

REVOLUTION

FALL 1990

***The End of a Stage –
The Beginning of a New Stage***

Mao More Than Ever!

***Two Talks by Bob Avakian
Chairman of the RCP, USA***

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The two talks were edited for publication (including editing changes made by the author). But in editing we've attempted to preserve the style and tone of the original presentation.

The End of a Stage – The Beginning of a New Stage

by Bob Avakian

Greetings, Comrades!

Let me begin by speaking to the fact that I am unable to attend this meeting. This has its negative aspect for sure, but mainly it must be seen in a positive light. I deeply regret being unable to attend and to take up the tasks and challenges at hand with you personally, and this is a negative thing. But on the other hand—the positive aspect—the reasons for my not attending have to do with the seriousness with which we are taking up our responsibilities and the prospects of revolutionary storms and revolutionary days ahead. For me, and for us, it is not a question of running and hiding with an eye to the past but accelerating our preparation to make leaps with an eye to the future.

I once heard a story about the period when Mao was leading the guerrilla warfare in the mountains of China, and over this period peasants in other parts of China would keep asking, “Is he still up there in the mountains?” By this they meant, is he still keeping up the fight—is the revolution still alive? Well, using this as a metaphor, we have our own kind of mountains—our own road for preparing to seize power in society as a whole—and we intend to *stay* on that road.

That leads me to the main theme of this talk. If I can be pardoned for doing so, I’ll introduce this by speaking in the terms of “popular American culture.” “Nice guys finish last” is a widely propagated piece of so-called “popular wisdom” in the U.S.—and this is really very revealing of the kind of society it is and the kind of society its rulers *want*—it is a willing self-exposure on their part. But *we* are out to do something very radical, to overturn all this. We are out for nothing less than to finish *first* and *remain* “nice guys” all the way through: to win victory for the proletariat, not just in the U.S. but worldwide, and bring into being a radically different world with radically different people—a world of freely and consciously

cooperating human beings, without inequality, oppression and class distinctions—a communist world.

To put this in terms of one of *our* often-repeated principles-to-live-by:

“In the final analysis, as Engels once expressed it, the proletariat must win its emancipation on the battlefield. But there is not only the question of winning in this sense but of how we win in the largest sense. One of the significant if perhaps subtle and often little-noticed ways in which the enemy, even in defeat, seeks to exact revenge on the revolution and sow the seed of its future undoing is in what he would force the revolutionaries to become in order to defeat him. It will come to this: we will have to face him in the trenches and defeat him amidst terrible destruction but we must not in the process annihilate the fundamental difference between the enemy and ourselves. Here the example of Marx is illuminating: he repeatedly fought at close quarters with the ideologists and apologists of the bourgeoisie but he never fought them on their terms or with their outlook; with Marx his method is as exhilarating as his goal is inspiring. We must be able to maintain our firmness of principles but at the same time our flexibility, our materialism and our dialectics, our realism and our romanticism, our solemn sense of purpose and our sense of humor.” (*Harvest*, p. 152)

Before turning to the main points of this talk, I want to touch briefly on the “end of the ’80s” point. This will only be a very short summary, because you comrades will be discussing a paper written on this question and in that discussion you will be going into this in some depth. Here what I want to speak to is what our orientation must be in coming to grips with some significant shifts in world contradictions, the interimperialist contradiction in particular. I am referring to the fact that things did not work out as we had predicted through the ’80s, in terms of the question of world war and the relationship between world war and the advance of the world revolution—in particular our analysis that, in the time frame of the ’80s, only a leap in the world revolution could prevent world war.

It is very important that we maintain a correct perspective on this. First of all, we were very correct in stressing the real and heightening danger of world war. Second, it is true that things did not work out the way we anticipated, and there have been the shifts in world contradictions—and in particular the interimperialist contradiction—that have resulted in a temporary and partial mitigation of this contradiction and have put off for a

certain time a direct, all-out confrontation between the rival imperialist blocs. But we should not lower our guard and flip to the other side, ignoring or underestimating the very real, deep-going and still intense contradictions between the imperialists and the continuing danger of world war. It is true that recent times have witnessed dramatic changes in what has been the Soviet bloc as well as the emergence of some imperialist states to more prominent positions (for example Japan and a Germany moving toward reunification), and there is the possibility of further significant shifts among the imperialists. But, with all this, the interimperialist contradiction remains very real and profound—there still remains the real possibility that this contradiction could erupt into all-out war. And it remains true that the most likely alignment in such a war would be two blocs facing off against each other with the U.S. heading one bloc and the Soviet Union heading the other.

I would also like to stress that it is very important to have a correct attitude toward one’s mistakes. And in this regard I would like to tell a little story that I heard about when W.E.B. Du Bois was in China and had a meeting with Mao. Apparently in the course of this discussion, which ranged rather broadly, Du Bois at one point said, looking back over his whole life’s work, “Well, it looks like all that I ever did was make one mistake after another.” And apparently at this point Mao sort of spit out the word “mistakes” in disgust and looked at Du Bois and said, “But at least you never made the mistake of giving up. We ourselves have made all kinds of mistakes through the history of what we’ve done, but we too have never made the mistake of giving up, and that’s the important thing.”

Besides, we are not at all “disappointed” at the prospect that world war may not come right away. Our impatience has not been for world war but for advancing the world revolution!

This point of basic orientation is especially important now, because the most important thing about the way world contradictions are expressing themselves now is the positive aspect—the “opening” (a “window of heightened opportunity,” to use one of the other side’s phrases) this is providing us—internationally and within the U.S. itself. It is to our advantage that the interimperialist contradiction and with it the immediate danger of world war and nuclear devastation have been temporarily and partially mitigated at the same time as mass movements and struggles, including revolutionary movements and armed struggles, are rocking the old order, East and West; and the guardians of the old order are confronting increasingly explosive problems in trying to keep the lid on and keep the masses down. In other

words, through the '80s we may not have gotten the conjuncture that we had foreseen, but we have gotten a kind of momentary conjuncture (which may last for a number of years) that is itself favorable to the advance of revolution, and it is up to us to make the most of this (and by "us" I mean our Party and the international communist movement, as concentrated in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement).

Our basic orientation toward the present situation

This orientation is summed up, I believe, in the statement I made that has been quoted in the Party's newspaper: Fear nothing. Be down for the whole thing. To this we can add Mao's comment that "If you want others to stand firm, you must first stand firm yourselves." This orientation is very appropriate and very important now, in a time when there is great stress and great storm—including gathering storms of mass rebellion and upheaval.

This is not at all a matter of hype or fronting like we're bad in an empty way, divorced from anything real among the masses. No, it has real and immediate practical meaning now. It has everything to do with what is put forward in our Party's May First Manifesto—with leading the basic people, who are increasingly in an angry and aroused mood, to "Take a bold stand, with cold revolutionary politics in command, and not let them carry out their plan: to pen us in, lock us up, hammer us down, and kill us off, while they're putting up that front, telling that Big Lie that this is what we want!" It has everything to do with leading this in such a way that the link is drawn and the bridge is built between this and the all-out revolutionary struggle we are aiming for: "And more, while we're battling them back, politically like that, we got to make this part of getting ready for The Time—and it can come soon—to wage revolutionary war."

We have continually emphasized the importance of revolutionary optimism and strategic confidence in our cause. And we are right to do so. This has a real basis.

As just one example, take the whole uproar and repressive reaction around the flag and flagburning. Yes, for now at least, the ruling class decided not to outlaw flagburning in a way that would involve openly tearing away some of their facade of "freedom and democracy for all—free expression, even for unpopular viewpoints." But they seriously considered the possibility of doing this, through an outright amendment of the Bill of Rights; and they have made very clear that, around the question of "loyalty to the flag and all it stands for," they intend to insist even more aggressively on unquestioning obedience, and that in general they intend to be further turning

the screws of repression. This shows their viciousness but even more it shows their panic, their concern and fear about the breaking apart and breaking down of their internal "unity" and order imposed from the top. Imagine all the uproar and upheaval that was created just over the question of torching their "symbol of national unity!" In other words, here is a living illustration of how correct the basic orientation is of tactically respecting the other side but having strategic contempt for them and strategic confidence and optimism about our cause.

And look at what is happening around abortion. Look at what the ruling imperialists must do—the lengths they must go to, the risks they must take in terms of tearing up their whole social fabric—in pursuit of their reactionary agenda, internationally and within the U.S. It is clear that they intend to continue their assault on women, particularly focused right now around the question of abortion, and that even though they will continue to try to attract people to an illusory "middle ground" position around this, in reality they will continually cut away any such "middle ground." While this whole move by the ruling class is a deadly serious attack that must be fiercely resisted, strategically this is very positive and favorable for our side.

Looked at overall, the polarization that is shaping up in the U.S. itself and the potential alignment are strategically favorable for us, if we look at what is happening—the way the ruling class is moving and the resistance this is bound to call forth and is already beginning to call forth—in terms of Black people and other poor people in the inner cities; immigrants, especially those from Mexico and Central America; women; and even many who had been relatively well-off "blue collar" strata—miners, farmers, many long-time factory workers, and so on—who are being told to "eat the flag" and may start choking on it! The U.S. economy is, in reality, far from the picture of uniform stability and robust all-around prosperity that they like to paint: while it still retains some real strengths, owing to the position of the U.S. imperialists in the whole network of international imperialist-dominated relations, the U.S. economy is marked by sharply contradictory factors and contains serious cracks and fissures. And the world economy, which does provide some real strengths and "reserves" for the U.S. imperialists, also contains elements, in particular the whole debt crisis, that make for great volatility and potentially devastating crisis to which U.S. imperialism is especially vulnerable precisely because of its international position.

Also very important in all this is "the crisis of morality and values" in the U.S. This is not simply an ideological question but is an acute expression of major material changes in society—in production and social relations. The fact

is that "traditional morality" is acutely in contradiction with these changes—including very importantly the changed situation with regard to the family, with the greatly heightened numbers of women who must work. And yet, this "traditional morality" is a crucial ideological and social prop of the rule of the imperialists, which they are in need of now more than ever. This, to say the least, involves some very explosive social contradictions!

And internationally, while there may be a partial and temporary mitigation of the interimperialist contradiction, as I have said this does not mean that inter-imperialist contradictions are not still very intense—they are and there remain a number of "hot spots" which could develop into "flash points" that could trigger a direct confrontation between the imperialist blocs. Certainly this remains true of the Middle East. Perhaps ironically, Europe itself, especially with the tumultuous events going on now in Eastern Europe, remains an area of great tension that could erupt into an all-out confrontation between the Soviet imperialists and their allies on the one side and the U.S. imperialists and their allies on the other. And there are other areas of the world where this is also the case.

Closer to the U.S. itself, despite recent gains by the U.S. in Panama and Nicaragua, the situation in Central America (and the Caribbean) remains one fraught with difficulty and danger for U.S. imperialism—it is a situation that is far from firmly under their control yet one they must attempt to get more tightly in their grip. And countries like Mexico—as well as others like Brazil, and even Argentina and Venezuela—are also potentially big trouble for the imperialists, with the huge debt the cutting edge of this. All this, too, is strategically favorable for our side.

And then there is the particular situation of Peru. More and more it is clear the U.S. imperialists are creating public opinion for heightened intervention there against the people's war—though conducted in an underhanded and cowardly way—camouflaged as their so-called "war on drugs"! While this will put increasing necessity before our Party in particular to fulfill our internationalist duties in support of the people's war in Peru, from a strategic standpoint this too is extremely favorable for our side—in the U.S. specifically and internationally—because here is a revolutionary war led by a party based in Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and winning great victories on that basis, striking real blows not only at the local reactionaries but at U.S. imperialism (and Soviet imperialism as well).

Given all this, why should we not keep talking about revolutionary optimism and strategic confidence in our cause? As Mao put it, we should "crave greatness and

success" for the cause of our class, for the proletarian revolution, in the U.S. and worldwide. (See *Chairman Mao Talks to the People*, edited by Stuart Schram, Mao's "Talks at Chengtu," p. 120.)

"The end of a stage"

With this as a basic orientation, let me turn to what is raised in the title of this talk, in particular the first part: *Why do I speak of "the end of a stage," what exactly do I mean by this?*

By "stage" in this context I am not referring to a new era in world history in the same way that Stalin did when he identified the present era as that of imperialism and the proletarian revolution. In the fundamental sense in which Stalin spoke of it, the era today remains the same: this is still the era of imperialism and the proletarian revolution. Nor am I referring to stages in the development of our revolutionary science. Indeed that science has developed to a new stage, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, but I am using "stage" here to refer to something else. The stage I am referring to that has ended is the whole historical period that began with the First International, and took a leap—but was quickly set back—with the rise and fall of the Paris Commune; that took a new qualitative leap with the October Revolution, the establishment of the Soviet Union and the founding of the Third (Communist) International; that reached its highest pinnacle with the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China led by Mao; and that has finally seen the reversal of the revolution and the restoration of capitalism in China, following the same setback in the Soviet Union in the 1950s. This period has ended with a situation where once again there are no socialist countries in the world and no Communist International, but it has *not* ended back where it began.

We, the international proletariat and the international communist movement, have come out of this whole period not with nothing but with a great deal. First and foremost we have the ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, which is the product of this whole period and which enables us to sum up the historical experience of this period and move forward—as we are doing. And we not only have Maoist parties and organizations in a number of countries, in virtually all parts of the world, but we also have the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM), a regrouping and rallying force and a political and organizational center on a certain level for the international communist movement, strengthening its revolutionary struggles now and contributing to the future formation of a new Communist International that will draw deeply from the lessons of the positive and the negative

experience of previous Internationals. In terms of what is most fundamentally important and what is most strategic, this is a lot to have, even as there is a great deal more to be won.

It is good to have some historical perspective on the gains and losses during this stage that has ended.

Check out the rising bourgeoisie and its difficulties and reversals:

There were hundreds of years from the emergence of the bourgeoisie in feudal society to its rise to the ruling position in a new society cast "in its own image": capitalist society. (This is spoken to by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*.)

The English bourgeoisie. It took them a couple of hundred years to bring about the triumph of capitalism and the bourgeois system of rule (from the 1600s to the 1800s)—and they still can't get rid of the "royal family" (in-bred mutants though they are!).

It was nearly 100 years after America won independence from England before the bourgeoisie in the U.S. put an end to slavery. And it did that only in the service of strengthening its own system of exploitation—capitalism.

As Mao and his comrades in China used to point out, if it took the rising bourgeoisie hundreds of years to bring about the more or less complete triumph of capitalism, and if this involved a number of setbacks and reversals, then why should we be disoriented or lose heart if the proletarian revolution does not go forward in a straight line from triumph to triumph—if it, too, involves real leaps backward as well as great leaps forward and undergoes many twists and turns before it can win final victory not just in one or a number of countries but worldwide? After all, the proletarian revolution is a much more radical revolution than the bourgeois revolution or any previous revolution in history in which one class overthrows another.

The proletarian revolution means not the mere replacement of one system of exploitation by another, but the abolition of all systems and all relations of exploitation, of all social inequality and oppression, of long-standing divisions in society and the world, of class distinctions themselves. As Marx and Engels put it, this revolution involves the most radical rupture with traditional property relations and with traditional ideas. So we can be forgiven, I think, if we do not become downhearted and defeatist if our revolution encounters real difficulties, and even bitter defeats, along the way to the final goal of communism.

In this light, a comment on Ronald Reagan and his description of communism as an "outmoded 19th-

century philosophy." This is interesting coming from someone upholding a truly outmoded philosophy, from the 18th century—at the most! Let fossils like Reagan gloat over the difficulties and upheavals that the rulers of the Soviet Union, China, and other such countries are experiencing. The so-called "demise of communism" is really just revisionism becoming more openly bourgeois. This does not constitute a "crisis" for genuine communism and it is not a bad thing for us—for the international proletariat and the international communist movement, as represented specifically by the RIM and the parties and organizations affiliated with it. Strategically, it is a fine thing for us.

The defeat in China— the international dimension

Something very important to grasp in understanding the world-historic battle between the two fundamentally opposed forces in this era—the bourgeois-imperialist forces and the proletarian-communist forces: The defeat in China (like the defeat in the Soviet Union before it) is primarily a defeat inflicted by the *international bourgeoisie* and is not primarily due to weaknesses or flaws in the socialist states themselves. And the mistakes of the revolutionaries—including of Mao Tsetung himself—are mainly mistakes in dealing with the very real problems and dangers caused primarily by imperialism and its still-dominant position in the world.

What was involved, particularly in the case of Mao, was emphatically not a question of fundamental ideological orientation. As a point of basic ideological orientation Mao made very clear and he meant that he was willing to give up a great deal in order not to give up the revolution. In other words, at one point he said that if the imperialists should attack China, or if there should be other setbacks, then they would be prepared to go back to the mountains and wage guerrilla warfare and start the revolution over again in a certain sense. For example, in 1957 he said, "We wish a peaceful world but we must put ourselves in the worst position and be prepared for major disasters. We came from Yenan and must be prepared to return there." And a couple of years later he said again, "If the enemy occupies Peking, Shanghai and Wuhan, we will go into the mountains and engage in guerrilla warfare. We will go 10, 20 years backward and return to the Yenan period." (*Mao Miscellany*, Volume 1, pp. 47 and 222)

So it was not a question of fundamental ideological orientation. Rather, what was involved was an error in policy, although there is an ideological aspect to Mao's error—a tendency toward nationalism, toward viewing the problems and tasks of the world revolution a bit

narrowly through the prism of revolutionary experience in China and the concerns of defending socialism in China. This policy error was linked to a real material/technological problem: China's material/technological strength could not match up to that of the Soviets (or the U.S.) at a time when the Soviets were making real and concrete threats and moves toward attacking China, including with nuclear strikes, in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In various places, memoirs and elsewhere, both Nixon and Henry Kissinger have recalled the situation around 1969 when the Soviet leadership made indirect or even more direct feelers, you might call them, to the U.S. imperialists, indicating that they (the Soviets) were thinking about launching nuclear strikes in China and sort of inquiring what the U.S. would do in response. Now Nixon and Kissinger both say, and I have no reason to disbelieve this, that they indicated very strongly that they would be opposed to this and that they were likely to do something in response. Not, of course, because they had any love for socialist China, but because they felt that this would unhinge things and unbalance world relations in a way that would be very detrimental to U.S. imperialism. And I think this is a very important thing to take into account. This sets the general framework and gives a sense of the very real necessity, difficulties and dangers that Mao and other revolutionaries in China had to deal with in the period of the late '60s and into the early '70s and up to the time of Mao's death and then the coup which brought revisionism to power in China in 1976.

In this light, what I want to touch on particularly is the Soviet danger and "the opening to the West" that was the policy adopted by the Chinese leadership in response to this and the deal with Lin Biao and what brought things to a head with him, specifically in terms of the international situation and the dangers faced by China.

An important objective factor in all this were the setbacks in Third World liberation struggles in the late '60s and early '70s—that is, increasing influence and control by the Soviets (Vietnam, Palestine and Dhofar/South Yemen, and liberation movements in Angola and Mozambique, among others, are indications of this). This, along with the intensifying Soviet threat to China itself, seemed to lead to the abandonment of the line represented by *Long Live the Victory of People's War*, which was written by Lin Biao but generally reflected the line of the Chinese Communist Party at that time—the 1960s.

On the positive side, *Long Live the Victory* was an attempt to provide a rallying call and a general program for advancing Third World liberation struggles and strengthening the communist pole within them. It went straight in the face of the Soviet backstabbing and

betrayal of these struggles and the attempts of the Soviet revisionist rulers to bend these struggles to their imperialist interests in colluding and contending with U.S. imperialism. On the other hand, as I pointed out in *For a Harvest of Dragons*, "Long Live the Victory" represented "the absolutizing of what was then the principal contradiction in the world (between the oppressed nations and imperialism)—raising it out of the context of world relations and contradictions in which it actually exists and treating it as a thing unto itself and virtually the only significant contradiction in the world." (*Harvest*, p. 150)

Related to these errors was the tendency, in correctly insisting on the need to wage the armed struggle, particularly in the Third World, to raise this above the question of *what line*, representing *which class*, is leading this armed struggle. Yet when the reality became clearer that many of these Third World liberation struggles were led by bourgeois forces who were inclined to accept offers of Soviet "aid" as a hoped-for "shortcut" to "quick victory," a serious split developed and deepened within the Chinese Communist Party:

Lin Biao, along with his general tendency toward militarism—toward raising the military above the political—"tilted toward" the Soviets. (His view: a bad socialist country is better than imperialism; to him the Soviet Union was not imperialist itself but just a bad socialist country.) This objectively amounted to treachery and capitulation to the enemy—the Soviet Union—that did then represent the greatest danger to China.

On the other side were forces within the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, generally grouped around Chou En-Lai, who wanted to deal with the Soviet threat by capitulating to Western imperialism and coming under its wing.

Mao's response to the very real Soviet threat to China was to attempt to build an international anti-Soviet United Front. There is too much evidence that Mao was behind this line—it cannot simply be blamed on the revisionists. For example, there is Mao's receiving of a parade of lackeys of Western imperialism, from Haile Selassie, "emperor" of Ethiopia, to the Shah of Iran. Everyone who was an active revolutionary at that time can't help recalling the parade of "puppets of the week" through Peking who unfortunately all too often met with Mao and therefore were given the stamp of approval—and through this the stamp of approval was given by Mao to this general orientation of international anti-Soviet United Front.

It seems that the problem was that the U.S. imperialists, if they were going to enter into some sort of united front with the Chinese on the basis of common opposition to the Soviet Union, were insistent that China

prove in practice that it really was serious about this and that it meant it would go along with at least putting a certain gloss on reactionary rulers who in fact were lackeys of Western imperialism throughout the Third World. It wasn't enough that China do certain things with the U.S., but the U.S. in turn insisted as the price for all this that they do this parade of "puppets of the week" kind of thing and openly embrace, at least on a certain level, reactionary leaders in the Third World who were aligned with or who were in fact controlled by Western imperialism. One of the most unfortunate—it is not even too strong to say shameful—instances of this was the fact that, apparently because of the strong influence of pro-Soviet revisionists in the Allende government in Chile in the early 1970s, China was quick to recognize and carry on business with the regime headed by Pinochet that overthrew the Allende government in a military coup, which was orchestrated and backed by the U.S., and then carried out bloodstained repression in which tens of thousands of Chilean people were massacred and many more were jailed or forced to flee the country.

As further evidence that Mao was behind the anti-Soviet United Front line there were a number of articles (in the *Peking Review* and elsewhere) written under the name Liang Hsiao—the name of a writing group which put forward the line of Mao and the "Gang of Four"—which argued for the "Soviet main danger, most dangerous source of war" line. And there were other clear indications that in fact Mao was behind this line.

As opposed to the capitulators, Mao did try to carry off this united front without abandoning socialism in China itself and without fundamentally abandoning the revolutionary struggles of oppressed peoples and nations in other countries—he tried to maintain independence and initiative while building such a united front as he had succeeded in doing in the war of liberation against Japanese imperialism during the 1930s and up to the end of World War 2. But this time around there were significant differences that made such a united front policy incorrect: The Soviet Union was not the sole or greatest danger to the oppressed people of the world as Japan had been to China during the time of the anti-Japanese united front. U.S. imperialism (and its allies and lackeys) continued to be no less of an enemy to the people of the world.

For China to take this international anti-Soviet United Front line was disorienting to revolutionaries and communists and to the masses of oppressed people all over the world who had, correctly, looked to China as a revolutionary base area and a revolutionary center. And in fact, this united front against the Soviet Union line objectively weakened the revolutionary forces within China itself—those who followed Mao's leadership—and made it more

difficult for them to maintain the initiative: it strengthened and gave initiative to the revisionists who were moving to suppress socialist revolution in China, restore capitalism and bring China under the domination of imperialism, particularly the Western-Japanese imperialist bloc.

Still, it is very important to keep in mind what was after all the context for all this—the necessity, the very real threat, that Mao was attempting to deal with: the very real danger of a major Soviet attack on China. Mao went with the "Soviet main danger in the world" line not out of fear—nor certainly out of a desire to capitulate to imperialism!—but out of a mistaken attempt to apply a policy that had been correct in another situation but was not correct in this situation. And all this once more highlights the point I stressed earlier: The defeat in China for the proletariat (like the defeat in the Soviet Union before it) is primarily a defeat inflicted by imperialism (the international bourgeoisie), and the mistakes of the revolutionaries, including Mao, are primarily mistakes in dealing with the very real problems and dangers posed by imperialism. (If socialist China had not been in the situation of being surrounded by imperialist states and their allies, the revolutionaries in China would have had far less difficulty in dealing with revisionist and other bourgeois forces within China itself.)

Something that has come to light, including through the recent upheavals and repression in revisionist China, is that even some former and now disaffected Red Guards from Cultural Revolution days don't understand all this. They buy the line, put out by the imperialists, the revisionists in China, and others who hated the Cultural Revolution, that what the Cultural Revolution was really all about was factional fighting among big-shots at the top of the Chinese Communist Party, including Mao. They blame Mao for the fact that repeated struggles did in fact break out among the top leaders of the Chinese Communist Party, not understanding that this is a part, a very crucial part, of the overall class struggle in socialist society in the context of the international situation and the international class struggle. They criticize Mao all out of proportion—and for the wrong reasons.

Despite certain errors Mao made—in very complex, intense, and dangerous circumstances—and despite bourgeois/revisionist slanders that his approach to socialism and the advance to communism amounted to "equalizing poverty" and so on, Mao was profoundly right in his whole emphasis on revolution before and as the basis for production and "modernization." Haven't recent events in China made this abundantly clear?!

Incentive and initiative

This touches on the question of incentive and initiative—the two fundamentally opposed world views on this, the bourgeois and the proletarian.

Marx and Engels spoke to this already in the *Communist Manifesto*, answering the charge that communist society would take away all incentive from people because they wouldn't be able to get ahead further by working harder and so on. They pointed out that if this were true, if the bourgeois view were correct, then bourgeois society itself would have gone to the dogs long ago because in bourgeois society those who work the hardest and the most get the least, and those who work the least get the most.

Once again, the bourgeois view on this is a *self-exposure*. You can get a fundamental idea about a system and the class that rules in it by what *they* put forward as standards to be upheld and followed, by what they glorify or insist must be the rule. The bourgeois system *insists on selfishness*—that selfishness is the “bottom line” of all human motivation, and that any society not rooted in this is “unrealistic” and bound to fail. And apologizers for this system play on the fact that most people in the world have never known any other kind of system and, living under a system like this all their lives, find it difficult to even conceive of a different kind of system.

In a report from an area Party organization on work in a housing project, a woman in the project is quoted as saying this: “You keep talking about ‘the system,’ but it is the people that make the system; it is not the system that makes the people.” This woman was speaking out of disgust and dismay at some of the vicious and rotten things people around her, particularly a number of the youth, were drawn into. But she was also speaking under the influence of the bourgeois viewpoint and its never-ending propagation through the media, culture, the educational system, the churches, and many other vehicles.

This viewpoint puts things exactly upside-down. It is, in fact, the system that makes people—that determines people's relations with other people and that shapes and molds their values and ideas. People are not free to just choose any system they want. People come into the world with social systems already in effect, and they are made to “fit in” and “find their place” within the system.

As for people's ideas, Marx and Engels pointed out in the *Communist Manifesto* that the ruling ideas of every age are always the ideas of the ruling class. Where, after all, do people get their ideas from? Who controls what ideas they have access to and how different ideas and theories are presented—or not presented?

The system forces people to relate to each other in certain ways. It forces them through its “normal work-

ings”—the economic system and how people must earn a livelihood and what people are pushed into and driven to by the workings of this system and the “lot” it hands them. The system coerces and represses people through the use of its state power and armed force when people try to go up against the system and do things a different way. For example, if homeless people try to take over housing—and this has happened in reality many times already in recent years in the U.S.—we see that the state power comes down on them and drives them out of the housing and subjects them to the punishments of the law, as well as outright brutality.

Or take something like People's Park in Berkeley, which is actually a struggle that flared up again and has been going on in one form or another for twenty years. Here were people trying to develop an alternative lifestyle, trying to develop a different way of relating, trying to put people above property and do something creative with an area that was just being kept for speculation by the university and other capitalist interests. And what happened there? People were killed as well as other people brutalized by the police, the National Guard came out, there was martial law imposed, and so on. And all of this is to say nothing of the continuing murders of Black people and other oppressed people in the U.S. and the general brutal murderous oppression brought down on anybody who seriously steps out of line or goes up against the whole system.

But, like everything else in life, the capitalist system is full of contradiction, and this contradiction erupts in all kinds of ways and calls forth all kinds of struggle. And in this struggle people, particularly the people on the bottom with the least stake in the present order, seek out ways to go up against the system and defeat it, and they seek out ideas to guide them in doing this. They are bound to be drawn toward those things that are in most fundamental contradiction to the whole system—toward the revolutionary proletariat and its ideology, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. In taking up the revolutionary struggle against the system and taking up the most revolutionary ideology to guide that struggle, people can and do change themselves. In rising up and overthrowing the system, they begin to make themselves into new people.

Look at the powerful example of how revolutionary China, with Mao's leadership, dealt with the drug question—as described in the pamphlet by Clark Kissinger—how they eliminated this as a social problem when it had been an extremely serious problem in the old society. How could this have been done if it was “the people who make the system” and not what it is in reality—“the system that makes the people.”

And here I remember a story from visiting in China

where it was recounted how a miner who was then in his fifties had in fact been an opium addict from the time he was six or eight, because that was the time he began working in the mines. And he was asked why he began smoking opium and how he eventually overcame this. He told the story of how his family was so poor that he had to begin working in the mines at that early age, and he worked continually, seven days a week for twelve or fourteen hours or more, and he said that literally for years on end he never saw the sun. And eventually, as others before him had, he came upon opium as a way of trying to deal with the situation, being able to bear up underneath it without totally cracking. And then he said after liberation, after China was completely liberated in 1949 and the new system came into being, he saw the sun, both literally as well as symbolically. And then he said he had no more need for opium, so he cast it aside as part of joining in the struggle to revolutionize society as a whole.

This is a true story, it has real meaning, and there are millions of such stories in China which illustrate the basic point that I am making here. No, the masses of people do not *make* this system—but they can and will *overthrow* it and create something far better in its place.

Mao Tsetung led the Chinese masses not only in overthrowing the old system but in making historic changes in how people relate and what motivates them. Mao upheld and applied the communist viewpoint on this question of initiative and incentive, taking this farther in theory and in practice than had previously been done in the experience of socialist countries.

“Serve the people”—that was the ideal and the practical slogan that Mao popularized, as opposed to Deng’s motto: “to get rich is glorious,” or “serve yourself”! Work not for personal gain but to advance the cause of the masses of people and the struggle for communism, all over the world. This was the orientation that Mao led the Chinese people in taking up and applying in practice.

These were not just lofty principles in some abstract sense—high-sounding but unrealistic—they were the guiding principles that tens and hundreds of millions of people in China strove to live by in their daily lives and that hundreds of millions of people in other countries were inspired by. And now that the revisionist-capitalist system in China that was installed with the overthrow of socialism is more and more revealing its all-around bankruptcy, material and “spiritual,” even the imperialist media must report that increasingly masses of Chinese people are openly expressing their fondness for the morals and principles of serving the people and serving the collective good that were the guiding principles in socialist China led by Mao.

The position of Maoists is very clear: Yes, we most

definitely want initiative—the initiative of individuals and above all initiative expressed through movements of masses of people. Our ideology and political line can and will unleash this in a far greater way than the bourgeoisie or other exploiting classes would ever think of doing, *but* this will *not* happen in the service of a commodity system where initiative is in fact stifled or perverted to serve the end of profiting at the expense of others. Our vision and our practical program point to the overthrow and elimination of all such systems and to the triumph of new, liberating and far more uplifting relations among people.

In these days when the imperialists are trying to make something fashionable and “trend-setting” out of “commodity-fetishism” (the outlook that treats everything and everybody as something to be bought and sold and used to make a profit); when they are on an offensive to declare their outmoded system and its corrupting, degrading values the “wave of the future”(!); it is all the more important that we wage a bold ideological counteroffensive—indicting their system and its values and putting forth our communist principles in opposition—as part of taking them on in a determined and militant way overall. We should instill in the victims of this system an attitude of despising this system and all it stands for—of recognizing that this system represents not the “wave of the future” but the dregs of the past—that it is the thing *standing in the way* of a much brighter future. As Mao said, “Unless we despise the old system and the old reactionary productive relationships, what do we think we are doing? If we do not have faith in socialism and communism, what do we think we are doing?” (Schram, Mao’s “Talks at Chengtu,” p. 121)

The question of Stalin and “Stalinism”

It is necessary, in summing up the stage that has ended and the historical experience of socialism so far, to speak once again to this question. I made a rather extensive analysis of the positive contributions as well as the serious errors of Stalin in *Conquer the World*. But right now especially, with the changes going on in the revisionist countries and the increasing repudiation and attacks there directed at Stalin and “Stalinism” from many different quarters, it is necessary to return to this and to make clear what it is we uphold and won’t renounce and what we cannot uphold and must criticize in terms of Stalin’s role as the leader of the Soviet Union and in the international communist movement over a decisive period of thirty years, from the early 1920s until his death in 1953.

Mao used the formulation that Stalin’s achievements were 70 percent and his errors 30 percent of his overall

role. The essence here is not the quantitative analysis—not the percentages, 70 percent positive, 30 percent negative—but the overall assessment this suggests: Stalin mainly should be upheld but he did make errors, including serious errors.

First, the positive side—the reasons why it is correct to uphold Stalin overall—his contributions to the international communist movement that outweigh his negative side:

Following Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin led the Soviet Union in taking the socialist road in opposition to right and "left" opponents whose lines would have led to openly abandoning the goal of socialist transformation or in any case would have led to socialism being overwhelmed and defeated by the forces of capitalism, inside the Soviet Union and internationally.

Stalin led in the complex and acute struggles to carry out collectivization of agriculture and to socialize the ownership of industry, putting the economy on a whole new foundation. This was something that had never been done before. While some significant mistakes were made, the fact is that, contrary to the slanders of the defenders and apologists of the old order, this monumental upheaval was marked by the enthusiasm and initiative of millions and millions of people in the countryside, especially the poor peasants, who were radically transforming centuries-old relations of oppression and casting off thousands of years of enslaving, mind-numbing tradition.

Stalin gave emphasis to the revolutionary struggle and the formation and development of communist parties in the East—that is, the colonial world—which was a very important development for the international communist movement. Along with this, Stalin made very valuable contributions in developing Marxist theory concerning the national and colonial question and the liberation struggles of the oppressed nations.

Stalin led the Soviet people in arduous and heroic struggle to defeat German imperialism, led by Hitler, in World War 2.

In the last years of his life Stalin not only refused to buckle under to the imperialists, who were threatening the Soviet Union with atomic weapons, but he continued to grapple with the problems of how to carry forward the socialist transformation of society and what would be the transition from a socialist economic system to a communist one.

All this is more than enough reason to continue to uphold Stalin's historical role as a leader of the Soviet Union and in the international communist movement.

As I wrote in *Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions*, in noting some of Stalin's main historic achievements and putting his errors in historical context:

"To bring about socialist collectivization together with socialist industrialization and transform the Soviet Union from a relatively backward to an advanced country economically—all of which was accomplished in the two decades between the end of the civil war in Russia and WW2—was a great achievement of the Soviet working class and people under the leadership of Stalin. And it had much to do with the Soviet Union's ability to defeat the Nazi invaders in WW2, another great achievement of the Soviet people carried out under Stalin's leadership.

"At the same time, in giving leadership to an unprecedented task of such tremendous proportions—the socialization, transformation and rapid development of the economy of such a large and complex country as the Soviet Union under the conditions where it was the only socialist state in a world still dominated by imperialism—Stalin did make certain errors. To a significant degree this is explainable by the very fact that there was no historical precedent for this task, no previous experience (and previous errors) to learn from. On the other hand, as Mao has summed up, certain of Stalin's errors, including in the sphere of political economy, economic policy, and socialist construction, arose because and to the extent that Stalin failed to thoroughly apply materialist dialectics to solving problems, including many genuinely new problems that did arise." (*Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions*, pp. 89-90)

It would be extremely wrong to negate Stalin's positive side and refuse to uphold his historical role overall. It would also be extremely wrong to underestimate his errors or refuse to thoroughly criticize them. As we know, Mao spoke of Stalin's errors as representing "30 percent" of Stalin's overall role. But when Mao speaks of the actual content of this "30 percent," it is clear that he is not talking about minor mistakes with minimal consequences. Here are some of the things he says concerning the negative side of Stalin:

The Chinese revolution was made by acting contrary to Stalin's will! "If we had followed Wang Ming's, or in other words Stalin's, methods the Chinese revolution couldn't have succeeded. When our revolution succeeded, Stalin said it was a fake. We did not argue with him, and as soon as we fought the war to resist America and aid Korea, our revolution became a genuine one [in his eyes]." (Schram, Mao's "Talks at Chengtu," pp. 102-103).

"Stalin felt that he had made mistakes in dealing with Chinese problems, and they were no small mistakes. We are a great country of several hundred millions, and he

opposed our revolution, and our seizure of power.” (Schram, Mao’s “Talk on Questions of Philosophy,” p. 217)

While recognizing Stalin’s great achievement in leading the collectivization of Soviet agriculture, Mao was at the same time sharply critical of important aspects of Stalin’s policy toward the peasants and the effect of this on the relations (contradictions) between workers and peasants, industry and agriculture, and the city and the countryside. Here is how I characterized this criticism in *Conquer the World*:

“As Mao put it, you want the hen to lay eggs but you don’t feed it; you want the horse to gallop but you don’t give it fodder and so on. Basically they took a tremendous amount from the peasantry as the basis for a breakneck industrialization program at the same time as they were carrying out rapid and wide-scale collectivization of agriculture; . . . In the comments and criticisms made by Mao in places like the *Ten Major Relationships* and consistently throughout. . . Volume 5 of Mao’s works and also in the CIA-collected *Miscellany of Mao Tsetung Thought* and in the *Chairman Mao Talks to the People* collection there is a consistent thread of criticism of the Soviet policy toward the peasantry. If you want to put it in a rather stark form, to a significant degree, they carried out industrialization on the backs of the peasantry while at the same time carrying out collectivization.” (*Conquer the World, Revolution #50*, p. 19)

Mao also criticized Stalin for placing too much emphasis on technique and technically trained personnel and not enough reliance on unleashing the initiative of the masses in carrying out socialist construction and transformation of the economy. For example, in commenting on Stalin’s *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, Mao said, “Stalin emphasized only technology, technical cadre. He wanted nothing but technology, nothing but cadre; no politics, no masses. This too is walking on one leg!” (Mao, *A Critique of Soviet Economics*, “Concerning *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*,” p. 129)

This was linked with a more general problem of orientation that Mao summed up: Stalin’s tendency to rely on administrative procedures rather than relying on and mobilizing the masses. This tendency asserted itself and became more pronounced the more Stalin’s leadership was consolidated and the more the Soviet Union made gains in socialist construction. As Mao put it, “At that time [the 1920’s] Stalin had nothing else to rely on except

the masses, so he demanded all-out mobilization of the party and the masses. Afterwards, when they had realized some gains this way, they became less reliant on the masses.” (See *Mao Tsetung’s Immortal Contributions*, p. 147)

And I think we must call attention to the fact that Stalin’s “top-down” tendency became very pronounced in the way he attempted to bring socialism to Eastern Europe after World War 2.

Through the course of summing up the triumph of revisionism and the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union after Stalin’s death, Mao made the pathbreaking analysis that in socialist society, even after ownership of the means of production is in the main socialized, there are still classes and class struggle and most centrally the antagonistic contradiction and struggle between the proletariat in power and the bourgeoisie which still exists and is constantly regenerated out of the contradictions of socialist society overall. This was in direct opposition to Stalin, who by the mid-1930s was declaring that antagonistic class contradictions had been eliminated in the Soviet Union, that all exploiting classes had been eliminated. (See, for example, Stalin’s report, “On the Draft Constitution of the USSR,” in 1936, and Stalin’s report to the 18th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1939.) This was a most serious error on Stalin’s part and it was bound to do damage to the proletariat in carrying out the class struggle against the bourgeoisie in Soviet society—which objectively did exist.

This was connected to a tendency on Stalin’s part to mix up what Mao referred to as the two different types of contradictions in class society—those between the people and the enemy, and those among the people themselves. The first, said Mao, are antagonistic and must be dealt with by the methods of dictatorship. The second, contradictions among the people, are not antagonistic and must be dealt with by democratic means—through ideological struggle, criticism and self-criticism, and so on.

Stalin’s tendency to mix up these two fundamentally different types of contradictions meant that methods of repression and dictatorship were used against people who were not enemies but were merely making mistakes or simply expressing disagreement with the policy of the Soviet government. At the same time, relating back to the fact that Stalin failed to recognize the continuing existence (and constant regeneration) of the bourgeoisie within socialist society, Stalin tended too much toward seeing opposition as all externally based—as being a matter of imperialist agents at work within the Soviet Union. All this contributed to a situation where, on the one hand, the target of repression and dictatorship tended to be too broad—including not only actual enemies, who should

have been repressed, but also individuals and groups among the people whom it was wrong to repress—and on the other hand the decisive class struggle against the actual bourgeois forces existing and being constantly regenerated within socialist society itself was not carried out as correctly and powerfully as it should have been. Again there was a growing tendency not to rely fully on the masses—both to recognize and repress actual enemies and to carry out struggle to resolve contradictions within the ranks of the people themselves.

Linked to all these errors were certain tendencies toward woodenness and a mechanical approach to problems in Stalin's outlook and methodology. Mao put this rather strongly: "Stalin had a fair amount of metaphysics in him and he taught many people to follow metaphysics." (Mao, "Talks at a Conference of Secretaries of Provincial, Municipal and Autonomous Region Party Committees," *Selected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 367)

This connects up with Stalin's tendency toward one-sidedly insisting on "monolithic unity." Mao strenuously argued against this kind of outlook: "To talk all the time about monolithic unity [he said], and not to talk about struggle, is not Marxist-Leninist" (Schram, Mao's "Talks at Chengtu," p. 107). While Mao does not refer specifically to Stalin in this particular statement, it is clear that this criticism applies to Stalin's outlook and method—particularly in his later years when the Soviet Union had "realized some gains" and "they became less reliant on the masses," as Mao put it.

This is tied in with the fact that, during Stalin's later years especially, things became rather "cold" in the Soviet Union and initiative was seriously stifled. Contrast this with the whole spirit of Mao, who says, "Whenever the mind becomes rigid, it is very dangerous," and "Unless you have a conquering spirit it is very dangerous to study Marxism-Leninism. Stalin could be said to have had this spirit, though it became somewhat tarnished." Mao also said that "If you are too realistic you can't write poetry" (Schram, Mao's "Talks at Chengtu," pp. 110, 115, 123). And I would add, in keeping with the thrust of what Mao is saying here, that if you don't have a poetic spirit—or at least a poetic side—it is very dangerous for you to lead a Marxist movement or be the leader of a socialist state.

To these criticisms Mao made of Stalin, our Party has added a sharp criticism of the United Front Against Fascism (UFAF) line adopted by the Communist International (Comintern) in 1935 and the related lines and policies of Stalin in carrying out a united front with the "democratic" imperialists against the fascist imperialist bloc of Germany, Italy, and Japan in World War 2. Some of Stalin's errors of that time were really rather extreme

and even smacked of rank opportunism—including appeals to Great Russian chauvinism and to a patriotism that was tied in with a number of reactionary things, such as patriarchy and "traditional relations" between men and women (it was during the period leading up to World War 2 that Soviet law was reversed on abortion and it was made illegal, to cite one significant example). These serious deviations from Marxist-Leninist principle jump off the pages of Stalin's speeches *On the Great Patriotic War*, and I have made fairly extensive analysis, in *Conquer the World* and elsewhere, of serious errors of principle in the UFAF line, so it is not necessary to go into this at greater length here.

It is necessary, of course, when making such sharp criticisms, to keep in mind the objective situation and the very extreme and dire necessity faced by the Soviet Union—at that time the world's only socialist state surrounded on all sides by hostile imperialist states and their allies and forced to deal with a massive all-out invasion from what was, at the start of World War 2, the most powerful, and seemingly invincible, imperialist armed force—Nazi Germany. And here I can only add that in reading over histories of World War 2, particularly the battles on the Russian front with the Nazi armies, there are incredible stories of how soldiers on both sides died of such things as going out in the dead of the Russian winter to relieve themselves and literally having their bodies freeze to death. And you can also recall the stories and accounts, so vivid, of the masses of people who died of starvation by the thousands and hundreds of thousands in Soviet cities such as Leningrad—and they literally had almost no clothes and perhaps actually in fact no food—along with the thousands of people, the tens and hundreds of thousands of Soviet civilians, who died in the war directly from bombardments and so on. When you read these accounts you get a very vivid sense of the dire necessity that was involved here and that Stalin and the Soviet Union were up against, and you get extremely angry at those people who flippantly criticize Stalin without taking into account in any kind of serious way the tremendous difficulties that he had to deal with and that he could foresee on the horizon even before World War 2 broke out.

But even keeping all that in mind, and even allowing for the fact that Stalin and the Soviet Union had no other, previously existing socialist states whose experience they could learn from—even making the necessary allowance for that—it is still necessary to criticize Stalin for very serious errors along the lines I have indicated here.

Of course, it is even more necessary to maintain the fundamental distinction between our criticism of Stalin and the unprincipled and in many cases totally unfounded

slanders of the reactionaries against Stalin and "Stalinism." Our criticism is fundamentally different from theirs—ours is a *revolutionary* criticism, made from the standpoint of the proletariat, not from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie, the imperialists and reactionaries. We make unsparing criticism of Stalin's mistakes and shortcomings because this is in accord with reality and it is necessary to make this criticism in order to serve the proletarian world revolution; and we continue to uphold Stalin's historical role overall for exactly the same reason. It is something worth pondering seriously that those who treat Stalin as, on balance, a negative figure—or as someone who may have initially been more positive but then became essentially negative—themselves either from the start oppose the revolutionary interests of the international proletariat or degenerate into such a position. More specifically, those who attempt to approach things as Marxists but negate Stalin's role overall end up as social-democrats (socialists in name, bourgeois-democrats in fact) or plain and simple bourgeois-democrats or more openly reactionary defenders of the exploiting system. As Mao pointed out very insightfully in responding to Khrushchev's slanderous denunciations of Stalin as far back as 1956, when the sword of Stalin is dropped—as they were then openly doing in the Soviet Union—it will not be long before the sword of Lenin too is dropped (and, we can add, the sword of Mao as well).

As for "Stalinism," here too we must have a very critical approach to criticism. That is, we must distinguish between those aspects of Stalin's methods and policies that deviated from Marxist-Leninist principle and were harmful to the interests of the international proletariat, on the one hand, and those aspects of "Stalinism" that are in accord with and further the fundamental interests of the proletariat. In reality, there is no such thing as "Stalinism," scientifically speaking. Stalin advocated and in the main upheld Marxism-Leninism, not "Stalinism." I have used this term here—and have put it in quotation marks—to refer to how the bourgeoisie and reactionaries generally use this term, "Stalinism," to describe anyone and anything that is identified, rightly or wrongly, with the leadership and influence, with the historical legacy, of Stalin in building socialism, in building communist parties, and generally in the experience of the international communist movement. When the imperialists, the revisionists, and other reactionary fools attack "Stalinism," they include in this attack the exercise of state power by the proletariat and the central and decisive role of the proletarian state in building a socialist economic system, and they include the leading role of the communist party, the vanguard party of the proletariat. And when we see the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

in China and Mao's basic line and methodology attacked as "Stalinism" as well, we know there are definitely very important things about "Stalinism" that we must uphold!

In conclusion on this point, it is correct and necessary, from an historical standpoint, to uphold Stalin's role overall, to counter the slanderous attacks of the reactionaries against Stalin, and to vigorously respond to their attacks on communism in the form of attacks on "Stalinism." But, at the same time, it is also correct and necessary to learn from not only the achievements but also the very serious errors of Stalin—and more than that, to really strive to avoid repeating such errors.

A repeat of the "Stalin experience" is not what the international proletariat needs—that is not aiming high enough. Things advance in spirals. The historical experience of the Soviet Union and the international communist movement under Stalin's leadership, with its positive and negative aspects, is a part of the synthesis we have achieved, it is part of the concentrated summation of that experience that is integrated into our ideology, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

As we have affirmed in formally adopting Marxism-Leninism-Maoism as our Party's ideology and in summarizing its essential features, this ideology is "not the quantitative addition of the ideas of Marx, Lenin and Mao (nor is it the case that every particular idea or policy or tactic adopted or advocated by them has been without error)." Rather, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is a "synthesis of the development, and especially the qualitative breakthroughs, that communist theory has achieved since its founding by Marx up to the present time. It is for this reason and in this sense that, as Lenin said about Marxism, it is omnipotent because it is true." (Central Committee Report, 1988, document on Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, published in *RW* #470, August 29, 1988)

We must go forward on this basis and in this spirit, not aiming simply to repeat the past but building off it to reach still greater heights.

More on unity and diversity in the new society

As noted before, Mao said that "To talk all the time about monolithic unity, and not to talk about struggle, is not Marxist-Leninist" (Schram, Mao's "Talks at Chengtu," p. 107). Here he was talking specifically about socialist society and he was criticizing Khrushchev & Co., the revisionist leaders of the Soviet Union: "The Soviet Union does not talk about the contradictions between the leaders and the led. If there were no contradictions and no struggle, there would be no world, no progress, no life, there would be nothing at all." (Ibid., p. 108)

So in socialist society there cannot be all unity, there is bound to be diversity—there is bound to be contradiction and struggle. The question is, how to look on this and what to do with it. I believe that fundamentally and strategically it should be looked on as a very positive thing and the leaders of a socialist society should strive to give expression to this diversity and to make full use of it to serve the struggle to further revolutionize society.

Socialist society should be the farthest thing from a stagnant and dreary place. It should be a vigorous, vibrant society. But it will never be that if everything is “top down” and if people are told that the leadership always knows what’s right, that it will take care of everything, that everybody must march precisely in step, and so on. How can we, when we’re in power, despise and suppress the very kinds of things we welcome and promote now—non-conformity, critical thinking, the unwillingness to blindly follow authority, and so on?

Does this mean we don’t need unity and people pulling together for the common cause and to carry forward the continuing revolution under socialism? No, we need those things very much, but diversity and struggle need not undermine this unity—they can and should make it more real, more firmly grounded, more solid. And they will make things a hell of a lot more exciting!

If someone gives the same speech over and over, and in a lifeless way besides, people may listen the first time if they like the content—they may even listen a few more times—but sooner or later they will turn their backs. If socialism is lifeless and boring, it will fail.

The question of dissent

Mao also pointed out that “In the beginning truth is not in the hands of the majority of people, but in the hands of a minority” (Schram, Mao, “On Democratic Centralism,” p. 183). We communists, of all people, should not be afraid of the truth—or of the possibility that others may discover the truth before we do, or discover that we are in error on something. Nor should we fear that others may show that Marxism itself is in error—it is not and they cannot. All this is especially important when we are in power.

Let people dissent. Let’s even “institutionalize” dissent to some degree—but not completely, or it will be suffocated, and that would be bad. Let’s allocate some funds for “independent” and even opposition publications and cultural works, and so on. This will be good, it will enable other points of view to get out there and will force us to reflect more deeply on things and perhaps see ourselves in a truer light.

Even some open reactionaries should be allowed to

publish a few books and have some limited access to the media. If handled correctly, this will help strengthen the understanding of the masses of people about how much better the new system is than the old one and will strengthen their resolve to continue the revolution. And, again, it will force the leadership to take a hard look at things, including itself. Recently, for example, I read a book by Zbigniew Brzezinski. He puts forward all kinds of ridiculous ideas, including his theories on Marxism and so on. And on the one hand this is very maddening, but on the other hand it is a good thing to read things like this. It makes one a better Marxist, and I came out of it feeling much more strengthened in my own understanding of how correct Marxism is, especially in opposition to these ridiculous theories that people like that put forward.

Does this mean that I am calling for liberalism and bourgeois-democracy after all—that I am opposing the dictatorship of the proletariat? No. I am not talking about *whether* the proletariat should exercise dictatorship but *how* it should exercise it. Everything I’m talking about must be carried out in the context that the proletariat has seized power and has consolidated its rule, that the proletariat, with the leadership of its vanguard party, is running society and is in overall control of not only the economy but politics, the media, culture, and so on. But dictatorship and control by the proletariat need not mean, and should not mean, that no opposition is allowed.

At the same time, we should not let the reactionaries get out of hand. And people who do challenge us better expect that we will answer back in kind. Mao made a point of saying that Marxism is a wrangling *ism*, and we should be a bunch of wrangling motherfuckers, no less when we’re in power than when we’re not.

All this is related to the fact that, as Mao pointed out in “The Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,” in socialist society there are still contradictions between the people and the government. When we say that in socialist society the masses are the masters of society, this is true in a dialectical sense—it is true relatively, not absolutely; it is something in motion, undergoing change, not something static and without contradiction. The masses increasingly strengthening their mastery over society and their ability to transform it in their interests has everything to do with the points I am stressing here about dissent, about unity and diversity, about contradiction and struggle.

Further on the question of “totalitarianism”

In *Democracy: Can’t We Do Better Than That* I debunked this so-called “theory” of “totalitarianism” and

showed that it is not so much a theory as an obsession—but a madness with a method and a purpose—to serve imperialism, particularly Western imperialism. But there is a point related to this that is important to speak to: Marxism is not a religion, and the proletarian state should not be run like a theocratic state with Marxism the official “state religion.”

In socialist society there needs to be struggle, and criticism/self-criticism, but there also needs to be “air” for people to breathe, room for them to disagree, allowance for them to come to the truths that Marxism reveals in their own way—and allowance for Marxism itself to breathe and grow, to discard outmoded concepts and analyses and to deepen its reflection of reality, as the liberating science it is, in opposition to suffocating religious dogma.

In socialist society we should not act as if the central authority is all-knowing and as if things will be fine if it relies on its authority to get the masses to go along with things, rather than relying on the masses to grasp their own interests and act accordingly, with leadership and through lively, vigorous debate and struggle. We cannot rely on such authority when we don’t have it, in the old society, and we should not try to rely on it when we do have it in the new society—or it won’t last long either.

The problem with intellectuals

Intellectuals do have certain strengths. They do have certain training in how to grapple with ideas and a basic appreciation of the importance of coming to some kind of rational understanding of things. And they tend to be flexible in their thinking and willing to consider different points of view. But, on the other hand, all this is marred by the fact that intellectuals, especially in bourgeois society, are trained in the erroneous and upside-down method and outlook of the bourgeoisie. The class bias of the bourgeoisie and the narrow self-interest of such intellectuals themselves tend to get in the way of their correctly approaching, let alone solving, problems. Further, intellectuals tend to be divorced from practice, alienated from the masses of people and far less capable than the basic masses of firmly grasping the essence of things and taking a decisive stand on matters of great social and political significance.

While a small minority of intellectuals in capitalist society become revolutionary intellectuals and take up the stand and viewpoint of the proletariat, in general intellectuals tend to gravitate to bourgeois-democratic ideas and to be seduced by bourgeois-democratic illusions. This is a problem not only under capitalism but in socialist society as well. Why is this?

Mao spoke to this problem: “Intellectuals usually express their general outlook through their way of looking at knowledge. Is it privately owned or publicly owned? Some regard it as their own property, for sale when the price is right and not otherwise” (*Critique*, p. 47).

Ideas and knowledge: those are the particular commodities of the intellectuals. And we can get a tip-off to this by the phrase that’s bandied about so much in capitalist society—especially in defending the struggle over ideas—“the marketplace of ideas”: let’s see how this idea does in “the marketplace of ideas,” let various ideas compete in “the marketplace of ideas.”

The very phrase—“the marketplace”—should tell us that this is not simply an abstract principle of upholding intellectual inquiry or dissent, or the struggle over different ideas and the confrontation of opposing views, but that it has everything to do with a society where everything is made into a commodity—including ideas, which must circulate and find their “true value” in “the marketplace of ideas.” And even though this is an illusion, because the bourgeoisie exercises dictatorship in the realm of ideas as well as elsewhere, it does express a general outlook—the bourgeois outlook—which does in fact generally seduce the intellectuals in capitalist society and exerts a very strong pull on them even in socialist society.

Intellectuals tend to share in the general misconceptions of the petty bourgeoisie. As Marx put it, they tend to confuse their own narrow interests with the general interests of society.

Let’s take an important example from history to grapple with the fundamental problem involved here: The library in ancient Alexandria. Carl Sagan talks about this in *Cosmos*. This was a great center of knowledge and learning concentrating many volumes, thousands and millions of volumes, and it brought together scholars who came from many parts of the world to this library in Alexandria, an ancient city in Egypt. Sagan not only enthuses over this but then he tells the “down side” of how, as this ancient society disintegrated, eventually this library was sacked and burned and all this great learning was lost.

But Sagan goes further. He also talks about how this library and these intellectuals who were gathered there were a tiny sliver of society, a society that was in fact founded on the massive enslavement of the people who created the wealth which made possible such a library as this. And then Sagan goes on to speak directly to this dilemma:

“There is no record, in the entire history of the Library, that any of its illustrious scientists and scholars ever seriously challenged the political,

economic and religious assumptions of their society. The permanence of the stars was questioned; the justice of slavery was not. Science and learning in general were the preserve of a privileged few. The vast population of the city had not the vaguest notion of the great discoveries taking place within the Library. New findings were not explained or popularized. The research benefited them little. Discoveries in mechanics and steam technology were applied mainly to the perfection of weapons, the encouragement of superstition, the amusement of kings. The scientists never grasped the potential of machines to free people. The great intellectual achievements of antiquity had few immediate practical applications. Science never captured the imagination of the multitude. There was no counterbalance to stagnation, to pessimism, to the most abject surrenders to mysticism. When, at long last, the mob came to burn the Library down, there was nobody to stop them." (Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*, p. 335)

Taking this as emblematic of a major contradiction, we can say it is easy to have a society where a privileged intellectual elite has considerable freedom to grapple with ideas—as long as they stay within certain confines and don't fundamentally challenge the existing order. These intellectuals, however, rarely if ever look down. They don't look to really see the society that is the foundation for the elite position they are occupying. They don't concern themselves, or even are unaware in many cases, about the suffering of the masses and the fact that the masses are kept in ignorance.

The hard thing is turning all of this upside down without stifling the critical spirit, the wrangling over ideas and theories and so on. Because we have also seen from history that it might be quite easy to institute a kind of monolithic system where only a few ideas are allowed to be debated out and where there is not real critical thinking and dissent. And we have seen that, to the degree that this is a tendency in socialist society, it works against socialism, against the revolutionary transformation of society, against the advance to communism.

So the real hard problem is how to achieve a correct synthesis of all this on the basis of moving society forward towards communism. The real problem is overcoming the oppressive division of labor in society. The real problem is how the masses become masters in every sphere of society, including intellectual life, and how they remake them in the image of the proletariat.

This is both necessary and possible. It is necessary and possible to do it without constricting the critical spirit, without suppressing the conflict of views and the struggle

over ideas. In fact, doing this requires that there be the most vigorous and lively struggle in society, that there be critical thinking, that there be unconventional ideas, that people challenge authority, and so on, as I have been stressing. But again this is possible as well as necessary because the ideology of the proletariat is both partisan and true. It allows for and demands critical thinking and challenging convention, vigorous debate and struggling over ideas, raising the sights of all of society to cardinal questions and the linking of theory with practice in order to continually deepen our understanding of reality and to transform it—to know and change the world—in the interests of humanity.

The question, which is posed very acutely in socialist society, is how to unite with the intellectuals, how to utilize their strengths not only to serve socialist construction and scientific experiment but to serve the class struggle—by raising important and often pressing questions that would otherwise perhaps not be raised, by stimulating and stirring up debate and ideological struggle—how to unite with them in this way while at the same time getting them to put their training at the service of the proletariat and struggling to remold them in practice and in their thinking.

If the spontaneous tendencies of the intellectuals and their notions of "freedom" are given free rein, this will contribute to the masses being suppressed and enslaved. The interests of the masses and the outlook and method of the proletariat must be in command, but the historic goal of the proletariat cannot be achieved without learning how to correctly lead the intellectuals—how to unite and struggle with the intellectuals and remold them and their outlook—as part of moving society forward to the point where the contradictions between the intellectuals and the masses, and between mental and manual labor, have been overcome. To the point where everyone in society is productive and creative in dealing both with ideas and with material things and where neither material things nor ideas are any longer commodities.

The positive side of unresolved contradictions under socialism

I am focusing attention sharply on these questions—of diversity, of dissent, of the role of intellectuals and the wrangling over ideas—not only from the point of view that these are significant problems that will have to be dealt with in socialist society and grappling with them now will help prepare us and the masses both to seize power and to exercise it in their interests. I am also raising these questions because I believe that there is a very positive side to all this—that handling these contradic-

tions in the way I have spoken to here will in fact greatly contribute to dealing with that monumental question that I posed in "Eye on the Prize": How to maintain socialist society as a revolutionary society, and a base area for the world revolution, without trying to constantly maintain society in a state of "war communism," which will not work.

I keep coming back to this problem because we must sum up historical experience around this very deeply and have the basis to make crucial breakthroughs on this as we, the international proletariat, seize power in the future, perhaps in the near future in some places. As we know, Mao grappled over and over with this problem. When we were up in the mountains waging guerrilla war, he said, everyone shared everything equally ("we ate out of the same bowl" is how he expressed it); but when we came down out of the mountains and seized power throughout the country, we encountered all kinds of new problems, he concluded.

In other words, there is the tendency for people whose lot has improved in the new socialist society to become conservative and selfish, and there is the tendency for leading people to follow the capitalist road. And it is not enough, as Mao knew well, to simply recall the hardships of the old society or to preach to the young people who have grown up in the new society about how "back in the old days, we had to make this and that sacrifice." Socialist society is marked by new and different contradictions than the old society, and carrying forward the revolution under socialism depends on correctly identifying and dealing with those contradictions and the forces and struggles they set in motion.

This brings up one very important factor in all this: the positive side of unresolved contradictions under socialism—the bringing to the fore of driving forces for revolutionary transformation in the socialist stage—forces on the cutting edge of contradictions that are coming to the fore as decisive questions in terms of whether society will be moved forward or dragged backward. A very important aspect of all this is the woman question, the struggle for the complete emancipation of women. This will be a decisive contradiction giving rise to crucial struggle throughout the socialist period.

Along with this are other divisions and inequalities left over from the old society—these can be generally characterized as bourgeois right—which give rise to conflicts and struggles. Related to this, there is the basic contradiction between leading people in socialist society who take the capitalist road and the broad masses of people who, as Mao put it, do not like big shots oppressing them. And there are the youth who are generally marked by their daring, their willingness to challenge

authority, and their impatience for change.

Unleashing all these forces to speak out, rally forces, raise criticism, and rise in rebellion can be risky and messy. But such mass upheaval is no less essential under socialism than it is under capitalism. And certainly this is not something communists should fear! Fundamentally, all these are forces that are favorable to the continuation of the revolution. By unleashing them and "jumping in" with them into the swirl of struggle, it will be possible to strengthen the influence and leadership of the proletariat within this mass upheaval and to direct the main thrust of the masses' resistance and defiance against those in authority who are acting like big shots and are seeking to restore a system based on the oppression and exploitation of the masses.

The alternative to this—to simply defend the *status quo* at any given time under socialism and to act like "the party of order"—is a recipe for defeat and for capitalist restoration. If it is true that without state power all is illusion, it is no less true that the whole purpose of proletarian state power is to continue the revolution and advance to communism—and without this, state power itself will become an illusion for the proletariat!

The international dimension of all this

First it is important to recall the basic point on the advance/consolidation dialectic in terms of the world proletarian revolution. This refers to making the greatest possible gains for the revolution, in particular countries and worldwide, in periods of advance, or upsurge, and then consolidating the most that can be consolidated in preparation for a further leap in the future. (This is gone into more fully in *For a Harvest of Dragons*.)

But here I want to raise a provocative question: What answer should be given to Mao Tsetung's question (in "The Ten Major Relationships"): Do you genuinely want atomic bombs? Mao's answer was yes. He said China needed nuclear weapons in order to deal with the threat from the imperialists and not be bullied by them, though of course Mao did not fundamentally *rely* on such weapons to stand up to the imperialists.

Still we must ask: what has historical experience shown about this? Has the possession of these weapons made a qualitative difference in terms of being able to deal with these dangers and stand up to such bullying? And, on the other hand, what has been the effect on the socialist states resulting from their entering into the race to develop and build up a store of these weapons (although for defensive purposes only)?

Does this tie in with the line of having, as a fundamental objective and basic point of orientation, the goal of

fairly quickly “catching up to and overtaking” the imperialist countries in a contest of “material strength”—economically and militarily? We know that Mao had moved away from and criticized this line and orientation in general. As he put it in 1962, “It took from three to four hundred years to build a great and mighty capitalist economy; what would be wrong with building a great and mighty socialist economy in about fifty or a hundred years?” (Schram, Mao’s “On Democratic Centralism,” p. 175)

The question I’m raising here is what are the implications of this in relation to the question of nuclear arms and the overall question of the military strategy and doctrine of a socialist state in dealing with the danger posed by imperialism.

I think the answer to this provocative question would suggest a different position than is put forward in our *Programme*, where it says that while the new socialist state will wage a determined struggle to abolish all nuclear arms, in the meantime it must develop its own nuclear weapons. *Why* am I suggesting a different position here—what does this have to do with the question of continuing the revolution in a socialist country while maintaining and strengthening it as a base area for the world revolution?

What is fundamentally involved here is the question of not simply “standing up to” the imperialists but of doing so in a way that is part of hewing out a radically different kind of society and world—a radically different path for humanity—toward the communist future. It is the question of carrying forward the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and strengthening the socialist country as a base area for the world revolution, as opposed to “settling into” the network of world relations and simply seeking to “survive” as a state—a state that is, for the moment, socialist.

This is linked to the question of the state—in particular the proletarian state and how it is and must be radically different from all previous forms of the state. Here it is worth recalling again Lenin’s formulation (in *The State and Revolution*) on how the proletarian state is not really a state in the proper sense of the word, and my comments in *Some Thoughts/Some Further Thoughts* on how this means that the more the proletarian state is strengthened the more it should embody something radically different from bourgeois dictatorship and all other forms of the state.

Of course, as we have seen, this doesn’t mean that you can do away with such things as a standing (professional) army—at least not for a fairly long historical period. But it does mean that it is crucial to build up the role—the political as well as the military role—of such things as

mass popular militias, and that the “regular” (i.e., the professional) army must be radically different from the army of any other kind of state in its doctrine and methods of fighting and most fundamentally in its relation to the masses of people and to the question of the masses really exercising state power, revolutionizing society and developing the socialist state as a base area for the world revolution.

Drawing lessons for the future from the whole historical experience of the past stage—and what could be called the “first wave” of socialist revolutions and socialist states, beginning with the Soviet Union and reaching its highest crest in China with the Cultural Revolution—it would seem that entering into the kind of effort that would be required to develop the kind of nuclear arsenal that would put a socialist state in the position to “counterbalance” the nuclear threat from the imperialists would skew and distort this socialist state—economically but also politically and ideologically—and would be very likely to fail anyway in the attempt to reach such a position of “nuclear parity”—as a socialist state.

Then what about other war technology? Should socialist states do without any advanced war technology and simply, literally base their military on the lowest level of technology? Of course not. They should have certain advanced technology, but they should not *rely* on this and certainly they should not rely on others to provide this technology. They should rely on themselves and fundamentally on the masses—just as they were relied on to win state power in the first place. But nuclear weapons are a different question than simply advanced war technology of other kinds. And this has become all the more so with the development of very “high-yield” strategic nuclear weapons (and their “delivery systems”) that are even very different from the kind of “atom bombs” that Mao was talking about in “The Ten Major Relationships” (in the latter half of the 1950s).

As noted before, to attempt to acquire the ability to come close to “counterbalancing” the nuclear arsenals of the imperialists—and to attempt to maintain such “parity,” which means constantly producing new, more “sophisticated” versions of these weapons—would put tremendous strains on a socialist state and would distort it economically, politically and ideologically, and it would almost certainly be an unsuccessful attempt anyway. Further, the actual use of nuclear weapons would dictate a certain kind of warfare that I believe is not in keeping with the principles of people’s war. Certainly this applies to “high-yield” strategic nuclear weapons.

Let’s look again at the statement attributed to Chang Chun-chiao concerning the historical experience of the Soviet Union: “The satellites went up to the sky, and the

red flag came down to the ground." Is there, in fact, a profound truth concentrated in this statement? To be provocative, even as the meaning of this statement was characterized by Chang's revisionist accusers (Deng, et al.), is there something fundamentally correct being said here? In other words, is it perhaps true that there is at least a very strong connection between the attempt to build up things like "nuclear arsenals" (and related things like having satellites in space) and the tendency to become revisionist: to try to "be the equal" of the international bourgeoisie by becoming bourgeois yourself? Very definitely we know that Mao did *not* try to match the imperialists (including the Soviet social-imperialists) "nuke for nuke"; nor did he base his military strategic thinking on matching the imperialists in any war technology. As opposed to this, he continued to insist and rely on the principles of people's war, including the most important principle that, while weapons are of course an important factor, people, not weapons, are decisive in warfare.

All this relates to the basic principle that ideological and political line is decisive and that the question of what line is being carried out in practice will determine the actual class nature of a party and a state. How do you know *who really* has state power? This cannot be answered in a formal way, as we have learned from bitter historical experience, with the rise to power of revisionist bourgeoisies in former socialist countries who follow the capitalist road but continue to put up road signs saying "socialism" and "communism."

Whether the proletariat has power is not so simple as whether the army is called the "people's army" or whether the masses are organized into militias—this should be clear from the recent experience in China or a place like Ethiopia (where the reactionary dictatorship calls itself "Marxist-Leninist" and has organized "popular militias" to oppose revolutionary wars against the regime). Once again, the question of what line is in command and being put into practice makes all the difference.

Again I am not trying to give complete answers here but to further pose crucial—and provocative—questions which I believe we, all of us in the international communist movement, must ponder and struggle over very deeply and unflinchingly.

These questions are not just abstract philosophical questions but will have increasing practical importance for the international communist movement, because we can see great battles ahead and the question of actually seizing power in a number of countries is coming more and more sharply into focus.

Some observations on the particular problems of not only winning but keeping the dictatorship of the proletariat in a place like the U.S.

This problem was brought more sharply in focus in my own thinking by hearing a report about how a basic person raised this question when talking with one of our people about our whole revolutionary outlook and objectives. He said this, which I thought was very insightful and provocative—he posed it as a question which I thought was very insightful and provocative—"Okay, I can agree revolution is definitely needed and I'm down for it, but I see one problem: in this country there is such a broad range of people who are middle class and kind of well off, and maybe we can get them over to our side in a real revolutionary situation and get them to go along with a revolution for awhile, but sooner or later they'd get unhappy, they'd want things the way they were before and then we'd have to start exercising dictatorship over them and the whole thing would come apart and wouldn't work." Again, I thought this was a very insightful and provocative question that can't be shined on or brushed aside but has to be really dug into very deeply. So let's dig into this problem.

Carrying out the seizure of state power and the socialist transformation of society and advancing to communism must be done and can only be done by relying on the masses of people. This fundamental principle remains strategically valid and very important.

Here again is the importance, and perhaps a new dimension, of the fundamental truth—without state power all is illusion—and the related point that I have made previously (in *Reflections, Sketches, and Provocations*) about what state power and socialist states are good for after all. With state power in the hands of the proletariat guided by a party armed with the liberating ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism there are all kinds of seeming "miracles" that can in reality be achieved—all kinds of changes in the basic relations in society, in how people relate and in how they see the world and what they are motivated by. And conversely, the big thing about the enemy—the thing that gives them such influence and ability to corrupt and pervert things—is after all that they hold state power!

Of course, this has its material foundation. These imperialists do have the material strength—which translates very importantly into military strength—that they have built up over a couple of hundred years of rule. They do have their position as big-time international exploiters. And they have the "force of habit" and "the weight of tradition's chains" going for them. But with all that, their hold on people, politically and ideologically, can still

come unraveled.

Here again we should recall the point that in the '60s in the U.S., while of course state power never changed hands—while there was never a fundamental change in the social system—there was a situation where the political and the ideological initiative was lost by the ruling class and was in fact gained by the forces rising in opposition, including a significant revolutionary current within them. I think if we look at this we can see that, for example, to pose it somewhat metaphysically, if there hadn't been the armed forces and the whole state apparatus in the hands of the bourgeoisie we would have come out of the '60s with a very different society than the one we did come out of it with.

That's not to say that it would have been a revolutionary society in the full sense, that it would have been socialism moving on to communism. Again, this is somewhat metaphysical, yet it does make a point: if you remove the question of state power society would have changed very radically. There were all kinds of people who were trying to make radical changes, and without the state power of the ruling bourgeoisie in their way they would have made them, although it would have required things going far beyond where they were to make a real socialist transformation of society. This is somewhat metaphysical, but it does bring out a very real and important material point—the question of state power.

As for the imperialists' military might—which is the “bottom line” of their political power and the “ultimate answer” they have to any criticism of them—well, as Marx said, the weapon of criticism can never equal the criticism of weapons; material force must be met with material force. But this does not mean that we will try to match them, literally, force for force.

Just because in an imperialist country like the U.S. it is necessary to follow the strategic road of political work and struggle leading to insurrection in key urban areas, followed by civil war throughout the whole territory to fully and finally defeat the other side's armed forces—and just because the other side thinks more “conventional” fighting in more defined battle areas is “the kind of war they like”—this doesn't mean that we will give them the kind of war they like anyway. As we have repeatedly stressed, once we are into warfare with them, we will fight *our way*—and we will fight to deprive them of the ability to fight “their way.” This is what it means to wage *people's war*.

No one is saying this is easy—in fact, people's war is in one aspect the hardest kind of war to fight, because it means avoiding seductive “shortcuts” and “get-rich-quick” schemes for illusory “quick and easy victory”—but people's war has one fundamental bastion of strength

that only those fighting in accordance with the fundamental interests of the masses can rely on, and that is the conscious, voluntary, determined action and support of the masses, above all the masses of poor and exploited people. Relying on this and combining this with operational principles, doctrines and methods of fighting concretely bringing into play the strategic strengths of our side—developing and deepening these in the course of carrying out the people's war (“learning warfare through warfare,” as Mao put it)—it is possible that our side could wage, and win, a people's war even in a country like the U.S.

Right now, as far as battles go, the immediate question for us is strengthening our ability to take the other side on in militant *political* battles and in so doing increasingly seize the political initiative from them. Learning to do this as we do it—learning this kind of political battle through waging it—we will heighten our ability to wage warfare for real and in the most all-out revolutionary way when the conditions for this do come into being—and that could in fact come soon.

Waging mass militant political battles in this way—going right up against the whole repressive offensive of the other side and developing and utilizing organizational methods that preserve our forces while strengthening our fight—will not only sharpen up the battle lines throughout society but will influence the political terrain in a way that is favorable for our side—for our people, our class. Carrying out this political battling in the overall context of exposing the enemy and arousing the people, and building the conscious organized fighting strength of the oppressed masses—above all building the Party as the vanguard force—with our Party's newspaper as the heart and hub of all this activity and struggle: this will give life and vitality to the task of preparation—getting ready for revolution.

One of the most important things it will do is to bring forward, steel and temper a revolutionary hard-core, with the Party as the most solid force at the very core of the whole revolutionary struggle. The importance of this must not be underestimated and cannot be stated too strongly—it will have a tremendous effect and will have a crucial bearing on whether or not we can get the military struggle off the ground when the time comes and whether we can carry it through all the way and win.

And in the framework of carrying out our overall political work and building this militant battling as a key part of that, we must wage some very bold and sharp ideological struggle, especially with the youth of today, most particularly the youth among our class. This goes back to the slogan: Fear nothing, be down for the whole thing.

I believe very strongly in the whole orientation of this slogan and in the need to boldly popularize this among basic people, particularly the youth. The fact that many of these youth grow up surrounded by violence is not all bad. Of course, much of the *kinds* of violence involved is bad—it is without dignity or lofty purpose, and this is not liberating but degrading. But there is also a positive side to this situation. We spoke to this in the May First Manifesto, including in the quote from my article, “The Myth of Non-Violence,” where it is said straight-out how uplifting it would be for these youth to break out of the vicious cycle of degrading violence they are subjected to by the police, and even by each other, and to rise up instead in revolutionary war with the leadership of the revolutionary proletariat.

It is true—and we should not hide the fact—that waging revolutionary war, especially to defeat such a powerful enemy as we are directly up against—U.S. imperialism—will involve great destruction and sacrifice. But this truth must not be allowed to blot out the even greater truth of the liberating nature of such a revolutionary war—especially one that wins! As Mao so powerfully put it:

“A great revolution must go through a civil war. This is a rule. And to see only the ills of war but not its benefits is a one-sided view. It is of no use to the people’s revolution to speak one-sidedly of the destructiveness of war.” (*Critique*, p. 50)

This is not just a question of tactics, but of principle. And in this basic point of orientation, too, we ourselves must set an example and lead the way.

If youth who are desperate and demoralized can be out there risking their lives for a gold chain, then certainly we can set an example and call forward youth—and others—to be willing to risk whatever it takes to break all chains of oppression!

Returning to the question of the particular difficulties that will be faced by the dictatorship of the proletariat in a country like the U.S., somewhere I read or have heard it said that if there were a revolution in the U.S., people would have to change their whole way of life and their whole way of looking at things. In a basic sense, this is true of revolution in any country—revolution does involve a complete change in society and in people—and revolution does change everything. But this is especially true when applied to revolution in a country like the U.S.

What must be remembered is that in fundamental terms this “change in the whole way of life” would be a great change for the better—a change to a *much better* way

of life—not just for the most exploited and oppressed people but for the majority of people overall. And the whole struggle, and all the turmoil and upheaval—political, ideological, and eventually militarily—to build up to and then carry out the seizure of power and bring into being a new, revolutionary system will itself bring about great changes in people as well as in social conditions and relations.

Yet it is still true—the observation of that basic person remains very insightful and provocative—that in a country like the U.S. it will be very difficult, even with state power, for the proletariat to keep the allegiance of, or maintain an alliance with, more middle class people, because fairly extensive sections of the “middle classes” (broadly defined) enjoyed a relatively well-off condition in the old capitalist society, certainly as compared with the basic masses in the U.S. and even more so as compared with the vast masses of people in the Third World. This will be a great challenge that can only be met by really wielding our ideology, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, in a concrete and living way, and at the same time a sweeping way.

The proletariat in power can to a certain degree make tactical use of the respect, even awe, that especially intermediate and backward sections of the people feel spontaneously for whoever is in power. But the proletariat can *never rely* on this. In the final analysis, spontaneity will go against the revolutionary proletariat. Fundamentally it must rely on the initiative, the conscious struggle and self-sacrifice of its most advanced forces and on the fact that it does represent the interests of the masses of people and a much brighter future for humanity—and that this will have real meaning, will make a tangible as well as an intangible difference in people’s lives.

What will be decisive for the proletariat in power is the orientation of not fearing or trying to suppress or rigidly control but instead giving full expression to the contradictions and struggles that socialist society will be full of, that will characterize that society and be the driving force in its development—one way or the other. And, as spoken to before, it will be decisive for the proletariat in power to fully unleash forces that can be powerful driving forces in carrying forward the revolutionary transformation of society—such as women (and men) fighting for the complete emancipation of women as part of the fight to abolish all forms of exploitation and oppression—forces on the cutting edge of key contradictions that will be coming powerfully to the fore in socialist society.

As I pointed out in *Some Thoughts/Some Further Thoughts*, this whole problem must be analyzed in terms of class forces and alignments within what is now the U.S. itself, but more fundamentally it must be taken up in terms of how it will take shape and be battled out on a

larger scale, in a larger context, ultimately a global context. And here I'm referring not only to the general question of how the revolution in a particular country must be subordinate to the overall world revolution, and how a socialist state once it's achieved in a particular country must be above all a base area for the world revolution. I'm also referring specifically to the question of what the yankee imperialists in their arrogance refer to as their "backyard," in particular to Mexico and Central America.

And, again as I said in *Some Thoughts/Some Further Thoughts*, despite their imperial arrogance this is strategically very favorable for us—this unique situation where Central America, or in particular Mexico, joins the United States, where a country under imperialist domination joins and has a long border with, is literally connected to, an imperialist power of the magnitude of the United States. This will pose special challenges but also will provide special opportunities and strategic advantages for not only achieving the revolution but also for carrying it forward—not just maintaining the dictatorship of the proletariat, but continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat in what is now the United States and in these other countries.

Without obliterating the fact that different revolutions in different countries have their own discrete processes, that is, that revolutions have to be made generally country by country—and certainly being a party in the United States we have to avoid the orientation of even backing into some kind of chauvinism where we see our revolution as being the savior of the people oppressed by imperialism, in particular the people in Mexico and Central America—without falling into that wrong orientation we should, strategically speaking and in our fundamental orientation, view the revolution in the United States and in this nearby part of its so-called backyard as one strategic process. A process that is, in a fundamental sense, part of the overall world revolution but also has a particular, special place within that in terms of how revolution will go down in this area of the world.

And as they want to say, in their imperialist arrogance, that this is their backyard and they want to tightly control that backyard as well as access to the back of the house, as they see it; we, with just the opposite point of view, from our strategic interests and with our outlook, want to say: knock down the back fence, open up not only the back of the house but the whole house and let's from a strategic standpoint make revolution together, not only in overthrowing the old order, but let's have increasing unity in terms of building the new world after the old order is overthrown. Once again, in general terms—and not ignoring the contradictions involved with this and certainly not taking a chauvinist stance of obliterating the

need for revolutionary processes in these separate countries on their own initiative with their own dynamic—we can say that this is very favorable for us if we correctly view this question of the so-called backyard and turn it around against the imperialists, while at the same time viewing this in a larger context as part of the overall world revolution.

The Question of the "Cult of the Personality"

Again, this was raised more sharply in my mind by a penetrating question that was raised by a basic person: what would the Party do if the Chairman is killed? On hearing this question a recently recruited basic Party member commented that we would get this question a lot from oppressed people with experience in losing leaders—Black people in particular.

Taking off from this, I think it's important to summarize what we've said on this question of the role of individuals, individual leaders, the Chairman's role in particular, and how this relates to Party collectivity and the collective leadership of the Party. Now first of all, on the cult of the personality itself, in *A Horrible End, or An End to the Horror?*, I had this to say on this question:

"However much it may drive liberals, social democrats, and bourgeois democrats generally up a wall, there is also a dialectical relation—unity as well as opposition—between cult(s) of the individual around leading people and on the other hand ease of mind and liveliness, initiative, and creative, critical thinking among party members and the masses following the party. In the future communist society, this need for firmly established revolutionary authority as an 'anchor' will no longer exist and would run counter to developing the critical spirit and critical thinking; it too will have to be abolished as an important part of the advance to communism. But to demand its abolition now runs counter to that advance, and to unleashing and developing that critical spirit and critical thinking."
(*End . . . Horror*, p. 212)

Over the past decade or so our Party has made a strong point of emphasizing the important role of the Chairman as leader of the Party—his role in terms of whether or not the revolution can advance and perhaps whether or not it can succeed in the U.S. This has been very correct and necessary to do, and we should continue to give emphasis to the crucial role of the Chairman. At the same time, however, it is important to have an overall and a dialectical view of this, and in particular to grasp what is fun-

damentally involved and what is the principal aspect here.

The principal aspect in the contradiction between any individual in the Party and the Party overall is the Party, not the individual. In other words, the collectivity of the Party and the collective leadership of the Party play a more important and decisive role than any particular individual within the Party, even those individuals who play a very important role. And those individuals who do play such an important role in the Party play it within the context of the Party and its collectivity, not outside of that. So while it is important and continues to be important to stress the role of certain individuals and in particular the Chairman's role, it is also very important to stress the question of the collectivity of the Party and collective leadership of the Party.

Lenin, in answering those people who made a lot of criticism and noise about how among the Bolsheviks there were always the same old leaders year after year after year, very strongly and sharply pointed out that it takes a long time to develop these "same old leaders"; that having a real core of people who develop the ability to lead and the collectivity of leading is a very precious thing for a Party and for the class that it leads. And I think that in fundamental terms this is our answer to this question of what we would do if the Chairman or other important leaders of the Party are killed. On the one hand, of course, seeing that this does not happen is an important part of the class struggle. We have to wage this fight very seriously and we have to win it. But we are going to suffer setbacks, and we have to be prepared for these. One of the ways to be prepared is to emphasize and to even further strengthen the collectivity and the collective leadership of the Party, and this we have to put forward very strongly as well and explain very deeply and thoroughly to the masses.

Furthermore, it's important to stress that while we are putting forward very strongly the role of certain leading people, and the Chairman in particular, and while we are putting forward the collectivity and the collective leadership of the Party, we must emphasize also that neither the Party nor the leader of the Party is in any way infallible or should be followed blindly. And here I'd like to recall the statement that I made during a speech at a rally for the Mao Tsetung Defendants about ten years ago. I emphasized the point that the bourgeoisie does not like people to ask "why" when they order people to do things and that on the contrary our outlook, the outlook of the proletariat, is to encourage people to ask why. Ask why, I said, whenever anybody tells you to do anything; and ask why whenever we call on you to do something. And this is very important. We do not—in stressing the importance of individual leaders and the leading role of the Party—

want people to follow the Party blindly, either those on the basic levels of the Party or masses who are working with the Party and coming in contact with the Party.

Reverence and irreverence

This brings me to the question of *reverence and irreverence*. Concerning the question of the cult of the individual, Mao had this to say: "There are two kinds of cult of the individual. One is correct, such as that of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and the correct side of Stalin. These we ought to revere and continue to revere for ever. It would not do not to revere them. As they held truth in their hands, why should we not revere them?" (Schram, Mao's "Talks at Chengtu," p. 99)

We have great reverence for Mao, but we have also learned irreverence *from* Mao. Otherwise, if we did not have such irreverence, how could we have the courage to criticize and overthrow the ruling class! And how could we move on to make the two radical ruptures—with traditional property relations and traditional ideas?

More on the question of youth and age, and "youth and us"

Here again I want to stress the point I made in talking about the relation between individuals and the collectivity and collective leadership of the Party: developing a core of leadership which is tested and experienced and which has been forged in the midst of upheavals and struggles is no easy task and is a very precious thing. On the other hand, we have to be aware of the great importance of new and fresh forces coming forward in society.

Here is something we can learn, something very important we can learn, from Mao. He said, "As soon as they have grasped the truth the young founders of new schools embarked on discoveries, scorning the old fogeys. Then those with learning oppressed them. Isn't that what history is like? When we started to make revolution, we were mere twenty-year-old boys, while the rulers of that time . . . were old and experienced, they had more learning, but we had more truth." (Mao on youth vs. the "old fogeys," in the Schram book, p. 20)

We must have *both* experience *and* truth, but we must learn from and be invigorated by the boldness of youth, we must be good at learning new things and learning from new forces emerging from among our class and other sections of the people. And we must be good at *combining* these newly emerging things with the experience and truth we have gained through years of struggle.

The Question of "Popularization vs. Raising Standards"

This was raised by Mao in "Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art," but it has more general application.

The need to emphasize popularization first and foremost is especially important now, with increasing signs of the atmosphere becoming more politicized and a rebellious mood growing among key forces in society, as reflected in popular culture but also increasingly in popular revolts and political struggles.

In other words, there have been important positive changes with regard to the first of the "three needs" I referred to in *Some Thoughts/Some Further Thoughts*—positive changes even in the relatively short time since those talks were given. This first "need" refers to the need for a politicized atmosphere and the development of a revolutionary movement and a revolutionary mood among basic people as well as more generally in society. Largely because of changes in the objective situation and the actions of the ruling class there have been these important positive changes in the mood of the masses, including masses of women, as well as masses of proletarians, with much more of a fighting mood developing among Black people in particular. And increasingly we are immersed among and influencing these masses. In such a situation, overintellectualizing and an orientation toward "slow, patient education" in an aimless way stands out all the more sharply in opposition to what we must be engaged in—doing sharp exposure to hound the enemy and mobilizing masses to wage militant political battles against that enemy.

Theory is important—very important—but, without degrading theory and reducing its role, it is crucial to always remember that the fundamental role of theory is as a guide to action—above all a guide to change the world in radical ways. And here we can again learn something from Mao, who talked about how such people as Bernstein, Kautsky, and Plekhanov of the Second International had read more Marxism than Mao and his comrades, but, said Mao, although they had read more Marxism than us, perhaps we are a little bit better than they were(!): "They transformed the Second International into the servant of the bourgeoisie" (Schram, Mao's "Talks at Chengtu," p. 117). And about such people, Mao said very aptly, the more they read the more ignorant they get.

The point, after all, is to make revolution.

Returning to and concluding on the point of why this is the beginning of a new stage

Again, it is very important to emphasize that while we are temporarily back to a situation where there are no socialist states in the world, *we are not back to where we started*. In terms of both the subjective factor—that is, the genuine communist forces—and the objective situation, there are a number of important positive elements.

The subjective factor. We have a great storehouse of accumulated experience, and we are armed with the ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, which is the product of the whole previous stage. But more, in countries all over the world we are engaging the other side in revolutionary struggle in various forms and on various levels but all aiming toward the same goal: the seizure of power as the immediate goal as well as the long-term goal of continuing the revolution to achieve communism worldwide.

The objective situation. Here I'm not just speaking in general terms—nor focusing only on the changes referred to at the beginning of this talk (in terms of "the end of the '80s," the ways in which contradictions have shifted rather than coming to a head through the '80s as we had foreseen). More specifically, I am pointing to the more immediate situation—and opportunities—the strategically favorable elements in the international situation but also in terms of the polarization and faultlines within the U.S. itself, as I spoke to earlier.

Again, the essential problem is that the other side has state power, and the essential question is seizing state power from them. This, of course, is not simply a military question but also a political question and a question of correctly handling the relation between the objective and subjective factors. It is a question of waging people's war with revolutionary politics in command when the conditions exist for this—a people's war guided by the ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and fought in order to carry out a political program based on concretely applying that ideology to the particular situation in a given country, in the context of the overall world situation. And where such conditions do not yet exist at this particular time—as in the U.S. right now—it is a question of carrying out the necessary political work and building the militant, politically conscious struggle of the masses to help bring into being conditions and accumulate forces that, together with changes in the objective situation, will make it possible to launch and carry out a people's war with a serious prospect of winning.

So let me conclude on this question of winning.

We have said that one of the main things to learn from Lenin is his pit-bull grip on this question of winning. Learning from this, we can say that winning is the whole point—it is the prize we must never take our eye off.

But there is also the question of winning in the *fullest sense*. This means not just the seizure of state power, though that is the crucial first step without which all is illusion. Beyond that it means carrying forward the revolutionary struggle not just in particular countries but worldwide, doing everything we can for the world revolution and contributing everything we can to the world-historic goal of the international proletariat: winning a whole new world, a communist world.

The difficult thing, the greatest challenge and the most decisive thing, is to maintain the *unity* between these two aspects of winning—to fight now toward the goal of seizing state power, and upon seizing state power to continue to fight, in a way that is consistent with that world-historic goal and that lays the basis for great leaps forward and for summing up deeply and surging forward again in the face of setbacks and momentary defeats.

We do have the whole rich historical experience of the stage that has ended—concentrated in Marxism-Leninism-Maoism—and we have not only a political and ideological but also an organizational foundation, within particular countries and in a beginning way worldwide, from which we can and must rise to the challenges of the stage that is opening.

With this in mind, let me close with another statement from the conclusion of *For a Harvest of Dragons*—a statement that rings true today even more so than when it was written just a few years ago:

“the problem in this period is not that revolutionary possibilities may not arise but that they may not be seized—or may be thrown away. We must not be unprepared and must not leave the international proletariat unprepared for those great days in which decades are concentrated, and we must not repeat the historical error of sounding a retreat just when the opportunities no less than the difficulties are the greatest.” (*Harvest*, p. 153)

Radical Ruptures, or Yes, Mao More Than Ever

by Bob Avakian

I want this to be somewhat wide-ranging and at the same time it's going to be somewhat freestyle. So here it is.

The rupture with the past and the specter haunting the guardians and hangers-on of the old order. Or, once again on the question of totalitarianism or utopianism turned to horror.

Especially with recent events in Eastern Europe and also the recent events in China (the whole Tiananmen Square bloodbath and everything), there is not only the barrage of bourgeois propaganda generally going on, but there are also a lot of questions being thrown up of a more fundamental nature among people who are not necessarily die-hard supporters of the worst things in the world. At the same time there is a specter that is haunting the guardians and even the hangers-on of the old order, and it is also haunting some of those people who are not the worst but who have been steeped in bourgeois-democratic illusions and are heavily influenced by bourgeois-democratic prejudices.

This comes out in a lot of different ways. I recently read an article (I think it was in the *Atlantic*) about religion. Its title was something like "Can We Be Good Without God?" It wasn't quite on the same level of gloating that you've been getting a lot these days from the more authoritative spokesmen for the system, the powers-that-be, the high-ranking people in the media, and so on—I'm referring specifically to the imperialist system in the West—the gloating over the "demise of communism" and the "triumph of capitalism. . . a free society. . . democracy," and on and on, *ad nauseam*. This *Atlantic* article was, in form, a more "agonizing" article, about how basically every attempt at making a better world that's based on relying on human beings, and the potential or actual good in human beings, has proven to be a dismal failure,

and so the only hope for the human species is to have some absolute principles of religion.

This wasn't necessarily an argument for the Christian religion alone to be the dominant religion, but an argument for a commonly held idea that goes back to the theme I addressed in that article about morality ("The Morality We Need. . .and the Morality We *Don't* Need," first published in the *Revolutionary Worker* #516, July 31, 1989, now also published as a separate pamphlet). I'm referring to the theme—or, the argument—that without belief in some god and without the absolute authority of religion and its scriptures, people would turn into beasts. That people are *by nature* potentially bestial, potentially cruel and horrible, and that by themselves people are not capable of creating a good society and a good world.

It is specifically in this context that this article in the *Atlantic* brings up the "demise" of all attempts at social transformation—in particular of the socialist and communist type—how these have ended up in dismal failure and are always *bound* to end up in dismal failure because they are cold, materialistic, atheistic, and don't recognize the transcendental, absolute necessity of having some Higher Being whose will and commandments have to be invoked to keep human beings and their inherently evil nature in check.

Now this article isn't the most crude argument for this view—it's not Pat Robertson, who in any case draws different conclusions politically. This *Atlantic* piece is actually almost more of a liberal-type argument. It reflects—it seizes on—some objective developments in the world, particularly the setbacks for truly historic attempts at revolutionary transformation, as in China—the fact that since the counterrevolutionary coup by Deng & Co. in 1976, capitalism has been restored in China, although it masquerades as "socialism." This has meant the removal of a tremendously powerful, vibrant, and influential revolutionary base area and beacon.

China was a real beacon to the oppressed—to our people, to our class around the world. Even people who didn't look at it in that way (like liberals), but who maybe had a certain respect for it on a certain level and were attracted to it on a certain level (as many intellectuals were at the height of the Cultural Revolution in particular), have drawn their own conclusions and have been demoralized in various ways. Now there is among straight-up reactionaries some more cynical speculating on these failures as they present them, or *setbacks*, as we more correctly see them, but there is also some genuine demoralization and disorientation among various classes. Even among our class this has its direct and indirect effects, and certainly among the intellectuals and others there are more powerful negative influences which have

come about because of these objective setbacks.

But also what we see here is their class viewpoint coming to the fore very sharply: their utter lack of belief in the ability of the masses to transform the world and to transform themselves in the process. When I say "utter" I don't really mean to say "absolute" because, as we've seen and as the example of the Cultural Revolution shows, such intermediate strata can be influenced to a better attitude and orientation towards the masses. But when our great successes are temporarily turned into great defeats then this has its influence on such people in terms of their losing any sense of the ability of the masses to radically transform the world and themselves in the process.

It was interesting because the ideas in this *Atlantic* article were also somewhat echoed, a little bit differently, in a fairly major article—I don't remember where—about Vargas Llosa, the now-right-wing author, counterrevolutionary political hack, and presidential candidate in Peru. This was an article tracing his history and talking about how at one time he was on "the left"—all taken with Castro and Cuba—and then became demoralized about them and moved over to the right. I think this is something of a trend among some, certainly not all, formerly progressive or even revolutionary-minded intellectuals in Latin America particularly, as well as in other places. What Llosa says is that every attempt at installing a "utopia" in human society is bound to end up in disaster, bound to end up in totalitarianism because it represents of necessity the attempt by a few people, concentrating more and more power in their hands, to enforce their vision on the unwilling masses of people. And the reason they are forced to concentrate more and more power in a few hands is because the masses *are* unwilling, because the visions of these utopians are not realizable. It's a view that utopianism, particularly of the "leftist" kind, is not only unrealistic and a waste of time, of energy, and so on but is actually extremely terrifying and horrendous: it is bound to bring great horror into the world; it is bound to end up in the horrible excesses of totalitarianism.

This is fundamentally a view that *any* attempt to make a radical transformation of society and of people is bound to end in these horrible excessive crimes of totalitarianism. This is also, of course, a theme that was in Hannah Arendt's writings on totalitarianism. I spoke to this in my book *Democracy: Can't We Do Better Than That?* This is one of Arendt's main themes: the attempt in particular to change *people* is seen as something that is bound to lead to the most vicious attempts to manipulate and ultimately to torture people into accepting something alien not only to those particular people but to "human nature" itself.

What this really gets down to is, again, the question of

the *two radical ruptures*, as Marx and Engels called them. This means most fundamentally the radical rupture with all traditional property relations, but what is being focused on here, very acutely, is the other radical rupture—the rupture with all traditional ideas. Basically what's being said—in different forms but with a common theme—by those who invoke the specter of totalitarianism and talk in gloomy terms about the innate evil in the human character is that it is *impossible* to make such ruptures, particularly the rupture with all traditional ideas. Here “traditional ideas” must be understood in the broadest sense to include culture and even various notions of “spiritual qualities” deemed to be the thing that essentially makes human beings human and distinguishes them from the rest of “God’s creation,” or the rest of nature, or however it’s viewed. According to this view, there is no way that such a radical rupture could or should be made and therefore no way that the *attempt* should be made, because it’s bound to end up in disaster, in horrendous totalitarian excesses, and so on.

I think this comes out in the viewpoint that, again, there are certain inherent qualities of human beings, and there are certain things about human society and its historical development, that are so integral to what human beings and their societies are all about that any attempt to break with these things is bound to lead to disaster. Included in this are things like religion, various forms of culture, various traditional ideas and customs, and so on. And this is said—for instance the notion that religion is essential for human society—even by people who themselves are not necessarily religious, but who believe that the religious traditions of human society and the religious, and as they see it “spiritual,” qualities of people in society are an indispensable part of holding human society together in some sort of decent way. And here I’m giving this the best interpretation that can be given to it.

In this article I wrote, “Religion: Who Needs It? . . . And Who Doesn’t” (*RW* #538, January 8, 1990), I spoke to some of this. There is the fact that in general terms, going back through the history of human society, there has been a general consensus among the peoples (as Engels referred to it) that there is some sort of supernatural presence—there has been a general belief in god or gods or supernatural forces among different peoples in different societies in the world throughout history, up to the present time. In other words, there has been a religious element to human existence throughout history going back to the earliest human societies—even societies where class divisions have not developed. Various people have picked up on this religious “general consensus” in history and have insisted on concluding that this is a quintessential or absolutely necessary part of

human society and human existence and that any attempt to root out religion is, again, bound to lead to the disasters and the excesses of totalitarianism and utopianism gone wild in the most horrendous sense.

Awe and wonder at the unknown

I recently read an interesting book about Christianity that someone sent me. It’s called *The First Coming*, and it’s written by one of those “dissident” Catholic theologians—his name is Thomas Sheehan—whose argument is basically this: Look, most everybody knows, including all the higher-up religious authorities, that the Christian scriptures are in large part invention. That a lot of the things they describe as historical fact are not historical fact. That a lot of the things that are presented as predictions about what will come to pass had actually been written later than their pretended time of writing, so that things they’re “predicting” have in fact *already happened* (to put it simply, they’re lying: they’re reporting on things that have already happened but are *pretending* that they’re *predicting* what will happen in the future). That a lot of the stories about the most outstanding and well-known and important Biblical figures—even including Jesus—are fanciful inventions. Sheehan even goes to the point of saying that attributing god-like quality to Jesus was an invention, that Jesus himself never claimed to be divine.

(And certainly we know that Jesus never claimed to be one of the Trinity as it’s come to be known in the time since then. The idea of the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—was concocted later, and everybody who knows anything about the history of the Christian Church knows that the resolution of the question of the Trinity involved several centuries of very bitter and intense battles that cost the lives of at least hundreds of thousands of people—it involved very vicious and sectarian battles. All kinds of horrendous things were done by the different sides in this bitter battle around the Trinity.)

But leaving aside all that about the Trinity, this book by Thomas Sheehan insists that Jesus never even claimed to be the Son of God, that this was stuff written into the *Bible* later through the centuries, beginning not too long after Jesus died and then continuing after that. And yet Sheehan still clings to the view that Jesus does represent something very important in the history of religion—indeed in the history of humanity—which is that the message from now on is that God’s Kingdom exists among people and the point is to live it, to live according to the principles that Jesus preached, etc., etc.

In this book, *The First Coming*, one of the things that

Sheehan focuses on at the end is the general idea that awe and wonder at the unknown, and the attempt, with our limited (finite) human capacities, to guess at the mysteries of the vast universe, is one of the things that is an essential human quality. In his thinking, this human quality is identified with some basic religious essence in people, a sort of inherent need for religion. And it's interesting: I was recently rereading this document that was written up—someone in our Party wrote up some thinking about the question of art and its role throughout history—and they raise this question as well, although, of course, from a radically different perspective. This document argues that one of the important functions of art is to tap into the wonder at the unknown. That this is one of the functions of art as art and is one of the things that aesthetics has to take into account. Now this was someone writing from the standpoint of our ideology, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, from the standpoint of upholding it and trying to apply it to the sphere of art.

I think it is correct—both in the particular sense in which it was raised in that paper, in terms of the sphere of art, and more generally—that wonder and awe at the unknown is something that human beings have had historically and always will have. But this is not because of mystical-religious reasons but rather because of the contradiction between ignorance and knowledge, and more generally because of the nature of existence and in particular the *contradictory nature* of existence: that things are always going through change and transformation and qualitative leaps. There are always things that are unknown and there is the struggle to make what is unknown become known. And all this also has to do with the particular characteristics—the particular contradictions—that mark human beings as a particular species, the way human beings are a particular form of matter in motion with a particular form of consciousness. Because of this we do reflect on the unknown and seek to search it out and to make it known—and certainly revolutionary communists would be the last to deny or want to deny this whole quality of human beings. But this does have to be stripped of any sort of supernatural, metaphysical, mystical notions. That's the difference between how we would look at and treat this question and how people who are still caught within the confines of religious thinking in one form or another would look at it.

It's very interesting because this Sheehan guy who wrote this *First Coming* book deals contemptuously with atheism. He's come up with this phrase he obviously thinks is very clever because I've seen him use it a couple of times—somebody also sent me an interview that he did where he invokes this phrase—"the village atheist." It would seem this is supposed to evoke echoes of the "vil-

lage idiot," but it is also supposed to bring to mind your common, run-of-the-mill, garden-variety atheist: those people—and I think he's making a general reference to atheists—who haven't really thought deeply about this question, who see the obvious contradictions and discrepancies, falsehoods, and so on in the scriptures of various religions and therefore dismiss religion out of hand without thinking about the more profound and awe-inspiring questions that are much deeper than any particular scripture or even any particular religion. This is what he seems to be saying.

To me this is sort of the last refuge of those who cling to religious mysticism. They say, in effect, yes we should reject all the scriptures, and yes the historical claims of the scriptures are false (or full of falsehoods), but there really is something more profound which you cold, mechanical, materialist "village atheists" are missing here. This is really a kind of last refuge of people who are as yet unwilling and unable to make this radical rupture with all traditional ideas, including religion; who, to put it bluntly, still refuse to confront the world as it actually is and confront the task of transforming it on the basis of taking it as it really is.

I don't want to go into all the reasons right here and now why I think people cling as a last refuge to this kind of "rewritten" religion—this "religion *despite* the scriptures," we might call it, which is after all a kind of shamefaced religion. But obviously, in very basic terms and very briefly, it has to do with their class outlook and with, again, not yet seeing—or, because of class position and class outlook, *resisting*—the truth that people themselves and in particular a certain class of people—our class, the proletariat—can take up the challenge of overturning existing institutions, conditions and relations and radically transforming them. There lurks the notion that if people (and particularly the masses of basic people) try to do this *all by themselves*, it's going to turn into disaster somewhere down the line.

What Mao summed up from history is a fundamental truth: The people and the people alone are the motive force in the making of world history.

Certain historical experience, especially the experience of the Soviet Union and China, is distorted by the powers-that-be and their media, their "experts," and so on, and then this distorted "historical experience" is invoked as alleged "proof" of some supposed overriding fact that people's attempts to undertake such transformation of social institutions and relations—and the transformation of people themselves—are *bound* to end in

some kind of disaster. This is one of the things that comes up continually through all the "commentary," particularly from the Western media, about events in Eastern Europe. Of course the way they present it is "the triumph of democracy over communism," and "the free enterprise system and the free enterprise spirit" versus "command economies"—"centralized, bureaucratic economies." (I'm having to laugh because you want to ask these people sometimes: have any of you ever worked in a capitalist corporation? Have any of you ever worked for a so-called "democratic government" bureaucracy? You want to talk about "command" and "centralized" and "top-down authority" and the absolute insistence on blind obedience to authority in the most petty, ruthless, and capricious dictatorial manner. I mean, come on—give us a little bit of a break here. There are few things in the entire world that are less "democratic," I would venture, than a capitalist workplace or a "democratic society" bureaucracy. And let's not even talk about how "democratic" is the *military* in these "democratic societies!" Anyway, that's just an aside.)

But one of the ways in which they are presenting this question—one of the elements that is extremely important to these Western imperialist "experts," media commentators, and so on—is what they call the triumph of Christianity or of religion more generally over atheism. This is *extremely* important to them, for the reasons that I tried to generally speak to in that article "Religion: Who Needs It? . . . And Who Doesn't." I cited a statement by Napoleon which makes this point very well: when he thinks of the Incarnation he doesn't think about the mystery of religion but about the mystery of the social order. Or we have it from the Shah of Iran. *Revolution* magazine, in an article about Islam and the Iranian Revolution, had a quote from the Shah essentially to the same effect: even though he carried out certain "modernization" reforms, etc., some of which cut into some of the authority of the traditional religious powers, nevertheless the Shah made the statement straight up that religion is very important for social stability (see Larry Everest, "Islamic Revivalism and the Experience of Iran," *Revolution*, Fall/Winter 1989). So even on that basic political level, as well as more generally and in a broader sense ideologically, religion is extremely important to the powers-that-be, particularly of the Western imperialist variety.

And it's also interesting to see what's happening under the baton of Gorbachev (and I mean baton in the double sense—both the conducting baton and also baton in the other sense, a kind of police baton Gorbachev is wielding to beat these Eastern European societies over the head to make them move in a certain way). As they're moving in

a certain way in Eastern Europe under Gorbachev's baton, they're also finding religion to be something they have to bring back in its more classical form for the same kind of reasons that Napoleon and the Shah talk about. This is a "fact of life" for the counterfeit "communists" of Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union itself, particularly as the bankruptcy of their own distorted and perverted versions of communist ideology, their so-called "Marxism," has become more and more apparent. I also spoke to that in that recent article on religion and I won't go further into that here.

So from many corners we get this same notion about the attempt to make a radical rupture—which would include rupturing with this whole past history of religion being an integral, crucial part of how human society has evolved, from even before classes emerged and up through various forms of class society to the present—that the attempt to make a radical rupture with all this is bound to lead to disaster.

This same kind of stand is also taken in relation to all kinds of culture. Here I'm using the term "culture" to refer to literature and art, but I'm also using it in a broader sense to include "traditional morals" and traditional habits, customs, etc.—all that kind of thing. I want to speak to a few aspects of this and tie this together in terms of the essential point I'm trying to make here.

In *Bullets* there's a statement where I say it's impossible to carry out the revolutionary transformation of society and the transition to communism without bringing into being a completely new culture—a culture that is a radical break with the past and that represents for the first time in history the outlook and the interests of the proletariat and is in an overall sense guided by the ideology of the proletariat.* In that case I was using "culture" in a more limited sense, that is, referring specifically to literature and art, and I made a number of other comments about the character of that literature and art—what it is *and* what it *isn't*. It isn't the narrow, dogmatic conception of "proletarian culture" that for example would have it reside in *one* particular *form* that is proletarian in its very essence to the exclusion of all other forms. Nor should we uphold the notion that only art that is guided in a fundamental sense by the ideology of the proletariat can be of any value, can play any important role in rising up against the old order and the powers-that-be and in carrying out the radical transformation of society.

None of these things is what we mean by the necessity to bring into being a new and radically different form of

*See *Bullets from the Writings, Speeches & Interviews of Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, Chapter 18, "Art and Culture."

literature and art—and culture more generally—which is proletarian in the sense that it represents and carries forward the outlook and interests of our class, the proletariat. But I've come to realize more and more that this understanding of the need for a radically new culture is not only extremely controversial among artists and people who are very much into the sphere of culture, but it's part of a much deeper and very sharp controversy which ties into the questions I've been raising up to now. In short, it's tied in with the question of whether it's really possible to carry out these two radical ruptures, to really make a radical break with the past.

This is also reflected in culture in the broader sense—in the sense of traditional ideas, morals, habits, customs, etc. For example, there is the whole question that I raised in "End. . . Beginning" ("The End of a Stage—The Beginning of a New Stage"), using the Library at Alexandria as a metaphor for a very sharp contradiction, a very fundamental question that has to be addressed and resolved in the course of the revolutionary transformation of society and the advance to communism. Without repeating everything that is said in "End. . . Beginning," the point is basically this: here was this center of great learning and knowledge in Alexandria in ancient Egypt, with millions of volumes of books and a great deal of knowledge concentrated there; yet this involved only a very tiny sliver, a very elite sliver of society. (Carl Sagan speaks to this in *Cosmos*.) The position of this tiny elite was in turn founded upon—and their ability to engage in this learning was founded upon—the brutal enslavement of the great majority of people in the society who created the material wealth which made it possible for this Library with its learning, and the tiny sliver that was into this, to function. On the other hand, the masses of slaves and the masses generally were excluded from this knowledge. It was the province of only a very tiny elite section of society.

This is kind of an emblem for a very acute problem that the proletariat in carrying out the transformation of society will have to take up and resolve: how to break down such a division of labor and how to bring into being a situation where the *masses* of people take up and master these spheres, without doing this in a way which is narrow, dogmatic, and mechanical-materialist. How to recognize and make use of the qualities and abilities that intellectuals have developed, while at the same time struggling to transform these intellectuals and transforming society and people in general so that knowledge is no longer capital or commodity. So that the antagonism between mental and manual labor is broken down, overcome. So that in neither sphere—neither in the sphere of mental labor nor in the sphere of manual labor—are people exploiting other people or are things treated as com-

modities or as capital.

So this is a sphere where the question of the radical ruptures gets posed very sharply, and where it is frankly said by many that there *is no way* to overcome such a contradiction and you're better off just leaving it alone. Such people argue, essentially, that as bad as things like that may be—as bad as it may be that things like the Alexandria Library have historically rested on a foundation of slavery and other forms of exploitation, that the masses of people have been exploited and locked out of this knowledge—it's even worse to try to carry out the kind of transformation we're talking about, because then will come down the dark, dark night of totalitarianism and all the terror associated with that, and you're only going to create a much worse horror. LEAVE THINGS ALONE!

This ties in with the overall question of traditional relations/traditional morals. Not too long ago I read a book on Cambodia by Elizabeth Becker. She's one of the people who is putting forward exactly this viewpoint—that look, here's an example of a society where they tried to impose this utopia and impose their will in an iron-fisted way, and this just led to all sorts of horrendous things. She goes on and on about this long-established, beautiful Cambodian culture and history—these customs and underlying relations that have been there for thousands of years and these things of religion and culture which were so integral to the whole Cambodian existence and the whole Cambodian identity—and how these people (the Khmer Rouge) attempted to just rip these up and replace them with their own utopian visions which turned into horrible terror. And among the things she cites as being these idyllic and almost ideal relations in Cambodia before the Khmer Rouge came to power are all these traditional relations of enslaving women and traditional relations in the family—not just bourgeois ones but even feudal traditions—classical conventions and traditions that enslave women. These are all things which I'm sure, if they were applied to Elizabeth Becker, she would immediately rebel against and find horrendous!

Without attempting here to make some kind of evaluation of the Khmer Rouge, which is a very complex, difficult problem, it is rather clear that, in the approach of people like this author, Elizabeth Becker, there's a significant element of chauvinism: treating these Third World peoples and their cultures, traditions, and relations as sort of "quaint." Therefore, with this outlook, it's perfectly alright for the masses of people in these countries to be subjected to these "quaint" forms of oppression and exploitation—such as patriarchal and feudal oppression of women and of the masses more generally—but don't try to impose them on me! That's different—I

come from an advanced enlightened society! Such is the chauvinism of this outlook.

That's on the one hand the viewpoint that comes through, intentionally or not, in something like this Elizabeth Becker book on Cambodia. But there also are real questions and real challenges posed by the kind of things that are raised. And fundamentally it gets back to this: how *do* you make these two radical ruptures? How do you break with these very oppressive and exploitative relations and traditions, customs, and cultures in a way that, again, fundamentally *relies on the masses* and acts on the understanding that *they* are the ones that have to carry out these social transformations. Not that this will just happen spontaneously—it requires that the masses have the leadership of a vanguard party, *but* a vanguard party that precisely relies fundamentally on the masses to carry this out and doesn't try to impose it from the top down.

This gets back, in an important way, to this so-called “demise of communism” in Eastern Europe. In an ironic sense—ironic because these regimes are not socialist in the way that the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership was, even with his errors—recent history has rendered a clear verdict on a statement made by Stalin right at the end of World War 2, I think it was, when he said: This war is different than past wars; in this war, wherever someone extends his army, there he can implement his social system. Now I'm paraphrasing, but it's an accurate paraphrase. And history has rendered its verdict on this.

Already in our own writings, and also in some significant ways in the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* (RIM), criticism is made of the real shortcomings in the way the attempt was made to institute a new social system in Eastern Europe from the top down. Mao made this criticism very sharply: with regard to land reform in particular in these countries and more generally with regard to social transformation, everything was top-down, they didn't rely on the masses, they didn't mobilize the masses, they didn't unleash the initiative of the masses to carry out these social transformations. And I think history has rendered its verdict *negatively* on this statement by Stalin. In fact this verdict was rendered some time ago, by the mid-1950s, with the triumph of revisionism and the reality of capitalist rule, in “socialist” guise, throughout Eastern Europe. But the recent dramatic events in Eastern Europe have added a footnote and, you might say, an exclamation point to this historical verdict.

That's certainly not to say that in the course of war you have to absolutely observe boundaries set up by the imperialists, that the old state boundaries are sacred and must be the subject of awe, or that you could never cross boundaries and overthrow a reactionary regime “from

the outside.” But if you do that, as was done for example through World War 2, then you have to find the ways to mobilize and unleash the initiative of the masses to carry out the radical transformation of society. And if you think, as Stalin apparently did, that you can just “impose” a new social system—that you can bring about radical transformations—from the top down, that is a very serious error.

The actual achievement of the two radical ruptures is impossible any other way than relying on the masses and their own increasingly conscious and voluntary struggle to carry out these radical ruptures. Again, let me return to points raised in relation to Cambodia and also in the example of the Alexandria Library to amplify this a bit. Recently I've been reading a book called *India Waits* by Jan Myrdal. It's an extremely interesting book, both from the standpoint of the background reading I've been doing in getting prepared to write a book on religion, and also in terms of a number of things it reveals and exposes about Indian society. He covers a span of several decades: it's written in the late '70s, but he also reflects back on earlier times when he was in India and talks about changes that have taken place there, but on the other hand how *fundamentally* things have *not* changed.

And in the course of this, he goes way back thousands of years to the time of the Buddha in ancient India, and to the period following that, when various religious figures came from other countries, including China, and discovered these Buddhist monasteries. He makes the same fundamental point as Sagan does in pondering the lessons of the Library at ancient Alexandria: here were all these learned monks and all this knowledge was concentrated in the Buddhist monasteries in ancient India, and yet these monks—not that they necessarily lived extremely lavish lives themselves, some of them were quite ascetic and lived rather simply—nevertheless their whole way of life and more than that all the learning and knowledge that they were privy to and that they were able to take up was based again on a foundation of cruel and extreme exploitation and enslavement of the basic masses of people in that society. And there is also the question, of course, of the *content* and the *worth* of such knowledge and “wisdom” that is acquired by monks, scholars, and so on, in conditions where they are divorced from the basic masses and in fact enabled to lead their lives of “scholarship” and “devotion” only and precisely *because of* the exploitation and enslavement of the masses.

So once again, when you begin to dig beneath the surface, or when you see beneath this veil that surrounds all these traditional relations and customs, including religion and culture, social relations, family relations, and so on—when you begin to pull this veil aside you see

these horrendous things themselves: these cruel and vicious forms of exploitation that are the foundation of this "culture" and "tradition." Then such "culture" and "tradition" begin to lose some of the luster and glow that has been painted onto them by the powers-that-be, by those who find it useful to present them in this hallowed light.

**"Thoroughgoing materialists are fearless."
(Mao Tsetung)**

When you look at this history and you look at this question of the two radical ruptures—and specifically when you look at the claims from various quarters that any attempt to carry out this kind of social transformation, these two radical ruptures, is bound to end in the disasters and horrors of totalitarianism—what really comes through on the one hand is the *need* to make these two radical ruptures, but at the same time the need to really dig more deeply into *how* to make them. What stands out is the need to really root ourselves even more firmly in the principle that these ruptures cannot be made *without* relying on the masses. And at the same time they cannot be made without a real grappling with, and a real wielding of, materialist dialectics.

To put it another way, we have to figure out how to do this through a combination of firmness and suppleness, or finesse. Not finesse in the sense of trickery, but finesse in the sense of flexibility and suppleness (the French word *souplesse* describes very well what I mean here—it implies not only flexibility but elasticity and the ability to adapt, intellectually as well as in other ways). It's like the quote in *For a Harvest of Dragons* about maintaining our firmness of principle and at the same time our flexibility, our materialism and our dialectics, our realism and our romanticism, our solemn sense of purpose and our sense of humor. It's the same principle involved here, but I've been grappling with how it applies to these two radical ruptures, especially in light of some recent historic developments (including recent events in China and Eastern Europe—the "changing face of revisionism," and so on) and questions that are thrown up, for people like us in particular, about historical experience.

What I mean by this is, fundamentally, the question of relying on the masses versus trying to do it top-down and imposing it on the masses. I think such an attempt is bound to lead to disaster—if not in the almost mythological way that it's presented by the "totalitarianism" theorists, still it's bound to lead to disaster particularly from *our* standpoint—it's bound to lead to defeat for *revolution* and alienation of the masses from the very things you are supposed to be relying on them to carry out.

There is also the question of figuring out how to have

a certain—I don't know, I'm not even sure of the terminology, but maybe it should be called a certain "tempo." In other words, actually making these ruptures and breaking with the dead hand of the past, but doing it in a way that brings people along step by step—or, more to the point, wave upon wave—rather than trying to do it all at one time, or trying to do it constantly in some form of "war communism": straight-line forward in a kind of "forced march" with the same continual high pitch of intensity.

Again, it's this fundamental point from *Harvest of Dragons*: Our firmness of principle and our flexibility . . . our solemn sense of purpose and our sense of humor. You have to carry out these radical ruptures, you have to carry them through, and you have to not waver about that—this is a fundamental point of strategic orientation. But on the other hand you also have to *not* be like one of these exploiting class groups or cliques that, as Mao put it at one time, are frightened every time there is a rustle of leaves in the wind. Such people, despite their "woofing" and swaggering, don't have and can't have what we call "strategic double c": strategic confidence in your cause and strategic contempt for the other side and its system and all it represents. It is a fundamental characteristic of exploiters and oppressors that they panic as soon as they get even a vague notion or general sense that the masses of people are no longer awestruck by the power of these exploiters and oppressors. We, who stand for the final abolition of all exploitation and oppression, of all class division, should never be like such people.

Not too long ago, in preparing to write an article on religion, I went back and read Marx and Engels—some writings of theirs on religion. It struck me that they express a very strong insistence about the folly of attempting to outright suppress religion. There is no better way, they insist, to give life to religion than to drive it underground and to make it illegal or something "subterranean." It is far better to let it out in the open.

Not that Marx and Engels are arguing that religion should be allowed to be used as a cover for exploitation and oppression and counterrevolution and so on, but that the religious sentiments of masses of people are not something that should be outlawed "by decree," that people cannot move beyond religious superstition and prejudice by being ordered to do so. People can't move beyond that by having atheism *imposed* on them. They have to be led, but they have to be *relied on* fundamentally to cast this off as they carry forward the transformation of society. At the same time, of course, you have to carry out, as Lenin said, a very militant struggle for atheism and, in a more all-around sense, for materialism—dialectical materialism.

There is a strategic confidence in what Marx and Engels write about this: why should we feel any need to drive this underground, why should we be afraid of religion? That's ridiculous. Driving it underground only aids the dead hand of the past. It doesn't help to break with the dead hand of the past.

Strategically this is very important, not only in terms of religion but more generally in terms of the dead hand of the past. We have to move on it, but we have to have strategic confidence in what we are doing and strategic contempt for that dead hand of the past, so that we are not afraid of it and don't seek to suppress it in ways which only help to bring back the past and strengthen that dead hand of the past.

**Again Mao was correct—
Marxism is a wrangling ism**

This question of strategic confidence versus the dead hand of the past is going to get posed in a lot of ways. For example, I think what I've said generally about boldly taking on the other side in debate and ideological struggle applies very much to the sphere of religion as well as other spheres of ideas, of culture and so on. As I've put it, we should be a bunch of wrangling motherfuckers. What do we have to fear here? We should welcome debating these people. People who represent the dead hand of the past and even people who are clinging to the past while at the same time they want to do many good things and are doing many good things—what in the world do we have to fear from confronting their ideas and taking them on in debate and ideological struggle? They have no foundation that can hold up.

Let's look ahead, to the future. Once power is seized, once you have wrested it out of the hands of the old order and power has come into the hands of the masses of people and you begin to carry out the revolutionary transformation of society, you have all kinds of initiative that can be taken. And you have even less reason to fear and deal in a defensive way with these old relations, institutions and ideas. For example, you begin the transformation of the educational system and other spheres of culture, broadly speaking; you're in a position through the media and all kinds of ways to take on these old, reactionary things and begin to undercut them at their very foundation and to continue to move on them in that way. I think you would want to promote a lot of lively and vigorous debate with people who want to defend these old things, or even those who are coming from a better place but are still hung up in these things, still clinging to them at least with one hand. You want to draw them into vigorous debate as well as drawing them—drawing all

those who are not die-hard defenders of the old order—into the most fundamental thing, which is the actual struggle to transform society in every sphere. The media and the educational system should be full of struggle, debate, and lively and vigorous wrangling about all the major and controversial questions, even while the prevailing line, the line that's in command, is one of militantly promoting atheism and more generally dialectical materialism.

In all this I think you have to rely on the youth in particular while relying on the masses generally. You rely on the youth in particular to break with the dead hand of the past more quickly and you bring up new generations of youth who are breaking with these things, who are challenging all these old conventions and relations and traditions. But you don't do it by keeping them ignorant of these relations and traditions and treating these things as though they are some sort of contraband. Because there is no better way to get the youth to want to take these things up and to be fascinated with them than by treating them as something "forbidden." Instead, I think you want to expose the youth to these things, and you want to *expose these things* to the youth. You want to do both—you want to expose the youth to them and expose them to the youth—you want to allow and encourage and, in an overall way, lead the youth to dig into these things while at the same time you rip the veil off them and show them to be old, outmoded, and representing the dead hand of the past.

Here again it is a question of strategic confidence, and strategic contempt—the strategic confidence that we certainly have everything going for us in exposing the old and reactionary, for which we should righteously have strategic contempt. I do think that in order to do this we have to break with metaphysical and absolutist views of a lot of things that have unfortunately marred the international communist movement historically and were rather sharply concentrated in Stalin. Some of the views of history, of the laws of history and also of nature, tended strongly toward metaphysics; at times this found expression in the tendency to treat nature and history almost as if their development were determined by some supernatural force or were following some preordained, predestined pathways.

Linked to this kind of ideological error has been the tendency, again evidenced in Stalin's methods, to act as if right and history are more or less "automatically"—more or less metaphysically—on your side if you are the communist vanguard. And this in turn is linked with a tendency to not thoroughly apply the mass line and rely on the masses, with the leadership of the vanguard, to consciously grasp their own revolutionary interests and wage revo-

lutionary struggle in accordance with these interests to achieve the overthrow of the old order, the ongoing revolutionization of society and the final triumph of communism worldwide.

As opposed to such erroneous tendencies, we must arm people with the basic understanding that there are certain underlying contradictions in all things and processes, that these contradictions give rise to struggle which leads to changes through leaps and breaks—radical ruptures. With regard to the historical development of human society, there is a certain “coherence,” as Marx said, because of the basic materialist fact that the production and reproduction of the material requirements of life is the foundation of any society, and people therefore carry forward the struggle to develop the productive forces. Moreover, this struggle for production takes place, and can only take place, by people entering into social relations with each other in the process of production, and on this basis arises the contradiction between production relations through which people carry out production on the one hand and the productive forces themselves on the other hand. In turn, there arises on this economic base a superstructure of politics, ideology and culture, and at certain points in the development of society through its basic contradictions the superstructure comes into conflict with the underlying economic base, reflecting and concentrating the fact that the production relations have come into antagonism with the development of the productive forces. This sets the stage for social revolution. And, as a result of the historical development that has taken place, propelled by these underlying contradictions and the struggles they give rise to, the stage has in fact been set for the achievement of world communism through the social revolution of the international proletariat.

All these things are dynamic and living things that Mao particularly treated in a powerful, dynamic, dialectical way. And because Mao waged a sharp, penetrating struggle against the tendency that I referred to above—the tendency to treat these things in a wooden, mechanical, dogmatic, and determinist way—the international communist movement, the Maoist movement throughout the world, has made crucial ruptures with much of this metaphysical approach, although of course the struggle against such tendencies is and will continue to be an ongoing one. This applies to our own Party as well as to the international communist movement in general. In saying this I am not conceding one inch to the bourgeois pro-imperialist “totalitarianism” theorists and so on, but I am motivated by the conviction that we genuine communists, above all, must face reality and be truthful, with ourselves and about ourselves and our history, as well as

everything else, in order to truly make the greatest contribution to the historic goal of the international proletariat—the thorough defeat of imperialism and all reaction and the final achievement of communism throughout the world, thoroughly eradicating the social basis for exploitation and oppression and the division of society into classes.

In order to advance to communism we must never forget the fundamental truth that we cannot do without the dictatorship of the proletariat—we must never fall into bourgeois liberalism; but we must also never forget the fundamental truth that the dictatorship of the proletariat is dictatorship *by the masses* over the bourgeoisie and all reactionaries. Once having seized power, we have absolutely no intention of handing it back to the bourgeoisie—to exploiters and oppressors of the masses—in any form. But the question will be: who is “we” who are in power—is it the masses, led by their vanguard, increasingly extending and deepening their mastery over society, and their ability to transform it in a revolutionary way, in every sphere; or is it a new bourgeois clique that divorces itself from the masses and their revolutionary interests and becomes a new exploiting class ruling over the masses in their name, in the name of “socialism,” or “communism,” or “democracy,” or whatever?

It is really necessary to face up to the fact that there has been this tendency toward imposing things top-down in the history of our movement, historically and internationally. Again, without conceding an inch to the slanders and gross distortions and ulterior motives—the dishonest motives, the hypocritical and murderous motives—of our enemies, we nevertheless have to face the truth about ourselves and about our history, the history of the international communist movement. Otherwise what are we here for? What are we all about? How are we going to achieve what we have set out to achieve? And again I say: we have nothing to fear from facing the truth and bringing it fully to light. It is the other side—who really do panic at even the stirrings of discontent and revolt of the masses they oppress—it is they who have a great deal to fear from this.

***We represent the proletariat,
and they represent the bourgeoisie***

Once again, we can't get into all this without talking about Stalin, who did make many of the kind of errors of method and approach that I've been talking about. We uphold Stalin and the period of our movement and the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership. We uphold this historically, and I think we can say very well to our enemies: We represent the proletariat and you represent the

bourgeoisie. Don't talk to us about how can we uphold Stalin. How can you uphold George Washington and Thomas Jefferson? You claim to speak for the bourgeoisie and democracy. These people like Washington and Jefferson were slaveowners and defenders of slavery. While generally what they did was in the interests of your bourgeois system, they did certain things that were against the proclaimed principles of your system. Well, if you can defend them, we can certainly defend leaders of our class who overall upheld and furthered the interests of our cause and our class but who secondarily did some things that were against our interests. This is a fact of history, this is not surprising at all given the fact that these people were leaders of the first attempts to make these kinds of radical ruptures. And let's keep in mind the historical fact that what we are trying to do is to bring into being a whole new society, a whole new world without exploitation and oppression in any form, without class distinctions whatsoever, while all you have done—and all you have ever aimed to do—is to bring into being and defend another system of oppression and exploitation, founded on acute class divisions and great social antagonisms.

So, on the one hand, strategically speaking we have no difficulty and no hesitation in upholding people like Stalin, despite the errors, even some serious errors, they made. But, on the other hand, we do have to dig very deeply into the errors they made—otherwise what are we trying to do, and how are we going to go forward?

The lessons of carrying out a critical and all-sided summation of historical experience emphasize the importance of not having a wooden, mechanical-determinist approach. This emphasizes the need to have the suppleness, the flexibility (*the souplesse*) that comes with the real grappling with dialectics, the wielding of dialectics, materialist dialectics. We have to not fall into the notion that the way to change people is to *impose* change on them, even in their own "best interests." We have to find the ways to unleash them and to rely on them and, yes, to lead them. I'm certainly not putting forward here a recipe for tailing—and the answer to some of the difficulties that have arisen in trying to lead, where this attempt to lead has gone over to or verged on imposing things on the masses—I'm certainly not saying the answer to that is tailing the masses. That's no answer at all and it will only end up with the masses being delivered into the "tender mercies"—in reality the murderous clutches—of the enemy, the representatives and guardians of the old order.

The past and the future

But we do have to break some new ground and find some new ways to actually make these radical ruptures.

And we have to know how to make these radical ruptures in a way that synthesizes correctly the past history and experience of human beings and human society. That's one of the things I also found interesting about this draft paper I referred to earlier, on the question of art and its role in history: it grapples with this question of the value and the role of works of art from previous historical periods and representing other classes than the proletariat. It grapples with how to have an historical materialist approach to these works. How to correctly situate them, if you will, in their historical context, but on the other hand how to view their role in today's context. How to avoid on the one hand simply negating everything that is from previous historical periods and that represents classes other than the proletariat, or on the other hand uncritically upholding these things. How to get the correct synthesis. Because making the two radical ruptures—and Marx was very clear on this, as was Engels—does not mean throwing everything from the past indiscriminately into the garbage can.

So that's not an answer—just throwing everything indiscriminately into the garbage can—that's not the point. The point is how to synthesize, how to integrate past history and experience into the achievement of these two radical ruptures. Now that doesn't mean you take all these things as they are and integrate them. That would not really be synthesis and that would not be making the two radical ruptures. The question is: how to achieve a synthesis so that you recast things while taking things up both in their historical light and in terms of their role in the present—recast them in this sense—and in light of all this integrate them into the achievement of these two radical ruptures.

That's what we have to know how to do. We can't err either in the direction of just negating everything from the past and throwing it all in the garbage can, or of just dragging it all along with us as it is and thinking that, for example, it is fine to just take someone like Michelangelo "as is" and without applying revolutionary criticism to such things as Michelangelo's works, from the standpoint of the proletariat and its world-historic tasks. People like Michelangelo and other "giants" of "Western culture," or great cultural and historical figures of other societies and cultures, are often presented, uncritically, as transcendental figures who have the same value in any given historical period and in any given society—as if they have this overriding value which is above ideology, above politics, above the question of classes and social relations. No, that's all wrong. On the other hand, these figures and their works do have a certain role and a certain value when viewed in the light of our historic task and achieving these two radical ruptures—when they are

recast in light of those ruptures and as part of achieving those ruptures.

I think we need to grapple deeply with these questions. If we are going to achieve these two radical ruptures and transform the entire world, we're going to have to really come to terms with questions like this and sum up some past experience critically to be able to make a leap forward and grapple on a new level with *how* to achieve these two radical ruptures.

I am focusing here in particular on the rupture with all traditional ideas, understood in the most broad terms to include some of the things I have mentioned—religion, literature and art, and culture more broadly: traditional ideas, traditional morals, and so on. Fundamentally and in the final analysis, making this radical rupture with all traditional ideas depends upon and can only be done in the context of making the radical rupture with all traditional property relations. But on the other hand there is a great deal of life and dynamic which goes on in this sphere of ideas itself—that is, broadly speaking, the sphere of culture and ideology as I've just discussed it. There is a great deal of struggle and dynamism that goes on in this sphere which in turn reacts upon and influences very strongly the struggle to transform the basic relations of society, or to put it in the form Marx and Engels did, traditional property relations.

The need to really grapple with this applies not only to people whose work is more centered in the ideological sphere, though obviously they have particular and perhaps more extensive responsibility for this (people working in the sphere of the arts, for example). But generally speaking, in order to learn what we have to learn, in order to lead what we have to lead, and in order to carry out what we have to carry out, we all have to really grapple deeply with these questions—to wrestle with these questions in a very profound and sweeping way—really get down on these questions of how do you actually make the break, the radical rupture, with the dead hand of the past without thinking that means you take the entire past and throw it in the garbage can.

I think in the history of our movement, the international communist movement, there has been some tendency in this direction of entirely, one-sidedly negating the past. At the same time, there's also been the opposite tendency: to uncritically accept things from previous periods and other classes. And it's interesting that both of these erroneous tendencies have been found among some of the same people and same forces in the history of our movement—there has been a kind of “dualist” tendency to on the one hand declare everything produced under the rule of previous historical ruling classes useless garbage while at the same time actually upholding

certain particular things from previous historical periods as timeless “classics.” Sometimes this has been tied in with nationalism—nationalist deviations opposed to proletarian internationalism. Such nationalist deviations lead in the direction of one-sidedly negating things from the cultural traditions of other peoples; and at the same time, especially if certain things from a given “national culture” have acquired the status of “great works,” there has been this tendency to view them as “great national treasures”—uncritically.

As I say, both of these tendencies—to one-sidedly reject or negate things from the past and on the other hand to uncritically accept and “drag along” certain things from the past—can exist at the same time, even within the same people and forces. These tendencies can co-exist with each other because fundamentally they both fail to grasp how to carry out the radical ruptures with traditional property relations and traditional ideas while achieving a correct synthesis of the past—of history and its heritage, of historical and international experience and its role in relation to the present-day world and in relation specifically to the task of achieving the two radical ruptures.

Well, I don't have a lot more that I want to get into specifically on this question now. I more want to raise this as something to grapple with. This should be done with a spirit that is full of that “strategic double c”: strategic confidence in our cause and strategic contempt for the other side and for the fact that it does represent the dead hand of the past. And, once again, we can and must have strategic contempt for that dead hand of the past without that meaning we have absolute contempt for everything that's from the past.

The demise of revisionism and the dead hand of the past

In this light we can return again to the point I made in “The End of a Stage—The Beginning of a New Stage” about how, strategically speaking, the so-called “demise of communism” in what are and for some time have been *revisionist* countries—*counterfeit* communist countries—is a good thing for us. The way I put this in “End. . . Beginning” is this: “The so-called demise of communism is really just revisionism becoming more *openly* bourgeois. This does not constitute a crisis for genuine communism and is not a bad thing for us, for the international proletariat and the international communist movement, as represented specifically by the RIM and the parties and organizations affiliated with it. Strategically, it is a fine thing for us.”

I think this is a very important point of basic orienta-

tion—that this is really a fine thing for us strategically.

Of course it does create a number of problems for us in the short run. In the tactical sense it creates a certain amount of confusion among many people—it creates a certain amount of disorientation—because there is this whole constant barrage of bourgeois propaganda about how what this represents is people rising up against “communist tyranny” that finally, after having it imposed on them for many years, they are now throwing off.

Just as an aside, besides everything else, this is again just a gross distortion and basic nonsense—it is an extremely simplistic view, to say the least. These revisionist regimes and their ruling parties obviously did have a social base, they obviously had a base of support among sections of the population for a certain period of time. Even many revisionist parties in countries where they weren't in power had a social base for a fairly long time—for example in France the (counterfeit) Communist Party had a mass base for quite a period of time.

Now there have been changes in the societies in Western Europe—and also, more recently, in Eastern Europe—which have undermined and eroded this social base. This has to do with heightened parasitism in these bourgeois societies in Eastern as well as Western Europe and a lot of other changes in the class formations in these countries—in the “configuration of classes,” if you want to use that kind of a phrase.

The social relations of society have changed in various ways, especially having to do with this heightened parasitism. In other words, the old pattern of Eastern European societies, in which they were weighted toward heavy industrial production and there was a certain “social compact” (a stated or unstated agreement) whereby the revisionist regime ruled in the name of the working class and paid particular attention to “social welfare benefits” for especially the more skilled industrial workers—this is giving way to an attempt to shift away from such an emphasis on heavy industry and such a “social compact” and to move toward more “high-tech” economic patterns in these countries, hand-in-hand with an attempt to get a bigger “cut” of the exploitation of working people internationally and particularly in the Third World. This is a major factor in undermining the basis, the traditional basis, of these regimes in Eastern Europe—and some similar changes have undermined the popular basis of the revisionist parties in Western Europe and other places as well.

This is obviously giving rise to a great deal of turmoil and upheaval along with other things happening in these parts of the world and in world relations and struggles more broadly. Still, it is extremely simplistic and nonsense to talk as if these revisionist regimes and parties never had any base of support. And although it has been

undermined and eroded significantly over several decades, they still have some base of support among sections of the population.

But anyway, from our standpoint, these changes, and in particular the fact that these revisionist regimes and parties are becoming more openly bourgeois, is very fine. It's changing the terms of things in a way that strategically is good for us. We have to know how to handle the short-run and tactical difficulties in light of and being guided by the strategically favorable factors that are involved here.

Strategically favorable polarization

One of the things that is involved here is a significant political and ideological shift. It's ironic, if we think back to almost ten years ago, near the beginning of the eighties, I made this deliberately provocative statement about how in a certain sense, and only in a certain sense, we should let these revisionist parties have the name communist—we should make the point of saying we are revolutionary communist/proletarian internationalist. But they have said, in effect: no thank you, we don't want it, we no longer want even to be *called* communist. They want to let go of it as fast as they can now. But we're very glad to loudly declare ourselves communists, while making clear this means the same thing we've always meant by revolutionary communism/proletarian internationalism. And in particular, as we have achieved a higher synthesis in our understanding of this, we have grasped firmly that today communism means and can only mean Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

One of the most important results of the fact that you have these revisionist governments and parties becoming more openly bourgeois is that more clearly, in ideological terms, you have a pole made up of increasingly closely identified, closely akin, forms of bourgeois rule and bourgeois politics and ideology. Whether in Eastern Europe or Western Europe, the forms of government and the politics and ideology being promoted are more and more alike. And on the other hand, you have, most fundamentally, the howling objective reality that the great majority of people in the world are in miserable conditions, in situations that in actual fact require proletarian revolution to provide any real solution. And there is a very strong objective basis for these people to gravitate towards Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, which is the ideology that represents this solution and that stands directly opposed to all this, increasingly similar, bourgeois ideology and politics coming from the Western and the Eastern powers.

The basis has been strengthened for our ideology to

more clearly be recognized as the direct and really only opposite pole, the only real answer to these more and more closely associated forms of the ideology and politics of the bourgeoisie. I'm not saying everything has become crystal clear, that there are no shades of difference, no elements of confusion and no ideologies that come forward claiming to be one thing that are really another, and specifically that claim to speak for the oppressed while really representing the oppressor. Of course all that exists and will continue to exist, but there is, in a very global sense, a certain polarization in terms of basic ideology and politics occurring in the world. And this is a very good thing.

It is a fact that at the present time objectively our pole is weak in relation to the opposite pole and that in the short run not all of these developments I have been discussing that are strategically favorable for us are necessarily immediately favorable. Nevertheless, there is this fundamental polarization which is occurring which is favorable for us. And there is the underlying objective fact of what is the position and the crying needs of the great majority of people in the world, which is also very favorable for us. In fact, the basic conditions and fundamental needs of the masses of people throughout the world are the basis for proletarian revolution and really the basis for our existence as revolutionary communists.

It is these conditions and needs that are bound to incline people towards the pole of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, even if right now this pole is still relatively weak and is not a pole of massive attraction in many countries, with some important exceptions, and—speaking in terms of the world as a whole—is not yet drawing the massive number that it has to draw and that it will draw. This is another way of stating the fundamental principle that Marx underlined: the important question is not what the masses of workers are doing at any given time but what they will be compelled to do by the situation and their conditions and objective interests.

The temporary, relative weakness of our pole right now has to do with some very crucial material things in the world such as the defeat of our side in China, the reversal of the revolution there, and the fact that there is right now no such base area for the world revolution as was represented by China. In other words, a real beacon was lost—not the *rigor mortis* fake socialism of the revisionists but a living, vibrant revolutionary socialism that China actually represented particularly through the heights of the Cultural Revolution. This was lost with the triumph of revisionism in China after the death of Mao.

But, while temporarily there are no such revolutionary socialist states in the world, there are inspiring revolutionary struggles—there is the people's war in Peru and other struggles throughout the world. What is of partic-

ularly great importance about the people's war in Peru is that it is being led by a party carrying the banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. And in other struggles in the world, in many places in the world, there are many people who are drawn towards our ideology and who in general uphold a genuine revolutionary standard—who represent a genuine revolutionary opposition to the powers-that-be and the established order. So these are also favorable elements, favorable aspects to the situation.

The point is that we have to figure out the ways to strengthen our pole of attraction. First and foremost and fundamentally this means carrying forward the revolutionary struggle, strengthening it in the material sphere. But what is also important is the question of how to carry out work and struggle in the ideological sphere. This includes through literature and art and other ways as well as through the propagation of our ideology and exposure of the ideology and politics of the other side. The question I'm focusing on here is this: how to strengthen our pole in the ideological sphere? How to strengthen the attractive power of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism as the pole directly and clearly opposed to the bourgeois pole to which all these revisionists, as well as of course the "old-line" bourgeois powers, are scurrying to attach themselves? In grappling with this question, we should keep firmly in mind the fundamental, and fundamentally favorable, objective basis for this despite certain real losses we've suffered—in particular the loss of China as a revolutionary base area and beacon—and despite certain real weaknesses in our situation at the present moment.

Our ideological counteroffensive

The title of this talk is "Radical Ruptures, Or, Yes, Mao More Than Ever," because I do believe the slogan "Mao More Than Ever" is very important at this time. It is important not only in relation to recent events in China (in particular the Tiananmen Square massacres) that were the immediate context in which we raised this slogan, but more generally in relation to the situation in the world overall, in terms of the fundamental ideological and political polarization that I have spoken to, and in terms of the actual struggles going on in the world.

While carrying forward with the crucial things that our Party has undertaken—in particular the shifts we've spoken about in the latest Central Committee Report: shifts to increased emphasis on leading masses in militant political struggle and on bringing forward the youth in particular—and along with doing everything we can to help advance the revolutionary struggle internationally and thereby strengthen the pole of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in the world, at the same time we have to put

great emphasis on struggle in the ideological realm. We have pointed out that in various ways these shifts call for increased emphasis, put increasing demands, on work in the ideological sphere and ideological struggle.

This takes shape in many different forms and many different aspects. There is increased need for criticism and self-criticism in our own ranks, based on keeping our "eye on the prize"—the goal of revolution and ultimately communism worldwide. There is increased need for ideological struggle—of the vigorous, lively kind, guided by the most lofty vision and yet dealing with things in terms of actual problems to be solved within our own ranks and more broadly out among the masses. There is also the need for ideological work to propagate and to strengthen the pole of attraction of our ideology, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, and to criticize and expose the opposite pole, the bourgeois-imperialist pole.

What is needed is really "Mao More Than Ever." What is called for is really turning up our ideological counteroffensive, going on the offensive with Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in opposition to all these reactionary monsters and all this bourgeois muck: the real forward-sweeping current that we represent and that our ideology represents versus the same old, same old quicksand of the past. There is a great need for us to very vigorously carry this out, again guided by "strategic double c": strategic confidence in our cause and strategic contempt for the other side and the fact that they do represent the muck and the same old, same old quicksand of the past and nothing at all of the wave of the future.

While this is a general statement of what is demanded in terms of waging an ideological counteroffensive, I think we really have to dig into this, investigate, and draw forward ideas from our own ranks and more broadly from the masses about how to carry out such an ideological offensive broadly and overall in our work. I also think there are two particular spheres or two particular groups to which we have to pay particular attention. That is, this offensive has to be carried out particularly with two groups in mind: the intellectuals and especially the youth among our people, the basic proletarian youth.

Interestingly in light of this, I was thinking of the comment by Robert Thompson (I refuse to call him *Sir* Robert Thompson), the British counterinsurgency expert who led their counterinsurgency efforts in Malaya after World War 2 and tried to aid the U.S. imperialists in counterrevolutionary war in Vietnam—to his great chagrin since this war ended in a great debacle for the U.S. imperialists. Thompson thought he could apply in a more general way certain things that were done in Malaya that were at least partially successful for reasons having to do with particular characteristics of what was going on there

right after World War 2. He thought he could make this into a general and universal thing and apply it to Vietnam, but it didn't work at all—about which, of course, we and the masses of people in the world are very happy, even if he's not. But nevertheless I was thinking about his comment that communism attracts intellectuals because of the ideals it expresses and that it attracts youth—he didn't put it exactly this way, but essentially he is talking about youth from among the basic masses—it attracts them because of its whole fighting spirit. Now I'm paraphrasing, but this is essentially what he said.

Again, we do not want to make an absolute out of this kind of division. We don't want intellectuals who are merely attracted by the "ideal" and have no inclination toward trying to achieve it in practice, who want to remain aloof from the actual struggle, from really taking on the enemy in order to make this "ideal" a *reality*. Nor, on the other hand, do we want youth who merely are inspired by the fighting spirit but are kept ignorant of what the ultimate purpose of this is, who are not given the "ideal"—who are not given the vision, the lofty vision of what it's all about but are only appealed to on the basis of "let's go fight" without being given an understanding of the *content*, the purpose, and flowing from that the methods of the fight.

Yes, we want the youth especially and we want the masses broadly to be attracted to the fighting spirit that we represent—the going up in the face of the enemy, the willingness to take on the enemy. In other words, as we put it, we want people to take up the whole spirit of "Fear Nothing. Be Down for the Whole Thing." But we also want to give content to that "whole thing." We want people to be inspired by what is the content and meaning of the "whole thing," that is, the whole transformation of society throughout the world and the achievement of these two radical ruptures as I've spoken about them here. But I do think there is something interesting in this comment by Robert Thompson, and we have to figure out how this might apply or might have some bearing in carrying out an ideological offensive among these two groups in particular—intellectuals and basic youth—while also carrying it out more broadly.

Particularly among the youth and among basic proletarian people generally, a point that we have made is extremely important: the need for what we refer to as a new generation of revolutionaries. This is linked very closely to the crucial point we have talked about of bringing forward a revolutionary people. This must be done not in some sort of religious fanatical sense, but in a sense of really grounding people in the reality of what society is about and what it could be and should be about and *will* be about if we dare to bring it about. Grounding people

in that, we can and must bring forward masses of people and in particular looking at the new generation coming forward we must inspire them to devote their lives to revolution, to live and die for revolution. It is decisive that we train a new generation of people in this way, with this understanding and lofty vision and dedication. In this way, the youth can act as a kind of vanguard force for the broad masses in rising up to make revolution.

Our ideology is powerful—let's popularize it

Now this is not just some ideological task in some abstract sense; it has everything to do with the overall work to bring into being a revolutionary people and to actually bring into being and carry out the revolution. But there is an extremely important ideological aspect to all this. We have a lot of work to do in terms of the popularization of our ideology and everything it represents. And I mean popularization in both senses—in the sense of spreading it broadly among the people and also in the sense of making it accessible and understandable, something that can be readily grasped and taken up by particularly the basic people in society.

I think we have made some real headway in doing this. For example, many reports that I've read say that our slogan "Revolution Is the Hope of the Hopeless" is extremely popular among the youth who come in contact with us or who've seen the slogan—which is quite a few youth—and that this is something that a number of youth have really taken up as their own. And not in some sort of religious way. They understand what the basic meaning is, and the more we work with them the more they come to understand their own role in bringing this about. This is not some sort of "divine intervention" we're talking about when we say "Revolution Is the Hope of the Hopeless"—this is a question of the conscious and active engagement of masses of people themselves in the struggle to transform the world.

The popularization of this slogan is one very important advance we have made, and we have to figure out ways to make further advances in terms of popularizing (in both senses I've mentioned) our ideology and what it represents in living, powerful terms and in a way that is related to the actual struggles that we have to be carrying forward. I mean related in an overall sense: when I say "related to the actual struggles" I mean not off in some abstract realm far removed from these struggles, but in an overall way having a living relationship to the actual struggles of the masses, the political struggles that are so crucial in preparing the ground for going over to the highest form of struggle, the mass armed struggle to seize political power.

I don't have the answers to all of the key questions

involved in carrying out our ideological counteroffensive and boldly popularizing our ideology, but I am confident the answers can be found. I think they can be found by grappling with these questions on the leading levels of our Party, but also and more fundamentally by putting these questions out broadly and doing investigation—going out to learn, and to sum up what we learn, through our own ranks and broadly among the masses, about how to popularize this ideology, how to bring it forward as something growing numbers of basic people take up as their own, which it is.

Yes, there are some objective difficulties we face in doing this that I've spoken to—in particular the loss we suffered in China and the fact that we don't have right now a socialist state playing the role that China played, particularly through the Cultural Revolution. But we also have some real strengths going for us, including the strategically favorable factor that, increasingly, revisionist regimes and parties are becoming more openly bourgeois. Most of all we have going for us the desperate need among the great majority of people in the world and large and growing numbers of people in the U.S. for radical change in their situation and a radical change in society.

We have to pay some concerted attention to waging this ideological counteroffensive, whose basic thrust can be captured in the slogan "Mao More Than Ever." (This has also been put forward as part of a larger slogan: "Phony Communism Is Dead, Long Live Real Communism! Mao More Than Ever.") We have to boldly carry out this counteroffensive without making it a substitute for, or something that diverts our efforts from, the shifts we've been talking about in carrying forward the militant political struggle of the masses and bringing forward the youth especially. Correctly carried out, this ideological work and struggle should strengthen and deepen these shifts.

I think the power of what Mao represented, the power of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, is something that we should not underestimate. On the contrary, we have to really find the ways to make this something that the masses themselves can readily take up and wield as their own, as the tremendously powerful weapon it is when it is taken up by revolutionary masses.

A Final Note:

Principles in Carrying Forward the Revolution Under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Preventing Revisionism and the Rise to Power of the (New) Bourgeoisie

These are principles based on summation of the experience of capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union and in China and the struggle to oppose such restoration.

- Put the advance of the world revolution above everything, even above the advance of the revolution in the particular country—build the socialist state as above all a base area for the world revolution.
- Bring forward new—emphasis on *new*—revolutionary forces, wave upon wave, in socialist society. Example: women (and men) fighting for the emancipation of women as part of the struggle to overcome all oppression and class distinctions.
- The party in socialist society must act as the vanguard not only in terms of being a party in power but *also* in terms of actively involving itself in and leading—actually unleashing and winning leadership of—mass struggle in opposition to those aspects of the *status quo* which at any given time have become obstacles to the further revolutionization of society, which stand in opposition to the new revolutionary forces being brought forward. In short, be a party in power *and* a vanguard of revolutionary struggle against any parts of power that are blocking the road to complete liberation.
- Be ready not only for ongoing class struggle—struggle to advance toward communism and defeat attempts to drag society back to capitalism—but be ready also for those times when this class struggle becomes an all-out battle, throughout society. Seize hold of these occasions to make new breakthroughs, new leaps in the revolution, as Mao did through the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, which is the highest pinnacle that the international proletariat has scaled so far in its historic struggle for a communist world.