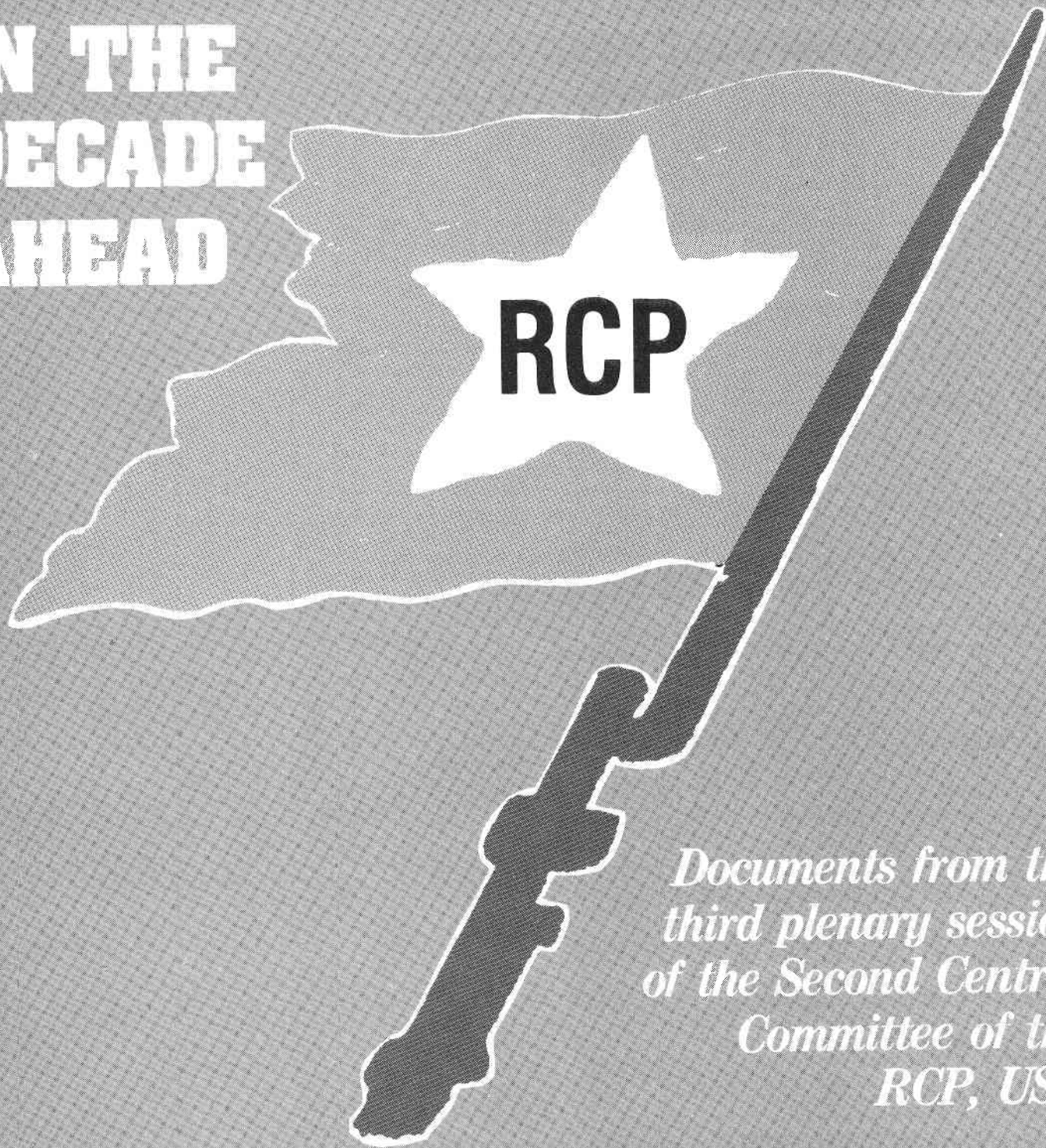


**THE PROSPECTS FOR
REVOLUTION AND THE
URGENT TASKS
IN THE
DECADE
AHEAD**



*Documents from the
third plenary session
of the Second Central
Committee of the
RCP, USA*

Recently the leadership of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA held a very important meeting. The third plenary session of the Second Central Committee took up key questions relating not only to the immediate period and the crucial tasks facing us now, but also to this whole period leading up to the very real possibility of revolutionary crisis in the years ahead.

What was taken up at this meeting is vital to the revolutionary movement and its prospects for success in the coming period. For that reason, in this issue we are printing excerpts from the opening talk given to the Central Committee by its Chairman, Bob Avakian, and from the report, "Outline and Summary," submitted by the Chairman, which was discussed and strongly approved by the whole Central Committee. These have been run in a serialized form in the weekly Revolutionary Worker as well.

Opening Remarks

It is very important for us to recognize just how crucial this meeting is, and what context it is taking place in, both in terms of the development of the objective situation and also of the subjective factor, that is, our Party, and overall in terms of the sharpening class struggle in society. And I think one of the things that has to be recognized—and to a certain degree, although unevenly and not without struggle, is being recognized within our Party—is that what goes on between the ruling class and our Party is not some abstraction without any relation to the class struggle. Rather it is in fact not only a part of but in an important way a concentrated expression of what is going on in society as a whole.

In fact, some of the masses have come forward on the basis of seeing that when attacks come down on an organization like ours, that is precisely an attack on the working class and masses of people that we represent. They understand that precisely what the ruling class goes after first and foremost is that force which is the potential—and is developing as the actual—leadership; that when you want to go after the masses of people, over whom you have to tighten your grip and crack your whip harder, you go after the people, the organized force, that can lead them, most fundamentally, in doing something about it. And increasing numbers among the masses come forward and immediately grasp that this is what's involved and at stake; they don't see the attacks on our Party as something divorced from and unrelated

to what's developing in society as a whole, but as a concentrated form of the class struggle in society, a particularly intense and acute form. And this should give us a sense of the importance of the battle around the Mao Tsetung Defendants.

Lenin wrote in one of his works (I think it was "The Collapse of the Second International") about how some people, even whole parties, become accustomed to relatively peaceful times and of the relative stagnation that can set in for periods when you're in an imperialist country; they become accustomed to more or less peaceful conditions and evolutionary change. And Lenin pointed out that as things sharpen up, and the conditions clearly begin to undergo dramatic change, some people do not go forward, and among them in particular there are two kinds of responses—they either panic or they just simply refuse to believe it, to believe that sudden and drastic changes are already taking place and will take place on an even grander scale in the period ahead.

And I think that we see some of this phenomenon right around us now: some people look reality right in the face and they try to deny it. Some people are saying, "Well, I don't really see why we say that world war is coming (and so on)"—when the signs of it are more and more *blatant* every day. And this is primarily an ideological question; it takes the form of a political line, but it's an ideological question—what are you going to do in the face of these developments? And some people actually take the attitude, whether they're fully conscious of it or not, and whether they openly formulate it this way or not, that maybe if they refuse to acknowledge that heavy things, including world war, are shaping up, then they might not happen (this, of course, is subjective idealism, and solipsism, in the extreme!)

Crisis, Lenin said, crushes and breaks some people, and other people it tempers and steels and strengthens. And overwhelmingly, he said, looking at the overall situation, those in the second category are the greater number. And all this is what's happening already, and will increasingly go on.

As an important part of this you see new people, coming forward especially from among the basic masses, more and more whose feeling is that the situation is intolerable. For some of them it's *been* intolerable for 30 or 40 years and their question especially is, what are we going to *do* about this? And with them it's more a question of explaining the

necessary political work that has to go on, to temper their hatred and not have it just give vent to impatience, and then demoralization. Line is decisive. But the kind of revolutionary line we're putting out does have a dialectical relationship with social forces—if you put out this kind of line it brings forward social forces who see the need for, and more than that feel the urgency for, revolution—some of whom have felt the burning desire for drastic change for most of their lives, and others who are beginning for the first time to feel this way and to understand that it is necessary, and just maybe possible.

And in one of the cities in the tour, I was told that during the speech a middle-aged Black guy came out of the meeting about half-way through and he was crying. People asked him what was going on, and what he said was, "Listen that man up there is saying everything I've wanted to be able to say my whole life, I just can't believe it." It was overwhelming to him—he went back into the meeting—but it was so heavy for him, to actually see an organization that takes such an uncompromising stand, puts all this together, explains it and explains what can be done about it.

To me this is not an isolated individual. He represents millions of people. Not enough yet to launch an insurrection, but millions of people. And this pinpoints this question: are we speaking to the real contradictions and the way things are moving and developing? Are we speaking for the people who have been on the bottom all along and have felt this way all their lives, as well as other people who see their conditions changing and recognize some new things for the first time? Or are we just crying in the darkness; is it the case that we are just gritting our teeth and doing all this because it's the *right* thing to do, even though it has no real relationship to the actual situation and its development?—another form of utopian socialism, idealism, moralism. And if we base ourselves on this utopianism—we have a better "idea," divorced from material reality—then we won't be able to keep pace with developments and maintain a revolutionary orientation and line. And this is exactly because things *are* sharpening up.

By grasping what's involved, we can get a much sharper sense of the importance of this meeting and the questions it is focusing on. I think that, all of us, to one degree or another, have become accustomed to living and working politically in a certain kind of context; and if we really want to be honest about



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it, as much as people have dedicated themselves to revolution and even put their lives on the line in certain situations, how many of us have really confronted until recently the question that maybe it is going to fall on us to actually do this in the period ahead? And that there is nobody else out here that is going to do this.

And this gets even sharper when you start really realizing that the imperialists *are* in a lot of trouble, they're in a *lot* of trouble. And one of the points that we've been stressing on the tour and more generally in talking to the masses is that *you* may not think that revolution is a serious possibility, but the rulers of this country think that it is a real possibility, and they're starting to talk about it more—and act on that understanding, too. That doesn't mean that it is certainly going to happen in the next period. But the question of whether it's a real possibility is something we have to get into very deeply, because it sets the objective stage and the framework for everything else we're talking about. If our basic analysis is wrong, that they're not really getting ready to, and being driven to, go to war and there's not really any serious crisis—already serious crisis and deeper crisis on the horizon, including world war—then what we're doing and what we're talking about doing, our political line and specific policies, etc. are all off, all wrong. They wouldn't fit the circumstances and would in fact subject us to unnecessary risks and sacrifices.

And, again, there is constantly the tendency to want to settle into whatever the present situation and level of our work is. And maybe it seems, subjectively, that every time the Party sort of settles into the tasks at hand, some people in Chicago, or somewhere, just keep upping the ante. But that's not what is happening, if we look at it more fundamentally. The ante keeps getting upped by the development of the objective situation, including what the ruling class is doing. We are coming to gulfs and chasms, and if we don't strain and leap—and maybe grab the other side by our fingernails and pull with every muscle, pull ourselves up, raise ourselves up, and then race and do it yet again—then it's not just that abstractly we're not going to be able to ascend, but we're going to crash and be shattered.

Because, whether or not things develop all the way to a revolutionary

situation in the period ahead, there is certainly going to be a heavy situation developing out here. The question is not whether heavy things are going to be happening, the question is whether they're going to be one-sided or two-sided in a basic sense. Whether there's going to be one program out here or two programs, one answer (with many different variations), or two answers as to which way things have to go. Whether or not things sharpen up all the way, they are *certainly* going to sharpen up. We're going to have to be making leaps. If you don't make these leaps, then you end up with nothing, because conditions change and the ground you've been standing on is continually cut out from underneath your feet, and either you leap or you don't move at all—except down. And the reason the ante keeps getting upped in terms of our tasks and what we're called on to do is that, by and large, the leadership of this Party has been correctly grasping this and formulating the lines and policies to leap ahead in the face of these conditions—and not only the difficulties, but also the increasing opportunities they provide.

The kind of people we bring forward are gonna put some demands on us. It's not like when you go out with a trade-unionist line, and you bring forward another kind of social base. Instead we're bringing forward the *advanced* more and more. And these people are gonna put us to the test—what about this and this, and are you really serious? And so are the intermediate and the backward among the masses, in a different way—they're gonna jump in your shit all the time about every question going down. You're going to have to really read the *Revolutionary Worker*, you're gonna have to study *Revolution* and *The Communist*, you're gonna have to struggle ideologically and deal with questions coming up from all different sections of the masses. You're not going to be able to say, "I don't feel like talking about political questions today, I'm too tired," you're not going to be able to pick and choose *when* you will discuss world affairs. People are going to be coming up to you and *challenging* you, some from a more backward, and some from an advanced position.

We *all* have to study, we all have to strain and put heavy demands on ourselves—or really, struggle to meet the demands that *are* placed on us. Otherwise, you're really accepting—through the back door and self-cultivation—the very outlook that we're being attacked with: that being a revolutionary leader is some kind of question of a career or trying to be a great man or woman in history, rather than rising to

the necessity and the responsibility you have to do what has to be done. And we should accept nothing less than striving to be on that kind of level. We'll let history judge how well we do, but we should do as well as we can.

Because for the first time, we are actually confronting the fact that the situation *might*—not certainly will but *might*—ripen into a revolutionary situation in the period ahead—and what are we going to do about it? This, obviously, is a fundamental question, a decisive question of orientation and political line.

Looking at it in that light, we can see more clearly that we are in no position to be wasting time. This is not a question of hype, but in a real sense we are in a race against time. Things are going to be sharpening up anyway. If we decided to fold up our tents and go out of existence, that doesn't mean that the masses of people are going to have an easy life and that there's not going to be tremendous turmoil, upheaval, and destruction. So if we want to do something about it, if we want to be what we are and lead people to fight for their real interests, if we want to prepare for the future and the real possibility of revolution—and the certainty of greatly intensified conditions—then we've got to race against time in a real sense.

Do we really understand things this way? Do we really understand, for example—and just to take a somewhat arbitrary number—that whether or not a thousand networks of the *Revolutionary Worker* are actually developed might be decisive in determining whether or not we can make revolution in this country in the next decade—*might* be decisive, I don't say "*will* be," but will in any case be extremely important and might even be decisive.

And it goes back to what I raised at the start—how do we view the attacks on the Party, and specifically the battle around the Mao Tsetung Defendants. How do we see the fight to keep them from putting the Chairman of our Party in jail? Is this just another campaign, or is it a crucial battle? Does it have anything to do with the overall class struggle, is it a vital part of that, does it have any effect on building a revolutionary movement in this country and does it play a very important part in advancing that struggle or suffering a setback in it—does it in fact, even have a great deal to do with whether or not we will be in a significantly stronger or weaker position as things sharpen up and if indeed they do ripen to revolutionary conditions—is all this the case, or is it just something we have to do?

How do we look at the May Day demonstration? Do we understand it correctly, in this way: that whether or

not we can make a success of May Day, whether we can actually mobilize many thousands of workers (and thousands of others), will tell us something very important about the situation, and more importantly will significantly and dramatically *change* the situation. Again, just as with the networks, and with the battle around the D.C. trial, (and the fund drive, too), whether or not we succeed with May Day may well have a lot to do with whether or not we can actually push things all the way, if the objective conditions do ripen.

Are all these urgent, do they have everything to do with preparing for revolution—whether the situation ripens sooner or only later—so that we have to study and wage theoretical, and ideological, struggle even while we're carrying out the work of building these battles and campaigns—and in fact, do this all the more deeply and thoroughly?

Somebody told me, for example, that on the leading body in one area, half the people have not yet read the article in *The Communist* on Enver Hoxha's book. I find that criminal. I don't think

that's a situation we can tolerate. I frankly don't know how anybody in that situation could sleep—I couldn't sleep. As soon as I found out there was an article like that in *The Communist*, I don't care if I didn't eat or sleep for two days, I'd have read the goddamn thing. Maybe some people don't have as much freedom, but we're all very busy and working hard, so that's not the reason. There's something wrong with people's understanding if they don't stay up all night if necessary to study, especially something as important as that.

So, it comes back to this: how are we viewing things, how are we viewing the situation that is in fact sharpening up? Because the simple fact is that, until we can move and influence millions, even ultimately tens of millions of people, we can't do what we want to do, we can't launch an insurrection and seize power. And everything we're doing right now, especially the main campaigns and the work to develop and expand *Revolutionary Worker* distribution, build these networks, etc.—all this has everything to do with whether we will be able to

move and influence those millions and tens of millions in the future, whenever the situation does fully ripen. As I said before, it is through this kind of political work that we will know, as the objective conditions sharpen up, what the mood is, what the contradictions are within that, and ultimately when in fact a revolutionary situation has ripened. And, as I also stressed, we are not just measuring the situation and the mood of the masses, we are also significantly *changing* them through this kind of work. We are not merely taking the pulse beat, we are *quicken*ing that pulse beat, accelerating the development of things.

And it is with this kind of understanding, and this sense of urgency, that we have to approach this whole meeting. We have to understand that we are not just meeting to discuss developments in the next few months, or even for the period up to May Day, we are setting a whole orientation for the whole period ahead.

Ideas and Questions on the Points

(1) The objective situation and our work.

Is there a real possibility that a revolutionary situation might actually ripen within this country in the next decade (through the working out of this spiral)? In my opinion, yes. This is not the same thing as saying it certainly will develop—nor that if it does we will certainly be able to succeed. We are talking about prospects and possibilities, not promises and guarantees. But, in any case, as Lenin put it, only the work of preparing for revolution, preparing to seize the time when a revolutionary situation does develop, whether sooner or later, "it is *only* work in this direction that deserves the name of socialist work." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 258, "Collapse of the Second International")

But what leads to the conclusion that the *possibility* is a real one and not something so remote as to make preparation simply long-term and general principle? Our analysis of the "downward spiral"* is not only correct but is being more and more borne out.

* This analysis of a "downward spiral" was made at the time of the founding of the Party in 1975 and has been deepened since. The second plenary session of the first Central Committee (1976) described it this way: "It means that, as opposed to earlier times in the post-WW2 period, when the U.S. economy was hit by recession, things have entered in-

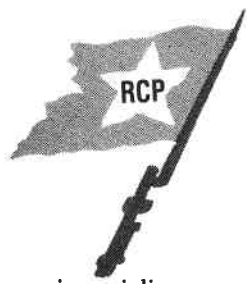
1974-75 was indeed a serious crisis, and more than that did indicate that a qualitative—downward—leap had been taken (actually a few years before). And the "recovery," partial and temporary as it is, has been achieved largely through credit manipulations and inflation of currency—both internally and internationally—on a tremendous scale. This is a case of laying the basis for deeper, more devastating crisis in the future, under the conditions of—and through the recourse to—imperialism and incredible parasitism.

The present new "downturn" very likely will not mean a complete "crash"; and it is even possible that such a "crash" may not happen before the world war—though it may well. But should war come first, that would not at all constitute or signal some resolution of the crisis for the imperialists, in and of itself—for that, they would have to win the war, redivide the world favorably and at the same time prevent or significantly limit revolution leading to socialism in various parts of the world. War in itself is not the end of

to a specific downward spiral (not a straight line down) which will only give way to another spiral through a major change in the relation of forces in the world—redivision of the world, through war among the imperialists, revolution, or—most likely—both, on a world scale." (*Revolutionary Work in a Non-Revolutionary Situation*, p. 3)

crisis (or a particular spiral), but on the contrary represents the extreme concentration of the contradiction of the imperialist system and the crisis that preceded and led up to the war. Lenin was dealing precisely with a crisis occasioned by the first world war when he drew the general conclusion that "it is the great significance of all crises that they make manifest what has been hidden; they cast aside all that is relative, superficial, and trivial; they sweep away the political litter and reveal the real mainsprings of the *class struggle*." (*CW*, Vol. 24, p. 213, "Lessons of the Crisis")

A basic question of great importance that has to be seriously taken up in connection with this: Under imperialism does war essentially, and on a grand scale, exercise the "purgative function" that economic crisis does under premonopoly capitalism; in a basic sense, is it correct to view the (major) spirals of imperialism as spirals from one inter-imperialist war to the next inter-imperialist war—being principal over and conditioning the cyclical development of the economy of the various capitalist countries, which (cyclical development) is not eliminated under imperialism but significantly altered by and subordinate to the spirals determined by inter-imperialist war? Historical analysis and examination of the economic situation in the various imperialist countries since the advent of



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imperialism seems to strongly suggest that this is in fact the basic pattern—our dialectic.

Returning, then, to the question of how the imperialists can resolve this crisis in their interests—and specifically to their necessity to *win* the war and achieve a *favorable new redivision*—our own imperialists in particular are not at all in the same favorable position they occupied before each of the two previous world wars. Then they were able to play the game of “sitting on the mountain top and watching the tigers fight”. Why? Because *other* imperialists found their interests more directly and immediately threatened. But the division coming off WW2 has dictated that this time around it's the U.S. imperialists' turn to be “on the front lines”—even if the war starts in Europe or some other place outside U.S. borders (which it almost certainly will, though nuclear weapons could quickly change that and introduce a new and completely unprecedented element for the American people—massive destruction *in the U.S.* in inter-imperialist war). Already the U.S. imperialists have had to absorb the “preliminary tremors” before the inter-imperialist war—with Indochina being the most outstanding example—and this has taken no small toll on them. Thus, though it may well be true that, at the outset of the war, (if revolution has not prevented war), our imperialists may be strengthened economically, politically and ideologically, this will be fraught with sharp contradiction from the beginning and these contradictions will intensify as the war drags on and no quick victory or easy, “lay back” policy is possible for U.S. imperialism.

It is also possible that a revolutionary situation—occasioned by a serious economic crisis (including a “crash”) and/or a serious political crisis (including the more blatant preparations for world war)—may develop before world war breaks out (and we must bend every effort to prepare for and seize this opportunity if it does arise to make revolution and prevent world war). This requires us to criticize the position taken at our Founding Congress and in the *Programme* adopted there—that only revolution in *both* superpowers could prevent world war. In my opinion, revolution in either superpower would drastically alter the world situation and might prevent world war—though some kind of global conflict resulting from

inter-imperialist rivalry among the remaining imperialists might still occur.

All this is why both the possibility of a revolution in this country within the next decade and the necessity, and urgency, of preparing for this possibility, are real. Here a word must be said about the “weak link” formulation. This is spelled out in Stalin's work *Foundations of Leninism*, where in Chapter III, “Theory,” Stalin says this: “The front of capital will be pierced where the chain of imperialism is weakest, for the proletarian revolution is the result of the breaking of the chain of the world imperialist front at its weakest link.” (p. 29, Peking FLP, 1965)

A few comments on this. Stalin's main thrust and argument is against the Mensheviks and other social-democrats, as well as the Trotskyites, who, following the outlook of mechanical materialism and in particular the “theory of the productive forces,” insisted that revolution must first take place in one or even a number of countries where capitalism was most developed. It was quite correct and necessary for Stalin to combat this, and not only does the “weak link” analysis have a good deal of truth to it, but it was an especially important weapon of the Marxist-Leninists of that time, particularly in explaining the basis for and consciously fighting to defend the newly emerged Soviet Republic.

But this analysis must not be mechanically applied either. This is important in at least three ways: (1) The “weak link” is not a static thing, but changes with the changes in the overall world situation and the situation in particular countries, which are of course dialectically related; (2) “weak link” should not be taken to mean that place where the imperialist system is literally the weakest, in (mechanical) materialist terms—i.e., where capitalism is the least developed—this would be the mirror opposite (opposite pole of the same stupidity) of the Menshevik/Trotskyite line Stalin is combatting. Weakness refers essentially to the political situation of the ruling class, to its being caught in a severe crisis, and not to the level of development of the productive forces in the particular country (remember, for example, that revolutionary situations and at least one serious attempt at seizing power did occur in Germany at the end of and shortly after WWI); and finally (3) the “weak link” formulation should not be taken to mean that revolutions could not occur in more than one country during the course of a particular crisis, especially a deep-going, international crisis (including world war)—revolutions are extremely unlikely to occur (or at least win victory) at exactly the same time in different countries

(though even this is not impossible), but they may well occur in several countries during the course of the same crisis, if it is significant and long-lasting enough.

All the above should help us to grasp more deeply the meaning and extreme significance of Lenin's analysis of a revolutionary situation and the sudden and dramatic leaps and changes, affecting literally millions in a concentrated way in a brief period of time. Lenin powerfully expressed this point in the following terms: “It is *not so often* that history places this form of struggle [revolution for the seizure of power] on the order of the day, but then its significance is felt for decades to come.” (CW, Vol. 21, p. 254, “Collapse of the Second International”) This emphasizes all the more the importance of preparation, of developing the revolutionary aspects within the non-revolutionary situation, and of the question—raised by the Chinese Communist Party in the “General Line” polemic—of seizing vs. throwing away the revolutionary opportunity. Lenin said that in non-revolutionary situations, to influence and mobilize thousands really means moving and leading “masses”, for as the revolutionary situation develops, thousands become millions, and the thousands we have trained and kept “tense” during “ordinary times” become the *leaders* of the millions who quickly go into motion and learn in weeks what they can't learn in years of “normal times” once a revolutionary situation does ripen.

Even if a revolutionary situation does not mature through this spiral—or even if we are not able to win victory if it does develop—still if we carry out the only kind of work that deserves the name of communist work (to paraphrase Lenin), work to expose the system and prepare for revolution when the time finally does ripen, then even if we suffer severe repression in the short run and take some *organizational* defeats at the hands of the ruling class, we will remain unconquerable *politically*, our roots will go deep and spread broad enough that they cannot be completely pulled up, and our forces will be able to regroup, continue to hold aloft the banner of revolution, rally the advanced and continue the work of preparing for the future trial of strength and the eventual victory. And the significance of *this* will be felt for decades—it will lay the basis for future advances, rather than setting the struggle back for years to come. (Think where we'd be now if the old Communist Party [CPUSA] had consistently carried out a revolutionary line, even if it was for a time dealt a severe blow organizationally as a result of doing so!)

The Chinese Communist Party “Gen-

eral Line" polemic stresses that the Marxist-Leninist party must master all forms of struggle and be able to quickly change from one form of struggle, and one set of conditions to another. Otherwise it will not be able to win victory.

Lenin, in "The Collapse of the Second International" calls sharp attention to the ways in which the German party and others became accustomed to and corrupted by the relatively stable, peaceful atmosphere over several decades in their countries, and how this was dialectically related to the increasing adoption of opportunist policies by these parties—the "boil" which festered for a long time before finally bursting into social-chauvinism during WW1. Lenin also points to a further dialectic: the lack of preparation for the increasing repression against anyone carrying out a revolutionary line with the advent of the war meant that these parties' tendencies toward opportunism were strengthened—they were in no position to carry out a revolutionary defeatist line, except at the price of being virtually decimated organizationally. Of course, it would have been far better, as the class-conscious German workers insisted to these traitors, if they had gone to jail, even been killed, for upholding and educating the masses in a revolutionary line. And had they done so, they would have laid the basis for the regrouping and re-constituting of the revolutionary vanguard, on a more solid basis. But, even so, at best this would have meant that, because of their lack of organizational preparation, they would have suffered far greater losses than necessary. The point, again, is that there is a dialectical relationship between political preparation and organizational preparation, which means that they inter-penetrate with and significantly influence each other. . . .

This is especially important for us to take up in light of the intensifying attacks on our Party and our analysis of the character of the '80s; all this requires us to have the correct organizational as well as political (and ideological) line and methods to be able to meet and counter these attacks and, most important, expand and deepen our revolutionary work.

And to repeat: the possibility of a revolutionary situation actually developing in this country in the next 10 years (through this spiral) certainly cannot be ruled out—nor can the possibility of actually seizing victory if such a situation does develop. And if this occurs, then surely the effects of our revolutionary work to prepare and then our attempt to scale the heights at the decisive moment will be felt for decades—even if that attempt should

constitute a "dress rehearsal" for later victory, as Lenin summed up the role of the 1905 revolution in Russia.

(2) The International Communist Movement

The Second Congress of our Party called for stepped up efforts to make contact, carry on struggle and build principled unity with Marxist-Leninist forces in other countries, on the basis of drawing and upholding clear lines of demarcation. And over the past period we have in fact increased both correspondence and direct contact with representatives of Marxist-Leninist parties and organizations in other countries. At the same time, with the full flowering (weeding?) of opportunist tendencies in the line of the Albanian Party and its degeneration into counter-revolution, we have not only taken up the task of resolutely upholding the immortal contributions of Mao Tsetung against attacks from this quarter but have begun to make a thorough (and continuing) criticism of the dogmatorevisionism of the Albanian Party and its hangers-on, which is an important task because Albania still retains some prestige as a revolutionary and socialist force even among some organizations and parties which, at least up until now, have generally adhered to a revolutionary line. Overall, it is clear that there is a process of clarification and alignment occurring within the international communist movement, and we have an important role to play and responsibility to fulfill in this process, which is in fact a very sharp and crucial struggle.

In general, it can be stated that the situation today in this regard is better than it was a year ago: the Chinese revisionists are widely discredited among all those who have any serious intention toward revolution, and the dogmatorevisionists are overall losing ground among such forces; the number of organizations and parties that have taken a clear stand in support of Mao Tsetung and his contributions to Marxism-Leninism while opposing and exposing the revisionist rulers of China, is growing. But, at the same time, the contacts and level of unity, in theory and practice, among these forces (and some we may not even know of as yet) are still extremely primitive. For both these positive and negative reasons, the need for a qualitative leap in this situation stands out very starkly.

In fact, it calls for not only more consistent and systematic exchanges and increasing practical support and unity in struggle. It calls for step by step (but constantly advancing) progress toward

ongoing and concrete unity in theory and practice, on every level—ideological, political and organizational.

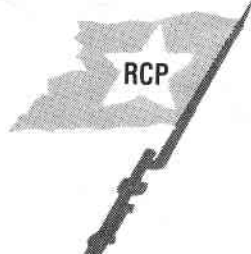
This is a point we must discuss seriously—and urgently. Of course, if we were not able to achieve principled unity with a single force internationally, that would not mean that it would be impossible for us (or others) to make revolution (in this country or others). But we are proletarian internationalists, the working class in this country is in fact one part of the international army of the world proletariat, and we should in no way raise the primitiveness and present low level of concrete unity among Marxist-Leninists to a principle nor fail to recognize that the forging and further development of such unity will greatly enhance the revolutionary struggle in each country and internationally.

(3) The United Front and Proletarian Leadership.

The Second Congress (1978) criticized the "labor aristocratic" outlook as it has been reflected within the revolutionary movement, including tendencies in our Party. In particular, the importance of carrying out work among the lower strata of the proletariat and the urban poor was emphasized, while it was pointed out that strategically we must continue to base ourselves among the more socialized (and generally better paid) workers. And this was linked with the question of carrying out much more systematic, and thoroughly revolutionary, work among the oppressed nationalities. And further attention was focused on the need to carry out revolutionary, communist work among all strata of the people and various social movements, in order to carry out our united front strategy.

Since that time, some very important, if initial, steps have been made along the lines called for at the Second Congress (and since). This is true both as regards the objective and subjective aspects. That is, there have been both increasing struggles of importance among these various strata and social movements and increasing development in our understanding of their importance and in our ability to work among and influence them. Moody Park is an outstanding case in point, and there are other examples as well (smaller-scale battles against police terror, our work in "Rock Against Racism," anti-draft and anti-nuke demos, etc.).

Of course we must avoid any pragmatic tendency to lose patience with work among the basic industrial workers, rather than persisting systematically in carrying out revolutionary work and building revolutionary strug-



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gle among them. We must avoid any tendency to "forget about the workers" and simply direct attention elsewhere "where the action is"—where there is perhaps more political motion, even though most of this political movement is openly reformist. As the article in *The Communist* (No. 5) on *What Is To Be Done?* points out, we have only *begun* to carry out the consistently Marxist work Lenin calls for among the workers. How can we expect, after years and years of nothing but spontaneous trade-unionism, even from so-called communists—and in large part even from genuine communists—that all of a sudden, and through a few months (yes a few months!) of our selling the *Revolutionary Worker* and hardly more time of us systematically breaking with economism and carrying out revolutionary agitation and propaganda in general, large numbers of workers will come forward as the vanguard force in the political struggle? But are there not thousands of advanced workers? And can we not bring them forward and unite them around the Party's line as a class-conscious force marching to the front ranks of the fight against all oppression, and its source, the capitalist system?

This is not to say that this will be a straight-line process or that it is all "smooth sailing." But, really, is that a worse situation than among other strata? To think so is to fall into rank pragmatism. Of course, things will have to develop much further before the working class in its millions steps onto the political stage in its vanguard role, but it is certainly no less true that the tendency to reformism and the general vacillation and other weaknesses of the petty bourgeoisie will continue to exert themselves, and very powerfully, until the working class is mobilized in its masses to march to the forefront and more fully infuse its outlook, strength and discipline. And, in the meantime, the more we mobilize the (growing numbers overall of) advanced workers in political struggle, train them politically and keep their revolutionary consciousness tense, the more we will be able to influence both other strata as well as more backward sections of the working class itself and push things forward along the path of building a united front under the leadership of the proletariat and its Party, toward the goal of overthrowing imperialism and establishing socialism.

This has specific application with regard to the relationship between the struggles of the oppressed nationalities and the overall working class struggle for socialism. It is undeniably true that among the masses of the oppressed nationalities, even today (and not merely at the high tide of the struggle of the oppressed nationalities) there is more of a revolutionary mood and receptivity to revolutionary agitation against the system and the whole rotten way of life in this society. But this is also marked by sharply contradictory tendencies, and in particular it is characterized by strong nationalist influences. If we are not thoroughly scientific, we ourselves will not be able to draw the distinction between nationalism—even in a basically revolutionary form—and proletarian ideology and consciousness (again this is an "old question" in our young movement, but certainly not an "outdated question").

None of what is being stressed here is meant to nor should have the effect of denying the importance of revolutionary work among the oppressed nationalities or of pouring cold water on the efforts and strides that have been made in that direction. In fact, this needs to be developed much more broadly and deeply—but it needs to and must be developed with Marxism and our Party's line in command, and not be slipping into tailing after spontaneity and pragmatism in a new form, for that will only mean, once again, that initial gains will be lost and advances turned into their opposite. On the other hand, by more firmly grasping and adhering to our Party's line and the Marxist-Leninist principles it is based on, in this work and overall, the initial advances can be built on and further advances achieved—through determined struggle, including ideological struggle, and persistent revolutionary work.

This is a question that we should take up as part of the broader question of how to persevere and make further advances in carrying out revolutionary work among the basic industrial proletariat, and correctly handling the contradiction between this and broadening and deepening our revolutionary work among the oppressed nationalities, the lower strata and urban poor and all strata and social movements among the people, guided by the strategic orientation of building the united front and its solid core under the leadership of the proletariat and its Party.

(4) May Day 1980.

The importance of this event and the campaign to build it can be more fully grasped in light of what was stressed in the point just above (3). In fact, while

the beginnings of upsurge among various non-proletarian strata are both positive developments in themselves and indicators of the much greater upheavals in the period ahead—and indicators of the correctness of our analysis of the character of the 1980's as well—on the other hand, work among these strata and in these developing movements reveals (and recalls) not only their positive aspects but also their shortcomings, limitations, vacillations, lack of thoroughgoing opposition to the whole system, etc. Again, this is not to downgrade the importance of such struggles and of our carrying out revolutionary work among them; it is not meant to and should not have the effect of pouring cold water on this. In fact, it points, once again, to the need for us both to step up work among these strata and movements *and* to strive to be even more strictly Marxist and carry out in a lively and non-sectarian way the ideological struggle among them.

But the fact remains: these strata and these social movements can only be thoroughly transformed, powerfully linked to the overall fight against the imperialist system, and directed—or diverted—from the reformist to the revolutionary path, as the material force of class-conscious workers, rallied under the leadership of the Party and its line, increasingly mounts the political stage and shows in practice the revolutionary character of the proletariat and its class interests and its tremendous potential to unite the people to seize control of and remake society. And, along with this (as also noted above), this material force of class conscious workers, even though only thousands at this time, can have a very powerful impact on the rest of the working class, even those sections that remain relatively dormant and backward in the short run and will only be drawn into political life and activity in the years ahead.

In summing up the Battle of the Bicentennial,* we—by and large correctly—summed up this point, referring to the phenomenon of how "revolutionary" came to be identified with "worker" instead of student, intellectual, "hippie," etc. While we must guard against "workerism" (economist philistinism)—and undoubtedly there was, especially on the part of the Menshevik Jarvis/Bergman group who since split from our Party, some influence of this thinking (as well as some reformist

* The "Battle of the Bicentennial" refers to a campaign around the slogan "We've Carried the Rich for 200 Years, Let's Get Them Off Our Backs," which culminated in a July 4, 1976 demonstration of 3000 workers and others in Philadelphia. It countered the capitalist Bicentennial patriotic barrage.

tendencies) in our work around and summation of the July 4th demonstration—nevertheless this phenomenon was real, if somewhat limited, and does point to the potential political impact of a force of class-conscious workers beginning to take “independent historical action” as Lenin called it. And this is important both in regard to broader sections of the working class and to other strata.

Given the development of the objective situation and of the subjective factor—the latter referring to the line and work of our Party—there is both the necessity and the basis for this phenomenon, this political impact, to be much greater than it was in the Battle of the Bicentennial. And it is with this understanding that the call for revolutionary May Day 1980 was issued and that our work to build it must be carried out—beginning with the task of arming the advanced we can mobilize now with this understanding and on that basis unleashing them to broadly and boldly build this campaign.

If things are not understood and built in this way, then the question arises: why after all did we pick *May Day* as the time for this revolutionary demonstration? Why indeed, except to emphasize and strengthen, in practice and in popular consciousness, the revolutionary pole of the working class and its power in attracting around its banner the mass of the oppressed, as embodied today in the force of many thousands of class-conscious workers, rallying around them thousands of others of the oppressed. And with this understanding, it can be more clearly seen how decisive the struggle to carry out this campaign is and what a leap—forward, or backward—will be made through the outcome of this struggle.

(5) The Trade Unions, Economic Struggle and Political and Revolutionary Struggle.

First a question: why do all (or almost all) opportunists—from the Soviet-style revisionists, to the Chinese-led revisionists, to the Hoxha-ite dogmatorevisionists, to the open Trotskyites—insist on the notion that capturing the trade unions and transforming them into revolutionary organizations (or smashing the existing trade unions and replacing them with revolutionary ones) is the decisive question for the working class, an indispensable requirement and prerequisite for advancing to socialism? They all fundamentally disagree with Lenin’s whole thesis in *What Is To Be Done?* and share in op-

position to it the economist outlook.

Some—even many—of these various opportunists point to another of Lenin’s well-known works, “Left-Wing Communism,” to justify their position. But what does Lenin actually say there? He does, in fact, say that the struggle against the traitorous leaders of the labor movement “must be waged ruthlessly, and it must unfailingly be brought—as we brought it—to a point when all the incorrigible leaders of opportunism and social-chauvinism are completely discredited and driven out of the trade unions.” (Peking FLP edition, 1965, p. 43). But he immediately follows this statement with the important conclusion: “Political power cannot be captured (and the attempt to capture it should not be made) until the struggle has reached a *certain stage*.” (*Ibid*, emphasis Lenin’s). Note—“has reached a *certain stage*.” Lenin very carefully and consciously does *not* say—“has been *completed*.”

In other words, Lenin fully recognized that the communists cannot thoroughly win leadership of the trade unions and the allegiance of all the workers in them, especially the more backward, until *after* power has been seized (in fact Lenin also noted that under capitalism even the trade unions could not embrace a majority of the proletariat). And therefore, thoroughly defeating the opportunist misleaders of the unions and capturing leadership of them is not and cannot be a prerequisite for the seizure of power.

What Lenin is emphasizing, as indicated by the title of this particular chapter of “Left-Wing Communism” (Chapter VI—“Should Revolutionaries Work In Reactionary Trade Unions”), is precisely that indeed they should and must work in them, “For the whole task of Communists is to be able to *convince* the backward elements, to work *among* them, and not to *fence themselves off* from them by artificial and childishly ‘left’ slogans.” (p. 46) What Lenin is referring to in the last part above—fencing themselves off with infantile “left” slogans—is the approach of setting up revolutionary workers organizations in opposition to the trade unions and trying to get the mass of workers to leave the trade unions and join instead in these workers organizations that have as their basis of unity the fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin emphatically does not mean that, in working among the mass of workers in the trade unions, or in general, the communists should water down their politics or descend to the level of trade-unionist politics and economism. In this work as elsewhere, he repeatedly stresses just the opposite, putting emphasis on revolutionary agitation and propaganda as the main means for work-

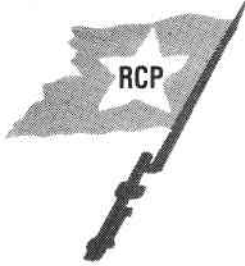
ing among and convincing the backward workers and the mass of workers generally, who are organized on a broad scale in trade unions.

But further, not only is it not a prerequisite for revolution to capture the trade unions, it is not any kind of universal principle that work within the trade unions is the most important focus of communists’ work; in fact, this is often not the case, and to make it some kind of principle is to fall into opportunism. Stalin spoke directly—and correctly—to this point in criticizing rightist tendencies within the German Communist Party in the late 1920’s:

“To say that [communists must work only in the trade unions] is to condemn the Communist Party to the role of a passive observer of the class battles of the proletariat. To say that is to bury the idea of the leading role of the Communist Party in the working-class movement.

“The merit of the German Communists is precisely that they did not allow themselves to be scared by talk about ‘the framework of the trade unions’ and went beyond this framework by organizing the struggle of the non-organized workers against the will of the trade-union bureaucrats. The merit of the German Communists is precisely that they sought for and found new forms of struggle and organization of the unorganized workers... From the fact that we must work within the reformist trade unions—provided only that they are mass organizations—it does not at all follow that we must *confine* our mass work to work within the reformist trade unions, that we must become slaves of the standards and demands of those unions.” (*Works*, vol. 11, p. 314, “The Right Danger In The German Communist Party,” emphasis Stalin’s)

The point and important principle that can be synthesized out of all this, is that when and to the degree that the trade unions are mass organizations of the workers, and especially when and to the degree that they become arenas and vehicles of class struggle involving masses of workers, it is absolutely necessary for communists to work among them, to unite with but more than that to influence and lead these mass of workers in a revolutionary direction, mainly through revolutionary agitation and propaganda (not however through sloganeering and other infantile “left” methods and policies). But in such work, as in all work, communists must not limit themselves to the confines of the trade unions or reduce their political line to the level of the spontaneous trade-unionist struggle (nor still less to the explicitly bourgeois politics of the trade union hacks). Instead they must



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carry out strictly Marxist agitation and propaganda and all-around revolutionary work to raise the workers' sights to the broad and decisive questions in society and the fundamental political struggle for socialism, reaching its highest form in the armed struggle for the seizure of power.

Here it must be noted and stressed that, not only must we especially bring forward and unite the advanced workers around this line and in this work, but in order to do so we must combat the tendency among them toward adopting an economist position. Often they tend in this direction not because they themselves fail to recognize the limitations of the economic struggle and the dead-end of reformism; but because, pragmatically, they fall into the notion that the rest of the workers can only be moved forward by first finding the lowest common denominator around which to unite them. In other words, the advanced workers, in attempting to build a revolutionary movement among the workers, run up against the same backwardness, the same obstacles and difficulties that we do. And if we, as conscious communists, have to more deeply arm ourselves with Marxist-Leninist principles and wage a sharp and persistent struggle against economist tendencies, how can we think that the advanced workers can overcome this tendency unless we similarly arm them and involve them in this same ideological struggle?

But what about the economic struggle? It has not been very long since we have made a thorough rupture with economism in the form of (one or another version of) the "center of gravity" line.* This includes the idea of paying "particular attention" now to the economic struggle. And in criticizing this latter idea, it has been pointed out that, in fact,

*The RCP's founding congress in 1975 adopted the line that the economic struggles around wages and working conditions should be the "center of gravity" of the Party's work. This wrong formulation fed into the spontaneous tendency to reduce the class struggle to the day-to-day economic struggles and lose sight of the goal of revolution, socialism and communism. It made a special stage out of waging the economic struggle and evaluated all the Party's work from the point of view of how it contributed to this economic struggle, instead of judging all of the Party's work and every battle by how it contributed to the goal of socialist revolution. This line was criticized and repudiated in 1978.

the economic struggle will assume more, not less, importance as the situation sharpens and especially in the context of the development of a revolutionary situation. This, of course, does not mean that in such circumstances it will then be correct to make the economic struggle our "center of gravity." Rather, it means that in such circumstances there will be more instances where economic struggles become militant battles, and more than that—and especially in the context of developing political struggle, on the part of class-conscious workers as well as other strata—there will be more likelihood and instances of actually developing economic struggles themselves into political struggles (the oil workers in Iran is a sharp example of this, which occurred, of course, in the context of a developing revolutionary situation and struggle).

As Lenin pointed out in *What Is To Be Done?* and elsewhere, the economic struggle, and the economic exposures, often have the function of drawing the more backward workers into struggle against the bourgeoisie, even though on the most elementary level. And, Lenin insists, this means that communists must precisely carry out strictly Marxist work in relation to these struggles and questions, no less than to all others, if they want to influence and lead these more backward elements coming into action, divert them toward revolutionary politics and political struggle (and if they want to remain communists). And it should be obvious that, with an intensifying situation and especially with developments toward a revolutionary situation, in many cases the first step of the backward workers in coming into political life and struggle will actually take the form of waging economic struggle—and in these conditions hundreds of thousands, even millions, of these more backward, ordinarily slumbering workers will be coming into motion, mainly in this way.

The point of this is not to resurrect the "theory of stages," or to argue that in those future conditions we should adapt our line and politics to the level of understanding with which these backward workers first come into motion and into serious struggle against the bourgeoisie. No, exactly the opposite—it will be even more decisive then, in practical terms, that, in linking up with them, we conscientiously and consistently strive, right from the beginning, to carry out revolutionary agitation and propaganda, direct their attention to the larger and broader questions and context within which these battles are taking place and divert them onto the path of revolutionary struggle around the banner of the class-conscious

proletariat.

And even today, where instances of sharp, militant struggle do break out on the economic front and draw into motion formerly passive and backward workers, it is important to grasp and apply these same principles—keeping clearly in mind what Lenin said about how every minor crisis, even a militant strike, represents in miniature what a major crisis will be like, on a broader and deeper basis, throughout society as a whole, and that even in these "minor crises" the masses involved in such struggles show to some degree the same tendency to learn in a few days or weeks what they do not learn in years of "normal times" (check out the comment of a white steel worker in Levittown about how he had changed his mind about the Black people's struggle, and obviously about the overall situation to some extent—*RW*, June 29, p. 7).

None of this, of course, goes against the understanding that we have struggled to reach, that all-around exposure of the capitalist system must be the main focus of our work, with agitation central to that. Nor, by the same token, does it go against the correct understanding that we must both direct the sights of the workers to the broad political questions and their long-term and general interests and lead them to take up political, especially revolutionary, struggle. And it is on this basis and in this light that the importance of and correct role for the National United Workers Organization must be grasped and built on.

Through the course of deepening our grasp of the revolutionary line in opposition to Menshevism, and economism in particular, we have developed a more correct understanding of the role of the National United Workers Organization (NUWO), and especially of its relationship to the Party. It has been summed up that the NUWO must in fact be built "in the wake of the Party." This means that its political links with the Party must be clear and open (though not used as a club). But more fundamentally, it means that it is the Party that, above all, we must put forward as the driving revolutionary force among the proletariat—and among other strata as well, as the representative of the revolutionary proletariat. It is on this basis and in this context that we can and must build the NUWO as an organization of the working class, based among advanced, class-conscious workers, that has an overall revolutionary thrust and on that basis takes up and mobilizes workers around major questions and key battles in society.

The NUWO can and should be a place where advanced workers (but including

those awakening to political life) can not only take up and build such struggles, but can carry out broad political discussion and struggle, over the questions connected with these struggles and over other questions confronting the class-conscious working class (this doesn't mean the NUWO should also be a study group, but it does mean that it should have broad political discussion, not simply limited to questions directly connected with struggles it is building, though much of this political struggle will focus around and unfold out of questions connected with these struggles, taken up broadly and not narrowly—not simply in the most restricted, tactical sense). Further, the workers we lead to be actively involved in the NUWO should not be stuck in a "slot" there and walled off from other political life and activity; quite the contrary, we should seek—and struggle—to involve them in distributing the *Revolutionary Worker* (including forming the nucleus of a network), in discussion groups around the *RW*, in attending *RW* forums, and in going to political events and struggles centered among other strata (as well as important struggles involving other workers). Advanced workers need such political experience and "atmosphere"—and this need is especially acute now, given the still low level of political consciousness and struggle among the mass of workers—and often it is also important, for them and for the other, non-proletarian forces in these struggles, that these workers go as a group, as the NUWO, while at the same time selling the *RW* at these events, etc.

(6) On the Historical Process of the Proletarian Revolution

Of necessity, only a general summary of some thinking on these questions can be presented here, but it should not only provide a useful basis for discussion of these points but also provide an important part of the overall framework for the discussion as a whole.

Having some sweep in our view of the process of proletarian revolution is important not only in general but also specifically in light of the recent major setbacks of the international proletariat—specifically the reversal in China. The Chinese revolutionaries certainly were a model in approaching it this way, and in arming the masses with this approach: while they fought heroically to continue the revolution, they at the same time stressed that, even if there was a reversal, this could not reverse the general course of history nor the ultimate inevitability of the

triumph of communism (they drew analogy to and lessons from the struggle of the rising feudal class in China to replace the slave system and the struggle of the bourgeoisie to establish capitalism in other countries, pointing out that the process of abolishing all systems of exploitation through the proletarian revolution was bound to be even more complex and protracted, but was also bound to be crowned with victory in the end).

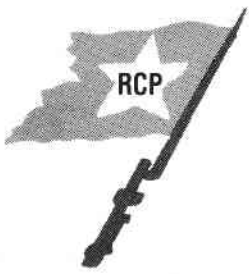
But, as we can learn from them, having this sweeping view is important not merely so as to be able to have a scientific basis for "plucking up our courage" in the face of difficulties (though that is important and necessary, so long as it is on a scientific basis), but more than that to be able to rise to the challenges—and opportunities—that lie more immediately before us. If it is correct to view the major spirals under imperialism as being basically defined from inter-imperialist war to inter-imperialist war, then this also suggests that not only for the bourgeoisie but for the proletariat as well, the outcome of the present spiral is far from determined. In other words, it has not yet been determined that the particular major spiral from (the conclusion of) WW2 through WW3 has resulted (even if only temporarily) in a setback for the international proletariat—it could turn out that the loss of China, on top of the loss of the Soviet Union, might be more than compensated for, if a major imperialist country were ripped away from the imperialists through proletarian revolution, establishing a socialist country in its place. (There is no guarantee of this, of course, and no *immediate* prospect of it, but as stressed earlier, it is not out of the question. But even if this doesn't happen, and even if overall this major spiral should result in setback rather than advance for the proletariat, not only would this not change the course of history in general, it would also not change the fact that through that particular spiral, the contradictions of the imperialist system, and the fundamental contradiction of the bourgeois epoch, between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, have been *intensified*, and even the way the imperialists "resolved" things through that spiral only strengthened the basis for their own destruction in the future—if the imperialists manage to hang on for centuries, that will very probably mean that the whole world will by that time be highly developed capitalistically, and Marx and Engels' view on the proletarian revolution will be vindicated anyway.)

The Paris Commune, as we know, lasted only two months. But if it had lasted longer, then what? Would it have

been able to last for long as a workers' state, as a socialist country? That is very unlikely. Undoubtedly it would have suffered a reversal and been transformed in content into a bourgeois state, a capitalist society. To say this now is not the same thing as saying it then—then to adopt such a "philosophical" view and to have sat by with arms folded rather than to have actively supported the Commune would have meant revisionism and betrayal, determinism and capitulation. But to look at it with this understanding now, from the standpoint of historical materialism—applying materialist dialectics to the process of proletarian revolution—is to arm ourselves to fight better now to hasten the victory of the proletarian revolution, not only in this country but world-wide. In this, too, Mao is a great teacher. Here is what he had to say about this process, specifically looking at the defeat of the Paris Commune and the reversal in the Soviet Union (in the context of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China and specifically in arguing that the Paris Commune model was too advanced for the conditions in China at the time):

"If the Paris Commune had not failed, but had been successful, then in my opinion, it would have become by now a bourgeois commune. This is because it was impossible for the French bourgeoisie to allow France's working class to have so much political power. This is the case of the Paris Commune. In regard to the form of soviet political power, as soon as it materialized, Lenin was elated, deeming it a remarkable creation by workers, peasants and soldiers, as well as a new form of proletarian dictatorship. Nonetheless, Lenin had not anticipated then that although the workers, peasants and soldiers could use this form of political power, it could also be used by the bourgeoisie, and by Khrushchev. Thus, the present soviet has been transformed from Lenin's soviet to Khrushchev's soviet." (From the U.S. government collection, "Miscellany of Mao Tse-tung Thought, 1949-1968," Part II, p. 452.)

It is an important fact that socialist countries that have so far existed have existed so far as islands surrounded by a sea of imperialism and reaction (or the situation has been, except for the brief period of the socialist camp following WW2—which won't be addressed in this paper, but is an important subject for discussion—that there has been one major socialist country with a few others "hung up somewhere" between bourgeois democracy and socialism but ultimately being turned around and in any case not in themselves a major



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material force affecting world politics). In the "Communist Manifesto" Marx and Engels briefly trace the rise to power of the bourgeoisie over several hundred years—"An oppressed class under the sway of the feudal nobility, an armed and self-governing association in the medieval commune; here independent urban republic (as in Italy and Germany), there taxable 'third estate' of the monarchy (as in France), afterwards, in the period of manufacture proper, serving either the semi-feudal or the absolute monarchy as a counterpoise against the nobility, and in fact, cornerstone of the great monarchies in general, the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway" (and even this last assessment is correct only as regards a handful of advanced capitalist countries—see Peking FLP edition, 1970, p. 33).

I think there is a useful analogy here with the process of the proletarian revolution world-wide—though there are obviously differences as well, the most fundamental one being that the proletariat cannot develop the productive relations characteristic of its society until *after* it has seized political power; and it also cannot "share power" with the bourgeoisie in the same way that the bourgeoisie could with the feudal class, both being exploiters, though the proletariat does "share power" with the bourgeoisie under socialism (even within the socialist country) in the sense that the bourgeoisie not only still exists, not only is constantly engendered under socialism, but most importantly is engendered precisely within the proletarian state and its leading force, the proletarian party. With all this, looking at it in historical perspective, it can be seen that the rise to power of the proletariat, beginning only a little more than 100 years ago with the Paris Commune, is still in its early stages and has, so far, always occurred in the conditions where, on a world scale, the proletariat not only has to "share power" with the bourgeoisie (and other reactionary classes) but finds them still dominant.

This has presented the proletariat and the masses of the socialist countries, and specifically the Marxist-Leninists leading them, with serious difficulties and powerful necessity. They are faced with the need to make use of contradic-

tions within the enemy camp, among the imperialists and reactionaries, merely to survive as a socialist state which of course stands in contradiction to assisting and supporting the revolutionary struggle internationally. And experience shows that this becomes particularly acute as the inter-imperialist contradictions heat up and inter-imperialist war rapidly approaches—which, with the existence of socialist countries, is no longer simply inter-imperialist war but now also involves the socialist countries themselves. This makes the handling of different basic contradictions and their interpenetration very difficult and complex.

The rub is this: it is precisely the bringing to a head of the contradictions on a world scale—the approach of the resolution of a major spiral, with the imminent prospect of world war—that at one and the same time creates the very great likelihood that the socialist country will face all-out attack by an imperialist power or powers sharpens, brings into being, or brings closer, the objective conditions necessary for revolution in many countries, perhaps even including the imperialist powers themselves. This raises the contradiction between defending the socialist country and assisting, supporting and accelerating the revolutionary struggle in the other countries to a much intensified level. How have the socialist countries and the international communist movement handled this so far?

Not too well. In general, as we know, the overwhelming tendency has been to subordinate everything to the defense of the socialist country—or even where this might be correct for a certain period, as for example in WW2, to almost completely liquidate the secondary aspect, the class (or national) struggle within the other countries. In short, everything has come to be staked on the defense of the socialist country.

But the problem is not so simple as this. It is not the case that the revolutionaries in the socialist countries, and the international communist movement, have simply forgotten about revolution in other countries or have not attempted to link the defense of the socialist countries with the advance toward socialism in the other countries. The problem is that, besides the outright national chauvinism and writing off of revolution at home and abroad by the revisionists in the socialist countries (the Chou En-lais, et al.), the revolutionaries have basically followed the method of *combining* the defense of the socialist country with the advance toward socialism in the other countries into a *single world struggle*. The enemy becomes the imperialist bloc that is the main danger to the

socialist country, and forces are realigned on a world scale to array against it the socialist country in alliance with the other *countries and peoples* in the world who also, for conflicting reasons, oppose that "main danger" bloc (the "anti-fascist war" and the Chinese's, even the Chinese revolutionaries', approach of building the same model of struggle in the face of the impending World War 3).

The problem here is not that adjustments are called for in the class struggle within various countries, but that what has accompanied all this has been the line that in the countries of the bloc opposed to the bloc that is the "main danger" (to the socialist country), the struggle should become that of a national war against that "main danger" bloc. And this leads to the disorientation of the proletariat and its Party, in those countries and even internationally. Instead, it seems to me that, even if it is correct to temporarily subordinate the class struggle within some countries to the international struggle in a more limited and immediate sense (for in an overall and long-term sense the struggle within each country is generally subordinate to the world struggle, but here we are talking about subordinating it to the defense of a socialist country) then this should be understood and *explained within the Party and to the masses* on the basis precisely of defending the socialist country, and it should be done with the orientation of continuing to expose the reactionary nature of one's own ruling class and continuing to prepare to overthrow it whenever the opportunity actually does ripen.

Why, in such circumstances, can it not be explained to the masses in the following terms: Our ruling class, in pursuit of its own reactionary aims and interests (with concrete exposure of what those are and how it is pursuing them), is allying itself militarily with a socialist country, a homeland of our class, the international working class; but this ruling class has not for a moment or in any way changed its nature—not only does it continue to exploit and oppress the working class and people here, it is right now maneuvering to grab more areas to plunder in the world and will, if it sees the opportunity, stab its socialist ally in the back, in accordance with its vampire-like nature; and more than that, it is right now preparing to do all this at the war's end, or sooner, if and to the degree it can. We, on the other hand, must fight to defend the socialist country, but we must also never lose sight of our own class interests (for the ruling class will never lose sight of its, and if either side does so, it will *only* be ours); and just as they are exploiting and oppressing us

and maneuvering and preparing to strengthen their position to carry out their bloodsucking, predatory interests, at the expense of the working class and people of this country and all others, so we must not only resist this exploitation and oppression but must also constantly prepare and maneuver to strengthen our position to fight for and achieve our class interests—to overthrow this reactionary ruling class, establish the rule of the working class and support and advance the international revolutionary struggle.

Why cannot this be the line that the Party arms itself, and the masses, with, in these circumstances? Of course, it will be only the more advanced, class-conscious workers who, at any time, will fully rally to and take up this line, but since when do communists alter (water down) their line on account of this? Obviously, this is a very complicated situation and actually carrying out such a line—and propagating it in popular terms—is very difficult. But, again, since when do difficulties constitute a valid reason for communists to abandon the correct line?

And more than this, such an approach is correct only if a scientific assessment of the world balance of forces actually demands that some adjustment be made, temporarily, in the class struggle at home. The maneuvering of the socialist country to avoid having to “fight on two fronts” against the imperialists, or even to sharpen up the inter-imperialist contradictions so that one bloc is forced to ally, however conditionally, with the socialist country in the war, really should not be made the line of the Marxist-Leninist parties in other countries. Our Party’s approach to this during the time before the revisionist coup in China was basically correct, and insofar as even the revolutionaries in China promoted the line of “national struggle” in the advanced countries (this requires further investigation, but it seems that they did do so), then they were in error—not traitors, but in error.

It was both very necessary and correct for the revolutionaries in China to make a sober assessment of the situation in the imperialist countries and to conclude that the prospect of revolution there was not so immediate as to eliminate the need for China to make an “opening to the West” and even try to contribute to an alignment among the imperialists that forced the Soviets to face a danger “on two fronts.” But it was not correct to therefore determine that the form of revolutionary struggle, should it develop, in the countries of the U.S. bloc, was “national struggle” against the Soviet “main danger to the people of the world.” If the proletariat

and its Party in the other countries must, under certain conditions, make temporary adjustments in order to defend the socialist country, it is no less true that the socialist country must also take into account not just the struggle in its own country and to defend itself, but must also make “adjustments”—that is, limit the moves it does make toward exploiting contradictions among the imperialists—in consideration of the struggle for revolution in the other countries. Again, this is extremely complex and very difficult to correctly handle, but simply attempting to *combine* everything into one *international struggle against the “main danger”* is not the answer.

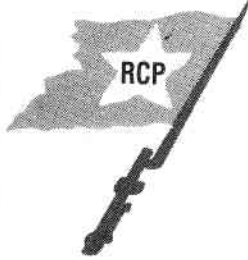
This was Stalin’s error, in a very developed form, and it also seems to have been the error of the revolutionaries, including Mao, in China. It does not need repeating again that this is difficult and complex, but it should be stressed that all this must be much more thoroughly discussed, debated and thrashed out, within our Party and among Marxist-Leninists internationally.

Another, closely interrelated, element in this is the fact that the socialist countries that have so far existed have had a strong legacy of backwardness to overcome. And in China this was further compounded by the fact that the revolution proceeded, and could not but proceed, through a period—and a protracted period at that—of democratic struggle, before it could advance to the socialist stage (in Russia there was a bourgeois-democratic stage, but not in the same way as in China, not as fully or for as long a period). And along with this, the revolution in China matured and finally won victory during a time—the 1930s and ’40s—when within the international communist movement the distinction between communism and bourgeois democracy was, to say the least, somewhat blurred. All this had its negative effects within the Chinese Communist Party and strengthened the bourgeois-democrats to capitalist-roaders phenomenon. (Even Mao, truly great Marxist-Leninist that he was, was not unaffected by all this, in my opinion. He indeed stood out virtually alone—at least at the end—among the “venerable veterans” of the Chinese revolution, as a communist surrounded by bourgeois-democrats. More than that, he indeed stood out as a towering figure within the communist movement historically and internationally, but nevertheless I believe that the national-democratic character of the Chinese revolution over a protracted period, as well as the still backward economy of socialist China and the threat of subjugation by imperialism, exerted some influence in Mao

toward nationalism and bourgeois democracy, and, as stated in the concluding chapter of *Mao Tsetung’s Immortal Contributions*, toward seeing the revolution in other countries through the eyes of the Chinese revolution.)

This is not to say that, in a fundamental sense, Mao did not understand the difference between the revolution in a country like China and that in the advanced capitalist countries. He certainly did have a basic understanding of this, and explained it. In quoting Mao on this point in [a previous report], I inserted the comment that in a country like the U.S. (as opposed to one like China) it takes longer to get to the stage of armed struggle, but a shorter time to win victory once the armed struggle has begun. This is, of course, a reflection and result of the different kinds of conditions in the two types of countries and the different strengths and weaknesses of the revolutionary movement. And along with this, it should be noted that, having seized power in a country like this, there will be real strengths, including the size, both relatively and absolutely, of the proletariat as compared to other classes and strata, its high degree of concentration and socialization and, along with and as the basis for this, the high degree of development of the productive forces.

The point here is not to say that, once we have seized power in this country, everything will be easy. It is rather to recognize the great leap that will be taken by the international proletariat when it does seize power in an advanced country, and the strengths that must be seized on and utilized for the struggle of the international proletariat—and to do this will itself require very intense struggle, especially in the ideological realm. Living within a country like this, with the political backwardness of the proletariat—which is the other aspect of its being an advanced, imperialist country—we can easily lose sight of this potential and its importance for the world struggle (this point was sharply urged on me by an Iranian comrade in discussion about the revolutionary struggle in our two countries). And what a correct understanding of this will lead to is an even deeper understanding on our part of the crucial importance of struggling against the backward tendencies among the masses, raising their consciousness through struggle and training them as Marxists, with particular emphasis on combatting patriotism, national chauvinism, etc., so as to strongly imbue them with proletarian internationalism—the fact that, in order to make revolution here, we have to go so directly and intensely against patriotism, bourgeois democracy, etc., will also be a great strength for the international



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proletariat, especially once political power is won here.

Mao made some important comments on this subject in his "Critique of the Soviet Textbook, *Political Economy*":

"Lenin said: 'The more backward the country, the more difficult its transition from capitalism to socialism.' Now it seems that this way of speaking is incorrect. As a matter of fact, the more backward the economy, the easier, not the more difficult, the transition from capitalism to socialism. The poorer they are, the more they want revolution. In Western capitalist countries, both the employment rate and the wage standard are relatively high, and bourgeois influence on the working people has been far-reaching. It looks as if it is not that easy to carry out socialist transformation in those countries (i.e., the seizure of power). The level of mechanization in those countries is very high, too. After the revolution has borne fruit, boosting mechanization further should present no serious problem. The most important question is the remolding of the people." (Section XIV, "Is Revolution in Backward Countries More Difficult?")

This leads us to the question of the forces and relations of production and the base and superstructure.* This is a monumental question, and further study and writing as well as discussion and struggle should be done around this. Here I will only attempt to sketch the outlines of a few basic points, to lay the basis for further discussion.

When we say that the production relations—or the economic system (base)—are ultimately determined by the level of development of the productive forces,

* The *productive forces* of society encompass the tools and instruments developed by people in their interaction with nature to produce what they need and want, and also, most importantly, the people themselves, with all their skills and abilities, who actually do the producing. The *relations of production* are the social relations into which people enter in the process of production. These production relations, which change in the course of history in accordance with the development of the productive forces, constitute the economic structure of society; they are thus often referred to as the *economic base* of society. And upon this base is erected the legal, political, ideological and cultural *superstructure* of society, which includes not only the legal and political institutions, but the art, philosophies, ways of thinking, etc. of a society.

this is correct and is further a basic principle of dialectical and historical materialism. But what does this mean, especially in today's conditions? Specifically, why is it that socialism could exist in China on the basis of relatively backward productive forces, while in a country like the U.S. a very highly developed level of productive forces exists, but socialism has not yet been achieved? Obviously, the correspondence between the forces and relations of production (and the base and superstructure) cannot be understood mechanically.

But, as stated, this is obvious—because of the Russian and Chinese revolutions and the theoretical as well as practical leadership of Lenin and Mao (before that it was, of course, not "obvious" at all). To get at this more deeply, the principle, or law, involved, can be stated roughly as follows: for socialism to be built, the productive forces must be developed enough that there exists in the country at least some large-scale means of production and a modern proletariat working in a socialized way on this basis. If this minimum condition is present, it will be possible for a party to be built, representing the proletariat and uniting its most class-conscious members, together with revolutionary intellectuals, etc., that can lead the struggle through the necessary stages to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat (in some form or another of class alliance). Further, how rapidly the ownership of the means of production can be socialized, and what intermediate and lower stages (besides state ownership) this must pass through, will be fundamentally determined by the level of development of the productive forces (how advanced the means of production are, how large and socialized the proletariat is, etc.).

Upon seizing power, the next advance along the socialist road must be to socialize ownership, to establish the dominance of socialist ownership. Without this, the dictatorship of the proletariat will have no economic (material) basis and can only degenerate into some form or another of reactionary dictatorship.

But then the crucial question arises: what is the decisive task at this point, to develop the productive forces, or to carry out the class struggle against the bourgeoisie? And, if the latter, what is the main focus of that class struggle?

Through the course of the Chinese revolution, especially in his forging of the basic line of the Chinese Communist Party for the socialist period, and most of all through the Cultural Revolution, Mao developed the understanding that the class struggle is the decisive question, and he further pointed to the struggle

in the superstructure, over politics and ideology, as the main focus of this struggle. This, of course, was in direct opposition to the revisionist line that, upon achieving socialist—i.e., public—ownership, the key thing is to develop production, and that if there must be class struggle it can be reduced to the struggle for production—"socialist" production itself will defeat, or will be decisive in defeating, capitalism and reaction at home and abroad.

Mao, of course, recognized the importance of the struggle for production, and of its interpenetration with the class struggle. But he recognized and insisted that the class struggle is decisive, is the key link. It is decisive specifically in determining *what kind* of production will be carried out. For, to view it from one angle, once the workers are no longer allowed to question and struggle over *what the production is actually serving* and the dialectically related question of *how the production is carried out*, then revisionism is bound to prevail, capitalist relations are bound to take hold, and indeed capitalism is bound to be restored.

But more than that, Mao (and the Four) emphasized, especially through the course of the Cultural Revolution and the lessons learned and deepened in that process, that *in order* for the masses to take up and determine questions like that, in order for them to defend and develop the socialist economic base (not only defend and develop the socialist ownership system, but further socialize the other aspects of the relations of production) they must *first and foremost* pay attention to political and ideological questions, to "affairs of state" and the problems of world outlook and method. This understanding is the basis for the line, "grasp revolution, promote production." Mao (and his comrades) understood—in a dialectical materialist way—that the forces of production are the foundation for the relations of production and that they in turn (constituting the economic base) are the foundation for the superstructure; and they understood by the same token that the relations of production and the superstructure objectively lag behind the development of the productive forces, and *conscious struggle* is required to bring them more into correspondence and thereby further liberate the productive forces.

Even in those unusual circumstances where restoring production is the most pressing task of the proletariat (for example in Russia and China immediately after seizing power throughout the country), the question of *according to which line* and *serving which class interests* is still decisive (this is the meaning of Lenin's statement, in his struggle

against Trotsky and Bukharin, that "without a correct political approach to the matter the given class will be unable to stay on top, and, consequently, will be incapable of solving its production problem either."—see *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 84, "Once Again on the Trade Unions, the Current Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin," emphasis Lenin's). And even where the immediate focus of the struggle involves a question of the economic base (socializing ownership, either initially or to a higher level, restricting bourgeois right, etc.), still this will find concentrated expression as questions of line, of politics (and ideology)—this is a manifestation of the fact that politics is the concentrated expression of economics. Of course, these lines must be not only struggled over in the realm of ideas but must be concretely implemented; but again, in order for the working class and masses to grasp the correct line in opposition to the incorrect line and to defeat the latter with the former in practice, they must first and foremost pay attention to and struggle over the larger questions of politics and ideology and approach the practical struggle from the high plane of two-line struggle.

All this does not deny the ultimate and overall dependence of the mental on the material. Rather it grasps the dialectical

relationship between them, that matter and consciousness can be and are constantly transformed into each other, and that it is only through conscious action—class struggle being the decisive action in class society—that the masses of people can transform the material world (as well as themselves) in their own interests.

Mao developed, fought for and applied this line in the conditions of China, where the pull toward putting emphasis on developing the productive forces above all else was undoubtedly very strong, even among honest revolutionaries, given the backward state of China's productive forces. But, of course, this line developed by Mao does not have any less relevance or application for building socialism in advanced countries. There, as Mao pointed out, "After the revolution has borne fruit, boosting mechanization further should present no serious problem. The important question is the remolding of the people." Certainly, in those conditions, the importance of the superstructure, and of ideological struggle in particular, will not be less than in a country like China.

And, as noted, a major focus of that struggle will be the question of proletarian internationalism vs. narrow, chauvinistic thinking. The material

strengths that the proletariat will have won, upon seizing power in an advanced country like the U.S., can only be strengths for the proletariat if they are utilized as strengths for the *international proletariat*; otherwise they will once again become a powerful weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie, against the proletariat—internally and internationally—with the restoration of capitalism.

The strengths that will exist for socialism and the proletariat once power has been seized in this country should not arouse in us great power chauvinism, or disdain for the revolutionary struggle and the battle to build socialism in other, especially more economically backward, parts of the world. Quite the opposite—they should further arouse in us the determination to hasten the overthrow of imperialism here, in unity with the struggle of the proletariat and oppressed people of the world, with the vision clearly before us of what a tremendous leap it will be, not only or even mainly for the working class here, but for the international proletariat and the struggle for communism world-wide, when power is wrested from the imperialists here and a powerful bastion of reaction is transformed into a powerful base area of the international proletariat and the world revolution!

Lenin . . .

(Continued from page 5)

revolutionary left-wing forces internationally in the critical years ahead.

II. The Outbreak of War Puts International Socialism to the Test

World War I was a war between two blocs of imperialist powers that broke out in 1914 over the existing division of colonies and large sections of Europe. With the complete division of the world among the "Great Powers" by the end of the 19th century, the rapidly developing German imperialists (who were joined by Austria-Hungary and Turkey in the "Triple Alliance") pushed outward and demanded a more favorable redivision of the world.

On the other hand the imperialists of Great Britain (which possessed a far-flung colonial empire and needed new outlets for the export of capital), France (which hungrily eyed the Alsace-Lorraine, a rich coal and iron region seized in 1870 by Germany) and of Russia (which wanted to seize parts of Turkey and Poland) put aside their own differences to form the "Triple Entente." (Italy joined this bloc in 1915, creating the "Quadru-

ple Entente"—followed by the U.S. imperialists in 1917.)

Both alliances of imperialist powers had been making feverish war preparations in the preceding years. In 1914, France had just started an extensive program of modernizing the Russian army, and Lenin often pointed out that this was one of the main reasons why the German imperialists decided to strike first. When Archduke Ferdinand of the Austro-Hungary Empire was assassinated in Serbia in the summer of 1914, and the Austrians, with German blessings, invaded Serbia to "extract reparations," the imperialist alliances as they then stood swung into combat.

With the outbreak of war, the socialist convictions of the leaders of the Second International were put to the test, and nearly all of them turned traitor to the international working class. The International Socialist Bureau held a flurry of meetings in the last days of July where they passed a number of weighty resolutions demanding disarmament, international courts of arbitration and called on their respective socialist parties to unite to prevent the outbreak of war. At this point, most of these great "leaders" still couldn't believe what was going on right before their eyes.

Only several days later, nearly all of them supported their own governments'

war measures on the ground of "self-defense." Each imperialist government set out to prove it had not attacked its neighbors, but had been attacked by them. The French Socialist Party declared that France was the victim of "German aggression." The party's deputies voted unanimously for war credits, and a few weeks later, Guesde and Sembat joined the "Government of National Defense." Albert Thomas became the "socialist" Minister of Munitions.

In Belgium, Vandervelde joined the government. The social-democratic parties in Austria-Hungary nearly unanimously surrendered to the government's declaration of war. In Britain, the Labour Party joined the war government, while the Independent Labour Party and British Socialist Party came out in opposition to the war (though with most of their leaders, this did not last long).

On August 4, the Reichstag delegation of the German Social-Democratic Party unanimously voted for war credits, claiming that "we are menaced by the terror of foreign invasion." Fourteen deputies had voted against the credits in the Social-Democratic conference, but no one broke the unanimity principle until left-wing deputy Karl Liebknecht openly defied the party majority and