

Accumulating   
 Revolutionary   
 Forces   
 for the   
 Coming   
 Showdown

The Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA held an important meeting in the latter part of 1982. In this issue we are printing background material all of which was written by a leading member of the Central Committee on the basis of points raised by the Chairman, Bob Avakian. The background material consists of three sections; the Report contains six sections.

# Background Material

## I. Advance and Consolidation (Spiral-Like Development), Including a Philosophical Point on Relative Identity

Advance and consolidation are a unity of opposites. Both are necessary. While advance is overall principal, without consolidation there will be no real advance. We will not be able to "come from behind..." unless we grasp this firmly. Coming from behind is not, and will not be, a straight line process either.

It has been pointed out by good basketball commentators that when a team is twenty points behind, say in the third quarter, it is generally a mistake to try to catch it all up at once; you'll exhaust yourself and fall short. Better to make a run that cuts the lead to ten by the end of the quarter, and then catch up the rest in the final period. (Of course, twenty points down in the third quarter is not time to "take it easy" either.) What is true in basketball (in this case at least) is also true in revolutionary preparation.

While this may seem like a polemical point against "leftism" (and it does have that element), overall this is a point against economism ("left" and right), which as we have pointed out, is characterized by this straight line thinking on the process of revolution.

All this relates to our important analysis of the 1980s, which has been deepened especially at the time of the 1979 Central Committee and since. While the basic analysis in the '79 CC report of the coming period is quite sharp and correct, perhaps there could have been more taking into account there of spiral-like development within the overall trend of the heightening of contradictions and the increase in the level of our work. The 1980s themselves, as we have seen, will be marked by ebb and flow, and (more directly to the point) our efforts cannot be a constant high-pitch either. War communism is necessary at times, but cannot and should not be generally maintained. The point here is not that things have been going slower than we thought so far this decade. Far from it:

World contradictions are sharpening at a rapid rate (... how many wars have been fought in the last 6 months alone?...). There has been some active preparation, to say the least, on the part of the enemy. And on a world scale, too, the people's struggles so far this decade have clearly already exceeded the mid-'70s. The U.S., too, has seen the emergence of social movements of real significance. So our analysis has been proven correct; even the full-ahead "tilt" that it had in 1979 was correct, given the notably accelerating pace of events confronting us at that time in particular. But still the point remains that there can be no straight ahead path; that consolidation is both objective for the party and requires conscious efforts to handle it correctly in order to maximize the overall advance.

Mao pointed out, in the context of the military struggle against Japan, that while extending the ground they'd already won was the main thing overall, "Holding our ground and extending it are inseparably connected." ("After the Fall of Shanghai and Taiyuan", *SW*, V. 2, p. 68) (Of course, for Mao, "holding ground" was not an absolute either; sometimes it was necessary to give some ground in order to gain time and prepare a counter-offensive.) Mao also points out that "It is essential to rest and train our troops, and the best time for doing so is when the enemy is on the defensive. [Mao also seized on other times when for various reasons the enemy was not engaging in full scale attack — for example during part of the Yenan period — ed.] It is not a question of shutting ourselves off from everything else for rest and training, but of finding time for rest and training while expanding our areas, mopping up small enemy units and arousing the people..." ("Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War," V. 2, p. 106) For Mao the point of all this, clearly, was not turning inward, nor failure to carry out the central task at hand — in that case, destroying Japan's army by war. Rather it was grasping that if the revolutionary forces do not train, rest, consolidate, then no expansion takes place. As Mao put it, "The correct principle is expansion with consolidation..." ("Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War," V. 2, p. 101)

The point of raising all this, however, is *not* that this should be mainly a period of consolidation for us. On the contrary, overall it should be one of advance and expansion, preparing for still more in the future. But, in opposition to straight line thinking, it is important to grasp the general principles here, particularly the point about "expansion with consolidation." And beyond that this should be a period of consolidation on the philosophical and ideological fronts.

For some time now, we've been overthrowing quite a few basic conventions from the history of the international communist movement. And in a sense, this is a fundamental and ongoing process; but, this too must proceed through spirals, related in part to the spiral of theory and practice. We've thrown a lot of shit up in the air, challenged and made critical evaluation of some rather major things. Now it is time to bring the threads of that together; it is not now the time to be doing more questioning of basic things as much as it is to be taking out broadly the synthesis of what we have done. In other words, it is time to emphasize the consolidation of the critical evaluation we've made, pulling together the synthesis (the basis of which exists, especially in "Conquer the World?..." as well as the *New Programme* and other basic party documents) and taking it out, rather than raising a whole lot of new and basic things up. That's the main aspect now. This does not mean we should not continue to be critical or excavate some more things, to make further advances in building off of and deepening our basic line in an all-around way, in many spheres and in the course of applying it. But the main emphasis is on consolidating that basic line and taking it out, while secondarily we should do some more critical excavating.

It is also true that we have to do some consolidating on the organizational front as well (centering on, but not limited to, party building). But here, it is important to see the main thing in this regard as growth, advance. As stressed in a number of things lately, including the Chairman's pamphlet on the party<sup>2</sup>, and the editorial after May First 1982, the party should be growing quantitatively, particularly in its basic membership. Even the qualitative aspect of party-building, besides the line, includes (as "Conquer the

World?..." put it) "the training of party members and those drawn towards the party in theory and in practice..." (p. 48, emphasis added). So organizationally, we should be stressing growth and advance, and (as the Chairman emphasized particularly in his piece on "A Social Base for Proletarian Internationalism?")<sup>3</sup> an ongoing process that includes consolidation as an integral part of it.

Both of the above points relate to the need, and should strengthen our ability, to make the party and its line more accessible more broadly among the masses. We should go full speed ahead carrying out our all-around work, popularizing the party and its basic line among the masses awakening to political life and bringing forward the advanced around and into the party.

There is a philosophical point that relates to all the above, and it is one that deserves some emphasis right now if we are to correctly grasp the role of consolidation on the ideological and philosophical fronts. Marxism cannot and does not reject the notion of relative identity. To say that change is absolute means there is also relative rest. And, together with this, to say change is absolute does not mean that any given thing is less itself than it *is* itself at any given time. This deserves some stress now; "Communists Are Rebels"<sup>4</sup> emphasizes the opposite (and overall fundamental) aspect of change — although that pamphlet is quite correct and even relevant with its (oft' forgotten!) basic theme of materialism.

In "On the Question of Dialectics" in his *Philosophical Notebooks* (V. 38) Lenin wrote: "The unity (coincidence, identity, equal action) of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute." Immediately after this important passage, however, just to make the other aspect clear, Lenin made the following succinct and relevant observation: "NB: The distinction between subjectivism (skepticism, sophistry, etc.) and dialectics, incidentally, is that in (objective) dialectics the difference between the relative and the absolute is itself relative. For objective dialectics there is an absolute *within* the relative. For subjectivism and sophistry the relative is only relative and excludes the absolute." (p. 358)

Some might argue, well, there is the absolute, but it resides only in the universal, the infinite "sum total" of things. But if that were so, there would in fact be no absolute, or objective truth, since, as Mao pointed out in "On Contradiction," the universal does not exist apart from the particular and "without individual character there can be no general character." (*SW*, V. 1, p. 330) If there were no absolute within the relative, then our knowledge at any time would not be *relative* and a (partial) reflection of objective truth, but would be invalid and agnosticism and idealism would reign supreme. Lenin pointed out in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* that "Dialectics... contains an element of relativism, of negation, of scepticism, but is *not* reducible to relativism." (V. 14, p. 137)

Lenin wrote, in a passage that should disturb both dogmatists and agnostics and should delight real scientists, "You will say that this distinction between relative and absolute truth is indefinite. And I shall reply: it is sufficiently 'indefinite' to prevent science from becoming a dogma in the bad sense of the term, from becoming something dead, frozen, ossified; but at the same time it is sufficiently 'definite' to enable us to dissociate ourselves in the most emphatic and irrevocable manner from fideism and agnosticism, from philosophical idealism and the sophistry of the followers of Hume and Kant." (*Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, p. 136)

The thing about dialectics, you see, is that it rescued *materialism* (in Lenin's time anyway) from agnosticism and idealism (which, at first at least, presented itself in the form of mechanical materialism and then flipped into more open idealist forms when that broke down in the face of new advances).

There are, it is true, no absolute boundaries. But there are particular states of matter, that is particular forms of motion (including in the stage of relative rest as well as conspicuous change) whose essence (while relative) is also definable and distinguishable from other forms of motion.

One example of the political consequences of not grasping this can be seen in Hoxha's mashing together of the character of revolution in the two (basic) types of countries in the world — oppressed nations and imperialist countries. In typical Trotskyite (and Menshevik) style the result is sometimes a "leftist" skipping of stages in the oppressed nations, but just as often, and more fundamentally, it is overt rightism — for example, ascribing a national character to the "revolution" in imperialist countries. Ultimately, the agnosticism associated with the kind of philosophical error gone into above will produce the kinds of despair and political capitulationism described, for example, in "Coming From Behind..."<sup>5</sup>

An example from chemistry (cited by Engels in *Anti-Dühring*) might shed still more light on the philosophical point here and its ideological and political implications for us: Boyle's law is a law which states that if the temperature remains constant the volume of a gas varies inversely with the pressure to which it is subjected. Engels tells of a scientist, Regnault, who found that this law does not hold good in certain cases. Engels then says that if Regnault had been a philosopher like Dühring he would have had to say: Boyle's law is mutable, and hence not a genuine truth, hence it is not a truth at all, hence it is an error.

"But," as Engels points out, "had he done this he would have committed an error far greater than the one that was contained in Boyle's law; his grain of truth would have been lost sight of in a sand-hill of error; he would have distorted his originally correct conclusion into an error compared with which Boyle's law, along with the little particle of error that clings to it, would have seemed like truth." ("IX. Morality and Law. Eternal Truths," *Progress Pub.*, 1969, p. 111)

Fortunately, Engels reports, "Regnault, being a man of science, did not indulge in such childishness but continued his investigations...." He discovered that Boyle's law loses its validity at temperatures approaching the temperature at which the particular gas liquifies — and even within its temperature limits Boyle's law is, of course, not absolutely and finally true. But that does not mean it is not a part of science, not a reflection of reality and therefore need not be studied or applied. Would such a viewpoint on Boyle's law aid or retard science at its present level?

It is true that the proletariat, as the revolutionary class, has nothing

ideologically or materially to fortify against progress and, as a vanguard party, we are not interested in such fortification. But, we *are* interested in science, in the actual process by which it advances and in making revolution. Therefore, it is well worthwhile to note what Bob Avakian wrote in *Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions* (interestingly enough against Deng and his pragmatism): "To say at any point, 'Well, tomorrow we will know more than today so let's not (dogmatically) apply what is known as truth today,' is to deny and disrupt the process by which more knowledge is actually acquired. This is metaphysical because it goes against the actual dialectical relationship between theory and practice; it is idealist because it actually denies objective truth." (p. 156)

A final thought on this point. Mao did not say, "Unity is transformed into struggle, and then there is *struggle* again." Nor did he say, "Great disorder across the land leads to great *disorder*." In the first case the word was actually "unity" and in the second, "order." True, in both phrases (and in context it is still clearer) Mao was emphasizing the fundamental aspect ("Struggle," "Disorder"). But Mao was precisely a dialectician, so he did not neglect the aspect of relative identity either. (Of course, as we know — and Mao himself knew — "flowers fall off do what one may" and, particularly where the class struggle is concerned, things often do not go as planned and the enemy, or other developments, may not allow such relative order at any particular time. But is it wrong, irrelevant, and never timely to point out this aspect? Real Marxists, apparently, think not.)

## II. More on Central Task, Accumulating Revolutionary Forces

For some time now, in the course of deepening our understanding of central task, we have come to understand more deeply that the basic character of our work in this whole period is preparation, preparation for the seizure of power. This in itself (linked of course with increased political clarity on the *content* of that preparation) represents progress against various reformist views. In particular, it represents a break with gradualist views and strategies aimed at getting the so-called "vanguard" firmly rooted (or swamped) in the mainstream. As the Chairman has recently pointed out, even among the Maoist forces there has been the tendency to think that the masses will at all times be with you if you are correct — and this has indeed been a frustrating (and ultimately deadly) notion.

Preparation, to be sure, is no passive pastime. Mao put an exclamation point on that when he said, "... the whole of the Anti-Japanese War constituted a preparation." ("Talk on Questions of Philosophy", *Chairman Mao Talks to the People*, Schram, ed., 1974, p. 217)

As we have emphasized preparation so, too, we have emphasized the international dimension, and specifically how in the imperialist era developments in any one country are more determined by contradictions in the international arena than by contradictions internal to that country. And we have pointed to the links between these two questions, preparation and the international dimension, particularly with our analysis of historic conjuncture and the need to prepare especially for the qualitative sharpening of all the contradictions on a world scale.

Mao himself made links between the period of preparation in China and the whole world arena, and in doing so pointed to some things which we can learn from and utilize to deepen our understanding of the process that is central task, including its international dimension.

In particular, while discussing the Chinese revolutionary forces' military strategy, Mao wrote of fighting campaigns and battles in such a way as to attain "... our goal of strategic protractedness, which means *gaining time to increase our capacity to resist while hastening or awaiting changes in the international situation* and the internal collapse of the enemy, in order to be able to launch a strategic counter-offensive and drive the Japanese invaders out of China." ("Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War," *SW*, V. 2, p. 85) (emphasis added) In another essay on military strategy, Mao also wrote of the developing international situation, especially the worldwide popular movements and the Russian revolution which were factors supporting the struggle in China, and then went on to say, "Large-scale direct assistance is as yet lacking and will come only in the future, but China is progressive and is a big country, and these are the factors enabling her *to protract the war and to promote as well as await international help*." ("On Protracted War," *SW*, V. 2, p. 126) (emphasis added)

This idea of "promoting as well as awaiting" changes in the international situation provides a broader, international dimension for the important concept of "accumulating revolutionary strength" which was raised in the "General Line" polemic as a general task for the proletarian party in any country: "It (the party) should concentrate on the painstaking work of accumulating revolutionary strength, so that it will be ready to seize victory when the conditions for revolution are ripe..." ("A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement", Point 11, FLP, 1963, p. 22)

What should these observations of Mao's and the Chinese revolutionary practice tell us? For one thing that the revolutionary forces during periods of preparation have to engage the enemy in battle (even if that means *political* battle in our conditions now) and put a certain amount "on the line." (By "battle" we mean the class struggle in the all-around sense comprehended by our central task.) The oppositional, revolutionary pole needs to be out there in the field, even in order to assist in drawing others into political life. The experience of the revolutionary movement in any country shows this — remember the effect of the Panthers and their battles in the 1960s? The revolutionary forces cannot just be passive; they have to "promote as well as await" the changes in the world situation which will in turn provide the fundamental objective conditions for a qualitative leap in the revolution.

But at the same time as the revolutionary party must be far out and risking it in periods of preparation, still there has to be a sort of "string tied to our backs." There has to be a line between us and the broad masses (meaning mainly the politically aware ones) so that the revolutionary party and its forces can't be easily crushed like roving rebel bands. We have to be far out but — on that basis — build united fronts. This same principle also applies to a correct understanding of stages in the revolutionary process. We have to be far advanced, but we also have to know how to adjust, step back and pick up the broad masses (without, of course, being absolutely tied to majorities) in a revolutionary situation. Precisely the time when power is on the immediate agenda may be the time when, for example, we *might* not be able to say all the things about the Pope in our press that we have the freedom to say today.

Such are the times when, as the Chairman has pointed out, the correct basic theme of "Left-Wing" Communism will be especially applicable — the tactics of how to win the broad masses through their own experience to the party's program in a period of revolutionary crisis. In re-reading "Left-Wing" Communism under those circumstances it will likely appear that Lenin will have gotten much smarter.

But overall, to accumulate revolutionary strength, you have to be way out on a limb or you will never be advancing things — advancing them toward the time when, due fundamentally to the working out of world contradictions (which of course include *revolutions* in the world), objective conditions ripen to the point where the prospects for seizing power open up.

This understanding of the accumulation of revolutionary strength and forces has application in every country although there are obviously differences in how this can be carried out in different types of countries. It links up this process with what is fundamental, the international dimension, and goes against the incorrect, linear view of accumulation that this process simply unfolds as a quantitative accumulation which proceeds to a certain point (based on conditions internal to the country) and then on that basis goes over to a qualitative leap.

Attempting to generalize some experience from the Chinese revolution, one can learn quite a bit about this actual process. (This *can* be done, by the way, without falling into the errors we have criticized about absolutizing this experience or projecting it in a mechanical way into the world arena.) In fact a correct understanding of the Chinese revolution argues strongly against lines (which are often based on *mis*-interpretation of that revolution) which argue more for a linear, quantitative build up of forces or for various rightist schemes based on winning all the masses to your banner by being concerned with their well-being, etc.

In 1930, Mao wrote: "They [speaking of pessimistic comrades including Lin Biao — ed.] seem to think that, since the revolutionary high tide is still remote, it will be labor lost to attempt to establish political power by hard work. Instead, they want to extend our political influence through the easier method of roving guerrilla actions, and, once the masses throughout the country have been won over, or more or less won over, they want to launch a nation-wide armed insurrection which, with the participation of the Red Army, would become a great nation-wide revolution. Their theory that we must first win over the masses on a country-wide scale and in all regions and then establish political power does not accord with the actual state of the Chinese revolution." ("A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire," *SW*, V. 1, p. 117) Abstracting this from the concrete conditions of China, there is a general understanding here which is of great value as a weapon against rightism and mainstream thinking. It is not necessary "first... to win over the masses on a country-wide scale" to begin serious revolutionary activity, nor is that really the goal of your activity during the preparatory period.

But on the other hand, it is not as if your revolutionary activity cannot and does not have influence over the broad masses under these circumstances. Particularly as the battle is joined the attention of these masses is drawn toward you and some will break away from the enemy camp. Mao wrote "... the fact that the Red Flag has never been lowered in the border area shows at once the strength of the Communist Party and the bankruptcy of the ruling classes, and this is of nation-wide political significance." ("The Struggle in the Ching Kang Mountains," *SW*, V. 1, p. 102)

To accomplish this, to accumulate strength and prepare for the opportunity for the seizure of power nation-wide, Mao and the Chinese revolutionary forces were very much "out on a limb." When Hoxha claimed that Mao's military theory was for an "endless" war "without perspective," Hoxha was being "patently absurd," as was so succinctly stated in *The Communist*. (See "Beat Back the Dogmatist-Revisionist Attack on Mao Tsetung Thought," J. Werner, *The Communist*, No. 5, p. 12-14 for more on this.) Mao had a clear perspective (contrary to Hoxha's and Wang Ming's) that the revolution in China would take the form of a protracted people's war as the main form of struggle. It would be a war based in the countryside, which with the party's leadership could lead to victory in the new-democratic revolution as a stage in the struggle for socialism. *But* on the other hand, Mao never argued that the armed struggle should be begun only when there was the clear perspective of relatively quick victory — quite the contrary. In fact there was no such perspective when the armed struggle began in China. As Mao himself put it, "... the Red Army is small and weak. The Chinese Red Army, starting as guerrilla units, came into being after the defeat of the first great revolution. This occurred in a period of relative political and economic stability in the reactionary capitalist countries of the world as well as in a period of reaction in China." ("Strategy in China's Revolutionary War," *SW*, V. 1, p. 198) So the revolutionary forces under Mao's leadership engaged in a long period of preparatory work without the clear and immediate prospect of victory in which they were risking a lot, were outgunned and in a sense isolated.

(A sidepoint on the question of methodology: one of the valuable things about studying the experience of the Chinese revolution in this light is that it teaches materialism. The fact that you are examining a military struggle makes it quite clear that you are studying the material strength of opposing sides. Making the analogy between that struggle and our situation today helps make the same point clear. In our preparatory period the form of the struggle is political. But still what is expressed is the relative strength of both sides, even if that strength shows itself principally in the form of relative political influence over the broad masses. As was the case in China this too is ultimately determined by contradictions on the world level.)

In our situation, too, we must engage in active preparation for those great, revolutionary days in which, as Lenin said, twenty years are embodied. In this period of preparation we will not have, nor should we gear our tactics to having, a large section of the masses under our banner. (As the Chairman has pointed out, even in China when they had armed revolutionary regimes in the base areas and some of the spontaneity of nationalism going in their direction in the war against Japan, most of the time they did not have the majority under *their* banner, as opposed to that of the KMT or other bourgeois forces.) But while we will not have a large section under our banner in this period, neither can we fail to carry out really active all-around work including seizing on opportunities that do arise to influence broad sections, sometimes even exercising tactical leadership among them. In this regard, it is very important to seize upon "minor crises" of various sorts that arise internationally and domestically. These are often times that test our mettle and, more than that, open up broad avenues to expand our influence and forces. These periods are very important in training our party and the masses for the opportunities ahead.

It is definitely not the case that "just anything to await" the coming oppor-

tunities is fine. We are not awaiting a *deus ex machina* but are engaging in revolutionary struggle. First off, it would be perverting our correct analysis of world contradictions and their motion to hinge everything on awaiting "THE CONJUNCTURE." Our analysis (including our analysis of conjuncture) is far more dialectical than that. As the Chairman pointed out in his article "In Today's World Especially 'Slow Patient Work' Cannot Be Justified" (RW No. 107), periods of preparation in one country are periods of revolution in another. This is not just some moral warning to help us stiffen up our internationalism. Revolutions (or revolutionary struggles) that take place in periods which are overall preparatory periods on a world scale are not only important for the people in that particular country, but have influence on the material strength of world forces and on the sentiments of the masses worldwide. This can have a significant effect on the outcome when a world-historic conjuncture does arise.

It is also true as Mao pointed out that in war it is a question of preserving oneself and destroying the enemy; and the latter is clearly principal overall in the process. Correctly understood, this idea of "promoting as well as awaiting" is an expression of this dialectical relationship. Understood in this way, one can see how the principles stressed in "Charting the Uncharted Course" are not at all contrary to this understanding, but are an essential part of it. In particular, there is great relevancy to Lenin's point that "... there are moments in history when a desperate struggle of the masses even in a hopeless cause is essential for the further schooling of these masses and their training for the next struggle." For one thing, as we pointed out, such a struggle may not be initiated by the revolutionary party; and for another, such a struggle may make a big contribution to "hastening or awaiting" revolutionary developments internationally.

There is a correct, as well as an incorrect, way to "promote." And this brings us right back to the importance of the basic point here. It emphasizes the importance of grasping the whole process, of grasping for what and how the revolutionary force should be preparing and its profoundly international dimensions. As the "Basic Principles..." document puts it "... revolutionary crises can mature very rapidly and... communists must do everything possible to prepare for and accelerate developments toward such situations..." (para. 61, p. 12)

### III. More Ideas on What it Means for Revolutionary Territory that is Seized to be Base Areas for the World Revolution (Taking Spiral Development into Account)

As "Conquer the World?..." sharply brought out, the existence of socialist countries in an imperialist-dominated world is an advance — but a tough problem. It is a problem that has been compounded by the phenomenon of lopsidedness in the world and by the fact that, so far, the socialist revolutions that have emerged from conjunctures have been in relatively backward countries. (Even though Russia was imperialist, still it was a backward imperialist country.) But even if there is revolution in one or more advanced countries in the coming period, this problem will not be eliminated. It will be around with us for quite some time.

To say that socialist countries must be base areas for the world revolution is not just an ideological stand; it has material meaning. In this regard, it is useful to explore the analogy between a (or several) socialist countries as base areas for the world revolution, and the experience in China of the establishment of base areas during the course of the revolution there. The analogy is not exact. In particular, it is important to keep in mind that the Chinese revolution in this period was a bourgeois-democratic one whereas in an overall way in this era the world revolution is the proletarian revolution. It is also important to remember that there are discrete processes within particular countries and thus to avoid falling into the error of treating things on a world level as basically extensions of phenomena within nations. But with these caveats, it is still useful to explore this analogy.

One basic point in common between base areas and socialist countries is the purpose of both: to serve as bases for expanding and conquering more. There is no other purpose apart from this. In "Pay Attention to the Day to Day Needs of the Masses — But Don't Overdo It!",<sup>8</sup> the Chairman made it clear that this was Mao's line on the relationship between tasks in the base areas and the war overall. And in that context it is necessary and correct to pay attention to the needs of the masses in the base areas and to making the transformations that can be made there in the production relations — again mainly to serve further advance and expansion.

Mao clearly understood this relationship between the base areas and the whole country — and that even their existence (while a necessary part of the strategy for winning nation-wide power) was fundamentally dependent upon the overall situation. He wrote "... whether it is possible for the people's political power in small areas to last depends on whether the nation-wide revolutionary situation continues to develop. If it does, then the small Red areas will undoubtedly last for a long time, and will, moreover, inevitably become one of the many forces for winning nation-wide political power. If the nation-wide revolutionary situation does not continue to develop but stagnates for a fairly long time, then it will be impossible for the small Red areas to last long." ("Why Is It that Red Political Power Can Exist in China?", SW, V. 1, p. 66) Relevant here is the idea raised in "Conquer the World?..." that there are limits on how far you can go in one country in carrying on socialist revolution and production without winning and transforming more of the world.

On a world level, there have been historically rather protracted periods between major revolutionary advances, periods of relative reactionary stabili-

ty. It would be ridiculous and reactionary to argue that the socialist countries that exist in such periods should just give up (or alternatively engage in a rash advance, which would amount to the same thing). So it has been, and will be, necessary to engage in consolidation. And this is good — not bad — for the world revolution. The point raised in Section II about the significance of the continued existence of base areas for people throughout the country holds true about socialist countries on a world scale.

After you have "squeezed out" all you can from a period of revolutionary storms you have to consolidate. You have to prepare for the next advance, which includes backing up and paying attention to the livelihood of the masses, etc., so you do not unnecessarily lose what you've won. These are the periods when it may be necessary (depending fundamentally on the international situation at the time) to "bribe" some of the intermediate strata into working for socialism.

But again, maintaining all this is problematical. Over long periods of non-revolutionary times on an international level, and in the face of various material and ideological pressures, it is difficult to keep the middle forces with you. In summing up the coup in China, we noted some aspects of this problem. Mao speaks to this problem in regard to the base areas within China: "When the revolution is at a low ebb in the country as a whole, the most difficult problem in our areas is to keep a firm hold on the intermediate class." ("The Struggle in the Chingkang Mountains," SW, V. 1, p. 88). But the problem is not isolated to the intermediate alone. Mao went on in the same essay to say, "Unless the splits and wars within the landlord class and among the warlords in China continue, and unless a nation-wide revolutionary situation develops, the small independent Red regimes will come under great economic pressure and it is doubtful whether they will be able to last. For not only is such economic strain intolerable to the intermediate class, but some day it will prove too much even for the workers, poor peasants and Red Army men." (p. 89)

Of course, here there are some differences between small base areas in China and whole countries — including in their ability to sustain and develop a relatively full economic life. But, fundamentally, including in the economic aspect, the analogy holds. This closely relates to the point raised by the Chairman, quoting Lenin, in "Reflections and Sketches" on the burden that rests on the advanced workers. But here, too, there is the other side of the coin: these advanced masses can carry quite a burden and, in fact, make a giant difference on a world scale. This is related to what the advanced masses within the socialist country must be prepared for, which is especially preparing to make the biggest contributions and sacrifices for the world revolution, including being prepared to risk-it-all in periods when that can make the difference in revolutionary advances internationally.

All this is opposed to a sort of "fortress socialism" approach, where the defense of the socialist country becomes the center of everything. There is a very real basis for this to set in, based on the necessary and important task of defending what has been won. The Chairman spoke to this problem, and some of the ideological and political results of it in his piece "Marxism as State Religion."<sup>10</sup> Certainly, the proletarian forces within countries under bourgeois rule must make adjustments for the defense of the socialist countries; but, frankly, the main bending in this regard should be made by socialist countries for the overall advance of the world revolution.

Often the basis for this "fortress socialism" (and ultimately "state religion") outlook arises in periods of difficulty for the world revolution, when the socialist country or countries are "out there on their own" and facing real difficulties; however this has historically reached its heights (depths?) in periods of world conjuncture, when both the dangers and the opportunities for world advance are greatest. Particularly when one is rooted in the wrong political line on the relation of the socialist country's defense to the rest of the world revolution, it is easier to see the dangers than the opportunities. This political view tends to block vision. Mao wrote of a related problem in China: "Unable to see beyond their limited environment in the Fourth Army, a few comrades believe that no other revolutionary forces exist. Hence their extreme addiction to the idea of conserving strength and avoiding action. This is a remnant of opportunism." ("On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party," SW, V. 1, p. 107)

Of course, it will not do to negate from either side the contradiction between the defense of the socialist countries and advancing the overall world revolution. Both are an objective part of the world revolutionary process. It is necessary to grasp the objective process of revolution on a world scale, including the fact that in an overall way it proceeds in a spiral-like way and involves both consolidation and advance. What has been won should be defended, as one (subordinate) part of the overall tasks. Failure to see this will not eliminate the contradiction involved here, but from the opposite side, will turn it into an antagonism. Mao also criticized the putchist tendency in the Chinese Communist Party, one which regarded the situation in China as one of permanent upsurge. This is actually linked with the criticism made earlier (Section II) of the theory that in China they had to first win over the masses on a country-wide scale. Here, again, as with Trotskyism, the ultimate essential rightism of this theory is clear. On a world scale, too, while there have been and will be periods of giant upheaval when it may be possible to win a lot "at once," world contradictions are not in permanent upsurge either and (with the present level of imperialist development at least) it is not possible to win the whole world at once.

Of course, historically speaking, this has not been the main problem. And the correct relationship — what is principal — between the task of defense and advance on a world level must be upheld and struggled for. Mao wrote, "As far as the enemy is concerned, he is afraid to advance into our base area, but the main danger in his eyes is a Red Army that has driven into the White area." ("Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War," SW, V. 1, p. 237). And, in general, one must constantly keep the sweeping view in mind, the vision of the future when it will be possible to, in a manner of speaking, go over to the strategic offensive on a world scale and indeed wipe out the enemy "resolutely, thoroughly, wholly and completely"!

# Report from the Central Committee

## I. What We've Accomplished, What Remains to be Accomplished

There should be no underestimating what we've accomplished by building this party and, in a basic way, developing its line, organization and influence... and no underestimating what we can and *must* do in this decade. Our vision of our internationalist duties within the U.S. must be no less than this: What we wish there had been in the '60s, we can be in the '80s when the stakes are a lot higher—that is, a party steered and tempered with a core of leadership, a vision and a program to do it.

A look at the world confirms Mao's important point that "a mature party" is a most important condition to win revolution. In many countries, the existence today of even a small core of Marxist-Leninists would be a major advance and would open up now-closed avenues toward revolution. Here there is more than that. This is in no way to underestimate our difficulties and our still small size and experience but fundamentally our party does meet the criterion of "a mature party." This means more than that we've "weathered storms" like some battered ship (although we have weathered storms); it means we have developed a basic analysis (on a world level and of the U.S.), a strategy as concentrated in our *New Programme*, and the framework of party organization which needs to be further built, but a core of which has been established.

This puts new and weighty responsibilities on us — both within the U.S. and internationally. We should not be complacent, but on the other hand, in order to fulfill these responsibilities, it is necessary to recognize and stress that we have accomplished some things. This is a point made in the background material when it gave some emphasis to consolidation on the philosophical and ideological fronts — and based on that, stressed actively carrying out our responsibilities.

After studying "Conquer the World?..." , letting it settle in and weighing it in light of the whole recent history of developments both in our own party and internationally, a leading comrade made the remark, "Conquer the World?..." settled some things." Of course, it didn't settle everything and questions and struggles around ideological and political line will go on (though in varying forms); however it is quite important to grasp that "Conquer the World?..." (together especially with the *New Programme* and *New Constitution*) do represent a certain "settling" and landmarks of clarity on major questions confronting the proletariat, particularly in the context of the coming world-historic conjuncture.

There has been a process going on in the material world, in the international movement and within our own party. It is worth studying over our own major documents with this in mind; one can see a whole series of interrelated questions first raised in a systematic way in the "Thoughts..." document" in 1978 which were touched on again and again in succeeding documents and then achieved a resolution particularly in "Conquer the World?..." . The call for consolidation ideologically and politically should be seen in this light. It is not a question of "Well, we arbitrarily opened up a lot of questions and now, arbitrarily, we're shutting them down." First of all, we're certainly not intending to shut down critical thinking and the raising of and grappling with important questions — "turn out the lights, the party's over." In close connection with stepping up our all-around revolutionary activity there are many important theoretical questions that have to be struggled over and solved, the context for this being set by our party's basic line. In this way, there should and must be active ideological struggle throughout the party. But secondly, this emphasis on consolidation is not at all arbitrary, but a reflection of a process that has been unfolding internationally. It's part of a whole process in the development of Marxism and has very much to do with the development of contradictions in the world, a process which began for the international movement with the coup in China and the questions that threw up before us. The questions treated in these documents were not accidents; they had to do with the actual questions that were thrown up by the development of imperialism and the socialist revolution, in particular by the setback in China and the further unfolding and sharpening of contradictions on a world scale. (It was some time after the split with the Mensheviks that we summed up that the heart of the political question facing the party in that struggle was whether or not to capitulate in the face of imperialist war.) So these questions were not innate in the mind, were not arbitrarily cast from the skies by god, but have arisen as very real problems to be solved. Obviously they are not all solved; however there are spirals and phases in spirals. It is not the case that now a whole period characterized by reflection and self-examination is called for. Rather, the point is that a number of questions have been settled and that we have achieved a certain perspective and sufficient clarity both on some basic questions of the international arena and, linked with that, on our immediate tasks in terms of the seizure of power in this country (or, as has been pointed out in "The Border Question,"<sup>12</sup> as much of it as we, the international proletariat, can get our hands on).

A higher level of theoretical clarity has been achieved on a number of major points including: a materialist (and dialectical) analysis of the laws of motion of imperialism internationally; a more correct understanding of the contradictions involved in the relation between the defense of socialist countries and the advance of the world revolution; the proletarian revolution as fundamentally an international process; our central task and a series of strategic questions of class analysis and path to revolution in the U.S. "Conquer the World?..." and, in a different way, the *New Programme* and *New Constitution* are a concentration of all this. Ironically, if we don't clearly understand that certain questions have been settled, then we will be unable, based on this, to raise and settle new ones that face us.

There is a deep methodological point about the relation of theory and practice involved here, a question of the theory of knowledge and the development of world history, and theory in that context. Our theory arises from practice — practice in the broadest sense of the experience of the class struggle (and that of production and scientific experiment) internationally — and in turn serves the revolutionizing of practice and so on in spirals. This is the method behind our line; it would not have been a correct line if an idealist or rationalist method had been behind it (that is, had we used the method of simply taking time out for reading and comparative text study, deciding what was right and wrong in each text — a method which would make it impossible

in fact to decide that). This spiral of development now means both an increased emphasis on practice and popularizing the basic line we have achieved. And it also means there should be *increased* theoretical work on various levels in the party, especially over the many questions that confront us in deepening this line in practice (again, speaking broadly).

This Marxist theory of reflection — as opposed to rationalism — also applies to how we should view our criticisms of the historical body of Marxism. Some people, perhaps, are waiting for the "other shoe to drop" from us, à la Bettelheim, and for us to dump Stalin and perhaps "thoroughly settle accounts with Engels" (and Marx...?) or other such nonsense as well. They are wrong. Internationally some people (whether from a rigid and mechanical view of Marxism or from the cousin of this view, agnosticism), were shocked by "Conquer the World?..." and frankly misinterpreted it. The fact that it criticized some ideas of Marx did not mean that it attacked the historical body of Marxism. (In fact there is a way in which, by criticizing Marx, the criticisms made of Stalin, while more severe, were "put in perspective" in the sense of also being criticisms of errors in the history of the development of Marxism, not outside of it. Despite the real criticisms made of him, you could even say, in this sense, the stress was on "the bright side" of Stalin.)

The fundamental question here is not even so much the question of Stalin, but more the question of a correct, not idealist, approach to the development of Marxism and, on a basic level, the question of the socialist revolution itself: can you do it, and if you can, is it worth it?

The experience of many forces internationally who have dumped Stalin merits attention. (Not that this is the only, or even everywhere the main, error in relation to Stalin — witness the Albanian trend — but this still merits attention.) Recently the Canadian group In Struggle!, after mucking around in centrism and bourgeois liberalism (including on the Stalin question), took the final step. They formally abolished themselves, publishing a document to that effect, complete with a picture of Snoopy on the back cover gleefully flapping his ears over the announcement. Unfortunately, In Struggle! is not alone in this agnostic, social-democratic swamp. The point is not the pragmatic one that since everyone who has dumped Stalin has ended up no good, then we shouldn't. The point is that Stalin had some truth. He also had some metaphysics, but he did have some truth. Because of this, and because the experience of Stalin is part of the historical experience of the proletarian dictatorship, it is necessary to take the attitude of "Stalin's errors are our errors, the errors of the international proletariat." Only in this way can we learn from them, as well as his positive contributions.

Mao once made the assessment, referring to Khrushchev's secret speech, that there are two swords, the sword of Lenin and the sword of Stalin, and those who have cast down the sword of Stalin have, or will soon, cast down the other sword. This is true and still relevant.

In our last Central Committee report, we said we should take a "Marxist approach to Marxism." There we were referring to the necessity to cast off some old concepts and to recognize that Marxism is a living science. Here again, though from the other side, the same point arises, that Marxism is a living science with an historical development. We have often referred to the "heritage we renounce," speaking of revisionist currents within the international communist movement. We have been busily renouncing *this* heritage, and we should keep on renouncing it in its various aspects. But then there is also the heritage we do not renounce, that being Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, understood as a living science with a process of development, including the continuing development of our own political line. This, too, is a Marxist approach to Marxism.

Perhaps we and the whole international communist movement could learn from the approach of some natural scientists. Stephen Gould, for example, with his theory of punctuated equilibrium in evolution, has broken with much traditional Darwinism. But that has not led him to place himself outside of the school of Darwin's theory. As Gould himself wrote, the newly developing theory "would not be Darwinism, as strictly defined, but it would capture, in abstract form, the fundamental features of Darwin's vision...". (*Science* magazine, April 23, 1982) Why should Marxists be less scientific than this? Why is it that the body of Marxism should be considered more like the Catholic Church than like a science — that is, a set of scriptures instead of a living science? (And, of course, once it can be shown that there is even one hole in the scripture, then there is an opening for agnosticism.) No, Marxism is a science and this is a heritage we do not renounce.

There is quite a bit of talk in the world today about a "crisis of Marxism." And, yes, as Chairman Avakian has addressed in a number of his writings, some incorrect currents, including within the "Maoist" trend, have run into real problems. But, as the method of "Conquer the World?..." shows, these are problems which can and must be solved with the basic principles of Marxism, especially materialist dialectics. They will not be solved, as we have pointed out, by clinging to a soiled grey shirt of disproven and/or revisionist concepts; but neither will they be solved by pissing and moaning about "crisis" armed (if it can be called that) with agnosticism and social-democracy. This is precisely the method of combining "a sweeping historical view with the rigorous and critical dissecting of especially crucial and concentrated historical experiences, and to draw out as fully as possible the lessons and to struggle to forge the lessons as sharply as possible as weapons for now and for the future." ("Conquer the World?..." , p. 9) And we and others in the international communist movement have applied this method, and some basic answers have begun to emerge. In the face of this there are those who say, with the inverted gleam of self-righteous agnosticism in their eyes, that "you have no idea what you don't know. Wait until you grow up, then you'll have a *real* crisis, like us." In a way, they are right about the first part: there are many deeds that cry out to be done and there will be many unpredicted twists and turns in the struggle that cry out for answers. But unlike such agnostics we believe that Marxist theory is indeed capable of growing to comprehend that ever growing tree of life. And, more than this, we have firmly grounded ourselves as a party in that method and made a basic analysis, elaborated a programme and policies. As for growing up, it would be an excellent idea for still more people to grow up and confront the coming conjuncture with all its necessities and opportunities, as opposed to the comfortable fairy-tale land of social-democracy and agnosticism.

Of course, we should recognize that, viewed from another angle, agnosticism will be part of the objective conditions that a revolutionary party

will have to deal with in a period like this. Grasping this fact will help the vanguard avoid the rather rearguard behavior of becoming obsessed with it, constantly banging our heads up against it. Instead, we can deal with it like other conditions, as we persist in carrying out our overall (and broader) responsibilities. Chairman Avakian pointed out some time ago in "Coming from Behind to Make Revolution" that it requires the weapon of materialist dialectics to see beneath the very real difficulties and dangers of the present situation to see also the very real opportunities. Besides the war danger, there has also been the loss of revolutionary China. As the Chairman pointed out, one thing socialist countries are good for is combatting idealism with materialism, and this is especially true on a broad scale when they are around. When there are no socialist countries around (especially after they have been overthrown), there is more fertile ground for idealism. So we should not be paralyzed by the existence of agnosticism, but should understand the political basis for its existence today and more firmly grasp the scientific basis of our line and carry it out.

We have forged a basic line and developed some policies for carrying it out; armed with this, along a tortuous path, we can meet our obligations and rise to the occasion. There is no basis, no need at all for second-stringism when it comes to vanguard responsibilities. It is true that we still have many defects and face many difficulties. These should be analyzed and should not be glossed over. Hype will not do. But neither should defects or difficulties in general be seen as some sort of obstacle that must be torn down before we can advance. Instead we should approach these defects and difficulties in the spirit of "if we have problems, we should solve them." Perhaps this sounds flip, but it isn't. Rather it points to the firm foundation we have, and also to the duties and responsibilities that face all of us in accelerating the revolutionary advance.

## II. More Stepping Up, Stepping Out

Our party is at a crossroads. Not a crisis but a crossroads where we can, and must, build off the solid foundation of line and organization we have forged and make significant further advances in a number of arenas. This is not to say we can now become the leading force among the masses, or any other such "left" economist swill. Neither is it to say even that we should put ourselves on some kind of all-out "war communism" footing in this period in an attempt to leap ahead; spiral-like development does need to be taken into account. But it is to say that we have been through a phase in which we have made some significant breakthroughs, both in theory and in practice, and we must now put more emphasis on applying these to make further breakthroughs, especially in practice.

This should make clear that calling for some consolidation in the philosophical and ideological fronts is not by any means a call for passivity, for sitting around and building a blockhouse to guard our achievements. Rather it is consolidating our political line in the context of carrying it out on a still higher level and popularizing it broadly, particularly among the advanced in our social base but also in every arena in which there are outbreaks against the current order.

Neither should this be understood to mean "now we are going to do practice." We have been carrying out revolutionary practice, in many forms and arenas, but this should be continued and deepened. This, too, will require theoretical work — in fact, increasingly comrades will be called upon by the party and the course of events to make analysis in various ways. The brain, as Mao said, is an organ for thinking and it should be used as such.

While today is not a time when we can recruit thousands, can we not recruit a significant (if relatively small) number of advanced people, particularly proletarians, into our party? While we cannot lead the mass movements today, can we not do better still at being an influence within many of them — and even lead some of them — and further train advanced proletarians through our press and in other ways to appraise such events and the various class forces involved? While today is not a time of revolutionary crisis, are there not more than a few "minor crises" which are a rich vein of opportunity for us in preparing minds and organizing forces? And while the conditions are not ripe for our party to become a force contending now for hegemony in society, even exercising hegemony on "the left," is it not possible to work in an all-around way so that the various forces active in political life do feel more compelled to weigh and react to our line — and aren't there even some opportunities when we can "light up the sky" with the basic line and stand of our party?

In short, we have to continue to carry out our central task "create public opinion . . . seize power" and deepen our understanding and our all-around application of it. The *New Programme* describes the central task as "the bridge from the present to the future." This means, as the Chairman has stated, that only with the forging of our line on central task and the wielding of the newspaper as the main weapon could we "really begin to forge the links between our work in this period and the actual mass armed struggle for power in the future." Saying this, of course, does not mean this is easy — or more to the point that it does not involve contradiction. In fact even stating there is a "bridge" implies that there is a "gap" of sorts between the present and the future. In particular there is a gap between where the masses are now and the vanguard position. This gap presents itself as an obstacle to bringing advanced masses to a vanguard position during the long period when the bulk of the masses aren't revolutionary. This is part of the basis for the contradiction that always exists between the vanguard party and the masses, a contradiction that progresses through the process of bringing the masses forward toward a revolutionary position. Our line on central task provides the way, under our conditions, to correctly deal with the contradiction.

But we can learn better how to handle this contradiction, this "bridge and gap" — how to apply our central task — by studying the experience of how other revolutionaries, including in this country, have tried to deal with it. The Panthers tried — and ultimately broke their back on it. They did, in a very refreshing and significant way, establish a vanguard position. They put revolution and the armed struggle for power on the map in this country, and that was no small accomplishment. As Eldridge Cleaver once put it, the CPUSA had ruled the gun out of order and completely off the political agenda. The Panthers put it back on. But having established the vanguard position, the Panthers, too, had to deal with that gap.

While the Black masses in the U.S. were definitely not quiet in that period, and there was a significant section that were in a revolutionary mood, still it was not a revolutionary situation; U.S. imperialism still had reserves (linked to its international position) and this was reflected in the consciousness and action of even the more advanced Black masses. The Panthers were in a

vanguard position and the masses weren't. So there was a need to deal correctly with that vanguard/masses contradiction and to do the maximum possible at that time at bringing them to a revolutionary position. The Panthers tried to get the masses to relate to the vanguard, as they put it, and move forward. Even things like the Breakfast for Children program (in their original conception) were efforts in that direction. They were never really correct, and later degenerated completely into reformist and Black capitalist schemes, but originally they were linked with struggle against capitalist institutions, like big supermarkets, and they even raised the question of political power in the sense of "the capitalist system isn't meeting the needs of the Black masses and we are taking care of business." The point here is not to sum up the whole experience of the Panthers (the pamphlet "Summing Up the Black Panther Party"<sup>13</sup> does quite a bit more), nor certainly to uphold the breakfast programs. But it is to point out that revolutionaries must deal correctly with the contradictions involved here, striving to maintain a genuine vanguard position and prepare for revolution through straining at the limits at every point in bringing the masses forward. Our central task is a qualitatively greater weapon for doing that today than anything the Panthers wielded; at the same time we must continue to carry it out correctly ourselves, persevere in that path and push things forward as far as conditions allow at any point. The contradiction involved in forging that bridge over a period of time is a difficult one; it is difficult in particular ways for parties in imperialist countries where the masses want revolution less (at most times) and where the armed struggle can only be launched at a time when contradictions in society are very acute. But this same contradiction involved in forging the bridge between the present and the future also presents itself in the colonial and dependent countries because, even though the armed struggle can generally be started earlier there, the masses there are not always in a revolutionary mood and often the armed struggle continues on a small scale for quite a while before a nation-wide bid for power is possible. There, too, it is not so simple as constantly growing while constantly whittling down the enemy's strength.

This contradiction between the vanguard position and the masses' position also poses itself differently at different stages in the struggle, even within one country. At a later stage in the struggle in the imperialist countries, it will pose itself in a qualitatively different way, when it is really possible and necessary, as Lenin wrote in "*Left-Wing Communism . . .*" to move millions to support the revolutionary programme. But at every stage in the struggle, including today, it is a question of how to bring forward masses (even if this overwhelmingly means the advanced sections) to the maximum degree at any given point — without at the same time going "to the masses" — that is avoiding the economist recipe of basing the vanguard's position and activity on the level of the intermediate masses at any given time.

This is the point of the section in the background material for the meeting where, quoting Mao, it speaks of the need to hasten and await changes in the international situation. Our central task is precisely the way in which we, under our conditions, are hastening while awaiting.

Also related to this "bridge and gap" question is the need (raised in the background material) to maintain a constant tension between the vanguard's fundamental need to be "way out on a limb," engaging the enemy in battle (as defined by our central task, which means political battle for us now) and, secondarily, the need to have that "string tied to our backs," building united fronts, never being completely cut off from the broad masses. Living in the present situation, and with the tension involved in this contradiction, any revolutionary soul becomes filled with impatience, with the desire to get it on. And that's fine (as long as it is tempered by our line, including an analysis of the present situation) not only because such impatience is justified, but also because it can be a prod pushing things ahead, helping to overcome any lagging on our part.

In the same way, there should also be impatience with our relatively small size and with the kind of shortcomings (mainly quantitative, within the real leaps) that have been summed up about May Firsts and the battle for 100,000 paper circulation. Unfortunately, however, the basic situation (our still small size and relatively limited, though significant, influence) is not due mainly to our own mistakes. We say "unfortunately" because if this were due principally to our mistakes then we could do a quicker job of changing the situation and bringing proletarian revolution onto the agenda. The fact that the masses aren't in a revolutionary mood and lots more people aren't rallying to our banner is due mainly to world events. By this we don't mean only that a world historic conjuncture has not yet sharpened all the way, but also some more particular (though related) events. For one thing, if looked at from the standpoint of world balance of forces, our trend has been taking it on the chin internationally for the last five years or so. This doesn't mean we're on the ropes and about to be knocked out; on the contrary, we've become more steeled and politically are more prepared to meet the challenges and make big advances in the coming period. But still it's not like the loss of revolutionary China was a non-event or something, or that its absence today has no effect on the broad masses. To the contrary. International events of this magnitude not only affect material force in the world but, because of that, exert a deep effect on the masses' mood.

On a lesser, but still important, scale the fact that our trend was not able to really get on the map within Iran has also had its effect. That revolution, which was definitely a revolutionary mood-creating factor internationally from around 1978 to 1980, has also turned basically into its opposite, as was unavoidable as long as those class forces that led it stayed on top of it. Today that reactionary Islamic Republic inspires no one — except perhaps the Soviets (and also the Western imperialists) who are scratching for a way to make some more inroads. Take also the recent situation in the Middle East. The fact that the Palestinian masses did not wage a decisive offensive had a real effect. We were not engaging in idle academic chatter when we raised Marx's point that sometimes a desperate struggle of the masses, even in a hopeless cause, is essential for their future struggle, and, we added, most importantly for the whole international proletariat. Had Arafat and the rest of them not provided the kind of aid only they could then provide for imperialism and had they instead led such a struggle, there would have been quite an interesting situation internationally. Not that it would have automatically manufactured a revolutionary situation in ten other countries, but it sure wouldn't have hurt. Even the masses in the U.S. would likely be in a different mood today — let alone the Middle East. This is a symptom of the profound and brewing volatility in the present world.

The point here is not to invent our own "Catch 22" by turning the correct point of "hastening or awaiting changes in the international situation" into its opposite in the form of: "let's wait around until the PLO finally wises up and carries out a revolutionary strategy." The basic point here is that there is

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an international, and material, context for the present situation, including our degree of influence on the masses here.

But we can and must do more. Even these examples underline the fact that it's not exactly boring out there. There are profound possibilities shaping up amidst the difficulties. In these circumstances, it's quite correct and important to broadly popularize our analysis of the 1980s and to resurrect the slogan "Revolution in the '80s — Go for it!" There are those who might say to us, "Oh, you were saying that three years ago." And, to that, the obvious reply is, "Yes, we were saying it then — and it's all the more relevant now!" It would take either a vested interest in spreading confusion or a straight line ahead view of reality ("revolution must go straight ahead, or its basis isn't there") to say that world contradictions have not sharpened since the beginning of the decade. Our analysis has reflected reality very profoundly; and its consequences are all the more important. This does not mean things are easy; they are not. But we never promised straight line progress, nor rose gardens of any kind. What we have said is that this will be a decade of the ripening of the clash between the trends toward war and toward revolution on the world scale. This "promise" is based on a materialist analysis (something generally lacking, even among revolutionary forces in the world today), combined dialectically with a view that gives full play to revolutionary people's conscious dynamic role. There is a great need to popularize this line with its hard, revolutionary "edge" (while also understanding and making clear that things will advance through spirals and we have to learn to vary our pace in tune with that).

In some ways our analysis of the '80s has become an "outlawed analysis" on the left, particularly in the last couple of years, even as popular movements have grown (and particularly as reformist trends to unite everyone against Reagan have arisen). A couple of years back, the turning of the decade along with some rather sharp revolutionary developments (particularly in Iran and Miami) provoked quite a bit of broad thinking along the lines of the slogan we had once advanced, "if you liked the '60s, you'll love the '80s." At that time, however, what the various political forces meant by that had not been so clearly elaborated. Now they have, while also some things have happened in the world which give some temporary advantage to revisionists. So an analysis which seemed more popular and immediately evident then is largely outlawed now in many circles. For one thing, such revolutionary stuff tends to interfere with grand schemes to make the left "respectable" and insert it as a major mainstream force in America.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks were a sect in the sense of outside the mainstream with their line, too, for most of the period leading up to and even during the Russian revolution. When Lenin advanced his "April Theses" in 1917 that things had gone as far as they could go in the bourgeois democratic stage and it was necessary and possible for the proletariat to lead things on to the socialist stage of the revolution, he was isolated, to say the least. In a typical case, one ex-Bolshevik reportedly wrote, "For many years the place of Bakunin (an anarchist—ed.) in the Russian revolution has remained vacant; now it is occupied by Lenin." But while Lenin's was an isolated analysis, more important still was the fact that it was true. And because it corresponded to material developments, in just a few months it was the programme of a successful revolution. So while we should not glory in the relative isolation of our analysis at the present, neither should that deter us from broadly popularizing it. In fact, there is a way that its uniqueness, its very "outlaw" character, can open avenues to popularizing it more. It is hardly boring conventional wisdom, and it is both true and corresponds to deeply felt needs (even if not understood possibilities) among the advanced, and in particular in our proletarian social base. Among them, we have to popularize both our analysis and also our programme and that everything that we are doing now is, simply put, "getting ready for revolution" and that they need to join in that.

In unity with and as part of this analysis, we also should instill a kind of "be patient, it's coming" outlook among the advanced forces — that is, an understanding that things are indeed sharpening and, as always, it is proceeding through spirals, not in a straight line, and that we must be energetic in carrying out our preparation in an all-around way without falling into freneticism.

Even as we broadly popularize our basic analysis of the world situation, however, there is also the question of continuing to get deeper clarity ourselves on the character of this decade and its particular revolutionary possibilities. It is not the '60s; it is being shaped principally by different (and ultimately more profound) contradictions. This does not mean the '60s are not important to learn from; they are, but the lessons must be genuinely learned, generalized and applied with the knowledge of the differences in the '80s as well. Certainly we do not seek to resurrect the more backward, reformist things from the '60s; beyond that we must grasp that the forms in which new, revolutionary things arise will be different. Chairman Avakian has pointed this out, particularly in the article "'60s People'" (a point we'll return to later).

The way in which revolutionary struggles take shape in this decade on a world scale, including within the U.S., is bound to be different from the '60s in many cases. This, too, has to do with the principal contradiction shaping things. In the '60s, things were mainly influenced by the oppressed nations vs. imperialism (particularly U.S. imperialism) contradiction; there was Vietnam which was a focal point of contradictions on a world scale. In addition, inside the U.S., as part of this but having its own particularities, there was the Black liberation struggle and other social upheaval (which was stimulated by profound material changes brought by the world development of imperialism). There was also revolutionary China and the Cultural Revolution. These things, which set a context for the times, are profoundly changed today (though the contradictions which gave rise to all this have hardly disappeared).

In the present world situation, and particularly looking at the implications of it for the development of the revolutionary movement within the U.S., the contradictions between different imperialist forces are lending new features to the political landscape. In these circumstances, it is especially important to grasp Lenin's point about how the masses are drawn into political life by the ruling classes themselves, and to recall another point from Lenin which was referred to in "Charting the Uncharted Course" (p. 12), that "the independent historical action of the masses who are throwing off the hegemony of the bourgeoisie turns a 'constitutional' crisis into a revolution." In this decade, the likelihood of just such situations quickly emerging, including in this country, is greatly increased. There is past experience on this, including from the '60s. In his memoirs on the *Years of Upheaval*, Henry Kissinger writes of a "vacuum" that existed for a time in that period which was created because

of inner-bourgeois contradictions. This, he says, allowed a "vocal minority" of radicals to exercise influence far beyond their numbers. If this was true then (and it was), then consider the possibilities in the years ahead, with the near-certainty of far more serious crises in the U.S. Such situations can emerge quickly and in them the preparations and leadership of the vanguard party will be sorely needed — and tested. This kind of analysis lends still more weight to the profound possibilities for "coming from behind to make revolution."

With these possibilities and the whole world situation at present in mind, it is important not to underestimate the pro-Soviets, including the CPUSA. We should consider the CPUSA in light of the analysis made by Jorge Palacios in his book on "historic compromise,"<sup>16</sup> as well as in light of the international factors now shaping up. The CPUSA has a strategy for power, perhaps in alliance with other imperialist forces — a strategy which combines gradualism with from-the-top putschism. Revisionism is not simply, or mainly, an ideology, something that we will defeat by a mere battle of ideas, though it will certainly require that. Revisionism has state power and all the things that go with it — including an army, and other resources of a powerful imperialist state. This exerts a powerful pull in the world on various class forces. But exactly because it is all this, and not just an idea, it is also a colossus with feet of clay, as Lenin said of imperialism. Revisionism, too, can be overthrown and defeated everywhere by the revolutionaries, and the preparation we do today for this will be crucial. All this will give shape to the outlines of a potential revolutionary crisis in this country. It is certain to involve cracks and splits among the imperialists — internationally, of course, but also domestically in relation to international developments. The revisionists are sure to be operating like a motherfucker in this climate, contributing to it. These are certain to be very complex and highly political times, in which the programme, tactics, organization and all-around preparation of all political parties is going to be critical — and battlefield-tested. (Our *New Programme*, particularly pages 19-21, gives a vivid description of all this.) These are the times in which revolutionary opportunities can emerge very quickly, the times in which fissures can emerge (as Lenin put it) through which the revolutionary initiative of the masses can burst.

If we do not see things in this light, then we can be caught totally by surprise, failing to see anything but "a bunch of bourgeois stuff" and a locked-up situation. This is yet another way in which, as we wrote in "Charting the Uncharted Course," a potential revolution can be turned into a constitutional crisis if the revolutionary forces fail to act. We should see, and lead the masses in seeing, how a world situation with two blocs of cutthroats at each other's throats gives us excellent opportunities to go at them. Grasping all this as part of our analysis of the '80s, and closely linked to our emphasis on the key role of the vanguard party, is another aspect of the task we described at the end of that same piece: "In a sense we are clearing the ground of economist litter and all other obstacles so as to be able to see such an opportunity as it is arising and not to miss it." It is such developments as these, linked with our overall line and strategy for revolution in the U.S., that we must be preparing for.

In this light, we should see the importance of the "minor crises" that develop along the way. We should regard them as excellent "schools," concentration points and generally as opportunities that must be seized. Such crises are fundamentally favorable ground for us, favorable for carrying out our central task in an all-around and accelerated way. This is quite a different attitude than arises from a gradualist, reformist view which usually sees such things as unfortunate and damaging disruptions. We can remember this attitude in the time of the Iran crisis when virtually the entire U.S. left besides our party dove under the rug with muffled cries of "Oh, god, look at the wave of reaction." There was, to be sure, a reactionary mobilization; but practice demonstrated how the masses being moved into political life in a sharp situation can be turned into a very good thing through the efforts of revolutionaries. (Of course, it was not mainly cowardice that drove the CP under the rug then; the alignment of forces internationally and domestically was such that they had little to gain.) Not every crisis is like the Iran crisis; most, in fact, will be more characterized by a variety of left forces in the field. But in any case these are favorable times for us, important times for engaging the enemy in battle. Of course by this we mean political battle, as defined in an all-around way by our central task. And when we say "engaging," the key thing is to see it not as simply something we do, but as something that arises from the objective situation and which the party plays an important role in unleashing and leading. We are obviously not an army; but we are also not a political army, confronting the enemy alone in political combat. We are a political party. As such, particularly in times of opportunity, we must play our full political role. As we summed up in the pamphlet "Support Every Outbreak of Protest and Rebellion": "What is revealed in these 'minor crises'?" The different class forces, not only in their ideology but in practice; the nature of the state — the bourgeois dictatorship, the fundamental weaknesses of the imperialists' system; all of this provides fine opportunities for the revolutionary forces." (p. 5)

Perhaps it should go without saying, given all this and the analysis of the '80s in particular, that building our party is a key task. Still, what with the history of economism in the international communist movement, including in our own party, it is worth reminding ourselves of it. But more specifically, it is important to emphasize the aspect of broadly popularizing the party and its programme, making its basic line accessible in a concentrated way to the masses. This is clearly linked up with the importance we have recently been attaching to recruitment into the party, especially (though not only) from the proletariat, and to the *New Constitution* as the basic document which people must agree with to be recruited.

The *New Constitution* is the correct document for recruiting since it provides basic principles and lines of demarcation. This approach is not only necessary in making the party and its line still more accessible, it is also helpful in demarcating revolutionary principles which are a weapon against opportunism. People need a basic foundation to come into the party, but they don't need the whole elaboration of it yet. This is a matter of the ongoing education of party members. The old Revolutionary Union used to have its "three principles of unity" (the need for armed struggle to smash the state, for the dictatorship of the proletariat and for democratic centralism). While we are not advocating a return to exactly this, the method here is important, and we now have a higher level of understanding synthesized and concentrated in our *New Constitution*.

None of this means that we are attempting to build a "mass party" or that

we are raising the slogan "to the masses." To try to base ourselves on the broadest masses, even the broadest masses of the proletariat, under today's conditions could only mean disaster. It would mean reversing the view so succinctly put forward by Chairman Avakian when he said, "In particular the viewpoint comes through that 'you shouldn't do anything to offend the American people' which, if you think about it, is ridiculous. I mean, why shouldn't we?" But we do want to and should build the party among the advanced, particularly the advanced proletarians. To do this correctly requires giving this task some emphasis and systematic attention, defeating any shamefaced tendencies toward the task of recruiting. It also requires consolidating the advances in political line we've achieved and giving emphasis to taking this revolutionary synthesis out more broadly. Continuing our party's lofty character does not mean that we cannot concentrate and popularize its basic line; in fact it requires it. This means such things as giving increased emphasis to the use of our *New Programme* as well as the *New Constitution*.

We should also cultivate a kind of "early Christian spirit" at all levels throughout the ranks — a spirit of building up our small forces and of all members actively analyzing heaven and earth. It used to be a great strength of the Revolutionary Union (linked, of course, with some of the primitivism) that all its members and units took up seriously the task of building the RU even from the time it was a fledgling organization and of analyzing major events in the world and the movement as they occurred and also applying the same method to more local developments. Now that we have advanced and established a nation-wide party organization and a central press, shouldn't it be more — not less — possible to do all this correctly? If we do so, we will have taken another stride in building the party qualitatively, the central element of which is line, including the training of its members and those coming around it in this line. As long as all members and units adhere to democratic centralism and carry out party line and policy, this will not hinder, but will in fact facilitate, consolidation.

In the same spirit, we should encourage "local authorities to take more initiative under centralized guidance" in the spirit of Mao's policy in "On the Ten Major Relationships." (*SW*, V. 5, pp. 284-307) Again, given the increasing strength of our line and centrally set major policies, it should be possible, and quite important, for local party organizations to make analyses and take initiative. This, too, is linked with the question of the whole party on all levels "taking responsibility for the movement" which was raised by the Chairman in "Conquer the World?..."

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The Chairman has spoken of the need to begin to make a further leap — even a "rupture" — in terms of the party itself. This is definitely an urgent need and one which, if understood correctly and dialectically, is perfectly in tune with the emphasis on consolidation in terms of political line. On the basis of building off our correct line and the solid framework of party organization we have developed, it is necessary and possible to press further ahead in expanding the base of the party, challenging the advanced to take part on a higher level in the class struggle as party members, bringing forward fresh forces and further preparing the party to meet the tests ahead.

### III. Further Thoughts on the Advanced in Society and the Social Base for Our Line

We need to more deeply understand the advanced forces in society today, in particular in light of our understanding of this decade and its differences, as well as similarities, with the '60s.

As referred to earlier, and as developed more at length in the article "'60s People," we need to look principally to the newborn forces, even as we tap the best from the advanced forces from the previous period. Even they will have to come forward to a new world, new and greater tasks. Overall, as a methodological point, we should keep our eyes open with the aid of Lenin's statement that communism springs from every pore of society. The world has changed, and the forces arising even within U.S. society have changed in important ways, too. They have a different stance, different style. As one example, it's not the hippies anymore, it's the punks. The hippies (a '60s development which was not without its positive aspects) were more characterized by idealism. The punks are more severe. It's not "Love is the Answer," it's "Hate and war, it's the currency, you've got to deal with it." Even when nihilism gets mixed in, the latter is more in tune with the times. The point is not that any forces, including newborn ones, should be tailed and left to spontaneity, but there is a point in recognizing that which is new and arising and its positive elements.

Here we should look again at the concept of "roads to the proletariat" in relation to all this. When this concept was raised in "Coming From Behind..." it was said, "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." This basic idea is quite correct, an important weapon against economism. It is a reflection of the general truth that the economic struggle is not "most widely applicable" in developing class consciousness and also of the fact that the proletariat, for real material reasons, is not usually the first force to move into real political action. This is even true of the "real proletariat," as well as the more bourgeoisified workers. But, while this basic point is true and should be upheld and applied, a few other things need to be taken note of. First off, since the time the "roads" point was raised, we have deepened our class analysis of the U.S.; at that time we were mainly speaking of more bourgeoisified sections of the workers and the potential revolutionary influences on them. This is true, and important among these strata, but still the main revolutionary social base we have now identified is somewhat different. Secondly, the "roads" point tended to be associated with veterans of the '60s, identifying these as the most advanced and the key lever to the proletariat. The article "'60s People" treats this somewhat differently and more correctly: while upholding the important and potentially vital and advanced role of such forces, it says that mainly these will be a powerful revolutionary "reserve" force for the newborn forces. (This should not be taken mechanically; what is being spoken of here are general, social phenomena; individuals from "'60s backgrounds" may play very advanced roles at present.)

That article puts forward that our party should identify itself with newborn

forces and look mainly there and to new forms in which the struggles of this decade will arise. Part of the question involved here is the youth question. There should be no underestimating the potential revolutionary qualities of youth (and the point that they will come "in their own way" to Marxism). This requires the development of a full-blown and vibrant Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade. It also requires recruiting the really advanced youth into the party itself, in accordance with the criteria in the *New Constitution*. It should be remembered that the Panthers, for example, were largely an organization of youth. It is striking to look at a list of Panther martyrs and see that overwhelmingly they were in their teens and early twenties.

In general, it would not be a bad idea to resurrect Lenin's statement flung proudly back into the accusing economists' faces that the Bolsheviks were not a party of tired old men of 30, but a party of youth. (See "The Crisis of Menshevism," V. 11, p. 354) Of course, some of us men and women of 30 and more have gotten "younger" in the past few years — a product of the struggles against economism and the fact that, in terms of line, our party now much more thoroughly represents the new and arising forces in the world. But people who are young in *all* senses must also be brought forward in increasing numbers.

In looking at social forces generally, it is important to sharpen our weapons of analysis. Here we want to focus on the Black masses and on the need to further apply our tools of class analysis and of distinguishing different political trends and lines. All this is absolutely necessary in order to be able both to forge a firm base for the party and also to carry out our strategy of united front under proletarian leadership. First off, there is the question of what forces represent our social base among the Black masses? This is important to consider in light of a number of the points raised in the article on "Class Polarization Among Black People" (*RW* No. 154) that spoke to certain changes that occurred during and after the '60s. Linked with this is the question of political trends.

Do nationalists, even revolutionary nationalists, represent this most solid base? No, they do not. Neither is it necessarily the case that all, or most of, the advanced people will "come through nationalism" to come to us. This does not mean that the advanced are not influenced by these trends at all; they generally are, or at a minimum they do weigh our line in relation to nationalism in various ways. But it is important to see that there is a section (not the majority, but this is not the point here) who have much stronger internationalist inclinations, and who are in varying degrees tired of nationalism, even in its more revolutionary expressions. This, too, is the product of both political experience from the '60s and also of material developments where, coming off the '60s, many nationalist forces gained positions — even positions of some authority over more proletarian Black masses. While we should weigh how we are doing in relation to those Black masses whose outlook is basically nationalist, we should weigh even more how we are doing with, and how we are viewed by, Black masses with internationalist inclinations.

As the above-mentioned article pointed out, Black nationalism, including revolutionary nationalism, represents definite class interests. This is very clear when one examines the main base of someone like Farrakan. A large section of this base is Black people whose class position is petty bourgeois. The line he articulates also represents their (and Black bourgeois) class interests, and is even important to study to learn some things about the mood of a section of the Black petty bourgeoisie who gained some position in society and now see it threatened. This line sometimes assumes a more militant expression, but most often is quite openly rightist in its form.

To repeat, this is not to say none of these forces are significant. They do have influence that extends in various ways into our social base, and the influence of these lines is certain to grow. And no advanced forces are going to develop as party members without comparing and contrasting different lines. Besides, our strategy is not "class against class," but the united front against imperialism, with the key alliance being that between the struggles of the oppressed nationalities with that of the proletariat as a whole. People can, in some circumstances, be revolutionary without being proletarian revolutionary. But if we confuse our main social base with that of the nationalists (and even more if we confuse Marxism with nationalism) we will be unable not only to develop our own party and its influence, but we will be unable to unite very well either. Often we go from sugar to shit in our approach to nationalist forces, from tailing them to attacking them for not being proletarian revolutionaries. The old polemics with the BWC are useful teachers in that regard.

Looked at in a broader context, this raises the general question of the urgent necessity to develop the base and forces of our party among its class base. As crisis matures, many political forces will mobilize their social base and also have influence within the basic proletarian masses. Under these circumstances the party must have the forces to win the day (or at least seriously contend at a given stage) in the struggles that will rage with these other forces; there must be forces that can be mobilized to begin to put the stamp of the proletariat on events. This will ultimately be decisive. Looking at the Iranian revolution, you can see that Khomeini had (and still has) a class base. It included sections of the urban petty bourgeoisie and recently land-dispossessed urban poor. One of the major problems there has been that (for a variety of reasons) a powerful social base for a proletarian revolutionary line did not get mobilized.

We say in "Charting the Uncharted Course" that the key political point about the real proletariat in this country is a section that "because of its daily condition, responds more readily to a revolutionary line and will help swing others into motion as well." And further, that document makes the point that neutralizing or winning over other sections "depends on this." But this is not automatic and depends on the extent to which our party is a force among these proletarian masses and that there exist trained party members among them and others who on one level or another consciously support the party and its line. Freedom is the recognition of necessity — and its transformation; we have some work to do in order for that revolutionary process described in "Charting..." to come to fruition.

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We should pay attention to some of the obstacles that the advanced who do come forward run into and their views on (including criticisms of) the party. This is an ongoing question, but a few aspects will be delved into here.

First off, there is the question of revisionism. Among most sections of the masses who are in some degree of political ferment this is a major question. In particular it is so among many of the immigrants with the most revolutionary experience; often the struggles they have experience in are led by revisionist forces. (As a side point we should also more deeply understand the conse-

quences, which are both positive and negative, of the fact that many of these immigrant masses have also only very recently become proletarians, having been separated from the land.) Even in the case of some forces who are struggling against Soviet-backed regimes, there is the pull of revisionism. Some of them will shoot bullets at Soviet forces but will not shoot polemics at the Soviet Union. This may be frustrating to us, but we should also understand the strong pull that the material strength of the Soviet Union exerts, and in particular on bourgeois class forces. There are many advanced forces who are genuinely repulsed by revisionism and want to fight it as part of the revolutionary struggle. Often these people are initially very excited by our line and then become frustrated when they take it out and our ideas don't just carry the day or make steady progress against revisionist influence. (Sometimes, of course, the revisionists also put up more direct, physical barriers in the face of these people.) These people need to be armed with the kind of materialist understanding spoken of earlier, in Section II, the understanding of revisionism as a material force in the world today but at the same time, dialectically, as a colossus with feet of clay. Only with this can they appreciate and assess the real significance of their action in opposing it and continue to heighten their revolutionary activities.

We also need to sum up and make further progress against the tactics of the U.S. imperialists and their state in regard to all the advanced forces who step forward, particularly among the oppressed nationalities. While this is a general question, it will be treated a bit later in this report in the section on base areas and factories as fortresses.

Finally, in this brief sketch, we should sum up an attitude that exists quite broadly among the masses, including among the advanced. That is the attitude of hating the system, yes, but often saying to us, "I'll be there when the time comes." What people mean by this needs to be examined and gone into politically with the advanced. Sometimes (and this is a very broad sentiment among oppressed people) this reflects a hatred of the system, but despair at seeing the possibility of overthrowing it. We should not underestimate the genuine difficulties that face advanced people in a period like this; these are heavy times, which divides into two — their very heaviness often acts as a barrier holding people back. This is especially true for people with some political experience, including a lot of Black people, who have seen some real struggle waged, but still find the system intact. Here our analysis of conjuncture needs to be brought forward — how in one sense they are right, that it is not always possible to overthrow this system, but it is just possible that such a time may be emerging soon and what their role is. This analysis is also important to those who say this and feel the weight of the fact that the great bulk of people today "ain't doing nothing." We have to explain that, frankly, the inert mass doesn't matter now — and what is important now is preparation. Sometimes, too, when people say this they also have specific political lines in mind, including lines on the question of the necessary form of armed struggle in the U.S. (like urban guerrilla warfare as the main form). These lines need to be discussed, including from the point of view of a Marxist-Leninist line on military affairs (*Red Papers 4* still has important and basically correct things to say on this question, and there is a basic line on it in our *New Programme*). Finally, people are often expressing quite sincere revolutionary intentions when they say this, but fail to see its political content. While many such people will actually come forward and "be there when the time comes" and may possibly contribute to a proletarian revolution, we should also point out to really advanced people that such a stand may wind up making you nothing more than cannonfodder for a revisionist (or other imperialist) coup attempt. With a strategy which combines gradualism with putschism (from the top), the revisionists certainly have a role for basic masses — and it is precisely that of unconscious cannonfodder.

In contrast to all this we have to struggle with advanced people to grasp that when a chance comes for proletarian revolution we can't afford to miss it: we have to get politically prepared. The advanced have to get politically conscious on a whole other level, get organized, get into the party and most basically in this period of the '80s get ready for revolution.

#### IV. Mass Movements

The development of various mass movements inside the U.S. has been an important political change — and an arena in which our efforts could make a leap, and a difference. In our *New Programme* we write that, in relation to the mass movements, "The point is to make clear that the whole political system is worthless." This is a crucial point. However it should not be taken to mean that our work in relation to every political movement that arises is simply to go out and say, "The whole political system is worthless." Involved here is a philosophical point on the particularity of contradiction. These movements do have their own dialectic of development, a dialectic which we should be within as an important part of carrying out our overall line (or within those that have a basically progressive character). This dialectic is not isolated from the more basic contradictions of society (if we forget this we will land in economism); its resolution is dependent on the motion and/or resolution of these larger contradictions. But there is this particular dialectic nonetheless. Everyone knows from their own political experience the force of the events and movements of the day, whether around Vietnam or Black liberation or whatever; these movements brought the questions of imperialism and revolution to the forefront, not automatically, not simply on the basis of the internal dynamics of any one of these movements, but on the other hand, not unrelated to that either. We need to be within that process, in the conditions of today and today's movements, which certainly do not pose any less profound questions because deeper questions are up. People who are veterans of the '60s remember the political atmosphere, the coffee house discussion on all the questions from tactical to philosophical posed by the movements, and how people struggled and advanced through all this. We have to be able to be a part of this, part of the freshness of discovery — without, of course, pretending that we don't know what we do know about the whole system. Nuclear war will never be stopped under imperialism (that is, by reforms under the imperialist system), but we want to be part of the process through which people figure this out. In all such movements, there are debates, literature, writers, etc. In a well-chosen way we need to be part of this in various ways — certainly and most importantly through our own press, but in other ways as well. We cannot have "one-shot" approaches to these things. This need not go against, but should in fact help contribute to our basic task of diverting all these streams and trends toward a revolutionary goal.

Of course we need to distinguish between different movements and make

analysis, not simple across-the-board characterizations. We don't even support some of these movements; obviously the way we work in them (if we do) has to be different than in some others. In the '60s we supported the basic demand for the U.S. to get out of Vietnam, but we do not support the demand for a nuclear freeze. This requires thinking, plans, tactics, etc. But this is not beyond us.

As we have been calling attention to for some time now, there are some movements, some struggles in which we should assign a few people to go in, to help provide tactical leadership under some circumstances, to carry out political struggle in that context, to become known as party people in that movement, etc. In some circumstances most of what such people will do will be "reconnaissance work on the enemy" (as the movie "Breaking With Old Ideas" put it) — that is, studying the lines, programmes, etc., of reactionary or opportunist forces in order to educate the proletariat about all this through the press. In many other circumstances, much more will be possible. None of this should mean our main slogan of the day should become "to the mass movements" as a gimmick or cure-all, any more than it should be "to the masses." And even when we do assign people and resources in a major way, the main context of our work even within the movements should be carrying out all-around exposure with the paper as the main weapon. But there are other aspects of the work, as well, as gone into just above. And to carry them out will require raising our level — on all levels from national to local. Theoretical work will have to be done on many questions relevant to these movements. The questions in these arenas are often complex and tricky. For example, during this summer's major anti-nuclear demonstration in New York there was struggle over slogans, including over whether or not to target both superpowers, or just the U.S. This was not so simple as one might imagine, as the struggle involved different forces, including both revisionists and basically straight-up U.S. imperialist representatives. Kennedy-type forces, for instance, are very careful to "target" both — since that provides an easy out for the U.S. imperialists ("See, the Rusksies wouldn't, so we can't either"). So you have to figure out under these circumstances how to relate to various forces, how to advance slogans, including tactical slogans, etc., and it is tricky. But if we can't figure out questions like these, then we can't make a revolution, for there will never be a revolution that does not involve complex tactical questions, compromises, allies, etc.

So there are bigger questions here than simply "going into" the mass movements (though, in general, we should). With just this approach when we "go" we won't have much to say (or much good, anyway). This primitive approach may be OK in a few cases and for a little while, but after a while the masses — and we — will not appreciate it. Neither is the question just "finding out more particular facts." Soon enough we would be like Alice lost in Wonderland, unable to distinguish major from minor matters, unable to connect up particular questions with our general line. A more strategic view is required, and from this plane, to make an analysis of the particular movement. It is necessary to understand its basic significance, the key questions posed by it, and to link that up with our overall understanding of broader world developments. In short, it is necessary to develop a tactical line for many of these movements. Other forces have such lines when they support something we initiate (e.g., many gave their specific reasons for supporting the Mao Defendants); why shouldn't we? Without this, for one thing, we will fall into many a trap. Often opportunists will attempt to provoke struggles over minor matters in an attempt to isolate us. We need not always feel compelled to join a struggle over every question at all times. We need to develop some sophistication. Our comrades on the West Coast who related to the Diablo nuke struggle summed up at a certain point that they would have to sign the group's agreement not to use "violent" tactics there. This was quite correct, as it enabled us to concentrate on the really main questions of imperialist war posed there (and, no, they did not pledge to become pacifists). Without this approach, one will careen from sectarianism to capitulation.

Lenin once made the point that the proletariat had to develop its own class politicians, in no way inferior to those of the bourgeoisie. Revolutionary communists who function in these arenas have to be skilled, not infantile. They should not be afraid to be temporarily isolated, even thrown out of a coalition, for matters of principle, but also not stupid enough to fall for every revisionist trap that is set for them. They should know how to do all this in order to raise, not lower, the level of the overall movement. Lenin, in an essay "The Election Campaign and the Election Platform," made the point that without a programme and, in particular, "without a tactical line based on an evaluation of the current political movement and giving exact answers to the 'accursed problems' of the present, it is possible to have a small group of theoreticians, but not an operative political unit." He also wrote that anyone who "promises that the policy of the revolutionary proletariat will never come up against difficult or complex situations is simply a charlatan" (from "Left-Wing" Communism...).

It is important to emphasize here that the foundation for all this — and what must continue to be our main weapon now — is the newspaper and our overall line on central task. Without continuing to carry out work centered on the paper (and not just as "educational activity" but, as we put it in the *New Programme*, as "the most concrete and practical plan for accumulating revolutionary strength") it would be impossible to even think of becoming a revolutionary influence within mass movements. In fact entering these arenas in a bigger way should give more scope and richness to our press. Exposure remains the key link. As pointed out earlier, when we do go into these movements in a major way, still our main overall work within them should not be narrowed to only the questions that arise spontaneously within them, but should continue to be our all-around work of exposure — even while we deal with the particularities of the movement. Further, our work within these movements should be an important source of exposure and other articles for our press, all crucial for the broader work of the party beyond any particular movement. These points are gone into in the section on central task in our *New Programme*, in the pamphlet "Support Every Outbreak..." and in the Chairman's pamphlet on the party, and need to be studied in this context.

Today, of course, there are many problems with the mass movements. The revisionists have come on the stage in a way that they were not a couple years back, around Iran. There are real "left upsurges" even now in some arenas, but this does not characterize the situation overall. We shouldn't think that it's been mainly our mistakes that have kept our influence low in these situations, or that we are going to change that situation rapidly. This has mainly to do with the present, objective world circumstances. In the sixties, the revolutionary forces were able to gain quite a bit of initiative in these movements (although overall you would have to say they did not lead them, particularly the anti-Vietnam struggle). Much impetus was given to this by the interna-

tional situation, which was dominated by the liberation struggle of the Vietnamese and by the Cultural Revolution (although with the former there was always the contending of revisionist influence, though it was not then triumphant). The revolutionary thrust and initiatives of the '60s in this country came from the world situation as a whole. But also (and relatedly) it was the upsurge of revolutionary action, sentiments and organization among the Black people within the U.S. that pushed that movement as far as it went. It propelled many people forward from a progressive anti-war position to a revolutionary one. Our Chairman, for example, has often told how it was Eldridge Cleaver of the Panthers who turned him on to Mao Tsetung, pointing to a poster of "the baddest motherfucker on the planet earth." This was the experience of many people. It was a tremendous boost for and specific advantage of the revolutionary forces in the U.S. In other imperialist countries, even where there was also a sharp revolutionary upsurge in this period, a revolutionary section of the basic proletariat did not play a comparable role. In France, 1968, for example, the CP ultimately came to represent the workers to that movement — both sabotaging the unity of workers and students, but also turning out workers for demonstrations and engineering some reforms. This confused, demoralized and even entrapped many honest people in that movement. In the U.S. in that period insofar as sections of the proletarian masses were in motion it was much more the Panthers than the CP who came to represent them. This is part of the reason today why revolutionary forces do not have more initiative in these movements. That component of a revolutionary section of the proletariat is basically lacking. And elements of it who have more mounted the political stage, for example some of the Central American immigrants, are heavily influenced by revisionism. But we can learn from all this in order to further accelerate that back-and-forth process: working in the proletariat (including taking advantage of the political effect of these movements there) to bring forward advanced proletarians into revolutionary political life, including into the party, and, especially through the efforts of the party, working in these movements to bring to bear the influence of the revolutionary line and the revolutionary proletarian social base as it develops.

These movements, despite all their limitations, do overall provide favorable circumstances for revolutionary work. If we work effectively in these movements, it will also mean that our overall work, including the work we do more directly among the basic masses, is going to be better. Advanced people do not develop in a vacuum. It is also true that the potential for them to act (even on very important occasions) cannot only be determined by the existence of advanced people alone, or just them combined with a revolutionary line. Advanced people need a context — a political atmosphere that not only educates them but also allows them to breathe and feel their potential strength. While a few years back very little was stirring inside the U.S., now that has changed. While there is still plenty of surrounding and suppressing of the advanced among the proletariat that goes on, times like these are also marked by growing feelings of not being quite so far out on a limb. All the reformist and revisionist hegemony in the mass movements cannot change these facts — very favorable ones to us.

These movements are a crucial training ground for advanced people, both from within these movements and from outside of them. While we are not out (at present, at least) to take over the social base of the reformists, we cannot bring forward our social base without entering into this arena in various ways and contrasting our line and programme with others. A major theme in *What Is To Be Done?* was Lenin's insistence that class consciousness can only result from learning to observe in practice, in the swirl and struggle of the political arena, all the various social classes and their representatives. In "Left-Wing" Communism... Lenin describes "The years of preparation for revolution (1903-05). The approach of a great storm was sensed everywhere. All classes were in a state of ferment and preparation. Abroad, the press of the political exiles discussed the theoretical aspects of all the fundamental problems of the revolution. Representatives of the three great classes... anticipated and prepared for the impending open class struggle by waging a most bitter struggle on issues of programme and tactics. All the issues on which the masses waged an armed struggle in 1905-07 and 1917-20 can (and should) be studied, in their embryonic form, in the press of the period... the classes were forging the requisite political and ideological weapons for the impending battles." If any summation ever gave a concise picture of the importance of parties, their press and of the arenas of social turmoil in periods of preparation — that one does.

Unfortunately, the tendency to stay aside from all this has a history in the international communist movement. Even the Maoist trends of the '60s and '70s were heavily affected by this, due to certain concepts inherited from the Third International. Changing this is part of being "What Is To Be Done?-ists." A number of recent articles, including the one by our party on "Imperialist Economism" in the second *A World to Win*<sup>16</sup> as well as the piece on the "Crisis of Marxism..." (*RW* No. 171) by the Chairman have touched on this point, including the errors of our trend. Often revolutionaries have incorrectly avoided the political arena due to a strategic concept of winning the leadership of the masses through leading their daily economic struggles. Supposedly in this process, the revisionists would also be exposed. While marked by economism, this is related to other errors as well, including the incorrect tendency to see revisionists (especially the pro-Soviet revisionists today) as mere reformists, defenders of the present order and fuddy-duddy sell-outs — incorrectly assessing their strategy for power... or even believing they didn't have one.

It is true that revolutionaries should not be infected with parliamentarianism, and more broadly, must break with the whole traditional, social-democratic identity of being part of the "left." But while we must have another identity — programme, strategy, and revolutionary bearing — we must not become irrelevant to the mass movements that the traditional "left" relates to — at least the most important movements. The forces that can be won over through this process, the weapons sharpened by struggle in that arena, will be crucial preparation for the seizure of power.

## V. Base Areas and Factories as Fortresses

Some time ago, in his paper "For Decades To Come... On a World Scale," (*RW* No. 98) our Chairman raised the idea that the experience of base areas from the semi-feudal, semi-colonial countries also has political applicability in some situations here — though because of the differences in the two types of countries there are real differences. This, together with the vision of factories as fortresses, is an important concept. It has historical prece-

dent, even in this country where some similar areas were definitely base areas for the Panthers at high points in the '60s struggle. Its basic and ultimate importance stems from a strategic view — from the point of view of staging areas and organs of proletarian political power during a revolutionary situation — and of organizing the armed insurrection itself. This sort of strategic view should affect how we work to establish base areas today.

These concepts also correspond to the real conditions of the proletariat in the U.S. today, to their material conditions, to the "suppressed energy of the youth," etc. Particularly if it is viewed flexibly, potentially covering more than just one shop, the principle of "factories as fortresses" very much corresponds to the conditions of the oppressed sections of the proletariat, as described in "Charting the Uncharted Course." Hired, fired, laid off, in a pool circulating from shop to shop, working long hours — for many of these workers (including, but certainly not limited to, immigrants) these factories are often the center of their lives, including their social and political lives.

From the strategic perspective described above, it should be even more clear that a base area (or potential base area) is not a place to side-step the political struggle. Historically, the Bolshevik factory-fortresses and stronghold neighborhoods were seething political arenas, full of contending political forces and trends. This was true at the high points of struggle and in embryonic ways in less stormy periods. A potential base area is no safe, pure, economist refuge and can never be developed with such a view. (As a side-point, we need to understand better how the revisionists function in these areas. While their influence is uneven, nowhere will we be able to avoid it. Often it is expressed in a different way than our influence, including through the medium of such local authorities as union officials or tenants' associations. In other cases, particularly in some immigrant communities, their influence is expressed in those ways, but also in broader mass ways.)

A base area is something which cannot just be declared or redefined as some place where we go to do some things occasionally or we sell papers. To meet the real criteria of "the unleashing of the masses' formerly suppressed political energy, the outpouring of their activism and of their quest for revolutionary ideas and theory" ("Decades") requires a combination of objective factors and our work. As yet, we should be clear, we have no base areas. But through our work and changing conditions they can and will develop — and they can emerge quite rapidly.

Objective conditions for the full flowering of a base area (or factory fortress) most often will emerge in connection with broader events in the society or world. One of the present problems is the relative quiet of the Black masses — a condition, however, as we have seen even in the last few years, that can rapidly change. Some sections of immigrants are in a greater state of political ferment; however, some of these communities are base areas for revisionists (though sometimes contested). Does this mean that we have screwed up? No, fundamentally it means that the revisionists have state power (or part of state power) in the countries where these people come from, or have authority in the movement there today. Some are, in a way, extensions of revisionist base areas there. We will screw up if we don't recognize that as part of the objective conditions. Still, such communities are often more fluid and open to contest than many places, partly because of these conditions.

We should also note in passing here that it is wrong to make work in building base areas and factory fortresses equivalent to our central task, or even to the carrying out of our central task among the proletariat. First of all, there is the factory work. But second of all, the emergence of base areas is due, as referred to above, to a combination of factors, all of which do not exist at all times. To reduce everything in the proletariat to work to build them would be narrowing the scope, both geographically and politically, of what we do.

Approaching things from a strategic view, from the standpoint of our central task, we should be able to avoid the problems which result when we act as if a base area or factory is just a place to get a few things going for a while (or alternatively, when "not much is going," a place to sell the paper). This degrades the concept of base areas — and degrades the key role of the paper, reducing it to an instrument for marking time instead of our key weapon now in revolutionary preparation. Actually, such tendencies are remnant reflections in practice of the old "concentrated struggle/ broad exposure" line, an eclectic formulation which we correctly replaced with our central task of "create public opinion... seize power." It is not a correct view of our work, in these areas or anywhere, to try to "stir something up now and then; sell papers now and then" instead of carrying out all-around work aimed at the seizure of power, with exposure the key link.

We should sum up some of the obstacles that have confronted the advanced people who have taken up our line in places like these. Of course the first one is the state. One of the major, in fact the major, difference between base areas when they develop in a country like this one as opposed to in a place where you can have fully liberated territory in the course of the struggle, is who has state power there. This has real consequences. The bourgeoisie also recognizes the potential of the proletariat in areas like these and acts accordingly. While strategically despising this, we also have to tactically respect it — and develop ways in which the enemy's moves can be exposed and defeated. There are varied forms in which the state has moved against the advanced in places like these. (One article in the *RW* on Cabrini Green went into some of this.) Even when they move directly, they often do so selectively, picking on the advanced people who live there and leaving our organizers alone. Sometimes party members are unaware of this. This serves the political purpose of putting out a warning "not to mess around with these people" or else; it also seeks to take advantage of contradictions like the national question, often reserving the hard blows of the state for those from the oppressed nationalities (Damián García's murder being a case in point). Often the state in these places moves through other institutions like (some) gangs, tenants' associations, unions. Here again a political purpose is served when threats seem to come "from the people." And, in fact, even in these places it is not at all impossible for the state to mobilize forces. This, too, is a consequence of that state power; often a convincing Mafia-style "argument" for the intermediate is that "these people bring cops and other trouble." Ironic, when it comes from the cops themselves, but often effective for a time. These are some of the real troubles that advanced run into that we have to assist them in understanding politically and strategically and in devising ways to combat — including to help lay the basis for times when all this crap gets righteously dumped on its head.

A strategic approach to building base areas and factory fortresses requires combining various forms of work and struggle. We should be careful and systematic in our approach, without being conservative, knowing how to seize opportunities. The Bolsheviks did not open up all their people in their strongholds, even as others played a very open role. They employed various

creative tactics. Of course a base area is not a base area without periodic visible expressions of this (though visible does not mean the "visible force line"); but laying foundations for this requires other forms of work and even at high tide we should combine open and secret work. The masses — even the broad masses — appreciate a serious approach from a party that wants to win.

All this links up also with the fact that, especially in the overall quieter times of today in most of these areas, the advanced are not exactly "well liked and respected" among the intermediate and backward. This old economist definition leads to misidentifying the real advanced people, and frustrating them. Advanced people in these places should be recruited into the party. This is not because "there's nothing else better to do right now" — this is precisely the wrong and shamefaced approach to recruiting that must be broken with, no matter what else is happening at the particular time. And there is real potential for this right now, both in places where there is at present more immediate base-area potential and also in those where there is not. We should not "step over a quarter to pick up a nickel," that is, de-emphasize recruiting into the party on behalf of things that might seem more palpable.

Often the profoundly felt desire of people from these places is to get trained. The youth, in many cases, due to the characteristics of youth and their experiences in growing up in these places, often want to get out. While the youth can be the key and dynamic force in these places, this, too, will vary in tempo and intensity with other conditions, so we should not see a desire on the part of youth to "get out" and get trained as a bad thing, but often as a key step. In general the advanced, including as they become party members, should be led and encouraged to take part in the class struggle in many spheres and arenas. Communists should not contribute to limiting these people to only one form, one sphere of the class struggle — i.e., in their project and/or factory with their neighbors. Sometimes in a given period this amounts to beating their heads against the wall anyway; sometimes it is quite correct, fruitful and necessary. In any case, applying a little dialectics isn't bad anyway — that is, if we want to develop base areas, then we should also develop advanced people through participation in many other spheres of life. Is there anything wrong with advanced proletarians becoming familiar with the struggle within the scientific and cultural arenas; with participating in the struggle within the various mass movements? Not at all, in fact it is a critical part of their training, including their training once they have become party members. As Lenin wrote, "The masses will never learn to conduct the political struggle until we help to *train* leaders for this struggle, both from among the enlightened workers and from among the intellectuals; and such leaders can acquire training *solely* by systematically appraising *all* the everyday aspects of our political life, of *all attempts* at protest and struggle on the part of various classes and on various grounds." (*What Is To Be Done?*, Chap. V, b) This points to the decisive role of the newspaper, and also to the all-around training that advanced people and party members should get where possible.

Speaking of the paper, it is important (and not at all economist) to include in our press exposures that powerfully lay bare the conditions and life experiences of proletarians in the U.S. It is important to educate these people in proletarian internationalism, but, as the Chairman pointed to in his piece "On Both Aspects of Proletarian Internationalism . . ." (*RW* No. 184) these proletarians' life conditions provide a basis for them to gravitate toward this understanding.

We also need to develop a more complete and dialectical understanding of "mounting the political stage." It is not as though there is only one form of this — for example a walkout or a demonstration in a housing project. The point here is not to underestimate the significance of a political strike. It is a very significant and high form of struggle (although Lenin in 1917 writes of how this, too, becomes backward at a time when armed insurrection is the order of the day). We should seek to develop — and unite with and lead where they do develop — many forms of struggle. This also means understanding that parties represent classes, and joining and building the proletarian party and strengthening its role is an extremely important form of the class struggle. Lenin had a full appreciation of that. He wrote, "The task of Social-Democracy consists precisely in *transforming* the spontaneous struggle of the workers against the oppressors, by means of the organization of the workers, propaganda and agitation among them, into a struggle of the whole class, into the struggle of a definite political *party* for definite political and socialist ideals." ("Our Immediate Tasks") To join the party, to get trained, to take part in the struggle in that arena and through the vehicle of the party in an all-around way in society is a high form of struggle indeed; most definitely it is mounting the political stage. It is not all that is required in that regard, but it is certainly no less important than other elements of our central task.

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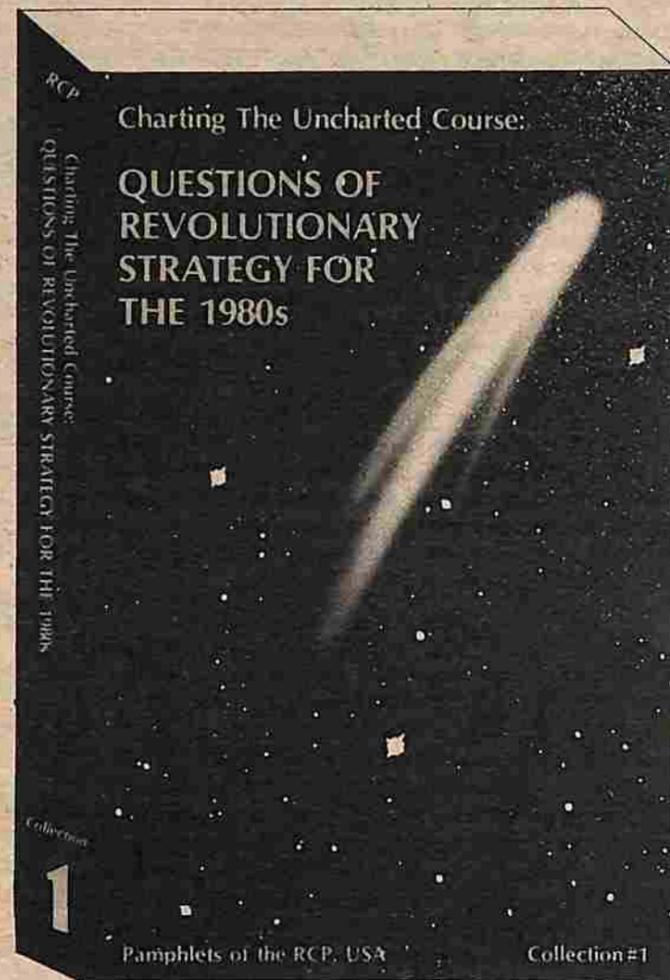
Again, for a base area to really be a base area does require some broad and visible manifestation of the initiatives of the masses. Objective conditions for this are maturing in the world. Even in this immediate period, circumstances will present themselves when base areas can fully flower and, more generally, the firm foundations for this can be established in many places now.

## VI. Promoting the Party

Together with the orientation of "Revolution in the '80s — Go For It!", there is the question of the party. Here we are not so much speaking of the question of building the party, popularizing its line, etc.; these are more ongoing, basic questions. What we are speaking of here is what could be called promoting the party. Perhaps that sounds a bit too dull and narrow. It does involve all the questions of getting into the realm of the bourgeois media (and even there using a kind of "proletarian Jerry Rubin" approach in many cases). But it also involves seizing the real opportunities that do from time to time present themselves when the party itself — its basic stand, line, programme — comes to the fore as the issue broadly. Such are the times when we can and should "light up the sky" with the party. This is not the same as being sectarian; that is a political question. Opportunities like these do not present themselves all the time, and certainly not in every struggle. There is a question of analysis, of knowing when as well as how to seize on the opportunity that actually is there. Also involved here are questions of image of the party. Another way of describing this is: all the stuff we do that "doesn't belong on the 'left,'" that is, that offends the "left."

The youth are important in this regard in a number of ways. First, as a new

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and rising force, it is particularly important for the party to pay attention to trends, thoughts, actions among the youth. Second, there is the RCYB, which has an important role to play around this question. Frankly, the RCYB has the freedom and ability to do a number of things the party can't quite do. And that's just fine and very helpful.

We can learn from the Panthers here. Our party is a vanguard party, and qualitatively more so in the most fundamental sense than the Panthers were. But there are still some ways in which the Panthers were better than we are now, and this is one of them. This was not separable from the times they were in, times of upsurge, but they also played an advanced and conscious role in this. They certainly "lit up the sky" with the image of revolution in a way it had not been lit.

Some things to remember from that period that could be learned from:

—The Panthers were responsible for making "pig" the well-deserved name of those enforcers of law and order. Then there was "the avaricious businessman, demagogic politician and murdering pig";

—The Chairman has told the story of picking up the *Richmond Independent* one day around 15 years ago in California and seeing in that paper an account that went along these lines: "Protesting the killing of Denzill Dowell, fifteen armed Black Panthers picketed today in front of the Contra Costa Sheriff's office in Martinez. At one point in the demonstration one of the group, Reginald F., 18, of Oakland went into the building and entered the elevator. A Contra Costa County sheriff asked him if he intended to take his shotgun into the sheriff's office when he presented his grievances. 'Righteous on that,' said F." Now right there in little Richmond, California, the superstitious awe of the state took quite a blow.

The point is not that we should copy any of these particular things that the Panthers did; that would not only be unoriginal, it would be harmful. But there is a method here and one that can be learned from, generalized and applied under the different conditions of today.

These sorts of things, while they are not the same thing as party-building, are also part of our central task. They are not the main part of it, but they are part of it in the sense that they contribute to that process. They are not the main thing contributing to that process, but they do deserve conscious attention, even some emphasis at appropriate times.

There is a line, linked with economist tendencies, that such things as "image" or "style" do not need to be paid attention to at all. However, it is like Mao said, if you are not carrying out a policy consciously, then you are doing so unconsciously. This is very much related to the question of combining revolutionary romanticism and revolutionary realism raised by the Chairman in "Conquer the World? . . ." In the '60s, the Panthers consciously created an image, and had an overall style — including black berets, black leather jackets, etc. Again, it would be silly and wrong to copy this particular style today, but the method is relevant. We should pay attention to, and synthesize on a higher level through a communist outlook, new things arising from among the masses in all their various sections, things which express their revolutionary sentiments and aspirations — and this includes elements of style or image. And we should pay attention to the way things change as well, since what represented rebellion in this sphere in the '60s does not represent rebellion in the '80s. This, from another angle, is part of looking for and supporting new things, new forms in which revolutionary things arise.

A positive and important example of this method is the whole "personality cult" around the Chairman, including the famous poster. These questions concentrate matters of line, including line on the political question of second stringism vs. vanguard responsibilities and a vanguard party. Lots of struggle, of course, went into that poster, including around what kind of image should be projected. The end result of that particular struggle was quite fine, definitely capturing the spirit, tasks and "edge" of the decade and the sentiment that "this is the party with the programme and the leadership to carry through." In fact we should give more emphasis now to this orientation.

The call here is obviously not one to become "trendy" — or for everyone to look the same. On the latter question first: different communists (including different party leaders) are indeed different; to pretend they were

not, besides being ridiculous, would be a negation of the fact that communism springs from every pore, and it encompasses and is capable of leading forward the whole rich range of human experience, in particular that of the proletariat. Overall, we do not want tailism in any sphere, including in this one. There is a fine line between the correct point of synthesizing that which is new and arising and tailing it. The critical thing is to keep in mind that we are not trying to "appeal" to the masses on some basis other than politics (correctly and broadly understood) and that what attracts people to us fundamentally is our line. But the basic point being raised here is quite opposed to tailism — it is another dimension of leading, in every sphere.

## Conclusion

"Communists are makers of revolution." This was said by the Chinese in their polemics with the Soviet revisionists and remains a profoundly true and necessary point of orientation for revolutionary communists today. This meeting represented, and our basic approach must be, more on the dialectic in theory and practice of actually being that.

We have a basic analysis; a whole series of questions have been raised and settled. This doesn't mean we can turn the whole world upside down at once; but let's do all we can in transforming things now — and that's quite a bit, and very important to the future. The whole orientation of this report, and that which should guide our work, is being based on our achievements in line, programme and organization and finding — not inventing, for that would be a case of "concocting fashionable means" and ultimately reformist — but finding the opportunities that do exist in the present period to build our party and to influence the shape of things to the maximum degree possible, all as preparation for what is brewing.

We have to learn better, in the course of practice, to "hasten and await." Great earth-moving forces are stirring beneath the surface of the planet; a giant eruption is brewing and even as it brews, fissures and cracks are appearing in the still-intact crust, tossing upward movements, people, turmoil. Out of this we are forging weapons for the future. We must train ourselves, and the advanced who are thrust forward, in this basic analysis. We must teach that outlook of "be patient, it's coming" in a dialectical unity with the main thing, our approach of "Revolution in the '80s — Go For It!" □

<sup>1</sup>"Conquer the World: The International Proletariat Must and Will," Bob Avakian, *Revolution*, Special Issue, No. 50, 1981.

<sup>2</sup>"If There Is To Be Revolution, There Must Be A Revolutionary Party" 1982.

<sup>3</sup>Chap. 9 of the Chairman's pamphlet on the party.

<sup>4</sup>"Communists Are Rebels: A Letter from RCP Chairman Bob Avakian To His Parents on Philosophy, Religion, Morals and Continuous Revolution," April, 1980.

<sup>5</sup>"Coming From Behind To Make Revolution," Bob Avakian, 1980.

<sup>6</sup>Cited in "Charting the Uncharted Course: Proletarian Revolution in the U.S.!", a reprinted section of the 1980 CC Report, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup>"Basic Principles For the Unity of Marxist-Leninists and For the Line of the International Communist Movement," a draft position paper for discussion prepared by the RCP of Chile and the RCP, USA, 1981.

<sup>8</sup>Chap. 6 in the Chairman's pamphlet on the party.

<sup>9</sup>"Reflections and Sketches," a Series by Bob Avakian appearing in *RW* No. 170-186.

<sup>10</sup>*RW* No. 179.

<sup>11</sup>"Thoughts on Points for Discussion," a report by Bob Avakian to the Second Plenary Session of the Second Central Committee of the RCP, USA in 1978.

<sup>12</sup>*RW* No. 174.

<sup>13</sup>By Bob Avakian, 1980.

<sup>14</sup>*RW* No. 147.

<sup>15</sup>*Chile: An Attempt at "Historic Compromise" — The Real Story of the Allende Years*, Banner Press, Chicago, 1979.

<sup>16</sup>An International Marxist-Leninist Journal, No. 2, May, 1982.