in those days, to have people each working separately, each taking the product, making money by selling it themselves, made a certain sense. That is, it was all that society was capable of achieving at that time.

We Can Achieve Much More

Now we’re able to achieve much more. But there’s only one thing standing in our way — and that’s those people who take everything we produce, grab it up themselves, turn it into private property. They’re the only barrier standing between us and achieving the life undreamed of in the past. It’s them and their whole system. That’s why they have to go, and that’s why they will go.

The capitalist class says revolution was good in the past, when they were making it, to put themselves on stage, to bring about their system. But then they want to stop everything and turn everything around. You know even in those days they had to mobilize the people, get the people involved, make nice talk — they weren’t going to fight their own war, not on the front lines, anyway. They took part only a little. The masses of people actually had to throw out England, take up arms to do it. It’s always been the masses of people that have struggled. And until now it’s always been a group of exploiters that have taken control and reaped the benefits. But now things have reached a new stage where for the first time in history the working class, which represents the majority of society, is not only going to do the fighting but is also going to take the benefits and use them for the majority of society and for mankind as a whole.

Even at the time of 1776 and the signing of the Constitution and all that they tried to keep the people as oppressed as

possible. And there were all kinds of rebellions with people attempting to take over the state legislatures and all kinds of other things. They're always afraid that when the people go into action, when people start struggling against oppression, they don't want to stop half-way. The masses of people don't want to get rid of one exploiter, just to have another to ride on our backs. So they're afraid and say, "Don't go too far."

It's just like that movie *Frankenstein*, everybody has seen that movie — that was written a hundred years ago. At the time these capitalist revolutions were taking place around the world, not just in this country but in France, England and other places. And what is the whole point of the movie? Remember, Dr. Frankenstein, a German scientist, created the monster. The monster turns against him and brings disaster. The whole point of that story was that "certain things mankind can do, some things people can explore, there is a certain distance that science can go, but it must not go any further. Leave that to God. If you go beyond those bounds you bring disaster and tremendous suffering to everybody." That was the actual point of that story.

"Leave certain things alone, there are certain limits, limits beyond which you shouldn't go." They're afraid even of science, even natural science. When people began to take up science they began to smash down superstitions and other things they try to put as chains on our minds. People began to look at the real cause of things. Because when people look at the real cause of things they begin to look and investigate what's the cause of our suffering, and there is only one answer — capitalism.

Human Nature

Back in the ancient days of slavery in Greece and Rome — and even here only a little more than a hundred years ago in the South — it was considered natural for certain people to be slaves. I mean literally and directly belonging to someone else, that was considered natural — the natural order of things. It was "human nature," the slaveowners said, that some people would be slaves, other people would own them. But then after a certain point that form of slavery was too

backward, couldn't develop production enough, and was overcome and defeated by a new form of slavery, feudal slavery (landlord over serf or peasant), which in turn was replaced by the present day, capitalist form of slavery where the slave chains aren't visible. It's an economic form of slavery whose law is to be exploited by the capitalists or starve.

But today everybody in this country, even the politicians who represent the exploiters are against slavery — the old type. They say that it's unnatural for people to be slaves, it's unnatural for one person to belong to another person. Well, yes it is. It's against progress, against the interests of mankind. It is a crime.

But so is the form of slavery we live under now, which they claim is the perfect, natural order of things these days. "It's just natural for some people to own all the factories, machines and so on, and make everyone else work for them to make them rich. You can't change that. That's human nature. If I don't do it today, you'll try to do it tomorrow." This is what they say.

But there's nothing any more natural about that than it is for one person to own another. And the workers aren't naturally going to accept it any longer. [*Laughter, applause*] Because we as a class have our own nature, that stems from the way we do things — the way we organize, cooperate in common to produce and to move everything, so that people can live, so people can eat, be clothed and all the rest of it. We produce all that in common and it is our nature to cooperate. It's true that they try to divide us among ourselves — one against the other, men against women, one race or nationality against the other. But nevertheless we are continually breaking through that, forging more unity and cooperation, because that's our nature as a class. And that's where the future of humanity is going.

A Proud History of Struggle

You see not only in this country but throughout the world, our class has struggled and pushed things forward from when it first came on to the scene. Since it was brought together in these large factories, brought together in the cities,

began to be socialized — work socially, together in common. And from the beginning, not only in this country but in every other country, our class has fought back and advanced.

It isn't just that we struggled and dug a hole in the ground for ourselves. No, we have gone forward. But it was really only a little more than 100 years ago that our class really came on the scene in any large numbers as a modern class of factory workers. It was only in the middle of the last century, in this and other countries, that we came together and already by then workers throughout Europe, particularly in countries like France and Germany, rose up and smashed the crowns off the monarchs. Although they were not able to do away with capitalism at that time, they pushed the struggle of our class forward.

In 1848, for example — they never tell us this history, but this is the real history — the workers of Paris, France rose up, and scared the hell out of the capitalists, even though they weren't able to overthrow them. The capitalists came down with savagery against them. Spilled their blood and it ran in the streets of Paris. The workers were temporarily defeated. But they picked themselves up and they learned, so that in 1871, less than 25 years later, the workers rose up in Paris once again. And for two months in Paris, they took power away from the capitalists and they smashed them and the workers ran that city. And they created the first embryo — not the fully developed mature form, but the embryo — of the future society of the working class.

And do you know what they did? They ran the city for two months, and there was no crime. They abolished crime right then and there. The people were all working. And workers got together and didn't need the capitalists, they swept them aside. They ran the city and began to reorder society along the lines of our own interest.

This scared the hell out of the capitalists. They staged a comeback, they organized their forces in other parts of France, and they brought their army in and smashed the workers, who had not ruthlessly suppressed them enough. That's one of the lessons we have to learn. We cannot show any mercy to the slavemasters. Not only in struggling

against them, but once we've overthrown them we have to keep them down or otherwise it's going to be our blood spilt, and we'll be put back under conditions of slavery, with the chains fastened on once again.

Learning Through Victories and Defeats

The Paris Commune, as it was called, the workers Commune which was created by them in the year of 1871, was smashed. But once again our class, not only in that country but in countries throughout the world, learned from that setback. And we know a little more now, we learned the cause of that defeat, as we learn important lessons daily, big and small. But in these big battles we learn big lessons. So after the defeat of the Paris Commune, the workers internationally went forward. They wiped the blood off and surged forward again.

At the time of World War I the rulers in this country and in England, Germany, France and Russia put people in uniform, to set people up to kill each other to decide which one of these international bandits would get the biggest share of the take from robbing people all over the world. While that was going on the workers were rising up against it and saying, "No more! You are not going to drive us into the ground and put us into uniform to kill each other, kill brother workers in other countries to keep this thing going on any longer. We're not taking up the torch to weld more chains on us. We're taking up the torch to burn those chains away."

And so in Hungary, Germany and other countries at the time of WW I, workers rose up and in some cases created their own power and overthrew the capitalists, threw them down. In most cases once again the workers were set back. But in Russia they were not. In Russia, the working class seized power from the capitalists and began the process of building a new society, and unlike the Paris Commune of 1871, the workers were able to keep that power and become masters of society.

And from 1918-20 they defeated the armed attempt of the overthrown exploiters — supported by the rulers from countries around the world, including our own ruling class in the

U.S. — to make a comeback. They defeated them on the battlefield through more than two years of bloody civil war. The Russian workers consolidated the rule of our class, the working class, and continued the struggle to eliminate exploitation and oppression.

The Russian Revolution — A Lighthouse in the Storm

This was like a lighthouse in a storm. Workers all over the world, including this country, celebrated and looked to the newly created Soviet Union as their own. The world's workers saw the progress of workers in Russia in building a new society, in taking over the mighty factories and other means to produce — taking over all levers of society and using them for the interests of the great majority of mankind. And the workers rose up in their millions all around the world, including many in this country, to defend the Soviet Union when it was attacked.

The Russian Revolution was a tremendous victory for the working class. This victory that we celebrate tonight took place in October 1917. But it suffered a temporary reverse, not in a few short months like the Paris Commune had, but almost 40 years later. In the 1950s, after the death of Stalin, who led the Soviet workers in building the new society from the '20s until his death in 1953, traitors within the Party of the working class itself, within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, within the workers' own state, came forward, stabbed the workers in the back and turned their own workers' state back to a capitalist state, so these traitors could exploit the workers.

You remember Khrushchev, he was the one who banged his shoe on the table. That's not what the working class will remember him for, but that's what the capitalists remember him for, they think that was funny. What the working class will remember him for is betraying the revolution — stealing power from the working class, restoring capitalism, once again setting up the system of stealing the wealth from the workers. And naturally since the workers of the world, especially those who became more conscious of the real nature of

our struggle and historic goal of our class, had looked to the Soviet Union for many years, and rightfully so, as a beacon for their struggles, as an example of what they were striving for, naturally many of these workers were demoralized.

The line of the capitalists is, "You can't change human nature, sooner or later you get another boss and even your own party, the workers' Party, will be taken over by a new group of exploiters who will enslave you once again." This line they push, these lies seemed to many people, to many workers, as if maybe it was so. That maybe, after all, if we do struggle with the capitalists, even overthrow them, and hold them down for a while, sooner or later a new capitalist class will arise, new exploiters to put chains on us. The capitalist class in this and other countries spread this widely in order to demoralize and hold back the workers, hold back our struggle.

China — Learning from World Experience

But in the middle 1960s, like a bright ray of sun shining through the clouds, the darkness the capitalists tried to spread, there was an event in China. It was called the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. We learn about it because it was an important historic event for our class. Because in 1949, the workers in China, united with the masses of people, succeeded in rising up and driving out foreign exploiters, particularly our own rulers right here who exploited people there, too. And they also overthrew Chinese exploiters who were linked up with the imperialists in enslaving the people there. And they created another workers' state. A workers' state of hundreds of millions of people, making up a quarter of mankind.

But after that the capitalist class, as the history of our class' struggle shows us, did not lie down and roll over and play dead. In China some people — as happened in Russia — even people within the Party of the working class itself, began to grow away from the workers, look down on them — as happened with the Party in this country. They began to think that the working class was not able to remake all of society, couldn't transform it in the interest of all mankind, could not

continue to go forward, and that the most it is good for is a few crumbs off the table of capitalism. These same kind of forces arose in China and tried to do the same thing there as had been done in the Soviet Union — bring back capitalism with themselves as new capitalists riding the backs of the workers.

In the midst of this, in the mid-1960s, this Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution broke out. What this was, was the masses of hundreds of millions of people in China rising up and taking matters into their own hands, fighting back to prevent the revolution from being taken from them. To prevent a new group of exploiters from dragging society back to capitalism. The people smashed them and brought them down to the dust.

And you know who led that? Mao Tsetung, who was in his late 70s at the time. The capitalists got a theory that when people are young they like to raise hell, but when they get older they get conservative. “Same thing happens to society,” the bourgeoisie says. “When the society is young it makes revolution, and when it gets old it becomes conservative — look at us.” Well, it’s true for *them*, because they’re a group of exploiters. Mao Tsetung is in his 80s now — it has nothing to do with age, it has to do with which class you stand with. Mao Tsetung has continued to base himself on the needs and desires of our class, the working class, to go forward and not be dragged back, to transform all of society to free itself completely and all of humanity along with it.

This is why we celebrate the Chinese revolution, which created the People’s Republic of China in this month, October, in 1949. But the Chinese revolution has continued since then and has proved not only that the working class could seize power, knock down the capitalists, and begin the process of remaking society in its interests and the interests of humanity, but more than that proved that the working class can keep power, and can continue to make revolution and go forward.

This is what we are celebrating, this is what the founding of our Party, the Party of our class, means. It’s a question of learning the lessons from our rich history, lessons paid for in

blood, learning both the positive and negative lessons. As we celebrate we proudly proclaim that we are going to build on the struggle of our class and we are going to learn from those lessons, positive and negative, and we’re going to wage struggle to remake all of society, and we are going to wage struggle to forge and sharpen our Party as a weapon and never allow it to be taken over by the capitalists and their agents.

Moving to the Future

I want to conclude in a sense where I began. As I said at the start, it’s not a question of struggle or not struggle. We have to struggle and so will our children coming behind us. It’s a question of whether that struggle will advance society and humanity, will advance from this stage to a higher one. That’s what it’s really all about.

Thousands and millions of years ago, man — in a historic advance at that time — first stood up, freed his hands, not walking any longer on all fours, but stood on two feet and took tools into those hands, and this is the thing that first separated him from the kingdom of animals, that set man off. Over thousands and millions of years we have developed human society and developed those tools and instruments from the first primitive tools to massive tools and machines of production that we have now.

And at this stage in history the question for the working class, representing the majority and the future of humanity, is standing proud on our two feet, smashing down the capitalists, taking power into our own hands and really for the first time completely moving beyond an animal-like existence. Being able to sweep aside the barriers that capitalism and private ownership and control still place in our way and being able to consciously confront nature. Being able to consciously transform and harness its forces and use them to advance society to a level not even dreamed of in the past. This is the historic mission of our class and this is where our struggle is headed.

They force us to struggle, they take our blood every day — thousands of workers die on the job every year and millions

more are injured. And when they can't make enough profit, and when they can't keep their system going just by exploiting us here, they try to put us in uniform and force us to go fight our brother workers and sister workers in other countries throughout the world. They do this in their desperate clawing to keep a dying system alive a little longer. To inject another fix in a dying corpse of their capitalist system which long ago should have been put into its grave and covered over.

And they try desperately to block the power of progress and the advance of history with our bodies and our blood. But this has gone on long enough. In fact it has gone on too long. We'll fight all right, and we'll have to shed our blood because they force us to, but from now on we will not shed it for them, but shed it for ourselves, for the advance, for the liberation and emancipation of our class and humanity.

This is what it's all about, and this is what the Party stands for. As I said at the start, the Party is a Party of struggle. A Party of slaves who are determined not to be slaves any longer. It's the organized general staff and leadership of our class, to lead it in this historic battle, this historic mission of advancing human society to a completely new stage, to end wage slavery, and all the evils and suffering of this capitalist system. To end exploitation and to rip out for once and for all the weeds and roots of exploitation, so that they can never grow again.

And this is what we are celebrating tonight when we celebrate the founding of our Party. This is our festival, this is our spirit, a festival of the oppressed, determined to be oppressed no more.

And with the leadership of our Party, the Party of our class, and together with the hundreds of millions of our class throughout the world, nothing can stop us. We will free ourselves and we will free all mankind. [*Prolonged enthusiastic applause*]

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