

**IS REVOLUTION  
REALLY POSSIBLE  
THIS DECADE  
AND WHAT DOES  
MAY 1ST  
HAVE TO DO  
WITH IT?**

Talk by  
Bob Avakian

The following are excerpts from a recent talk by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party. (Subheads are ours—Ed.)

A very profound, important, even decisive question exists not only among the advanced section of the working class outside the Party and even more broadly among the masses, but within our own ranks as well, which in general terms can be put simply: is revolution really possible in this country, especially within the next few (say 5 to 10) years? And in the most recent period this question has more and more taken the form of saying, "I agree with your analysis of the objective situation; it's clear that there's a serious crisis that's not getting any better and it's obvious that world war is coming before long, but I just don't see how revolution could possibly happen here in the same period of time."

Interestingly enough, the same people might not have said that they agree with us on our analysis of crisis and war a couple of years ago, either. But now it is almost that you have to be politically blind and/or extremely stubborn not to recognize certain powerful things shaping up, particularly developments toward war; so it's very clear to growing numbers of people—and a cause of great concern as we have pointed out—that the developments towards war are accelerating. And basically many people are saying, in one form or another, either openly or simply by their actions, that yes, they agree with our analysis of the objective situation, the crisis and, in particular, developments toward war, but what they cannot agree with in our analysis is that there is any possibility of doing anything about this other than going along with the imperialists in one form or another. In other words, the part of our analysis that says—therefore, and along with the deepening of the crisis and developments toward world war, there is a real possibility of revolution in this country in the next ten years—that is something that people say "I cannot agree with, that's the part I can't see." This leads some people to go off into pleasure-seeking, hedonism, and other forms of demoralization, which is what that is, or to become agnostic at best. So I think this is a question that is very important to answer in its own right and also specifically in relation to building for May First 1980.

Now we have to ask: if many people raise this—and I think we'd agree that they do—then why is that? In particular, what is it that they fail to see? What is wrong in their view of things, and more fundamentally than that, in their methodology, in their outlook and the way they are approaching this problem? Because simply to acknowledge at this point that, yes, there is obviously a serious crisis and even more than that, there are obviously significant developments towards world war that are becoming sharper all the time, does not really require the science of Marxism-Leninism. And that's why a lot of people who are not familiar with Marxism-Leninism or who actually reject it or fail to apply it (to one degree or another), can rather readily agree about crisis and war and yet don't agree with us on the opposite of that—that is, on the opportunities, on the possibility of revolution. What I'm saying is that it's more or less apparent, obvious even on the perceptual level, that there is the question of things developing toward world war. When that wasn't so readily perceivable, many people who were relying on perception or taking an agnostic attitude and not a scientific approach (or not really a thoroughly scientific one) did not agree with that point either. Or they simply were more successful in wishing it away, while it is now becoming more and more difficult to do that today.

Of course, to not only see the surface and external appearance of things—such as events around Afghanistan—that signal the approach of world war, but to actually grasp the underlying forces and the decisive, internal contradictions of the imperialist system that are at work propelling the two superpowers and their blocs toward war—this cannot be done by relying on perception; it requires grasping and applying the principles and methods of Marxism-Leninism. And so, too, seeing beyond the obvious developments of crisis and acceleration toward world war and recognizing the potential of revolution within the same developments—this also requires nothing less than the struggle to grasp and apply Marxism-Leninism. And relying merely on perceptual knowledge, on what is immediately evident on the surface of things, always leaves you lagging miserably behind the development of things.

Therefore, just as it was possible not too long ago, by relying only on perception and spontaneity, to deny the analysis that we made about the crisis and especially the prospects of war, so today by using and being mired in the same method you can deny the possibility and prospect of revolution. What people are missing in this, what they fail to do, of course, is first of all and most fundamentally, they fail to apply materialist dialectics: they look at the situation at any given point in terms of what it is on the surface or in terms of what it has been, and they don't see that things can undergo rapid and dramatic changes, sudden upheavals with millions of people suddenly being thrown into a situation far different from the one they are accustomed to in the so-called "normal" and "ordinary" times of this system—especially (see article in *Revolution*, Feb-

ruary/March, *America in Decline*, "Crisis and War: The Mood and Conditions of the Masses") the so-called normal and ordinary times of this system in the last 30 or 40 years, stemming from its position in the world, its top dog position among the various imperialist bandits. In short there is, even among our own ranks, the phenomenon pointed to at the last meeting of our Central Committee—the failure to grasp or the outright disbelief in the possibility of sudden and dramatic changes, leaps, upheavals, and so on, which Lenin stressed about people, including communists in Europe in the period leading up to World War I (which also led up to the Russian Revolution and serious attempts at proletarian revolution in other countries). And again, what underlies this, in ideological terms, is the failure to base yourself on the dialectical materialist viewpoint.

And in terms of the material conditions, the reason that this still could happen, that this erroneous viewpoint and method is still so strong, is that although there have been significant changes in the objective situation, it has not made a leap to a revolutionary one or even one directly approaching a revolutionary situation. Now if you have been around for a period of time, you can see real, dramatic changes in the objective situation and people's attitudes. Even such a young veteran as myself and others, who have been involved in the thing for 15 years or so in one form or another, have seen masses of people undergo tremendous changes in their outlook. If people think that we used to go out with the primitive literature we had years ago—expressing our basic viewpoint, however much it was marred by rather obvious reformism, looking back on it now—if people think that even that stuff we went out with and passed out 10-15 years ago or so got the same kind of reception that we get now from among the masses, including in the industrial proletariat, it's not so at all. No, the response now, to a much more openly and thoroughly revolutionary line, a straight-up communist stand and analysis, is qualitatively more positive among much broader numbers of people. And I know if you talk to people who were around in the '50s, even to pass out a lousy reformist trade unionist leaflet then (which is what the CP did) meant that you would watch most of them decorate the ground and get a lot more hostile reception than we get at a backward place now going out openly with our full communist program and openly promoting it and propagandizing it. And that obviously is related to the changes in the underlying objective conditions that we have been talking about. But on the other hand, and not ignoring these great changes, things are still within the same arena in the sense that they are not only not yet revolutionary, in terms of the mood and sentiments of the broad masses, but they are not even one in which anything like the majority of the people are feeling the press of the situation in such a way that they are driven to seek really drastic, radical ways out yet.

It is the case that people are questioning more deeply, losing more sleep, finding themselves repeatedly jolted awake by these minor episodes and crises; but it is still (if you want to put it that way) on the same continuum that it's been on. It hasn't yet made a leap, not only not to a revolutionary situation but even to one where people are really politically alive in their masses and thrashing things out intensely, as happens even before things fully ripen to a revolutionary situation. So, looking at it only perceptually—in other words metaphysically—taking into account only quantitative motion, and not grasping that within that, beneath the surface, is the development and intensification of the contradictions the masses are facing that could well lead to a revolutionary situation, and a revolutionary explosion—this leads either to tailing the masses or to "blind faith" in the possibility of revolution—and sooner or later, in either case, to demoralization, despair and outright defection from the revolutionary ranks. So it's crucial to stress that people have to look beneath the surface and make a scientific analysis, they have to see what is going on right now beneath the surface, the contradictory trends and motion, the minor crises that are occurring even with today's still non-revolutionary situation—the occasions where, as we have pointed to several times, people do go through sudden and dramatic changes in their outlook. True, this is on a certain level, within a certain limitation, but even within that some people make a leap to becoming revolutionaries by going through the whole experience of a crisis like that around Iran and seeing in a very concentrated way what the class interests are—a concentrated expression of them, as they are arrayed against each other in this battle. And if you can grasp those things, you can recognize the potential that we have emphasized (Lenin is the one that we really learned this from and he stressed it very emphatically—that you can see people doing this, this kind of phenomena going on, in a miniature way in such minor crises); and if you apply the scientific method, you can certainly grasp the possibility for it on a massive scale when there is a full development of a revolutionary situation.

#### Development of a Revolutionary Situation

Now that brings up the next point: does there have to be, for example, a major depression lasting 10 years like in the 1930s and having that kind of depth and then on top of it a war—do things have to repeat themselves exactly, or on an even more devastating scale before there could possibly develop a revolutionary situation? I don't believe so. And I don't think history

argues for that kind of position. There wasn't that level of economic depression before World War I, not only not in Russia, which was backward (and arguments could be made about how that's different from this country), but even in Germany, where a revolutionary situation did develop, for example, at the end of that war, there was not the depth of depression before World War I that there was in the 1930s, and yet that did not mean that there was not the development of a revolutionary situation. In fact there was, at least one and maybe two or more times in Germany during or right after World War I.

And one of the things that's going to be included in this analysis we're making in this book (*America in Decline*) and was included in the chapter reprinted in *Revolution and the Revolutionary Worker* is the very important point that World War 2 was really, for the masses of people in this country, more of an inconvenience than it was a disaster. It led to victory gardens and rationing and things like that. It did not lead to what the people in Europe and Asia and other parts of the world went through. And that's one of the reasons why a lot of the masses in this country are still extremely naive and fall for this line that maybe a war would be good for the economy and maybe that's what we need, even though they don't like it. But the kind of hell that they are going to be put through if revolution does not prevent war is testified to by the fact that they are already getting ready to draft women, because they need them and they know it and they've got to put it right out there. That right there is an indication of the fact that this is not going to be victory gardens and rationing and some inconvenience. You could say that's an important if perhaps small indication of it, but another, big indication of it is the presence of nuclear weapons, and generally the degree of communication and transportation and delivery systems that exist even for conventional weapons and the means for moving conventional forces. All this means it's not at all the greatest possibility that the U.S. will remain untouched in the process of this war, whether or not Russian-bloc troops actually cross U.S. borders (which is a real possibility). And furthermore there's going to have to be a mobilization and control and regulation of this society—economically and politically—on a level unlike anything previously in order to fight this kind of war with that kind of adversary. And the kind of unprecedented changes that the masses in this country will be put through, even in the preparation for such a war, to say nothing of the war itself, could well provide the objective basis for a revolutionary situation. All of this is gone into pretty thoroughly and explained very powerfully in the chapter from the book reprinted in *Revolution and the RW*, and people should study that deeply and repeatedly, so I won't repeat all of that here. But what it all emphasizes is the crucial point in regard to world war in particular: just because the imperialists start it does not make it certain that they will finish it—instead it may finish them, in at least some countries, including this one quite possibly—that is, the imperialist war might well be turned into a revolutionary civil war to overthrow the imperialists.

But the very fact that revolution hasn't happened conditions people's thinking; and unless you consciously strive to overcome that by a scientific analysis, then spontaneously you're just going to see what appears before you and not the potential that could arise in vastly different conditions in the future—in fact, not even what is developing beneath the surface and the seed of the future that already exists and is developing in the present, including the minor crises and eruptions that occur. The (draft) *Programme* speaks very powerfully to this, pointing to the revolutionary potential, the glimmer of the future, that is shown in the upheaval of the 1960s and early 1970s, or today, such as the events around Iran. But it even comes out—once you have a scientific viewpoint and method—in less overtly political events. Look, for example, even at such things as blackouts, where authority no longer holds, even if it's only for a few hours, and you see all sorts of people, whom the authorities look at like creatures of the night, they come out and begin to stalk the authorities, until finally, they put the lid back on and drive them back into quiet submission for a while. But what about when they can't do that any longer? What about when they are stretched to the limit, fighting their enemy, their rival imperialist gangsters, while trying to clamp down on all the "social unrest" (as they call it) that the war and everything they'll be putting people through will give rise to?

Of course, if you look at things metaphysically—statically, without internal contradiction and with everything absolutely isolated from everything else—then you won't and can't recognize this revolutionary potential. If you look at this country the way it is now and somehow think that there will be crisis, even world war, but despite that, people's lives won't really be affected—that terrible things will happen, metaphysically, "over there," but somehow things will basically stay the same as they are in this society—or maybe some way people will be suffering, will be tightening their belt a little more, going through a little bit more hardships, deprived of a few things, but fundamentally the conditions of the masses won't change; if that's your outlook, then naturally you will say revolution could never happen.

But when you think about it, it's inconceivable that there could be deeper crisis and even world war and only some minor adjustments in people's lives. It's not going to happen this time like it did in Vietnam. Then,

even with all the upheaval in this country, even in the military, there were many in the working class whose heads were so damn hard and so pragmatic that they looked at the fact that their wages went up in the '60s and that overrode everything else that was happening in the world. So even when their own kids came back and told them, "Listen, Vietnam is not a glorious cause for American democracy and freedom, it's a goddam bloody enterprise of plunder and murder and pillage," a lot of them didn't even want to listen. But, more to the point, in a certain sense they did not *have* to listen—exactly because their conditions were not drastically changed, for the worse, and, despite the upheaval at that time, the whole society was not in thoroughgoing crisis, the ruling class did not have everything on the line and was not stretched to the limit as it will be in the upcoming world war (again, people should study the chapter of *America in Decline* reprinted in *Revolution* and the *RW*).

And, along with this, there will be another crucial element that was missing in the past—a vanguard party with a thoroughly revolutionary line, actually enabling it to lead the working class and the oppressed masses generally in seizing the opportunity if it does develop. True, this Party—our Party, the Revolutionary Communist Party—is still small and its influence still exists only among tens, or perhaps hundreds, of thousands—not yet millions, certainly not anything like a majority of the working class. But this is not at all unique or unusual—the same was also true of the Bolsheviks at the start of World War I. As a matter of fact, it could be said that we will have to be coming "from a long way back." I think it could be said that we're the Silky Sullivan of the proletarian revolution.

I don't know if you remember Silky Sullivan, but he was this horse that used to race and his trademark was that he ran about 25 lengths behind on the backstretch but he had this tremendous kick. And there would always be this question down to the wire: could Silky Sullivan whip by everybody as they came down to the homestretch and beat everybody to the wire? And if you were to walk into the racetrack knowing nothing of the horses, knowing nothing about their physical features and their different styles of racing and so on, then if someone told you that the horse way back there is the favorite (or perhaps not the favorite, but that that horse has a good chance to win this race), well, you would think whoever told you that was crazy. If you just walked in with no analysis of the different horses or their styles of running, you would say that. Just going by perception, not looking at the development of things and without any scientific approach, you'd say, "This horse is out of it, and anybody who bets that horse must be a complete fool; I wouldn't put my life savings down on that, or even any of my earnings at all."

Of course, analogies do have their limitations, but I think there is a point here—looking perceptually doesn't answer the question—and what I mean by this kind of Silky Sullivan analogy is that we are not going to go into the situation of deeper crisis and war with a large section of the working class already following our Party's banner—or even in favor of some kind of reformist socialism, a large revisionist movement in the working class and so on—those are not our conditions, thank god. That's not to say we won't have to deal with the growth of these kinds of influence in the working class as things sharpen up, but that it's not a necessity for this kind of thing to exist before we can even think about revolution—and precisely to stress again the point that people will be going through dramatic changes very quickly when things do sharpen up much more.

This country is about the only one coming out of World War 2 that openly talked about capitalism, bragged about "free enterprise," and the only one that didn't have to have some kind of social-democratic movement in the working class. That is a reflection of its position as top dog coming off that war. Even France, England, etc., they had to appeal to the masses on some kind of social-democratic basis, and often (as in France and Italy, for example) this role of reformist socialism appealing to broad ranks of the working class was played by the communist parties that went revisionist and gave up their revolutionary principles.

But in the U.S. there has been no significant social-democratic movement and no large communist movement over the past period of time, since World War 2. Thank god—because, had there been, it could only have been on the basis of completely betraying communist principles—and, in fact, even the CP, which nearly set a world record for doing that, still was unable to get a mass following, because of the objective conditions, the strength of U.S. imperialism coming out of World War 2 and its ability to make concessions.

So one of the most important things that was brought up in the 1976 CC Report was when we said that we have to have the determination and willingness to be a relatively small group for a fairly long period of time—not to make a principle out of being small but to make a principle out of the things that will mean that we will be small, because if you are trying to have a large mass communist movement in a situation that is not yet even approaching a revolutionary one, you can only do it on a non-revolutionary basis, I don't care what anybody says. That doesn't mean that you don't try to influence the masses as broadly as possible, but if you are going to have a genuine communist move-

ment it's going to be small, because there are going to be a small number of people, especially in a country like this, who are going to follow a revolutionary communist program in more or less "normal times." And that, in a certain sense, is as it should be given the situation, as it has been in the past 35 years since World War 2 and even as it still is today.

But on the other hand, what is more important to grasp especially now is, once again, the potential for rapid and dramatic change in people's conditions and in their sentiments, as all the contradictions that have actually been accumulating over the past 35 years finally come to a head—explode. This is not to say that, even if the objective basis for revolution does develop, everyone among the masses, or even anything like a majority, will immediately make a giant leap onto the bandwagon of all-out revolutionary struggle. No, in fact, the social-democratic, reformist forces that are beginning to show a few signs of life now, will no doubt grow and gain in influence, and the great majority of the masses will try various other means of finding a way out of the crisis and destruction before they become really convinced of the need for the revolutionary overthrow and complete transformation of society represented by our Party and the class-conscious minority of the proletariat that follows it even before things reach the point of revolutionary crisis. But all this only stresses even more the need for the Party to vigorously propagandize its revolutionary program and carry out agitation and propaganda to thoroughly expose the system, as well as for the class-conscious workers to rally around the Party and act in a powerful way to influence the broader ranks of the masses and the developments in society as a whole.

Does this go against the argument that we've repeatedly made—that already today there are millions of people who hate this system and desire a drastic change? No, not at all. In fact, it is quite true that there are indeed millions of people in this country who right now are in such a mood that if they actually saw a revolutionary situation they would not only welcome it but they would be overjoyed and would rush to the front with a gun in their hand. But the mere fact that there is a sizeable minority of people who have such sentiments does not make a revolutionary situation, nor does it even lead all or most of them to be revolutionary-minded, or at least willing to consistently work and struggle for revolution. Such a truly revolutionary outlook doesn't develop fully among even the majority of these people when they can see that the rest of society is not in that position, and not in a revolutionary mood.

A revolutionary situation is not simply one in which the need for revolution is urgently felt by those strata who all along have been in more or less desperate conditions and desirous of drastic change. Again, even they do not become revolutionary in their majority, in the sense we are talking about, until the whole of society becomes convulsed in deep-going crisis and particularly until a large section of the working class—including a large section of the basic industrial proletariat—and even beyond that a significant section of the petty bourgeoisie find themselves seeking, now this way now that way, but some way out—desperately seeking some radical way out of the situation that is worsening from month to month and week to week.

And that doesn't happen overnight either—there are qualitative leaps—and even for the millions who already hate life under this system it would be wrong if we thought they would be just sitting there stagnantly and all that is necessary is for them to one day be brought out and thawed out by the heat of the moment, as though they will be kind of permanently revolutionary. Even though their conditions may be permanently more or less ones of great hardship and continual oppression and degradation that doesn't mean that their response to that will be to remain in a constantly revolutionary mood. The developments, including sudden leaps, toward a revolutionary crisis, in society as a whole, together with the consistently revolutionary work of the Party and the actions of the class-conscious section of the working class rallying around the banner and line of the Party—this is what can influence and ultimately lead both those in more or less permanently miserable conditions, and broader sections of the people, especially the broad ranks of the industrial proletariat to move toward a revolutionary position and finally to take decisive revolutionary action.

#### "Coming From Behind"

The call to "weld those who hate this shit into a class-conscious force," around May First 1980 is not a call in the wilderness, or out of nowhere—it is based on a clear, scientific analysis of the situation and its development. And, in particular, it is based on the recognition that, especially in a country like this, sudden and dramatic changes can indeed take place in a very short period of time. It is a call to make a leap in our preparations, the preparation of the Party and the advanced forces—those who do, already, right now, hate this shit—this whole society and what this system and this country does all around the world—for the kind of situation that may well develop in the not very distant future, for the kind of conditions when, as Lenin put it, a month or a week means more and holds the possibility of more dramatic change, among millions and millions of people, than years or even decades of "normal times" under a system like this, "normal times" such as we have generally witnessed in

the U.S. since the outcome of World War 2 ("normal times," in other words, in the sense that, despite upheavals such as those of the '60s, the ability of the ruling class to maintain its authority and power in society is not fundamentally called into question). There is indeed the possibility that we may be approaching such extraordinary times, such a rare historical moment, when all the strengths of the system and the ruling class are turned decisively into their opposite.

Look at how a society like this functions. It functions in a way that things are all very closely intertwined and bound up together; it functions on a very high level, but exactly because of that it is in a certain sense very vulnerable to sudden change when there is a severe "jolt" or "snap" in the fabric. I'm not advocating sabotage, let's be clear on that, because that won't bring about a change in the consciousness of the masses, it will leave them passive politically. And, anyway, the very workings of the system itself, leading to sharp crisis and the devastation of war, will do far more to jolt people awake to political life than any sabotage by revolutionaries could ever do. And that's the point—a seemingly single breakdown could be the fuse that detonated a revolutionary crisis (for example, it was pointed out in the reprinted *America In Decline* chapter that many government officials have expressed real concern over what might happen just if welfare checks were not received one month!). This is not like a society where things more or less go on in a backward, unchanging way generation after generation—in other words, the potential for sudden and dramatic leaps in a certain way is even greater in a society like this—which is actually the other side of the fact that the situation of the masses in a more backward country generally is more miserable, more desperate, more or less all the time—although that should not actually be taken to mean that there is always a revolutionary situation in those countries, because even there the situation must undergo a qualitative change and be concentrated in a revolutionary crisis, as happened in Iran, for example, in 1978-79. But once again, one of the advantages in a country like this is that when things do begin to break and snap—and I'm not just talking about a major financial and economic collapse but some kind of serious, sudden breakdown in the normal economic and/or political situation—such a breakdown introduces big changes in ripples throughout the whole society, much more decisively and devastatingly in a society where the means of communication, transportation, government control, etc., are highly developed and integrated.

This is related from another angle to the point I raised earlier about coming from way back like Silky Sullivan. The fact that things can change very rapidly means that you can't look at it as though it is the case that because the working class on the whole has been quite backward for a long period of time, it couldn't become radicalized overnight. In fact the potential for it to become quickly radicalized in large numbers is very great, for the reasons I've been stressing. And I think you can see that indicated—again, if you apply Marxism to get beneath the surface and deal with things in their contradiction and motion—in the difference between the real labor aristocracy and the masses of workers who have been somewhat bourgeoisified over the period of the last several decades. The difference in their attitudes could be sort of expressed in the formulation that the labor aristocracy basically is content and thinks things here are fine and wants to beat off any attempts to make change, whereas the masses of workers think things are *still tolerable* but not fine. Of course, this distinction is kind of general and certainly not absolute, but I think it generally applies and there is a real difference between thinking things are tolerable and thinking that things are fine.

People's lives, speaking of the masses of workers, are certainly not easy and full of great expectations. They've gone through the heavy '74-'75 recession; they adjust and they get into the rut of living in a slightly and sometimes a significantly lower standard of living and then that kind of becomes the normal routine, but when the whole society is erupting in upheaval and turmoil, when dramatic changes are taking place and things are going up for grabs politically, then what was tolerable, what people have adjusted to—maybe not just once but several times—becomes intolerable. With people who are discontented with their situation and just trying to get through it, when the possibility arises that they just don't have to do that, then they go through changes in their thinking and actions very quickly—not in a straight line toward revolution, but quickly all the same, and more and more open to the idea of revolution. As I said in one of those interviews reprinted in the *RW* ("When You're Talking Communism You're Talking Internationalism," also a pamphlet—*RW*) a lot of people put up with what goes on all the time in this society and they also know it's garbage and when they actually see the chance to throw it away, a lot of them will do so quickly—and that's what I'm talking about.

We can come from way behind and I'm not just trying to pluck up our courage, it's not a question of that, it's a question of being scientific—you can't walk into the middle of a race and look at Silky Sullivan and know the whole picture, you have to study, you have to know the characteristics of the horses, the horse's record, how it runs, what the other horses in the race are all about, what the conditions of the track are, and everything else. Let's put it this way; we're coming

from a long way back, but we're not coming from nowhere. We do have the experience of certain sudden changes in the objective situation, we do have the experience of the movement of the '60s and early '70s, which was very significant and taught a lot of people things which they haven't totally forgotten and which the bourgeoisie is not able by any means to ignore in the ways it tries to appeal to them now. And there have been, of course, revolutionary forces that have developed—most of all our Party which developed out of that movement and was able to continue advancing when that movement ebbed.

To come at it from another angle, what we are having to deal with is the dialectic between the fact that the industrial proletariat must and ultimately will be the backbone of the revolution on the one hand and the question of "roads to the proletariat," on the other—and the related question of diverting the spontaneous movement of the masses toward revolution, in particular the movement of the working class. What I mean by this dialectic between the ultimate leading role of the industrial proletariat and "roads to the proletariat" is that right now there is a reason why the proletariat—on the whole, leaving aside the class-conscious minority—is not the most radical segment in society or the most politically active at this point. In fact, it's rarely the case that the industrial proletariat is the first section of society to act. And that's basically for two reasons: one, its daily conditions of life make it more difficult for it to enter the political arena on a regular, daily basis; but second and more fundamentally, when it comes to the situation where the industrial proletariat is already politically active in its masses and ideologically in a mood to act in a revolutionary way, that means that you've got a crisis that is throwing everything up for grabs. Because even though sections of the petty bourgeoisie may actually go into motion sooner, in many cases this really is a kind of looking to the past, their actions are kind of a remnant of the past and they are more likely to be crushed outright or co-opted by the ruling class than the basic industrial proletariat and the working class as a whole. When the industrial proletariat finds its conditions one of extreme hardship—and desperate conditions, that means that the crisis has reached the very basic heart of the whole society. Therefore, for those reasons, we shouldn't expect that the industrial proletariat, in its millions, is going to act from the beginning as a vanguard of revolution.

On the other hand, it is crucial to bring forward the class-conscious proletariat as the vanguard force right now. And many other sections of the people in this country—not to mention people all over the world—we can see how they would be tremendously influenced by the class-conscious workers upholding the banner of the international proletariat and marching onto the political stage, straight up against imperialism. And certainly this would have a great impact on broader sections of the working class, right here in the U.S., too. All that is precisely the potential and importance of May First 1980.

But, what is the relevance of the "roads to the proletariat" and this question on the point of diversion. I think a lot of what the advanced section of the proletariat is now are people who for reasons other than simply being members of the proletariat are somewhat more politically advanced. People who went through the experience of the '60s in one way or another; people from the oppressed nationalities, people who were veterans of the Vietnam war; women who don't accept being in their "place," some immigrants, especially those from countries where there's a relatively strong anti-imperialist struggle, and so on. And a crucial question for the Party is how to give all this a class-conscious expression and help spread it to broader sections of the working class as well as exerting an influence on other forces in society, broader sections of the people. I'm not saying that we should make that an absolute and go around looking for different strata within the working class and make them into separate compartments. Just the opposite—we have to look for those ways that different streams of political and social expression and movement are an influence within the working class that can be a big lever to move a class-conscious section forward and to influence much broader masses; and that links up with the question of diversion.

If we went with the approach that's all too often been followed within the communist movement—and which had a strong influence in our own ranks in the past, and still persists to some degree and in various ways today—of saying, "Let's go into the working class and find out where the majority are at and unite with them where they are struggling and then somehow, some day introduce revolutionary politics"—well then, we could never be like Silky Sullivan, we might be wearing Silky Sullivan's number, but we wouldn't be Silky Sullivan and when the time came for Silky Sullivan to make the kick and race to the wire, we'd just sink further behind and everybody who put themselves on the line with us would be extremely angry at this switcheroo that we pulled. In other words, I think that we could only just sink down into the mire entirely and be in no position to lead a revolution even when the objective basis for it did develop.

Let's look at this question in terms of what the struggle with the Mensheviks really was about, most fundamentally. (The Mensheviks were an opportunist group within the RCP that was struggled against and defeated and then split from the Party in late 1977—RW.) It was about a lot of things, and you

know it was focused around China, what stand to take toward the revisionist coup and reversal of the revolution after Mao's death in 1976. But, if you look at it objectively, even beyond what even we fully understood at the time, what were the two roads that were parting company there, what was the basic dividing line? It was the question of whether or not you were going to capitulate to the bourgeoisie in World War 3, because anybody that takes the line of tailing after the masses at this point can do nothing else—I don't care what their intentions are—once you decide that's going to be your program there is no question where you will end up, you will capitulate, you will throw away the red flag and pick up the red, white and blue rag of plunder and oppression. That was the biggest cross-roads we were objectively facing.

That's how important this question of diversion is. If we thought that we were going to get in there and sort of be in the midst of—i.e., tail at the back of—the spontaneous movement of the working class and then somehow as things change we were going to be able to just swing that over to a revolutionary movement—no way. I'll even say that we've got to have a conscious determination not to link up with all the struggles of the masses. I say not link up with all; I don't say that where the masses are really fighting, standing up against the system, even if they aren't fully conscious, we don't have to pay serious attention to that. But again, while uniting with the positive thrust of it, the main thing we have to do is work to divert the masses from the spontaneous, reformist path toward revolution.

What I'm talking about is politically the question of tailing behind vs. diverting the struggle and ideas of the masses and I think that links up with that question of "roads to the proletariat"—not entirely, but there is an interpenetration because it's basically a question of whether you are going to be seeking to link up with the class-conscious proletariat and give political expression to its sentiments and on that basis try to influence the working class and its movement or are you gonna go to the average workers and try to subordinate yourself to their understanding and backward tendencies. The question of the "roads to the proletariat," is the question of the social influences upon segments within the working class that tend to make them more radical right now—and how to develop and unleash that. And this, again, links up closely with the principle I'm stressing—that in general it's the advanced, the more revolutionary-minded, in the working class especially, no matter how much a minority of the proletariat they may be now or at any given time, that we have to be linking up with; even there we have to be diverting their activity, but we have to link up with their sentiments and channel and guide those into a class-conscious force capable of exerting a powerful influence on broader sections of the working class and broader sections of the people in general. We'll get into this further when we get into May Day—I think there will be millions of workers, and others, who will sit up and take notice then, and that itself will be a very important step, very important preparation for the time when a revolutionary situation does finally ripen, whenever that occurs. I think a lot of workers who go along with this shit every day, when they see something like May Day, it's gonna cause them to go through some basic changes in their thinking; and, even though in and of itself it won't transform more than a small number into conscious revolutionaries, it will have a profound, broad impact and plant powerful seeds for the future.

Before speaking more directly to May Day and some other questions I first want to make one point around this question of revolutionary defeatism and proletarian internationalism which is crucial in relation to May Day as well as more generally. The last article in the 4-part series summarizing some chapters of the fundamentals book (*The Science of Revolution*, see RW Feb.15) stressed that the working class has to be trained concretely as well as theoretically in proletarian internationalism, and unless it is, it will never be able to act in a class-conscious internationalist way when the decisive time comes—such as the actual outbreak of world war. It will never be able to play a class-conscious role and most of all never be able to uphold a revolutionary defeatist stand and not only welcome the setbacks suffered by its own ruling class but actually work to take advantage of them to turn the imperialist war into a civil war to overthrow the imperialist system unless it is trained in a thousand concrete instances both before and during that war. Iran is an example of how what we do, and whether we concretely train especially the advanced workers in proletarian internationalism has a great deal to do with whether we will be able to turn an imperialist war into a civil war. It is a question both of ideological training and training concretely in actual battle—that is, actually turning people around, getting them to act in their own class interests around these questions.

And it is battles such as these, as opposed to the economic struggle, that are of much more importance in preparing for revolution. That's why I said that no matter what your intentions are you'll end up capitulating unless you do lead and train the proletariat, and especially bring forward the advanced as a class-conscious force around questions like this. Because if you just go along and link up with the masses where they are at and concentrate on the trade union struggle, then when the war comes along, even if you try to make the transition from the trade union to the international arena and attempt to promote pro-

letarian internationalism and revolutionary defeatism, the workers will answer you in bourgeois trade unionist terms—"listen, of course, we have to fight these guys for better conditions and so on, but after all this is our country and we are not even going to be able to talk about improving it if we don't go out and win this war." In other words, the logic of that trade unionist ideology would propel people not toward revolutionary defeatism but non-revolutionary, counter-revolutionary defensism towards your own bourgeoisie in the war—a stand of "defend the country" and not "seize the opportunity, take advantage of the defeats of our bourgeoisie to overthrow it." All this underlies and underscores the tremendous, critical importance of the slogan, "Our Flag Is Red—Not Red, White and Blue," that is being raised around May First 1980.

### Can This Party Lead a Revolution?

Now, a couple of other points before we get to May Day. Some people raise the point, after you've really gone into the need for revolution: can our Party, can the RCP, really lead such a revolution. Now this has two aspects: can we lead politically in an overall sense, and can we actually lead the armed struggle when it finally comes down to this. Well, these are big questions, but I think that we don't hesitate to say yes, we can and will do that.

And, in another sense, this question also has two aspects: can we lead in overthrowing the old, with all that means, and can we actually lead in building the new. I think that the (draft) *Programme* is a big step in indicating that we do have not just a general vision but we have a sense of what needs to be done and what can be done and what will be done not just to overthrow the bourgeoisie, but in transforming society. Of course, we will have to deepen that, but I have been studying the statements of some of these bourgeois political leaders and "statesmen" and so on, going back and looking over their pronouncements—and they are idiots. And this fills you with even greater confidence that definitely the proletariat and its Party can rule and more than that transform society.

They are not idiots in the sense that they have no mental capacities or that they are not capable of logical thought within a certain sphere, but they don't have any understanding of how things really work nor certainly what the actual laws governing the development of things are and where they are actually propelling things in the most fundamental sense—toward revolution. And the reason that these people really are morons is that in the most basic sense they are uninformed about the world and make the most superficial statements with the greatest piety and pomposity on the basis of the most remarkable ignorance. Well, the reason that they do this is because they are the representatives of a historically obsolete class that is still ruling society, and that's why these people pontificate with empty heads and have an occasional insight but basically are totally incapable of grasping—despite all their vaunted learning and "wisdom"—what any class-conscious worker with or without a significant degree of formal (bourgeois) education can understand.

And this relates to an important point about the class-conscious proletariat and our Party in particular: if we can analyze the crisis of U.S. imperialism, and if we can analyze the underlying causes as to why there is going to be a world war, if we can analyze all that—if we can wade through all the fog and mystification around that and make a correct analysis of it (as concentrated in the book *America In Decline*)—then why cannot we make the political, strategic analysis and tactical policies and the rest of it, to lead a revolution? I think we can—and for the same reasons that we can analyze the crisis and developments toward war—because we have the same science of Marxism-Leninism. Not just in the abstract, but we've shown that we can apply that science, we can break through the mystification and fog, we can break through appearance to essence.

The point here is not to toot our own horn, but that Marxism is a motherfucker. And we have shown that we can wield it; we have been able not just to uphold the general principles of Marxism, but very importantly we have been able to concretely apply them in the broader sense, like in making this analysis that will have the impact of a theoretical hydrogen bomb when this book comes out in its full form. Using the science of Marxism-Leninism, we have been able to go beyond the appearance to the essence, not only to analyze the actual underlying contradictions driving things toward world war, but also to recognize the possibility of revolution. The same science, and the ability to apply it—which has not been handed to us as a gift but which we have struggled for, over a dozen or more years, and we have to continue to struggle to deepen that—means that we have made real strides and can, through struggle, continue to make even greater strides not just in developing a general analysis and general strategy for making revolution but in learning concretely how to make all the tactical maneuvers that have to be made—and have the necessary tactical flexibility, without compromising or giving up on or failing to educate broader and broader numbers of masses in the basic principles that we have to uphold and fight on—in order to actually make revolution.

We have stood several tests, made critical analyses at key junctures and fought through to begin really taking this high road and charting the uncharted course to proletarian revolution in a country like this.

And one of the reasons that in the new (draft) *Constitution* of the Party there is emphasis on struggle within the Party is that people should understand the crucial importance and the actual laws that—and the reason it's there is mainly to educate people, inside and outside the Party, in the importance of struggle over line—that a Party has struggle within it as a critical part of the overall class struggle in society as a whole. But it's also for people to know, secondarily but not insignificantly, that this Party has a history, that it has fought through questions, and its line did not just drop out of the sky—it has been fought for and will be fought for.

Another aspect of the specific question, can we lead an armed struggle, is that the bourgeoisie has domination over us on this front, even on the theory of warfare. But they have domination over us on everything, until we challenge them and wield the weapon of Marxism. Take myself personally: I didn't know much at all about political economy 10 or 12 years ago when I first became a communist. And through the course of the struggle with Bruce Franklin (an opportunist who promoted a terrorist line inside the Revolutionary Union, the main forerunner of the RCP, and was defeated through ideological struggle in 1971—*RW*) I grasped that I had better learn some. Because I felt the need to get some fundamental grounding and because most of the stuff around was revisionist, I thought I'd better go back and study Marx, study *Capital*, and try to understand it. So I did—I struggled through the volumes of *Capital*—and I say "struggled through" 'cause it wasn't easy. I can say that there are still many things I don't understand about political economy but I think that my understanding has undergone a qualitative change and that our organization collectively has made real leaps in our understanding on those questions. We certainly understand more about the workings of the capitalist economy and U.S. imperialism right now than the bourgeoisie does—I'll say that right now, without any hesitation.

The same applies to military science and strategy. I'm not going to go into details on that, but what I'm stressing is that it is a science, that it is a serious question that must and can be taken up and conquered with the science of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought. We are behind the bourgeoisie on this front—they know more than we do. Although our class internationally has gained rich experience on the question of revolutionary warfare, nevertheless particularly in a situation like our own, there is not much experience and we'll have to chart an uncharted course there, too—and we'll do that. I don't say that glibly—that's a task that we have to take up seriously and scientifically—there are principles to it, there are laws to it and the science of Marxism can and will enable us to grasp and wield things in that sphere as well.

We have to do that and we can. But one thing that we have not defeated among the ranks of the masses of people—and to a certain degree in our own ranks—is in a funny way a kind of feeling of inferiority ourselves in the face of the ruling class—a feeling like "how can we match up to these generals and professors and politicians?" Now, usually, you only get to see them from a distance, and one of the great things about the '60s was that we got to engage in direct confrontation with their leading spokesmen about things like Vietnam and we wiped the floor with them. We saw that these are not geniuses, they are just defenders and apologists of murder and crime on an unprecedented scale; and, yeah, they have a certain amount of knowledge, 'cause in the dog fight that is capitalism they wouldn't be able to be spokesmen if they didn't have that, but they are on the wrong end of history and therefore they cannot grasp the truth. And we can—not easily and not by somebody handing it to us, but by struggling for it.

I think one of the more important points made in the (draft) *Programme* is where it draws the links between the political and the military actions and organization of the masses—I spoke to this last May Day, but the (draft) *Programme* addresses it a little more concretely. Where are our military forces going to come from? Out of the nucleus that is going to be formed in mass political organizations, both those that have grown up spontaneously and then are guided and led by us—that is, as we apply correct policies to win leadership in them—and some we initiate ourselves. These mass organizations, especially in the industrial proletariat but among the masses broadly, are going to form the bedrock basis out of which we are going to build our military organization—there's no mystery about it. There's nothing we can't tell the bourgeoisie about the basic principles involved in this, because they can't do anything about it. The point is that there is a dialectical relationship between the political and military struggle and organization of the masses—the second develops out of the first—and if we can master the science of political struggle we can certainly do it for military struggle as well.

One of the points I especially like about this (draft) *Programme* is when it talks about the situation when the armed struggle is actually underway and how the capitalists, when they are facing defeat on the battlefield, won't just flee, they'll try to sabotage and blow up factories and so on. Here the challenge is clearly presented to the workers: it won't be an abstract question of "can we run the factories," but a question of concrete, immediate necessity to do so. This helps break through the mysticism that the

workers could never really learn to run the factories. In other words, we are going to have the necessity and it isn't some mysterious thing—we're just going to have to do it or else we're gonna lose—it's no longer just an abstraction. And I think that the same thing is true in relation to warfare. There is the question, the principle of learning warfare through making warfare and also the dialectically-related principle of studying the basic laws of warfare and especially the experience of the proletariat on this front, so that we don't have to learn everything from scratch and suffer setbacks more than necessary. But in both aspects—learning warfare through making warfare and grasping the laws of warfare through study—there is no mystery and nothing unconquerable about it; it is a question of advancing and ultimately triumphing through struggle.

Another aspect of the question the masses raise about whether we can actually lead a revolution is this—how steeled and tempered are we? Now, in one sense, we are not that steeled and tempered, and we are going to get a lot of tempering and steeling in the immediate period as well as in the future—and we are going to have defections, we are going to have some people who capitulate. But in the most important sense, we have already undergone some important steeling and tempering—in the furnace of two-line struggle, including several all-out ideological struggles to determine whether we would continue on the revolutionary road or sink into reformism and betrayal. And we have won those struggles. Therefore, I believe that we have a stronger foundation than any other organization that has existed in this country. True, we are going to be hit with more than any other organization has ever faced before we succeed in overthrowing the bourgeoisie, but we also have a stronger foundation. And I have said many times, and it needs repeating, that this is not because we are braver or bolder or have been through more than other people have been through, either in our lives or our political activity. That's not the point; the point is that in terms of ideological and political line we have a stronger foundation.

I don't believe this question of facing murder, facing torture and so on is a question of some kind of existentialism—developing your essence, your personal courage and determination. I believe that the decisive question here, too, is ideological and political line. It is a question of, is this worth it compared to what you are being motivated by? Whether it's worth it to go through torture, worth it to stand up to all this, depends on what your outlook and political understanding is, what you see is not only desirable, but what is necessary and possible, if not today then tomorrow. And that's why I don't hesitate to say we have a stronger basis to stand up to this stuff than any other organization—and not only to stand up to it but to advance right in the face of it and through the course of it.

But I'll tell you one thing—and it should be said straight up to the masses—if you're posing the question "is revolution possible, can it really happen" in the sense that somebody will come along and without you having to sacrifice, without you having to be involved, without you having to continue to struggle, somebody will just hand you a better life. . . . no, *that is not possible*. And you might as well get that idea out of your mind. 'Cause a lot of times when people say, "it's not possible," they want to have their cake and eat it too—they want a better world, but they want it given to them, without the tremendous struggle that's necessary all the way through.

There is the fact that to a certain degree questions like this come from people (let's face it) who haven't yet been plunged into conditions where they say, "Fuck it, anything is better than this!" And overall, for the majority, this is still the situation, so we have to deal with it—and it's not entirely bad, because it does require us to go much more deeply into questions, and then we can develop our own understanding as well as others'. But I think that we have to say to them straight up, "look, it will never work unless the masses (including you) consciously struggle for it. Maybe it will succeed for awhile, but it will never last, revolution won't work in the long run like that." What people mean—or at least some people, and most people in part—when they say that it will never work, is they can't turn on a machine called "revolution" and have it working perfectly for them. Yes, it is true, *that will never work*. And the Party can never lead it in the sense that we're going to be able to just do everything for the masses or that we'll never make mistakes, never suffer setbacks, never be crushed here or there, never have to regroup and rise up again. So we have to fight ideologically, people have to rid themselves of this notion that something—and, in particular, revolution—working means somebody does something for you and it's all perfect. Instead they have to grasp, we have to struggle with them and lead them to grasp, that they have to emancipate themselves, under the Party's leadership, that they have to struggle, they have to play a role, ultimately a decisive role, in making—and continuing to make—revolution. The Party's role is to lead through developing, applying and arming the masses with a correct ideological and political line.

Can we lead in not just destroying the old, but in building the new? Well, again, if we can analyze, as we have (not without shortcomings, I'm sure, but more deeply than any other organization and certainly more than the bourgeoisie), the actual concrete workings of U.S. imperialism and the historical developments over the past period down to the present day that are turn-

ing into their opposite the strengths of U.S. imperialism, and the present downward spiral crisis and movements toward world war—if we can analyze all that, if we can in an analytical and theoretical sense destroy the old—then why can't we now also in a literal, practical sense destroy the old. And why can't we also both be prepared for theoretically and go on practically to build the new? If we can apply the principles of Marxism to analyze all those questions, then why can we not apply the same principles to build the new, out of the destruction of the old. I think this point has to be stressed to people. And in general these questions that came up from the masses about whether our Party can actually lead a revolution—they have to be taken up seriously and explained repeatedly and all-sidedly, or else we won't be able to mobilize them to the greatest possible degree at every point around the revolutionary line—and in particular right now around May Day.

#### What May 1st 1980 Has to Do with Revolution

Now, specifically, on the question of May Day—and how it relates to preparing for and ultimately making revolution. Can we just sit around and wait for the development of the objective situation and then we run out with the banner of revolution and rally everybody around it and march straight forward to victory? Of course not! I think that statement in the New Year's article (See *RW* No. 34, Dec. 28, 1979) the quote from Lenin about how revolution has to be viewed as a continuous process with sharp outbursts and upheavals alternating with periods of more or less intense calm—that statement is very important. He doesn't say that when there aren't upheavals, things are just quiet and calm. No, he speaks of *intense calm*. In other words, when you are in a situation of serious crisis, even if things have not yet actually, immediately begun developing towards a revolutionary situation, still periods of calm are more or less intense. And isn't that the case now? Look at Iran and Afghanistan, for example. What has happened, do events around them stay on more or less the same level? No, there are periods of more or less intense calm alternating with times of outburst and sudden jolts in the situation. Isn't that what we are witnessing right now, around Iran and similarly with U.S.-Soviet relations focused on Afghanistan?

This is the general character of the situation we're already in, and it will become more marked in the future, with the further development of the crisis and acceleration toward war (and the war itself, if it is not prevented by revolution.) We will have to learn how to both maximize our advances and consolidate our gains through these periods of intense outburst and intense calm—and there will be both a growing opportunity and necessity to do so, if we are really going to prepare for the future revolutionary situation, whenever that comes.

But does this mean that we are counting on the development of the objective situation—even in the very brief period before May First 1980—to make May Day a success, when otherwise it would be failure? No definitely not—and in fact this is rather obviously an incorrect defeatist line. It is not the case that between now and May First something is going to happen, in terms of the development of the objective situation that is going to make May Day a success where otherwise it would be a failure. The fact is that the objective basis for May First to succeed—to rally thousands and thousands of workers together with thousands of others, around the revolutionary banner of the international proletariat—that basis *already exists*. It has everything to do with the objective conditions (and our analysis of them), but *not* with what will change in the objective situation between now and May First (or even with changes in the objective situation since last May Day, when the call for May First 1980 was first proclaimed—though there have been tremendous changes since then, including especially in relation to Iran and Afghanistan). The basis for May First 1980 is rooted instead in our analysis of the crisis and developments toward war—and the real possibility of revolution in this country (as well as others) within the next decade—and therefore the urgent necessity, as well as possibility, to weld the advanced into a class-conscious force that makes a leap in taking independent historical action in the interests of the international proletariat, influencing broader masses and making crucial preparation for revolution.

To think that something must happen in the objective conditions before May First, or else it will fail, is itself to fail to grasp the essence and profound significance of our Party's line and analysis of the situation and its development. It is really to fall into a kind of religious despair—to have only desperate hope that some god—labelled "the objective conditions" is somehow going to intervene to make May Day possible when it isn't really possible otherwise. This is a line we have to confront and defeat in order to actually make a leap—forward—on May First. Of course there is also the line that treats the subjective forces—the Party—like a god (or the devil), saying that bullshit in the Party will prevent May Day and only "purifying" the Party of this bullshit will make May Day a success. This too, is metaphysical, and defeatist, and this orientation must itself be defeated to make May Day a real leap forward. Both of these erroneous lines—first, that which says we cannot make a leap forward on May First without a dramatic change in the objective conditions before then and also that which says that a thorough routing of rightist forces within the revolu-

tionary ranks is a *pre-condition* for a leap forward on May First (and is our main objective now), and otherwise May First will flop—these erroneous lines must and will be defeated not only in theory but more than that and most of all in practice, by carrying through to victory the May Day campaign and actually making the leap forward on May First. Now, in a certain way the real basis and objective of May First 1980 goes back to the question of “roads to the proletariat”—the influence within the proletariat of different strata and social forces which tend to be more radicalized. Make no mistake, this May Day does have to have not only a revolutionary character, but it must be stamped with the mark of the proletariat, especially the industrial proletariat, the backbone of the working class and proletarian revolution—the mark of the *class-conscious* section of the proletariat, representing the real, revolutionary interests of the working class. This May Day has to have a significant force of the industrial proletariat within it, as its core. Of course, we cannot get mechanical about this and think that they are all found at the factory, because many will be found in the unemployment office, but in general the proletariat, especially the industrial workers, the *class-conscious* workers, must be the backbone of May First, too. Why is that? Is it some kind of moral question? Is it because, somehow, workers are “better people” or something? No, it is because the working class actually is the only revolutionary class in this society, and the only class capable of leading thoroughgoing revolution in every country in this era, and to one degree or another all sections of society—friend and enemy alike, both various sections of the people and the ruling class itself—recognize the potential of the working class, when it becomes radicalized, to exert a profound influence in changing society. The ruling class is deathly afraid of this, and various strata of the people, even those who today do not believe such a thing can happen, will be greatly inspired and leap forward in struggle when they see the working class, or even sections of it, actually begin to act in a radical, revolutionary way against the system. For these reasons, the actions of the advanced workers, still small in numbers welded together as a class-conscious force, on May First—not working or searching desperately for work, but raising the red flag in opposition to the red, white and blue, and marching onto the political stage—will truly begin to turn the whole country upside down; it will exert a tremendous influence on broader ranks of the working class in the U.S., on other sections of the people here, and a tremendous influence as well, a tremendous inspiration and assistance, to the working class and oppressed people throughout the world.

So, especially with regard to the advanced workers—including those who have for some time, for various reasons, been more inclined toward a revolutionary position, but generally those who more readily gravitate toward and tend to take up revolutionary agitation and propaganda—we have to struggle with them to understand our analysis of the objective situation and its possibilities. I believe that if they do not grasp that, we cannot win them to take up May Day—and not just to come out themselves, but to *build* for it. ‘Cause why should they act? Why will they themselves be brought forward to act? Simply because they’ve always hated this system and would love to see it wiped away? No, by and large they are not yet acting politically, even spontaneously; although some are here and there, in general they are not yet acting politically—not only not in a politically conscious way, which of course they can’t do without revolutionary leadership anyway, but not even by and large, (and certainly not on a large scale and intensely yet) they are not doing so spontaneously. Many people, especially among the more advanced, have been through a lot of struggle, and they have a lot of deep questions. They are not just going to come out and struggle, no matter what their sentiments might be, they are not going to come out in large numbers and in any kind of sustained way unless and until they see the possibility for it to make a real difference, to have a real effect on society, to actually contribute something important toward basic change, toward revolution.

That’s another reason why I think these letters from foreign-born workers are very important. I also think that it would even be good to have letters from people from other strata in this country talking about what it would mean for them to see the class-conscious force of the working class in the U.S. raising the red flag in defiance of the red, white and blue, marching onto the political stage on May First. What if the students and others who were taking a progressive stand around Iran wrote a letter to the *RW* or the May Day Committee saying how important it is for the workers to act in

a revolutionary way; what if other sections of the people in this country, as well as internationally, did the same? What if prisoners—and I think we talked about this before—wrote their parents, relatives and others they know, and said, “Listen on May Day you gotta act, and you gotta tell these sons of bitches you’ve known at the steel plant for 23 years to do something worthwhile for the first time in your lives—get your ass out there and do something revolutionary on May First, ‘cause you know it has to be done.” It’s true that the main thing is going to be the influence of the working class, especially the industrial proletariat, the advanced section of the working class rallying around the revolutionary banner on May First that will have a tremendous impact on other sections of the people, most of all other basic masses. But it’s also true that the advanced workers, who we’re calling on to do this, have to understand the great impact they can have in this way. They have to understand it theoretically, through our analysis, especially through explanations of this (and other points) in the *RW*, and they have to understand it practically—by going out and being involved in building May Day among other strata as well as broader sections of the working class, getting that experience directly themselves as well as by us educating them.

These are all the kind of things that have to be cut through, have to be broken down, especially (though not only) to the advanced workers, in order for May First 1980 to represent a real leap forward. There is no doubt in my mind that there are far more advanced workers right now than the thousands we’re talking about mobilizing on May Day. Just taking it mathematically for a second, there are, say, 15 million production workers on assembly lines and in similar situations in this country; and you can’t tell me that, at a bare minimum, there aren’t 150,000 or 300,000 out of that 15 million—that’s just 1 or 2%—that are revolutionary-minded in this country at this time. I don’t believe it. I don’t mean revolutionary in the sense that they are fully class conscious, I mean revolutionary-minded in the sense that they have a burning desire for a basic change. You can’t tell me that at a bare minimum (and this is really understating the case) there aren’t at least 2% in the proletariat who are revolutionary-minded in this sense. Now of course, this is not enough for us to make revolution right now, but it certainly is enough, even if we only mobilize a small part of that hypothetical 1-2%, to make a real leap forward on May First 1980—make a real leap toward making revolution in the future. But the question is, can they understand why they should act and what importance that will actually have in terms of its influence now, in terms further of contributing to the possibility of seizing the time if it ripens in the next period—or at least prepare for doing that in the future and keeping alive and rallying people to the banner of the international proletariat and the proletarian revolution—not losing the opportunity whenever it finally does develop.

One of the things I’ve talked about before—and something we should also put out straight to the masses, especially the advanced workers—is this: haven’t you had enough of this shit! I feel this way everytime I read the *RW*; it hits me very hard, especially these good agitational articles that sharply expose different outrages of the system. It sort of leaps out at you and gives you a rush of the feeling—I’ve had all I can take of this shit! If you read this stuff—what they do to these prisoners and how they just shoot people down in cold blood, or a factory blows up on people who’ve worked their whole life for these bloodsuckers and they throw them on the street like garbage—it makes your blood boil and increases 10-fold your determination to make revolution and getting rid of all this. I always feel after reading a couple of these articles that I have just had enough, and I have to temper myself politically not to just explode but to figure out how to act politically to hasten revolution.

So it’s not just a question of tapping people’s anger, it’s a question of politically educating and mobilizing them. Look at this whole picture and where’s it going to end up, time and time again, unless and until we end it. And how can anything other than revolution put an end to this? I thought it was a good point in the brochure around the Fund Drive we put out, when it put the shoe on the other foot and said straight up to people with illusions about reforms solving the problems—reforms, not revolution are unrealistic, how can reforms possibly do anything about all this? But winning people to a revolutionary position is dialectically related to enabling them to see the possibility of abolishing all this madness through revolution, ‘cause when you’ve finally had enough has a lot

to do with whether you see that you don’t *have* to put up with this any longer.

That’s what’s so powerful about the (draft) *Programme*—you begin to get a real sense, a greater sense than before, it is possible that you actually advance through revolution to build a new society. Where, for example, you can walk down the fucking street and not have to be fucking afraid that some pig will come along and just blow you away, or at the least brutalize and degrade you. We can bring a new society into being through revolutionary struggle—we don’t have to put up with this shit any longer. This shit, this system, is not just an outrage, it’s historically obsolete. Abolishing it is something we have to fight for, but it’s possible. We can create a society where you can go to work and never again have to hear the words “you’re fired!” It’s possible. And women will not have to walk a gauntlet or fear for their lives everytime they want to go from one place to another. All these things are possible. But we have to make it happen—and that’s where May First 1980 fits in. What does it mean to think about a new society where you don’t have to hear these insulting words and be degraded anymore, where there will not be some swaggering asshole with Nazi combat boots and dark glasses (trying to hide his crimes) coming up and putting you through that shit, or even murdering you if he feels like it. And even more than that, where all the backward conditions in society can be brought under attack and uprooted, where unity can be built with oppressed people all over the world in the fight to win control of and transform the whole world and advance beyond relations of exploitation and oppression, and all the rotten social relations and degrading ideas that go with it. Is that worth fighting for? Certainly it is. Is it possible that it can happen? Yes, beyond doubt it is, but we have to work and struggle for it, from now forward, to prepare and then seize power and beyond that to keep power in the hands of the proletariat and continue transforming society.

As Lenin said, only work of this kind is worthy of the class-conscious proletariat. We’re not handing out guarantees for victory, but nothing else is worthy of the class-conscious proletariat. I don’t mean morally, I mean politically, because the only way we ever are going to get out of and help move humanity beyond all this is to work, sacrifice and struggle to prepare for and make—and keep on making—revolution. A revolutionary situation is gonna develop in this country sooner or later. If it doesn’t happen within the next 10 years, it’s gonna happen some time later, and we’ve got to do everything for that. And without putting out hype or putting out phony guarantees, we have to arouse people’s sentiments, their awareness of the historic times we are entering right now. This is one of those periods when big things are gonna be happening, and we have to influence them now and we have to be able to influence them much more decisively when we reach a much more decisive point.

So these are some crucial points about the possibility of revolution and the crucial role right now of May First 1980 in preparing for that. And we have a Party that represents and embodies that future not only in the long term sense, but in the sense that we have an actual *Programme*, a strategy, policies and so on. And right now, the advanced forces of the proletariat have the opportunity—and the necessity—to join together to push things further toward that goal and May Day is a concentration of that.

We have to arm ourselves and the advanced outside the Party with a deeper understanding of our Party’s analysis of the objective situation and what role the action of the class-conscious forces can and must play in rallying the oppressed at this point, even if it only numbers in the thousands right now, on May First itself. And on that basis we have to put the challenge squarely to the advanced, to those who *do* hate this shit: if you say it can’t happen and don’t act then you are working to make it not happen; don’t say “it’s a good idea but it won’t happen”—it *can* (and ultimately *will*) *happen*, but you have a role to play, a crucial role, in *making* it happen.

So, in conclusion, the essential question around May Day, and its relation to revolution, is this: can we draw forward those who hate this shit, can we build on their hatred for oppression, but more than that can we arm them with the understanding of how the class-conscious proletariat has to act and what an impact that will have on the development of a very tumultuous period ahead—one that holds at least the real possibility of a revolutionary situation? It is by doing this that we can and will make a great leap forward on May First 1980. □