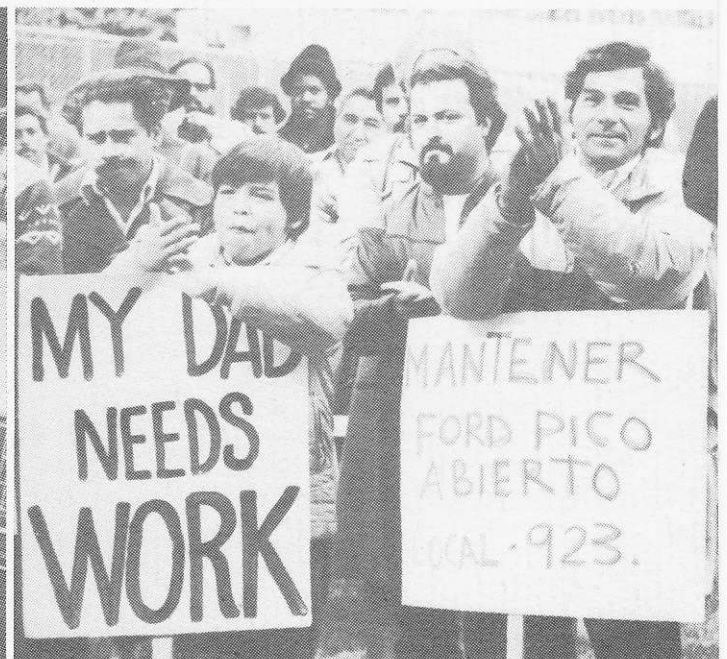


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# Repression, Reaganomics, War, and Revolution

The Present Situation and  
the Tasks of U.S. Marxist-Leninists



Marxist-Leninist Debate Series  
Position by the U.S. League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L)

## Preface

**T**he essay which follows, "The Present Situation, Period of the Revolution and Marxist-Leninist Tasks," by the League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-Leninist) is the first of a series of statements which are part of a debate in the U.S. communist movement to help clarify the political line for the socialist revolution. This debate in the communist movement was initiated through a public call by the Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist), League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-Leninist) and Revolutionary Workers Headquarters for all Marxist-Leninists in the United States to participate. The debate is open to all Marxist-Leninist organizations and individuals to participate by writing position papers and responses to those of others. The aim of the debate is to advance the struggle for Marxist-Leninist unity by helping clarify political line.

The debate will feature the publication of positions on six political questions that are essential in the formulation of a line and program for the U.S. revolution. The CPML, LRS and RWH have called for debate on the following six topics, beginning with the first topic in November, and the others following at six-week intervals:

1. The nature of the current period of the U.S. revolutionary struggle and the tasks of communists
2. The national question, including positions on the Afro-American national question, Chicano national question, Asian national questions, the Puerto Rican national question
3. The question of labor and trade union work
4. The woman question
5. The international situation
6. Party-building and organization.

The first topic, the nature of the current period and the tasks of communists, includes the analysis of objective conditions in the U.S. and internationally, the communist movement, and the tasks of communists in this period. For the remaining topics, it has been recommended that position papers include theoretical views, programmatic demands and strategy and tactics, and summarization of practice wherever possible.

The League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-Leninist) is looking forward to a broad, movement-wide debate. We believe that such a debate can help advance the efforts U.S. Marxist-Leninists are making to sum up our experiences, both positive and negative, further our theoretical work, forge a Marxist-Leninist line and program for the U.S. revolution, and build Marxist-Leninist unity.

We believe it is especially important to have a broad airing and exchange of written positions at this particular time in the history of the U.S. communist movement. The contemporary Marxist-Leninist movement in the U.S. has more than ten years of experience in doing mass work and developing our understanding of the conditions of the U.S. revolutionary struggle. Today many U.S. Marxist-Leninists are trying to sum up this experience while confronting the many and complicated questions that are posed by objective conditions and the mass movements in the 1980's.

Tensions in the international arena and the danger of world war are increasing. Domestically the masses of people are under heavy assault by the ruling class, as witnessed by the deteriorating economic situation, the rise of racial hatred and violence against oppressed nationality peoples, attacks on women's rights and the growing social decay.

It is clear that the need for Marxist-Leninist unity is pressing. In order to forge a principled unity, Marxist-Leninists must place at the center of unity efforts the clarification of a political line and program fitted to the specific realities of the U.S. in the current period.

Through this debate, we hope that the U.S. communist movement can make some significant steps forward in clarifying such a political line, and through a serious and comradely exchange of views, clarify the existing views in the movement and raise the collective political understanding of the entire movement. We hope that all U.S. Marxist-Leninists will participate.



## **The Present Situation, Period of the Revolution and Marxist-Leninist Tasks**

### **Introduction**

**T**his is the first of a series of statements by the League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-Leninist) which are a part of a debate in the U.S. communist movement to help clarify the political line for the socialist revolution. In this paper we try to present the League's basic views on the general objective situation in the U.S. today, including the economic, political, ideological and social aspects; an assessment of the revolutionary movement in the country and its stage of development; and finally, the main tasks and responsibilities of Marxist-Leninists.

In this and subsequent position statements, the League has attempted to integrate the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought with the realities of the United States. The fundamental ideological task of every socialist revolution is to make a concrete analysis of concrete conditions at each stage of historical development and upon this formulate a correct political line which can be carried out by the vanguard party of the working class. The League hopes that this statement will be a contribution to the clarification of line and a step forward in the process to forge a genuine communist party in the United States.

### **The U.S. Today**

The fundamental feature of the United States today is that it is a monopoly capitalist system in irrevocable decline and decay. After World War II, the U.S. emerged as the richest and most powerful imperialist power in history. It oppressed millions of people and nations around the world and through this cruel oppression and the exploitation of the working class at home, U.S. imperialism ascended as a superpower. Due to a number of serious international and domestic contradictions, however, U.S. imperialism has been thrown into a profound crisis and faces a steady erosion of its power in every sphere.



The current turmoil in the U.S. economy is a product of these contradictions which have been building up for years. Some of the most important of these problems are:

- the rise of the third world against imperialism. Many countries have seized greater control over their raw materials and markets which have been vital to U.S. imperialist interests. This has undermined the U.S. bourgeoisie's ability to reap superprofits from many areas of the world today, causing severe business problems for American companies.
- other capitalist countries, such as Japan and Germany, have rebuilt their economies and now challenge the U.S. bourgeoisie in the contest for raw materials, markets and labor in a number of vital areas.
- the rise of the Soviet Union as an imperialist superpower. The attempt of the Soviets and their allies to achieve world hegemony directly competes with U.S. imperialism.
- inter-capitalist competition at home, the relentless drive to maximize profits and years of a declining rate of domestic capital investment are now threatening to cripple or even extinguish a number of major monopolies such as Chrysler and even whole industries such as steel.
- the horrendous amount of military spending to support U.S. imperialism has distorted a significant sector of the U.S. economy, directly tied it into government policy and destroyed much of the productive resources of the country. The massive military budget over the decades has been a main cause of the current high inflation.
- for several decades, the federal government implemented a policy of trying to stimulate the economy and prevent depression through massive government spending, leading to huge budget deficits. Also, the government was forced to make concessions to the legitimate demands of the people by spending billions of dollars on educational, cultural, social and economic assistance programs in the hope that this would lessen social conflict and diminish class struggle. The huge government budget deficit is a major factor causing the current monetary instability.

These problems among others have created an economic picture characterized by business stagnation as well as high inflation. And as a result the ruling class is attempting to shift its serious problems onto its capitalist rivals, the third world, and working people and the oppressed nationalities domestically.

In foreign affairs, the U.S. bourgeoisie has adopted policies to more aggressively protect its interests. This accounts for the increased belligerence towards the third world, the developing trade and monetary wars with other capitalist countries and the increased tension with the Soviet Union.

Domestically, the bourgeoisie has stepped up its exploitation of working people in the forms of unemployment, speedups, "job rationalizations," "takeaways," overtime, automation and robotic conversion, and pay cuts. The bourgeoisie also has intensified national oppression to try to improve profits.

The economic prospects for the masses are dim. Business economists predict high inflation for some time to come as well as high unemployment. Business failures and takeovers will continue. The economy is not likely to collapse in the foreseeable future, but will be in protracted crisis, bringing more and more problems for the masses. The current round of problems for big business will concentrate the economy even further into the hands of a small number of monopolies and financial institutions, thus laying the basis for even greater upheavals in the next crisis cycle.

These economic problems over the past several years have shaken the political scene in the U.S., most obvious being the election of Reagan, the collapse of liberalism and the promotion of a rightwing movement by the bourgeoisie. The Keynesian economic approach, dominant for the past 40 years, is being discarded, as is liberal social policy. The bourgeoisie has turned towards more openly pro-business policies for the federal government and the elimination of social programs because they have fewer options, less room to maneuver, less ability to try to bribe and corrupt the masses. The bourgeoisie unabashedly hopes that its current approach will better advance its fundamental interest: its rate of profit.

The economic attack on the masses is accompanied by a reactionary political and ideological movement directed primarily against the poor, women, the working class and the oppressed nationalities.

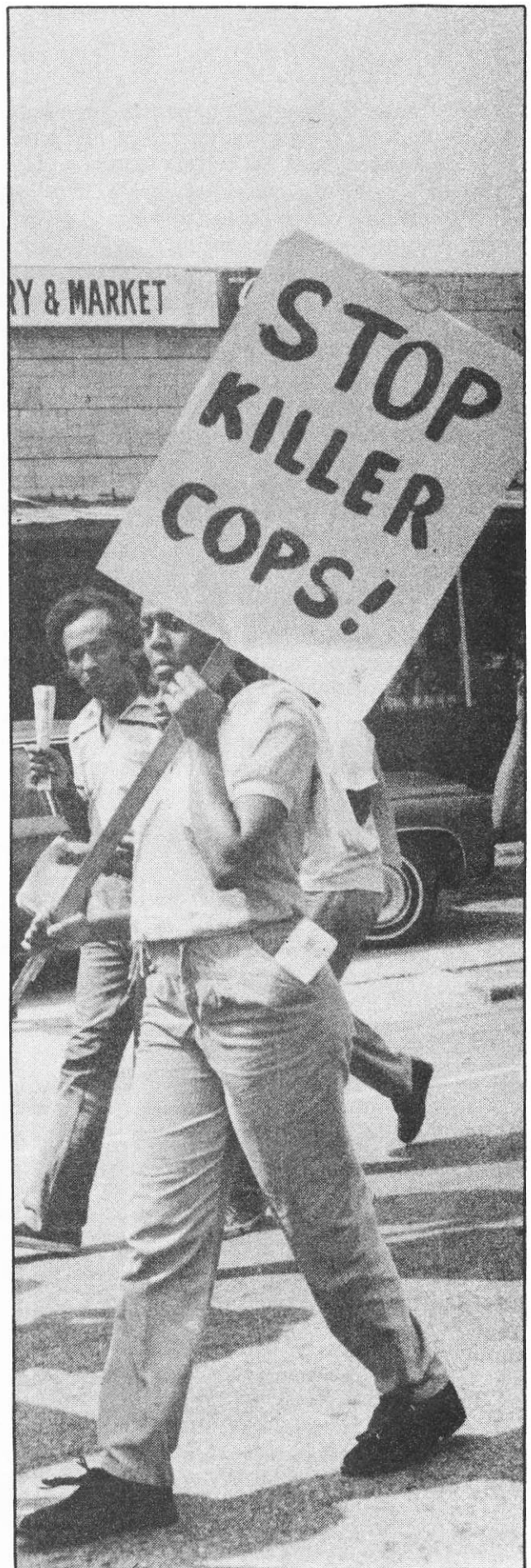
A climate of violence and racism is deliberately being fanned up in the country against the oppressed nationalities. Instances of racist-motivated violence and murder of Afro-Americans and other oppressed nationalities are increasing at an alarming rate. The missing and murdered children in Atlanta, the lynching of a 19-year old Black man in Alabama, the murder of Puerto Ricans, Chicanos and Mexicanos by police and border patrol, the beatings of Chinese in Boston and Klan firebombing of Chinese-owned businesses in southern California — all have brought the question of racist-hatred, violence and murder into sharp focus.

This reactionary campaign is seen, too, in many different areas: in the attack upon democratic rights, in the stepping up of government surveillance and intelligence gathering, in the expansion of police and law enforcement agencies. Wide and diverse sectors of the population are being directly affected: workers, oppressed nationalities, women, youth, students, the elderly, veterans, the poor and unemployed as well as the middle classes. All find to lesser or greater degrees a significant decline in their standard of living, a deterioration of living conditions and a general rise in insecurity about the future.

Accompanying the ruling class' economic and political offensive against the masses has been an ideological campaign to try to prevent the development of mass discontent and win popular support for the bourgeoisie's polices. A more openly racist atmosphere is being encouraged in the country, as seen even in the movie theaters. The bourgeoisie is funding the Moral Majority and similar groups in the millions of dollars to spread their conservatism among the masses. Even groups like the KKK and the Nazis are being given more attention and endorsement.

The ruling class hopes that the masses will believe the decline in their standard of living and the generally more difficult times are a result of Arabs, foreign capitalists, illegal immigrants, masses of oppressed nationalities, a decline in "morals" — anything and anyone but the bourgeoisie itself.

The Reagan "revolution" will be unable to solve the woes of the U.S. The basic causes of the economic crisis are too deep and beyond the decisive control of the bourgeoisie. While Reagan's plan may affect the magnitude of some of the immediate manifestations of the crisis (such as the declining rate of profit and high inflation), it is unlikely that there will be any



major turn around in the economy. In fact in the years ahead, as the crisis continues, there may be calls for even more extreme measures to help the economy, including more direct government support for certain sectors and massive restructuring to stabilize the economy.

For the masses of people, however, the standard of living will continue to decline. Real income will be pushed downward, social services will be eliminated, the environment will worsen considerably and there will be a steady erosion of the limited democratic rights that now exist.

This situation will present major responsibilities for Marxist-Leninists to integrate with and strive to lead the growing mass resistance that will develop in the coming years. Every sector of American society will be thrust into motion and the level of spontaneous struggle will heighten. At the same time the developing situation presents serious dangers for the people and communists. The reactionary movement will continue to grow and the bourgeoisie may turn more decisively to the open use of terror and violence to perpetuate its rule. Outright fascism cannot be ruled out.

Unless Marxist-Leninists are prepared ideologically, politically and organizationally to meet the responsibilities of the growing mass movement, as well as respond to and survive the reactionary offensive, the revolutionary movement in the U.S. will be unable to fulfill its most basic requirements.

### **The International Situation and the Foreign Policy of the U.S. Bourgeoisie**

The U.S. bourgeoisie is contending with the Soviet imperialists for world hegemony and this contention is threatening to lead the world into a third world war. The Soviets are the more aggressive of the two superpowers and the greater source of war. The U.S. desperately is trying to repel the Soviet offensive while maintaining its domination over many parts of the globe.

The worldwide military and economic empire of the U.S. bourgeoisie is vital to its own survival and is the reason for the anxious attempts to shore up its power overseas. A major reserve of power for the ruling class is the billions of dollars of investment overseas, the hundreds of military and spy bases around the globe and the direct influence upon scores of other governments.

The erosion of U.S. power around the world, especially since the war in Indochina, has provoked profound reassessments of U.S. foreign policy. Kissinger's "detente," normalization of relations with China, "shuttle diplomacy," Carter's "human rights" campaign, and now Haig's "get tough" stance are all attempts to redefine and consolidate a foreign policy that will best achieve the ruling class' aim of counteracting the Soviets, maintaining and expanding U.S. power in the third world, and overall achieve U.S. supremacy in the world.

The attempt at "detente" with the Soviet Union proved unable to restrain the Soviets and protect U.S. interests. Over the last couple of years the ruling class has turned increasingly to a more confrontational approach to the Soviet Union and vigorous defense of its imperialist interests. The attempt to reach detente with the Soviets has definitely taken second seat.

Recent U.S. interference in other countries such as Iran, Turkey and in Central America, and its support of local reactionary forces such as Israel, South Africa, south Korea and the Marcos regime in the Philippines have sharpened tensions in the world. These actions are clear proof that the U.S. imperialists have no intention of giving up their empire. It is an illusion to believe that the U.S. bourgeoisie can develop a "democratic foreign policy" that will oppose Soviet hegemonism at the same time as it respects the sovereign rights of the oppressed nations. The U.S. opposes the Soviet Union because of its imperialist interests, the same interests that lead it to intervene and oppose democracy in El Salvador, the Middle East and southern Africa.

While U.S. actions on occasion may objectively assist the struggle against the Soviets (such as the improvement of relations with socialist China), the U.S. has not given up its drive to attain world hegemony. Thus Marxist-Leninists in the U.S. must continue to oppose both superpowers and not view either as a strategic ally to counter the other.

The international situation, and the foreign affairs of U.S. imperialism in particular, are of great importance to the U.S. socialist revolution, as the U.S. is a worldwide superpower. The strength of the bourgeoisie is based to a great extent on its ability to oppress others around the



globe. The U.S., too, is locked in a mortal battle with the Soviets for world domination, threatening to unleash a new world war which obviously would have tremendous consequences on the course of the revolutionary struggle in this country.

Communists in this country in the coming years must oppose the superpowers' acts of aggression, interference and subversion of other countries. We should promote solidarity with the struggles of other peoples, pointing out that these struggles have common interests with those of the working people of the U.S. This internationalism is an important responsibility of communists in the U.S. in order to combat the poison of national chauvinism spread so widely and for such a long time in the U.S. And very practically speaking, the victories of the people of other countries in achieving democracy, economic equality and independence, and socialism give not just inspiration but concrete assistance to the proletariat of this country by weakening imperialism.

In the immediate upcoming period, the mass movement will be confronted with important issues such as the reinstatement of the draft, an escalating arms race, the danger of U.S. intervention in Latin America or the Middle East, and Soviet aggression in other countries, and increased Soviet-U.S. conflict. Communists will be called upon to offer a clear alternative to the war-mongering of the U.S. imperialists as well as to the propaganda of the Soviets and their agents such as the CPUSA who apologize for the social-imperialists.

### **Resistance to U.S. Monopoly Capital**

The resistance to the current offensive of the bourgeoisie has been mainly local and sporadic. Compared to the 1960's and early 1970's, the mass movement during the past seven or eight years has not been as vigorous. At the same time, the dissatisfaction with the deterioration of living conditions, the rise in racism, and the suspicion of bourgeois politics has spread throughout wide sectors of the working and middle classes of the U.S.

Among workers, the level of activity and consciousness is still not very developed. Struggle is rarely national in scope, although there have been some notable exceptions over the last several years. The coal miners have staged several long, militant walkouts, and now there is the nationwide air controllers strike. A significant development over the past several years has been the fre-

*Thousands of Chicanos and Mexicanos have demonstrated against repression by the migra (Immigration department). Here a demonstration led by the Committee on Chicano Rights in San Diego, May 1980 (UNITY photo)*



quency and militancy of a number of strikes among public workers, including transit, hospital, educational and others.

The traditional trade union leadership, however, has offered little resistance to the offensive launched by the ruling class. They have caved in to takeaways, layoffs, speedups, etc., and promoted chauvinism against oppressed nationalities, immigrants and workers in other countries such as Japan. Along with the top labor bureaucrats there is a strong labor aristocracy within the upper stratum of workers which continues to benefit from the spoils of imperialism. These forces have acted as a major obstacle to the development of the class struggle and class consciousness.

The general decline of U.S. imperialism will not of its own eliminate these social props of imperialism. The struggle with these forces will actually intensify in the coming years as the crisis of U.S. imperialism continues. The recent Solidarity Day demonstration in Washington showed that while the masses of workers want to struggle, the top labor leaders were mainly interested in regaining their political influence in Congress. The masses of workers will have to mount struggle to protect their standard of living, but are finding that the traditional conservative trade union leaders are unwilling and unable to lead the battle. Many reform-minded trade union leaders are already appearing in a number of unions and are challenging the old structure. These upcoming struggles are important for the Marxist-Leninist movement to participate in, to develop their ties with rank and file workers, gain greater influence within the trade union structure, and improve the position of the working class.

The developing economic crisis is affecting the unorganized workers even more seriously. There has been a significant and relatively high level of activity these past several years among the unorganized workers, such as among lower stratum production workers and farm workers. They have even less protection against the offensive than the unionized workers. The ruling class is stepping up its efforts to attack this sector, as in Reagan's new immigration policy which would revive the "Bracero" program. Organizing the unorganized will be especially crucial for communists in the coming years.

The movements of the oppressed nationalities are comparatively more developed than the working class movement at this time, and there are signs pointing to a resurgence of mass resistance on a widespread scale. Over the last several years, there have been major uprisings in Chicago, Houston and Miami.

Certainly the level of spontaneous activity is not at the level it was during the 1960's, but there is a mass current of anger and resentment among the oppressed peoples. Some of the most noteworthy recent developments are the formation of a National Black United Front and the Black freedom movement in the small towns of the South; the mass demand for redress and reparations for Japanese Americans interned during World War II; the struggles around land in the Southwest for Chicanos; the unionization activities among Chinese and other Asian workers; the land struggles among Native Americans and Hawai'ians; organizing activities among undocumented workers in the Southwest; and the formation of a Puerto Rican organization for struggle.

It is significant that the traditional leadership in the oppressed nationality communities has been unable to provide much credible leadership. The traditional leadership in many cases is in disarray and has tried to hold back or sidetrack the struggle. There is a popular desire among many of the oppressed peoples for a new leadership that is more responsive to the people, militant and able to provide a path of opposition to the ruling class' attacks.

The developing situation in the oppressed nationality movements provides especially important opportunities and responsibilities for communists.

Over the last several years, while there has been some lull in the general militancy of the mass movement, there has been a definite spread of dissatisfaction with life in the U.S. A number of major social sectors have been propelled into struggle due to events and the policies of Washington and Wall Street. These social movements have had a significant impact on millions of people who previously had some faith in or illusions about the bourgeois system.

Watergate, widespread government corruption, Abscam and other exposures of the rottenness of bourgeois politics have created much suspicion and even cynicism about traditional politi-



cians. Many have had their illusions shattered. The instability in the presidential office since Nixon and the low voter turnout in the national elections are indicative of this alienation from traditional politics.

Also, over the last several years the women's movement has developed significantly. It has become more of a mass question, affecting a great number of women of many ages and backgrounds. Throughout the country, there have been major struggles around such basic issues as abortion rights, health care, anti-woman violence and the special exploitation of women workers.

Another area of widening concern for millions of Americans is the danger of nuclear power, chemical exposures and general environmental issues. This movement has grown from one that focused mainly on preserving natural habitats to one that is concerned with the very conditions of existence for millions of people. The cases of the Love Canal and Three Mile Island dramatized the life and death nature of these issues. Wide numbers of individuals have become antagonistic to the policies of big business that are damaging the environment and general health conditions for vast sections of the populace in the country.

Over the past couple of years many students have protested cutbacks; the elimination of minority admissions, ethnic studies and other minority programs; nuclear power and nuclear weaponry; U.S. investments in South Africa; the threat of the reinstatement of the draft, among other issues. An anti-war movement is also appearing in the U.S., as witnessed by the opposition to U.S. involvement in El Salvador and other countries. The spread of anti-military sentiment has touched even forces such as the Mormons, who are opposing the deployment of the MX missile system.

All these forms of protest connected to the general deterioration of the economy and living conditions in the country have created widespread disenchantment with present U.S. society. While some look to Reagan and other reactionary solutions for the crisis, there is much more popular feeling that the future holds little promise of improvement, but only steady decline, with the backdrop of war looming on the horizon.

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The development of the objective situation and the mass movement places great responsibilities upon the communists of the U.S. There is a growing demand for leadership to oppose the bourgeoisie's attacks.

It would be wrong to predict a great revolutionary upsurge in the immediate upcoming years, but it would also be wrong to cite only the lack of spontaneous militancy as a rationale for communists to submerge themselves in the mass movement without regard for the basic and long-term requirements of the socialist revolution.

It is the task of Marxist-Leninists today to carefully analyze their own forces and the currents in the mass movement to determine where best they can direct their limited energies to build and influence the mass movement, increase communist forces through winning the advanced, and prepare for the mass struggle that is building up.



*The fight to save the International Hotel in San Francisco was one of the most significant people's struggles of the 1970's. Residents and supporters faced police attacks, but mobilized tens of thousands of people in support of the right to decent housing for Asians. Marxist-Leninists played a significant and leading role in the I-Hotel fight, uniting with a broad range of forces in the community. (UNITY photo)*

## **The Marxist-Leninist Movement in the U.S.**

**T**he contemporary anti-revisionist communist movement in the U.S. is now a little more than ten years old. Its origins were primarily from the student, anti-war and oppressed national-ity movements of the 1960's. The present movement did not emerge out of struggle within the old communist party, as in some other countries. While this had its drawbacks in that the new movement could not draw extensively from the experiences and ties of the old communist party, there were some advantages. The anti-revisionist movement was not encumbered with the encrusted, opportunist and out-of-date ways of the old party. In fact, the freshness and youth of the new communist movement was one of its main strengths.

The new communist movement, while trying to learn from the past and from the experi-ences of others, looked at Marxism-Leninism in a new light. It was faced with the difficult task of formulating a correct political, ideological and organizational line based on the realities of the U.S.

The developing communist movement correctly brought out some basic truths that the old party had abandoned or had never truly grasped: the anti-revisionist movement pointed out the use of violence by the bourgeoisie and the need ultimately to overthrow the ruling class in the U.S. through the use of armed force. The new movement pointed out the class nature of the state as an instrument of bourgeois rule, challenging the illusions and deceptions which the old party, liberals and pacifists had fostered for years.

The new Marxist-Leninist movement also stressed the importance of the movements of the oppressed nationalities. Many strived to understand what it meant that the end of the rule of monopoly capital would come about through the merger of the movements of the working class and those of Black and other oppressed peoples. The new communist movement promoted inter-nationalism, and understood that the revolution in the U.S. was intimately connected to the anti-colonial, anti-imperialist and national democratic revolutions taking place primarily in the third world. And the new communist movement emphasized the organization of the masses in the fac-

tories, communities and schools — again breaking from the CPUSA's style of minimizing basic mass work.

These and other lessons were unevenly understood in the new communist movement, but generally speaking these, among other aspects, set apart the anti-revisionist movement from the revisionist communist party. These are vital legacies of the early anti-revisionist movement that should be remembered, not belittled as trivial, immature or even incorrect. These were the beginnings of a correct line on the U.S. socialist revolution.

Over these past ten years, the main aspect of party building has been the further development of political line and program. In this process, the anti-revisionist movement has had to engage in a number of internal struggles to develop this political line. Through each of these struggles, with the Progressive Labor Party (PLP), Revolutionary Union (RU), Communist League (CL), Workers Viewpoint Organization (WVO), the "Revolutionary Wing" and others, the communist movement developed an increasingly more correct and sophisticated political line and defeated, to various degrees, different opportunist forces.

These struggles were vital for the very existence of the communist movement, since these opportunist forces often tried to physically and politically destroy genuine communist organizations.

In addition, over the last ten years much good political work was accomplished. Many young communists integrated with the masses of people, and in some sectors, especially in the national movements, are playing leading roles today. The strength of communists within some of the national movements today is far greater than any other "left" force, including the CPUSA. In the trade unions, communists have also begun to gain footholds in some industries and unions and led some struggles, although the influence in the working class movement is still very weak.

Communists too have begun to make inroads in the student movement and other social movements.

Over the last ten years, serious attempts were also made at developing communist organization and propaganda. These were not simple tasks, as the communist movement had to develop these from a position of almost complete ignorance in the early 1970's.

So in our opinion, we believe the past ten years of the communist movement have been generally positive.

Communism has emerged as an organized force in the U.S — it has become an important influence in sectors of the mass movement and has begun to unite socialism with the working class movement. Relatively developed political lines have been formulated and tested to some degrees, and have led to some important advances in the mass movement.

At the same time, we regret that over these past ten years there have also been a number of negative features that have plagued the communist movement and caused setbacks. There were various forms of right and "left" opportunism that consolidated in several of the anti-revisionist groups, taking them into neo-Trotskyism or liquidationism. Right and "left" deviations also marked other communist forces. There were "left" deviations such as dogmatic book-worship, left-sectarianism and belittling mass work. There were right errors that included belittling party building, the ideological tasks of communists in this period and the need to build up the independent strength of communists among the masses; economism; liquidation of the national question and tendencies towards reformism. While "left" opportunism is a serious problem, on the whole, right opportunism is a greater danger from a long-term point of view.

These errors damaged the ability of communists to make further gains in the mass movement and efforts to unite genuine Marxist-Leninists. Some comrades became demoralized from these problems.

The main sources of these deviations we believe are several:

For one, there was the immaturity of the communist movement itself. Many mistakes and deviations were a result of inexperience and the inevitable product of gaining knowledge through trial and error. There was dogmatism as well as empiricism, both of which stemmed from incorrect, partial or immature understandings and applications of Marxism-Leninism.

Another source of errors was the middle class basis of much of the communist movement. Many comrades came from student and professional backgrounds and were imbued with petty



bourgeois views, even though they had committed themselves to communism. Remnants of these petty bourgeois tendencies encouraged liberalism, individualism, conceit, self-glorification and non-struggle.

And there was also the historical condition of trying to make revolution in the homeland of a superpower during a decade of relative stability. This contributed to some comrades making errors of impatience and desperate fanaticism, having illusions about the bourgeois state, as well as committing errors of national chauvinism.

Today as a result of uneven development in the communist movement in the U.S., differences in experiences as well as in political lines, the communist movement is in considerable flux. The future holds different possibilities depending upon the decisions communists are making today. There is the possibility of raising our collective experiences to a higher level, and through struggle developing a relatively more sophisticated and correct political line to achieve Marxist-Leninist unity; or there is the possibility of vagueness, liquidationism and the disintegration of a significant part of the communist movement.

While the League has not been immune to the problems described above, on the whole we believe that we are a stable and steadily growing force in the mass movement. In part this is due to the fact that the majority of the membership of the League is from the oppressed nationalities and working class. We believe our political line, while needing to be much further developed, has guided our work in a generally correct direction and has achieved some successes in different areas.

On the other hand, there are other sectors of the communist movement which are in crisis. It is possible that the problems described previously have taken their toll more drastically on these forces. There is a definite and dangerous current of liberalism in ideology, liquidationism and localism in organization, and reformism and economism in politics, that exists in the communist movement today. If allowed to triumph, this current will mean the end of major sections of the anti-revisionist movement.

In light of this situation, we would like to put out what we believe to be the main tasks of communists in this period.

## **Tasks of Marxist-Leninists Today**

The definition of tasks of Marxist-Leninists flows from an assessment of the period of our movement, the objective situation and the history of the anti-revisionist movement, all of which we have outlined above. We draw the following conclusions about our tasks:

1. The working class movement in the United States is still without a genuine communist party. While there have been attempts to forge this party over this past decade, no such party exists today. It is, therefore, the central task of every Marxist-Leninist to build such a party.

2. The party must be a Leninist one, one that will be militant, disciplined and able to carry out its tasks as the twists and turns of the revolution demand. No other party will be able to survive the struggle in the U.S. and fulfill the responsibilities of the socialist revolution. The party must have within its ranks leading fighters from the masses, primarily from the multinational working class. It must be a serious organization that actual leaders from the mass movement will join.

While encouraging democratic discussion within the party, there must be fundamental ideological unity and strict adherence to line and policy. Recently in the U.S., some comrades have called for a retreat from these principles. But this would be a serious error — there is no way the revolution in the U.S. will be made without a steeled Leninist party.

As such, a party is a voluntary association; its discipline is derived from its ideological solidarity. This is why communists must pay attention to ideological and political line as the foundation for organizational line.

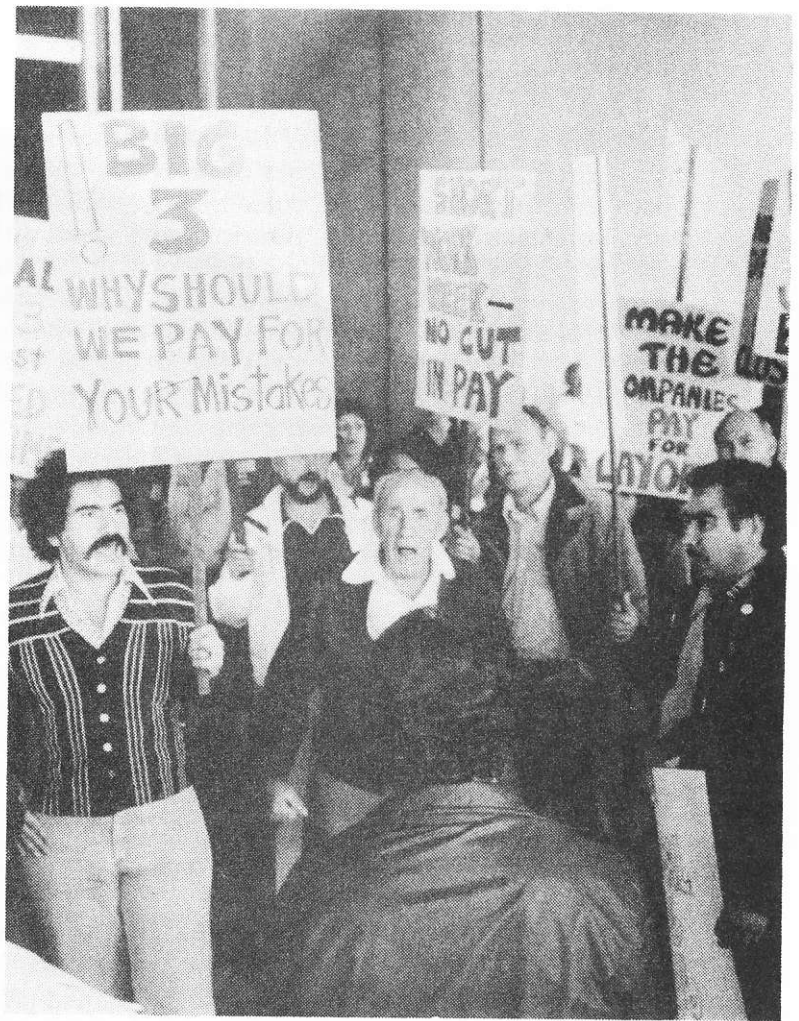
3. By party building as the central task in this period, we mean that the forging of such a party must be our chief goal for this period. It means that we must give particular attention to the development of the line around which advanced workers and communists can be united.

Party building as the central task means that the nature of our mass work, propaganda, theoretical work and all the other tasks of communists must be influenced by our efforts to forge a party. In practice, this means that we should give special attention to the investigation of conditions, the development of line, and forging unity with other Marxist-Leninists. It is especially important to give close attention to working with the advanced elements from the mass movement and winning them to communism.

We must realize that we are still in the embryonic period of the revolution — the period when it is unavoidable that we give major attention to increasing the strength of communists by integrating deeply with the mass movements and winning over the advanced forces, demarcating genuine Marxism-Leninism from opportunist trends, and forging a disciplined organization. Without such attention, communism cannot become established and develop as a distinct force. If we are not successful now, we will be unable to advance to the next stage of our revolution, where we will actually be a decisive force in the mass movement and shift our main attention to leading the mass movement to seize power. Of course there is no brick wall between these periods of the revolution, and both party building and leading the mass movement must be done throughout the entire revolutionary process, but a distinction in emphasis must be made in order to be absolutely clear as to how we will be able to advance from a relatively small and weak force to a powerful one.

Party building requires that we pay special attention to the development of line in order to lay the basis for the party and to unite Marxist-Leninists. We believe we are in a good position to develop this line, as we have collectively over ten years of direct experience in the revolutionary movement, with a great many lessons and practice to summarize (not like a decade ago). We have made many concrete investigations among the masses and have ties with various sectors of the population. And we have the experiences of different lines that have been put into practice over these past ten years. In the immediate period ahead we must strive to deepen and develop our analysis of U.S. conditions, including a class analysis of U.S. society, and we must more sharply and comprehensively clarify our strategy and tactics for communist work.

We are faced with the pressing task of developing a program for the U.S. revolution in order to help meet the requirements of leading the mass resistance that will increase in the coming years. The communist program must include our views on the strategic alliance of the working



*While the overall influence of Marxist-Leninists in the working class is still weak, communists have played an active role in various plants and unions. At the 1980 United Auto Workers national convention in 1980, Marxist-Leninists, militant trade unionists and other progressive forces held a demonstration to oppose plant shutdowns.*

*(UNITY photo)*

class and oppressed nationality movements, the immediate and long-range goals of the socialist movement, and the basic features of the future socialist society in the U.S. In the past there have been some weaknesses in the communist movement of viewing a program as an overly generalized statement of theoretical principles and views without sufficient attention to clarifying the specific features of the revolution in the U.S. and a future socialist system in the U.S. There have also been weaknesses in understanding the importance of clarifying an immediate or minimum part of the communist program and linking it to the maximum program. We must devote special attention to developing a program that articulates our long-range aims and visions, the strategic path to revolution, and also an immediate program of struggle for the masses to fight for their economic livelihood, improved living conditions and political rights.

4. The task of integrating with the masses and striving to build and lead their struggles is fundamental throughout every period of the revolutionary struggle. Communists stand for the interests of the working class at all times and must help advance the struggle to improve the lives of the masses and oppose the bourgeoisie. The revolution itself can only be waged by mobilizing the masses and relying on them.

In the present period, when forging a communist party is our chief goal, it is essential that party building be done in close connection with building and helping advance the mass movement. If communists do not deeply integrate themselves with the mass movements, they cannot have any real understanding of social conditions or begin to play a role in the people's struggles.

A communist party capable of leading the revolutionary struggle can only be formed in the process of mass struggle. As we build up the strength and organization of the communist forces in preparation for the future formation of this party, we must ensure that the communist forces have close ties with the masses. In the process of building and influencing the mass movements, communists will win gradually more respect and support through the correctness of their views and example of their practice.

It is essential that communists actively build and influence the mass movements if they are to understand the actual conditions of the people and objective conditions in the society as a whole. It is essential to have close ties with the masses and participate in and strive to lead their struggles in order to develop line and test lines that have been formulated. Only on the basis of extensive practice can different opinions and lines be fully evaluated.

In the course of active participation in the mass movements, communists must reach out to the advanced elements among the people and win them over to communism. The ability of communists to root ourselves among the advanced is crucial if communism is ever to become a leading force in the mass movement. As increasing numbers of the advanced elements are won to communism, this strengthens our ability to give leadership to the mass movement and unite with the broader sectors of the people in the struggle. The advanced elements are the critical link in uniting the socialist movement with the mass movement.

5. With regard to the particular mass work communists should engage in at this time, we believe we must proceed from a realistic appraisal of our own forces and the objective state of the mass movement.

Marxist-Leninists are relatively few in number today, and thus we must carefully make maximum use of our forces to build up our strength as rapidly and soundly as possible, expand our ranks and affect the mass movement in the most effective ways. We should assess where the mass movement is the most active, which sectors of the working class would be most open to class struggle and communism, and where it would be most feasible to place our forces at this time.

In our view, communists must focus our attention on the relatively lower-paid, less skilled and more oppressed sectors of the working class in this period and on the struggles of the oppressed nationalities. These sectors of the working class include unskilled production workers in basic industry; workers in the lower stratum of industry and manufacturing, especially in the unorganized South and Southwest; and workers in the lowest-paying, labor-intensive industries like sweatshop production and farm labor. These sectors have been less affected by the privileges of imperialism, are less connected to the labor bureaucrats, and in general face more difficult living and working conditions — factors that make them more inclined to struggle.



At the same time, communists must realize that the national movements are still the relatively more active and conscious sector of the mass movement today. It is important to note that a large proportion of the lower-paid and less privileged sectors of the working class are oppressed nationality workers.

It is among the less privileged and most oppressed sectors of the working class and the oppressed nationality movements that we find more advanced elements, a relatively higher level of discontent and more openness to struggle. The activity among these sectors of the population has a major effect upon all other sectors, as they often set the tone and level of struggle for the rest of the masses.

Focusing our attention on these sectors does not mean we neglect work among the higher paid and skilled workers, the middle class, among intellectuals or others. Work in these areas must develop, since as communists we must have a long-term view of how we can develop our influence, but we should not underestimate the need to carefully define the *emphasis* of our mass work in this period.

Communists must have a patient, down-to-earth, militant style of work that avoids wild, unrealistic ambitions, desiring to quickly seize the leadership of the mass movement. We must also avoid the tendency to simply merge with the immediate struggles of the masses, tailing the coattails of the reformists, and forget our strategic objectives and the task of developing our own independence and initiative among the masses.

With regard to tactics, in the conduct of mass work, it is important for communists to become skillful in utilizing a variety of methods and forms of political struggle. Communists must learn to combine different methods and emphasize one or another in the appropriate circumstances. In the present period, for example, conditions exist for mobilizing and organizing direct, mass political actions in many instances, and the possibilities should be evaluated concretely.

It is also possible for communists to utilize other forms or arenas of political struggle such as bourgeois elections, running communists as independent candidates and forming electoral coalitions with other progressive forces. Electoral work can be useful in helping to advance the struggle for the immediate demands of the masses and building a united front with progressive strata. The electoral arena can also be useful in gaining access to broad sectors of the population and exposing the bankruptcy of the present bourgeois system and the need for a real political alternative.

6. Organizationally, communists in this period must strive to build organizations on the basis of democratic centralism. Organization is a reflection of political and ideological line, and in turn affects politics and ideology.

The development of political line and program and building our mass work must go hand in hand with the development of communist organization to implement the line and direct the forces of communism. Without a correctly functioning democratic centralist organization, it is not possible to systematically practice the mass line and scientifically develop, test and evaluate lines and policies.

By democratic centralism, we mean there must be centralized leadership on the basis of democratic elections and accountability to the membership. There must be promotion of lively discussion, debate, consultation and summarization of varied experiences and opinions, and there must be strict adherence to decisions, policies and lines. Communist organization must be disciplined, militant and unified in action.

Communist organization must combine collective decision-making with individual responsibility. It must avoid individualism in the forms of commandism, anarchism or disregard for the collective will.

Communists in the U.S. must strive to construct a party that will be the decisive organizational weapon of the proletariat — one that will be serious (advanced workers and activists from the mass movement do not want a debating society or a group where everyone does their “own thing”), and effective (while there must be ease of mind, in a communist organization the individual must accept his subordination to the organization and line).

In the U.S., due to the middle class basis of much of the present communist movement, the extreme individualism and liberalism fostered by bourgeois society, close attention must be placed to the problems of self-glorification, careerism, adverseness to discipline, suspicion of leadership and collectivity, factionalism and sectarianism. Communists must aspire to be self-sacrificing, hard-working, self-critical, modest and assertive. Ideological work must constantly be done to oppose the plagues of bourgeois society and promote the proletarian qualities communists must develop if they are to best serve the revolution.

7. And finally, when we are speaking of the tasks of Marxist-Leninists in this period, we should not separate our immediate work from our views of our long-term and strategic tasks. Our understanding of the goals of our movement decisively affects the nature of our work today.

In the League's view, our strategic task is the overthrow of the monopoly capitalist class, replaced with the rule of the working class for the construction of socialism. Socialism will achieve the emancipation of the working class from wage slavery and the liberation of the oppressed nationalities from national oppression.

The united front against U.S. monopoly capital is our basic strategy for socialist revolution, uniting all who can be united against the common enemy. The core of this united front led by the working class is the strategic alliance of the movements of the working class and oppressed nationalities. These two great revolutionary forces will one day unite in common cause to overthrow the criminal rule of U.S. imperialism.

Important allies in the struggle will be the international forces opposed to imperialism, for the overthrow of U.S. monopoly must include a series of uprisings and revolution in the U.S. empire.

Our understanding of the revolution in the U.S. is that it will be a most violent one. The study of history and the present reality of U.S. capitalism shows that it is one of the most violent and vicious bourgeois democracies in the world. The motion towards dropping democratic liberties is being witnessed even today.

Marxist-Leninists in the U.S. must begin to prepare for the more repressive rule of the bourgeoisie.

And finally, while we cannot know for sure how the seizure of power will come about, we do have some preliminary beliefs based upon historical experience and the study of conditions today. The bourgeoisie in the U.S. will most probably have to be weakened by a combination of uprisings in the imperialist empire, war and domestic struggle. Even with these factors, the proletariat and revolutionary people in the U.S. will have to take the path of armed struggle at the correct moment, that is, some form of urban worker uprising together with the insurrection of the oppressed peoples and nations in the country. It is even possible that the revolution will be sparked by a national uprising within the U.S.

These, then, are what we hold to be the basic features of our future revolution. Other conceptions of the revolution, such as peaceful transition to socialism based upon legislation, the "mass strike" or terrorism, will never be successful, and they ignore the reality of U.S. monopoly capitalist society in its international and domestic features.

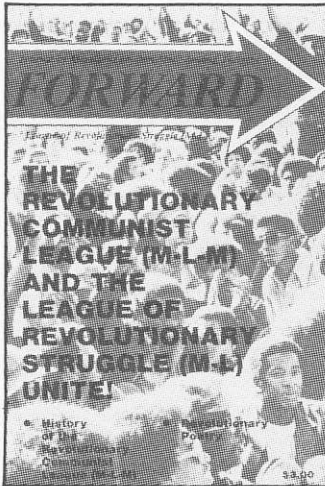
## **Conclusion**

This essay has presented our basic views on the period of the U.S. revolution and the tasks of communists today. By necessity, we have raised a number of questions of principle and strategy, for our immediate work must be governed by our long-term considerations and fundamental stands.

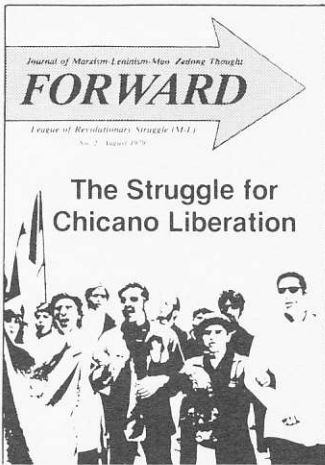
We hope we have presented our views clearly and that this helps in distinguishing our opinions from others. Our intention is not to unnecessarily deepen divisions, but to clarify the very real differences that exist in our movement, and upon this understanding, begin to advance and forge principled unity. At this point in time, the most pressing need of the entire communist movement is the precise presentation of and discussion on line.

We look forward to responses to this and forthcoming essays.

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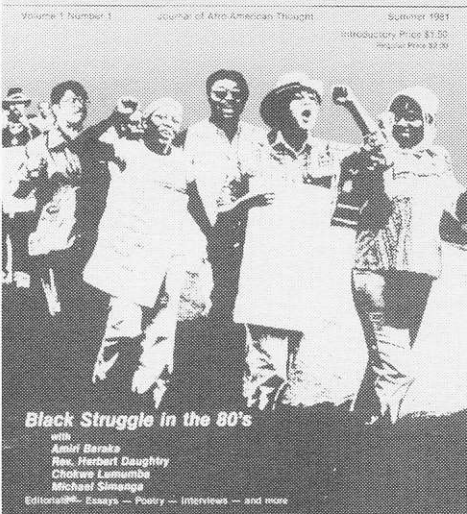
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