



**If There Is To Be  
Revolution,  
There Must Be  
A Revolutionary Party**

**By Bob Avakian**

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*Shortly after the publication of "Conquer the World? The International Proletariat Must and Will" by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (Revolution magazine, No. 50, December 1981), Comrade Avakian responded to a number of questions from a comrade who has been involved in the revolutionary struggle throughout the decades of the '60, '70s, and into the '80s. The answers elaborate on a number of questions raised in "Conquer the World...". Excerpts from this series of questions and answers were published in the Revolutionary Worker.*

*In this pamphlet we reprint those excerpts dealing with questions about the party. They originally appeared in RW issues 136-144. Other excerpts dealt with anarchism (issues 145-6), " '60s people " (issue 147), and from the '60s into the '70s and today (issues 148-50 and 154-5). Some of these other excerpts will appear in pamphlet form in the near future.*

## Chapter 1

### Why We Are “What Is To Be Done?”-ists

Q: There were a number of points you raised about the party in your recent talk that I want to get into. The first one was the concept of “Leninism as the bridge,” in particular in regard to the party — and how “Marxists” (so-called) and “Maoists” (so-called) see the party. The second was to get more into the point you made that in regard to preparing minds and organizing forces, the party was the key aspect of organizing forces. The final thing was the point raised about the relation of qualitative and quantitative aspects of party building in the last part of that talk. I had always looked at the question of building up the party quantitatively and had not seen the qualitative aspect being key in that. These three things struck me in going over “Conquer the World? . . .” as things I’d like to see developed more.

BA: Do you want to start at the first point — the section on “Leninism as the bridge”? I’ve read over a few books from people who are like this guy Djilas, who was part of the Tito apparatus in Yugoslavia (then he had a falling out with Tito, but basically has a Titoist, social-democratic, bourgeois-democratic outlook on things). Djilas wrote a book, *Conversations With Stalin*, where, from a bourgeois, revisionist, social-democratic point of view, he does some criticism and also exposure of some things that Stalin said. I haven’t actually read *Conversations With Stalin* (which I should read), but I’ve seen significant quotations from it, references and also there’s this other book out now by a Soviet defector; the book is called *Nomenclatura*, which is the name for the apparatus and the privileges associated with the apparatus in the Soviet party and the Soviet state. And there’s this other book I read, *From Comintern to Cominform*, by this guy who was a revisionist “critic,” you know, and defector from the revisionist Communist Party of Spain.

All of these are from the bourgeois-democratic, social-democratic point of

view and all of them are attempting to sum up from their point of view what went wrong with the Soviet Union and how the revolution there was corrupted, perverted, betrayed from within — however they look at it — and they all have the common view that it ended up being a dictatorship of the party, and the interesting thing there is that *all* of them — I think this is extremely significant — *all* of them go back to *What Is To Be Done?*. When they want to find the kernel of where everything went wrong, the kernel of this development of the revolution into its opposite, into a dictatorship of the party over the masses, all of them go back to *What Is To Be Done?* and in particular the whole thrust there, not just on the organizational question of the party. They really sort of get the point with a little bit of profundity anyway, that is, of Lenin's whole struggle against spontaneity and how that's linked with the organizational question of the kind of party, not just a party in general but the *kind* of party, a democratic centralist party, that Lenin fights for. They all recognize those two things are very closely tied together: the whole political, ideological and philosophical question of bowing to spontaneity and tailing behind the masses versus a vanguard role, and the organizational expression of that being the principles of the party, the Leninist party, a democratic centralist party. So it's kind of striking that all of them say that this was the embryo of the future party dictatorship, then you look to the whole idea of professional revolutionaries, of an organization whose backbone is professional revolutionaries — *that* is the basis for a future elite.

Of course several things strike you there. One is the idealism of these people in the sense that rather than looking at what the contradictions in society are that make a vanguard necessary, it's sort of treated like a willful thing on Lenin's part, or even if they give Lenin a certain amount of credit, then he just made a voluntarist error of wanting to try to make revolution by pulling the masses along into it. They do this instead of looking at what are the material conditions in society that make a vanguard necessary: the division of labor in society, the fact that people live under a bourgeois dictatorship and so on that means that people are not, in their masses and certainly not all at once, going to become politically conscious, revolutionary-minded internationalists and just rise up to make revolution. There are objective contradictions that make a vanguard necessary which itself also becomes in a certain way a concentration of some of those contradictions, that is, the contradiction between the vanguard and the masses becomes a concentrated expression of the contradictions that make the vanguard necessary in the first place.

You know, a lot of people who are honest, especially a lot of petty-bourgeois people but not only them, also people who are also somewhat more politically aware among the basic proletarian masses—it's not like they're blind to history. There is something that's being seized on here, that obviously the state in socialist societies like in Russia and China, for example, got turned into its opposite, into a bourgeois dictatorship and obviously the role of the party is

pretty central in that. This makes people spontaneously gravitate toward the line consciously promoted by the bourgeoisie to discourage people from making revolution, which is, "What's the use, you make revolution, the masses will make revolution but it will be an intellectual elite or a party elite who will reap the fruits, come to power, and once they come to power then they'll want to conserve their power just like every previous ruling class and so really there's no difference, maybe the ideals proclaimed are different in their particulars, but the process and the result will end up being the same." This is something some people genuinely agonize over and some people have become cynical as a result of their perception of this, but not in their rational understanding of what is involved. And even some people who are genuinely revolutionary-minded, who hate the present society in a pretty deep way, become a bit cynical. This also reinforces reformist tendencies in them because they become convinced that revolution won't work out anyway, so if you can make life a little better through some form or other, then that's the best you can hope for.

### What Are We Supposed To Do?

This is something that I've been thinking about because if you try to be more scientific about it, this is the same problem Lenin ran up against. Lenin was not blind to the fact that in previous revolutions this process had gone on nor was he completely unaware of the dangers of a party turning into its opposite, even though the first socialist revolution was the one he was involved in so obviously he hadn't had the experience of it to sum up previously, and the Paris Commune was destroyed from the outside, so to speak, not because of the internal contradictions within the Commune itself leading to its degeneration. (Although, obviously, internal contradictions inside the Commune made it more vulnerable to the attack by reaction.) In any case, Lenin was not totally unaware of this and the question is, put it this way: what are we supposed to do? Are we supposed to say OK, because we can see this danger, then we won't have a vanguard party and, OK, then we won't even have revolution, then we can be sure of avoiding this problem!

But the problem is that there's an objective need for revolution and it's subjectively felt or at least the need for drastic change in the society is felt by the great majority of the world's people, even if it's not felt, at least in normal times, by the majority of people in the imperialist countries where they have a relatively privileged existence because of the nature of imperialism and the relations in the world today. But what are we supposed to do? Are we supposed to say well, OK, therefore in order to avoid the possible degeneration of the revolution, in order to avoid the contradictions that do arise when you have a vanguard party, we just won't have a vanguard party, and in fact we won't even have a revolution and therefore we can avoid those problems.

Well, you see, that's the kind of point of view that I find unacceptable, not just morally, but because I think that this is an idealist point of view that

doesn't actually look at what are the material contradictions that underlie this problem and therefore seeks to go to the roots and solve them that way. It's not that I believe that just because you want to solve a problem there's bound to be a solution (though I do think there's something to the Marxist law that a problem doesn't pose itself in a direct and immediate way, if you take that in a historical sense, on the agenda of history unless there is a solution at hand or a solution maturing within the womb of the present conditions), but I think the correct, revolutionary, scientific Marxist-Leninist way to approach this problem is to look more deeply at the underlying contradictions and figure out and struggle to grasp more deeply how to resolve these contradictions in the process of moving forward.

### Eurocentric Go-Slow Chauvinism

What strikes you when you study this sort of Tito-ite, social-democratic, bourgeois-democratic line is, for one thing, its tailism and its open promotion of bowing to spontaneity and, another thing, its Eurocentric chauvinism. Now Yugoslavia is not exactly an *advanced* capitalist country but neither is it an oppressed nation in Africa, Latin America or Asia. The same thing is true of Spain; Spain is not one of the top imperialist powers in the world, but it is certainly capitalist and I would even tend to say an imperialist society, even though it has some backward features within it which make for particularities in the revolution there. But, it's not accidental that this is the kind of line that arises from people who are pro-Western imperialism, let's put it that way, because that's what all these people are: Djilas, this guy who wrote this *Nomenclatura* (even though he sometimes wraps himself in a Marxist guise) is pro-Western imperialism and so objectively is Claudin who wrote the book *From Comintern to Cominform*. Basically what they are saying is that until the masses themselves are ready for socialism you can't force them to have it, so you just have to sort of carry on with the business of ingratiating yourselves with the masses where they're at, and then—in comes the theory of the productive forces along with the bourgeois democracy—eventually the development of society and the productive forces and the masses' own organizations, like trade unions and democratic organizations, will eventually lead to socialism like you have in many parts of Europe—that is, *imperialism* ruling under a very tattered pink banner of socialism. So this is one feature.

The other reason I say that it's not only very tailist and bowing to spontaneity but also very Eurocentric chauvinist is because it's fine, if you're going to take the point of view of pro-Western imperialism, to talk about just waiting and waiting and waiting. I'm being sarcastic when I say it's fine, but maybe you can find some basis among more privileged workers and more privileged sections of the masses, petty bourgeoisie and so on in these imperialist countries who are sort of gradualists: "let's go slow or let's not try to hurry things . . . what's the big hurry, things will come anyway, as the masses gain experience

in democratic organizations and society develops," while meanwhile all this is based on plunder internationally as well as the exploitation of significant sections within these imperialist countries themselves. It's based on international plunder of those countries where the desire of the people for revolution, even if they don't consciously understand everything about what that means, but still their desire to drastically change their conditions is very acute.

So here you get this lopsidedness of the world. If you were an internationalist, if you were looking at the world as a whole you'd say there's tremendous urgency, we have to figure out everything we can to actually accelerate this process, yes, by making revolution by relying on the masses, but to look at the world as a whole is all the more reason not to be tailing. If you end up tailing consciously and promoting this kind of line in a European imperialist country or in a Western imperialist country, then you're consciously promoting chauvinism.

This is something that is more particular to our situation than Lenin's, because Lenin was in a country that overall was part of the British-led imperialist bloc that the U.S. became a part of also, and was an imperialist country but was also backward in many ways. The conditions there were sort of midway between East and West in a certain way. Even though overall it belonged in the imperialist camp, there were some very backward conditions and the masses were in very desperate straits a good part of the time. But at the same time Lenin viewed things on a world scale, as well as just taking account of the particularities of Russia and the acuteness of the situation there and the conditions that did, if correctly and dialectically understood, cause Russia to be a certain kind of weak link at a certain point. So he understood the need to accelerate the process of revolution and he saw very clearly that if you sat around and waited for the spontaneous development of the revolution, you would actually be contributing to retarding the revolution.

This view, this sort of Titoite social-democratic, bourgeois-democratic view in vague Marxist coloration tries to wrap itself in the mantle of Marx by playing on the fact that Marx's ideas of the party were not as developed as Lenin's. When Marx and Engels dealt with the question of the socialist revolution (although you know in opposition to some slanders to the contrary, Marx and Engels paid a lot of attention to important instances of colonial oppression and still more to rebellions in the colonies, whether in China, India or Ireland, and drew important conclusions), still they were largely looking at things from a European context and correctly so in the sense that that was exactly where the most important developments influencing the world, particularly toward socialism, and the working-class movements generally, were concentrated at that time. Some of the questions that Lenin was confronted with, that were brought sharply to the fore in the imperialist era were only beginning to assert themselves toward the end of the lifetimes of Marx and Engels, like after the Paris Commune. At the same time, as Lenin pointed out, the period of several

decades between the Paris Commune and World War 1 and the developments leading directly up to it, say at the turn of the century with the advent of imperialism, was a period where by and large, while the world was not quiet in any sense, for Marxists only slow patient work was possible. And then the contradictions accumulated and brought a lot of these questions sharply to the fore. What Lenin summed up was precisely all the lessons, the rich lessons, the very important lessons that are concentrated in *What Is To Be Done?*, in terms of the spontaneity of the masses and the consciousness of the revolutionaries and the need for a vanguard party, whose backbone is professional revolutionaries. (Not that every member has to be a professional revolutionary, in fact we have to learn how to combine the two: people who are not full time cadre making up a large base for the party or in the party at the same time as you have a backbone of professional revolutionaries, a backbone of the party who are professional revolutionaries.) This is an important development in Marxism; it is precisely this that these people want to negate.

#### Consciousness and the Conscious Element

To me there is something very significant to learn from that, it is a very good teacher by negative example of how important, once again, *What Is To Be Done?* is, that all these people feel compelled to go back to that and attack Lenin for that, precisely because what's concentrated there is not only the organizational line of the party, but its underpinnings, which is the more developed sense of the role and importance of consciousness and the conscious element in relation to the masses which, yes, involves a contradiction and requires this contradiction be handled correctly. But still, the role of consciousness and the conscious element is a very indispensable element for the revolution. The masses will not spontaneously develop socialist consciousness. They may gravitate toward it, as Lenin said, but they will not spontaneously develop socialist or Marxist consciousness and that has to be, in a certain basic sense, imparted to them from without, even at the same time as that doesn't mean standing to the side of them in the political sense. But it does mean not simply merging into their midst, that is, tailing behind them. It means carrying on active political revolutionary work in their midst, especially paying attention to the advanced but also even more broadly among the masses, being in their midst in *that* sense, but not just sort of merging into their midst, that is, submerging yourself beneath their level of consciousness and struggle spontaneously developed at any point.

This is a tremendously important point that Lenin raised. And I know that sometimes people accuse us of being "*What Is To Be Done?*-ists," as if that's a crime, but this helps you to understand much more fundamentally just how important it is and how proud one should be to be a *What Is To Be Done?*-ist. Sometimes people have said, "you just uncritically take everything in *What Is To Be Done?*, you don't even have any criticisms of it." And I say, yes we do,

we have some points of disagreement with Lenin because there are some places where he still made certain concessions to the German social-democratic (which really was social-democratic) trend. You can see that even in *What Is To Be Done?* there are certain ways (probably mainly for tactical reasons because he wasn't in a position to call into question the whole German social-democratic party and its pronounced role of leadership in the Marxist movement) that Lenin holds them up as a model even though the whole thrust of what he says goes up against what they were doing, something which he brings out openly when there's no longer any choice in World War 1, when, as he says, their opportunist boil burst. But Lenin was not able to go back and tie together all these threads and it is important to do so.

This is what we started doing in the last Central Committee report, in the "Charting the Uncharted Course" section in particular. We've held up this German "WORKING CLASS" social-democratic model in more sharp relief as a negative example. This Eurocentric "WORKING CLASS" model is what I'm talking about with all these people like Djilas and the *Nomenclatura* author, Claudin, etc. It's not accidental that they have to bring *What Is To Be Done?* right into their sights and fire on it; you can see again what an important contribution it was; I mean, it does have its organizational expression, but not only that. You can see what's the basis by seeing what they say, using them as a negative example of the importance of a Leninist party and what it's based on. This notion of just "going slow" and "if the workers don't want revolution then nothing can force them" is of course a way of pitching yourself to the most backward.

#### "Alienated from the Masses"

It's very current now in the movement in the U.S.; it's a recurrent theme that all opportunists dump on us because we're always doing things to "alienate ourselves from the masses," by which they mean the lowest common denominator. In particular the viewpoint comes through that "you shouldn't do anything to offend the American people" which, if you think about it, is ridiculous. I mean, why shouldn't we? For example you have to say from being around, and you yourself were involved, that when the Vietnamese people rose up in revolution against U.S. imperialism they offended a good part of the American people. And, precisely if they hadn't been offensive in that kind of way then a lot of the good results — not only in Vietnam and internationally at the time, but even in the U.S. itself — a lot of the very positive results would not have developed. People who were themselves oppressed, outraged at their situation, alienated, in a frame of mind to rebel and looking to reach out to others who were in the same situation and with the same sentiments, would not have been encouraged and drawn forward to the degree or in the same way they were because the Vietnamese people rose up: Black people in the U.S., a lot of the youth, and so on.



And for that matter, when the Black people rose up in the U.S. or the youth and so on, didn't they offend a good part of the American people? And these people were around then too. The CP was also around then. Unfortunately, some of the very same people who are now putting up stop signs and saying "no offense, please, you can't offend the mainstream," were themselves involved in doing it then. That's one of the big tragedies, people from the '60s who drew the incorrect conclusions from the temporary ebb in the movement, especially in the mid-'70s. But there was the CP then pushing the same line: you know, you said, "U.S. Out of Vietnam," and they'd say, "Can we have a little negotiation, fellows?" and so on. This was tied up with the whole Soviet international line and their relationship to that, but also the way they see carrying out even that line for that matter, which is you can't offend the masses.

One thing that comes up is you can't offend the national sentiments of people. Well, for Christ's sake, if we didn't offend the national sentiments of the American people how could we be communists and proletarian internationalists! It would be absolutely impossible. This is where this leads you though. It's not a correct theory and it leads to problems in the oppressed nations; for example, it leads you into promoting bourgeois nationalism and reformism in the final analysis, anyway. But especially in an imperialist country this is directly and immediately a recipe for chauvinism and pro-imperialist reaction. And of course, all these people I've cited, that's what they're promoting, some of them almost openly and consciously and with little disguise, some of them with more of a leftist disguise, but this is the whole idea. This is a tendency that is accentuated with the development of imperialism and in the imperialist countries, in particular "go slow" and so on. It attempts to wrap itself in the mantle of Marx, as I said, by taking advantage of the fact that Marx's work was done before the real development of the imperialist era, at least the qualitative leap involved in the development to imperialism. But, it is also a retrograde trend, it's not really just upholding what Marx said, but out of condition, time and place. It's also retrograde against Marxism, of course, because what it's doing is taking advantage of the fact that with the development of imperialism and, particularly since the Second World War there has been a temporary retarding in the revolutionary movement, particularly among the working class in these advanced imperialist countries, especially of the West. There has been much more of a material basis for these kinds of lines and the basis to say "let's go slow." But that has also, because of the same material conditions, put you much more directly — especially if you're talking about conscious forces, people with worked out theories and not just people who are just acting spontaneously — in opposition to the international proletariat, makes you much more a leech, and a conscious pro-imperialist chauvinist in relation to the international proletariat. That's what's involved.

Here's where the importance of the point about "Leninism as the bridge" in terms of *What Is To Be Done?* links up with "Leninism as the bridge" in

terms of revolutionary defeatism and opposition to one's own imperialism. You see what I'm trying to say? This trend concentrates how they come together in a negative sense.

**Q:** You mean the way you talked about imperialist economism?

**BA:** Exactly. And bourgeois democracy. You can see the bourgeois democracy; these people, not accidentally, all push bourgeois democracy. You see, one point I wanted to bring out in relation to this, and going back to what I was saying earlier, I myself have done some agonizing over this. It's true, there is a real danger and a real risk that you try to develop a party and the party goes bad when it's in power and becomes a bourgeois party and institutes a bourgeois dictatorship, turns the state into a bourgeois dictatorship. We put a lot of emphasis, and I myself have fought in particular to give leadership on this question of preparing *now* against that, and that preparation is very important, although when the time comes you're going to have different material conditions and the ideological preparations we do now will be important then but obviously won't be sufficient, there'll be tremendous struggle anyway because it's different when people are in power than when they are being hunted and hounded and everything.

**Q:** I noticed in your speeches and even in some of your radio talks, it's something that you pay attention to, something that's a question on the masses' minds, "whatever happens when you guys get in power?" And you always try to deal with that question.

**BA:** Obviously events in China brought it out even more sharply. We all knew what happened in Russia; we'd all come to a basic understanding of what happened there and we also theoretically knew the contradictory nature of socialist society, but we were all taken off guard by what happened in China to one degree or another, so that has to tell us that our understanding was still far from really profound on this question. And it's on the minds of the masses; they bring it up a lot, even the basic proletarian masses who really don't have anything to lose; there is a difference in the way it comes up among different sections of the masses, but it comes up. Malcolm X gave the example in one of his talks that when slaves are leaving a plantation and somebody says "Yeah, but where are we going?", they say, "Who gives a fuck, anything's better than this." Malcolm X was talking about outlook, not literally that it's not important to know where you're going. And that's very correct and that is the outlook of the real proletariat that has nothing to lose but its chains. But on the other hand he was talking to an audience largely made up of that section of Black people, for example, yet he still had to make that argument, to struggle over that point with his audience, and the point of that story obviously was that there were some in his audience who were posing the same question, where are we going? Not that it's wrong to pose the question, but it was still like wanting to know what's on the other side of the river before they were willing to leave where they are, even as bad as where they are is. That'll always come up, even

among the basic proletariat, but especially in the U.S. where even the most oppressed sections are, after all, in the U.S.

As perverted as he's become, when Eldridge Cleaver left the U.S. and went to Algeria and other places, and he saw the conditions, the much more stark conditions of the oppressed masses in other countries — and this was obviously for him the beginning of his capitulation — he started talking about how, compared to that, even the oppression of Black people in the U.S. is like being pressed between two velvet sheets. Well, obviously, that's an exaggeration and going way too far and way over the line, and for him it was the beginning of his capitulation, the idea that things aren't so bad even for Black people in the U.S. after all, and he didn't see it as part, as just the much more extreme form of the same imperialist system. But, nevertheless, there is an element of truth in that, that even the most oppressed in the U.S., if you want to get into this sort of contest, reverse upsmanship to see who's most oppressed, there are people outside the borders of the U.S. who will win. And it's obviously a ridiculous and reactionary contest to get into.

Still, there is this question and it's good that people pose the question because you don't want people to rebel blindly, you want them to make revolution consciously with a sense of where they are going. But again it divides into two. On the one hand, it reflects that even people who are very oppressed feel they have a little something to protect, as against an unknown, and that shows that even for them, their consciousness is not unrelated to the sharpening of contradictions. They're not constantly in the mood to exchange anything, whatever it might be, for what they have, it's only when the contradictions sharpen up very acutely that they themselves are willing to put everything on the line without knowing exactly in every detail how everything's going to work out.

### Be Part of the Battle

On the other hand, it's good that people do pose the question, it's good that people do want to know where things are going and what's the way forward out of this, including on this question, "Well, how do we prevent this revolution from becoming turned around, betrayed or turned into its opposite." But it's not quite correct the way they pose this. It's good they pose the question but the way it's posed often is sort of like *us* and *them* or *us* and *you*. What will happen when *you* guys get in power, instead of seeing their own role in this process which is crucial ultimately.

That's why we've also emphasized that we have to put it back to the masses to a certain degree, not to duck the question or to avoid the point of our own role in this. We've emphasized that the role of the vanguard and the masses is not an absolute and we don't want it to be an absolute. In other words, for people who are posing this question it's precisely not a matter of saying, "Okay, we're the party, we'll do what we can, but now what are you going to do?"

There's also the question of saying, "You have to make that leap to becoming part of this party to fight this question out from *that* standpoint too;" it's not just enough to be an advanced person among the masses who rallies to the call, but keeps a certain distance and says, "Let's see whether you guys are for real or not." You've got to come in and fight to make this thing for real, because that's the way it's going to get determined whether it's for real or not is people struggling it out and you can't stand, keep a certain safe distance, or a certain distance in any case, to see what happens, you have to become part of that battle. And you can't do that fully unless you join into the vanguard, because there *is* a real separation, at the same time there is interpenetration, between the vanguard and the rest of the masses, even the advanced masses. It is from this point of view, from this angle, that Marxists pose this question.

generation, I know from my own experience in things that the kernel of this is undoubtedly true. There was an SDS meeting called (given what I'm going to describe next, how somebody even managed to call the meeting is quite an accomplishment and a little bit miraculous); but the meeting somehow got called, people showed up and it was participatory democracy. This was the theme and the method of the time. So they had a problem, they wanted to start the meeting but they didn't know how to start it so somebody got up and suggested that they start the meeting and somebody else said, "Well, it's not for you to say we should start the meeting." People should decide whether they want to start the meeting or not." So then somebody else got up and suggested that they sing songs and see if they could get in the mood to get the meeting going. And somebody said, "Well, we have to first see if everybody *wants* to sing songs and we have to have a vote on that." But then how did they know that *that* was the question they should debate, whether they should sing songs or do something else: "Where do you get the right to say we should discuss the question of singing songs or not, rather than some other thing maybe people want to do?"

So finally they managed to get beyond that because life does assert itself and either they were going to go on like this forever and not have a meeting or they were going to have to make a few decisions despite themselves and despite their even good intentions to try to do everything in a d-e-m-o-c-r-a-t-i-c way. But then they couldn't decide what songs to sing and they got into the same debate over that: "Who are you to say we should sing this song and not that song and we have to have discussion about that first." "Well, let's see if we can elect a temporary . . ." I don't think they wanted to call it a "chairman of the meeting" but somebody like some "secretary of the meeting" or something, because again there's reality and life asserted itself. But it went on like this.

Now all that's humorous on the one hand, but it shows that there is this dialectic between democracy and centralism and you really can't have democracy if there's no centralism, that is if there is no vanguard leadership. How exactly that's going to work itself out in classless society, communism, I don't know, but even then there will have to be some form of centralism, some people who have the responsibility. Even if this responsibility is able to change then, and not be permanent in a certain sense the way it is now with the party, still you're not going to be able to get away from that contradiction. You can't. Life doesn't allow you to discuss everything all at once and endlessly, or else life will come to a standstill and you might even revert back to feudalism or something. Literally, I suppose that's impossible at the stage of communism; ideologically people wouldn't do that; there'd be a basis not to do it, materially and ideologically. But if you did actually just stand around and discuss forever then the Tom Haydens and so on would come in and maybe even get so far as restoring capitalism, or maybe socialism or something.

Leaving that aside, the point is that you've got to have some kind of leadership; there's got to be some sort of direction to things; people have to take responsibility.

## Chapter 2

### Can You Do Away With Leadership?

As I said, I have agonized over the question that the party *can* in fact get turned into its opposite and can become the leading force in restoring capitalism and imposing dictatorship over the masses and transforming the proletarian state into a bourgeois state, a bourgeois dictatorship. And you could just take the attitude, okay let's not have a vanguard then, that way at least we won't demoralize the masses by having another revolutionary party turn into something bad — which is a cop-out ultimately if you want to get right down to it. I've come to understand this point much more deeply. This also connects to a question on bourgeois democracy which was provoked in my mind when I saw "Fort Apache, the Bronx." (See RW 117): the proletariat — and even more than just the proletariat, but the future communist society when there isn't even a proletariat any more — has to evolve and develop something higher than a "perfection" of bourgeois democracy. That was one of the main points I was trying to bring out in that piece; the point of communism politically is not that we will clear away all the class obstacles and then we can have *pure* democracy — because there is no such thing.

#### Participatory Democracy

Remember when back in the '60s, there used to be "participatory democracy"? A lot of times people took up this idea out of the best intentions; and then there were those who took advantage of it, the Tom Hayden types and so on, (we remember him back then too). They would take advantage of it in a very callous and cynical way, for manipulation; they would promote participatory democracy out in public and at the public meetings, and before and after they'd have the clique meetings and decide everything and then let the masses play little games like they were deciding things. And that's just the point.

Now there was an SDS meeting I remember one time in Berkeley that I didn't go to but it was described to me. Even if you allow for a certain amount of exag-

ty for giving some direction and leadership. With all the problems involved in a party, the real contradictions between the party and the masses, those real problems and those real dangers stem from something more fundamental, from the division of labor and from the contradictions that generally characterize class society. And if you just want to turn your back on or walk away from those contradictions, the only thing you'll be doing is guaranteeing that the masses' role in things will be suppressed, that they will in fact be led around by the nose, they will in fact be taken advantage of by demagogues. That's the only thing you can guarantee if you refuse to have and build and strengthen the role of the vanguard.

The irony for all those people who recognize this problem but who recoil from it is that it's *only* with the role of a real vanguard party, a real revolutionary party based on Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, it's *only* with that vanguard that there's the possibility of the masses playing a conscious role in changing things and eventually overcoming that contradiction between the party and the masses. That's the contradictory nature of it; the greater the role of the vanguard, not in the sense that the more it has its hands organizationally on everything, but the greater its role is ideologically and politically, the greater the chances for the masses to actually take these things consciously in hand and transform the world in such a way as to eventually even eliminate the need for the vanguard when all over the world the basis for classes is eliminated. But that does *not* guarantee that the party won't go bad, that the party won't turn into a bunch of demagogues or its leadership won't become a new core of a bourgeoisie; there's no guarantee against that because you are dealing with real contradictions and they can get resolved one way or the other and they depend, as we've learned more deeply, more than on what's just happening in just one country at one time. But still it's *only* with that vanguard and precisely to the degree that its role politically and ideologically is strengthened — it's in relation to that, not contrary to that, that the conscious role of the masses is developed.

Earlier I referred to authors like Djilas and so on who are revisionists and pro-Western imperialist apologists, hyenas, but there are other people with much better motivation, with no desire to promote and serve imperialism, but still out of an incomplete or incorrect understanding, they end up falling into the same position. For them this is an error, while for the others it's a conscious and pro-imperialist policy. So I think that's a point that really has to be put before people and they have to grapple with.

### Anarchists

All the anarchists and so on who want to abolish vanguards . . . I remember Chang Chun-chiao in a speech on the Tien Anmen Square incident in China that was reprinted in *And Mao Makes Five*, made the point that the anarchists don't really want to abolish leadership by a small group; what they want to do is abolish your clique and establish their own clique. Now that was referring to people who were more *consciously* promoting anarchism in order precisely to install

bourgeois dictatorship, which was the situation then in China. But there are also people who spontaneously tend in that direction and they *do unconsciously*, in those cases, promote the same thing, contribute to the same result because as much as the anarchists may wish it they cannot eliminate this contradiction. Society can't be run like those participatory democracy SDS meetings; even SDS couldn't be run like that.

You're dealing with much more profound contradictions, and you're dealing with, you know, with a much larger process than simply one meeting or even one society and so the choice is not leadership or no leadership, it's one kind of leadership or another: precisely a bourgeois leadership or a proletarian leadership. And I don't mean just what label it wears because we've learned that's not the question either, we've learned that a lot more deeply. But precisely the question is what's the *content* of leadership, in other words, as Mao very importantly pointed out, what's the ideological and political line, which Mao pointed out is decisive. Of course, as Mao also said, sometimes even though your line is correct you can lose in the short run, which is a point that we had to bring out in opposition to our own Mensheviks around summing up the events in China. \* Saying that ideological and political line is decisive does not mean that if you have a correct line you'll go straight ahead and win in a straight line because motion only proceeds through twists and turns and in a spiral development. But still, it's precisely the content of the leadership, the character of the leadership in that sense which determines whether or not there is a real revolution with the conscious role of the masses being developed, unleashed and increased or whether that's suppressed. It's *only* with that kind of a vanguard that's even possible; it's not with anarchism.

Even in a more limited sphere as we pointed out in the article on the Spanish Civil War, \*\* the anarchist line was a line for defeat; it was ultimately a reformist line; and in its content, if not always in its intention, it was a capitulationist line. There was a very sharp example of the actual contradictions you're dealing with; there was an army in the field against you that was centralized and while you didn't want to have centralism on the same bourgeois basis that they did, you had to have centralism on a proletarian basis if you were going to defeat them.

Even when you get to communism you're not going to be able to have anarchism. I don't believe that communism will be the same thing. In a shorthand way Lenin said our difference with the anarchists is that they want to abolish the state right now and we know that we can only do it later. Well that was correct in one aspect, but it was kind of a shorthand way to explain a difference. And as we've learned more, and also going into this question more deeply, we have even a more basic difference with the anarchists. We *never* are going to be for the anarchist line. Not that we want order and "everything-in-its-place" or

\* Referring to a faction within the RCP, USA which split from the party in 1977.

\*\* *Revolution*, No. 49, June 1981.

anything like that. We want upheaval and disorder in that sense.

But what I mean by we're never going to be anarchists, is that really what the anarchists are at bottom is bourgeois democrats. They think that if you can just remove all obstacles and let democracy flourish in its pure form — it sort of gets down to the town hall concept — then everything will be all right; and they think that anything that goes against that is bound to become corrupted and destroyed anyway so what's the point, what's the use — which is also the line of the so-called "Marxists," that is, social-democratic, Tito-ite, bourgeois-democratic pro-Western imperialists. Those people's line is, "Okay, maybe you can say to us that our line is, 'Wait, wait, wait,' but the Leninist line is worse." Their view is that the Leninist line of "trying to accelerate revolution by having a vanguard" and "introducing," as they put it (there's the heart of their idealism), "you're *introducing* a difference between the vanguard and the masses," rather than this difference arises out of the division of labor and the contradictions that characterize society in this epoch. And their bottom line is that by that "willful introduction," as they see it because they're idealist, "you are going to produce something, which is going to end up even *worse*, i.e., look at the Soviet Union today, even worse than imperialism." That's where it links up with the social-chauvinist pro-Western imperialist line: "so therefore you're worse than we are." "Yeah, okay you can say we're just trying to go along with the flow, but by trying to divert the flow of things, you're only going to lead to worse disasters." You can see how in some ways their pro-Western imperialist line is in unity with these anarchists who say that anything that goes toward centralism in the name of advancing the revolution is only going to make things worse anyway.

But the simple fact is that because of the material conditions, because of the actual contradictions underlying things not only today but even under communism, it will never be possible to have "pure democracy." In "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" there's a good relevant point, although it's from sort of an individualist, not a communist, point of view. This is the movie based on the book by Ken Kesey, whose weaknesses came out sharply in his other book *Sometimes A Great Notion*. In the movie there is a scene where McMurphy (Jack Nicholson) wants to watch the World Series and Nurse Ratched doesn't want to. And she is a perfect bourgeois democrat in this context. Being sure of the situation she says, "Well, let's have a vote." So they have a vote and McMurphy wins the vote among the people that are there but then Nurse Ratched insists on having all these other people vote who are just literal zombies. So McMurphy gets up and says, "What, you're gonna have *these* people, these clowns vote? They don't even know what the hell we're talking about!"

### A Philosophical Question

There is a good critique of bourgeois and pure democracy; just allowing people to vote, or frankly even if they did know what you're talking about on one level,

just allowing them to have their say is no guarantee that the interests of the broadest masses are going to be realized. There's no guarantee of that just by people having a "right to speak" because life's not that simple, and not only is it not that simple, there's a philosophical question involved. Is there or is there not objective truth? Not that all of it can be known at a given time but is there or is there not objective truth? Are there or are there not things that lie in the direction of progress, advancing society, developing things? The philosophical underpinning of bourgeois democracy is agnosticism and eclecticism, "There's no truth anyway, so the important thing is that the majority of people have their will."

But the problem is that there is truth. That is, even truth as understood correctly as a contradictory phenomenon, a thing advancing through motion and development, or through contradiction. Precisely because there is objective truth, and it also moves in that dialectical way as a result of the dialectical motion of matter, then truth will assert itself anyway. The masses can all have their say and decide something that is not in line with the development of things and then their interests won't be served — especially if you're looking broadly at the interests of mankind as a whole.

One of the things people used to say around the Vietnam war was, "This is an unconstitutional war and was not declared by Congress." Well, who gives a fuck? I wouldn't have liked it any better if it was declared by Congress. This is not necessarily to condemn those people, or at least not all of them, who fell into saying things like that. But it wouldn't really do even to say "This was never submitted to a vote of the American people; we didn't want this war." Well, there's something there you can agitate around but you can't carry that very far because even if they'd had a plebiscite and all the American people, or the majority, had voted to have the Vietnam war, that wouldn't make it correct. It wouldn't make it in the interests of the majority of the people of the world, the interests of mankind, in line with progress, revolution and advance.

Having been inculcated and trained demagogically in the false concept of democracy, it may be tempting to think that you're being very radical if the most you can put forward is that we should remove all the fetters and have pure democracy. But pure democracy doesn't guarantee that truth (not in the absolute metaphysical sense but truth in a dialectical and materialist sense), will be grasped and acted upon and that progress and advance and development of things will be pushed forward. That's what's wrong with the anarchist line and that kind of approach will be wrong even under communism.

Like I pointed out in that little excerpt on bourgeois democracy that was reprinted (in *RW* No. 117), there is a definite revolutionary reason that we're for having people thrashing things out. We're preparing the basis now to have even people who oppose us and have even opposition lines printed now in our newspaper (not without leadership, not anarchistically, but to not raise people in a hothouse). For example around the "Sooner or Later" debate or the one around the party's *Programme* or "100 Flowers" we're laying the basis for do-

ing that in the future and doing it by thrashing it out *now*. The importance of doing it right now is precisely that things do develop through contradiction but it's essential that people thrash these things out and that they know the opposing lines as well as the party line at a given time for two reasons: for one thing somebody who opposes it may actually point out things wrong with it and they may have a more correct understanding of a part of something, even if at the same time their overall line is incorrect and the party's is correct; it's even possible that the reverse may be true at a given moment, they may have more of the truth and the party's line may be off at that given time, but even if that's not true they contribute something. Second of all, even if they're completely wrong, it's important for people to recognize and battle out these things and get a much deeper sense of what's right and what's wrong through that kind of struggle. But *that's* why we're for it because people should come to a much more profound grasp of objective truth in its motion and development and not just have things fed to them.

But none of that will *ever* eliminate the need for centralism. And you know that that's the case. All of us who've been through these attempts at participatory democracy with the best of intentions on the part of the majority (if not the Tom Haydens) know it very well and fairly deeply. At least we have the basis to know it deeply, in our experience of *trying* that kind of thing. Even if we removed the bourgeoisie, imperialism and class society from the scene, it still wouldn't work. You still can't do things without any centralism, without the dialectical relationship between centralism and democracy, that is between the people taking up questions and grappling with them but having some leadership. If people don't take responsibility for preparing agendas (in the broadest sense) that is, for helping to decide which are the essential questions to take up now, how are you going to sort all that out? Are you going to call everybody together and do like that famous SDS meeting? Are you going to spend two hours debating whether or not you should debate what should be on the agenda? As you see, that's like endless quicksand.

So these are some points, I think, that need to be stressed, and this does link up with why we say to people, "Look, if this party is going to continue on the revolutionary way, that depends on the development of things in the whole world on the one hand, but on the other hand, we have a role in influencing that. It's not like we're passive observers of what's happening in the world." We're conscious forces within that and there is a responsibility on people who are advanced enough where they want revolution, where they see the need for revolution and also see the dangers and the problems that arise because the party can go bad and the revolution can get corrupted and turned around from within.

Those people have to make the next leap, they've got to cross over that river, they've got to make that leap to coming *into* the party and fighting it out in that context, because otherwise, indirectly and unintentionally, they're contributing to the possibility of the wrong line winning out. Precisely the people who see that

that's a question, and a vital question, need to make the leap — not without taking up in an all-around way the questions of revolution, the line of the party, and so on but it's precisely the leap they need to make. That's just *one* reason they need to make it, but even that is a reason why they need to make that leap.

### "Maoists"

**Q:** You've been stressing that coming to the fore now in the international communist movement is the fact that there is no Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought without Leninism. You've talked specifically about the "Marxists" — that is, social-democratic, social-chauvinist, pro-Western imperialist attackers of Lenin. What about the other side of that, the so-called "Maoists" against Leninism?

**BA:** Well, there's the question of so-called (again this is so-called) Maoists — so-called Marxists, so-called Leninists, so-called Maoists. For example, there are people — so-called conscious people — who pervert the lessons in the advances achieved through the Cultural Revolution. Basically they end up back in unity with the so-called Marxists on a number of points, on bourgeois democracy in particular, and also on nationalism (and especially in its expression, when it's in an imperialist country, of social-chauvinism).

These are people who try to be Maoist by negating Leninism — rather than seeing Mao Tsetung Thought as a development in crucial areas of Marxism-Leninism — a leap in that sense, but not a negation of Leninism. And Mao, I pointed this out in that talk ("Conquer the World? . . ."), was very clear about the need for a Leninist party; one of the main objectives of the Cultural Revolution was precisely to reconstitute the party on an even higher level through the whole process of the upheaval and the advances made in the Cultural Revolution as a whole.

### Necessity, Freedom and the Party

Strengthening the party in this way was precisely one of Mao's main objectives in the Cultural Revolution, and never did he have in mind the idea of abolishing the party. That's the point he made when he said, "We have to have a party" in discussing the shortcomings of the Paris Commune in light of the experience at the time of the Cultural Revolution. He's very clear that you have to have a party, you have to have a vanguard and he's not just saying it in a negative sense "you have to have it." Mao is very clear on the dialectical relationship between necessity and freedom. It's a necessity to have a party, which includes the necessity of contradiction and struggle to maintain it as a *revolutionary* party, as the experience of China very sharply demonstrated. But the necessary role of the vanguard, where a correct line is able to be won and maintained in command through struggle, does open the door to more freedom, more freedom for the masses in the broadest sense, and that is in the sense of the worldwide advance toward communism. We can even say that applies internationally, too, the need

for a vanguard leadership. But just talking in terms of a party, or parties in different countries, there's a need for the vanguard there as well.

Somehow the idea gets promoted that the experience of the Cultural Revolution makes the Leninist line on the party, the Leninist party, somehow *dépassé*, no longer valid or surpassed by further experience. This is ridiculous and also reactionary and the people who promote this think they're being very profound but they're really only bringing in through the back door the same old bourgeois democracy and social-democracy that we've been talking about before which is more openly promoted by these so-called Marxists we've talked about.

These "Maoists" who are anti-Leninist say, "We will have a party based on the experience of the Cultural Revolution," but really what they're talking about is a party based on their own perversion of what the experience of the Cultural Revolution is. They are one-sidedly viewing only one aspect of the Cultural Revolution and turning it into its opposite in the way they're treating it. That is, they are taking the upsurge of the masses and the fact that the old party apparatus had become an obstacle to the revolution because it had come into the hands of a deeply entrenched bourgeois leadership and was under the command of their bourgeois line. It had become a counter-revolutionary instrument and the Cultural Revolution had as one of its main objectives to reverse that situation and not just simply restore the party to its vanguard role but, through the spiral-like motion, to strengthen its vanguard role, to strengthen it as a revolutionary instrument of the proletariat. But, these people take only the one aspect of the situation, that is the mass upsurge including its opposition to the party bureaucracy, and they treat that one-sidedly and freeze it. Then they think that they've come up with some brilliant new invention which is a social-democratic notion of a party or a non-party (or at least a non-Leninist party) in opposition to the Leninist line which Mao was consistently fighting for, and at the same time actually advancing.

Mao was actually advancing the understanding of the role of the party in relation to the masses, particularly when the party is in power; the party itself has to be revolutionized in those situations and even more than before. Although that's constantly a task, it's an even more important question when the party's in power. And beyond that, because you know that's not the whole of it, what Mao also grasped was that precisely in order to do that, the party had to be thrown up for grabs in a certain sense. The party itself develops in a spiral-like motion as part of the overall spiral-like motion of the revolution and of events in the world in the process of the development of the world from the bourgeois epoch toward the communist epoch. As part of that whole spiral motion, the party itself develops in a spiral-like way and at certain points it comes to crucial junctures or conjunctures where the question of what the nature of the party will be becomes a concentrated expression of which direction society will take and of the general overall struggle in society and even in the world, between the forces of revolution and counter-revolution.

So *that* was Mao's development. And it did involve an aspect of going against the "Leninist norms" as they are presented, in rigid, metaphysical, dogmatic and ultimately revisionist (that's why we say, dogmato-revisionist) form by the Hoxha-ites and people who want to uphold even some significant errors of Stalin, including the so-called monolithic party, in a metaphysical sense. Hoxha's dogmato-revisionist line holds that the party always is correct, that the party is sort of like the leader in a bourgeois sense, that the party imparts the correct line to the masses in a bourgeois metaphysical sense; but what these so-called Maoists promote in opposition to this is not real Maoism but the opposite pole of the same stupidity, social-democracy and bourgeois-democracy.

Often they have the same sort of notions of participatory democracy and so on, "We'll just say to the workers and to the masses 'come on in, join with us and make this party our own'" — as if that's not a question of *line*, and as if you can do away with the question of leadership even within the party itself, let alone the contradiction more broadly between leadership and led as it expresses itself between the party on the one hand and the broader masses on the other. Of course, that always means, whether people intend it or not, as I was drawing out earlier, that there will be demagogery, manipulation of the masses on a much more developed scale because in fact you cannot do away with the need for leadership.

### The Only Real Choice

The only way you have a chance for correct leadership is to grasp the contradictions that make leadership necessary and to handle that contradiction correctly through struggle. If you deny the need for vanguard leadership and for leadership even within the party, then you are guaranteeing that bourgeois methods of leadership and bourgeois forms of leadership will prevail. That is the only real choice — proletarian leadership and methods of leadership vs. bourgeois — not leadership vs. no leadership, not "vanguard vs. no vanguard." The question is not whether there will be a separation of a kind, even while there is interpenetration, between the vanguard and the masses. That will exist, and will take one form or another. Of course you could say it won't be between the vanguard and the masses because if you have the bourgeois form it won't really be a vanguard. But it will be, in that case, a clique; it will be a clique separated from the masses, but dominating over them in that situation. But exactly this will be the end result, too, with the line of denying or trying to pretend that you can somehow will away the contradiction at this stage between the leadership and led and that you can ignore or will away the underlying contradictions that give rise to that contradiction between leadership and led.

Really what it comes down to is taking certain aspects of the form of the Cultural Revolution — particularly mass democracy — and turning them against the content. Mao himself pointed out in "On The Correct Handling Of Contradictions Among The People" that some people think democracy is an end, but really it's only a means to an end. He was saying it has a class character

and in particular, as it was developed more fully in the Cultural Revolution a decade later, mass democracy had the purpose of waging the class struggle against the bourgeoisie and transforming the thinking of the people, advancing their consciousness as well as the forms of organization in society and among the masses that enable them to play a fuller and more conscious role in ruling and transforming society. *That* was the point of the mass democracy. But to make it an end in itself makes it a little game, makes it a luxury, and turns it against the class struggle — of the proletariat that is.

Frankly, this objectively has the character of demagogery and at least on the part of some people it is conscious demagogery because always these types who promote this, at some point or another themselves come up against the fact that there's a contradiction there. Then they either change their thinking about it or else they become much more cynical and consciously manipulative because they know damn well that they've got their own ideas and that they want those ideas to prevail. But if they continue saying to people, "Come on in and do whatever you want and let's have mass democracy," well, then they become consciously demagogic and manipulative. They themselves more and more consciously put into practice the things they claim to be opposing, all the things they claim to be the evils of, and inherent within, the Leninist understanding and Leninist character of a party. Of course, this is no more Maoism than the other tendency is Marxism; I put it in quotes or say so-called because it's an attempt to cut off an aspect of the development of the science of revolution, of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and use it against the thrust of it.

## Chapter 3

### Internationalism and the Mass Line

The line on the party that opposes its Leninist character as evil and undemocratic also goes along with bourgeois-democratic tendencies generally. And it's interesting that especially on the part of people in the imperialist countries this current has as one of its essential currents social-chauvinism because, you see, if you're going to tail behind the masses in imperialist countries then you're going to end up promoting social-chauvinism.

For example there's one group I know which wrote an essay saying, well, if there's a world war, and particularly if there's a Soviet invasion (which already shows you that it's a loaded question) of Western Europe, then the national question will certainly come to the fore and it's not up to communists to ignore the national sentiments of the people. But this is just another way of saying that if there's a world war there'll be a wave of chauvinism which will sweep over these European imperialist countries; that's really what they're talking about. So then the question is posed, do you do like Lenin did and go against that?

Let's face it, Russia was not the leading imperialist country in World War 1; it was not the leader of its bloc. In fact as Lenin pointed out, in certain ways it was in hock to England and even France, and to a certain degree there was even an element of truth (secondarily) that a lot of the fighting that Russia did was in the interests of British imperialism. But it was also, and Lenin never slackened on this, in the interest of Russian imperialism, even if they played a secondary role. Somebody's got to play the role of the leader of the bloc. You could say in this one context there was a qualitative difference between British imperialism and Russian imperialism, but that didn't make Lenin say, well, since we're second-rate, I guess we can defend the fatherland. There wouldn't have been a Russian Revolution had he not waged an untiring struggle against all the major manifestations of this social-chauvinist line, including the idea that, well, the masses want to de-



fend the fatherland and it's not up to us to offend the masses. If Lenin had not been an internationalist, he could not have taken that stand; if he didn't have in mind the overall process in the world and hadn't viewed the proletarian revolution as essentially and fundamentally an international process he would not have been able — not to have the courage in some sort of existential sense — but he wouldn't have been able to have the understanding to go against the wave of chauvinism that swept over Russia as it did over every country, at least every major participant, in World War 1 at the time.

But of course if you have a line of promoting bourgeois democracy and tailing behind the masses, even in promoting the *form* of that, denying the need for vanguard leadership and therefore denying the need for centralism, you will go along with, even promote, this wave of chauvinism. There is a direct link between vanguard leadership and centralism, not centralism in a bourgeois sense but centralism in dialectical relationship with democracy, that is, with the conscious role of the masses. If you deny the need for a vanguard role, politically and ideologically, you will deny the need for centralism organizationally and that goes hand in hand with tailing the masses. In imperialist countries it is bound to lead to promoting social-chauvinism.

### Oppressed Nations

Here we get into a more controversial area — but that's okay — which is in some of these other countries where there is legitimacy to the national question. To step back a second, I remember for example someone once challenged me when I said that these European bourgeoisies and the bourgeoisies in imperialist countries in general were the legitimate defenders of the fatherland, they were the legitimate bearers of the standard of the nation at this stage. Someone who had an opportunist line on this challenged me and said, well, what do you think about the comprador bourgeoisies in these countries of the third world? Do they have a national character, that is, because they're the ruling classes of the nation, are they the upholders of the national banner and the standard of the nation? But precisely what that question ignored or obliterated was the distinction between the imperialist countries and the oppressed nations.

Now it's true, we're talking about a *basic* distinction in the world; like Lenin pointed out, an era would not be an era if it did not consist of many different, diverse phenomena. Just because you're talking about general tendencies in the world, you cannot make everything fit neatly into boxes; there are transitional forms, there are things which are more in one category than the other but still have features from the category of which they're not generally a part; there are transitional forms in between and so on. But still there is this basic distinction between imperialist countries and oppressed nations in this era — a distinction which, if anything, is even *more* important than when Lenin first insisted on it around the time of World War 1.

The point is, the comprador bourgeoisies in these oppressed nations are na-

tional traitors, if you will; they are lackeys and retainers of imperialism. But the reason that it is correct to formulate it in that way and even to raise the question of national traitor is because the national question is still on the agenda as the central question there, whereas in the imperialist countries it is not. The national question, as Lenin pointed out very clearly, is a thing of the past for the developed imperialist countries; whereas it is very much on the agenda now, historically and politically speaking, for the oppressed nations. That's precisely the point and so that question itself revealed at the minimum an ignorance of that whole essential point.

Nevertheless, in these oppressed nations to promote a line of tailing behind the masses will in fact lead you also to promote and foster and tail behind nationalism. There is an important distinction: the national sentiments there have a great deal more progressive character and can contribute to a revolutionary movement, which is not the case in the imperialist countries, where they work against it. But still, even in an oppressed nation, communists are not — ideologically, in their outlook and in their overall stand — representatives of the nation. This is the point we have been fighting for with the article on "National Nihilism" in *Revolution*\* and so on. A communist is a representative of the international proletariat, of no nation in that sense; a communist is a representative of the proletariat, which is seeking to move society beyond nations, even while recognizing in a practical sense not only that there are nations in the world but that the national question is an extremely important question and the national struggle is an extremely important struggle which can, especially under proletarian leadership, contribute significantly to the proletarian revolution and the advance toward communism. (And even sometimes when it is not under proletarian leadership it can for a time and to a degree contribute to it, although then it will turn into its opposite, meaning it will be once more a question of that nation's subordination to imperialism.) There are tendencies for the colonial mentality to take hold even among the colonized themselves. Fanon talked about this and analyzed it in *Wretched of the Earth* from a bourgeois-democratic (but radical democratic) point of view. Mao, from a Marxist-Leninist standpoint, talked about this problem too: the colonial mentality taking hold and influencing even the colonized themselves in the direction of feelings of national inferiority. All that's true but nevertheless, that's secondary in an overall sense to the national sentiments and then the *nationalist* sentiments of broad masses of the people in these countries which are aroused by their concrete conditions, particularly the national oppression that does exist. These sentiments are also strengthened by the fact that large masses of the people in these countries are in a petty-bourgeois situation, that is peasantry or artisans or urban petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals and so on.

### The Mass Line and Nationalism

But here's where I said we'd get into some controversy: the question of tailing

\*See *Revolution* No. 49, June 1981. Also published as a pamphlet.

behind the masses. While Mao's contributions on the mass line are genuinely important, real contributions and are linked with important contributions of his in the realm of philosophy, there also is something which has to be called attention to and looked into more deeply. For a good part of the struggle in China the revolutionary movement was going *with* the spontaneous thrust of nationalism — against Japan, for example. The revolutionary movement did not have to — as it did in Russia — go against the nationalist (and in that case openly chauvinist) sentiment of the masses, especially as it sharply expressed itself in world war. During this whole period of the anti-Japanese war, for example, they had to give leadership to, but they were also *able* to a certain degree to merge with, the national sentiment of the people to fight against Japanese imperialism. I'm not saying it was wrong for them to do so; that's not the case at all. It was correct for them to rally people on the basis of their opposition to Japanese imperialism and to unite with people on the basis of the desire to fight for liberation of the nation and so on even after that against U.S. imperialism and its lackey Chiang Kai-shek. But still, what I'm trying to get at here is that in that kind of situation the need to go against the national sentiments of the masses does not present itself.

Even though Mao was one of the leaders, not only in China but in the whole history of the international communist movement, who most sharply and directly pointed out that truth is in the hands of the minority at the beginning as a law; even though he was the one that brought forth the formulation "going against the tide is a Marxist-Leninist principle" and stressed over and over again that that was the case; nevertheless I'm not so sure that in the area of the national question he saw or applied that consistently there. Again that links up with some of the points made in the talk ("Conquer the World? . . ." — Ed.) about what was the character of the Chinese revolution and what things they *had* to go against the tide of in the Comintern and the international communist movement at the time and what things they *didn't*.

The reason I raise the mass line is related to this. While I think there is a basic principle of mass line which is correct, still a lot of questions and concrete circumstances have to be thought through — including when what you're doing in its principal aspect is going with the stream of the sentiments of the masses in an overall sense, as was the case, for example, during the anti-Japanese war. A lot of Mao's writings on the mass line are from that period — at least in terms of what was put into the Red Book which many people are familiar with. When the situation did change in China, for example after the victory of the revolution and particularly in Mao's later years, there is increasing emphasis on his part on going against the tide.

Let me put it this way: when you're fighting a foreign enemy, maybe it's easier to rally 90% plus of the population to your banner. Now whether or not you can win leadership, whether the people are won to *your* banner is a question too. In other words, there's a class struggle within that, as there was in the anti-Japanese war: which banner exactly is it, what character of warfare, relying on what forces,

heading towards what eventual end, what eventual objective after you win the particular stage of struggle or if you pass through it? There is an intense struggle around all this which of course Mao very importantly and successfully waged, but still in another sense you're going with the tide of the national sentiments of the people and you can rally, even unite with, 90% or more of the people in that kind of context. This is not easy, but it is possible to do so. Whereas it may not be possible to do so when you're waging a civil war for example or when you have to carry out revolutionary defeatism in an imperialist country, when you have to go *against* the spontaneous tide in a much sharper way. Under those conditions your strategic objective should still be to win over all who can be won over to you, that is to unite with or to neutralize the broadest number, and to isolate the real enemies to the greatest degree possible; the united front kind of approach is still correct there. But we've correctly emphasized in the 1980 Central Committee report, for example, on "Charting the Uncharted Course,"\* that a civil war is a struggle between two sections of the people, and we're not going to have 90% with us more or less all the way through.

That was even true in China for example after the anti-Japanese war. They started with the minority of people — at least under their leadership — and they won over broad sections of the middle classes as the struggle advanced and as the Chiang Kai-shek regime really started tottering and then collapsing; then they won over broad sections. That experience also was summed up by Mao and made its impact on the Chinese revolution. I think that had something to do with important preparations for his ability to emphasize going against the tide and that you may start with a minority (while not giving up on winning over the majority or winning over or rallying the broadest number possible). Even in the anti-Japanese war a minority was under *their* banner.

But there's a difference here, which I'm trying to emphasize, especially when you compare it to an imperialist country. In particular, you cannot go with the tide of national sentiment, which is a powerful sentiment in today's world. There's a material basis for this in the imperialist countries; people understand with one degree of consciousness or another that they're fighting to defend a certain amount of privilege. Therefore, in such countries, to win over those who rally to the national banner, to win them to their more fundamental class interests, to the interests of the international proletariat, which are their fundamental class interests — this is not so direct and immediate and expresses itself differently.

I haven't thought this through thoroughly and I know I'm getting into an area of controversy, which is fine. The way I want to promote the controversy is in the form of putting the question: How does that interrelate with the question of the mass line? Not that we shouldn't uphold the mass line as an important principle and the developments around that as an important contribution by Mao, but how does that interrelate with the question of the mass line? One point I've been emphasizing over and over again is that it is a perversion of the mass line to promote

\*See RW No. 99, p. 12.

tailoring of the masses in the name of the mass line; it's a common perversion. Mao himself was very clear on this and opposed to it; if you look at what he actually said and systematized in terms of the mass line, it is very clearly opposed to tailism.

Mao was never a promoter of tailism, but on the other hand maybe certain ways in which they didn't have to go against the tide of the national sentiments of the people in the Chinese revolution have to be taken into account when you're in a situation where you do have to go against it. Not that you give up on winning the masses and not that you ignore what the sentiments of the masses are. But it's one thing not to ignore them, that is to take them into account tactically in order to be able to win them most effectively to a correct line, sometimes by struggling *against* a lot of their very sentiments; it's another thing to "take account of their sentiments" by tailing them and in fact capitulating to imperialism which has rallied them behind those sentiments. One of the common forms of capitulating to imperialism is in the name of the masses; that's what Lenin pointed out about World War I. He said Kautsky was an example of how the worst crimes in the world can be committed in the name of the masses. That was something that Lenin had to deal with very acutely in World War I and to a certain degree that particular aspect of it anyway, in terms of the national sentiments, has been both obscured and to a certain degree distorted, at least since the 1930s.

## Chapter 4

### Lessons from Iran on Coming From Behind to Build the Party

**Q:** We are talking about revolution in the colonies and dependent countries and how it's not some kind of absolute law that it can only be led by the proletariat. How does that relate to the question of party building, the party and the masses?

**BA:** Take the Iranian revolution. We do say "the Iranian revolution" — it was a revolution. It did lead to the toppling of one regime, and it did lead to the coming to power — at least in the short run — of new and different class forces than were represented by the Shah. Now at this point that revolution has clearly been turned into its opposite and a new reactionary bourgeois (ultimately comprador bourgeois, pro-imperialist) force is consolidating, or one can basically say has consolidated, its rule for now. But that doesn't change the fact that there was a real revolution there. There was mass uprising, there were all the conditions that characterize a revolution.

If you want to make the argument that the only revolution in this era that's really a revolution is the proletarian revolution, and that can only be led by the proletariat — well, that's a tautology; it's a circular argument. To say that the proletarian revolution can only be led by the proletariat is obvious. But it's incorrect to say that in this era the only real revolution is a proletarian revolution. So in that sense the Iranian revolution was a real revolution.

Now it *is* true that in the world of today there are ultimately only two classes that can rule society — the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. And in these oppressed nations, the colonial and dependent countries, what that means is that either the imperialists will ultimately rule them having as their dependents the local reactionary forces, or the proletariat will rule them and make them base areas for the world proletarian revolution. But the fact that that's ultimately true doesn't deny or obliterate the fact that there are transitional steps in between. It is still correct to say that as a general rule (though not in an absolute way) there are two stages

in the revolution in such countries, even though it's true that ultimately only the bourgeoisie or the proletariat are going to rule those countries — and that means not the *local* bourgeoisie or the proletariat, but either the proletariat or the *imperialists*.

In the course of work on the book *America in Decline* we've come to understand much more sharply that the relation between imperialism and these oppressed nations is also a production relation. It's a political relation, but it has a foundation as a production relation. Lenin insisted on the distinction between imperialist countries and the oppressed nations. And we've come to understand that the expression in the economic base, or the political/economic expression of this, is that the economies of all the countries in the world of today are controlled by finance capital, by imperialism. But the distinction is that in the imperialist countries — and not only the U.S. and the Soviet Union, but the imperialist countries of Europe and Japan as well — it is the local bourgeoisie that controls that finance capital, whereas in the oppressed nations, and in the colonial and dependent countries, they do not. There it is not the local bourgeoisie that controls that finance capital; it is controlled by finance capital internationally, or different blocs of finance capital. That is, it is foreign imperialism which controls that finance capital. And as I said, that's the political/economic expression or the expression in the economic base of that basic distinction between imperialist countries and oppressed nations. So that when we say that only the bourgeoisie or the proletariat can control these countries (talking about the "third world," for a short-hand expression), we don't mean the local bourgeoisie or the local proletariat. In the final analysis either it will be the proletariat — and that has to be the proletariat representing the *international* proletariat, programmatically as well as ideologically, in terms of what it is fighting for and how it's contributing to the world revolution in the final analysis — or it will be the international bourgeoisie, if you will, or different blocs of it, that is, *imperialism* will control these countries in the final analysis. But in between, that is before the final analysis, other class forces can come to the leadership of movements that are genuine movements that have at least an aspect of opposition to imperialism and its lackeys and that temporarily change the regime or even the relation of class forces in terms of who is in power. Iran is an example of that, where it was not the imperialists and the class forces that were their direct reserves that dominated power in Iran for a while; it was local bourgeois forces, but not the imperialists and their compradors who were in power for a period of time. And that is for a number of reasons which need to be looked at again.

This experience of the Iranian revolution is a very important experience in recent history that has a lot of lessons for the future, even the immediate future. The U.S. imperialists were on the horns of a very sharp dilemma in Iran; they had to decide whether to go down the line with the Shah and as a result risk being further exposed and having broader and deeper opposition rallied against them in Iran and internationally (even in the U.S.), or whether to try to cut the Shah loose

and save their own appearance to a certain degree — that is, to cut their losses and try to work through other forces. They went back and forth and had very sharp struggle in their own ranks about this.

### Reactionary Army Held Back

At a certain point it was pretty clear that the Shah was going to go anyway, unless they were willing to go all out to save him, that is unless they were willing to at least give very forceful backing to the Iranian army and maybe even come in directly with armed forces themselves. At that point, given the overall developments and current situation in the world, they decided to cut their losses and not to throw everything in opposition to the fall of the Shah's regime and the coming to power of new and different class forces. Obviously they did that very calculatingly, with the aim of recouping their losses and of reestablishing and consolidating their hold over the country on an even more powerful basis if they could. That much is perhaps obvious. But, what struck me at the time was that the Iranian army was not being fully mobilized, to a certain degree it was being held on its leash, and the Shah was bitter about that, too. This doesn't mean that there wasn't a genuine mass uprising or that as a result of the whole revolutionary process there weren't divisions within the Iranian reactionary armed forces that expressed themselves at the time of the February uprising.

But still, the army was held back. And the question is why was that the case? I think it was because the calculations were made by the U.S. imperialists and those who were following their orders that if they threw that army in entirely they risked a chance of really losing even bigger, that is, of having that army defeated, splitting even more, cracking open even more deeply in its foundation, and having a much more thoroughgoing revolution and also having the kind of chaos that the Soviets could come in and take advantage of more directly. So they decided not to do that, and for that reason, a large part of that army was held intact.

But that, you see, is the kind of thing which also pretty much guarantees that in the short run bourgeois forces, as opposed to proletarian forces, are going to be at the fore and are going to come to power. By that I mean bourgeois forces within the revolutionary camp as it shaped up at that time — the bourgeois or petty bourgeois forces or a mixture of them such as those grouped around Khomeini. That kind of revolution was only partial, but it was a real revolution and in terms of participation it was very broad. It really did almost engulf the whole nation in opposition to the monarchy. But that's the point. It was in opposition to the *monarchy*.

But as far as, for example, the peasantry being mobilized to carry out an agrarian revolution, as far as the proletariat being able to come to the fore, that's something that would have taken a longer and more deep-rooted — it's not so much a question of time — but more thoroughgoing revolution which also does take more time and more twists and turns. When Haile Selassie fell in Ethiopia in

1974 bourgeois forces there also came to the fore. And even though it was a much sharper and broader mass movement in Iran, including real mass armed struggle in that uprising, and there were legitimate defections of the army into the camp of revolution, it was precisely something that in its development and even in terms of the way the imperialists maneuvered was bound to, in a certain sense, in the short run lead to bourgeois forces being at the fore and coming to power.

It didn't go through enough for the proletariat to really win leadership and to carry out a thoroughgoing revolution even in the first stage — a thoroughgoing anti-imperialist democratic revolution in Iran. And that's important to sum up. Otherwise you can get demoralized: "Well there's another revolution that turned into its opposite." But that revolution was a *real* revolution, and it was not led by the proletariat. Such things not only are possible theoretically but happen in practice.

This goes against the tendency that whenever anything happens in the revolutionary movement that's an advance, there is a tendency to turn it into a law in some absolute metaphysical sense. For example, the revolution in China was led by the proletariat, and every other class was summed up as proven incapable of leading a thoroughgoing anti-imperialist democratic revolution. That's true, and not only was it true in China then but ultimately it's true in general in countries like China. But *ultimately* is one thing and making some sort of automatic, metaphysical, absolute law out of this is another thing.

What were the class forces that led the struggle in Cuba? Wasn't the Cuban revolution really a revolution? I think it was. It was led by petty bourgeois forces that ultimately became a comprador bourgeoisie for new imperialists, but it was still a revolution. To say that the Cuban revolution was not a revolution, or that the Algerian revolution (to take another example) was not a revolution because it didn't ultimately lead to the proletariat seizing power is metaphysics. And that's the point I was trying to get at; if you say that, then you're not going to really grasp the profundity and the thoroughgoing character that has to be imparted to a revolution to *really* enable the proletariat to come to the fore and come to power, even in the short run. (I say in the short run because we know that power can be restored and the bourgeoisie can restore capitalism — a new bourgeoisie in particular.)

### Why Communists Didn't Lead It

There is also the fact that, because of the repression there and a number of other reasons, the Marxist-Leninist movement was not very developed inside Iran itself. Now there was the kind of thing that went on in the Russian revolution where a lot of the Marxist-Leninist development, the polemics, the clarifying and sharpening of line questions that went on in relation to the Marxist-Leninist forces in Iran actually went on outside Iran, among the students, intellectuals and others who were outside the country for a period of time under the Shah's

regime. But there wasn't the development inside Iran of a powerful Marxist-Leninist movement. It was really having to try to come from behind, and in the short run was not able to take leadership in that struggle. I think in large part that's because of what the other side — in particular the U.S. imperialists — did, which made it much more difficult for them to be able to come from behind in that kind of accelerated way, because of what I was just talking about. The imperialists themselves took steps to see that the thing would sort of "get resolved" to a certain point, in the short run, and also to see that forces that they could both work with and also undermine more easily, put pressure on and hopefully win over or partly win over, would be in the forefront and would come to power.

That also was a very big factor in why the Marxist-Leninists were not able to win leadership, because Khomeini and the forces grouped around him had a real advantage over the Marxist-Leninists in the short run due to the way all the different forces were operating and the specific resolution of the contradictions that occurred (in a partial and limited sense) at that particular juncture. So, the limitations of the Marxist-Leninist movement also have to be understood in that light, not just in terms of the limitations of the Marxist-Leninists themselves, isolated from the rest of that. And that's not raised as a criticism of the Marxist-Leninist forces in Iran. It's just trying to draw some important lessons, because that revolutionary movement and that revolution of a kind there have been extremely rich in lessons, and we should draw all the lessons we can from this.

All this ties up with the question of the party. Mao talked about three magic weapons that they had: they had a revolutionary army, they had the united front, and they had the party. And these were the three magic weapons of the Chinese revolution. And correctly (not mechanically applied) those are three basic principals or three magic weapons of any revolution. But they are not magic weapons in a metaphysical sense. In other words, the question in Iran was not whether they had a group that called itself a party, or even *was* a party objectively. They didn't have it, but if they had had it that wouldn't have changed everything drastically either, just in and of itself. For example, in the U.S. there is such a party; there is our party. But what I was trying to get at with the lesson of Iran is when a revolutionary situation does emerge, how strong the party is will be crucial at that point. We can come back to this later in terms of the qualitative/quantitative aspect, because both are important, but quality is the principal aspect and the key link — even in building the quantity. But how strong the party is qualitatively and quantitatively is going to be crucial at that point.

### Can't Pull a Party Out of a Hat

Precisely what the experience of Iran shows is that you can't just create that all of a sudden. How strong the party is then has everything to do with what it has done and how it has been built, which is the element we continue to underestimate, not give enough attention to. It is very important to pay attention overall to what gets carried out and how much and in what way the party has

been built (that is, the quantity and the quality), all the way up, all through the process of preparation.

Let's take the question of the proletarian Black masses, for example, one of the most crucial forces for revolution in the U.S. Not to separate them out in any kind of an overall sense, but just to isolate that particular very important force for a second. Does anybody really think that just because their objective interests lie in proletarian revolution that there's not going to be any other major tendency among them at the time when a revolutionary situation develops? Or that even among the most advanced there won't be a constant pull back and forth and a struggle over which tendency to support and rally behind and help build? And it's going to come down to life and-death questions of how to influence and win over at that time literally thousands of people at a time. When we talk later about quantity and quality in party building, one of the things we will talk about and get into is this whole revisionist policy carried out, for example, by some parties we can see right around us, who give you a piece of literature and say "Join up with the Communist Party. Send in the form and you're in the C.P." And that's also what they basically do in the U.S., all these revisionist parties. They've had a history of it for years before; they've gone down this counterrevolutionary road even in the '30s with the C.P. in the U.S. So it's not a question of quantity in the abstract, numbers in an absolute way, but how much you are able to bring people forward to the banner of the revolutionary communist party in a large-scale way in a period of revolutionary crisis. *Then* it is correct to win over thousands, maybe not to joining your party literally on the spot, but maybe to joining it very quickly because everything becomes telescoped and accelerated in that kind of period.

And how are you going to do that? How are you going to win those people? There are going to be people out on the street; there will be real genuine mass debates, which will precisely be promoted by and in the service of the overall class struggle. How are you going to influence those people? How are you going to be able to get up and concretely win them away from bourgeois and nationalist forces among the Black people or just demagogues of one kind or another generally representing the bourgeoisie among the masses?

Social democrats, all kinds of forces are going to be in the field. Ron Dellums will be out there maybe pulling out all of his old speeches to prove he's always been a socialist and for revolution — and if not him somebody else. Maybe even Tom Hayden, we don't know. There are those types that will be out there, and their representatives will be out there. And how much we are in a position to influence that, to win people concretely, will be decisive.

Even in the imperialist countries, while the stage of revolution is a proletarian revolution, you can have something that starts out as a revolution and, as we have pointed out, ends up in a constitutional crisis. That is, a revolutionary movement develops but because the leadership falls into the hands of or remains in the hands of bourgeois forces, or forces ultimately serving the bourgeoisie, the revolution is aborted.

## The Party — A Leap

Again the question is not just quantity, how big a party you have, but *quality*, how trained people are. We have done a lot and have to even go further and more deeply into the process of overcoming to the degree *possible* the distinction between the party and the masses, not in the sense of trying to obliterate that distinction but trying to open up the questions that the party is thrashing out to the masses as broadly as possible; still there must be a distinction between the party and the masses, not only organizationally, but even ideologically and politically. The way in which questions are gone into, the depth in which they are gone into, is much fuller, much deeper in the party than more broadly, and it can be and it has to be because of the very reasons and contradictions that make a party necessary in the first place.

There is a leap to becoming a conscious communist and that leap has to organizationally be expressed in terms of joining the party and taking part in the life of the party. However much we advance and even make real breakthroughs in terms of opening these questions up to the masses and involving the masses in them, if the way in which those same questions are treated is not on a more advanced level in the party, then we are making mistakes on the other end. Then we are obliterating the role of the vanguard, and we are not going into those questions as deeply with the people in the party as we should be and can be; we are obliterating the role of the vanguard in the name of involving the masses or even in the process of seeking to genuinely involve the masses. Even as much as the masses have to be involved, party members have to go into the same questions from different angles and much more thoroughly and deeply and they have to thrash them out in a much more profound way because that corresponds to what the party is, what the level of consciousness is that's required, and the commitment based on that consciousness that's required to be in the party. And if you are not doing that you are downgrading the role and the importance of the vanguard, and then ultimately downgrading what the masses can do and how they can be involved and the ways in which they can take up and fight through these questions as part of the overall class struggle.

So, it's not enough to be selling the newspaper, reading the newspaper, and even maybe writing correspondence to the newspaper and contributing on that level, and being involved in the process of thrashing and grappling with these questions and fighting it through, in that kind of way and on that level — outside the party. For people who have gotten to that point, they need to take a further leap; people in the party need to keep on developing, too, but there is a very crucial qualitative leap to when you've gotten to that point, then you have to come into that arena where you can do this in a much more thoroughgoing way and through the course of it get trained in a much deeper way than you can do outside. The party is an arena where those questions are, have to be, thrashed out in a much deeper, more profound, and more all-around way than it is possible to

do at this stage of society outside the party exactly because of what the party is and why it is needed; what it is that gives rise to the need for a party also makes it the case that the party can and must take those questions up much more thoroughly and train people much more deeply. And people have to see the connection between all that and what we are aiming for, that is, our objective, our long-term objective in the more limited sense, that is, to make revolution, to carry out the "seize power" part of it.

### Preparation Key

If people see that at a certain point things are going to come to a head, at whatever time that is, and that everything we are doing is preparation for that, including the building up and strengthening of the party, qualitatively and also quantitatively, then they can grasp more deeply how important it is that they get into that whole process and be part of that whole struggle in that arena within the party. They'll see they need to get that kind of training, and not just get that kind of training but on the other side of it also contribute to the struggle over what kind of line and direction we are going to take. The question of whether or not we are going to carry out this line of Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power is not a settled question absolutely in the party. It's settled in the sense that that is our line and we've fought it through to a certain degree. It's not a settled question. At each point in which we run into serious difficulties there are going to be people not only on the outside who attack, but people who jump out inside on various levels to oppose that in various degrees.

People who understand the need for revolution, who want revolution and more than that, begin to see what's involved in revolution, have to get in and be involved in that struggle too; and get trained through the course of that, so that they are able to deal with all the complexities and twists and turns; so that they are able to carry out the work of preparation, and specifically so that they are able to deal with what all of that preparation is preparing for — that is when the revolutionary situation does ripen that they are able to make the biggest contribution. And if they are sitting, maybe not on the sidelines in one sense, but in another they are staying outside of that arena, then they are not going to be able to contribute. And the lack of that contribution, if you multiply it by the numbers of people who are in that situation, *could* mean the difference between victory and defeat. And that's how important it is. It's not a question of trying to hype people, but it is a question of their really grasping that very deeply.

That has everything to do with grasping the line around the whole central task and everything that's concentrated in that, and the whole question of preparation, as active preparation. We're carrying out revolutionary political work now, but it's *aimed* towards something and we are preparing for something, including in the way we take up the question of the party and how to build the party, and whether or not we pay enough attention to that and in what way we pay attention to it, with what line.

These are some of the lessons we can draw from recent experience internationally, particularly in Iran — and not only there, but that's a very concentrated example. If you see these things then the conclusion can and has to be drawn much more sharply around the question of the party, of people joining the party, the struggle to build the party, and of that aspect of preparation. You can see much more clearly how important that is; you can see it in a much sharper light.

## Chapter 5

### The Party: The Key Part of Organizing Forces

**Q:** In “Conquer the World? . . .” in the part on the central task when you speak of “preparing minds and organizing forces” you say that the party is the key aspect of organizing forces. Maybe you could develop a bit more how you see that.

**BA:** On the one hand maybe it should seem obvious that the party is the key aspect of organizing forces since it is a principle of Marxism-Leninism that the party is the most important organization of the proletariat, right? But the fact is that in opposition to that there’s been a trend which has also had a lot of influence within our own ranks going all the way back to the RU,\* where the party was seen as less important or treated as less important than mass organizations or attempts at mass organizations. If this was not true theoretically or in name, nevertheless it was true in another sense in actual political terms.

This went along with the idea that the key thing was to have mass struggle. In other words it went along with the understanding we used to have of the old central task of our party. Now, through forging the line of Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power, we’ve come to see that the struggle of the masses largely and overwhelmingly takes place, or is initiated, independently of the direct calls to action of the party, although that’s not always true and there are some important cases where the party does issue direct calls to action and mobilizes the masses in struggle. But for the most part, the struggle of the masses should be viewed more as part of the objective conditions that the party deals with, because most of it comes into being, people come into motion, independently of the direct calls to action of the party; even to a large degree independently of the *indirect* work of the party to initiate struggle, that is, the agitation and pro-

\* Revolutionary Union, the organization which preceded and played the key role in the formation of the RCP, USA.

paganda that indirectly causes people to come into motion. Even if you take that into account, still most of the struggle of the masses is something that takes place, is provoked if you will, or called into motion, by other and in an overall sense larger forces than the party itself. And in a general sense it forms part of the objective conditions that the party has to deal with, has to react upon. That’s in its principal aspect, not in its entirety; there are important secondary aspects in which the party does directly initiate certain important forms of mass struggle, and even leads them directly from the beginning.

In other words, in the past, the party was seen as a direct generator of mass struggle; and going along with this view was a tendency for those struggles to be treated as things unto themselves, even though we never gave up on the goal of revolution or forgot about it. The goal was always proclaimed and even work to propagate it was carried on in relation to mass struggles, but often in a way of sort of tacking it onto the work of building these struggles. But still those struggles were seen as something of a thing unto themselves, and the building of struggle like that was likewise seen as a stage unto itself. So building mass organizations tended to become the focus and emphasis of our work in organizing forces. This was true no matter how it was formulated, even if these organizations were called transmission belts or conveyor belts between the party and the masses.

In opposition to that understanding, as a negation of it if you will, the more that the line of actually preparing for *revolution* has been grasped and carried out, the more that Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power, or preparing minds and organizing forces, has come to the fore as the real basis of the work, the more there has been the necessity to grasp the real meaning and importance of the fact that the party is the most important organization that the proletariat has. Yet there has still been a lagging in that area. Even while there have been real advances in grasping and applying that new line on the central task, still there has been lagging on that aspect of the role and importance of the party as the key organization of the proletariat and the key aspect of organizing forces. If you think about it, the two really do go hand in hand.

In the past we operated with an idea of a sort of “intermediate stage” (summing this up obviously doesn’t mean we are now saying that today is directly a revolutionary situation, or even one that is immediately heading toward a revolutionary situation). With this intermediate stage idea it wasn’t that you carried out reformist work in the sense that you were consciously or subjectively trying to build toward something else than revolution even in the interim, even as an intermediate program. But nevertheless, objectively, the more that you treated struggles as things unto themselves, and as things which had their own dynamic, their own dialectic and their own process which was treated as self-contained — the more the role of the party would be downgraded. And on the other hand, in opposition to that, the more that you see that all of your work is work of *preparation* in the sense and with the content expressed by the for-



mulation of the central task now, Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power, or the formulation of “preparing minds and organizing forces” — the more you see that really the party is the most important organization. As we’ve swept away the old view, the importance of building the party has become much clearer and sharper.

Any kind of mass struggle or mass organization — as important as it genuinely may be, and even if it’s a struggle that becomes very broad and lasts a long time — has a temporary character as compared with the party and as compared with the ongoing task of revolution. Such a mass struggle cannot be identical with, nor still less replace the overall work, but has to be a subordinate part of the overall process and work of building for and carrying out revolution; any mass organization has to be looked at in the same way, even where it is correct for a mass organization to be maintained or even for the party to directly initiate it.

One of the things that Stalin more or less correctly pointed out (even if he tended to be a little bit mechanical in the way he treated it) was that the soviets (the councils of the masses) were the kind of organization that could only really be brought into being and maintained in a period of revolutionary upsurge; you couldn’t have soviets all the time. In fact it’s interesting to note, and perhaps the implications should be drawn out more fully at another time, that when it came to consolidating things after the Russian Revolution and the whole upsurge there associated with the conjuncture around World War 1, they basically had to do away with the soviet form. Even with the proletariat in power, the soviets were not able to be maintained in the form in which they had existed as part of the revolutionary upsurge. Now to what degree that was due to errors and to what degree that was more due to the rise and fall of the revolution and its spiral motion (which is what I tend to think) should be looked into more. But if we take just the aspect of when you’re not in power, I think it is correct as a general principle, without being mechanical about it, that you cannot maintain that advanced kind of organization all the time, especially when you don’t have a revolutionary upsurge.

This is one of the things that we summed up around the NUWO (National United Workers Organization), for example. We kept trying to find new ways to provide a theoretical basis and a practical basis to maintain it, but we finally summed up that there wasn’t any. The original meeting back in 1977 actually did show something. It showed that there were a number of advanced workers around who were interested in revolutionary politics. I know that some of the workers were brought there on a trade-unionist basis, especially by the Mensheviks, but also by the general influence of the economist trend within our line at that time; but there were also many who were brought forward on a much more advanced basis who wanted to take up politics and even world affairs. That was what was positive about that meeting, what was reflected there, even though it was perverted, especially by the Menshevik leadership of that meeting.

But even as we went forward and tried to root out the Menshevism that had influenced — I was going to say infested — but influenced our thinking, our line and our work, we still weren’t able to forge a practical and theoretical basis for maintaining the NUWO and we finally had to sum up that it wasn’t possible to maintain that sort of conveyor belt, transition belt, in this kind of a period. We did not conclude from this that any kind of mass organization is wrong now; and as for very advanced forms of organization, something equivalent to soviets, a mass form of basically revolutionary organization — that doesn’t mean they could not be maintained or should not be maintained and even initiated when the situation demands them; that is, in particular, when the situation is ripening to a revolutionary situation and the masses are rising in a general revolutionary upsurge. But nevertheless, you have to ask, well, why was there this sort of general tendency to view mass organizations as more important than the party? It was because there was a tendency to view struggle as cut off from and apart from and in reality as a substitute for the work of actually carrying out all-around preparation for revolution. Now we understand that our work of various kinds in building, supporting struggles has to be in fact a part of and *just* one part, in a general sense a subordinate part, of our overall preparation for revolution.

### A Backward Pull Will Emerge

I tried to point out in that letter of mine that was excerpted over a period of time in the *RW* (see issue No. 109) that there is going to be a tendency to go back to the old economist tendencies again. It has been pointed out that this has started already to assert itself and will increasingly do so now that there is more mass ferment and mass struggle. Opposition to Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power has been difficult for people who aren’t still won over to it inside and outside our ranks because there hasn’t been a big mass movement that they could latch onto, point to and use as a weight against this line. But now, even if only the beginning stages, there clearly is mass ferment and mass struggle breaking out here and there. And there will be a pull to say, “How can we stand aside from that?” In other words, how can we not plunge head-down into it and throw away all the line that we’ve fought to forge up to this point. There will be the very strong pull, even among the best, to get drawn into any particular mass struggle and lose sight of the fact that as important as some of those struggles may be, they are only one stream that we are trying to direct eventually into a general torrent that can knock down the dams ahead (if you want to carry out the analogy). There will be a tendency to get lost, to dive head-first into these streams and get lost just trying to swim in the swirl and complexity of the particular struggle, especially an important one. This is not to say that we shouldn’t enter into some of those streams, and actually swim right in the current of them, plunging into some of those struggles, but we should not do it head down. Nor should we do it in such a way that we throw

away or lose sight of the revolutionary goal, even unconsciously or just by being pulled along by spontaneity and not through actual design or conscious policy. We cannot lose sight of how this is still only one stream of the overall advance, one current that we are trying to — and that in fact *only* we can help to — channel toward the goal, along with a number of other streams.

The more that you grasp all of that basic revolutionary line that I've just been talking about up to this point, the more you can see that only the party is in a position to do that; and the more you can see how important it is in fact that the party be strengthened both qualitatively and quantitatively in order to be able — precisely as there is more mass struggle and mass upsurge — to carry out the kind of line that is concentrated in Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power. We have pointed out that this central task is a whole process which includes the preparation for revolution and also, eventually, the act of revolution itself in the sense of the seizure of power. To be able to carry out that whole process, you can see how crucial it is that the party be strengthened at every point as much as possible, that real effort and real leaps be made in building the party both qualitatively and quantitatively. The more you see all these diverse streams that you have to relate to — but in that way, with that kind of line — the more you can see how important it is to qualitatively and quantitatively build the party as much as possible at each stage. To summarize this point, this revolutionary line meets opposition from both the spontaneous pull (which still exists) and the conscious line and thinking (which also still exists in varying degrees) to treat any particular mass struggle or mass struggles in general as the be-all and end-all and a thing in themselves. Inevitably a part of that is to downgrade the role of the party.

It's really going to take a great deal of political courage, by which I don't mean some existential or psychological thing of "do you have guts," but a great deal of consciousness and determination to carry out the line that we've been forging more deeply, precisely not to plunge head-down into all these struggles and lose sight of the overall process and lose sight of the importance of the party. This is because there is going to be a tremendous pull of spontaneity, and there is always going to be the pull from masses involved in struggles to want to draw the party deeply into them in a kind of way that causes you to lose sight of the overall process which is comprehended by Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power, and of which these struggles have to be treated as a part, a subordinate part, however important any of them may be, or however important they may be overall as a general phenomenon.

In our history there has always been an active orientation and not an armchair orientation. And in one sense it was a strength of the RU, which stood out in opposition to a lot of armchair revolutionaries, and has been a part of the positive thing that I have described as "taking responsibility for the movement as a whole," that is, taking responsibility for building a revolutionary movement. But it must also be said that this divides sharply into two; to a significant

degree all along and at times unfortunately even the principal aspect, there has been the tendency to define "activity" narrowly and to identify it simply with being involved in struggle, while tacking on or adding on in a quantitative way and a mechanical way propaganda (in particular) about the need for revolution, socialism, and propagating the positive model of the socialist countries such as China (when it was one). So while there was a strength, there was also a great weakness, and now we've come to understand much more clearly that our activity has to be understood in a much broader sense and has to be seen as an ongoing process, as preparation toward and then carrying out the revolution, that is, the seizure of power.

There can't be any sort of wall created between the work we do now and the seizing of power later. And the most important form of work we are doing now is the agitation and propaganda, with all-round exposure key. Even where we may get involved in struggles on the level of trying to give tactical and organizational leadership, still in an overall way the propaganda and agitation and exposure we do in relation to them is more important. And beyond that we have to carry out exposure in an all-round way which in an overall sense will *not* be directly related to any particular mass struggle or mass organization. And there, again, the question of political courage comes in, in the form of standing up against the pull of "Let's do something more immediate, let's do something more practical," as if anything short of revolution can do what has to be done.

find the way to deal with the most immediate, pressing needs of the masses and unless you become the leaders of their day-to-day battles and their most immediate struggles.

There is influence of this idea, for example, even in the Chinese “General Line” polemic\* in a section that actually puts emphasis on carrying out all-around preparation for revolution and stresses that unless that’s done you won’t even be ready to seize a revolutionary opportunity if it does arise and you will throw it away even if the chance is there. Even that section, which we’ve quoted in the past, talks about *while leading the day-to-day struggles of the masses* you must carry out all-around preparation, etc. It’s not that you should never lead any day-to-day struggles, or it’s not that you should make a principle out of not leading any day-to-day struggles. But neither should you make a principle that you must lead the day-to-day struggles, which is what it has been — a principle — in the past in our own thinking and work. This remains a very widely held current in the U.S. among many groups and internationally, and it’s an incorrect tendency.

There’s an essay by Mao called “Be Concerned with the Well-Being of the Masses, Pay Attention to Methods of Work” in Volume I, written in 1934. It’s often cited by people who are influenced by this incorrect tendency I’ve just been talking about. In there Mao talks about the need to “solve the problems facing the masses — food, shelter, clothing, fuel, rice, cooking oil and salt, sickness and hygiene and marriage. In short, all the practical problems in the masses’ everyday life should claim our attention.” Now, I think the most important thing to point out in relation to this is what is the context in which it is occurring. Volume I in general covers the period of the first and second revolutionary civil war and the beginning of the war against Japan. The general characteristic of the Chinese revolution, as Mao pointed out and stressed, and even Stalin noted, was that the armed revolutionary camp was from the beginning fighting the armed counter-revolutionary camp. In other words, the form of struggle around which everything else was organized was revolutionary warfare pretty consistently throughout this whole long period from 1927 on.

Mao wrote in “Problems of War and Strategy” that the central task and highest form of the revolution is the armed struggle for power. So here they were, carrying out the highest form of revolution, which in the imperialist countries in a general way is what you build up to during a period of preparation. But in China at this stage (and this does have broad and important application for revolution in the countries similar to China, though it shouldn’t be applied mechanically), they were carrying out revolutionary warfare almost from the beginning; and from the time that Mao’s line even began to come to the fore and even before it fully triumphed, from the time he went to the countryside and formed the first base area, the forces under his leadership were carrying out warfare almost constantly.

\* “A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement”, FLP, Peking, 1963. Point 12 is especially being referred to here.

## Chapter 6

### Pay Attention to the Day to Day Needs of the Masses – But Don’t Overdo It!

I remember being interviewed on WBAI in New York a couple years ago by a woman who was either with the Communist Party or certainly had a lot of similarities in her line. (See *RW* Nos. 27 and 30) And I was running down the essential thrust of our line. (We have since developed it further, but by that time we had made a leap in grasping the essential thrust of it.) She tried to do a form of guilt-tripping: “Is that what you tell people in the winter when they don’t have any oil, when they are freezing to death?”

I remember looking right back at her and saying, “Yes, that’s exactly what we tell them.” And while we have to fight for partial demands, and such struggles can be important, the most important thing is that we have to imbue people with the understanding that the whole system is thoroughly rotten and has to be overthrown and we have to move beyond it to a whole different stage of society and that there is no other solution to all the many different problems and outrages and abuses that exist other than that. And yes, that’s exactly what we tell them.

But, obviously there’s more of a problem here than just an opportunist trying to guilt-trip people. And, again, this is really where political courage comes in: There is a spontaneous pull and it is a reflection of a real contradiction. While that revolutionary answer is a fundamental truth (and one that you have to instill and imbue in the masses and enable them to grasp), it’s also true that you can’t make revolution right away. So the problems of the masses remain and the abuses and outrages and the struggles they give rise to will continue to take place. And there will therefore be a pull toward “Let’s do something more immediate, let’s do something more practical,” and even the pull toward “This is the way in which we have to win the masses to revolution.” This has been and remains a very big current in the communist movement — and not only in the U.S. in our recent experience, but also, of course, historically and internationally. The idea has been that you cannot build a revolutionary movement unless you satisfy or somehow

### Warfare Central

So, in other words, they were already carrying out the highest form of struggle, and Mao insisted in a number of writings in this period as well as later that everything else was subordinate to this form of struggle — to warfare. Political work, everything else, was subordinate to that. So it's in that context that Mao is talking about how you've got to solve all the masses' practical problems. He doesn't say, well, before we can launch revolutionary warfare we have to go out and make sure the masses have enough salt, and that their problems of marriage are taken care of. He's raising this in the context of waging war. He even starts this particular essay out (one which does put some emphasis on this problem) with this very point. After a short introduction of the subject of the essay, he then goes on to say, 'Our central task at present is to mobilize the broad masses to take part in the revolutionary war, overthrow imperialism and the Kuomintang by means of such war, spread the revolution throughout the country and drive imperialism out of China. Anyone who does not attach enough importance to this central task is not a good revolutionary cadre.' And then he goes on and says on the other hand, if you do not attach enough importance to the problems of the masses you are not doing right either. But this is what he begins with and this is in fact what their work, everything, revolved around.

First of all they are waging warfare as the highest form of struggle, and as the central form of their work around which everything else is revolving. And second of all, they actually are holding power in a number of areas; therefore they have the actual practical problems that a government has. This is something that also has some provocative implications that should be thought through more deeply, because in fact when you are in power you do have to pay attention to those kind of problems in a way that you don't have to and in fact shouldn't when you don't have power. This is one of the particular aspects of the Chinese revolution too; they had power in a partial sense for a long period of time because they had base areas.

So, if anyone wants to take what Mao says, even stresses, in this essay and abstract that from that situation and make some kind of general rule that when you are making revolution you have to make sure the masses' marital problems are solved, you have enough salt and cooking oil and so on and so forth, and raise that as the *sine qua non* (that is, your starting point without which you can't do anything else), then they have actually perverted what Mao is saying and in fact they have reversed it. Mao was very clear on this too; without waging war as the central thing they were doing, all this stuff would lead to reformism and social work divorced from the concrete question of waging revolutionary war and of having base areas and so on. Elevated up to a principle in and of itself, it would lead to reformism in politics and capitulation ideologically as well. If you try to make this the central thing around which your work has to unfold, or the starting point without which you can't do anything else, then you will inevitably be pull-

ed toward reformism.

We can look also at our own experience in the revolutionary movement. Even though it is limited there are some lessons we can and should draw out of it. What I'm addressing here is this line that you have to prove yourself 'a good fellow'; like Stalin once wrote in this hideous essay in 1925,\* you've got to prove yourself to be a good fellow in the trade union struggle for a few years before you can win the masses to communism. That's a ridiculous reformist recipe. But such a line and current does exist; you have to prove yourself in terms of people's day-to-day needs before they'll listen to you about the larger questions. In an overall sense this is just exactly the contrary of the truth and is a reversal, an inversion, of the actual dialectic at work.

In our own experience, for example, let's take the students and in particular when the RU got involved in SDS. In the Bay Area and in Berkeley in particular, SDS was not very strong. It was not the main form through which political work against the system and anti-imperialist struggle and revolutionary development was taking place there. But, if you took the U.S. as a whole and in terms of the students, it was the most advanced form and in that sense the most important form of organization for a period. So while we weren't locally involved in SDS and hadn't earned our spurs or earned our right to speak by being actively involved for a long time in SDS and all of its local struggles, we were invited in to take part in the struggles in SDS nationally. It's sort of ironic we were invited in particular by Mike Klonsky and some others at the time, basically because being the mechanical hack that he always was and remained (remains I guess, whatever he's doing now) he was incapable of carrying out any kind of real ideological struggle. And one was shaping up very sharply between a number of different trends, particularly against PL (Progressive Labor) at that time in SDS. So on the basis of some contacts and especially the drafts of *Red Papers* which were circulating among some different circles at that point, they invited us in.

But whatever the mechanics of how that came about, the point is we went to those SDS meetings in 1969 and there were just a few of us that went. The RU was known partly on the basis of *Red Papers* and partly on the basis that we had been involved in an oil strike in Richmond, California. But what we had done in Richmond which attracted people and, if you will, gave us a certain right to speak, was not that we went there and took responsibility for all the day-to-day needs of the oil workers. It was that we were doing advanced political work — even with problems and errors, including some of these same wrong tendencies that I have been describing, there still was a thrust of advanced, even revolutionary, political work the RU was doing, helping to link up the Third World Strike at San Francisco State with the oil strike and actually doing some political work among those oil workers to win them politically to supporting that. But, *that* was the kind of work we were doing there; we also got involved (maybe a little too much, but I wouldn't say it was wrong in principle certainly) with some of

\* 'The Results of the Work of the 14th Conference of the RCP(B)', 1925.

the tactical problems of the time, of the strike. But this was always from the point of view, and always with a thrust toward trying to bring forward advanced political ideas and win people politically to a more advanced stand, and advance the struggle — not just the oil strike, but the larger political movement — on that basis.

When we went to the SDS meeting, *Red Papers* and the articles in *The Movement* that I wrote at that time about the work in the oil strike all made for some more receptivity to what we had to say. But when we got up and struggled in these SDS meetings, nobody said, “Who are you, how long have you been involved in SDS.” “What have you done practically” and “What have you done about this or that problem with the students,” or whatever. Or if anybody wanted to say it, they didn’t get very far with it. People wanted to know what we had to say because they were involved in a very sharp struggle over what direction that organization should take and that was being debated as a part of a larger question of what direction the overall movement should take and even how to make revolution. Nobody demanded to know if we had earned our spurs by paying attention to the everyday needs of themselves or somebody else and had been “good fellows” for such and such a time in a reformist way. People wanted to know what we had to say politically. They were interested in our ideas and they were interested in the ideological struggle and the struggle over what political direction to take. That’s what they wanted to know: “What the hell do you have to say,” not “Have you been good fellows in your local SDS chapter for so long.”

### Upside Down View

Now you could say, well that’s the students, and students are intellectuals in a certain way (and I guess even in the U.S. that’s true in a broad sense, even with all the philistinism there is). But I don’t believe, and nothing in my own experience or what I’ve read about convinces me, that when the broad masses become politically active and politically involved and begin to take up these questions, they are more narrow than the intellectuals in this regard. They are not more insistent that first you prove your spurs by having been “good fellows” in some immediate struggles or in relation to their immediate needs, or that you have no right to speak to them unless you’ve earned it first by paying attention to all their everyday problems. That’s not my own experience, not what I’ve studied, and it’s not our experience nor generally the experience of the revolutionary movement. It’s not the case, to put it simply. If that were the case it’s true we couldn’t carry out “Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power.” It is true that there are backward masses or only awakening masses, or even masses who can’t really even be called politically awake, who go into struggle and have a narrower view and largely remain interested only in the immediate questions of that struggle. But it’s also true, and a much more profound truth, that we should not be pitching our work to those masses. Even though we should not ignore them nor fail

to take them into account, we certainly should not be basing ourselves on them.

This upside-down view that first you have to prove yourself and earn your spurs does a great deal of harm. It influenced our own ranks for a long period of time, and its influence will continue to assert itself in our own ranks and among others because it is a pull. It does have a basis in reality and it is a pull of spontaneity. It is something that has to be much more deeply rooted out. You cannot cite that essay of Mao’s, “Be Concerned with the Well-Being of the Masses, Pay Attention to Methods of Work,” as though that is the central problem that is being dealt with. If you read through that whole Volume I, of which it is a part — here I’m looking at some titles: “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War”; “The Tasks of the Chinese Communist Party in the Period of Resistance to Japan”; and then a little bit later it’s “Win the Masses in Their Millions for the Anti-Japanese National United Front”; there is “Why Is It that Red Political Power Can Exist in China?”; “The Struggle in the Ching Kang Mountains”; “On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party”; “A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire”; “Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan,” and so on. The central theme and the line that comes through here is not that first we must pay attention to all these problems of the masses, then we can think about starting a revolutionary war after we have proved ourselves to be “good fellows.” The emphasis is just the opposite in these overall writings, including in this very essay.

It’s true for us as well in a different way even though the form of our work in this period is not one of armed struggle, and even though we do not hold political power in the sense of having base areas the way they did in China, still the essence of our work is “Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power,” with agitation and propaganda central now and exposure as the key link. The same relationship that existed for Mao also exists for us, though in a different way, with different practical implications. That is, in *that* context, and grasping *that* as the overall and essential thing that we are doing, then we have to pay attention to, or be conscious of, the problems and everyday needs of the masses. I mean that in the sense that we have to take them into account in carrying out our work.

When I say this it doesn’t have the same application it had in China because we are not waging revolutionary warfare and we’re not holding power, so we’re not able to and should not try to solve those problems in the same way that they had to in the situation that Mao is describing. But we do have to take them into account in carrying out our overall work. It’s true that we would be making a mistake if we carried out our overall work and did not pay any attention to — ignored — the conditions of the masses and their everyday needs, especially the masses who actually are the most solid social base for a proletarian revolutionary line. The “Basic Principles” document\* states that first of all these everyday needs and the struggles they give rise to are one im-

\* *Basic Principles for the Unity of Marxist-Leninists and for the Line of the International Communist Movement.*

portant (though not the most important) source of exposure, of agitation and propaganda. And second of all, around some of these questions and in some of the struggles that develop or can be developed in relationship to them, there is potential to lead masses in a way of militantly fighting back that can contribute toward the building of a revolutionary movement — precisely if it's seen in that light and governed by a revolutionary outlook and approach.

But with all that, that is still (a) not the most important thing we should be doing, (b) not the main thing we should be doing, (c) not something more important than or a necessary prelude to carrying out our central task and particularly exposure as the key link, and (d) the idea that we do have to do all that first is a trap of quicksand that we have to very, very rigorously avoid. That's what it will become if you fall into the idea that somehow the day-to-day needs of the masses are the most important thing we have to pay attention to, or as we used to formulate it "the center of gravity." It becomes a thing that drags you down if you make it the center of gravity. Or to use another metaphor it is a trap to view that as a fulcrum of your work, or even a prelude to more advanced work, or that without doing this you cannot carry out more advanced work.

In other words, alright, it's true, in a general sense, we have to pay attention to these questions, as it says in the "Basic Principles" document. You cannot carry out revolutionary work while ignoring the everyday problems, especially of the less privileged masses, the people who are the more solid social base for a revolutionary communist/proletarian internationalist line. It's true, you cannot in an overall sense carry out revolutionary work if you pay no attention to these things. So in that sense, yes, you have to pay attention to them. But, number one, all the things that I've been stressing are different between our situation and our kind of work now and the kind that Mao was talking about have to be immediately and firmly grasped. And number two, it was not said by Mao, and it's even less true in a situation like the U.S. where you are not now carrying out revolutionary warfare, that these everyday problems of the masses are the center of your work or a necessary starting point for your work without which you can't carry out broader and higher-level political work.

### The Party

While you have to pay attention to this, that's precisely what you have to do; you have to take them into account and you have to find the ways that these questions can be made elements of and parts of the overall process of building a revolutionary movement. They have to be approached from that angle, which is of course how Mao is approaching them under different circumstances. But, again, the principle in an overall sense remains the same, that these things are not the heart of your work and they are not a preliminary condition before you can carry out more advanced work. Quite the opposite. In his and our conditions alike, they are treated in the context where a more advanced form of work is what is in fact central to revolutionary work.

This leads back to two different views. One ultimately (and not too ultimately) is a reformist one; the other, an actual revolutionary line. An important, even crucial aspect of the struggle between those two lines will be the struggle over how you approach the question of the party, the importance and role of the party — is it really a vanguard, how important is it and in what way should it be built? And that's why, while maybe it's obvious that the party is the most important organization of the proletariat and it's the most important aspect of organizing forces, still it hasn't proved so obvious. It is part of the view that you have to, as a principle, pay attention to the day-to-day problems and struggles of the masses as the basis for carrying out other kinds of work, and as a way of winning the right to carry out more advanced work. Owing to the influence of that kind of line and the general reformist tendency and pull that it is a part of, there has been a tendency even in our own ranks in the past to see it as "sectarian" to talk about building the party as the most important form of organization. "What about the masses? What about mass organization? Isn't building the party putting our own needs above those of the masses?"

That's your view only if you somehow think that the party in the most fundamental sense is something other than an instrument for serving the needs of the masses and the proletariat. It's the highest and most concentrated expression of doing that. That's what it means that the party is the vanguard. And second of all, if that's your view, it means that you actually fall for that guilt-tripping revisionism of the woman on that radio program, for example, based on the idea that somehow there is a way that the problems of the masses (particularly the solid, real proletarian masses) can be solved other than through revolution; or based at least on the idea that the only way you can win those masses to see that revolution is necessary is by doing what's impossible, that is, trying to solve all their problems without revolution. If you think about it, those ideas, especially when you pose them that way, are sort of ridiculous. But it's taken a lot of struggle for us to get to the point of being able to see how ridiculous they are and there will be continuous struggle over that in the ways in which this question will continually reassert itself, even if in different forms and if in a sense more advanced forms, now that we've fought through certain aspects of this.

To the degree that that line still exerts influence, the role of the party will be downgraded. To the degree that the real grasp of the revolutionary line is firm and increasingly sharpened, the importance and role of the party, the fact that it is the most important aspect of organizing forces and the need to build it will come to the fore more powerfully.

There was just one point I wanted to make before we went on. It's on this question of paying attention to the well-being of the masses. I think what I said earlier is correct, that you do have to pay attention to those questions, in the sense in which I put it. But on the other hand, to be provocative about it, particularly given the pull of economism and spontaneity, in a certain way we could

almost say that you have to have the ability *not* to pay attention to some of those problems to a significant degree. In other words, on the one hand, you cannot fail to pay attention to them at all, or as some kind of principle, in the ways that I talked about earlier. But on the other hand, there has to be a conscious effort not to pay *too much* attention to them, and that is the much more dangerous and much more powerful current that has existed and continues to exist even within the trend within the international communist movement that we are a part of. I just wanted to summarize it that way to be a little provocative about it.

## Chapter 7

### More on the Party and Mass Movements in Relation to the Revolutionary Goal

Q: I had two questions: One was to get more into the question of the party being the key aspect of organizing forces and how that relates to developing the dialectic between being able to feel the pulse of the masses and actually being able to quicken it; and then I'm still somewhat confused about the actual relationship here between organizing forces — developing the party quantitatively and qualitatively — and the work that goes on in these mass upsurges, these struggles, which while not ultimately revolutionary in and of themselves are very important and are more and more going to come to the fore.

BA: There is a relationship between quantity and quality, not only in terms of building the party but also in terms of the party being able to carry out its overall line (which in one sense can be viewed as a qualitative question, that is, a question of line). There is also a quantitative aspect of that which enters in, which is how many forces the party can *directly* command under its leadership. Now there is, of course, the related question of the broad forces that rally around the party to one degree or another and carry out its policies in that kind of way, that is, not being part of the party but still sympathetic with it or supporting it and helping to carry out its policies. But still there is a qualitative difference between that and people who carry out the party's policies as *members* of the party and as part of its organization and division of labor, and with that degree of consciousness and therefore that degree of commitment. We talked a little earlier about how that is a higher level and how, if it is not, then the party is not really carrying out its role.

There is a relationship between how many forces the party can marshal as party members, as part of its own ranks, and how broadly it can carry out its line among the masses and also therefore how much it can really apply the mass line in a correct, that is not tailist, sense. In other words, how much you can actually feel and quicken the pulse beat of the masses. As we have stressed for some time

now, carrying out agitation is, along with spreading the party's line, actually also the most effective way of getting to know the masses politically, of really understanding where they are at. That's a point Lenin made which was stressed a couple of years ago in the Thoughts paper.\* And it's a very important principle to grasp. Ultimately quality is crucial there, too, because what kind of line party members are carrying out is going to be decisive in an overall sense, even in terms of bringing more people into the party. But within that quantity plays an important role. How many forces you can marshal, even if it's not ultimately decisive or the principal aspect, still it has everything to do with how much you can both feel and quicken the pulse of the masses, how much you can influence them, and how rich and diverse the material is that you can gather to concentrate in order to be able to further sharpen your agitation, your propaganda, your exposure.

The mass line should not be understood narrowly: that we go out and we find out what the ideas of the masses are and we just concentrate them in the most limited, direct, one-to-one sense, and take *that* back — just a little bit higher level concentration of what the masses themselves are saying. That's still tailism; it's still a form of empiricism. But there is a relationship. In order to carry out agitation among the masses you do have to know what's on their minds, how they are seeing things. You can learn from it, which is very important and that's not something you have to say because it's a moral principle that you should learn from the masses. You actually can learn from it and you can learn all the more when you actually have a revolutionary and not a tailist approach to this question. So you can learn from it. But also you cannot carry out effective and sharp exposure if you don't know what's on the minds of the masses, and first of all the advanced masses, especially among the proletariat and the real solid social base for a revolutionary line, but also more broadly.

So, the party has to learn and lead, and not just at the time when a revolutionary situation is maturing and ripening and a revolutionary struggle to seize power becomes possible — but all the way along this is so, through the whole period of preparation for revolution, as well as in carrying it out. In other words, all through the whole process that is comprehended and described by the formulation Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power, the more the party can marshal its forces into the field according to its organizational principles and with its division of labor, the more it can both learn from and the more it can affect and lead forward the class forces that can be most firmly rallied to the revolutionary banner, and also the masses more broadly. On the one hand, maybe it seems very simple, but it's also a very important point to emphasize, and again, it's been underemphasized and not firmly grasped.

But as far as the other point . . . the relationship of building the party to the mass struggles, was that the point you were raising?

\*“Thoughts on Points for Discussion”, a report by Bob Avakian to the Second Plenary Session of the Second Central Committee of the RCP, USA in 1978.

Q: Yeah, well like you said we're going to jump into these currents and streams of struggle. It's not that we shouldn't do it, but we should do it with our head up, not down. So how do you see building the party in relationship to that — even particularly right now in this period that we are in?

BA: Well, earlier I raised the thing about being sectarian, right? What we were always concerned about and what is sometimes the caricature conjured up by opportunists now attacking us is that we go in the midst of the mass struggles, and say “Join the party.” Frankly, I wish there was more truth to that caricature than there is. But on the other hand, that is not the essence of what we should do. The essence of what we should do is to carry out the line of Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power. I don't want to repeat everything that is said, for example, in the article “Support Every Outbreak of Protest and Rebellion”\*\*; it should be studied over again in terms of what we are talking about now. I think the principles there are important and also in some of the excerpts from the letter\*\*\* that speak to the same question — what should be the way in which we relate to mass struggles.

This is going to be increasingly important because there is going to be growing turmoil and struggle in the period ahead, whether or not a revolutionary situation fully ripens in the U.S. As we have stressed over and over again, if you take the world as a whole there will certainly be revolutionary situations developing in various places, and in the U.S. the situation will certainly be a much sharper one, full of a lot more turmoil and upheaval, whether or not a revolutionary situation fully matures and ripens there. So it's going to be all the more important to grasp and apply those principles that were stressed for example in those articles.

Our work is not to go in and say, “Join the vanguard.” In other words, the contradiction we want to deal with is not whether you should put everything into the immediate struggle or whether you should build the party. Those are opposite poles of the same stupidity in a certain sense. Obviously if you just go in and just make the immediate struggle everything that's erroneous. But it would also be erroneous just to go in and carry out that caricature, saying, “forget the immediate struggle, join the party.” The point I'm trying to make when I say opposite poles of the same stupidity is that those aren't even the right terms. The right terms, the correct approach and method, is to carry out the all-around work of Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power, with exposure the key link, including particularly in important struggles.

No recipe can be set forth to cover everything; you have to actually make a concrete analysis of the overall situation and the role of particular questions and struggles. In some cases you should *not* put any significant number of forces, maybe none at all, into the organizational and tactical aspects of that particular mass struggle or mass movement. In some other cases, such a method will lead to

\*\*\*“Support Every Outbreak of Protest and Rebellion,” reprinted from *RW* No.84 in pamphlet form.

\*\*\*Excerpts from a letter by Bob Avakian printed in *RW* Nos. 95, 96, 102 and 107-110.



the conclusion that it's very important to put one or even quite a few forces into that kind of work. But at all times this has to be seen as a subordinate part of carrying out the task of Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power. And in a general way, even when you devote a number of forces to the organizational and tactical aspects of a struggle, still the most important thing you have to do is the all-around political work to raise the consciousness and build this struggle as part of the overall preparation for revolution in that kind of way, that is by still making exposure the key link of your all-around work. That still remains the most important thing that you have to do, even where you do go into particular struggles.

### Seizing Power Central

When there are more and more of these mass struggles there is going to be the pull to fall back or become defensive in the face of that opportunist caricature. That comes with seeing the contradiction in terms of either you put everything into the immediate struggle or else you just try to build the party, like "doing your own thing to the side." The reason I'm stressing this is that if you accept those as the terms you are bound to go wrong. Those are not the terms. The question to bring to the fore, and the correct terms in which this has to be posed, is in what way does this particular question and struggle or movement or organization, etc., fit into the overall process of preparing for and then carrying out the seizure of power. That's the way we have to fight to present the question and it's a question of struggle within our own ranks and more broadly even to sharpen up that this *is* the question. We have to grasp it that way ourselves and win others to that kind of an approach and to carrying it out. If we can grasp that, then the question of the party again can be put in its proper perspective, and we shouldn't be defensive in that framework about the importance of building the party, and yes, building it right in the context of these immediate struggles, but again in a more general all-around way as part of the Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power and as the most important aspect of organizing forces. Once you grasp that the real question is how does this particular struggle or movement or organization fit into that overall process, then you can also see the importance of the party and you can also treat it in a way that isn't the opposite pole of the stupidity of putting everything into the immediate struggle and treating it as an end in itself and in fact raising it above the overall process and the revolutionary objective.

So it seems to me that the question is fighting to more deeply grasp the correct line on the central task, and in that context be able to therefore deepen our understanding and our practice around building the party. On the one hand it should be our objective to draw the advanced forces generally in society and particularly among the proletarian masses toward the party; that should be our general objective and we shouldn't see that as something we do mainly in relation to particular struggles. But on the other hand, it is also something we *should* do in relation to particular struggles including those we decide to devote forces to working in the tactical and organizational terrain. We should try and draw the advanced forces

toward the party, as a very important part of our overall work in general and even our overall work in relation to those specific struggles. The idea that somehow that's sectarian could only really have any currency if you are not carrying out that work as part of the overall process of Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power, as part of the preparation for revolution. If you are, carrying out such work, well then how, in what sense, could it possibly be considered sectarian?

So, again, it comes back to that same crucial question: With what line and as part of what process are you approaching and carrying out work in relation to different particular aspects of that process? Owing to the continuing influence of reformist tendencies and wrong thinking on how to approach particular struggles, there still remains to a certain degree this tendency to be defensive or to think this is sectarian to build the party. And, again, I feel very sure that that sort of tendency is going to assert itself very strongly the more there is mass struggle, mass movement, organization and so on. This question will sharpen both because we are going to be attacked for it and also because of the tendency to tail spontaneity, the influence of some of these old Menshevik, or at least incorrect, influences and lines. There's going to be a certain defensiveness and a certain tendency not to put enough emphasis in fact on the aspect of building the party.

### Lasting and Important

Our strategy is not "Build the Party, Make Revolution." It's Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power. But if you look at that as an overall process and you grasp some of the points that I have been trying to stress here, then you can see how important building the party is all the way through and as part of that overall process. Party building does not mainly take form and become concentrated in relation to particular struggles, it's more as part of the overall process. But it does also pose itself in relation to particular struggles, including those where you do decide to devote some forces to working within a mass organization and striving to play a role organizationally and to give tactical leadership as well as (and mainly) carrying out the overall political work. And we're going to have to fight these questions through. But the more that we grasp what all of our work should be guided by and is part of, and what the whole process that the central task relates to is part of, then the more and also the more correctly we can take up the question of building the party, both qualitatively but also quantitatively. That means drawing forces not only close to the party and struggling to win them to its line, but struggling to bring them *into* the party.

Just to sharpen it up, if you understand this correctly and dialectically, the building of the party is more important and more lasting than the building of any particular struggle. That is not the same thing as saying that our objective in relation to any immediate struggle is either to put everything into the immediate struggle or just to build the party. Again, that's the wrong question or the wrong terms. But if we see our role and approach to any particular struggle or any particular aspect of our work as how it fits into this overall process, which cor-

responds to the work of Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power, or prepare minds and organize forces, if we grasp that correctly, then we can see how and in what way it's a very basic truth that the building of the party is more lasting and more important than what happens in any particular struggle or any particular aspect of our work. It is a subordinate part of our overall work to build the party, in the sense that it's one part of it and in that sense subordinate to it. But it's not subordinate to whatever we do in any immediate struggle. Specifically we have to say it's not subordinate to the tactical and organizational aspects of what we might do in any particular struggle. And the building of the party is more lasting and more important than the outcome of, or the particular work we do in, this or that particular situation or particular struggle. But on the other hand, building the party is a subordinate part of the overall task of Create Public Opinion . . . Seize Power, even while it's the most important aspect of organizing forces. That may sound contradictory, which it is, because the reality that's involved there is contradictory. But it's not contradictory in an eclectic sense. I believe that does describe the correct relationship of those different aspects.

## Chapter 8

### A Party Is Not a Holy Thing – It's Got to Be A Vanguard

**Q:** To continue with the party and to deal with the point that you brought up a number of times here about developing the party quantitatively and qualitatively: in "Conquer the World? The International Proletariat Must and Will" you brought out that the key was quality and I would like to get into these two aspects now and how you see that.

**BA:** Well, let's take an obvious negative example to show in an extreme form why quantity cannot be made principal which is the revisionist parties, or the parties that were part of the Third International and ended up revisionist, such as the CPUSA or the CP of France, etc. The CP of France, for example, just hands out leaflets and says, "Sign up with the Communist Party; sign here to join the Communist Party"; it's like mass enrollment and the CPUSA does the same thing. They put out a pamphlet and you can write in and get a free, cut-rate membership to the CP. And the British CP, for example — I remember hearing stories about how they did the same thing as the CPUSA did during the '30's and the war. They would have mass rallies and at the end of it just sign up people on the spot. The CPUSA sometimes used to sign up 1500 members all at one time at a big mass rally.

Well, that's a certain kind of quantity, but the quality was obviously of very low character. These were not really communists that were joining these parties — I mean the parties were not really communist either. That's a little bit of a flip way to say it, but even at that time there were serious, serious deviations from Marxism-Leninism in the line of the CPUSA for example, and their method of building the party was a rather sharp expression of that kind of opportunism, reformism, patriotism, etc. and the deformation in the direction of just plain bourgeois democracy and bourgeois ideology in general.

But obviously these were not communists who were joining the party. How

could someone join the party on the spot like that just off the street and be a communist? At the most you could say that there is someone who has some strong class feelings and maybe a basic sense of the need for revolution, but certainly they are not a Marxist-Leninist; certainly they don't have a communist consciousness. Of course that is not a metaphysical thing, as if one day you acquire communist consciousness. But there are leaps, and there is a leap to when you join the party. In particular with people drawn from among the masses that do have both the material interests and also a basic ideological stand for proletarian revolution, you don't have to do a tremendous, an extended period of training and preparation before they can join. Most of their training in fact should take place *inside* the party. And that's a very important point to stress. But they still should be recruited only after they have been worked with. Even on an obvious level you should check to make sure they're not police agents. But even beyond this, a certain amount of work should go on with them in practice; they should get some kind of practical training, and also some kind of ideological training and a theoretical groundwork of a certain basic kind before they can come into the party and work and struggle in that arena and get the bulk of ongoing training as a party member.

I remember an extreme example where somebody told me that they had a relative working in the steel industry and one day a bunch of people came to go to a meeting to organize the union or something like that. They took this person's relative to the meeting and on the way they told him that they were members of the CP and they asked the guy to join. And the guy said, "Well, hey, I'm a believing, practicing Catholic." And they said, "Well that doesn't make any difference." And the guy said, "Does to me." There's a sharp example of where he was more principled than they were. And suppose they persuaded him to join. What kind of party are you building by doing that? So these are all extreme examples, but they make a point. And the point is that saying quality is principle over quantity is another way of saying what was pointed out in "Conquer the World . . ." that *line* is the key link. In other words, people have to be won to a certain line; and even more basic than that, of course, is the quality of the line itself, whether it is in the main and in its essence a correct line or incorrect line, a revolutionary line or an opportunist line, will determine also the character of the party and how it's built. And while there will be ebbs and flows in the party too — people who come in, people who leave — the line will determine what the overall direction and character of building the party is, whether the party gets stronger qualitatively, that is, continually deepens its grasp and application of the correct line, and also whether it gets stronger quantitatively over time and through ebbs and flows and in a spiral and not a straight-line way. The line will determine whether the party gets stronger quantitatively at least in the sense of that it's able to grow generally (though not in a one-to-one or mechanical way) in proportion with the growth of social ferment, political movement and activity

and struggle, and particularly the leaps that take place toward and then in the development of a revolutionary situation.

### Growth of the Party & World Developments

I don't think a party can or should grow in a straight-line kind of way. Even if you say "through ebbs and flows and spirals" I still don't think that its motion should be from smaller to bigger over any given period of time, say ten years, regardless of what's happening not only in that country but most fundamentally in the world as a whole. If the world as a whole is generally entering a period of ebb, then maybe, like Lenin said in *What Is To Be Done?*, you have to know how to defend and maintain aloft the revolutionary banner in periods of revolutionary depression. He didn't say you have to expand and grow and develop in such periods or at all times. That would be, I think, undialectical and unmaterialist. That's also an error that has been a big component of the wrong thinking of the international communist movement, that you ought to be able to grow quantitatively (if you are on the correct road at least) regardless of what's going on in the world and, as part of that, in the country that you are situated in.

Someone a while back asked about the history of our party, wanted to know all about it. So I said, well our party was founded in 1975 and I guess you could say that was the low point of the party. And that's a way of saying that there was a certain history before our party was founded and since then there has been tremendous struggle and development. At the *particular* time our party was founded the U.S., and the world as a whole, was in the midst of an ebb, and along with that, interpenetrating with the objective situation, there was the influence of opportunist lines, the Menshevism, that existed in our ranks and was able to achieve quite a bit of corrosion (without fundamentally changing our line to a counter-revolutionary one). But it was able to corrode the revolutionary character of our party to a significant degree. That was at its high point in that period of the founding of our party and shortly afterwards. And while it's not mechanically or deterministically related one-to-one with the objective situation in the world, including in the U.S. at that time, it was obviously strengthened by that. (Proof of the fact that it's not deterministically related to it is the fact that since the split with the Mensheviks, they've gone completely into the quicksand, buried themselves in it and now are eating it, whereas we have made leaps in forging further along a revolutionary line. And it's been the same objective situation in the world and including in the U.S. that we both are operating within.) But even saying that and taking that into account, still that objective situation did exert a strong influence, a strong pull, and strengthened the Menshevik tendencies and corrosion.

I made that statement that the founding of our party was its low point to indicate that you can't treat the question of a party metaphysically. Here we founded the party and we've talked about how it was a great victory that the party was

able to be formed. Well actually it was, because the real victory is that out of all the upsurge of the '60s a revolutionary vanguard was able to be forged and preserved and was able to carry through, with whatever corrosion did go on, and emerge in this period of tremendously sharpening contradictions and growing opportunities worldwide as well as growing tendencies toward war. A revolutionary vanguard was forged and actually was tempered and strengthened and is in a position where it can make advances in the period ahead. If it continues on the road it's on, it has the real possibility of leading the revolutionary movement if the objective conditions ripen fully for that.

A party was formed and, even with all that was bad about that period, taking its principal aspect it had a correct line. Especially, I think, that has shown in what has endured and been built on since that time and further developed, which is its line on the overall world situation, the line on revolutionary defeatism and the criticisms it made (even though they were only partial and still didn't represent a thorough rupture, they were still criticisms in an important direction) of the past policy of the Comintern as concentrated in the Dimitroff line and the line of the Seventh World Congress. If there hadn't been that, then the present line and policies of our party would not be explainable. We didn't leap out of nowhere. We leaped from somewhere, a very sharply contradictory somewhere. We had a very sharply contradictory line that was loaded down with and corroded by a lot of economism, but also had a very strong revolutionary kernel which took important expression around the world situation and around proletarian internationalism and revolutionary defeatism in opposition to social chauvinism.

### To 'Be Around' is Not an End in Itself

But, with all that, the point precisely is to say that a party is not a metaphysical thing. What I'm getting to is the statement that was made at the time of our founding party congress that "this is the second time the party of the proletariat in the U.S. has been formed and this will be the last time." Well, that itself is a little bit of a metaphysical statement. On the one hand, yes, it's very important, as I have just said, and in the way that I have just said, that a new party was formed. But on the other hand, if, owing to both the objective and subjective conditions, this party exists and carries on for 40 or 50 years like the CPUSA before it and never leads a revolution, what's so great about that? Really why would it be so terrible if somebody got together and formed another party and tried to learn from the positive and negative and went ahead and tried to make revolution? Not because "to be around for 40 or 50 years and not make a revolution means you are a failure," or that you must be wrong because you didn't make a revolution. It's quite possible that the conditions never ripened to where you could make a revolution in that period and nevertheless you might have made real and important contributions not only in that country but more importantly on an international scale. And if you were con-

tinuing in that direction then it would be wrong for people to form another party. They (and you) should still seek to build that party as the vanguard and to draw on its mainly correct past and on its contributions and to continue going forward. But there's nothing so holy about a party.

It is very hard to imagine that a party could stick around for 40 or 50 years, not have the objective and subjective conditions come together for making a revolution, *and* stay on the revolutionary road. It is not impossible. But it is not a virtue. Maybe the party is stale and basically lacking in what's required to be a revolutionary vanguard if it's been around for 40 to 50 years. And again that's not to say that it's inevitable that if a party is around for 40 or 50 years that proves that it's stale, that it has no revolutionary vigor, that it has lost its revolutionary thrust and so on. But, the point I'm trying to make here is that parties are in fact vanguards, they are in fact the expression in terms of the subjective factor of what is going on overall in the world as a whole, though they are not, as we've insisted on correctly, mechanically an expression of that. They are dialectically related to it and they react back upon it and have a tremendous role to play, which is linked to the role of consciousness and conscious initiative. They have a tremendous role to play in reacting back upon the overall objective situation internationally and, as a subordinate part of that, within a particular country.

It represented a tremendous contribution that in China a party was able to exist and remain a revolutionary vanguard for more than 50 years, with all the tremendous struggle that was involved in that whole process, before it was finally reversed by the revisionist triumph in China. That was a tremendous achievement, nothing to take lightly, or to say "it's really old so it's bound to be decayed and rotten." There is a law that the new supersedes the old but you can't mechanically apply that to parties because parties also take in the new. You can't just look at the length of time a party has been there and say it's old now, because it's constantly taking in the new and getting rid of the old itself. Eventually every party will be replaced by the new — which is communism, and not necessarily another party. So we have to understand it that way, but at the same time what I'm combatting is this metaphysical notion that a party is an "institution." It's sort of like socialist states, as if they should exist because abstractly they are good things. Well, that depends on the content of them and the role they play. One of the tendencies we have to struggle with very strongly is the line that anything a socialist state does to maintain itself and defend itself is justified because it's a socialist state, even if the content of it is against the socialist revolution and the advance toward communism internationally. This is the kind of thinking that has been handed down to us from the international communist movement. The same thing applies to parties. Whatever a party does is not good or justified just because it's a communist party and you need a communist party, a vanguard.

Precisely this leads us back to the question of *quality* and what a party's line is and whether or not it is able to steel and temper itself through all the periods of ebb and flow, through the periods of both revolutionary depression and tremendous upheaval and revolutionary advance. There's nothing magical or metaphysical that says just because a party is formed and plays a good role for some amount of time, that party therefore has a right to exist in perpetuity, no matter what it does after that — as if it somehow ought to be upheld and defended regardless of the content of what it does. There has to be tremendous struggle over the content of what its line is and therefore what it does, the role it plays.

The Chinese party remained on the revolutionary road for over 50 years and it continued to advance, because you can't remain on a revolutionary road unless you do continue to advance, and it did lead the struggle of the international proletariat to its highest pinnacle so far. But precisely that stands out very sharply in contradiction to the general trend. Almost all the parties which were members of the Third International (and now the Chinese party itself as well) degenerated into revisionism. So it's not an absolute law, and there's not some kind of time barrier you pass after which you are bound to go into revisionism. But on the other hand there is a lesson to be drawn out. The important thing is that the party must actually be a revolutionary vanguard. And furthermore, that revolutionary vanguard is going to tend to ebb and flow and the overall development of things in the world is going to influence the conditions in which any party is working, which obviously will have an impact on the party itself — both its size and even its line. Of course, this has to be understood as a very sharply contradictory thing, a dialectical process, because the objective conditions in the world also include the revolutionary struggles in the world as a whole, which in turn are obviously influenced by the subjective forces — and not just in each country taken separately but by the overall effect of what they do. So it is very sharply contradictory.

I'm trying here to sharply combat this metaphysical notion that the party should somehow grow from smaller to bigger in a straight line. This is wrong even if you make a "dialectical adjustment" of your straight line concept in the sense that you allow for ebbs and flows, twists and turns and spiral development, but you still say that from Point A to Point B in time, over any ten-year period, the party should as a matter of principle grow if it is on the right road. No, the party *should* not only maintain but deepen its revolutionary line and its revolutionary practice (and this again shows how quality is principal over quantity). But that development is going to be reflected differently in different periods. In some periods it may be, like Lenin said, upholding the revolutionary banner and maintaining revolutionary principle in periods of acute revolutionary depression.

However, with that understanding the party should seek to grow as much as

it can, to develop its quantitative aspect as much as conditions allow on the basis of putting quality first. And particularly in periods when there are the beginnings of social ferment, of upsurge, when the conditions are beginning to ripen and that's beginning to find expression politically in the society and in the world, the party should seize every opportunity to expand, develop and grow quantitatively, to enlarge its membership in dialectical relationship with the qualitative aspect in the way we have been talking about it, and with that qualitative aspect being the principle aspect, the one that overall is playing the decisive and determining role in this back and forth between quantity and quality.

We can go back to those examples I gave earlier of the CP's recruiting methods, which are a sharp expression of its opportunism overall. Of course you can build a *bourgeois* party big quantitatively without it having a Marxist-Leninist line, because the Democratic Party has a much bigger membership than the CP, and certainly than our party does. (That much we'll tell the FBI: the Democratic Party has a bigger membership than our party.) That is an example where quality is also determining quantity in a different way; there is a bourgeois line that's reflected in a bourgeois kind of way of getting membership and a bourgeois way of building that organization. But a qualitatively different kind of quality — that is, a qualitatively different kind of line, a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist line — requires that you build a party in a qualitatively different way. And in that context you cannot over a long period of time quantitatively build up your party and membership as a Marxist-Leninist party without putting the question of the line in first place. If you don't continually train the members of the party itself, and also those advanced forces who are drawn toward and brought into the party, in the theory and application of that line, if the party as a whole is not constantly deepening its grasp and application of a Marxist-Leninist line in dialectical relationship with the development of the world situation and of the objective factor in an overall sense, then over a period of time that's going to also be reflected quantitatively. It's going to be reflected in the fact that you'll lose membership and not only, at least, as a result of what may be an unfavorable objective situation, but also because of the situation in the subjective factor. That is, your line will eventually cause you to lose membership much more so than even a temporary ebb or a temporary setback in the overall movement will cause you to lose it. And a wrong line will also cause you to fail to gain membership, or perhaps even to lose membership, when the objective conditions are becoming more favorable and when you could gain a lot more membership if guided by a correct line. So that's one aspect of this quality and quantity thing.

ment to move this dialectical process forward, to act correctly upon this dialectical relationship between line and social base. At any given time it's the *line* that enables you to build the party, and in particular to build it among the real proletarian social base for the kind of line that our party has been deepening and applying through struggle.

But on the other hand, in another context I presented the question this way: it's also a matter in a certain sense of "coming from behind" in terms of the party itself. You remember, the talk "Coming From Behind to Make Revolution" raised this idea of "coming from behind" in a general, overall sense. This means, especially as the objective developments themselves accelerate, being able to accelerate ourselves to go from where we are to catch up with and get to the fore of the situation. This itself will not happen in a straight line way either, but in an overall way we have to be able to do that. There is also an application of that with regard to our party itself. In other words, there is a question in a certain way of rupturing the party itself, or making a further leap in the party itself, and in that sense really rupturing it into the kind of vanguard that is going to be necessary for the period ahead, especially if there is actually the development of a revolutionary situation in the U.S., but even if there is not. Even if a revolutionary situation does not fully mature or ripen in the U.S., the kind of tests that the proletariat and its vanguard are going to be put to in the world as a whole, including in a country like the U.S., are going to require a vanguard force that really *is* one. And that means not only in *line* being more and more firmly based on Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, but also actually strengthening the party's political base among that social base in society that has the greatest interest in proletarian revolution — that is, in carrying out that kind of a line. This social base is what we've called in short-hand terms the "real proletariat" in the U.S. Putting it from the other side — I mean that social base which has the least basis for being drawn into support for or conciliation with the imperialist system, in particular the imperialist ruling class of the country itself. There is a kind of a race involved there, a "coming from behind" process involved there.

Our party did come out of a certain kind of movement of the '60s, which was tremendously important and did bring forward a lot of forces. You were telling me earlier about an activist from the '60s now working as a lawyer, coming forward and being inspired by the example of people still carrying out revolutionary work, and coming forward and telling our people, half in whispers, "You know, I still believe in revolution." There's a lot of people like that and the '60s did have a lot of lasting effects. It produced a lot of people who already are, and many more who will be, drawn forward as things sharpen up. The '60s laid a lot of the basis for the future, both in terms of the overall consciousness of the masses and in terms of the vanguard itself; it was in that period that our party had its roots and out of which it developed. This is a broader, international phenomenon, too.

So all that's very important, but still there was a certain character to that social movement of the '60s in the U.S. It was a social movement which corresponded

## Chapter 9

### A Social Base for Proletarian Internationalism

Another important aspect of the question of the relationship between quality and quantity in party building is the relationship between line and social base. This takes us back again to the founding congress of our party in 1975. If you remember, the economist line which manifested itself in a number of ways there also manifested itself in the question of building the party and recruitment and particularly the way the contradiction of line and social base was expressed. At that time it was basically said that workers in our party, or even workers in the leadership, are the sign of a great victory and great advance for the proletariat and our party, in a very mechanical, economist kind of way. This congress presented the question of line and social base very mechanically, and as a matter of fact it had identified the wrong social base. That is, it identified the more bourgeoisified workers as the ones who should be our social base and the ones who ultimately would be determining what kind of line the party would have.

One of the Menshevik ironies is that they haven't had much success in getting that kind of social base to want to join their — I guess they still call it "communist" — formation. It's an ironic contradiction that they are involved in: for historical conditions and reasons owing to the different positions of these countries in the world, that kind of social base in the U.S., as opposed for example to some of these European countries like Italy or France, is not interested in being identified with communism in any kind of way. Trade unionism, yes, to some degree. But, unfortunately for the Mensheviks in the U.S., they don't have the whole historical and present day reality that enables them to wrap trade unionism up in a pink diaper of so-called communism. So they are really shit-out-of-luck (at least for now, with the present conditions).

But, getting back to our situation, despite all the distortions, there is still an important question of the relationship between line and social base. Line is still decisive, and line is particularly the key link that you can grasp at any given mo-

to a period (the '60s and early '70s) when things *didn't* sharpen up all the way to a revolutionary situation. And the lines (and the organizational expressions) that had currency and were largely in command in that period were not the kind that were capable of leading the revolutionary movement all the way through. (This is dialectically, though not mechanically, related to the way things did — and didn't — develop.) Neither were these lines and organizations capable of meeting the tests of the period of the '80s and ahead, meaning the tests that are going to be placed on the masses and in a concentrated way on the vanguard, even if a revolutionary situation doesn't develop in the U.S. In any case there are going to be tremendous demands as well as tremendous opportunities that are going to confront the masses, and in a concentrated way the vanguard forces, internationally, including in an important way in the U.S. So, there is a test.

### Leaps in the Party Itself

Now I don't want to introduce this to say we should panic, or to say there is something wrong with our party, or to say that it's only a matter of time, if we don't radically alter this party then it's going to go down the drain. That's not the point at all. The motion is forward. Viewing things in terms of their motion through contradiction we can actually see that the future is bright for the party itself as a part of the heightening prospects in the overall situation in the world as a whole. I think in the struggle carried forward up to this point there has been a strong foundation laid for coming from behind in relation to the party itself, for making further leaps and making a real rupture in terms of the party. But *that* is what's required — and nothing less! When I talk about a rupture, I mean our party has to do *more* than just keep going forward along the road it is going forward on. It has to make some real qualitative leaps. And that involves a certain process of rupture with some of the character that it has had up to this time. Specifically talking about social base, it means that there is a relationship between line and social base. That line has to be carried out mainly, not only, but mainly among that social base. And the advanced elements mainly, not only, but mainly from among that social base have to be brought forward toward the party, into the party, trained more inside the party and developed into a more solid base of our party. Now I don't mean this in a mechanical way or just repeating (with simply a different social base) the economist and tailist errors that we made in the past. We have to do this precisely by actually training people in practice and in theory in an all-around way as Marxist-Leninists, and ever more broadly raising the political consciousness of the people, especially that social base and particularly the advanced.

That revolutionary communist, proletarian internationalist line does represent in the most fundamental sense the interests of the *international* proletariat, but in terms of its expression inside the U.S., it does represent and is a concentration of the interests and to a significant degree the felt aspirations of a social base of people too — a concentration in the sense of raising to a higher

level. This doesn't mean that those people are already basically conscious, or a tailist notion that they already have the basic understanding that's required and all we have to do is refine it a bit. They themselves need to make ruptures and leaps in terms of their consciousness and in terms of their activity. But nevertheless, it's not like a line is just in the abstract. It does represent most fundamentally the interests of the international proletariat, but it also represents and has to find its most solid roots among that section of society whose interests are, in fact, most fully in line with the fundamental interests of the international proletariat, and whose felt aspirations are also more in the direction of those internationalist interests. If further leaps aren't made in that direction, and in that sense a "rupturing", then that will react back upon the line of the party. Even though the line at any given time is the key link, still there is that relationship with the question of social base, and that will react back upon the line of the party.

Now the role of revolutionary intellectuals, for example, among whom I count myself, is an extremely important role in the revolution, and it's an economist line and philistinism to downgrade in any way the role of revolutionary intellectuals in the movement. We have to continue to combat those kinds of tendencies. But at the same time it is decisive to carry out that line and build the base of support for the party, and also to build the party itself mainly, not only, but mainly among that proletarian social base. Ultimately, either positively or negatively, that will react back upon the line of the party. And the question that is up for struggle and will increasingly come to the fore is whether that is going to be in a positive or a negative direction.

I told a story at the '79 Central Committee meeting about a speech I gave in Cleveland. There was an older Black guy who got up and left the meeting early (eventually he came back). People told me that after he left he was out in the hall and when they went up to talk to him and see why he was leaving he was out there crying and he said, "That guy up there is saying everything that I've always wanted to say all my life." Now, I don't believe that speech was a tailist speech. The point was not that I was saying everything, just in a little bit better style or with a little bit clearer formulation, that he had always been trying to say all his life. He saw his own interests reflected but raised to a higher level, which is the role of the vanguard, and, because they had been presented in that way, he saw them in light of the struggle of the whole international proletariat. But in that light, in that broad sense, he saw his own interests and his own felt aspirations, concentrated and raised to a higher level. That's the kind of thing I'm talking about. People like that have to be brought forward and not only developed in a qualitatively greater way as the base of *support* for our party, but have to be brought *into* the party and they have to struggle and work and contribute to revolution in that arena. In the period ahead this is going to sharply pose itself. Either positively or negatively in its principal aspect this is going to react back upon the line of the party. It isn't a quantitative question there

either. It isn't a question of numerically where you have more members drawn from at any given point. But it is a question of motion and development. Over a long period of time if there is not motion and development — through ebbs and flows and twists and turns — but development towards increasingly building a base of support for the party among that social base and bringing that social base into the party, then that will tend to react back on the line itself. A line that represents the interests of the international proletariat should find its strongest base of support in the U.S. among that section of the masses whose social position is truly proletarian. Without motion and development in that direction, without that base of support, it is going to be very difficult to maintain and deepen a proletarian internationalist, revolutionary communist line over a period of time.

So that's another aspect of the problem that needs to be grasped. And not just the party leadership, or even membership, needs to grasp it. Even beyond that it should be put out broadly to the masses from all the different strata who are being drawn towards the party, but specifically it should be put forward as a question to be taken up and struggled over among that social base itself. They have to see this as a part of their responsibility and as a challenge to them; this has to be seen in the fullest sense, not narrowly or as a gimmick. We are not tailing; we are not offering some kind of first class and second class citizenship — inverting bourgeois society in the sense that if you come from the least privileged proletarian strata you have more privilege, or a higher status in the party. Line is principal; in a fundamental sense there is only one kind of party member regardless of what strata they are drawn from. That was Lenin's point in *What Is To Be Done?*. In particular he was talking about the party's backbone element being professional revolutionaries regardless of whether they are drawn from among the workers or the intellectuals. That's a basic principle in opposition to economism and tailism. And it's true. If you take any given individual or you take the individuals in the party as a whole, the important question is not where they come from, in terms of their social status or origin, but their grasp and application of the line as part of the party as a whole. But at the same time, viewing it more broadly in terms of where the work of our party needs to be concentrated and where its social base has to be mainly built and where over a period of time it has to make the most important efforts, and where it's crucial to make leaps in building the party itself, it is among that social base.

### Social Base for the '60s Revolutionary Thrust

In terms of material forces overall in society, the stepping forward of the proletarian social base for revolution around that proletarian revolutionary internationalist line has a tremendous influence in bringing forward the other strata and class forces that can be allies of the proletariat and can be won to the revolutionary banner. Now it's also true, and a very important principle in opposition

to economism and narrow thinking, that those proletarian masses are influenced by the movements and ferment among these other strata in society. There's a dialectical relationship. But let's take an example in the movement of the '60s to get at what I mean. What is it that pushed that movement as far as it went? What gave it such a revolutionary current? There was a significant revolutionary current, a revolutionary thrust, within that movement. Even if the majority of the people who were activists in the '60s were not in a basic sense revolutionary, certainly that current had influence among the very broadest ranks and there was a very strong force within that movement that did take a basic revolutionary position with whatever contradictions and weaknesses there were within that. And even if it didn't have a thoroughly proletarian class character to it and was largely influenced by petty bourgeois tendencies, bourgeois democratic tendencies and so on, still there was a revolutionary kernel and thrust and a revolutionary current that was very powerful. Why was that? Why did that become so powerful?

Of course in the most fundamental and important sense, it was what was happening in the world as a whole, in particular the struggle of the Vietnamese people and the Cultural Revolution in China, which shaped and influenced what was happening in the U.S. including among the forces that were active in the political movements of the time. But within that, as a subordinate part of that, looking at the U.S. itself, in terms of social forces it was the tremendous upsurge and uprising and the revolutionary sentiments and even the revolutionary organization among the Black people that pushed that movement as far as it went and gave as much of the revolutionary thrust and gave as much strength to the revolutionary current as it had.

You can see that by the way the bourgeoisie sums it up. The bourgeoisie in the way it tries to sum up the '60s will always try to downplay or even sometimes outright eliminate that role of the Black masses. To a large degree, of course, they will do that with the international dimension (or else distort it and pervert it), and they will also do the same thing to a very large degree with the whole thrust of the Black people's struggle. For example in that movie "The Big Fix" it was glaringly missing because if they had brought in the whole element of the uprising of the Black masses how could they put over the line that what happened to the movement of the '60s was that it was made up of a bunch of spoiled rich brats with a banquet in front of them who finally got tired of saying "no" when there were all these goodies to be had. That line would look even more outrageous if you tried to bring in the whole role of Black people at the time and then said "and the problem with them was they had all these goodies available and they got tired of being spoiled rich kids saying no — and decided to get all the goodies." Now there is a section, and we'll talk about this more later, of the Black petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie, that did reap some benefits from the struggle of that time. That's contradictory too, there is truth to that. But, nevertheless, taking the Black people in the main



aspect, that's not what was going on in the '60s. Looking in terms of the U.S. itself, that is the key element that gave that revolutionary thrust and gave as much strength to the revolutionary current as there was.

Now there is a lesson there. It isn't just because those who were rising up were oppressed (although that's very important) but this is also related to and was strengthened by the actual class position of the Black masses, their position as crucial elements among the least privileged and least bourgeoisified sections of the proletariat in the U.S., the real proletariat. Not that the proletariat and the strongest social base for a revolutionary line in the U.S. is all, or even in its majority, Black, but certainly there are millions of Black people whose position in society is proletarian. And *that*, and the way that material class position influenced their struggle, in interpenetration with the national contradiction, their oppression as a people and their resistance to that oppression — it was all that that gave the revolutionary current the thrust and strength it had at the time.

The general principle that I've just been talking about is also going to be true in relation to the party itself, in relation to the most advanced and the most concentrated revolutionary expression that develops within the society, that is, the vanguard party. Without getting narrow or mechanical about it, in an overall sense it's going to be true that the rallying of the strongest social base for the revolutionary line, not only around and in support of our party but into the party, is also going to draw and influence other strata and forces in society toward more support for the party and toward making the leap to joining the party itself.

**Q:** In "Conquer the World . . ." you summed up the campaigns around the 100,000 *Revolutionary Workers* and May Day and the relationship between quantity and quality in that. Overall, you said, quality was key and May Day really made some qualitative leaps but in terms of the quantity we didn't achieve what we wanted to. Certainly there will be people around who say that, now he says that quantity wasn't really that important so therefore the next time when it comes up that we put forward certain goals all we've got to do is reach a certain qualitative level and everything's fine. And I think what you have been saying here is that in terms of the development of the party, with quality being the key link, at a certain point quantity is going to act on the quality. You're saying that if we look at it at this time there's a certain leap that has to be made. As you put it in the '79 CC Report, there's a certain chasm that we have to get across here. Maybe you can focus a little more on that and whether that's actually the way you see it.

**BA:** Well to start with the last part first for a second: I'm not trying to present it like an *immediate* chasm in the sense that unless we make a certain advance, a certain leap *right now*, we're going to start going backwards or we're going to suffer a tremendous setback. That's not the way I see it. And another dimension to that is I don't think what's called for is some sort of intense cam-

paign of building our party or recruiting into the party. I think we need to sum up more deeply the efforts that were made in the past, including the advances we could have made beyond what was done in efforts like the Mao Tsetung Enrollment into the party; but I also think we need to see things in a little bit different light, especially at this point. What I am trying to stress is precisely the need to give more emphasis to this in an *ongoing* way, rather than like some emergency, intense effort or blast over a short period of time to try to make some leap. I think we need to make leaps, yes, but more we need to give increasing emphasis to this in an ongoing way.

To go back to what you said in the beginning of this question, I didn't say and I don't think that it's the case that quantity didn't matter or was unimportant in the question of May Day or in the question of the *RW*. As I pointed out in relation to summing up May Day 1980, there is a dialectic between quantity and quality, and if the quantity had been such around May Day that basically there were no advanced forces, beyond, let's say a few hundred or something, who had responded to the call for May Day 1980 by taking to the streets, then that would obviously have influenced the quality. If that had been so, then you could not say that there was the kind of leap that there was. What I pointed out then and what I still believe is that even though the quantity fell short of what we called for (and what was possible) it was not such a low quantity that it turned the quality into its opposite — that is, making the demonstrations a setback rather than an advance. If that small a number had come out, it would have represented a setback, no matter if there were some good things that happened secondarily within it.

The same thing with the *RW*; we've had to consolidate on a lower level than the 100,000 we called for, but we have succeeded in making the paper, the line on central task and the revolutionary communist/proletarian internationalist trend the paper represents, a real trend in a qualitatively greater way, but also in a quantitatively greater way than before. That trend, as given concentrated expression in the newspaper, now has *quantitatively* greater impact, if you will, and also qualitatively greater impact. If it didn't make a certain level of quantitative advance in terms of impact, it could not make a qualitative advance and we would have failed. So you could say on the one hand we did fail quantitatively to reach and consolidate on the 100,000 level; we had to consolidate lower than that. But on the other hand, the advances that were made in terms of the quantitative impact were such that when you take the thing as a whole, including the quantitative advances, we say that there was a qualitative leap there. That's the only correct conclusion. It's not that the quantity is unimportant or doesn't figure in, or as long as we do a few good things, as long as there's a few inspiring examples of things and as long as the line in the newspaper is correct, then it doesn't matter if we try to expand regular distribution to 100,000 and end up with a thousand, let's say, which is like only having hundreds on May Day, that's a very extreme example. Obviously we have con-

solidated on a higher level than a thousand. But, it's not like you could just say the quantity absolutely doesn't matter — that's not the correct method and that's not what I am saying.

The question of the party is a little different than May Day 1980 or than the particular campaign around the 100,000. I think building the party is similar to what we have to do now at this point around the newspaper, which is to build from what we have achieved and consolidated up to this point, and through the course of our work and through the development of things over the period ahead, to advance from that level forward, including making leaps at crucial points in an ongoing way by deepening our grasp of the correct line and our application of it. But in particular what I am singling out here, because I think it's been given too little emphasis, is the question of building the party, including building it quantitatively, recruiting new members into the party while taking quality, that is, *line*, as the key link and the principal aspect of that overall. Just as with the newspaper, that has to be an ongoing struggle which has to be given increasing attention and effort.

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