

# **REVOLUTIONARY WORK IN A NON-REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION**

**Report of the Second Plenary  
Session of the First  
Central Committee of the  
Revolutionary Communist  
Party, USA (1976)**

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## INTRODUCTION

The 1976 Report of the Central Committee of the RCP, *Revolutionary Work in a Non-Revolutionary Situation*, takes on great significance in light of recent two-line struggle within the Party against the revisionist headquarters headed up by Mickey Jarvis and Leibel Bergman.

This Second Plenary Session of the First CC was the first major encounter between the two lines within the RCP which became increasingly concentrated into two headquarters within leading bodies of the Party—the majority of the Central Committee headed by its Chairman, Comrade Bob Avakian, and the factional apparatus of Jarvis and Bergman.

The '76 CC meeting took place approximately one year after the Founding Congress of the RCP. In the period since the formation of the Party, a strong right wing, economist trend had developed in the Party—in part growing out of spontaneous tendencies within the working class movement, including in the ranks of the Party, and increasingly promoted by the Jarvis-Bergman headquarters.

The proletarian leadership of the Party had recognized the developing right wing tendency and taken some prompt steps to correct it. The article "The Day to Day Struggle and the Revolutionary Goal" and the two articles specifically dealing with the mass line, appearing in *Revolution* in the May '76, December '75 and March '76 issues respectively (and republished in the pamphlet *The Mass Line*), were all efforts in this direction.

Much of the focus of the '76 CC Report is directed at the errors connected with the formulation of "center of gravity of the Party's work" which was adopted at the Founding Congress as a description of the Party's policy, also adopted at that time, of concentrating its work in the economic struggles of the workers.

From the beginning, the "center of gravity" formulation fed the spontaneous tendency to *reduce* the class struggle to the day-to-day economic struggles and to lose sight of the goal of revolution, socialism and communism. It made a special stage out of waging the economic struggle and set this struggle up as the standard for evaluating all other actions and events—i.e. in terms of how they affected the economic struggle, instead of how all the Party's work contributed to, and how every battle should be built toward the goal of socialist revolution. It was coupled with and reinforced a tendency to downplay the political and theoretical aspects of the

class struggle, to liquidate work among the oppressed nationalities and other sections of the people and negate the Party's strategy for revolution—building a revolutionary united front against imperialism under proletarian leadership.

While the formulation "center of gravity" itself promoted these wrong tendencies, by far the most serious danger to the Party was the way in which the developing revisionist headquarters seized upon this formulation and tried to turn it into, in Lenin's words, "a special slogan" with which to push their all-round revisionist line. It was exactly against this tendency, most especially developed in the burgeoning revisionist headquarters, that the '76 CC Report was directed.

Later, with the full flowering of the two-line struggle, the formulation "center of gravity" and the policy of concentrating the work of the Party in the economic struggle was itself criticized and repudiated at the Second Congress in early 1978. This Congress also noted that the Party must continue to devote particular attention today to uniting with, building and providing political leadership to the economic struggles as an important part of developing the workers' movement into the class conscious struggle against the capitalist class. But it also stressed that this did not mean that the agitation carried out by the Party should be exclusively or even mainly centered on the economic struggle.

Since the '76 CC Report was directed in opposition to the developing right wing line, it is not surprising that it met with stubborn resistance from the developing revisionist headquarters before, during and after this Central Committee meeting. The first section of the Report "(Some Points and Questions on) Revolutionary Work in a Non-Revolutionary Situation" was drafted by Comrade Avakian and, after discussion on standing bodies of the CC, was distributed to all members of the CC prior to the plenary meeting. Those who held allegiance to M. Jarvis in particular organized in opposition to the line of "Some Points" and frantically tried to win others to their point of view in the days before the CC meeting was officially convened.

Jarvis and Bergman and a few other revisionist leaders themselves tried to bide their time and let those under them spearhead the opposition to the Report. Once the Plenary was officially convened, and Comrade Avakian delivered an opening speech, "Further Remarks on Revolutionary Work in a Non-Revolutionary Situation," the Jarvis-Bergman forces signalled a hasty retreat and gave up their efforts to openly oppose the CC Report and chose instead to put up a fight around several particulars that were discussed in the course of the Plenary—the decision to launch a campaign to form a national workers organization,

the question of the role of the communist youth organization of the Party and some questions regarding organizing the unorganized into unions. In addition, initial skirmishes took place around the nature and role of *The Worker* newspapers and some other questions. The outcome of this struggle was that they were dealt a defeat; thus the section of the Report reporting on specific decisions of the CC also represented a significant blow to the Jarvis-Bergman forces at the CC. In Comrade Avakian's "Concluding Remarks" at the close of the Second Plenary Session, he summed up the main points of the meeting and indicated the deeper unity achieved by the revolutionary majority of the Central Committee around the Party's correct line. The "Concluding Remarks" objectively concentrated the defeats dealt to the revisionist clique even though these opportunists were hiding their opposition and the final remarks were not made as a direct polemic against them.

Following the CC meeting, the Jarvis-Bergman headquarters sought to obstruct discussion and implementation of the CC Report everywhere they had any influence. To some, they slandered the Report as "left idealist." To others, they promoted the fallacy that there were "two lines" in the Report. More broadly, they used the method of seizing on particular aspects of the Report, divorcing them from the revolutionary context, and trying to raise them above or even use them to attack the overall revolutionary direction laid out for the Party's work in the Report.

The way in which the Menshevik headquarters tried to misuse the correct formulations in the Report of "small forces leading big battles" and that "quality exists within quantity" were both examples of this. They sought to focus all attention on these points, so as to direct attention away from and in fact combat the main point of the report—the need to orient all our work in today's non-revolutionary situation to ideologically, politically and organizationally prepare our ranks and the masses through the course of today's struggles so that when conditions undergo a qualitative change, the development of a revolutionary situation, the Party will be able to lead the working class and masses in toppling the rule of capital, establish the rule of the working class and embark on the road of building socialism toward the ultimate aim of communism. Now that the revisionists have split from the Party and are completely free of the constraints of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought they are openly taking snipes at the whole Report.

The 1976 CC Report remains a document of enduring value—not only to understanding the roots of the two line struggle within the RCP against the revisionist headquarters, but more importantly, as a further elaboration and deepening of the Party's correct line

as established at its Founding Congress. Its analysis of the present situation—the “downward spiral” of the world capitalist system, the tasks of the Party in maximizing the political gains that can be made in today’s circumstances and, above all, the orientation laid out of keeping to the “high road” of revolutionary struggle (indeed, the Report became known informally in the Party as the “High Road Report”) and rejecting the revisionist rut of building the struggle of today with no relation to the revolutionary goal—remain key points of study for those seeking to make revolution in the U.S.

The '76 CC Report reaffirmed the following principle, which has been upheld by our Party since its formation:

“Even in ordinary times, when it is leading the masses in the day-to-day struggle, the proletarian party should ideologically, politically and organizationally prepare its own ranks and the masses for revolution and promote revolutionary struggles, so that it will not miss the opportunity to overthrow the reactionary regime and establish a new state power when the conditions for revolution are ripe. Otherwise, when the objective conditions are ripe, the proletarian party will simply throw away the opportunity of seizing victory.” (from the Chinese Communist Party’s “Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement,” Foreign Languages Press, 1963)

Portions of the '76 Report were excerpted and slightly edited for publication in *Revolution* in the June and July 1977 issues. At this time we are making available not only what already appeared in *Revolution* but the entire Report with some minor editing and footnotes added.

*Chicago, June 1978*

## (SOME POINTS AND QUESTIONS ON) REVOLUTIONARY WORK IN A NON-REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION

(1) The objective situation sets the *stage* on which the Party plays its role. There is a dialectical relationship, however, between objective and subjective conditions. What is objective for the Party—for example, the mood of the masses—is *subjective* for those same masses (another way of applying what Mao says in *On Contradiction*, “what is universal in one context becomes particular in another,” and vice versa). Due to this same fact—the dialectical relationship between objective and subjective—there is an interpenetration between them, they react upon each other and therefore the objective situation *can be changed* by the action of the conscious forces *on the basis of grasping not only the general laws of development, but also the particularity of the conditions (contradictions)* that you are immediately confronted with (in this process the subjective changes, too). Hence Lenin’s statement that the “living soul of Marxism is the concrete analysis of concrete conditions.”

It is in this light that the statement by Mao in *Oppose Book Worship* has to be understood, “Communists should create favorable new situations through struggle.” They cannot create these favorable new conditions out of thin air—or out of the mere subjective desire to see more favorable conditions, or the will to create them—but by concretely analyzing the objective conditions, the immediate contradictions that have to be moved on to push everything forward, and *on that basis* developing lines and policies to advance. In the same article Mao stresses that, “Without Investigating the Actual Situation, There is Bound to Be an Idealist Appraisal of Class Forces and an Idealist Guidance in Work, Resulting Either in Opportunism or in Putschism.” As opposed to this, he puts forward in this same article the method of making a “correct appraisal of class forces, and then to formulate the correct tactics for the struggle.”

The point, then, of analyzing the objective conditions, of making a concrete analysis of concrete conditions, is to be able to determine how to change those conditions in accordance with the laws of development of society (and nature) and the revolutionary interests of the working class—which in turn are determined by and in accordance with these same laws of development.

(2) What are the objective conditions we face today? The

*MPR*\* makes an important analysis:

“The present crisis is a world-wide crisis of the imperialist system and the first such crisis since the first world economic crisis of the '30s and the war and redivision of the world among the imperialists that followed it. The conditions of the crisis in each capitalist country react upon each other due to the interdependence of the whole imperialist system. This crisis will continue to deepen—although it develops unevenly in different countries—both within the U.S. and within the imperialist system as a whole. The options and maneuvering room of the U.S. imperialists are lessening and will continue to do so, despite ups and downs in the situation. . . U.S. imperialism, together with the whole imperialist system, world-wide, is enmeshed in a deepening crisis—a real crisis and not simply a ‘downturn in the business cycle.’ And the direction is *down*, despite whatever temporary and partial ‘ups’ there may be within this.” (pp. 9-10)

The *MPR* analyzes this in some of its main features, in particular the falling rate of profit, the contradiction between government spending (and borrowing) and the accumulation (and productive investment) of private capital. *Business Week*, in a special issue (Sept. 22, 1975), confirms and even expands on these same points (while part of the purpose of this bourgeois magazine is to influence government policies in certain clear directions—tax cuts for the corporations, especially in regard to investment in new plants and equipment, big slashes in federal and other government spending, attacks on wages and benefits of government workers and the working class in general—this special issue does reveal real contradictions, and hint at the depth of them, for the bourgeoisie.)

A big contradiction pointed to in this *BW* special: agriculture has been one of the strong points of the declining U.S. economy and a basis of strength—and blackmail—for the U.S. imperialists worldwide. But, according to *BW*, agriculture, even big agribusiness, is heavily dependent on “external” sources of money for new investment (loan capital) and the “fastest-growing supplier of capital to agriculture today” is the government. But to supply this money to agricultural enterprises, the government has to borrow a lot itself and “there are limits to how much borrowing federal agencies can do without shoving other borrowers out of the market.” In other words, the same contradiction between different sectors of the economy “starved” for capital, the same anarchy—and the tug and pull on the bourgeois government—charac-

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\*Main Political Report to the Party's Founding Congress



teristic of capitalism.

This competition and anarchy is and will continue to be all the more sharply felt in the period ahead, according to the principle Marx noted:

“So long as things go well, competition effects an operating fraternity of the capitalist class . . . so that each shares in the common loot in proportion to the size of its respective investment. But as soon as it no longer is a question of sharing profits, but of sharing losses, everyone tries to reduce his own share to a minimum and to shove it off upon another . . . The antagonism between each individual capitalist's interests and those of the capitalist class as a whole then comes to the surface, just as previously the identity of these interests operated in practice through competition.” (*Capital*, Vol. III, p. 253)

This is the economic basis for the ever fiercer in-fighting and “dirty politics” of the bourgeoisie and its political representatives.

We need to make a much more thorough, deep-going and all-sided analysis of the development of the crisis, of the actual conditions and features of the crisis of U.S. imperialism—as well as the imperialist system internationally—and we have made some headway (through a team assigned to carry this out) in this area. (This investigation will be completed, systematized and prepared in book form within the next year\* and will be an important contribution to the revolutionary movement, both here and internationally.)

But the analysis we have made, based on what we do know, is fundamentally correct and is being borne out by developments in the real world. So, what does it mean that this is a major crisis, not just a “cyclical downturn” and that it will continue to deepen, despite temporary and partial “ups” within this? It means that, as opposed to earlier times in the post WW 2 period, when the U.S. economy was hit by recessions, things have entered into a specific *downward spiral (not a straight line down)* which will only give way to another spiral through a major change in the relation of forces in the world—redivision of the world, through war, among the imperialists, revolution, or—most likely—both, on a world scale.

This fact, of the depth and severity of the crisis, is revealed in new features that the imperialists themselves are forced to comment on, for example the combination of inflation and “recession” and is reflected in the mood of the masses. It can be gauged,

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\*Due to the interference and sabotage of the revisionist clique then within the Party, the work on this was delayed and this book will not be published until next year—1979.

especially in the thinking of older workers who have been through previous post WW 2 "recessions" and do not look at the present crisis in the same way at all, but—especially those who also lived through the '30s depression—see things more heading in that direction. This feeling is fairly widespread, and many comrades have commented on this. But,

(3) We need to understand much more deeply the actual mood of the masses, how they see things, what kind of changes they think are necessary, how they think changes will be made, how they see their own role in this, etc. As stressed before, for the Party this, too, is a part of the objective conditions—and we must analyze them with the science of Marxism, through investigation, heart-to-heart talks, and the application of the mass line, in order to determine the correct policies and tactics to move things forward, to take the next necessary steps along the road to proletarian revolution. Objectively the working class and the masses of people need to make revolution, but it is clear that at this point, subjectively—in their own thinking—this is not a felt need, not something that, as weighted against the alternatives the bourgeoisie is promoting, the masses are ready to make the necessary sacrifices for. This, in turn, is related to the objective situation they are in, which includes, as a significant factor, the remaining reserves of U.S. imperialism, despite its decline. This stresses the need to keep firmly in mind the principle Mao sets down:

“All work done for the masses must start from their needs and not from the desire of any individual, however well intentioned. It often happens that objectively the masses need a certain change, but subjectively they are not yet conscious of the need, not yet willing or determined to make the change. In such cases we should wait patiently. We should not make the change until through our work most of the masses have become conscious of the need and are willing and determined to carry it out.” (*Selected Works*, “The United Front in Cultural Work,” Vol. 3, p. 186)

This is a difficult period—for the masses, and for the Party. It is not a period like the '60s and early '70s, a period of high tide of struggle, mainly based among non-proletarian forces and mainly based on expectations of some vague notion of “radical change”(sometimes even posed as “liberation” or “revolution”) which ultimately would leave the foundations of imperialism unaltered and which therefore proved in the end illusory. This is

not to negate the real advances made in that period. Without that development, things would not be where they are now—for example our Party has its roots in that period, though it represents a qualitative leap beyond it. And where things are now is an advance, because it is the spiral that will lead to a major change in the relation of forces and will lead to the real prospect of proletarian revolution in this country as well as others.

But it is the *beginning* of this new spiral—and so the fact that it is an advance is not always immediately so evident. It is a period marked by struggle, including growing working class resistance, especially to attacks on living standards, but of scattered struggles, and of a great deal of confusion. To take stock of this is not to say “not much can be done, wait until conditions are more favorable,” but to lay the basis for determining how to make conditions more favorable, in the way discussed before, in accordance with actual conditions and the actual laws of development.

(4) There was more than a little idealism coming off the founding of the Party. This has generally taken the form of thinking, “Well, now that we have the Party, with the correct proletarian line, and we have put all that petty bourgeois baggage of the old period behind us, we can unite with the struggles of the masses of workers, quickly win leadership in these struggles and move forward in a straight line.”

By and large this idealism has been expressed in the openly rightist view that the “Center of Gravity” is everything, that it is enough to wage the economic struggle and to conduct this economic struggle in an economist way, not linking it with other struggles throughout society against the ruling class and with the long-range goal of proletarian revolution. In effect the “Center of Gravity” was substituted for the Central Task of the Party and became in effect, the *strategy* of the Party. It is, according to this view, the day to day (economic) struggle that will build the consciousness and unity of the working class and other questions and battles in society are seen as *diversions* from building this consciousness and unity. This is not to say that this has been a *worked out line* in opposition to the correct line of the Party, but it has been a significant idealist tendency.

This idealism has run smack up against the material world. While, overall, advances—including some very important ones—have been made by the Party in concentrating its forces in the key industries and major struggles of the workers, this idealist view and its rightist essence (and generally its openly rightist form) have run counter to these advances and could, if not checked, turn these advances into their opposite. While generally the morale of

Party members is high, based on grasping and applying the Party's correct line, this idealism has led to some demoralization—and will lead to still more, unless we get down on it and begin to root it out.

Sometimes this idealism has expressed itself in a "left" form, even to the point of the idea that the workers are ready to make revolution, but the Party, with its petty bourgeois influences is holding them back—sometimes it is said, the Party is the only thing holding them back. This tendency is definitely rightist in essence and is linked with the erroneous view that the economic struggles of the workers are "potentially revolutionary" in and of themselves. This tendency completely misunderstands the section on Orientation in the *MPR* as well as the role of the Party in relation to the rest of the class, degrading the role of theory and liquidating in fact the vanguard role of the Party. In line with this has been the tendency to think that "we would have the working class all to ourselves"—that the opportunists would somehow "stay away" from the workers' struggles, or be immediately rejected by the workers as alien to them—and along with this the tendency to downgrade the importance of polemics.

These tendencies, whether "left" or right in form, are not only rightist in essence but, once again, are based in idealism. They are based on a refusal to take the world—including the level of struggle, consciousness and unity of the working class—as it is—and *on that basis* develop the lines and policies to *change* it, in accordance with the laws governing its development.

It is necessary to say it again: due to the objective situation the masses face, they are not in a revolutionary mood—though there is widespread and deepening discontent and increasing lack of faith in the rulers of the country and their institutions. We must start from the actual conditions and break through the actual contradictions to advance toward the revolutionary goal, not in isolation from, but together with ever greater sections of the working class, ever broader ranks of the masses.

(5) On the other hand, the development of the situation must not be viewed simply in *quantitative* terms—a series of small changes, added together over time, will somehow lead to a revolutionary situation and a revolutionary mood among the masses. At a certain point, there must be and will be a *qualitative leap*, in the objective situation, in the mood, and—if we do our work right—in the consciousness of the masses. Lenin wrote, at the early stages of WW 1, "A sudden change in the mood of the masses is not only possible, but is becoming more and more probable." Why? Because, in that case, "the objective war-created revolutionary situation, which is extending and developing, is inevitably

engendering revolutionary sentiments.

In that case, the qualitative leap in the objective situation was the inter-imperialist war and the increasing hardships it placed on the masses of people. We cannot say now what will cause a similar qualitative leap in the development of our situation, whether a "crash" and major depression like the '30s, the outbreak of WW 3 or a combination of severe economic crisis and war—a war which, over time at least, would add to the strains and hardships on the masses. Nor can we say when this will happen. But we do know just as surely as there is not now a revolutionary situation, one will just as certainly develop in the future. Lenin summed this up too, "The same holds true for the working-class struggle against the bourgeoisie. Today there is no revolutionary situation, the conditions that cause unrest among the masses or heighten their activities do not exist," but tomorrow—in the figurative sense, of course—such conditions will develop, because of the basic contradiction of capitalism and its very nature, especially in the stage of imperialism.

And, as Lenin vividly pointed out, the development of the objective situation, the emergence of the objective conditions for revolution, the sudden deepening of a crisis and all the strains it puts on bourgeois society, make the contradictions of that society stick out all the more sharply and call into question the right and ability of the bourgeoisie to rule. As Lenin expressed it, "the masses, who uncomplainingly allow themselves to be robbed in 'peace time' . . . in turbulent times are drawn by all the circumstances of the crisis *and by the upper classes themselves* into independent historical action." (from "The Collapse of the Second International," *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 214, emphasis Lenin's; earlier quotes from Lenin are from the same article, p. 258, 257, 253).

(6) We do not now have such a revolutionary situation. In the situation we do face, we must deepen our understanding of how to carry out the principle set down by the Chinese in the polemic on the General Line (and quoted in the *MPR*):

"Even in ordinary times [non-revolutionary situations] when it is leading the masses in the day to day struggle, the proletarian party should ideologically, politically and organizationally prepare its own ranks and the masses for revolution and promote revolutionary struggles [mass struggles that attack and expose the system] so that it will not miss the opportunity to overthrow the reactionary regime and establish a new state power when the conditions for revolution are ripe. Otherwise, when the conditions for revolution are ripe, the proletarian party will simply throw

away the opportunity of seizing victory.”

In this light, the policy of making every possible connection with mass struggle against the enemy and making every effort to fulfill the three objectives\* in these struggles is crucial. And we have to pay special attention, within this, to training our own ranks, and advanced workers, who come forward in struggle, as class-conscious revolutionaries.

The importance of this can be grasped from what has been said previously about the development of the objective situation and the mood of the masses—including the inevitable qualitative change. Listen to what Lenin wrote, in summing up the main lessons of the 1905 revolution in Russia:

“Prior to January 22 (or January 9, old style), 1905, the revolutionary party of Russia consisted of a small group of people and the reformists of those days (exactly like the reformists of today) derisively called us a sect. Several hundred revolutionary organizers, several thousand members of local organizations, half a dozen revolutionary papers appearing not more frequently than once a month . . . such were the revolutionary parties in Russia, and the revolutionary Social-Democracy in particular, prior to January 22, 1905 . . . Within a few months, however, the picture changed completely. The hundreds of revolutionary Social-Democrats ‘suddenly’ grew into thousands; the thousands became the leaders of between two and three million proletarians. The proletarian struggle produced widespread ferment, often revolutionary movements among the peasant masses, fifty to a hundred million strong; the peasant movement had its reverberations in the army and led to soldiers’ revolts, to armed clashes between one section of the army and another. In this manner a colossal country, with a population of 130,000,000, went into the revolution; in this way, dormant Russia was transformed into a Russia of a revolutionary proletariat and a revolutionary people.”

This, of course, did not happen independently of, but in accordance with the development of the objective situation, and in particular with the immediate crisis and widespread discontent accompanying the war of Russia with Japan—and the defeat of

\*The three objectives are set forth in the *Programme* of the RCP as follows: “to win as much as can be won in the immediate battle and weaken the enemy; to raise the general level of consciousness and sense of organization of the struggling masses and instill in them the revolutionary outlook of the proletariat; and to develop the most active and advanced in these struggles into communists, recruit them into the Party and train them as revolutionary leaders.” (p. 102)

Russia in this war. But why were these conditions able to be utilized to develop a revolutionary movement, an actual uprising aimed at overthrowing the Tsar, in that case? Because the revolutionary party, the Bolsheviks, had linked itself with the struggle of the Russian masses—first of all, but not exclusively, the proletariat—and in the course of this had kept in mind the revolutionary aim and paid particular attention to raising revolutionary consciousness and training the class-conscious section of the proletariat. Lenin summed it up this way:

“The task is to keep the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat tense and train its best elements, not only in a general way, but concretely so that when the popular ferment reaches the highest pitch, they will put themselves at the head of the revolutionary army, [i.e., the masses of proletarians and their allies]. The day-to-day experience of any capitalist country teaches us the same lesson. Every ‘minor’ crisis that such a country experiences discloses to us in miniature the elements, the rudiments, of the battles that will inevitably take place on a large scale during a big crisis.” (These quotes are from “Lecture on the 1905 Revolution,” *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, pp. 238, 246—this whole article is rich in lessons and is worth studying repeatedly.)

(7) How is this different than the Trotskyites, dogmatists and others who talk about “training the advanced” and take the stance of waiting until the situation, and the masses, are developed enough for them to “step in and assume leadership?” The difference—and it is crucial—lies in the fact that we must link ourselves with every struggle, concentrating now in the day-to-day struggles of the workers around wages, conditions, etc. and *in the course of carrying out this process* strive to fulfill the three objectives and develop the class consciousness of ever broader numbers of workers and find and train revolutionaries, especially those who come to the fore as leaders of the actual struggles of the workers and masses. Lenin, in addition to what he stresses in *What is To Be Done?* and other places in combatting economism, also stresses that the Party must lead the day-to-day struggle of the workers, or it cannot act as their political vanguard. (This is an old question in our young movement, too. We had to stress the same point six years ago in the struggle against the Franklin line, a struggle that played a key role in laying the basis for the formation of the genuine working class Party—even those old polemics are not “relics” to be forgotten!) If we don’t carry out our work in this way, and “keep the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat

tense and train its best elements, not only in a general way but *concretely*" (to repeat Lenin's formulation, and emphasize "concretely" to stress "in the course of struggle"), then there is no way they will be able to "put themselves at the head of the revolutionary army" when the revolutionary situation and mass upsurge does occur.

(8) But there is another, overall much greater, danger. And that is abandoning the hard road—and the high road—of persevering in the class struggle, and making every possible link with all struggles against the enemy, striving to fulfill the three objectives and preparing our own ranks and the masses for revolution when conditions are ripe. The temptation is great to abandon it, exactly because it is hard, exactly because there is no revolutionary situation—and none clearly on the horizon, already visible at least in the outline of its features.

Without building a deeper and firmer foundation in the revolutionary science of our class, while establishing ever deeper ties in the struggles of the masses of workers, it will be impossible to keep to this hard but high road. We will then fall into "easy accommodation with imperialism" and "chase the wisp of painless progress" (to quote from the front page of *Revolution* announcing the Party's formation). We have seen this phenomenon in groups like the OL in this country and their cousins in many groupings in Europe, who have put down the banner of class struggle and taken up, in one form or another—generally in the form of "national defencism" and opposition to Soviet social-imperialism on a bourgeois basis—the banner of class collaboration.

These forces forget the fundamental difference between an imperialist country and an "underdeveloped country" or oppressed nation: they blur over the differences in the nature of the bourgeoisie in these two different kinds of countries, and along with this generally blur over the nature of imperialism and the nature of the state and throw out the fact that the nature of a country at any given time is essentially determined by the forces—class forces—that rule it and the level of development of the productive forces and the contradiction between them and the relations of production. This, and not subjective idealism, determines the actual character and tasks of the revolution and the revolutionary party in any country.

Along with this, these forces fail to recognize crucial distinctions between the development of a revolutionary situation in an imperialist country and in the countries of the Third World (again, the polemics against the Franklins which deal with this in depth still have much to do with vital questions of line today and we still have much to learn from them). Making these basic errors goes hand in



hand with saying, "well there is no revolutionary situation in these (imperialist) countries, and none is on the horizon, so let's find some other way than persevering in the class struggle to 'win the masses to our side.' " The other way is, as noted, to compete with the bourgeoisie—or even in some cases outright tail behind it—in appealing to the bourgeois (democratic) prejudices of the masses. "The masses may not be with us now, but when the Russian tanks roll across our borders, then they will rally to the 'national flag,' so let's scurry now to raise it"—this is generally how the line goes.

We must learn from this—by negative example. We must learn even more thoroughly that there is no easy road to winning the masses, that such roads are illusions—"the wisp of painless progress" that can only lead to easy accomodation with imperialism. And, on the basis of deepening our scientific understanding of this, let's deepen our determination to stick to the hard road, to the high road that will lead to revolution and the eventual emancipation of mankind!

(9) As I said before, this high road, this road of persevering in the class struggle means that we must take up and lead the day-to-day struggles of the masses of workers—or we cannot act as their vanguard Party. The analysis in the *Programme* on where the movement is at now, and based on that, the analysis in the *MPR* on the "center of gravity" is correct and must guide our work now. I have dealt with the relationship of this to the revolutionary goal in the article in the May 15 *Revolution*,\* and it is worth noting that in that article I quote Lenin who stresses the importance of participation in the daily struggle for existence of the masses of workers. But Lenin also points out that a borderline exists here between waging, and leading, the economic struggle and falling into economism, and that to avoid this error it is essential to carry out "strictly Marxist propaganda and agitation in ever closer connection with the economic struggle of the working class" and—as also stressed in that article, and by Lenin in many places—by applying this same strictly Marxist propaganda and agitation in every major struggle, of all sections of the people, against the ruling class.

Lenin, especially in *What Is To Be Done?* lays special stress on exposures—analysis of "living examples that follow close upon what is being discussed, in whispers perhaps," among the workers about key events in society. Exposure of this kind serves the purpose of helping the workers to grasp the nature and relation of the different classes in society and enabling the workers to "respond to *all* cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter *what* class is affected" and to respond from a communist point of

\*"The Day to Day Struggle and the Revolutionary Goal," May 15, 1976

view and no other. "The consciousness of the working masses," Lenin insists, "cannot be genuine class-consciousness unless the workers learn from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe *every* other social class in *all* the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical and political life, unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of *all* aspects of the life and activity of *all* classes, strata and groups of the population." It goes without saying, of course, that in order to train the workers in this, we must train ourselves—and this emphasizes the importance of political education and generally waging the theoretical struggle, which, Lenin emphasizes, is one of the three main forms of working class struggle, together with the economic and political. (Quotes from Lenin are from *What Is To Be Done?* Chapter III, Part C, emphasis Lenin's). We need to sum up how our Party press carries out its part in all this—the *Worker, Revolution*, pamphlets, etc.

Lenin argues in *What Is To Be Done?* that economic exposures are extremely important, but that they are not the "most widely applicable" means of raising the class consciousness of the workers, that "Of the sum total of cases in which the workers suffer (either on their own account or on account of those closely connected with them) from tyranny, violence and the lack of rights, undoubtedly only a small minority represent cases of police tyranny in the trade-union struggle as such. Why then should we, beforehand, *restrict* the scope of political agitation by declaring only *one* of the means to be the 'most widely applicable,' when Social-Democrats must have, in addition, other, generally speaking, no less 'widely applicable'?" (*What Is To Be Done?* Chapter III, Part A, emphasis Lenin's.)

Yet the same Lenin wrote in "Draft and Explanation of A Programme For the Social-Democratic Party," that the main activity of the communists must be to "develop the workers' class-consciousness by assisting them in the fight for their most vital needs." (see *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 114, 116) How can we reconcile all this, and how does it relate to the "center of gravity" and its relation to the Central Task of our Party today and the overall revolutionary goal? *By concrete analysis of concrete conditions—Marxist analysis*, of course—and to sum up what has been written before here, and elsewhere, it is correct now to concentrate our work at this "center of gravity," but: (1) we must carry out our work around this by conducting "strictly Marxist propaganda and agitation" and doing the kind of exposures Lenin calls for in *What Is To Be Done?*; (2) we must not restrict our work to this "center of gravity" but must build the political as well as the economic struggle of the workers (and wage the theoretical struggle, too, together

with these) and we must work among all strata, all social movements, fighting against the ruling class, while concentrating our forces in the struggles of the masses of workers; and (3) we must conduct all our work, in every struggle, among all social forces and movements, as part of building toward the revolutionary goal.

The Battle of the Bicentennial makes very clear the importance of political struggle, and of mobilizing and relying on the workers as the main force in this struggle, too. What was the greatest significance of the July 4th demonstration? It was that, for the first time in many decades the *working class* was mounting the *political stage*, challenging the bourgeoisie, waging a concrete struggle against two particular running sores\* as well as the thousand outrages of life under capitalism and challenging the whole way the country is run, while pointing the finger clearly at the class that runs it (and must run it) in this way. (The revival of May Day as a working class celebration in recent years in this country and the development of this over the past several years has been, of course, a very significant political battle waged by the working class against the bourgeoisie. But it is correct to say that the Battle of the Bicentennial, bringing together several thousand workers, together with their allies, from all across the country to the very site of the bourgeoisie's celebration of its birthday, to demonstrate *openly in the name and in the interests of the working class* against the capitalists in such circumstances, represented a mounting of the political stage by the working class in a more profound and significant way than even the May Day celebrations of the past few years. Thus the Battle of the Bicentennial was a qualitative advance for the working class movement.) And another lesson of the Battle of the Bicentennial is that as the working class does mobilize its ranks for such political struggle, it is able to give impetus to many other forces and groups and to rally them behind its banner, not through a declaration or command to follow us, but through the very strength, discipline and revolutionary outlook, that characterize the proletariat as a class.

In the "Lecture on the 1905 Revolution" Lenin notes the great change that took place among the mass of peasantry—and in Russia at that time the peasantry made up the great majority of the laboring people—due to the tremendous upsurge of the workers' strike movement and the development of political as well as economic strikes throughout Russia. The term "revolutionary" Lenin noted, changed from calling to mind a student—an intellectual, alien to the mass of working people. Philadelphia, 1976 was not the same as Russia, 1905, and we must be careful not to exaggerate its importance—while taking note of and building off the

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\*The "two running sores" referred to are unemployment and war.

real advances it did represent. It can honestly be said that, in a beginning way, some of the same phenomenon occurred—that to many, many working people in Philadelphia, and even other parts of the country, a demonstrator, a revolutionary came more to be identified with worker, instead of student or hippie etc. And this represents a real step forward—if only one step in the many that must be taken in building the revolutionary movement.

(10) The strategy of the proletariat for revolution, the strategic line of our Party for leading this revolution, is the united front. It is important to go back to what we say in the *Programme* about the united front:

“Forces, representing different classes and class viewpoints, come together around particular struggles—against imperialist aggression, cutbacks in social services, police repression, rising prices and other questions. . . Millions of people have become involved in these struggles, entering them for various reasons, with conflicting class viewpoints, and with varying degrees of understanding of the source of the problems and the links between the struggles. Millions more will continue to do so.

“The policy of the proletariat and its Party, in building the united front against imperialism under its leadership, is: to unite with those engaging in every such battle; to make clear through the course of these struggles the common enemy and the common cause of the masses of people; to develop fighters on one front against the enemy into fighters on all fronts; and to show how all these contradictions arise from and relate to the basic contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and can only be finally resolved through the revolutionary resolution of this basic contradiction. . .” (pp. 96, 98)

How well are we doing at applying this policy, while concentrating on the “center of gravity”? This is a key question to sum up. As was struggled out at the founding Congress, specifically in relation to the national movements, it is not a question of dispersing our forces in all directions, and actually weakening rather than concentrating and strengthening them; it is not a question of assigning a lot of cadre to work among non-proletarian strata, but it is a question of the *line* those assigned carry out, the line summarized just above for how to implement the united front strategy.

And there *is* the question of whether we have—sufficiently at least—assigned cadre to concentrate investigation and work

among the oppressed nationalities. Our *Programme* analyzes the *solid core* of the united front as "the revolutionary alliance of the working class movement as a whole with the struggles of the oppressed nationalities against the common imperialist enemy." It stresses and explains why the fight of the oppressed nationalities "for equality and emancipation is bound by a thousand links with the struggle of the working class for socialism and lends it great strength." (p. 99) How do we build the fight for equality and link it with the fight for emancipation of the oppressed nationalities together with the whole working class—guided by the stand of the working class to "End national oppression by ending its source, capitalist rule" (*Programme*, p. 117), together with ending all the evils of capitalism? What today is the *content* of the fight for equality, and how to correctly build this fight and link it with the revolutionary goal of the working class—merge it with the movement for socialist revolution and not *submerge* it under the *present level* of the workers' movement, which is largely concentrated in the economic struggle?

These are difficult questions. The *MPR*, as well as the *Programme*, gives basic guidance in this. In the *MPR* specific focuses are set down for building the fight against national oppression; against discrimination in work and throughout society; against police repression; and against deportations. Are these focuses correct ones at this time? What kind of struggle have we built around them, and what line struggle has gone on within the Party around this? Have we assigned cadre to investigate these questions—to determine the sentiments and sum up, through application of the mass line, the ideas and opinions of the masses of the oppressed nationalities in particular and the masses generally around these questions? It is very important to sum all this up.

The *MPR* also says that the tendency to tail after bourgeois nationalism is still the main deviation around the national question within the Party. Is this still true at this time? I think that it is not. It seems that a real tendency to liquidate the national question, to seriously downplay the fight against national oppression and for equality, or at least a failure to develop the concrete means for carrying out this fight, has developed within the Party. In my opinion, this has become the main deviation on this question and has shown itself very starkly in the work around busing—though our stand in opposing the busing plans that have actually come down and exposing the divide and conquer schemes and attacks on education by the bourgeoisie have generally been correct.

This tendency to actually liquidate the fight against national oppression is linked to the economist tendencies referred to earlier. What is required here is a *negation of the negation*—not a return to a previous tailing after bourgeois nationalism in taking up the

fight against national oppression, nor more generally a return to a petty bourgeois way of involving workers in political struggle, and not, in opposition to this, simply a waging of the economic struggle; but a concentration in the "center of gravity," while at the same time a mobilizing of the workers, together with other forces, in key political battles against the bourgeoisie, with a line representing the outlook and interests of the working class. We must carry this out and, with regard to the national question in particular, sum up our work, correct our errors in the way summarized just above and apply the correct line of our Party so as to link the movements of the oppressed nationalities with the workers' movement in a revolutionary alliance, to strengthen the core of the united front and build that united front as broadly as possible toward the revolutionary goal.

In our work in the shops, as well as among youth (and to some degree at least among students and vets) we have made a number of ties with Black people and other oppressed nationalities. Many of these have been brought close to the Party and a number already recruited. We must utilize these ties to not only build the overall revolutionary movement but specifically to forge real links with the struggles of the oppressed nationalities and carry out the policy of building the fight against national oppression as part of the overall class struggle and working at it from two sides\*—which is our policy for the struggle against national oppression and not our overall strategy for revolution, though it does play an important part in carrying out that strategy and building that solid core of the united front. Once again, in moving to carry this out, and combating the tendency to actually liquidate the fight against national oppression, we must be alert in guarding against a flip back to simply tailing after bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nationalities—a flip that would be very easy to make, exactly because of the relatively low level of struggle and consciousness among the masses, including the masses of workers, and the relative lack of firm footing of our Party in the working class, practically and ideologically.

To carry out this work in this period is difficult. The situation, as noted earlier, is not the same as that in the late '60s and early '70s. There are not the same kind of mass movements of the oppressed nationalities, nor can there be, *in the same way*, because conditions have changed. But it would be a very serious error to think that there will not be any more upsurges of struggle of the

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\*As the *Programme* of the RCP explains, "This means: mobilize the masses of the oppressed nationalities in the struggle against this oppression, on the one side, and mobilize the working class as a whole to take up this fight, on the other; bring forward the ideology of the proletariat and its common interest in fighting exploitation and all oppression; and in this way merge the national movements with the workers' movement as a revolutionary alliance." (p. 117)

oppressed nationalities against their national oppression. Right now such struggles flare up, and we must learn how to apply the Party's line—and the mass line which must be the underlying method in all our work—to building these struggles. Furthermore, exactly as the overall struggle against the imperialists grows, and especially the working class movement develops in strength, numbers and consciousness, it will give further impetus to the struggles of the oppressed nationalities and to all other social movements against the ruling class—again Philadelphia gave us a glimpse of this. And again, without exaggerating the events in Philly or the comparison with the 1905 revolution in Russia, we can learn from what Lenin notes in his "Lecture" on that revolution—that with the upsurge of the workers' movement "a movement for national liberation flared up among the oppressed peoples of Russia." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 249)

The forms and character of these movements in this country will differ from those in Russia: the essential thrust will not be for self-determination, for all the reasons analyzed in the *Programme*—and in much greater detail in the polemics against the BWC and other Bundists (again these "old polemics" still have much relevance\*). This question of self-determination—in its scientific sense, that is the right of secession—may arise, among Black people in particular, and the Party's line on this question provides the correct basis for dealing with this, in accordance with the actual conditions, should it arise.

But what will be of greater importance then, and is already today, is the question of how to link up with and lead toward the aim of socialist revolution the fight against the main forms of oppression of the minority nationalities in this country:

"Discrimination, the denial of democratic rights, violent police repression, suppression and mutilation of their cultures, exploitation and oppression as members of the working class, with the lowest positions, constantly high unemployment, the lowest paid jobs, the worst housing, the worst of bad health care and other social services—this is daily life for the masses of these nationalities in the U.S. today." (*Programme*, p. 116)

And, the *Programme* states, "this is what gives rise to the militant struggle of millions against the system that is responsible for it." If today, there are not millions in this fight, there certainly will be, as the contradictions of the imperialist system, and the struggle of

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\*See, for example, *The Communist*, Vol. 1, No. 2, "Living Socialism and Dead Dogmatism: The Proletarian Line and the Struggle Against Opportunism on the National Question in the U.S."

the working class and others, intensify. And, especially if we do our work right, this fight will not as in the past, be separate from, but will be linked in a revolutionary alliance with the overall working class movement.

As stated before, failure to take up this fight, or to build it correctly, can only be part and parcel of a general rightist, economist trend, that narrows the working class struggle and aims to keep it at its present level, and which treats national oppression and the fight against it, not as a key force to be directed back against its source, the ruling class, but as something to be avoided as a "detraction" from building the—trade-union—unity of the working class. Once again, instead of taking the hard, high road of figuring out how to expose and unite masses in struggling against the bourgeoisie, and specifically how to build the fight for equality, and persevering to break through the obstacles the bourgeoisie places in the way, this would amount to looking for the easy road of trying simply to establish some notion of "peace" among people of different nationalities—an illusory aim that will be, and already is, smashed on the hard rocks of reality of life under capitalism.

There are no easy answers to this, or any other, question involved in building the revolutionary movement to overthrow capitalism and build socialism. But there *are* answers—answers which the study and application of Marxism and the application of our Party's line in particular, enable us to forge in close connection with building mass struggle and uniting all who can be united against the imperialist ruling class. National inequality—or any other evil of capitalism—cannot be *eliminated* under capitalism. But neither can the fight against these evils be put off until "the revolution comes"—or there will not be any socialist revolution.

In conclusion, our Party's general line is correct. Our specific analysis of "the center of gravity" at this time is correct. But our Party's line and policies, and Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought generally, tell us that we must apply the mass line and conduct all of our work—in building the economic struggles of the workers, and their political struggles, and in all social movements, of all strata—so that it contributes to the revolutionary aim and prepares our own ranks and the masses to seize the opportunity to make revolution when the conditions ripen. As Lenin so powerfully expressed it: "Communism 'springs' from positively every sphere of public life; its shoots are to be seen literally everywhere. . . . If special efforts are made to 'stop up' one of the channels, the 'contagion' will find another, sometimes a very unexpected channel. Life will assert itself." And with this understanding—not religious "faith" but scientifically based understanding—firmly in mind, let us continue to stay on the high road and prepare to seize the time, no matter how hard it may be or how much time it may take in coming.



## SOME FURTHER REMARKS ON REVOLUTIONARY WORK IN A NON-REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION

First of all, the paper ("Some Points . . .") tries to proceed with one thing building on top of another, but there is a theme that runs all the way through it and that is indicated by the title—how to do revolutionary work when you don't have a revolutionary situation—and also by the statement from the Chinese Communist Party's polemic concerning the general line of the international communist movement that we have used in a number of places including in the *MPR*, which is quoted again in the paper.

The real question that runs through here is how do you do that, how do you carry out that kind of work in ordinary times? It is one thing to say that we have to do it and it is correct to say that we have to do it and to point to the need to do it, but the real difficult question is *how* do you do that? That's a question that you have to ask not only in general, in terms of what is the general method and the kind of things that I tried to indicate in that article that I wrote recently ("The Day to Day Struggle and the Revolutionary Goal," May 15, 1976 *Revolution*). It is important to raise the general question of what are we doing it all for, in a general political sense how should we take up anything that we are doing. But we also felt in our discussions (on the standing bodies) that we need to say more about what, for any given period, does it mean to be advancing towards that goal in a little more concrete sense than just, "well, we have to be advancing towards the revolutionary goal and let's make sure that we're striving to fulfill the three objectives."

It is very important in any particular struggle—at any given time—to analyze how we're striving to fulfill those three objectives. But more concretely than that, for any given time that you are trying to draw up your battle plans, how do you take concrete steps to advance towards that goal, without falling into the question of stages, of developing different programs for different stages or walling off different periods in the development of the struggle, and really treating each period as an end in itself and viewing things just in terms of "from this big meeting to that big

meeting" or something like that. There are periods of time when you are summing up, trying to learn from what you have done and project to what you are going to do, but all of this has to be viewed in the context of the long-term revolutionary goal.

And there is a philosophical point involved here which underlies what we are talking about. Like it says in the first point in the paper, there is a dialectical relationship between objective and subjective (and we'll go into that point more deeply a little bit later). But the paper points out how they interpenetrate and react upon each other, and the same thing is true for the question of quantity and quality. There is the same kind of dialectical relationship between quantity and quality. In other words, as Mao Tsetung puts it, there is quality in quantity and quantity in quality. The paper points out that what is objective for the organization is subjective for the masses of workers, and so on and so forth—another way of saying that what is universal in one context becomes particular in another. Well the same point can be made and has to be understood about quantity and quality. Quantity in one context is quality in another and vice versa.

Or to break it down more, between the kind of situation that we have now and the kind where you can launch an insurrection is a qualitative leap. Viewed from the overall sense of the kind of things we're talking about this is the big change from quantity to quality. But within that and leading up to that are a series of quantitative changes. And within that series of quantitative changes there are also qualitative changes. For example we might say in a small way, the July 4th demonstration was a qualitative change. Now I think it is correct to warn against exaggerating its importance or drawing undue comparisons to other times and places. But in terms of the effect that it had on the working class and on the masses of people in general it did bring about a qualitative change within the quantitative buildup for the big qualitative change.

So I think we can project and begin to see that at any given time you do have to figure out how to make concrete, qualitative (within quantitative) advances. But you have to do this without falling into a theory of stages or "here's the program for the next period," which then turns into its opposite and becomes reformist. Because if you ever try to erect a program for a certain period or stage in the struggle, short of your overall program, and make it an end in itself it's going to turn into its opposite and turn into reformism. For example you can see that in the history of the old CP when they went about building the industrial unions, there was a real tendency to make those unions an end in themselves and to make the building of them a program in itself. And when you do that, then instead of the reforms being a by-product of the struggle for

revolution, the dialectic gets reversed and they become an end in themselves and revolution becomes something separated from your day to day work and off in the distant future. Then the question of achieving the final goal becomes something which becomes reduced to rhetoric or occasional propaganda or in one way or another becomes divorced from what you are doing.

We have to understand the relationship that there is quality within quantity, as well as the other way around, but especially that aspect—that there is quality within quantity—without developing a theory of stages. There are objectively stages in the development of a struggle. But there is a crucial difference between understanding that and developing a theory of stages about the struggle. And there is the difference between “left” and right, between Trotskyism on the one hand, and the opposite kind of error which is really the same error but in opposite form, of revisionism. So if you fall into the thing of not recognizing stages, that objectively there are stages to the development of anything, then you are going to make the errors of that little pointy bearded guy [Trotsky]. On the other hand if you recognize the stages all right, but you raise them to a principle and say that at any given time the only thing that we can be achieving is whatever is possible in the given stage, then you make the opposite kind of error of Gus Hall and all those other kind of people [revisionists].

So it comes out of the same point really that is made here in point number one in the paper about recognizing necessity and the relationship between freedom and necessity. If you don't recognize necessity you're going to fall into idealism, and the particular form would be voluntarism, thinking you are going to accomplish anything you want, just by wanting it, regardless of conditions. You can vulgarize that thing about “nothing is hard if you dare to scale the heights,” not see it in terms of protracted struggle but in terms of immediately, by will power, you can accomplish what you want. That's why we call it voluntarism.

On the other hand if you do recognize necessity, but then make an absolute out of it—fail to see that it is in a dialectical relationship with freedom and that by grasping what the necessity is and what the laws are governing it in particular, as well as the general development of things, you can break through and advance things—then you bow down before necessity and you make errors in the form of vulgar materialism and determinism: “whatever is immediately impossible is always impossible and whatever you are doing is all that can ever be done.” Of course neither one of these [voluntarism or determinism] is going to lead to victory.

Now there are some ways in which the second [determinism] is more alluring over a period of time, because at any given time you can seem to be doing something and you can seem not to be

isolated. So it can be attractive. But that is a false attraction, a false allure, a dangerous seduction. And that's touched on later when the paper talks about the hard road and the high road—that we have to consistently struggle to avoid, and deepen our understanding of what is going on and the principles governing it in order to avoid, reformist, bourgeois illusions.

But to return to the point, we [the standing bodies] felt it was important to add the point about quantity and quality and to understand that there is quality within quantity. The aspect of there being quality within quantity of course is something which has its opposite—that there is quantity within quality. You can see that because there are “final aims” and “final aims,” depending on how you're viewing things.

From the point of view of where we stand now you can say that our objective is to overthrow the capitalists and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. From a certain point of view that can be viewed as our objective, that is a qualitative leap and not to understand that would be a very serious error. And we had a little bit of struggle on the way up around forming the Party about whether or not there is a qualitative leap involved in that and whether it means anything. But there is also quantity within that, and that is being borne out by the history of those countries where that has happened. Everything doesn't stop at that point; there are different stages within the development of socialism, and then another qualitative leap beyond that to communism. And without tripping out too much and getting too far away from the point, it is important to grasp this; and in terms of building our work what it means is that we have to try to take stock of where the movement is at any given time and we have to have objectives and things we are aiming for and campaigns that we are taking up, short of everything on the one hand, without making them everything on the other hand.

This is a difficult thing to do. We have to be able to concentrate our forces, carry out campaigns that are short of the final goal but are linked to the question, to the process of development of the movement towards the final goal. And that, of course, is a difficult thing to do, but if we don't do it then—we felt in discussing it on the standing bodies for example—that if we didn't stress that point enough then what might come off to comrades was something like, “well, things are tough now, we don't have a good situation, but we eventually will if we just keep plugging, just persevere and you'll get your reward in the end, somewhere, somehow.” While it is important to point out, even emphasize, that the situation will change (along with some of the other points that I'm going to talk about in terms of how we prepare for that, which are touched on in the paper and are very important), we felt

that this point—that there will be qualitative changes within the quantitative build-up toward a revolutionary situation—needed to be added and stressed.

Now, on the point about the relationship between the objective and the subjective. As it points out, the objective sets the stage. And that's something that I touched on already, that is important to understand. Mao Tsetung says the same thing: he says it [the objective situation] sets the stage upon which many an actor can play many a different role, full of sound and fury (and I can't remember all the poetic language he uses, but) in other words once you recognize, analyze the objective situation you have a lot of freedom and the role of the subjective factor has a tremendous importance. Also summing up somewhat, maybe from the errors of Stalin, we can see some errors that were made in terms of sometimes being undialectical about the relationship between the objective and the subjective, in terms of making them absolutes and not seeing them interpenetrate, as if there's the objective and there's the subjective and it's not like they react upon each other and that the one can change the other—sometimes this view comes through in Stalin, for example.

But the most important thing for us to grasp is the dialectical relationship between the objective and subjective. Exactly by understanding what the objective situation is, it is possible to change it, not easily, just like I said nothing is hard in this world, but also nothing is easy. And that's also a unity of opposites. But it is possible to change things. And the point is for emphasis in here where it says "in this process the subjective changes, too." And that means several things. In the process of grasping the laws and understanding the situation and analyzing the concrete conditions, not only do we change the world, but we also change ourselves in the process. This is true of mankind as a whole, it is also true of the conscious organized force (at this stage). We change ourselves in the sense that we deepen our understanding and we continue that spiral that goes from practice to theory to practice. . . . We continue to deepen our understanding. We change ourselves also in a quantitative sense, in the sense that we bring in more forces—more forces who were not subjective forces become part of the subjective forces, in other words, masses come into the Party.

As it says in the paper, the mood of the masses is something that is external and objective to the Party. But again there is not a wall between the Party and the masses; it is not like we want to erect a wall around us so nobody else can get in—as if there is only a one-way lock, so you can only get out but can't get in. So, in the process of changing the objective world another aspect of changing the subjective is that it gains more forces. As the objective, and

this includes the consciousness of the masses, grows, that is directly related to the fact that the subjective forces, the conscious forces, gain members and draw others closer around them. And as the subjective changes both quantitatively (more members) and qualitatively (deepens its grasp of the correct line and its links with the masses), this of course strengthens its ability to deal with the objective, to get the dialectic going in that kind of a way.

The contradiction between the objective and the subjective will never be eliminated. In other words even when we achieve communism there will still be the real world and there will be people trying consciously to change it. But obviously that is a different kind of situation than when you have these kinds of class divisions that we have now and the different kind of philosophical outlooks that we have now where the backward and the declining and the historically obsolete philosophies stand as a barrier between mankind as a whole and the objective world outside of mankind. They stand as a barrier in the way of transforming it, related to and flowing from the same way in which the objective organization of society in a backward, declining and historically obsolete way stands in the way of mankind being able to consciously transform nature. So this is why our goal is not a vague notion of changing the world, but it is to eliminate those divisions, to eliminate classes, in order that mankind can advance to the stage where it can more directly and consciously confront and transform the objective world. So viewed historically that's our goal.

And I think this is an important point because we have to arm ourselves and other people with an understanding, a basic materialist understanding, of what is this society, what makes it function. We talk about these phrases that we have in these articles on the Mass Line\*, where it throws in a phrase about how capitalist society is a barrier to development. What does that mean? I think we have to deepen our own understanding and the masses' understanding, and it's not an abstract question, unrelated to their lives. You know there is a very powerful thing from Lenin in one of these works that I cited here (although not in this particular quote that I cited) where he brings out and gives this example, he says something like, "today there is not war, people are in their homes, scattered and isolated from each other, going to work and back or whatever. Tomorrow there is a war and all of a sudden millions of people are drawn together, put into uniform, and organized by the capitalists."

What he's showing there is that these forces and laws (and that war itself) were not something that were simply the "will," even of the capitalists themselves, but act independently of anyone's will.

\*See *Revolution*, Dec. 15, 1975 and March, 1976 or pamphlet *The Mass Line* by the RCP.

Of course, in the case of any war, with regard to the particularity of when it broke out and how it broke out, this is a conscious action on the part of the bourgeoisie; it would be vulgar materialism if we didn't see that they consciously decide at a given time "this is it, let's go down." But the fact that they were driven to do that and sooner or later are going to do that [go to war] is independent of their will or anyone else's.

The fact that people can be moved from a situation of going to work, coming back, going to work, having a certain life and family and everything, and all of a sudden millions of people's lives are transformed in an instant, shows us in a living way that these are not abstractions we are talking about arming ourselves and the masses with, divorced from their daily lives, nor should we present them that way. But in fact there are laws and there are forces that are governing and determining what happens to them every day, much bigger than their home, their neighborhoods, their jobs, their communities, or even their country for that matter. There are laws of nature and laws of society that do determine this but the laws act blindly and they act behind the back even of the bourgeoisie, and certainly they act against the interests, against the will, behind the backs of and blindly to, the masses. So the question is not whether or not there are going to be forces out there that are going to affect your life and whether you can seal yourself off from them, but whether you can remove the obstacles and barriers to progress by consciously confronting them, both in the material world and in the philosophical realm.

What I've said so far is, in a sweeping kind of way, trying to lay the basis, act as introduction, to getting into some particulars. And I think it is extremely important for a leading body like this and in general for the whole Party, and ultimately for the whole working class to be able to constantly deepen our ability to view things in that kind of sweeping way. Because I think that is what moves people forward, when the blinders are removed and people see that there are these forces shaping things and that you can consciously master them step by step—step by step, not all at once, not out of will, but by grasping the situation you can consciously master and overcome them. And it brings things home a lot sharper, it takes the hatred people have for the way things are and their beginning, rudimentary understanding and fragmentary understanding of who's responsible for that—which divides into two, it is partly correct and partly incorrect—it takes it and concentrates it and channels and directs it in a way that doesn't just allow people to vent their hatred, which they do on each other all the time, but allows them to use that hatred and energy to transform the world and remove the obstacles to transforming it. So I think that is extremely important.

I want to say here a little bit more on this first point and then move on. I sort of touched on it when I was talking about what Lenin says, the example he gives about the army and the war and things like that, but notice what's quoted under point five in the paper, another quote from Lenin about the masses "uncomplainingly allowing themselves to be robbed." And I think again we have to understand this statement dialectically. (I'm sure there are hair splitters and so on who make every statement by people like Lenin an absolute, and if we wanted to have fun with the dogmatist forces we could play around with this statement and show them how off the wall Lenin was because he says that the masses uncomplainingly allowed themselves to be robbed. But that's not the point I don't think at all.) "Uncomplainingly" there is a relative term, it's viewed in terms of when the situation changes qualitatively in the big way we're talking about.

I think it's kind of like that phrase (I can't remember it exactly) about the wheels of God grinding—they grind slowly but grind exceedingly fine—it's kind of like the way people spontaneously view things. It's like fate, powers that be, god, whatever, is just sort of grinding along, shaping life and there isn't too much you can do about it, except within whatever little freedom you presently have so try to find the best possible happiness you can or whatever you can find. As long as the situation is relatively stable—you have to emphasize *relatively* stable—for the powers that be, then relatively the masses do uncomplainingly allow themselves to be robbed. Not that they don't know that they are being robbed and ripped off. (It's very hard to find too many people who you work with or whatever who the minute you say "you know they're ripping us off" won't agree.) But immediately the question comes up, "what are you going to do about it, that's always the way it is, that's always the way it will be" and so on.

Again these objective laws operating behind the backs of people and independent of the will of anyone, acting as blind forces, have a lot to do with changing people's outlook on that question too. It is as if the Mafia comes down the block every week and collects extortion money from you and the guy just shows up at a certain time every week and he's there and collects the money. And everybody hates it but that's part of life. But then if you have the Mafia beginning to fall out among themselves, starting to shoot each other up, other syndicates come in and try to grab the block off and the normal machinery begins to break down, then the question begins to arise much more sharply in the minds of those who are being robbed, "maybe this doesn't have to be this way; maybe there is a way that in fact it can be fundamentally changed."

And that's related to this question, this quote that's in here from Marx, about how when things are going well, competition takes



the form of an operating fraternity among the capitalists. In other words, yes, there's competition but they're able more or less—more or less, these terms have to be understood relatively—more or less peacefully to resolve it. But once the thing turns around against them then it is not a question of their being on the up swing, with more and more prosperity temporarily, but instead there is more and more crises. When it's a question of dividing up the shrinking profit pie and dividing up the losses, some people dying out and losing in the thing—then the competition becomes outright cut-throat. And the way that's related to the point before, the quote from Lenin, is that Lenin also laid out three conditions for the development of a revolutionary situation. He laid them out in different formulations, and one formulation that's several places is: 1) that the old ruling class has to be unable to go on and rule in the old way; 2) that the lower classes are unable to live in the old way; and 3) you have to have a conscious force, the Party, that's got the roots and the plan and the understanding and the organization to be able to turn the opportunity into a success.

I think from what I have been saying you can see the first two points—all three are interrelated—but you can especially and in particular see how the first two points are interrelated. In other words, independently of their will and because of the internal contradictions and laws governing capitalism—and more generally the development of society—this operating fraternity is breaking down. It is only a relative stability anyway. It breaks down more and more to where they are less and less able to keep the machinery sort of grinding along slowly. And all of a sudden there are jerks, there are fits and starts, there are repairs that they have to make in the machinery, there are arguments among the technicians about how to repair it. All of this brings out much more sharply in the minds of people, “hey, maybe we don't have to be just ground down by this machinery.” The dissatisfaction that exists takes a much sharper form, it calls into question much more fundamentally the right and the ability—and I don't think we can underestimate that question, the ability—of these guys to rule.

Again, this relates back to the dialectical relationship between the inability of the old ruling class to go on and keep the machinery grinding in the old way and the unwillingness and inability of the masses to go on living in the old way. This point about the ability of the old ruling class to rule is an extremely important question, not only in their own ranks but among the masses who are very practical minded and have to be because of the necessities of life. And there is and will be a big section of the masses, who up to the point of insurrection (and even after) are not going to be that conscious of their position in society and the historic mission of the working class. A big thing that makes a lot of them active and

brings them into motion and into unity with the conscious forces of the working class is the fact that these guys (the capitalists) don't seem to be able to make things run any more. Of course, our indictment of the capitalists is not simply limited to that—it is something that goes deeper and is much more fundamental—it goes to: a) *why* they aren't able to run society in a rational way and b) the whole thing about how society has to be transformed and how until it is, crises are going to constantly arise. But while we have to go deeply into this with the masses, we shouldn't fail to understand the importance of the question of the inability of the old ruling class to rule.

You can see that if you put it in terms of its opposite. Right now we have a *Programme* and it has a long section "Life Under Socialism," and it describes all these things that are going to happen, which have a lot of power, but frankly to a lot of people seem distant and remote and don't grab them immediately. But once the situation ripens and you've literally got two opposing armies right there in the field and in particular you have the army that represents the working class in the field, it is a little bit different than now. The workers' army marches into a neighborhood and it sends out its political cadre and they pull out the *Programme* about how things are going to change and whatever, and say to people (not only run down the generalities and future possibilities of life under socialism) but say "*now*, when we defeat the enemy, a, b, c, and d are going to happen," it makes a lot of difference to people. "Today you can't solve the question of criminals—tomorrow we're going to start solving it. And we have the armed might of the masses to solve it! Today millions are out of work and the economy is in chaos—tomorrow we will begin putting people back to work and restoring the economy—on a new basis, in a way to eliminate crises and chaos and make the economy serve the people's needs, and we have the armed power of the masses to enforce that too!" These are the major kinds of things that right now we're not able to effect. But when that situation ripens and the qualitative leap does occur then your ability to resolve immediate contradictions confronting the people, as opposed to the inability of the opposing forces, becomes a very real question and the question of immediate action and program becomes very important.

That's true in a big way at that time and it's also true in a lesser way but also important way in any given stage in the development of things. In other words, at all times it's crucial to pay attention to tactics. Often we get a struggle going but we don't pay enough attention to details and tactics. We hit the enemy a couple of times, deal him a couple of defeats, and then we're not prepared for the inevitable counter-attack. We don't pay attention enough to the fact that for people whom we are asking to follow us and to

whom we're raising this banner and saying follow behind us, in a daily, hourly way, without getting narrow or tailist or anything else, their lives are affected by what we do. The bigger the stakes in the struggle, the bigger the effect. But at every stage they're affected by what we do.

Let's take an example from the mass struggles of the workers. Members of the Auto Workers United to Fight (AWUF), which our Party has helped to build around the country, had been dealing some defeats to the union officials in the area of Dayton at the GM plant there. They had two big mass mobilizations at union meetings, where first they had 1000 people who came to the union meeting, which people know is not a small turnout, and they overwhelmingly voted down a proposal of the union officials to split the union and weaken the workers' fight as the contract approached. Shortly afterwards the demands of the Auto Workers United to Fight were presented at a union meeting and a guy got up and the union president tried to rule him out of order and adjourn the meeting and the guy kept arguing. The president said, well, I'll take a motion to adjourn and there were about 250 people at this meeting and nobody would make a motion to adjourn. So then the guy says "I move that we pass this first demand of AWUF" and it was voted and passed. Then the president says, "OK now, I'll entertain a motion to adjourn." There was no motion to adjourn. And it went on like this and finally after the guy had gotten up and presented about two or three more demands the union president says, "OK, I want to adjourn. We've passed all the demands. Let's go home." So we'd been dealing defeats to them.

But then at a meeting shortly after that the forces of Auto Workers United to Fight go in to struggle over how the question of the strike authorization vote should be handled in the union. And a committeeman working with AWUF gets up to make a motion and the president rules him out of order and there's a lot of struggle. There's roughly over 800 workers there and over half of them have been mobilized by the progressive forces. There's a lot of struggle and it's a tug and pull. The president rules him out of order, the masses shout to let him speak for a while and then it goes back and forth. Finally he rules him out of order and says "Get him out of here." Immediately, organized forces, goons made up of union officials, jump the guy, some workers come to his defense, one of the workers gets shot and the committeeman who stood up to make the motion ends up getting—well, I don't know exactly what his condition is, but they put him in critical condition in the hospital with possible long-term brain damage by being pounded on the head with brass knuckles.

The point I'm making here is a lot of times—not to criticize those workers, because they were generally waging pretty damn good

struggle—but I think we as the Party of the working class have to lead it in summing up that every time we hit them they're going to hit back. A lot of times I think we do this: we do make advances and gains in the work and then we sort of just act as if the enemy, when it's wounded, won't strike back. In fact when they're wounded, that makes them more vicious a lot of times. We don't consistently take into account the question of tactically taking full account of them.

I'm departing a bit from the main point I'm trying to make but I think that's another important point to stress—that whatever the given stage of the struggle is, as Mao Tsetung says, our class when it's fighting in close quarters with the enemy, has to depend entirely on the correct and firm tactics of its Party. This is a very important thing. It is not simply a tactical question, but it's a question of what our tactics are guided by as well. And particularly it's a question of our scientific understanding of the nature of the enemy and our ability to make a class analysis of different forces and to see whose interests they represent and on that basis how they are going to act and to be able to fight blow for blow and tit for tat with them and to anticipate the fact that the more we hit them the more they are going to try to organize their forces to try to hit back and the more we have to do the same.

The way it relates to this bigger question I've touched on before is that the dissatisfaction of the masses is always there, and it grows the more that this system goes into crisis and the machinery breaks down. But that does not automatically lead to tremendous upsurges of struggle or to any sustained upsurge of struggle. Linked to this is the fourth point in the paper, about there being more than a little idealism coming off the founding of the Party. We talked about this again on the standing bodies, but I think there is this tendency, not really seeing the ups and downs of the struggle, kind of like we've removed all that baggage from the past, we used to do everything all screwed up—a little undialectical view, like everything we did in the past should be negated in a one-sided way—and now we've cleaned all that away, and like it characterizes it in the paper, "now we're going to be able to unite with the struggles and move them straight forward." I don't think that this has taken the form so much of, "tomorrow we're going to achieve the revolutionary goal," but kind of like things are going to go in a straight line and in and of itself our work in these struggles is going to lead to revolution at some point. It's going to be like marching forward—after all, the workers are naturally going to embrace us because we've shed all that stuff that made us stink to them and here we are taking up their struggles, representing their interests, why won't they just fall in line and we'll go 1, 2, 3,

4—not understanding materialistically enough that we live in a real world where the enemy hits back, where there is necessity for people and it's not a question for people of bowing down to it but figuring out at any given time as well as in the overall, how to move things forward.

I think that is an extremely important point. Unless we pay attention to that things will move forward for a while, but people are up against real necessity—necessity to eat, people have families, and so on. The more we have gone out and built struggle, linked up with it, the more we've run into a lot of these things. Just because people see more that something is wrong, that the machinery is breaking down, doesn't automatically and spontaneously lead them to go forward in a straight line. It does lead them to struggle more, and there is more struggle. But of course nothing goes forward in a straight line. There are ups and downs, twists and turns, there are detours, inevitably in the struggle. I think this view that we can march forward in a straight line says basically, "after all we're going to show the workers that we're good fellows and not a bunch of idiots or people who didn't like them philosophically or something, and we've got a good heart and so on, and we have their interests at heart and we're even willing to fight if they'll just follow us in a straight line." I think we've learned a lot about the fact that at any given point if our tactics deviate from the mass line that as that second article [see pamphlet, *The Mass Line*] pointed out, you can go from very big to very small very fast.

Another point has to be made. Unless through all the tactical twists and turns we have in mind the long range objective and we're constantly raising the general level of understanding and bringing forward the advanced and training them, we're going to eventually find initial gains turned into their opposite. The spontaneous upsurges and our ability to link up with them are going to be weakened, not strengthened. When we're fighting in close quarters, especially where there is a high level of spontaneous struggle, the question of how to carry out the second and third objectives in that kind of situation becomes in some ways more difficult. It's one thing if you're working in a place and people say "yeah, so and so is a communist, and other people have different philosophies" or they're even a little more interested and want to learn about it—it's another thing where you are fighting in very sharp, direct quarters with the enemy and the question of us communists being involved becomes a part of that struggle.

The enemy says to the masses, "this struggle involves these communists, that's who you're following, whether consciously or unconsciously, that's what you're working towards." Even a lot of the advanced people say, "You know I think a lot of you guys' ideas are good but why do you have to bring that issue up in the

thing here—it just makes it more difficult for us.” The only way you can combat that is by arming the people: a) with an understanding that the enemy is the enemy and has its nature, has its necessity and is going to do what it’s going to do regardless of whether we’re there or not. It’s going to try to step up its robbery of the people and so on; and b) that there are much bigger things involved, for example as I said before with the example from Lenin about the army and this other kind of stuff, there are much bigger things involved than simply these day to day battles, although they are extremely important and have to be waged very sharply.

There are bigger things happening. For example, a lot of people who work in certain industries are vets; they’ve had broader experiences, a large number of them in the Vietnam War. They’ve felt, if not consciously understood, that thing about these laws operating to move them thousands of miles away from families, loved ones, friends and whatever, and plop them down into a kind of situation they would never have chosen to be in, at least 98% of them. But unless we arm people with a materialist understanding and raise their sights toward the long-term, general interests of our class, the question is going to arise in the midst of these battles, what the hell do we need you kind of guys around for? I’m trying to emphasize the two aspects: on the one hand we have to fight toe to toe, tactic for tactic, to be prepared to hit them back and try to anticipate their moves; on the other hand, if that’s all we do (this is Lenin’s point in *What Is To Be Done?*), after a while people say, “listen, we can wage this struggle without you.” People can learn these tactical things, people can learn how to retreat and this and that, in the narrow limited sense of how to wage that kind of struggle.

If that’s all that we are bringing to them, then our initial links with them and their initial sense that, “hey, these people are really adding something,” is going to get turned around, exactly when the stakes get raised for having us around. And they do get raised the sharper the struggle gets. Unless we’re consciously carrying out all of the objectives there is not going to be a basis for people to see how the immediate struggle fits into something bigger, or for that matter why have communists around at all.

I’ve sort of rambled from one point to another. I hope that people can get the general thrust, the overall point of this question that we are dealing with is how to do revolutionary work when not in a revolutionary situation. I’ve tried so far to deal with sweeping questions connected with that, and with some very particular questions.

I want to talk a little bit about what exactly is the objective situation. I don’t think in a meeting like this that we can fundamentally, qualitatively deepen, in a big sense, the understanding we have of what the objective situation is. I don’t think this is the place to do that or to try to do that. (We have assigned some people within the

Party to form a broader group and work with others who are friends and affiliates to deeply investigate the actual situation of the economy of this country and the other countries similar to it.) I don't think this is the kind of place to try to do off the cuff or half-assed attempts at analysis. But I do think that there are some basic points that, as it says in the paper, we have made at the Founding Congress and which have been borne out in reality. Some of them are pointed to in the references and quotes in that *Business Week* article. I want to say a couple more things and relate them back to the points which we've stressed and some of which were even added to the *MPR* document at the time of the Founding Congress.

One of the things this magazine does—one of the first graphs they have—is on the background of the capital crisis. They show how the growth-spending must accelerate and they have a graph of business spending on plant equipment up to '75 and then a projection for the next ten years. Then right below it they have a graph that shows that the rate of return has fallen. It shows pre-tax return on invested capital for private corporations. There is a very definite decline in the period from 1965 when what is their rough equivalent of the rate of profit is about 16% or 17% to about 6% in 1975.

So again like we said in the *MPR* there are offsetting tendencies. The way that Marx characterized it was he didn't say "the law of the rate of profit to fall," he said, "the law of the *tendency* of the rate of profit to fall." There is a little difference there, but the difference is important. As in everything Marx was very dialectical, and his point was, this is a general overall tendency. Then he went on to analyze that there are countervailing tendencies which also after a while turn into their opposite. This is in fact, like the *MPR* points out, what has been happening. There have been different ways in which the capitalists have tried to counteract this. But these things turn into their opposite, like a lot of their monetary policies, both here and internationally, government spending, underwriting of investment and their other moves which in fact these guys (editors of *Business Week*) call for more of, have for a while, temporarily, stopped the decline or pushed the rate back up temporarily, and then it falls again because these things turn into their opposite. And this is graphically illustrated by the thing here (in *BW*).

Another important point, linked to this, is the category *BW* has, which it calls "the big squeeze on U.S. companies." The point that they make is that with the rate of profit falling (you see all these things are related) the amount of profit that these companies are able to generate for new investment is declining relative to the amount that they have to borrow, each time around, in order to expand investment. The point is that their debt is growing greater than their profit which they generate internally, in other words

within their own operations. And that affects some of the other contradictions that are mentioned here.

For example the contradiction between the government itself borrowing—sometimes to prop up particular industries like agriculture, or others which are sagging even worse because agriculture has actually been a relatively strong point over this period, or to borrow for social services or to finance military spending or whatever—the contradiction between that and the ability of these corporations to get money is growing sharper. And that's linked to the fundamental law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. In other words if their rate of profit were not falling, the squeeze on them debt-wise would not be so sharp and some of these other contradictions would not be so sharp.

Like I said, I don't think this is the place to go into a half-baked or half-assed attempt to analyze it but simply to show what people ought to be looking to—for example, the graph here (in *BW*) which shows the equity of the corporations per dollar of debt. In 1965 for each dollar of debt there was (on the average) \$3.60 worth of equity. And at this point there's about \$2.30 worth of equity for each dollar of debt (equity being a rough indication of capital or "assets.") This is another way of illustrating the same thing that the capital that they have on hand, the profit that is being generated relative to what they have to borrow, is declining. What this means is it increases the power of finance capital even more. Overall it increases the power of the monopolies that are already most powerful, of the bigger banks, etc. (though not uniformly) and it means (and they even say straight out in here) that there is going to be a further concentration of capital in the period ahead. The smaller, weaker, medium-sized, even lower level (if you want to call them that) monopoly capitalists are going to be pushed to the wall even more in the period ahead and the bigger ones who are generating more profit or have more finance capital at their disposal are going to be able to concentrate and centralize even more capital in their hands.

When this happens—the ruining of sections of the bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeoisie or whatever—this further intensifies, over any period of time, the contradictions. It doesn't alleviate them, it doesn't tend to make them less sharp but tends to make them sharper. There is also a certain dialectic which sets in here where those who got get more and those who ain't got can't get nothing. Even among the big boys, if your financial record and your ability to generate profit isn't so good then your ability to get loans is also not so great. This is the kind of dialectic that feeds on itself.

What we have to understand at the same time is the way the laws operate. As Marx said in *Capital*, the capitalists are only capital personified. That I think is an extremely important point related to this thing about the way these laws operate behind the



backs of people, independent of their will. By that he was emphasizing that they operate independently in the overall sense of the will of the capitalists themselves. In other words these laws assert themselves and the capitalists are only active as the personal agents of the social relations of the system. That doesn't mean you can get vulgar and say they don't have any will at all, there is no superstructure—obviously that would be ridiculous. But in an overall, fundamental sense what I'm trying to get at and what is important for the masses to grasp as well as the Party, is that the capitalists are going to be driven to intensify exploitation. This operating fraternity is more and more breaking down and they are going to be more and more driven to push the masses down even more. This is the reason that these attacks are stepping up, and I think that it is important to arm the masses with this understanding, not in the more superficial sloganeering way that we tended to do it in the past—like simply repeating “there is more crises, more attacks”—but to go deeper than that and expose the reason that these crises develop the way they do, make real this thing about the inevitability of such crises, make real the thing about laws that operate and how they operate, and how by grasping them we can change things, make revolution.

In fact the capitalists still try from time to time to make the very contradictions of capitalism appear to be its great strength. For example in here (*BW*) they quote one of their own ranks saying “there can never be a capital shortage.” He is one of these pure, “free market” kinds of economists, he says something like, “we live in an economy where consumers have to state their preferences and the market is actually a great clearing house and if people don't have the money to spend on something and it won't get produced, that's tough.” It's like the main founder of their school of political economy, Adam Smith, talked about “the invisible hand” and this is what he meant: the market acts as a way of equitably settling all these conflicting interests and the exchange of commodities. I think that we have to turn that around or, like Marx did with Hegel, stand it on its feet. In fact there is an “invisible hand” but it is not one that equitably resolves all this in some kind of abstract interest of everybody but in fact it is an invisible hand which operates in an anarchistic way. Only by removing the capitalists, by removing the social relations that they're the personification of, can we eliminate this invisible hand which keeps smacking people, and move society and mankind forward. I think that that concept of the invisible hand is a good one, but I think we have to stand it on its feet and explain it to people scientifically. That's really the point of this.

The question came up, for example, among the Auto Workers United to Fight, when they had their conference recently, there was recently a bit on TV that showed the big four auto com-

panies—the 3½ or whatever, the Big 3 and the little tyke—and it showed that sales of the Big 3 were all up X% (GM the most and what have you), but American Motors was off X%. American Motors workers have actually won some things in their contracts in the past that other workers are striving for right now, such as the right to strike over all grievances, literal voluntary overtime after 40 hours, not phony voluntary overtime, and a steward ratio of one steward for every 35 workers which is overall a good thing. What is happening is that American Motors is saying these things have to be taken away because they are losing out in the competition and they've already closed down a line, laid off a thousand workers in Milwaukee, and they're pushing a line that they're going to go out of business if the workers don't give up a lot of things. Of course the other auto companies are pushing a line that they have to compete and that they're going to fall behind if the workers don't give up a lot of things.

So potentially these guys are educating the workers, but only potentially. They are not in fact educating them directly. But they're providing us with a lot of raw material to educate the workers—that in fact there is an antagonistic relationship, that their interests even in the short run can only advance at the expense of ours, by taking it out of us. But more than that we have to show, and this is the important thing—this is the point that Marx made in lots of different places—that with these social relations whichever way we turn and however the fortunes of the capitalists go the position of the masses of workers worsens in the long run. In other words the more the capitalists accumulate at one pole there is the increase in suffering and poverty and degradation at the other.

That's a real thing, that's not something that was just true in the 19th century and not now. What do they do when they accumulate? Do they parcel it back out and build new homes for the workers? New schools and hospitals suddenly spring up directly in relation to the profit of the capitalists? This is not what happens at all. What happens is more machinery, the shifting of that capital that can't be profitably invested in the home market to other markets, and where it is invested in the home market it is not to raise the standard of living of the workers, although some concessions are granted in periods where that is possible, but much more so to introduce new machinery, speed-up, etc. And there is the long-term tendency of capital in the form of machinery (constant capital) to replace capital in the form of wages and workers hired and paid with those wages (variable capital).

What we talked about with the auto workers, particularly at American Motors was look, they're running the line that we have to save the company to save our jobs and we have to tell the

workers the cold and hard facts that there isn't any way in the world that we can guarantee that American Motors isn't going to go broke. We can do anything we want, in fact work for \$1 an hour and we still can't guarantee that American Motors won't go broke. We have to explain to them in a living way that there are laws that are much bigger than American Motors or even the auto industry. We have to take the stand that if they are going to go broke we'd rather have them go broke with us making \$7 an hour than with us making \$4 an hour—and with us in a stronger position to continue the fight against them as a class. We have a lot of perceptual knowledge in that case because a lot of the workers who worked at American Motors worked for Hudson in the '50s and they took \$1 an hour wage cut to "save" the company, and it went broke anyway and they had to transfer to Milwaukee.

Again what you have is these blind laws operating, this invisible hand scooped these people up and threw them down in Milwaukee. No matter how much they tried to save the company. The same thing happened in this Dayton plant that I talked about earlier and that's why there has been a lot of sharp struggle there. They were convinced five years ago to take a wage cut to save the plant, then they were hit with a layoff, then demands for a further wage cut. So again potentially the workers are being educated, but we've got to raise that to a rational, scientific understanding in the course of building struggle or else it gets turned into its opposite and people become further confused and demoralized.

Now I want to try to touch on a few more points here, then see if we can somehow tie this all together because I know it's gone from one point to another, but I'm trying to drive home the main thrust here and that is—how do we do revolutionary work when we don't have a revolutionary situation. On the question of necessity and objective conditions and forging freedom there's a quote from Mao Tsetung (in point three of the paper), sometimes people need change but subjectively they don't understand the need for the change. Now that can be understood in big ways as well as small ways. Sometimes people need to go on strike and they don't understand the need to and sometimes people need to go up to Labor Relations and argue with them up there and sometimes in an overall sense they need to turn the world upside down and they don't understand it. That can be viewed in a lot of different lights, but the principle is the same.

I think we have to understand the principle correctly. And that is, as Mao Tsetung said, we cannot introduce the change just because *we* understand that the masses need the change and objectively it is true that they need the change. We have to view things in terms of their opposites, dialectically. Like how do the masses weigh that change as against what other alternatives are im-

mediately before them? Even if we know that in the long run those alternatives are dead ends and illusory, how do we convince the masses of people of that? And you can neither do it by giving up and saying all right, you have an illusion, let's play along with it for a while and later on we'll raise the question that maybe these are illusions, because that only leads to demoralization. Nor can you do it by saying that's all an illusion and here's what has to be done and dammit do it.

The key phrase here that Mao says is that we should not make the change until *through our work* most of the people have become conscious of the need and are willing and determined to carry it out. I think what we especially need to say is through our work *and together with the development of the objective situation*, because those two go hand in hand. (I'm not calling Mao an idealist here. I don't think that was his point—independently of the conditions.) But I think we need to add, "together with the development of the objective conditions," at the same time we have to stress and underline "through our work." If you want to look overall at the problem in our Party—whether it is not taking conditions into account enough and making rash advances (which certainly happens), or taking them into account and being too conservative—the second is definitely the main danger we have to deal with. But we shouldn't flip from one to the other. There is no point and no interest to be served by replacing determinism by voluntarism, by replacing slavishness before conditions or the tendency towards it with the tendency to ignore conditions and think that you can by your will transform reality.

So we do have to emphasize the question of *through our work*. And again we have to emphasize the question of step by step, quality occurring within quantity and that there are stages within the development of things. In other words it is not only true that today the masses need to objectively turn the world upside down but they don't see the need for that. There's lots of other things that are part of building towards that objective that they need to do but which they don't yet see the need to do, and that of course occurs daily, that there are changes that need to be made, struggle that has to be built. The key to all this is that through our work, the method of our work needs to be the mass line.

But again, we can't simply divorce the immediate thing, any immediate battle, from the overall goal. In other words, it goes back to this thing about what's universal in one context becomes particular in another. This means, the way I understand it in the real world, that in the context of transforming all of society (which can be viewed as the universal) every particular battle that we engage in towards that goal is a particular. There is also a sense in which you can isolate the particular battle and say that that particular

battle is the universal—the battle to organize the union, the battle to win a strike, the battle against this or that police repression, whatever it might be. And then there are many particulars within that—the tactics of each battle. That's another application of the principle that what is universal in one context is particular in another, or you can say what is a strategy in one context is a tactic in another, whatever you will.

But the point that needs to be stressed most, overall, is that while we have to keep in mind that there are qualitative changes within the quantitative steps towards the revolutionary change we can never forget the big quantity to quality change that we are aiming towards—in other words, never forget the revolutionary goal. If we do it will affect the smaller battles because they are also dialectically related—whether we understand it or not, whether anyone wants it to be true or not—it is true that what you can achieve in changing the conditions of the masses for example is related to the big question of how society is going to be organized. There is no way to get around that. If we think we can plug along and just change conditions step by step without running up against the question of changing the whole way society is organized then we have forgotten some very basic things and we need to re-root ourselves in those basics. So while we have to take up these particulars, look at the question of quality within the quantitative build-up, we have to keep in mind always the general, sweeping goal and the big qualitative change that we are talking about.

Now part of this question of the objective situation we are dealing with, and one of the big questions, is the mood of the masses. That is something that I'm anxious to learn a lot more about and think I have a lot less to say than I have to listen to on that question, because I feel that all of us in general have to sum up a lot more and get a lot better collective understanding of where people are at. But one thing that I think we have to understand—well, there are several things—one is that this is not the period of the '60s. It is not the period of that same kind of movement, nor will that same kind of cycle repeat itself in the same way because that is not the way that things go—history repeating itself—it goes in spirals and each one is different.

In the July 4th [internal] bulletin it points out for example that twenty years ago we could not have had such a demonstration and a few years ago it couldn't have had the kind of class character that it did. I think that is a very important thing that has to do with the objective situation and the mood of the masses, viewing it dialectically. And here it is important to take note of—we have talked about this but I think we have to understand it better—the question of bourgeoisification of the working class and the concessions that the workers were able to win due to the position of our

rulers since the last world war. Like it says in this point four here about the idealism and how it's rightist in essence and misunderstands the section in the *MPR* on Orientation, and how it downgrades the role of theory and the role of the conscious element, etc. I think we have to understand this pretty deeply. The section on Orientation that's in the *MPR* is correct but I use the example that it is like a Janus-faced thing. In ancient mythology (that's where we get the word January from) Janus was this guy who had two faces, one looking one way and one looking the other, and that's why January was supposed to be the beginning of the new year and signalled the end of the last one.

This orientation question divides into two. The question of the working class being the only truly revolutionary class, that we've got to put both feet there, that's our orientation, and so on, was a question of relatively and not absolutely (and that's important to understand) slamming the door on a certain outlook and baggage and view that characterized that movement in the '60s, even though it generally had a progressive thrust. The question is on the one hand of breaking with the past, not in an absolute sense, and I think there is some idealism around that as I said before—that we did break with it in an absolute sense—but to break with that orientation, make a qualitative leap; then you're confronted with the question, "all right, that is the class that is going to do it, all right we're the outfit that's going to be the conscious leadership of that, now we have to look with cold eyes, straight at reality and where it's at."

You can see this in letters that Marx and Engels wrote. Where they were dealing with people like Bernstein and that school it would be like, "you don't like the dirty hands and the rough hands of the workers" and so on. Then they'd turn around and when they were dealing with a lot of idealism and romanticism about those people with dirty hands they would bend the stick quite the other way and talk about the "philistine British workers" and this and that. I don't think that's because they ever gave up their orientation that the working class is the revolutionary class in modern society, that they changed their minds about the historic mission. But exactly because you break with that petty bourgeois baggage, make a leap beyond it, you've got to look and say, all right now, we are the conscious forces, where, in political terms, is the army that we have to be the conscious forces of? How do we actually move it from where it is to where we have to go? We can't erect as a barrier to that kind of materialist analysis a lot of moralism.

I think a lot of that went along with the idealism around the time of the founding of the Party. A certain amount of that was inevitable because the way things develop is not in a straight line forward; they swing this way and they swing that way and you've

got to make those swings go forward each time. And when you hit at one thing, you've got to swing a little bit the other way. It's like Mao Tsetung said, you can't right a wrong unless you carry it to excess, but you better know when to turn the excess around or else the thing turns into its opposite. So you're hitting against these petty bourgeois tendencies that do not like the rough and dirty hands of the workers and who want to have one foot here (in the working class) and one foot there (in the petty bourgeoisie) like it says in the *MPR*; but on the other hand once you've hit at those petty bourgeois tendencies, you've got to be able to swing back and be able to look and say cold-heartedly, where are the masses of workers at? Where are they in their understanding? What is the objective situation?

Can we afford to be afraid to say that there has been a lot of bourgeoisification of the working class in this country over the past period? Do we have to kind of slink around and avoid saying that? Does that make us flip back to the old orientation if we understand that scientifically? I don't think so. As a matter of fact we can't carry out our role as the Party of the working class unless we are willing to be ruthlessly scientific about that. That doesn't mean, and Marx and Engels never meant when they talked about the bourgeoisification, the philistinism and stuff, "forget about these guys, Jesus, when we wrote about the working class we never had *these* guys in mind." That wasn't the point at all. Or to be intellectually superior to them and what have you.

The point we have to pay attention to is what is the objective situation? What has been the position of the rulers of the country we're in? What freedom has that given them in the face of the struggle of the workers? What consciousness do the workers have? You can't hardly talk to an older worker without him telling you that even today things are better than they were in the '30s for example, even if he says things are headed toward another great depression. And that's objectively true. That doesn't mean that we have to bow down before that and say "OK, when they get worse we'll talk to you," or anything like that. But it means that we have to understand what is going on.

On the other hand we have to understand it *dialectically*—which we pointed out in the polemics against the Bundist-dogmatists. On the one hand there has been the bourgeoisification; on the other hand there has been a decline of U.S. imperialism and an undercutting of the ability of the imperialists to bourgeoisify. Which one of them is the aspect that we have to grab hold of, not just because it is the one we like better, which one is the one we have to grab hold of because in the real world it's the one that is the principal aspect—the aspect that is determining the nature and development of the contradiction—at this time, and the one that's rising

and developing? It's the decline and it's the undercutting of that bourgeoisification, not the fact of bourgeoisification.

But the question of principal aspect has to be dealt with dialectically, too. Just because you grab hold of the principal aspect and recognize that it is what's rising and developing doesn't mean that you can obliterate the other aspect or fail to take into account the fact that a lot of the questions of the need to rise up and struggle and to take matters into our own hands, a lot of this thinking is new to a lot of workers, or it's like dusting off old thoughts which people maybe thought didn't have to be thought again. There's going to be a lot of demoralization unless we do approach this scientifically and understand exactly where things are at. I think this is not a thing which is going to lead us or should lead us, if we do it dialectically and are materialistic about it, to further demoralization, but to less. It is not going to lead us in the direction of tailing behind the spontaneous tendencies of the masses but is going to in fact give us a firmer basis and greater understanding of the need to link up with, yes, but to *lead* the masses of workers, not tail behind them. And to struggle in a way that fellow workers struggle about where the future is going and how do you really sum up the history of where things have been, why are we having the problems we are having now and what's the answer to them? Is it to make the "good old U.S." number one again or is it to change the whole social relations?

These are big questions out there and if we tremble and close our eyes to them or bury our heads in the sand it's not going to make the questions go away or change the mood of the masses one bit, it's only going to allow the enemy to change things in a more backward direction, which doesn't mean that the inevitable is not inevitable and won't occur, but it will have to occur in another spiral. And, if over the long run we persist in this kind of idealism, we will degenerate and yet another time the Party of the working class will have to be formed to lead the struggle to revolution. That's just how basic this question is. This question of the idealism and the kind of moralistic way of looking at that Orientation section is something that has existed, to one degree or another, on every level of the Party. The point is not that some people have bad ideas and some of us knew better. That is not the point. The point is to sum up tendencies in general that exist throughout the Party.

In a certain way we negated the old petty bourgeois style of doing political work and a lot of moralism around the national question, a lot of Bundism, etc. (tailing after bourgeois nationalism), we negated it all right, but so far it's been a single level negation by and large. A negation tending towards a lot of strong economist tendencies, that the way not to do petty bourgeois political work is not to



do political work at all. Of course in the past the tendency towards tailing after bourgeois nationalism and towards petty bourgeois political work was often coupled with straight out economist work when we did take up the trade union struggle. The difference is that now we're overwhelmingly concentrating ourselves and correctly so, in linking up with the actual day to day struggle. But I think there has been an undeniable tendency to narrow the scope of our work. That's why we've had the mass line articles written in the way they have been, that's why I wrote the article that I did. [Pamphlet *The Mass Line* and article "The Day to Day Struggle and the Revolutionary Goal," referred to earlier.]

And I think that one thing that needs to be deepened (and we discussed it on the standing bodies, but it needs to be deepened throughout the whole Party) is *why* is the center of gravity the center of gravity? Why are we concentrating our forces there? And what are we trying to accomplish by concentrating our forces there? I spoke to that in a fair amount in that article that I wrote and I don't want to repeat all that, but I think the point is the center of gravity is the center of gravity because that is where in fact the workers, *as workers*, are waging their battles and in the embryonic way they are beginning to develop a sense of themselves as *workers* by fighting against an opposing group of employers, the way the *Programme* puts it. That's not the same thing as class consciousness and we shouldn't think that it is, or that the workers will achieve the class consciousness simply in these struggles, no matter how well we do our work there. No matter how correctly we carry out agitation and exposure and propaganda around those struggles, they will not achieve class consciousness if we simply limit our forces to that.

So what needs to happen—and I think we began to do it with July 4th and a lot of the line struggle that went on around building it—is that we need a further negation to carrying out the strictly Marxist kind of work. We have to learn on the one hand how to concentrate our work where the workers are, recognizing in fact that they are waging their main battles in the economic struggles and that it is there that presently they do begin to have that social character of a class engaged in struggle with the opposing class. We must concentrate our work there—but at the same time learn to play the piano, be able to work in the best way among all strata, in every major struggle against the enemy. We must concentrate our work in the working class itself in those battles but at the same time be able, as the *Programme* says, to develop the working class movement in the fight against all oppression, be able to focus in on major questions confronting the whole class and other sections of the people, the major battles, and develop them, using the single

spark method\*, into campaigns of the whole class.

I think again around July 4th we began to sharpen some of this and understand that it was correct to negate petty bourgeois political work, moralism around the national question, etc., but we can't make a single level negation to have moralism about the working class. Moralism about the working class in the sense of not to ever say workers are backwards about any questions. A moralistic view of the question rather than a scientific one, doesn't see the class in its potential, its historical mission, and ties in with the whole kind of revenge idea which will lead—even if you do temporarily turn the world upside down—will lead to its being turned back again. If your basic world view is simply that the workers are better than the capitalists—and you can even extend it if you want to say that they are better than the capitalists and therefore they deserve to rule—all it will lead to is new bourgeois forces emerging from within the working class. Rather than the correct materialist view that our class occupies a certain position, has a certain relation to the productive forces and to the development of society and a certain role to carry out that's qualitatively different than any previous group in society. Unless that's what guides us in our orientation we're going to be falling into right errors time and time again.

Actually facing where the class is, summing up more deeply what the mood is, the contradictory moods and ideas that exist, and being able to apply the materialist and dialectical method will lead to less tailing, not to more tailing, and more to relying on the masses of people—in the correct, political, scientific sense—rather than to less relying on the masses of people. Because if we try to rely on that moralistic, religious faith we're going to get burned out and people are going to get demoralized real quick and there has already been some of that. On the other hand in examining the mood of the masses and the development of the struggle, one thing to keep in mind as a very important point is the question of uneven development, which doesn't only apply to contradictions between imperialist countries, but applies to things in general. Things do not develop in a straight line and we have to arm the workers with this understanding, and it's linked to the single spark method, too. In other words, even on the level of the economic struggle, for example, viewing it from the point of view of the workers as a whole, the workers push forward in the coal fields and then they're push-

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\*The *Programme* of the RCP describes this single spark method as follows: "to mobilize the masses of workers to take matters into their own hands and wage a blow for blow struggle against the enemy, inside and outside the unions. To seize on every spark of struggle, fan and spread it as broadly as possible throughout the working class and among its allies. To build every possible struggle and build off of it to launch new struggles. And through the course of this to fan every spark of consciousness, to identify and isolate the bourgeoisie and its agents, and unite all struggles against this enemy. (p. 106-7)

ed back and then somewhere else they push forward—in the rubber industry—and then they're pushed back in certain ways. It doesn't go down that the whole working class advances as one wave together simultaneously like that, nor does any section of the working class advance consistently forward without going backwards and forwards. That's the whole key to the single spark method, we have to be able at any given time to see where the advances are coming and to be able to turn those into advances for the whole class both in terms of winning as much as can be won and in terms of *all* the objectives, in terms of raising the general level of consciousness and in terms of training and finding in the course of these battles those who can become conscious forces and conscious leaders. To do this we have to arm our own ranks and we have to arm the masses with the understanding that things go forward here and then back and forward and then back—but the overall direction is *forward*.

There isn't going to be a July 4th demonstration every week or every month or even every year. There was a certain sentiment, not only among our own ranks, but among the workers, kind of like "well, Jesus, what do we do now? That was a great thing, I wish we could have another one of those things. Now I've got to confront the problem in my shop where 98% of the people didn't go and 75% aren't that interested in what happened there, or 50% or whatever it is." And I've heard it raised among some of the Party members, like "I wish we had July 4th every month so we could do political work," instead of understanding that we have to find the ways in every battle to do Marxist work. Yes, there are political struggles like that [July 4th] and I think that another thing we can accomplish by negating the negation is to do away with this refusal to distinguish between economic and political struggle, because there is economic struggle and there is political struggle. The point of that is not to say that one is "better" than the other. But I think that there are things which by definition do involve broader strata, which do involve struggle with the bourgeoisie in a more broad way about their basic policies and get more towards the question of how the society is run. The point however is that we have to wage political as well as the economic struggle, and that in every struggle we wage, among whatever strata, while concentrating in the economic struggles of the workers at this time, we have to do it in a strictly Marxist way.

Now I want to try to conclude here because we have to meet a schedule. Having said all that I have, I want to conclude by talking especially about, and re-emphasizing again, the question of looking to the qualitative changes within the quantitative build-up for the big qualitative change. In line with this I want to first of all put out one thing which we want to discuss in the meeting: We

have discussed this on the standing bodies and felt that it was something that we could and should aim for. It arose out of an article—an interview I think it was—that appeared in the newspaper for the Cleveland and Northeast Ohio area. There was an interview with a couple of workers and one of them said in the course of or at the end of the interview—they were talking about what they had learned, the inspiration they had gotten from July 4th—and one of them said, “What I would like to see next year is a meeting of workers from all over the country.”

That got us to thinking. And what we felt we should be building for and aiming for—and that it’s realistic—is not just a mass meeting in general, but a mass meeting of workers from all around the country to actually form a national organization of workers. Now this is something we feel is not idealistic or a pipe dream. We don’t think it’s something that has to wait until every area has an area-wide IWO\*, just like area-wide IWOs don’t have to wait until every industry has one. But we do think that we have to make every gain that we can in strengthening the industry ones and in building area ones (and I don’t want to get into a long thing on that now because we’ll discuss it later in the meeting, according to the agenda). But this is an example of the kind of thing of making qualitative advances within the quantitative advances.

The key to it we feel is a political question, not the question of do we have the ties and contacts, but the political question of can we bring home to workers who would be the base of this organization and consolidate in their understanding the question of what it means for the working class to take up and lead the fight against all oppression, to infuse its strength, discipline and outlook into every battle and to develop key struggles into campaigns of the class? Because if we can politically solve that question we can develop such an organization. If we can’t solve it, not only can we not develop such an organization, but our work on other levels is going to suffer for it, too. So we think this is an example of

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\*IWO refers to “intermediate workers’ organizations”—that is, organizations of workers that are “intermediate between the Party and the trade unions (and other similar mass organizations of workers).” (*Programme* of the RCP, p. 109.) The Party’s *Programme* points out that “These organizations act as conveyor belts linking the Party with the class as a whole. They are one important organizational form in which communists can unite with advanced workers to build the united front against imperialism under proletarian leadership and develop into communists the advanced workers who continually come forward in struggle.” (*Programme*, *ibid.*) In fact the establishment of such a national organization of workers was achieved with the founding of the National United Workers Organization (NUWO) in Chicago Labor Day weekend, 1977 at a conference attended by nearly 1500. This was an important advance for the working class, despite the interference and sabotage of the revisionist clique within the RCP, which first attacked and then tried to pervert for their own reformist and reactionary purposes the building of this organization.

qualitative change within the quantitative build-up and something that we can and should and hopefully will struggle hard to build for, sometime probably late next summer.

There are other points that I could make but I'm sure in the course of the discussion that they'll come out so I just want to end on this one point here. That's this question about keeping to the high road. I think that in talking about Comrade Gert Alexander\* this was something that characterized her whole life and her role in the movement and I think it's something that has to characterize any group that seeks to play the role that we have to play.

In analyzing the question of the collapse of the Second International and why all these groups ended up in cowardly betrayal (or almost all of them) and fell in line with their own rulers, Lenin showed how the roots of this lay in the long-standing policy of class collaboration and compared it to an abscess which is building up, and again the qualitative leap came when the war broke out and that burst the abscess and there was no way at that point that you could eliminate the infection, you had to sever yourself from those that were infected in that way and for whom the abscess had burst. I think that we have to understand the similarities and differences with our own situation.

The similarity is in the objective development of things. Lenin showed how in the period really since the 1870s, with the development of this system into its highest stage, there was again a period of relatively peaceful development—development of monopolies, the grabbing of colonies, etc. It was a period in which the struggle between classes was not eliminated, in fact it was sometimes sharp—but nevertheless it was another one of those non-revolutionary situations as opposed to a ripened situation, a non-ripe situation, and one that was a protracted non-ripe situation, characterized by the growing strength of the monopolies and of the ruling classes in those countries.

So the similarity lies in the question of the relatively protracted period of non-ripe situation and a growing strength, relatively, of the ruling classes. However what is different from that period to this is that the situation then was that the groups that belonged to the Second International, the Social-Democrats, had in most cases—though not so in the case of Russia, but in the more “democratic” countries especially—had established themselves as leaders of large unions, had won positions in parliament and so on. This became—not inevitably, but in dialectical relation with their outlook—it became the basis of their class collaboration. Lenin never said that it was inevitable that they developed class collaborationist policies because they had people in parliament and led the unions. But he pointed out that unless they waged a strug-

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\*A veteran comrade who died in April, 1976.

gle and rooted themselves among the masses of workers and understood that this peaceful development could only be temporary—even if it lasted for several decades—that they were bound to degenerate.

The difference though, between that situation and ours today is that it has not been the case with the development of the struggle in the imperialist countries over the last period that the newly emerged Marxist-Leninist forces—those who stand, or claim to stand, on the basis of Mao Tsetung Thought—are in the position where they have a large base in the working class, developed leadership over a large section of it in the form of trade unions, positions in parliament, what have you. (Of course revisionist parties in several countries are in this position, but their “abscess” has long since burst, and for some time there has been no question of unity between them and genuine Marxist-Leninist forces as there was with the Social-Democrats before WW 1.) In fact, these new Marxist-Leninist forces have grown out of basically a non-proletarian movement and have been confronted with the question of how to establish a base in the proletariat. And they have been confronted with it in a situation which increasingly, in the past few years, has been marked not only by the restoration of capitalism in the USSR, but by the real emergence and pushing out of that country together with the decline of this country—the two growing hand in hand—the growing contention, and the prospect looming on the horizon clearer and clearer in the immediate period ahead—by that I mean more like five to ten years than 30 or 40—of that leading to world war.

In the face of this the overall problem is how do you make that break, how do you make that leap, coming from the kind of movement that characterized not only this country but most of the same kind of countries in the '60s, the general question is how do you make that leap to actually link up and establish a base in the working class while continuing on the road towards the final goal. That has been an overall and difficult problem that most of these groups wreck their ships on the rocks of. Now a particular form that this is taking is saying, “we don't have time for that, we don't have time to dig roots, to link up with the mass workers struggles, to do the patient day to day work and so on because the world is going to go up in smoke and the tanks are going to roll this way and China is going to be attacked before we can develop any base, the parties loyal to the Soviet social-imperialists have too strong a hold on the working class and therefore we don't have time for that so we have to find some other way.” It's the panicking in the face of this and the giving up on persevering in the correct kind of work because you look at the situation and you see what's looming and say we don't have time.

This is exactly how the point of sticking to the high road is linked to the question of understanding, yes, the question of quality within quantity, but also the question of the big change and as Lenin said the possibility of an immediate or very quick change from a non-ripe to a ripe situation. And that even if when the outbreak of such a world war occurs there is not yet a revolutionary situation and you don't have such wide and deep roots, if you've been carrying out the kind of policies that the Bolsheviks carried out and that we're talking about carrying out—making every possible link with every struggle, carrying out the three objectives—then, when the situation changes, not only can the objective situation change dramatically and the mood of the masses change dramatically—but the position of the subjective forces can change dramatically. (That's the point of Lenin's statement about how the Bolsheviks were laughed at before the 1905 revolution—were called a small sect, with several hundred this and several thousand that, etc.—see point six in the paper).

For example, the Bolsheviks grew by 10 times in the period of six months when the situation ripened fully in the period of 1917 (they also grew tremendously in the period of 1905 as Lenin pointed out.) And it was because they had carried out that kind of line that they were able to bring those who came forward into their ranks and to place those who had been trained during the other period at the head of the working class and to bring with them the working people in Russia in their great majority. They seized the time exactly because they had stuck to this policy and hadn't said "oh well, we don't have time, things are just shaping up too fast." It wasn't even until after 1912 that the Bolsheviks really got back on their feet. They suffered a tremendous defeat in the revolution of 1905. From 1908 to 1912 there were desertions in every which way, among intellectuals, demoralization even among the workers who had been in there and so on. I think the key to understand all this is that that situation can not only change dramatically in terms of the objective situation but along with that if we've laid the basis for it, the subjective forces can change tremendously and can seize the opportunity when it is ripe. And if they don't they will throw away the opportunity when it is ripe.

So the point that I want to conclude on is—it's not a question of memorializing or raising to a principle being small, or taking a stupid line like "we must try to see that in every area the Party is as small as possible." That's not the point. The point is that there are objective laws of development and we do in a sense have to uphold what objectively will make us relatively small for a period of time—as compared to bourgeois parties, social democratic groupings that may arise, whatever—while trying to be as large as we can on the correct basis at any given time. And the way we do

that, like I said, is by linking up with every battle and striving to fulfill the three objectives: or to put it another way, while being relatively small, for a period ahead (we can't predict for how long), how do we *wage big battles* together with the masses? How can we be relatively small and be able to unite with millions, not around our full *Programme* but around whatever are the main questions confronting the masses and the things that can be turned into campaigns? How do we apply that principle of uniting all who can be united, marshal and concentrate our forces, infuse the strength, discipline and revolutionary outlook of the working class and wage big battles, both in terms of what they represent politically and in terms of the masses who are drawn into them? How do we recognize that we are going to be relatively small but at the same time consistently strengthen our own ranks both in the sense that we add to them, bring forth out of these battles new people, bring them closer and bring them into the Party; and also that we become stronger in the sense that ideologically, politically and organizationally the numbers that we do have are strengthened? So that's the key question.

That's what's meant by sticking to the high road. And I think that's a tough road to take, but it's the only one, as I tried to point out, that will in fact lead us to resolving this thing in the only way that it can be resolved. It's the only way that another group won't have to come behind and say, "well, we have to sum up their negative experiences and learn not to fall into the pitfalls that they fell into." I don't think we were joking when we said this is the second time the Party of the working class has been formed in this country and it's going to be the last time. And I think it's true what it says in the paper about this being the spiral that may lead to the development of a revolutionary situation in this country. It's going to raise at least the prospect in many countries and very possibly in this country the prospect of the ripening of that situation. And whether that comes sooner or whether that comes later it's a question of waging big battles and strengthening our own ranks, making every possible link and carrying out the three objectives and persevering in that road until we achieve victory.

So I'll conclude these remarks with that.



# SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS OF DISCUSSION AND DECISIONS OF CC MEETING

## Two Campaigns Around Line, Propaganda, Agitation and Party Building

The meeting summed up that the launching of the campaigns around mass line and the international situation has been an important advance, that these two questions are in fact the key ones today for the whole Party and advanced people around us to be struggling over for higher understanding, and that the use of *Revolution* to promote these campaigns had further improved its role in giving leadership to the advanced section of the class. Still, it was agreed that there were real and important weaknesses in how these campaigns have been taken up throughout the Party, and that this must be changed if we are to have more than just a series of articles but a real campaign involving the whole Party and many around us.

### The Mass Line

In order to really develop this question into a campaign, it is necessary to discuss *why* we are taking up the mass line in the first place. Failing this, a tendency has arisen to approach the mass line as simply a set of techniques or tactics to advance the struggle. This is not the point. This misunderstanding has resulted in a tendency to see the March 1976 article (on methods) as more important than the first article in December 1975.

In order to correctly grasp the real significance of *all* these articles and really apply the mass line, it is important to see the points raised in the first article as basic. It takes up the question of why the mass line is a revolutionary weapon, not a gimmick. It is the method to use in resolving the contradiction between the inevitability of revolution and the fact that today the broad masses are not convinced of the necessity of revolution. It is based on the fact that independent of anyone's wishes, capitalism inevitably produces exploitation, oppression, crisis, and war.

Taking up the mass line means taking up how to root our actions and policies more and more in an understanding of the laws of capitalism and the class struggle, so we can develop tactics, but more importantly so we can guide the struggle towards its inevitable goal of revolution. This means, as the articles point out, carrying out all three objectives in the course of struggle, not just

the first one or two, in order to maximize the gains at every point in the struggle in preparing for the final goal.

With this in mind the body took up the need to improve our work with the advanced, and the general question of Party building, which, it was pointed out, did not end with the formation of the Party. The importance of the summation of work with the advanced called for in the last national [internal] bulletin was stressed. So was the need to pay more attention to the theoretical struggle, including training the advanced forces in the science of revolution in the course of struggle.

It was decided that bodies on all levels should specifically sum up where things stand on recruitment and make concrete plans to push ahead on this front. While we do not have a revisionist "open-door" policy of bringing in everyone who wants to fight the capitalists, it was pointed out that neither should we erect all sorts of unnecessary barriers to bringing in new members, especially workers. We should recruit workers who have a basic and firm understanding of the main points of the *Programme*: of the need for the working class to overthrow capitalism and move on to classless society, of the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat, of the need for a Party and its role in the struggle, of the existence of a science, Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, that explains the laws of nature and society and is the key to mastering these laws and a determination to grasp and thoroughly and consistently apply this science. (This does mean, for example, that if people still believe in God, they should be struggled with over this—but holding such beliefs means they are not yet ready to be communists.) We should lay out to advanced people the need to join the Party, and discuss with them a concrete plan for recruitment, including some study and discussion. But we should also understand that the main bulk of people's training will be better carried out inside the Party.

In the light of all this there was discussion of the development and use of *Revolution*, and other Party propaganda including pamphlets. It was agreed that there had been real improvements in *Revolution*, particularly in linking theory with practice, and that comrades welcomed this and increasingly saw the paper as a source of guidance for their work and study. While there must be still more improvements in the paper, the key link now is getting down on the problem, in many cases a growing problem, of unsystematic use of *Revolution* both internally and externally. In part, this is an organizational problem, and specific steps must be taken in every unit to organize distribution and finances. But mainly it is a political question. The point is not to make the main task of the Party newspaper vending, or to bog everyone down in discussion of all the articles. The real need is to arm the whole Party and all the advanced with a clearer understand-

ding of the role of *Revolution* as the organ of the CC, as a collective propagandist and organizer that puts out the line of the Party on major questions, and explains the basis of these lines and policies and questions of theory. Carrying this out is closely linked to more firmly grasping the need to train the advanced in the science of revolution in the course of struggle, to explain the basis and thinking behind the actions and policies we adopt. All this is what *Revolution* and other Party propaganda are aimed at doing.

There was also discussion of the role of agitation and exposure and, in particular, the local *Workers*. The need to grasp what Lenin meant by communists being "tribunes of the people" was stressed, together with the key role of broad agitation, of political exposures, of strictly Marxist materialist analysis bringing out the class relations behind all events in society, and revealing the dark forces behind them. In this light there was evaluation of the local *Workers*. There has been real progress in the development of more than 20 such papers, in their transformation into voices of the Party, and the establishment of a central news service.

Still there are problems, the key one being weaknesses in carrying out political exposures, particularly locally. Though there have been exceptions, the general trend has been for the papers to consist of news service articles—some propaganda, some national political articles and some on economic battles—plus local articles mainly consisting of "work reports" from where we are and articles cheering on the workers in their local economic battles. This undermines the ability of these papers to fill their potential as a key local force—the voice of the Party, the voice of the working class around every important struggle and social question in the area. Combined with some propaganda articles and news service articles that do exposures in a sharper way, still more directed to the actual questions of the masses, these changes will help the papers play an important role in stirring the workers' interest and raising their class consciousness, and guiding their struggle.

In order to play this role, it is important for the political exposures in these papers to be timely. For this reason it was decided that steps must be taken so that within six months to a year many of these local papers come out every two weeks. And we must aim within a year after that to have weekly papers. Obviously a number of steps, including further development of the news service, are necessary to make this possible. But most important is solving the problem of distribution and political use of the papers. In order to avoid breaking the comrades' backs or turning everyone into nothing but newspaper salesmen, new methods of distribution must be developed, but even more crucial these papers and the kind of political exposure they must do must become much more a part of the daily work of everyone where they are doing

their main work.

### Campaign on the International Situation, War and Revolution

The discussion at the meeting brought out the need to go much deeper and more thoroughly into this campaign and the questions raised by it. In general this has been an even greater weakness in the Party than the mass line campaign. It was agreed that an understanding that the world is headed toward war, deeper crisis and the potential for revolutionary struggle leads to the conclusion that the line we take today, the steps we take in preparing, in agitation, in training and educating our ranks and the advanced are crucial in determining our ability to advance the revolutionary interests of the class during a war.

The discussion also brought out the need to go beyond the basic beginning of a simple class stand and class hatred for the bourgeoisie around war and deepen this into a real class understanding of a complicated situation. This stands out clearly today in understanding our line and policies and those of the Chinese. While we can and do agree with the Chinese foreign policy of giving emphasis in the realm of state to state relations to making use of contradictions between capitalist countries, opposing both super-powers but giving special emphasis to opposing the Soviets who pose a special threat to China, we cannot fall into the trap of making this our general line for revolution in the U.S. We do not agree with the line of OL and a number of Western European groups to substitute this foreign policy (or some interpretation of it) for the development of a revolutionary strategy in a Western imperialist country. Given that both are based on genuine proletarian internationalism, the contradictions between the tasks of a socialist country and a proletariat out of power will not be antagonistic and will both contribute to world-wide proletarian revolution.

The CC united on the call for a conference to widely debate these questions, now scheduled for New York on October 16.\* Building for this conference must be the task of the whole Party—in building for it we will concentrate our work among non-proletarian strata (and in the general geographic area where it's being held), but we must work to bring advanced workers and politically prepare them for the conference (especially in the general area and near-by areas.)

The body also summed up that a failure to understand these questions and their importance, linked to economist tendencies, had already resulted in shortcomings in our daily practical work—for example a failure to do as much as we could have in taking out and mobilizing around our line on Angola, Korea, and

\*That conference was actually held on November 20, attended by 2300. Similar conferences were held shortly after on the West Coast, with nearly 2000 attending.

We should discuss and more firmly grasp *why* we are taking up both these campaigns around line—why, together with the general question of carrying out all three objectives, they are important to maximizing our gains now in order to be prepared to seize the revolutionary opportunity.

### IWO's

In the past year there has been further development in our experience in building IWO's [intermediate workers' organizations], industry and area-wide. Area-wide groups now exist in the Bay Area, New York and Milwaukee. More industrial IWO's have been built and national newsletters are being established in some key industries.

Out of this some questions have arisen which need to be more thoroughly summed up. First why does the *Programme* state "Their overall role is to apply the single spark method to take up the most important battles that workers are involved in, together with key battles of other sections of the people against the ruling class, mobilize the masses of workers in these struggles and develop them into campaigns of the working class"? Second, what is the reason for IWO's to be based in the plants and for area-wide groups to have industrial sections? This understanding of "overall role" and the slogan that best sums it up "Workers unite to lead the fight against all oppression" is crucial to winning workers to understand concretely the powerful role these organizations can play. It is also crucial in avoiding the economist error of making the shop struggle everything, or the "left" error of making these organizations united around some kind of ideological "revolutionary stand." It is a question of uniting workers as a class to fight against a broad range of abuses they feel in the shops and throughout society, and through this bringing the strength of the working class into these social battles and developing class consciousness.

Light is shed on these questions by the experience of the Bay Area and NY-NJ groups which have continued to make some errors of the type in the two journal articles\* "M1WO" and "Clarify" which exaggerated and crystallized real tendencies in the work. In the Bay Area, the M1WO still has no industrial sections and consists mainly of periodic meetings through which the Party tries to mobilize workers around specific campaigns it decides on. At the same time there exist a number of ongoing caucuses mainly leading economic struggle. This fails to fully

\*This refers to articles in the internal journal used as a basis for discussion and struggle leading up to the Founding Congress of the RCP. "M1WO" refers to the May 1st Workers Organization in the San Francisco Bay Area, and "Clarify" to an article written by some former Party members in the New York/New Jersey area, projecting some ideas from their experience in building IWOs there.

release and develop the initiative of the workers and is an organizational reflection of the theory of stages: economic struggle in the shops for the masses; political struggle for the Party and a handful of advanced.

In NY-NJ the UWO has established a number of industrial sections, but has not developed based on applying the correct understanding of "overall role." Instead there have been some economist and syndicalist tendencies—as in the decision last winter to make the main campaign of the UWO the fight against "the bosses' productivity drive." Today this is an attack and a battle shop by shop, and there can be no real meaning to making it a class wide campaign. This kind of line reduces an area-wide IWO into a coordinating center for industrial sections, not a class-wide, industry-based group. From this experience it is important to sum up why and how the whole of a class campaign (and the class struggle for that matter) is greater than the total of its parts.

The body also discussed the question of what makes an IWO a "real" organization, as opposed to a concoction of ours that is only a hollow shell involving no workers. This is especially important given the fact there are bound to be ebbs and flows of activity and membership, with changes in condition. An IWO is becoming real in an industry or area as it begins to be seen as a *social force*—a kind of proletarian pole—which is looked to and involves more workers beyond a core as battles arise. This is in turn dialectically related to the development of a core, which becomes larger and more solid through our political work and struggle with people to raise their consciousness and their *sense of organization*. As this process goes on the number of people who see this organization as their own and act on this perception will grow. This is the path we have to stick to, rather than just plodding along as if no results are fine, or on the other hand giving up and abandoning this path, retreating on the idea of IWO's, in the face of difficulties or setbacks.

The CC also summed up that, linked with economist tendencies, there had been a real problem in many areas of postponing off into the indefinite future the task of building IWO's. Concrete plans taking local conditions into account need to be made, but there is no predetermined set of stages to be gone through before an IWO can be built. And the task of forming and building these organizations is a real and specific task that must be taken up in the course of building struggles and campaigns in an area or industry, even where building or working in caucuses\* is an indicated step.

\* Caucuses are rank and file organizations of the workers which are generally less permanent and more limited in scope than intermediate workers' organizations. The *Programme* of the RCP discusses in some detail the nature of, and differences between, various forms of working class organization and their relationship to the overall struggle of the working class. See particularly pages 107-110.

The meeting also took up the question of a nationwide intermediate workers organization, which is gone into later in this report.

### Struggles Around Unionization

There was discussion about the need to take up the task of unionization in certain key industries, not as an end in itself but as part of the broader working class struggle.

*Amalgamation.* The body agreed on the need to raise amalgamation into one union as a point for agitation in the electrical/electronics industry. Seen in this light, and not as an end in itself or even as the main and constant content of our work in this industry, amalgamation can help build struggle, expose the hacks, and be part of a program that builds unity among workers in this industry.

The reason for raising this slogan in this industry, even while we have opposed some of the merger moves by hacks in other unions who seek financial gain and tighter control over the rank and file, has to do with the particularities of this industry. It can be considered one industry and generally is by workers in areas where different branches of it exist—all this in spite of the fact there are many unions and different actual sections of the industry. The hacks continue to carve at each other—at the expense of the rank and file. And there is real sentiment about the need for unity in a generally unionized industry where open shops are common, wages are overall low and some plants have 15 or more union locals in them.

Amalgamation can be one way of bringing out the class interests of the rank and file as opposed to the class interests of the hacks and companies.

We have no exact plan for amalgamation. That will have to develop out of the concretes of struggle. It could mean amalgamating into one of the existing unions, into a new AFL-CIO union, or the formation of an independent union uniting the bulk of the workers. In any case it could mean something radically different than exists now, and it would mean openly battling every step of the way for a class struggle union under rank and file control.

Amalgamation now is mainly an agitational slogan. But taking it up now would indicate other concrete steps. We should develop one nationwide newsletter, taking up all the questions facing workers in this industry, including amalgamation. Eventually we should aim for one IWO for all sections of this industry. But its main content now would be agitation in the course of concrete battles for unity in struggle—raising for example demands for common expiration dates, common rank and file meetings around contracts, and the principle that no one works while others are out on strike.

### Organize the Unorganized

The CC also discussed the question of organizing the unorganized and the need to make particular breakthroughs on this as a spark to the overall class struggle. The importance of taking these battles up from the beginning as a part of the class struggle, and not some separate, economist stage of unionization was stressed.

One of the questions gone into was the need to approach the question of what kind of union—i.e. independent or AFL-CIO—from this political perspective as well as by making a concrete analysis of concrete conditions—what are the real possibilities, what are the sentiments of the workers? etc. We are against dual unionism—which means ripping the advanced out of already existing unions and isolating them from the masses of workers—but this must not be confused with closing off our options in advance, or with viewing the AFL-CIO as “the center” of the current movement and struggles of the working class. Taking this kind of blanket view in advance would amount to “reducing the class struggle to the struggle for control of the unions” and not to the policy of “building its [working class] strength in the unions as part of building its revolutionary movement.” (*Programme*, p. 110)

No matter what approach is decided on in a particular case, the struggle for unionization must be put from jump in the context of the bigger class battle—including making it a question for IWO's and forming new IWO's. We must gain experience in uniting with broad sentiments, while from the beginning putting out an advanced line. This will make these struggles tougher, including subjecting them to more red-baiting. But this approach will help make these battles real political advances for the class, and not “just another union drive” as the union officials see it.

### Youth Work

In the course of this past year, especially the last few months, we have made real advances in assigning forces to this work, in building the beginnings of organization, and in bringing a significant number of working class youth to the Fourth [July 4th demonstration]. Even though many of these youth were new, a significant number showed enthusiasm for further organization and struggle.

All this and the experience gained in building organizations like Youth in Action is a very good first step. But it also must be noted that a tendency has arisen that would have the effect of trying to consolidate these current organizations and put off the formation of a Young Communist League (YCL) into the rather distant future. This has come out among other ways, in the fact that “YIA” has become almost a single



nationwide name for these groups and in a proposal to develop a newsletter linking these groups. It is wrong to think we can consolidate such an organization of youth nationwide, or even in any area for long, especially in the absence of a YCL.

Instead the CC decided that we should aim to found a YCL sometime in the spring.\* This means the work now has to be unfolded around the task of building the YCL, not mainly how to build the struggle of youth—though, with this proper perspective, struggles of youth should be built in this period.

In general the YCL must be an organization based both among students and working class youth in the neighborhoods—though we must be working to build the YCL with its main base among working class youth. It must have a life of its own and at the same time take its lead from the Party. The main glue holding it together must be its communist character, not some particular struggles of youth. At the same time the kind of communist organization it is must be determined by the particular qualities of youth—their particular needs, their daring, questioning, searching for answers and a life with a purpose—and take into account their inexperience, less discipline than stable workers, etc. This means that the YCL must not be mainly a “needs of youth” group, but a revolutionary communist, turn-the-world-upside-down group.

This has a number of implications for the work now. We must not have struggle and action on the one hand, and then portray Marxism as something dry and abstract for a study group off to the side. Instead we should learn from some of the positive aspects and experience of groups like the Panthers [Black Panther Party] and the Lords [Young Lords Party] in their early period and find the forms to make theory and study a mass question, a regular group activity of the youth. All this is sure to lead to red-baiting, but especially among youth our approach must be to find the ways to turn this around and appeal to the feelings that “If the authorities think it’s so bad, there must be something to this communism.”

Building the YCL also means uniting the RSB† and the working class youth. While it has been correct to emphasize the need to develop a core of working class youth, this must not be seen undialectically and a line taken that there must be some near majority of working class youth before a YCL is founded. Still, even after

\*This decision did (after considerable struggle against a revisionist line on youth and students put forward by the Mensheviks then within the RCP) culminate in the formation of the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade. For a thorough analysis of the struggle leading up to the formation of the RCYB, see the pamphlet *Communism and Revolution Vs. Revisionism and Reformism In the Struggle to Build the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade*, RCP Publications, 1978.

†This refers to the Revolutionary Student Brigade, under the leadership of the RCP, not the political mummy now headed up by the renegades from the RCP. With the founding of the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade (RCYB) in November, 1977, the RSB went out of existence.

the YCL exists, the tasks among neighborhood and students will differ somewhat. Reflecting that now, the student newspaper *Fight Back*\* must continue, and an additional communist newsletter must be developed, aimed mainly at the advanced youth (though RSB members should also get it) and serving as an organizer for the YCL. Once the YCL is founded there will need to be separate neighborhood and campus chapters, and a general structure kind of like a ladder—with these sections separate but linked at area levels on up to the national level.

### Elections

The meeting decided to enter into the political battle around the elections. Comrades should discuss this question making use of other Party propaganda on the elections, including *Revolution* articles.

In particular the meeting decided to propose to UWOC that it nationally initiate a series of demonstrations to be held in as many cities as possible in late afternoon (around 5 p.m.) on election day. Locally, the Party and as many mass organizations as possible, especially workers' organizations, should join in sponsoring and building these demonstrations. Other actions should be taken too, including wearing armbands on election day with a general theme like "they both stink," and struggling in union meetings to oppose union contributions to the campaign and that money go instead to support struggles or strike funds.

The demonstrations should have as their cutting edge the demand for jobs. Their overall thrust should be along the lines of a slogan (not yet formulated†) that gets across the idea that the working class has its own interests and must develop its own struggle and not be made into a tail on the Democratic donkey, or any other bourgeois party. While these are not "Don't Vote" demonstrations, the point should be clear that these elections are a trap and not the way forward.

While the elections and the Bicentennial are not the same, there are a number of lessons from our work around the Fourth that do apply and should be studied—especially around the fact that this is a political struggle and around the relation between particular demands and the overall political thrust.

In addition to joining in these demonstrations, the Party must have its independent role around these elections. We must more

\*With the formation of the RCYB the publication of *Fight Back*, the newspaper of the old RSB, was discontinued; in the spring of 1978 the RCYB began publishing its newspaper, *Revolutionary Communist Youth*.

†The actual slogan developed was "Politicians Fight for \$\$ Interests, We Must Fight For Our Own!"

deeply and thoroughly expose the real class content of these events and show very concretely through down to earth political exposure exactly how this election is part of the bourgeoisie's attempt to rally people around them, their rule, and their "solutions." It is a big attempt to restore faith and confidence in their leaders and their system in the face of political and economic crisis. This is what is behind all the hullabaloo around the elections, the appearance of a "new face"—Jimmy Carter—and his insistence that "the issue" is faith and trust.

And beyond exposing the nature and role of particular politicians, we must bring out in a living way, and utilizing vivid examples, how no matter what the intention of any bourgeois leader, capitalism has its laws which fundamentally determine what is going to happen around such things as unemployment and war and other attacks on the masses. Through all this we must make it clear that choosing between these guys is *worse* than useless, it's falling into a trap they've set instead of building struggle against it.

To help bring out these points and the whole question of revolution, the Party must develop specific forms to play its independent role, including a pamphlet, forums, etc. In addition plans are being discussed for Comrade Avakian to make speeches on the elections in several major cities.

#### **The Functioning of Leadership and Methods of Leadership**

The CC also reviewed and discussed the functioning of its standing bodies and of leadership generally throughout the Party.

Real progress has been achieved in establishing a unified Party leadership nationwide. At the same time experience has been accumulated in the struggle to establish this and this must be summed up in order to advance.

It must be recognized that for leadership on every level (and this applies in many ways to the basic units as well) there constantly exist contradictions between collectivity on the one hand and individual responsibility and division of labor on the other. There is also the related contradiction between the overall role of political leadership and particular responsibility to guide work and assist in making breakthroughs. Both aspects of each of these contradictions must be paid attention to and the proper relation between them must be constantly struggled for.

What is this correct relation? In an overall sense division of labor and individual responsibility must exist to serve and further develop the main thing—the political collectivity of a body. Along the same line it must be grasped that while going into particular work to help make a breakthrough has its real importance in its own

right, the main thing here too is the accumulation of experience to be summed up and put to use overall politically through leadership to the whole Party. And while leading comrades must not "sit in the office and wait for reports" and must go deeply into particulars, the main source of knowledge is the collective experience of the whole Party summed up through its channels.

Handling these contradictions correctly, paying attention to both aspects and their relation, leads to advances in building Marxist-Leninist political leadership. Spontaneity around these contradictions leads to breakdowns and will eventually lead to the weakening of the unity of the Party and to incorrect lines. Leadership bodies may tend to become either petty bourgeois discussion groups, taking up lines in only a general way (and sometimes even this is not done) or they become more like trade union councils, bottled up in pragmatism and existing to take up mainly organizational details.

Establishing real political leadership can not be left to spontaneity or seen as simply the task of a few people. It is a real political task and must be consciously taken up, studied, and struggled over in the course of the work.

As a further point, the CC, in accordance with the *Constitution*, called for elections to take place for branch leadership, following the method of democratic consultation and coupled with a general view of the functioning of the branch as a political unit, in accordance with the tasks laid out in Article 12 of the *Constitution*.

## **Build for the Founding Conference of a National Workers' Organization!**

Next year, late summer or early fall, the "workers' representatives" of the nation will assemble, making a summation of the situation in the class, and charting key steps forward, forming the fist of a nationwide, all industry workers' organization. Spearheading class struggle, it will be a major instrument in building the "struggle, class consciousness and revolutionary unity of the working class and...its leadership in the united front..."

The assembly will be both delegated and mass. It will build on the advances made in the past period and fresh advances will be achieved in the course of building for the assembly. For our Party it represents the major undertaking of the coming year. For our class it will be a historic stepping stone and a large caliber weapon.

It will be necessary to learn from the rich experience of July 4 in building for this assembly. Both achievements and shortcomings need to be summed up. We did well but we need to do better.

While our work in building industry-wide and area-wide workers' organizations has revealed many shortcomings, as discussed in the report, the development of these organizations with a significant life and initiative of their own and the leadership of the Party to develop these political instruments to the fullest degree must be significantly increased to insure a worthwhile assembly. It would be a serious mistake if existing and upcoming IWOs operated on the premise that the plans for the nationwide assembly meant that their tasks were reduced to the simply organizational, getting out the word and making propaganda.

Forming this nationwide workers' organization is not, and must not be viewed as a gimmick for "upping the ante" in the face of difficulties in building industry and area-wide IWOs. Just the opposite is the case—the building of the nationwide IWO is linked to building industry and area-wide IWOs as key weapons for the working class. On the other hand, if taken up in this way, the formation of the nationwide IWO will give further impetus to building and strengthening the organization and struggle of the

working class in all industries and areas. It will be in developing political struggle in the industry or the area that shoots will be developed and advances made. The opportunity exists to take a giant step in the development of shop, industry and area-wide IWOs as well as creating the tie that binds, a major embodiment of linking the Party with the class nationwide.

Work must begin on this immediately after the elections. There should be beginning discussions in the units summing up what can be learned locally from achievements and shortcomings in building for July 4, not as a thing in itself but with a view to how we can better build for the assembly on a step by step basis. "Step by step" is stressed as it won't do to view this as a ten month PR campaign. We must make this conference part of the class struggle, linked to and flowing from every battle. In this way it will represent a real qualitative leap in the class struggle. And if we do not take this step, it will not just be a missed opportunity for advance, it will mean an actual setback in the struggle.

The center intends to stay on top of this campaign and timely sum-ups and directives will follow.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

I want to make a few points in conclusion, in summarizing the main questions that we have dealt with here. We have achieved a great deal and united around a deeper understanding of these key points, so I just want to briefly summarize them.

First, we have deepened our grasp of the principle that ideological and political line decides everything—of what this actually means and how important it is. Along with this we have grasped more profoundly the crucial role of this body [the CC] as the highest body of the Party (except the Congress which elects it when it meets). We have come to see even more clearly our responsibilities and to grasp more firmly the meaning of the statement in the report from the last meeting of this body [first CC report]: “The Central Committee, as the highest body of the Party, has the responsibility for making crucial decisions concerning the line and tasks of the Party and the struggle of the working class. Those selected for the Central Committee are entrusted, in a very real sense, with the fate of the Party and millions of workers.” Grasping this deeply relates directly to grasping more deeply the principle that line determines everything. So that’s the first point.

Second, and very closely linked with the first point, is the question of waging the theoretical struggle, arming our own ranks—that is, the whole Party—and the masses with the scientific understanding representing our class. But we have only really made the first steps in taking up and seriously waging this theoretical struggle. I think we have all learned and come to see more sharply that the role of theory, in building the revolutionary movement of the working class, is crucial. And that any downgrading of theory can only lead to prolonging the condition of the working class as wage-slaves, can only prolong capitalism. Because capitalism cannot be overthrown and abolished with spontaneity, by the working class on its own, without theory to guide it; and the Party cannot lead the working class in achieving this without waging the theoretical struggle, together with the economic and political.

In fact, in order to build the struggle of the working class, both the political and the economic, it is necessary to wage the theoretical struggle. This means that we have to take up theory in a living way,

not as dry dogma, but linked with the actual struggles of the masses. At the same time, however, we do have to take it up, in one sense, "in its own right," and not treat it as a "guide to action," in a narrow or vulgar sense. Marxism is a guide to action in the broadest sense—in the sense of transforming the whole world through overthrowing capitalism and eliminating classes. Of course, Marxism also provides the basis for developing tactics for advancing immediate struggles short of the revolutionary goal; but if it is reduced to that—a guide to tactics in the day-to-day struggles—and if those day-to-day struggles are separated from the revolutionary goal which revolutionary theory reveals to us as necessary and inevitable, then things will turn into their opposite and instead of advancing we will be set back. Theory does represent one phase in the continual spiral—practice . . . theory . . . again practice . . . etc.—and as such is separate from practice, while at the same time dialectically related to it (forming a unity of opposites with it). So the two are linked—theory and practice—and in order to develop our *revolutionary* practice we have to take up the theoretical struggle, master theory always more deeply, in a living way; otherwise our practice will degenerate into *reformist* practice. And that is why I say that if we downgrade the importance of theory, of waging the theoretical struggle, we will be condemning the working class to prolonged suffering under capitalist rule. That's the second point, and it's a very important one.

Third, we have deepened our understanding of the importance of building the political as well as the economic struggle of the working class; and along with this of working among all strata, in all social movements, in every struggle, with the revolutionary aim in mind and conducting all our work in a "strictly Marxist" way, to build toward the revolutionary goal. Along with this we have seen the importance of making the distinction between economic and political struggle, without flipping back and saying "the economic struggle is not important" or "we can't raise political consciousness in waging the economic struggle." What is this distinction? The economic struggle is basically the struggle over wages, working conditions, etc., while the political struggle can be roughly defined as the struggle against the bourgeoisie and its state over questions of policy, how the country is run—in other words, struggle to influence the affairs of state. As I said in my earlier remarks, the political struggle does tend, more than the economic, to raise the basic question of how the whole society is run and in whose interests. And in the political struggle, as Lenin pointed out, the working class much more comes into contact with and joins with other classes and strata—and in the process, especially if the working class Party carries out its work correctly, the working class learns more about the features of these different



classes and strata and learns to distinguish its nature, and its interests as a class, from those of the other classes and strata.

Making this distinction does not mean, and must not lead to, abandoning the economic struggles as the present "center of gravity." But it should and must lead away from making a "special slogan" (as Lenin put it) out of the economic struggles, or making them an end in themselves, *overestimating* in fact what can be accomplished in these struggles, or negating the need to wage the political struggle. We have to strive to fulfill the three objectives in every struggle, including the economic struggles, and it is in these struggles that we must now concentrate our work, for the reasons we have talked about (and which I touched on in my earlier remarks). But this must not be turned into a line that denies the importance of taking up the political struggle—or for that matter a line that leads to taking up the economic struggle in an *economist* way, as an end in itself, separated from the question of revolution.

In other words, as pointed out in the paper, and deepened in our discussion, the "center of gravity" must not be viewed as the same as our Central Task or treated as the strategy for revolution. In fact, the correct strategy for revolution is, as we say in the *Programme* and elsewhere, the united front against the imperialists, under the leadership of the working class. And I think we have come to a better understanding of why this is the correct, the only possible, strategy for revolution and how we must go about applying this strategy. Along with this we have come to a deeper grasp of the line that the solid core of that united front will be the revolutionary alliance of the movements of the oppressed nationalities with the overall working class movement.

We have summed up that, since the founding of our Party, there has been a serious tendency to downplay the struggle against national oppression, that, in fact, this now constitutes the main error around the national question and that we must take concrete steps—political and organizational—to move against this tendency, to move to advance our work in the fight against national oppression and link it with the overall class struggle, working at it "from two sides" and recognizing that the principal side at this time, as far as the struggle against national oppression is concerned, is work among the oppressed nationalities themselves. This does not mean that we can neglect the other side. We must be good at taking up exactly those instances of national oppression which concentrate and expose in the most stark terms, the daily outrages of national oppression, and developing the struggle around these particular outrages into campaigns in which we mobilize the whole class, as well as the masses of the oppressed nationalities, and all others who can be united. At the same time, we have summed up that we need to carry out more systematic exposures, in the

*Worker* especially, of the many instances of national oppression.

And we have summed up, and deepened our grasp of the fact, that without carrying out the correct line of our Party on the fight against national oppression, we cannot strengthen the core of the united front, build the united front as broadly as possible and cannot, in the final analysis, carry through the struggle to achieve the revolutionary goal. That is just how important this question is. So, as we've said, what is called for is not a flip back to the old tendencies—in particular tailing after bourgeois nationalism—but actively building the fight against national oppression in line with the general interests and guided by the outlook of the working class. Since, as I pointed out in the paper, we cannot assign a lot of forces to this struggle now, this is also a question of waging big battles when our forces are small—of applying the mass line and carrying out the strategic line of united front against the imperialists under proletarian leadership.

Fourth, I want to sum up a few things about this question of rightist idealism and the related question of pragmatism. Pragmatism, as we point out in our *Programme*, means essentially, “whatever works is true, so just go along with whatever works at any point, don't sum up and don't investigate the actual basis of things, the principles underlying them, the laws governing them”—pragmatism actually denies that such laws exist. Pragmatism has been a problem in our work, not only in building the economic struggle, but in the political struggle as well, and we must get at it and root it out.

But pragmatism is not the exact same thing as the rightist idealism we have focused on in this meeting. Pragmatism is, in the fundamental sense, idealism, because it denies that there are laws governing the development of things, which, in the final analysis, amounts to denying the existence of the objective world independent of anyone's will. But the specific rightist idealism we have correctly zeroed in on at this meeting is more in the form of treating the “center of gravity” as everything and thinking that, now that we have, correctly, concentrated in this “center of gravity,” everything will move straight ahead—and nothing else should be allowed to get in the way. We have talked about how this sometimes takes a “left” form—the economic struggle is itself “potentially revolutionary”—but mainly takes the openly rightist form of neglecting, or abandoning in fact the revolutionary goal and building the economic struggle as an end in itself.

This is idealist because it fails to recognize that the real world consists of much more than the relationship between workers and their employers, and it fails to take into account what I spoke about earlier, in my remarks—that the operation of the laws of capitalism (and the laws of development of society more generally)

can bring about sudden changes in the situation of the masses. It is impossible to just keep "plugging along" in the economic struggle and wall this off from other events in society, or wall the workers off from other questions and struggles. This is why it is idealist.

It is rightist for obvious reasons, for the reasons that we have already gone into. The workers will think and talk about other questions, besides simply their relations with their employers, they will get involved in other struggles, whether we do or not; that is not the question. The question is whether they will do so spontaneously—which means, ultimately, with bourgeois politics in command, or whether we will lead them in taking up these struggles and fight for the leadership of a proletarian line. To do this, we must root out this rightist idealism we have been talking about.

But in rooting out this form of idealism, we must guard against the tendency to fall into another form of idealism. It won't move things ahead to replace the idealism of the "center of gravity is everything, we have swept away petty bourgeois obstacles to taking up the center of gravity so we can move straight ahead" with idealism in the form of saying, "now that we have taken up the fight against economism, we can move straight ahead and everything will, after all, be easy; all that was holding things back were these economist tendencies that have arisen." Yes, these economist tendencies that have arisen have been holding things back, but taking up the struggle against them, while crucial, will not make "everything easy" either. As I said in my opening remarks, nothing is easy—and, at the same time, understood strategically, nothing is hard if we dare to scale the heights (as Mao Tsetung has powerfully expressed it). There is, to emphasize this point again, a dialectical relationship between easy and hard—we cannot accomplish the revolutionary goal if we dare to strive for it, but we cannot "march straight ahead" to this goal. There will be ups and downs, twists and turns. Things will develop unevenly and in spirals, not in a straight line. This is very important to keep in mind, and we must guard against replacing one form of idealism with another.

Fifth, I want to stress again the principle that there is quality within quantity—and vice versa, but especially that there is quality within quantity, that we can and must make qualitative advances in building the movement of our class toward the revolutionary goal, even before we reach the point of being able to make the *big qualitative leap*—to make revolution. We have united around taking such a qualitative step (within the quantitative build-up toward the revolutionary goal) in our discussion and decision on building for the founding conference of a National Workers Organization in a year.

This represents just one of many such qualitative leaps we must make along the path toward revolution, but it is a very big leap in the present context and will make a very important contribution to the struggle of

the working class—providing we carry it out correctly, which, as we have discussed, is linked to summing up more deeply our work in building IWOs in general, and especially to the role of these IWOs in relation to the question of the working class leading the fight against all oppression and infusing the strength, discipline and revolutionary outlook characteristic of the working class. As we have gone into in some depth here, the more we get down on and make headway around this key political question, the more we will be able to advance the work of building IWOs in general, as well as successfully carrying out the formation of the National Workers Organization, as a tremendous force for the class struggle (to use the words of our *Programme*).

Finally, I want to end on this point about the high road. What this means is sticking to the strategic orientation of making revolution, refusing to “chase the wisp of painless progress,” to take the “easy road” of class collaboration and reformism. And I want to emphasize once more that to do this means that we must wage the theoretical struggle, in order to deepen the whole Party’s grasp—and raise the consciousness of ever broader numbers of workers and masses generally—of the scientific principles revealing the laws governing the development of things. We cannot keep to the high road through some kind of religious “faith,” but only through deepening our grasp of theory, while at the same time, deepening our ties with the masses, especially the masses of workers, linking up with and leading—in a strictly Marxist way—their struggles. We cannot keep to the high road, either, just by persevering—in the sense of “plugging along”—even if we combine this with more extensive study of theory, because that amounts to breaking the link between theory and practice and cutting the connection between the day-to-day struggle—and the level of the working class movement at any point—and the revolutionary goal.

What we have to do, what sticking to the high road means, is striving at every point to fulfill all three objectives, and striving to make qualitative advances in building toward the revolutionary goal; advancing step by step—without falling into any “theory of stages”—waging big battles, together with the masses, and through every battle strengthening not only the masses but our own ranks, ideologically, politically and organizationally. This is the way to maximize every possible gain at every point and make the greatest possible preparation for the future. This is the meaning, and the importance, of taking and sticking to the high road, and ending with an emphasis on that is a fitting conclusion to this meeting.