

REVOLUTION

SPRING 1984

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Questions of Strategic Orientation***

by Bob Avakian

***Angola: A Case Study in
Soviet Neocolonialism***

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***The Military Line of the PLO
and the Lessons of Beirut: A Letter***

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Advancing the World Revolutionary Movement: Questions of Strategic Orientation

by Bob Avakian

*The text of a talk by Bob Avakian,
Chairman of the Central Committee
of the RCP, USA,
given shortly after
Conquer the World?
The International Proletariat
Must and Will.
It has been edited for publication;
footnotes are by the author*

This presentation on advancing the world revolutionary movement could also be titled "Breaking With Old Ideas." First of all and essentially the idea that has to be broken with, which unfortunately has had a lot of currency in the international communist movement, is the idea that internationalism is something that is extended from the proletariat (or the people) of one nation to others, to the workers (or peoples) of other countries. This would correspond to a kind of literal rendering of "inter-national," and in fact during the period when we opened the pages of our paper to discussion and struggle over the drafts of the *New Programme* and the *New Constitution* of our party, as part of the process of coming up with the final version of those documents, we printed a letter from someone who argued that we should junk the term "internationalism" and call it "world revolutionism" or something like that, because the writer didn't like even the implication of "one nation to another" that could be drawn by making a literal rendering of "inter-nationalism." Well, that writer's suggestion is a bit of a mechanical way of trying to deal with a problem; proletarian internationalism and whether or not you really uphold it has come to stand for something, in fact it is a basic dividing line, and the term is fine in that sense. But there is a point that was being gotten at, even if not quite correctly, in that letter – that is, the criticism of this view that internationalism is something extended from the workers or the people of one nation to those of other nations. Such a view actually reduces internationalism to something secondary and subordinate, however important it may be said to be.

Much has been presented by our party on how the world arena is decisive and on the question of how to correctly view the internal and external factors in this era of imperialism – on the relationship between the process of revolution in a particular country and the process of the advance from the bourgeois epoch to the epoch of communism on a world scale and how the contradiction and struggle within particular coun-

tries is integrated into that overall process and determined primarily by *its* motion and development. Keeping that in mind we can see even more clearly what the material basis and the philosophical basis is for a correct understanding of proletarian internationalism. Certainly it is not mere window dressing, but beyond that it cannot be treated as something secondary or subordinate or something extended from the proletariat of one nation to others. It really has to be the foundation and starting point for the proletariat in all countries: the proletariat in advancing the struggle can *only* advance it by approaching it, and seeking to advance it, on a world level first of all. This doesn't mean of course that you try to make revolution irrespective of the conditions in different parts of the world or the conditions within particular countries, but it means that even in approaching that you proceed from the point of view of the world arena as most decisive and the overall interests of the world proletariat as paramount. And that is not merely a good idea. It has a very material foundation, which has been laid by the system of imperialism.¹

Now here I'll just mention something that I have been wanting to investigate. Maybe others know more about it. It is something that I think should be looked into. As I understand it, there was a struggle or a disagreement (however it should be described) between Lenin and James Connolly, who was one of the leading revolutionary Irish figures, one of the revolutionary leaders at the time of the Easter Uprising in Ireland during World War I. To summarize the difference very briefly, Connolly more or less viewed internationalism as the unity extended from a people to other peoples, whereas Lenin insisted, and correctly, that proletarians do not have a nation, in the ideological sense. That doesn't mean literally and materially that they don't live in a particular nation at a given time. But ideologically they are not representatives of a nation, and do not have a nation in that sense. They are representatives of the international proletariat.

This was also sharply focused on in one of Lenin's polemics against the bourgeois nationalists, so-called socialists from the Jewish Bund inside the Russian social-democratic movement. Lenin quoted one of them saying, well, according to the Bolsheviks, when asked what his nationality is, a worker should say, "I'm a social-democrat." Lenin went on after quoting him, saying this is the acme of our opportunist's wit, that he thinks this is an exposure of the Bolsheviks. In other words, Lenin was saying right on, that is what you should say, that should be your orientation. And more than that, it is the acme of your wit, and self-exposure, if you attack that as some sort of a deviation on the part of the Bolsheviks.² That didn't mean of course that Lenin denied or negated the existence of nations, the national question and the right of self-determination. Quite the contrary – but what he insisted on was with all that, proletarians are internationalists. In an ideological sense and in terms of their fundamental point of departure, they are not representatives of this or that nation. And Connolly's viewpoint, as opposed to that, was that you should be internationalist but if for example you were Irish, you represented the Irish people and on *that* basis you were for unity with all the other oppressed peo-

ple and the workers of all other nations. These are two sharply opposed viewpoints. And unfortunately I would have to say, to put it a little provocatively, that since the time of Lenin's death, Connolly's viewpoint (if you want to describe it that way) and not Lenin's, has prevailed increasingly in the international communist movement.³

To continue to be provocative, I would say that this was more or less the viewpoint of Mao: while he fought for proletarian internationalism, and overall you would have to certainly say that he was a proletarian internationalist, his viewpoint on what proletarian internationalism is, the viewpoint that comes through in his writings and speeches, is the viewpoint that we represent the Chinese nation and on that basis we are for unity with the proletariat and all the other oppressed peoples throughout the world. This differs from the viewpoint that Lenin fought for – that whether in an oppressed nation or in an oppressor nation, from an ideological standpoint communists do not represent nations.⁴ This deviation certainly did not begin with Mao. Rather I would put it the other way around. This is something that Mao didn't break with – a rupture that Mao did not make with what had become overwhelmingly the prevailing view in the international communist movement. In *Conquer the World* I referred to a law that was passed in the Soviet Union in 1934 which made for stiffer penalties, including the death penalty, for actions betraying the Soviet Union; and in the preamble to that law, it is said that defense of the fatherland is the highest duty of a communist. Now I don't think that has anything in common with Lenin's viewpoint, with Leninism on the question of the fatherland, with internationalism and so on. Lenin repeatedly insisted, particularly with regard to the imperialist countries – and that is where this sort of line takes the most harmful form – Lenin insisted that in those countries the fatherland is a dead issue, because the national question and the national liberation struggle is a dead issue in the advanced capitalist countries. He was also careful to say that phenomena in the world are not "pure" or absolute, and even in speaking of Europe, for example, he cited the Irish question precisely as an example of where there was still a national question in Western Europe. But taking not the exception but the rule, in other words the main aspect of the situation and not secondary aspects in opposition to the essence, he said that in Western Europe (and in the U.S. where there is also the national question, particularly for Black people as well as for others) on the whole the national question is over and done with. Therefore the question of the fatherland, of the defense of the fatherland and so on, was not the point on the historical agenda in these countries.

But even for those countries where it is on the agenda, and where politically it is necessary to not only wage but to strive to lead the struggle for national liberation, there is still the question of orientation and point of departure, whether or not your orientation and point of departure is that you are a representative of the nation *or* the representative of the international proletariat. To extend this a little bit, or to put it in somewhat geometric terms, I would say that you are better off as a communist going more horizontally than vertically.

By that I mean you're better off seeking your links and your identification with the proletarians and the oppressed masses all over the world in the contemporary era than you are seeking your roots and identification going back decades, or even hundreds or thousands of years, within your own nation. That is not to say that you should ignore the concrete conditions or the history and historical development of the nation that you are objectively a part of. But in terms of what your orientation is, your identification should be with the international proletariat of the contemporary era, and your emphasis should be on the fact that this is a radically different era, and that the proletarian revolution is a radically different revolution than all previous ones – or to paraphrase Marx and Engels, this revolution represents a radical rupture, both materially and ideologically, with anything previous.

Why raise this? Well, you know, it's a problem. It has been a problem in the international communist movement. For example, here in France, I mean, when a Marxist-Leninist force emerges which clearly says "fuck the French Revolution of 1789 and that whole tradition, that's the first thing that we want to have nothing more to do with, that's in the past," it will be a tremendous leap forward for the Marxist-Leninist movement in France. In my observations, one of the biggest millstones around the neck of any attempted Marxist-Leninist formation in France is that they all think that there is this great "left" tradition in France, and they go around wearing it – even those who may refer to it cynically on the one hand still believe it and follow in its path on the other. It is a big millstone. Because in fact that's a bourgeois, at best a bourgeois "left," tradition in the present era – it is still within the bounds of bourgeois democracy. As far as bourgeois revolutions go, the French Revolution was fine; it was the most thorough one, I suppose, that we know of. It was not totally accidental that the Bolsheviks, for example, borrowed certain analogies from this French Revolution, even sometimes took on pseudonyms from it, used analogies to the Jacobins and this and that. It was a very thoroughgoing revolution for its era. But that's precisely the point. And I was reading, just this morning actually, an article where Lenin was polemicizing against Boris Souvarine, who was an opportunist leader of the socialists in France during World War I. And it was so refreshing, especially after having been here for a while, even as an observer. Souvarine is attacking Lenin for his stand of revolutionary defeatism and throwing up all kinds of opportunist, Kautskyite-type arguments to obscure the issue and raising the history of France and of the French Revolution and the democratic and even revolutionary traditions of France – insisting that all this cannot possibly be compared to Germany and so on and so forth. And Lenin just bluntly says, look, this war has got nothing to do with the France of the end of the eighteenth century, this is imperialist France that's waging this war. That epoch is over and done with. Let the dead bury their dead, as Marx said in another context.⁵

So, you see, this is not just some sort of academic question, but right down to today this confusion of nationalism with internationalism – and specifically the stand of being a

"communist inheritor" of the best traditions of the nation and the best representative of its true interests – continues to plague the international communist movement and Marxist-Leninists in a number of countries. Of course we shouldn't one-sidedly negate the past or even one-sidedly cut ourselves off from the past, but there is a radical rupture involved. We are not the continuators of the previous revolutions of the previous eras. That is not what we communists are, that is not what the proletarian revolution is. In the U.S. we had one of the more grotesque (if not the most grotesque, at least *one* of the most grotesque) and internationally famous examples of this in the leadership of Earl Browder of the Communist Party, USA (CPUSA), who coined the slogan "Communism is twentieth century Americanism." (*laughter*) And it's easy to laugh at that because this is in fact extremely crude and grotesque. And to this day the CP in the U.S. has bookstores which bear the name "Jefferson Bookstore" and so on. Earl Browder is gone and the CPUSA is today worse than they were even then. But they've always done that, you know. Since the mid-'30s on. Since the time of the Dimitrov report.⁶ Those tendencies which already existed inside the CPUSA were given a tremendous boost and have been dominant ever since then without exception; when Earl Browder was in power and after he was thrown out by the Comintern and the leadership of the CPUSA, that line remained.

But it's not just the CPUSA. I remember someone telling me they came to France right after World War 2, and Thorez, the head of the French CP at the time, gave a speech about why it was that they were the upholders of the traditions, the great revolutionary traditions, of the French nation and why they could still say "*Vive la république*." And then Thorez added, of course that doesn't mean that the British comrades can say, "God save the Queen." Well why not? It seems to me that what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. I mean if the French comrades can say "*Vive la république*," then I think it's only fair that their comrades of the British Communist Party should be able to say, "God save the Queen." After all, they'd said almost everything else anyway by that time. (*laughter*) The British CP was proud to boast that it had gotten there first when Khrushchev announced peaceful transition, that it already had that as a policy for a number of years before that.

But to return to the French CP and this whole viewpoint of being a part of the great tradition of the nation: at the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris there's a whole corner that's been bought by the CP. Unfortunately it rings the Wall of the Communards, which the CP has sort of appropriated – it has bought up all the land in the cemetery right around the Wall of the Communards (the wall where the last defenders of the Commune were slaughtered). Well there are these disgusting monuments on different graves, for example the monuments to two soldiers who died as part of a French regiment in the Spanish Civil War – their graves are side by side and the CP has erected gravestones with the inscriptions, "here's the one who believed in God, here's the one who didn't." The only thing is you're not sure which one is the CP member. But, one of them was a CP member and one of them wasn't, one of them believed in God and one didn't, and they are lying side

by side because they fought shoulder to shoulder in the Spanish Civil War. Well, it's not that everybody who fought in the Spanish Civil War should have been an atheist or a communist. But the CP is going out of its way to make a point out of this, and if you see it in its context here, it's all part of "they died so that France can live." And over the graves of open CP members – even Central Committee members of the French Communist Party – are monuments with slogans about how they died for the French nation, for the glory of France, and so on. It's all part of a piece there, it's the great continuing tradition of the great French nation and its republic – this is what's being upheld. Now these are perhaps some of the more crude and grotesque expressions of this: so-and-so member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the French CP, who fought to preserve the independence of France during World War 2 and peace and liberty – you have to go read it to see how thoroughly revisionist it is. Unfortunately, this didn't begin with George Marchais (the current head of the French CP) and won't end with him. Similarly in the U.S. this sort of thing did not begin and end with Earl Browder, but was a consistent thread going back to the mid-'30s, and after Browder was gotten rid of it remained a consistent thread. Even if it wasn't always quite so crudely expressed as in the slogan, "Communism is twentieth century Americanism," that has been the line.

I remember one time being interviewed by a reporter who considered himself to be, and I guess in a certain way was, sympathetic. He had obviously been around the CP, and he kept feeding me what he thought were fat lines like, "your party, it is sort of an *American* party, sort of rooted in the soil of America, isn't it?" And I'd say, "no." Well, it went on like this, back and forth, and finally he just got explicit and said, "Well, listen, what I'm trying to get at is that you are an American phenomenon. That's what I'm trying to get you to say." And I replied, "I know that, and that's what I'm not going to say." But remember this guy was more or less sympathetic. He'd been around the old CP and he thought this was helpful. He thought these were big, fat lobs (as in baseball), he thought he was pitching you these nice fat pitches, so you could, WHISH!!, get some good hits. But it wasn't what we wanted to say. From his experience, that's what he thought we would want to say, because he'd been around the old CP and that's what they do want to say, and that's what they do say. That's what they have said for nearly fifty years. And when they said "Communism is twentieth century Americanism," unfortunately as a self-description it was true. What they were presenting as communism was twentieth century Americanism, i.e., imperialism. That's what they had become an appendage of and apologist for. The worst expressions of this are going to naturally be in the imperialist countries, whose role in relation to the national question is to be the oppressors of other nations.

Naturally the attempt to be patriotic, to be the best upholders of the nation and so on is going to take its most grotesque and harmful form in these imperialist countries. But, as an ideological stand, as a point of departure, it's still not correct for communists of any nation, even if in some ways it

is not as harmful in those countries where the national question is on the agenda as opposed to those advanced and capitalist countries where it is not on the agenda. Still, in the oppressed nations, over time and particularly if the revolution does succeed in advancing beyond the first stage and into the socialist stage – beyond national liberation and the new-democratic stage of revolution to the stage of socialism – this kind of outlook will more and more come into contradiction with the need to further advance the revolution and will place limitations on the ability of those leading it to guide the revolution forward in unity with the overall struggle of the international proletariat – to advance it as part of, and a subordinate part of, the world revolutionary movement. It's one thing to say that we have to practice internationalism. But merely the desire to uphold and apply proletarian internationalism is not enough to actually do so. It is necessary, again, to understand from a materialist and a dialectical standpoint, both the material and philosophical basis for why things have to be approached first of all and as a point of departure from the world arena; and as an ideological reflection of that, why communists are, in terms of their basic stand and point of departure, representatives of the international proletariat and not representatives of any nation or even of the workers of that particular nation (which is also another variant of how this nationalist deviation can express itself). It can express itself as, we are the representatives of the American or British or French or Chinese or Egyptian workers, what have you – you can just fill in the blank. But even if it's given a "class content" in this way, it is still a nationalist deviation.

So this is a crucial point on what it means to grasp both the material basis and the philosophical basis for the fact that the world arena is the decisive arena and it has to be the starting point, the point of departure for the international proletariat. And I'll talk more about some of the concrete, including organizational, expressions and implications of this at the end of this presentation. But I want to begin with that as a cornerstone for what follows. This is not simply rehashing old principles; unfortunately, to paraphrase Lenin, it is necessary to do a certain amount of excavation to bring back to life, to rescue and revive basic principles of Marxism-Leninism which have been to a large degree buried, distorted or altogether discarded in the international communist movement for some time now, and increasingly following the time of Lenin's death.

The International United Front

Now this brings us next to the question that has also been a big part of the heritage that I think we are all part of, and in particular a big part of the general body of knowledge and general approach of the Marxist-Leninist movement that arose in opposition to modern revisionism in the 1960s. And

that is the question of the united front. Actually this has been, in various forms, a part of the political arsenal, for good or bad, of the international communist movement even before the 1960s, going back for quite some time. A watershed, which I'll be looking at from different angles, is the united front against fascism and the whole line of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern. But I think we have to approach this from an historical perspective and also look at it in light of present-day conditions to understand this question of the united front in general and the role of the united front against fascism line more specifically.

In *The Foundations of Leninism* Stalin puts forth a general formulation which is correct, even if it contains certain erroneous tendencies in the direction of saying that the victory of the October Revolution in Russia has changed everything, in sort of a mechanical way, and along with that, perhaps you could say it makes the existence of the Soviet Union too much of a linchpin in terms of the alliance between the proletariat in the West and the oppressed peoples of the East. Nevertheless, even with those shortcomings I think this basic formulation that he puts out in his *Foundations of Leninism* is correct: "Hence the third conclusion: that under imperialism wars cannot be averted, and that a coalition between the proletarian revolution in Europe and the colonial revolution in the East in a united world front of revolution against the world front of imperialism is inevitable."⁷ Now I think it's important to note his formulation here, that the "coalition between the proletarian revolution in Europe and the colonial revolution in the East in a united world front of revolution against the world front of imperialism is inevitable." I think there are a number of parts to this formulation that are important, not just the united world front, but a united front of revolution. In other words, what is the content that's being put forward for this united front? What is its objective, what is its content? It is revolution, not peace and so on and so forth. And it is directed "against the world front of imperialism." In other words, it is directed against not this or that major imperialist power, but against the world front of imperialism. Then again, in the chapter on the national question, he makes the following statement: "the interests of the proletarian movement in the developed countries and of the national liberation movement in the colonies call for the union of these two forms of the revolutionary movement into a common front against the common enemy, against imperialism."⁸ Stalin then goes on to talk about how this is impossible "unless the proletariat of the oppressor nations renders direct and determined support to the liberation movement of the oppressed peoples against the imperialism of its own country;" and then he says that, "unless this slogan is implemented, the union and collaboration of nations within a single world economic system, which is the material basis for the victory of world socialism, cannot be brought about."⁹

Here it should be pointed out that the reference to a single world economic system as a material basis for the victory of world socialism, while not wrong in itself, is tied in with the idea that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is the living prototype of the future union of peoples in a single world

economic system. Now, I don't think this is essentially a question of chauvinism; this was also Lenin's viewpoint at that time, and the prevailing viewpoint in the international communist movement – they expected the victory of the world revolution a lot faster than, unfortunately, it has come. Even though by 1924 it was already clear that there was going to be a temporary lull, they expected it to be perhaps briefer than it's been. And they thought that they had created, even materially, the center of the future world socialist system, to which other socialist republics would be adjoined – not dominated by, but would come into (exactly what he says) free union with it. Now, if it had been the case that in the next decade or so the front of imperialism had been breached in many different places and basically, to use a much misused phrase, the balance of forces in the world had gone over to a situation where socialism was dominant in the world, then this kind of view would not have been particularly wrong. So what I want to emphasize here is not so much that this view contained some mistaken notions but that it was clung to all the way through the next war and has been perpetuated in even worse form of course by the revisionists in power beginning with Khrushchev – the view that the Soviet Union is the center of all future development toward socialism, not only ideologically, which would be bad enough under present conditions, but literally materially. But with all this, the basic position put forward by Stalin in *The Foundations of Leninism* – the common front against imperialism, the linking of the proletarian movement in the developed countries and the national liberation movement in the colonies into a common front against a common enemy, which is imperialism – is a basically correct formulation and basically correct strategic analysis of the general objectives and general alignment of forces in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution.

The United Front Against Fascism Line

Now, as we know, this is not the beginning and the end of the question of the united front. Nor is this the only approach that has been taken to the united front since that time. The first major departure from this orientation, in terms of the major strategic orientation of the international communist movement, came in the united front against fascism in the middle 1930s. And this was part of, and in fact subordinate to, an overall international line and foreign policy of the Soviet Union which was then, to be blunt, foisted upon the international communist movement as an alleged strategy or tactic for the struggle of the proletariat at that particular time. In *Conquer the World* I made the point, which I think is a very important point, that this whole united front against fascism strategy was very much linked up with the preoccupation of the Soviet Union with the European theater. In other words, this was overwhelmingly a strategy and an orientation dictated by the Soviet Union's concern with the situation in Europe. It was also, to continue being blunt, a Eurocentric, chauvinist outlook to begin with, which openly appealed to

bourgeois-democratic prejudices and Eurocentric chauvinism among the workers and the communists within Europe, in particular Western Europe. Because it was in Western Europe where capitalism was the most developed, where the colonial powers were centered, where imperialism had the greatest strength, and where it was able even in the midst of the 1930s Depression to make more concessions. If the people in the imperialist countries suffered in the Depression, which they did, you only have to think what the situation was like for the people who were not in the imperialist countries, who were in the colonial countries and the countries dominated by imperialism. And the Comintern made arguments in defending the position of the Seventh Congress, the united front against fascism line, which were blatant deviations from the Leninist position on defense of the fatherland.

We reprinted some of these quotes – they're really rather remarkable – in this pamphlet in which we said a word on behalf of national nihilism, the pamphlet "You Can't Beat The Enemy While Raising His Flag." There are some quotes in there from the Comintern in the late '30s on how the workers' viewpoint toward the fatherland is and should be different now than it was at the time of World War 1. Basically their argument was that at the time of World War 1 the workers really had no stake in the nation, they were on the outside looking in, they were without any rights, they were totally impoverished, and so on and so forth, and therefore they had a very bitter hatred for the whole situation. It is almost implied that Lenin's stand during World War 1 was sort of a subjective one which corresponded to the subjective bitter feeling of the workers then – they don't directly criticize Lenin, of course, but the sum total of what comes through is that there was this subjective bitter feeling on the part of the workers and this led them to have a sort of nihilist position towards the nation. What they're actually describing, the position and sentiments of the workers who did not rally to the defense of the fatherland in World War 1, corresponds in fact to what Marx and Engels said about the proletariat in the *Communist Manifesto*, that behind every institution they see nothing but the pretenses and interests of the bourgeoisie.¹⁰ These were workers who had no stake in the imperialism of their fatherlands, and therefore it was possible to rally them against the fatherland. But then the Comintern went on to talk about how the workers in the imperialist countries in the 1930s had won trade unions, won certain other basic rights and so on, and so now they have a stake in the future of the nation, and therefore, a stake in defending it. This argument was not to any degree more sophisticated than the way I'm presenting it right now. And our party, in the course of doing some investigation on this question, discovered these quotes which are rather remarkable.

In *Conquer the World* I posed this as a question but here I'll phrase it more strongly: I think what was being done by the Comintern then was an attempt to rally that section of the workers who were more bourgeoisified and, even in the midst of the 1930s Depression, still maintained a lot of the bourgeois-democratic prejudices and a longing for a more privileged position based on the historical position of their coun-

tries as imperialist exploiters and plunderers. It was a call to them to rally to the defense of the fatherland, not based on ignorance on the part of the leaders of the Comintern and Soviet Union as to what the Leninist position was – and not based on ignorance as to whether or not these countries were really imperialist, but based frankly on the narrow nationalist, narrowly-defined needs of the Soviet state. The proof of this is that from the period when the war broke out in September 1939, with the events in Poland being the spark, up until the time when the Soviet Union was attacked and entered the war in 1941, the Comintern all of a sudden rediscovered the Leninist position on imperialist war. Here, for example, are some excerpts from a letter the Comintern leadership wrote to the French Communist Party, which certainly needed a letter written to it combating its deviations from Leninism and its tendencies already to defend the fatherland. But this letter could stand as a refutation by the Comintern of its own position both in the period before and then after the brief interval of 1939 to 1941. The letter says, "This war is a continuation of many years of imperialist rivalry in the capitalist camp." Notice there's no distinctions between one capitalist (or one side) or the other. "The three richest states, England, France, and the United States, assert their domination over the great routes and markets of the world. They have seized the principal sources of raw materials. They have in their hands great economic resources. They keep more than half of the human race in a state of subjugation."¹¹ This doesn't sound like the Comintern's description of these three states before and afterwards – "peace, love, and democracy." The letter continues on these states: "They disguise their exploitation of workers and oppressed people behind a false mask of democracy in order to deceive the masses more easily."

Here is the Leninist viewpoint, that when looking at a war, you have to look not just at what happened the day or the year or even just a few years before the war broke out, you have to look at the whole train of development, sometimes over decades, of which the war is a continuation. Here, all of a sudden, this position is rediscovered and is used to criticize the French Communist Party which deserved criticism along these lines. But, unfortunately, one has to ask whether this criticism was being made on the basis of principle or whether it conformed (which is my opinion) to a particular turn of events and the particular tactics of the Soviet Union in pursuing its own national interests at that point. If you examine what was said and done, both before and after this brief interval, it becomes undeniably clear that the latter was the case. This takes us back to the point that the united front against fascism was based to a large degree on rallying Eurocentric chauvinism. As I said, the Comintern's letter criticizing the French Communist Party stands as a criticism of the Comintern itself, that is, its united front against fascism line. Look what the letter says about England, France and the U.S. These are not the *fascist* states, they are the democratic non-belligerent states – as they were defined before the war broke out and again later during the period when the Soviet Union was in the war. "They have seized the principal sources of raw materials" and so on; "they keep" – *they*,

England, France and the U.S. – “keep more than half of the human race in a state of subjugation.” And they use this democracy as a disguise and a mask in order to carry this out.

All this, of course, was (and is) perfectly true. And as I pointed out previously, in *Conquer the World*, if you were to go into India at that time, for example, and argue with the people there who were the least bit conscious of their own oppression and its source, and you were to make this big strong case about how much more terrible it would be if Japan were to take over, this would probably not get over so well. Or if you went into parts of Africa that were colonized by the British or the French and argued, “Oh, if Germany, if those fascists who even defile and despoil German culture” (this is another argument made by the Comintern – they don’t even speak the real German language, these fascists, you know, not the good German of Schiller and Goethe – this was the kind of stuff that was passed off as communist analysis), “well these German fascists, they don’t even speak good German, and if they come in here, as opposed to the British, or the French, why you can just see how much more terrible everything is going to be” – if you said things like that to such victims of “democratic” colonial oppression, then as Lenin once said, you should hope that they have a law against people laughing in public places, because otherwise you would be killed by laughter. Can you imagine trying to convince people in India how much worse Japanese imperialism would be for them, given the whole history of British imperialism? And on and on and on. Or in China for that matter? It is true that in China it was correct to line up forces to fight against Japanese imperialism. But that had to do with the particular situation there and not because Japanese imperialism was some completely different imperialism that would be worse for the people of China than British and U.S. imperialism would be. It had to do much more with the alignment of the forces and the contradictions among the imperialists, and the possibilities for taking advantage of certain contradictions to advance the revolutionary struggle, so long as initiative and independence was maintained by the communist vanguard, which it was. But to argue on the level that it would be so much worse in China, or in India, Burma, or what have you, or Egypt, or North Africa, if the Japanese or the Germans or the Italians were to take over would in fact be ludicrous.

The fact is that this argument was geared not to those people, but to the sections of the more bourgeoisified workers in Europe and communists there who were encouraged, were led, to pitch themselves politically (and ideologically) to these workers. Beyond that, if we look at Stalin’s speech concerning the Soviet constitution of 1936¹² it can be seen that broad, democratic strata, that is petty-bourgeois and even bourgeois strata, were being appealed to in these certain imperialist countries to unite with the Soviet Union on the basis that it was for democracy and that the threat in the world was the threat of democracy being wiped out and civilization being hurled back decades or centuries if fascist barbarism were to win out. In fact, there have been some studies that have done much to disprove this whole notion. One “revisionist” British scholar (this doesn’t mean revisionist in the Marxist-Leninist

sense, but revisionist in that they revise the standard conceptions of history) has made the rather brash statement (sometimes I guess the British imperialists are good for this) that the only thing wrong with Hitler from a political and diplomatic point of view was that he was German. In other words, if we reinterpret somewhat to get the essence of what he was saying, Hitler was just another imperialist statesman who happened to conform to and represent the needs and interests of German imperialism at a certain particular juncture, given its situation particularly coming out of World War 1 and through the period leading up to World War 2. The analysis that’s been done for *America in Decline* reveals that what Hitler and those around him were after in World War 2 (Charlie Chaplin movies aside where, you know, Hitler’s got this globe and he’s dancing around with it, “this is my lovely world” and so on – all that aside) was not taking over the whole world in sort of this classless and nonmaterialist sense.¹³ Hitler was actually attempting to achieve more or less what Germany had tried to achieve in World War 1 and had come close to achieving before it was defeated.

When Lenin was waging polemics in the middle of World War 1 against Kautsky – who all of a sudden shifted gears and came out in defense of a “peace without annexations” – Lenin was quick to point out that it was very easy for Kautsky to say this because Germany had by then done much better in this war than anyone had expected. It had won some colonies and occupied a fair amount of its enemies’ territory. So here were the German imperialists saying to the other imperialists (and Lenin was very explicit on this) that they would give back parts of France and Belgium and so on in exchange for this and that colony. And in fact their objective was not, in World War 1, nor for that matter in World War 2, to colonize the rest of Europe and to reduce the other European countries to a state of barbarism and tutelage under Germany and so on.

Of course, a victorious Germany would have reorganized those countries on German imperialist terms, with German imperialism in the top world position. That’s what always happens when imperialists win wars. They don’t win a war and then put things back on the basis they were before the war, or reorganize them on the basis of equality. Of course the victors take most of the spoils. That’s the laws of the game. But nevertheless their objective strategically (in World War 2 as well as World War 1) was not to colonize these areas in Europe and then turn them into German vassals and reduce the people to a state of slavery and barbarism and so on. Their objective was more or less to win back the colonies that they had almost won and that they were deprived of in World War 1 in Africa and other parts of the Middle East, and to make certain inroads into the Balkans and parts of Eastern Europe, although this could not be achieved without decisive military victory in the European theater – a redistribution of power among the imperialists, who were largely centered in Europe. This is what their objective was, and Hitler was an extreme expression of German imperialist interests when German imperialism was in an extreme position. Lenin pointed out at the end of World War 1 that Germany’s position was a desperate one. This becomes obvious by looking

even superficially at history. There's a kind of irony here, because after a certain point, mistakenly in my opinion, even Lenin (and certainly leaders after him) tried to get the German communists to become a part of the struggle against the conditions imposed on Germany by the Versailles Treaty at the conclusion of World War 1. And if you want to be a little bit nasty and provocative you could say that the communists kept calling for a struggle against the Versailles Treaty and then they were finally successful: in 1933 Germany tore up the Versailles Treaty and then we saw what happened.

This shows you the limitations and shortcomings of that sort of approach. Of course the communists were unsuccessful; actually the irony is that insofar as they made an attempt (and unfortunately they did make some attempts) at implementing this approach, the communists were not successful in rivaling the bourgeoisie and in particular the extreme, open parties of reaction, including the Nazis, they were not successful in rivaling them for the national banner of the trampled-upon German imperialist nation. That banner rightfully went to the bourgeoisie and in the conditions of Germany the bourgeoisie brought forward its most open reactionary representatives and instituted an open reactionary dictatorship and took extreme measures because its necessity was extreme. In the face of this, materialist analysis and materialist dialectics were thrown out in the adoption and application of the united front against fascism line. Again, this line was sold to people in those countries, such as Britain, France, and the United States – which did in fact have more than half the human race in a state of subjugation, and which even in the middle of a depression (and before that depression in a much greater way and even during it to some degree) continued to give certain droppings from these spoils to the sections of the working class and to the intermediate strata in these imperialist countries. These strata were granted a relatively privileged position, certainly in relationship to the world proletariat as a whole and to the masses of people in the world. And it was to these more bourgeoisified workers, those who now had a stake in the fatherland, as the Comintern openly expressed it, and to the intermediate and even some bourgeois strata, that the appeal of the united front against fascism was made and to whom it was geared. That's why I say that it was a Eurocentric and social-chauvinist appeal that, frankly, sought to rally people, including even sections of the bourgeoisie, in the "have" imperialist countries to fight to remain in that position and to keep the "have-not" imperialists from taking it away from them. This is the essence of the Soviet policy and the united front against fascism – which has to be viewed, in my opinion, as an extension of Soviet international line and foreign policy; that's what the essence of it came down to.

Now a lot of arguments were advanced, first as to why it was correct to single out the fascist states. But it's interesting, and ironic, that even from the point of view of the Soviet Union there are certain glaring inconsistencies that punch holes in the arguments that were made to justify this strategy. For example it is very striking and remarkable that many revolutionaries can be really good on a lot of questions,

but when you get to this question of World War 2 and fascism, they start sounding like ordinary liberals. This goes to show you the powerful role of the superstructure and of consciousness: all of us have been trained, including by the communist movement, to think nonmaterialistically and to think metaphysically and with an idealist approach to this question – and it is necessary to make a radical break with it. All of a sudden it's not a question of imperialism – this war and all the buildup to it was not the continuation of the very policies of plunder on *both* sides that were described by the Comintern itself at a certain interlude – instead it's the desire of some madmen and some evil people to take away everybody's democratic rights and conquer the world and enslave it, as if oppressed people and nations were already free. People have been trained in that outlook and it dies very hard. The line is that there were these fascist states that were out to conquer the world and an inevitable part of their particular essence was that they had an inveterate hatred for the Soviet Union as a land of socialism (as if that wasn't true of all imperialism), such an inveterate hatred that they just had to see it extinguished. But even if you look at it from that point of view, how do you explain the fact that Japanese imperialism was, for most of World War 2, not at war with the Soviet Union – until the very end of the war when the Soviet Union declared war on Japan? If it is some innate characteristic of these fascists that they had to extinguish the Soviet Union at all costs, why was it that Japanese imperialism (part of the fascist Axis) came to terms with the Soviet Union, after very brief skirmishes at the beginning, and during most of the war was not at war with the Soviet Union?

In fact, that can be easily explained, but it's explained on the basis of the particular interests and needs of Japanese imperialism, and not by some classless and nonmaterialist theory of fascism. And the differences between Italy/Germany, Italy/Japan, Japan/Germany – all within the same bloc – as well as the differences within the other bloc, are all understandable from the point of view of Lenin's analysis of imperialism, from the point of view of materialist dialectics. But they are not explainable by the approach that was taken with the antifascist united front. To cite a more recent expression of this, I was recently reading a pamphlet by a group of people who have broken off from the Communist Party of Turkey, Marxist-Leninist, and have joined up with a strange variety of opportunists in Germany and Austria, sort of the dogmato-revisionist kind. They are very strongly against the "three worlds theory" of the Chinese revisionists and they are very strongly against any notion that there's any difference among any of the imperialists, even in terms of the role they play in the world. In other words, they are willing to argue that German imperialism could just as easily be the force that starts the war as U.S. or Soviet imperialism, that any of the imperialist states could be the one to pull everybody together and start a war. This may sound very "left," but it is not. Yet, at the same time, they sum up the reasons why it was correct to have this antifascist united front policy and to line up with certain states against the others as was done under Stalin's leadership, because they go down the line defending Stalin.

Wherever Mao and Stalin disagreed they think Mao was wrong and wherever he criticized Stalin, Mao was wrong, not Stalin. So they have to explain this phenomenon of Stalin's united front with "democratic" imperialism in World War 2. They attack Mao for seeking to build an anti-Soviet united front in the early '70s – but what about what Stalin did around World War 2? That was different, you see, and they give a number of reasons which are basically regurgitations of the reasons that were given at the time for why it was okay. One of them is that there was a powerful socialist country, the Soviet Union, capable of leading this antifascist united front.

Well, a couple of things have to be said about that. To start with, the question of leading, as presented in this argument, is sort of a contentless and classless concept. I mean, what does that mean, to say "leading it"? That begs the question. First of all you have to say whether this policy is correct and whether anybody should lead it, then you can argue about whether there was somebody capable of leading it. So this argument about leadership is a tautological argument on one level that you can dismiss as such. But then the other question – what really is being gotten at – is the question of whether there was a force, as represented by the Soviet Union, capable through exercising such leadership of actually causing the imperialists with which it was seeking alliance and did have alliance to act in some way that would not be reactionary or not be imperialist, at least in its principal aspect, during the period of that alliance. In other words, even if it couldn't change their nature overall could it cause them at least in that period of time to act in a way which was principally not the extension of imperialist politics and economics but somehow progressive and contributing to the eventual complete defeat of imperialism? That's the real argument that has to be made. And I don't think on examining the concrete relationship of forces and the concrete facts and the actual course and outcome of the whole period leading up to and through World War 2 that you can argue that this occurred. I think that it is rather clear, and has to be summed up, that throughout the entire period the principal aspect (the overwhelming aspect) and the essence of what these "democratic" imperialists were doing was pursuing imperialist interests by imperialist means as a continuation of what they had been doing before the war. This remained true throughout the entire period when the Soviet Union was seeking and entered into alliance with them.¹⁴ To justify the kind of all-encompassing alliance that was built with the "democratic" imperialist states in World War 2, you would have to show that even without changing their *nature* it was possible to change the essence of the *actions* of these imperialists for a certain period. But that did not happen, and in fact it is not the case that it was possible to do so. There weren't the means at hand to change the basic character of even the *actions* of these imperialists – that is, to change them into actions which would be principally progressive, viewed in terms of objective content and objective effect. The only way to argue that this was possible (and that it happened) is to state the flattest tautology – that their actions

were principally progressive because they were allied with the Soviet Union against its main enemy – which is not only tautological but is based on the same fundamental error as Soviet policy overall in that period: subordinating the interests of the world revolution to the defense of the Soviet Union.

Another argument is that it was only the fascist states that were instigating war at that time, whereas the other states were taking a nonaggressive posture. Sometimes the more "left" version of this is that the nonfascist imperialists, as represented by the agreements at Munich and so on, were egging on the fascist states to go against the Soviet Union, but still it was the fascist Axis that was really responsible for the war. Therefore it was correct, for example, to have collective security agreements and to unite in a certain way with the other imperialists, because they too, for their own interests and reasons, did not want a war. Well, this again doesn't hold water from the point of view of Marxism-Leninism. And I think this argument also links up with the Eurocentric viewpoint that I was criticizing earlier. One of the things that Lenin hit on over and over again during the course of World War 1 was precisely the European chauvinist approach to the whole question, which says that a war is not really a war unless there is devastation and death that touches Europeans in a significant way. I'm looking for an article – but I'll just paraphrase it since I can't seem to find it: Lenin says that we Europeans are often fond of forgetting that colonial wars are also wars. And he goes on to criticize the whole viewpoint that if no Europeans are killed, well, then it's not really a war, that a war is when we Europeans get hurt or get killed.¹⁵ (This is, unfortunately, an all too frequent and current viewpoint down to today.) It's not too hard to understand that this is part of the whole European chauvinist, pro-imperialist viewpoint that seeks to preserve a privileged position and says that as long as we Europeans stay out of it, then it's not anything to really worry about.¹⁶

Lenin's polemic against this was part of his whole argument against the "who fired the first shot" sort of reasoning. He exposed that as an irrelevant stupidity; he insisted that you have to look at the whole history of what led up to this war (World War 1), and that, he said, is the conquest and plundering of colonies by *all* the imperialists. That's what this war is essentially and is mainly being fought over. It's irrelevant which one of them instigated or immediately started the war. In fact at one point, I believe (in an article I don't seem to be able to find), Lenin even says the Germans started the war, but then he immediately follows that up with the profound question: "So what?" That's his whole stand: who cares who "started" it – that's got nothing to do with the essence of this war. If you want to say Germany started it, I don't care. It could be argued the other way. But the point is that it is a continuation of definite politics and economics, *imperialist* economics and *imperialist* politics, over decades, and in particular the conquest and plundering and the rivalry for conquest and plundering in the colonies.

Although World War 1 was centered in Europe, as was World War 2, both wars were mainly fought over colonies. This relates to an important point about the present world

situation and developments toward a new world war: a lot of us, our party included, were for a time misled by this formulation put out by the Chinese party for a number of years in relationship to the world war now on the horizon, that Europe is the focal point of contention, Europe is the prize and so on. This formulation is a distortion that, unfortunately, was an extension of certain objectives that China had, even when it was socialist China. Frankly, and again to perhaps be somewhat provocative about it, I think there was a certain desire on the part of the Chinese to try to push the imperialists toward confronting each other in Europe, rather than having a Soviet attack on China – or at least as a means to delay that. Now I should also say that, taking this question by itself and on those terms, then from the point of view of the international proletariat you certainly couldn't argue that it would be worse if the two imperialist blocs went directly at each other and revolutionary China thereby was able to avoid or delay being attacked. But to get into that whole sort of posture of trying to maneuver the imperialists to fight this way and not that way, and on this terrain and not that, to attack this and not that, already gets you into very dangerous territory, and a very dangerous dialectic. The main point I want to make here, however, is that Europe, neither in World War 1, nor in World War 2, nor in the new world war looming ahead, Europe is *not* the focal point and prize. It was, in the previous two world wars, the main arena of battle, although in World War 2 the arena was much broadened, and there were many important war theaters, including the Pacific. You could still say it was concentrated in Europe in a certain sense, in terms of the most decisive battles. But if you don't have a Eurocentric viewpoint you can see more clearly that the battles in the Pacific, in Asia, and obviously the Chinese Revolution were a tremendous part of the overall terrain of World War 2. Returning to World War 1, it's rather clear the main battle and focal point of struggle, of the actual military confrontation, was in Europe. But Lenin's point (and the point I'm stressing here) is precisely that even when that was the case, the issue was still not the future of Europe, *per se*, but the battle for colonies.

So the question is, didn't this Leninist argument apply also to World War 2? In other words, wasn't that war (as, again, the Comintern itself said it was at a certain point) a continuation of decades of imperialist plunder and rivalry? The Comintern letter cited earlier says, "This war is the continuation of many years of imperialist rivalry in the capitalist camp." Perfectly true. Just as World War 1 was. True, World War 2 involved other, progressive and revolutionary elements, on a much greater scale than World War 1 (Lenin said about World War 1, correctly if in a bit exaggerated terms, that the *only* national element is the Serbia/Austria struggle). The national element in World War 1 was a very limited and certainly secondary element. But even in World War 2 it remained secondary. Even with the Chinese Revolution advancing through the struggle against Japan, and other genuine national liberation struggles that were waged (with or without the proletariat's leadership), plus the battle of the Soviet Union to defend itself, which was

a just war (even if the line guiding it was not a correct line from the standpoint of Marxism-Leninism, it was a just war) – with all that, when you look at the balance sheet, if you will, and apply the law that the principal aspect determines the essence of things, the progressive aspect was not the principal aspect or the essence of the overall course or the outcome of World War 2. Certainly it was not what gave rise to the war. In other words, in the main that war was not a continuation of national liberation struggles, or a continuation mainly of the Soviet Union's efforts to defend itself (or a combination of this with national liberation struggles, revolutionary civil wars, and so on). It was overwhelmingly, in its principal aspect and in its essence, a continuation of (as the Comintern said at *one* point) imperialist rivalry within the capitalist camp.

What Lenin insisted on in relationship to World War 1 – that you can't just look at the events of the last few years – has to be applied. You can't just look at what happened after Germany was put on a war footing after Hitler was brought to power, or Japan invading China or Italy invading Abyssinia (Ethiopia) – you can't just look at those events, but you have to look, for example, at what was Britain doing in the colonies? What was the U.S. doing in Latin America during that period? They no longer shot down the "natives" in the colonial countries? They no longer carried out suppression of the people who were under their domination in vast areas of the world? For that decade of the 1930s, say, they sat with their arms folded and didn't carry out armed suppression of the people in the colonies and dependent countries? They didn't seek to expand their colonial spheres of influence? If you could argue all that, then maybe you could say that they were "not instigators of the war" from the Leninist point of view. But if you can't, which you can't – unless you are going to be totally blinded by chauvinism, you can't argue that these imperialist powers were not carrying out those same policies all during the period of the '20s and the '30s – then you should recognize that the war when it broke out was a continuation of all that. So the argument that only one side (the fascist Axis) was responsible for World War 2 does not have validity from a scientific, Marxist-Leninist standpoint. In other words, it's not true.

Now there is also the argument that has already been touched on somewhat – it's related to the previous argument, but from a little different angle – that as opposed to World War 1 there was actually an attempt in World War 2, particularly by Germany, to subjugate a number of states in Europe itself and therefore national defense became justified there and this made the world war as it approached and broke out, different than World War 1. Well, just basically to summarize what's already been said, the objectives of German imperialism (and even many of their tactics, though not all) in World War 2 were very similar to what they were in World War 1. It's also true that in World War 1 Germany overran Belgium and occupied part of France. In fact, it is difficult to conceive of a war, especially among imperialists, where you only fight on your own territory, or where if when you win a battle on foreign territory, you refuse to occupy it.

When you're fighting a war, you fight it to win, and especially if you're fighting from the side of and with the interests and policies of the imperialists you of course overrun other countries. The argument that Lenin made in relation to World War 1 precisely applies to World War 2. He said, in opposition to the social-chauvinists of that time, if Paris or St. Petersburg were to be occupied by the "enemy" troops, i.e., Germany in both cases, would that change the nature of the war? Absolutely not.¹⁷ He didn't just mean if they came across one inch of French or Russian territory and thereby literally made an invasion; he meant a serious invasion and actual occupation, and he pointed out in any case that invasions are inevitable in almost every war. And that's basically what I was just saying: this doesn't change the nature of the war; it doesn't change what the war is an extension of, what it grew out of.

So, in essence, these various arguments in defense of the antifascist united front line were more or less flimsy rationalizations for a policy which sought first of all to subordinate the world revolutionary movement to the state interests and the national interests of defending what had already been achieved in the Soviet Union; and second, this was inevitably accompanied by serious deviations from, distortions of, Marxism-Leninism, materialist dialectics, and in particular the Leninist line on the defense of the fatherland in imperialist war. Along with that, as far as it was put forward and was taken seriously and taken up as any kind of a strategic orientation and tactical guideline for the parties that were part of the Communist International, it led them into the swamp of reformism and capitulation to the bourgeoisie. In the Dimitrov report, for example, it is said openly at one point that the principal contradiction now, or the question on the agenda now, is not the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie versus the dictatorship of the proletariat, but bourgeois democracy versus fascism. And this is the *strategic orientation* that's put forward in that report and it's linked up with the whole international line of the Soviet Union in aligning itself and other forces in a coalition with the Western imperialists, which were the states where the fascist form of dictatorship had not been implemented. But this was the kind of strategic orientation that was given: the fight now is to preserve or restore bourgeois democracy.

The report goes through a certain progression (or retrogression) even within itself. It starts off, picking up from "*Left-Wing Communism*", talking about the need to find the transitional forms that can constitute the approach up to the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Now that's what Dimitrov's report says is the question, at the beginning. It notes that in "*Left-Wing Communism*" Lenin stresses that there are transitional stages between "normal times" and revolutionary eruptions, even if these transitional stages are telescoped and brief in duration. Lenin says that you have to learn how to apply, especially in those times, the kind of tactics that bring over the broadest masses; it's no longer sufficient just to influence the broad masses and to have the advanced class-conscious proletariat with you, you have to figure out how to win over even backward masses. Well, it is

announced at the beginning of the Dimitrov report that it is going to speak to this, that it is going to take up that question in the concrete conditions of the mid-'30s and the development toward imperialist war and in the midst of the Depression and so on. But by the end it's gone through a series of changes itself so that it ends up arguing that the essential question is bourgeois democracy.

I think it's important to see here the link between this and the line of the book by R. Palme Dutt, *Fascism and Social Revolution*. Dutt puts forward the viewpoint – and this was the viewpoint of the international communist movement even though Dutt gives a particularly crude expression to it – that the bourgeoisie is no longer capable of carrying out the historical mission of the bourgeois revolution. In other words, it's no longer capable of developing the productive forces, it's no longer capable of upholding democracy, nor of upholding the interests of the nation. Therefore, the argument goes, it falls on the proletariat to do all these things. But Dutt's is a "left" version of this line. Because what he says is that the only way to do all of these things is to have a proletarian revolution. He does not say there are some good bourgeoisies and bad bourgeoisies or some that are fascist and some that are not going to adopt fascism. He says fascism is the inevitable product of imperialism – continuing the "general crisis" theory and carrying it to another extreme by saying that not only is capitalism, once it has reached imperialism, and especially once we've had the October Revolution, going on a straight-line decline downward, but now it's reached the point where fascism will be adopted, if not today then tomorrow, by *all* the bourgeoisies of all the imperialist countries because that's where the decline of imperialism is inevitably leading them: they have to take up fascism and revert to barbarism and so on and so forth. The only way out of all this is the proletarian revolution. That's why the contradiction presented in the Dutt book is not bourgeois democracy versus fascism, but communism versus barbarism. That's the contradiction that Dutt stresses over and over again: it's either going to be barbarism under fascism or much better machines under communism. I mean that's basically the view of communism that's presented – it is definitely technique in command and technique central. It's almost as if a graph, an engineering graph, were presented, where the Soviet Union and socialism is going up with technique and development of the productive forces, while capitalism and imperialism is going down; one's heading toward the bright communist future of marvelous machines and the other is heading toward barbarism and reversion to primitive production under conditions of enslavement. This is the way it is presented with Dutt.

Well, when that sort of "left" economism, a "left" expression of mechanical materialism, was abandoned because the results from it were not successful, and particularly in Germany the desired result did not occur, then the same basic assumptions underpinning it were maintained, not broken with, but now it was given an openly rightist interpretation, openly reformist, openly seeking alliance with sections, democratic sections, of the bourgeoisie and with democratic

bourgeois countries. That is, the same arguments were maintained that even in this era, the question was still one of carrying forward the traditions of the bourgeois revolution and of bourgeois society, of defending the nation and upholding democratic liberties, along with developing the productive forces and especially production technique, of course. But, now it was said that there *were* certain sections of the bourgeoisie who would split off from the fascist section and were willing to enter into an alliance to uphold these things. Rather than the argument being that the only thing to do was to have proletarian revolution to avoid barbarism, the argument was that we should unite with those sections of the bourgeoisie. In the Dimitrov report it's done through a sort of bourgeois logic; you're led up to it because first of all it says we have to unite with a lot of masses. Then it says, yes of course these masses are under the influence of, and at the present time form a social base for, bourgeois forces but we still have to unite with them. Then by the end it says pretty openly that you have to unite with sections of the bourgeoisie, those who are willing to preserve democracy, willing to uphold the interests of the nation and, you know, are against barbarism and retrogression. So the "left" form of this, all the "left" trappings, were dropped and it came out in its openly rightist, openly reformist version, which was that an alliance with the social democrats was now everything and nothing was possible without that, rather than the previous, mirror-opposite error. Previously it was held that until the social democrats are isolated, defeated and smashed, nothing is possible. So they became the main target. Then it was argued that until and unless we *unite* with them – always with the rationalization that we're going to get to their social base – but until we unite with them, nothing is possible. From either the "left" or the openly rightist direction, this was a strategy for capitulating to social democracy, to the bourgeoisie, for upholding reformism, and frankly for social chauvinism. To the degree that it was followed – and to a large degree it was – it's not surprising that this prepared much of the ground for the complete and total degeneration of the great bulk of the parties in the international communist movement after (or during and after) the war, and that by the time Khrushchev came to power, overwhelmingly (though certainly not entirely) what was left was deadweight socialists who had become respectable (to paraphrase a description by Upton Sinclair cited by Lenin in the article "British Pacifism and the British Dislike for Theory").¹⁸ That's largely what you had around when Khrushchev came to power in the Soviet Union, but the ground for this was prepared over a long time, including in a concentrated way in this united front against fascism line.

Now, if we're not going to be dogmatists and not going to be mechanical formalists, we have to recognize that there was actually something new and extremely important in World War 2 as compared to World War 1: there was a socialist state. There was not at the beginning and for the great bulk of World War 1. There was, of course, a new socialist state at the outcome of World War 1. But that was precisely something that resulted from the whole upheaval that came in connection with World War 1 and through

World War 1 and was not something which was a condition entering into the war or approaching it. So the existence of such a state going into World War 2 introduces another element into the situation, and the question of defending a socialist country is not something to be taken lightly. In other words, even if we view such a state as above all a base area for the world revolution, that doesn't mean that we therefore say, "who cares," that we give up base areas lightly. No, of course we can't have the approach of lightly giving up what's been gained. We'd give it up, as Lenin was willing to do, on the basis that we would win something more – or at least have a real chance of doing that, even if we couldn't be assured of it, at least that there's a real chance of it. It's for failure to have that kind of orientation that we can and should and must criticize the leaders of the Soviet Union and the Comintern, in connection with World War 2 in particular. But we can't criticize people for recognizing that there was a new contradiction, namely, the contradiction between the socialist state and the imperialist world, that entered in a significant way into the picture. The problem of how to handle that contradiction was not correctly approached and not correctly resolved. But of course you obviously couldn't correctly approach and correctly resolve it if you ignored it either. The criticism that has to be made must be directed precisely to the fact that when the opportunities for advance were shaping up to be the greatest – when another one of these "moments," as Lenin talked about, whose "significance is felt for decades to come,"¹⁹ one of these world historic conjunctures was approaching – at precisely that time the leaders of the Soviet Union and the Comintern sounded the retreat in the form of subordinating the world revolution to the interests of defending the Soviet Union, rather than the other way around.

Actually, there were two problems: one, this line was taken and two, it wasn't openly said what it was. In other words, if they had come out and openly said, "Look, we're going to make everybody make adjustments in their struggle and enter into a certain amount of agreements with their own bourgeoisie because we've got to defend the Soviet Union at all costs," well that would have been wrong, but at least everybody could have evaluated what was really being said, instead of all of this rationalization and convolution that was wrapped around it to try to pretty it up and disguise in fact what was being said. If they had come right out and said that, at least that would have provided the basis for people to struggle against it in a better way. In order to struggle against it, it was necessary first to penetrate to the essence of what was actually being said. And unfortunately, that was not done in most cases. It could not be done, and today as well the correct stand cannot be taken by superficial methods and with a blithe and blasé attitude – "well, you know, it's obvious."

For example, in our Central Committee back in 1976 we had a big struggle over this question of revolutionary defeatism, or rather we tried to have a big struggle: we had this Menshevik-type group festering within our ranks and they didn't want to struggle over it. Of course they've come out now openly as social-chauvinist since splitting from our party. But even then we tried to draw out some of these ques-

tions. Because at that time – this was before the coup in China, China was still a socialist country – we said, look there's the question of defense of China and there's the question of the overall struggle against imperialism in a new world war. Now how are we going to handle all this, how are we going to do better than was done last time, if, as is very likely, we are confronted with a new world war where all these elements are involved. So at one point, just as a way of evading the question, one of these Mensheviks comes out with a "left" summation and says, "well, what's the big deal? The bourgeoisie will declare war, and we'll apply a revolutionary defeatist stand, we'll turn the imperialist war into civil war. Let's move the agenda." Well you see, as we have pointed out before, it's very clear where they wanted to move their agenda to. They wanted to dismiss the complexity of the question because they really wanted to be social-chauvinists.

What I think comes out here is that a superficial approach to the problem can land you through the back door, if you will, into the camp of social chauvinism anyway, if you don't really examine the complexity of the question, and then determine how to handle the different contradictions and their interrelationship. You may have – as that Menshevik did not in fact, but you might actually have – good intentions to be a revolutionary defeatist and still not be able to do it. I am raising this not because the question of defending a socialist country is right upon us now. You know, a member of our Central Committee once said, after the coup in China, "well, war is approaching and we don't have a socialist country to defend, thank god." But you see that was a sarcastic comment, a sort of consciously provocative and deliberately one-sided way of summing up the past experience of the international communist movement. The comrade went on to say that actually, of course, that's not really the question because we can still make the same errors in other forms and of course it would be better if we really did have a socialist country to defend. The point is to learn how to handle this contradiction in a more correct way. This is not simply a matter of saying from an ideological standpoint, "we should not be afraid to lose what we've gained or else we can't win more." That's sort of a rock-bottom ideological stand for a communist, that you have to fight against a tendency to become conservative on the basis of having won certain victories. This even applied to Kautsky and the German Social Democratic Party when they were out of power, and of course it applies all the more when you're in power. But even when you're not in power, on a more reduced scale, in a more limited way, if you achieve certain kinds of things [even on a much reduced scale from what the German Social Democratic Party had going into World War 1] these can be turned into capital. So, there is the question of the ideological stand, yes – that if you're afraid to lose what you've already gained, the irony is that you'll eventually lose it anyway and you certainly won't win more – but there's also the question of methodology and the question of concrete content and political line that goes along with that: how do you handle the contradiction between doing everything possible to defend what you've gained while not raising that above the further advance of the world revolution in an

overall sense? How do you correctly subordinate defending what's been won to the further advance of the world revolution, to winning more of the world?

This problem and the importance of summing up all of this should be gone into deeply and all-sidedly in its own right, but it assumes special importance now because we are approaching one of these situations where, to use the phrase, things are going to be going up for grabs, not just in particular countries but in the world as a whole. Lenin once commented about wars that for all their horror they do strip away a lot of the litter and reveal the real mainsprings of the class struggle and also reveal what's outdated and obsolete in society and in institutions. He also pointed out that this can also happen with lesser crises to a certain extent, for example Poland and the imposition of martial law there is a striking current example of this. The real relationships do become very clear: it's you do this or you're dead. The fundamental truth that Mao made about where political power comes from becomes very stark and very real because the guns of one class or another are directly enforcing that political power. And in another situation, if you're living in an area where one army comes through one day and another army comes through another day (and the middle classes change the pictures of leaders on their wall, from one side then the other, as happened in the Russian Revolution – I was reading the novel *How the Steel Was Tempered*, and sometimes the "respectable citizens" got the wrong picture, they had Lenin's picture up when the white guard troops would come in, whoops!) – then the real class relations and the nature of different class forces tend to become very starkly revealed and you can see what Lenin talked about, fissures and cracks in society through which the seething discontent of the masses can erupt. It's like Lenin pointed out, the ruling classes rule not just by brute force, but also by the force of habit, by the dead weight of tradition and so on. Well when this begins to get thrown up in the air – if, for example, one day it's somebody speaking French that's dictating to you, and the next day somebody speaking Russian, somebody speaking English, and so on – it begins to break through all this. First it can be seen that the authority of all the governments is clearly resting right at the end of the cannon and the gun, resting on the tanks and missiles and so on. And if all that is shifting and changing, this is precisely very favorable for the proletariat.

But it takes a Marxist-Leninist outlook, not just an ideological stand but methodology and a political line consistent with that, to grasp what's favorable about that and to see beyond the very real horrors and difficulties of it. Similarly, to correctly handle the contradiction between defending what's been gained at any point and using such a tumultuous situation to advance the overall world revolution – using the socialist country as a base area while seeking to defend it, so long as that does not in fact come into antagonism with further advancing the world revolution – takes a consistent application of Marxism-Leninism. And I say "come into antagonism" because it's inevitable that it will come into *contradiction* with it. This is a point that we have to drive home over and over again. One of the worst errors made by the

leadership of the Comintern and the Soviet Union was that they put forward that there was no contradiction involved between defending what had already been gained, that is the Soviet Union in particular, and advancing the world revolution. They said that these were identical – not in the dialectical sense of a unity of *opposites*, but that they were one and the same. Well, even if the correct line is applied, overwhelmingly and consistently, there's still a very real contradiction which can become very acute. Now we can sum up and have to sum up that this was mishandled by the international communist movement in a very serious way in the approach to and during World War 2 and particularly in the line of the united front against fascism. But as important as that is and as much as that is part of the theoretical arsenal that is necessary to carry out destruction of opportunist lines and the construction of a more correct line, that still doesn't relieve us of the responsibility to concretely analyze this question more deeply in terms of how it actually develops at different stages, and it certainly does not eliminate the contradiction that's going to be with us during this whole long period of transition and struggle from the bourgeois epoch to the epoch of world communism. By this I mean the overall phenomenon (contradiction) that we're going to win victories and we're going to make breakthroughs but we will not go straight forward to communism, there will be not only twists and turns but reversals and setbacks, and things will proceed in spiral-like motion, there will be times when consolidation and preparation for the next upheaval is what must be emphasized, and times when risking a lot to make major new breakthroughs, that are not usually possible, must be the orientation – and, again, the rub is that these are exactly the times of greatest danger to the defense of what has already been won, in particular, socialist states.

With this in mind, let's turn to the policy of Mao and the Chinese Communist Party when confronted with the intensification of this contradiction in the early and mid-1970s. I think that the correct way to understand what was happening in terms of international lines in China in the early '70s is to view it as an extension and continuation of basically two things. First, it was a continuation of the general kind of line that had been applied in the Chinese Revolution itself and in particular during the anti-Japanese war phase, when among a number of imperialist powers that were objectively in contradiction to China, that were objectively oppressing China, one of them was targetted as the main enemy and a united front was formed even with forces dependent upon and ultimately representing other imperialist powers. While that was overall a correct policy and approach for the revolution in China in the conditions in which it occurred, and, specifically for the anti-Japanese war and more generally for carrying forward the new-democratic revolution in China, it was incorrect to try to extend the same kind of approach onto a world scale and make it a basis for a world alignment and a world strategy against the Soviet Union in the international conditions of the 1970s. Secondly, I think the Chinese policy was also a continuation – rather than a rupture which should have been made – with some of the erroneous lines and policies that I was just

dissecting a bit, the Comintern policy and Soviet strategy during and in relation to World War 2. And to some degree the Chinese drew this connection explicitly, or very strongly implied it. Articles were printed in the *Peking Review* and other publications about the victories of the great antifascist war and how this advanced the overall development of socialism in the world. It was very clear that the analogy was being very strongly suggested that the same kind of strategy should be applied, with the Soviet Union playing an analogous role to the fascist powers at the time of World War 2.

Now I think among the various leaders and the different class forces in the leadership in China, there was on the one hand fairly broad agreement around this policy, but on the other hand within that very sharp and even antagonistic differences existed. In this regard it is very relevant to recall Henry Kissinger's description of negotiations with Zhou Enlai on the one hand, and on the other hand Mao's indirect but very forceful political intervention in that process, insisting that the agreements be placed in the context of an overall presentation of the world situation *and* with the clear statement of fundamental differences.²⁰ To summarize it, I think that Mao was in a certain kind of unity with the forces generally represented by Zhou Enlai around the policy of seeking a broad united front against Soviet social-imperialism, including with U.S. imperialism and those forces allied with and dependent on it. And Mao saw this as a long-range strategic orientation, not just a short-term, very immediate tactical maneuver to head off a danger – which was a very real danger – of Soviet attack on China in the early '70s (as we know, the Soviets were actually making concrete plans to attack at least Chinese nuclear installations and maybe grab some of China in the north in the late '60s and into the early '70s). But I think the policy was not simply a short-term tactical maneuver to deal with that very real danger; it was a longer-term strategic orientation that for the next stage of things – and Mao was very clear, he saw them moving toward world war – it was the focus for the international movement and the form through which it should carry out the struggle. On the other hand, I think Mao sought to apply again what he had applied in the anti-Japanese united front and during the course of World War 2 – the policy of independence and initiative within the united front. In other words, what Mao did break with and had to break with – or there would almost certainly have been no Chinese Revolution at all at that time – was the attempt on the part of the Comintern (and Stalin) to get the revolutionary forces in China and the Communist Party in particular to enter into a united front with Chiang Kai-shek and with Western imperialism, U.S. and British in particular, in a *subordinate position*, that is, to basically roll up their independent banner, give up their independent political and military stand and forces and become a subordinate part of the Kuomintang government and forces. This would have meant, in reality, to capitulate to the imperialism with which they were in a united front against Japan, as represented particularly by Chiang Kai-shek. This was in fact the policy that was pushed from the Soviet Union. Mao himself said as much in a

number of places²¹ and it also can be pretty well established independently of that. I think there's not much doubt of it. And Mao was prepared to wage the same struggle on these same terms, more or less, in the context of an anti-Soviet united front in the present historical period (not that it's exactly a replica of the anti-Japanese war, but more or less on the same terms). Mao was prepared to and did wage such a struggle. I think this came out clearly in the negotiations with Kissinger and the Zhou Enlai stand on the one hand (which was more or less analogous to the line of capitulation to and subordination to U.S. imperialism during the anti-Japanese united front), and Mao's approach on the other hand – once again fighting and refusing to do that, insisting that this is still imperialism, these are still forces that, in a long-term strategic sense, have to be overthrown and eliminated from the world and therefore even though we have to now enter into a certain alliance with them, we're not going to subordinate ourselves to them. This, again, was a continuation on Mao's part of the struggle that he had to wage and did wage in order for there to be a successful Chinese Revolution in the first place.

The whole battle in the '70s, the whole struggle against the right-deviationist wind, against the forces more or less marshaled by Zhou Enlai and by Deng Xiaoping – even though there were sharp contradictions between them, they nevertheless sort of coalesced into one camp in opposition to revolution in the '70s – this whole struggle cannot be separated from the international context and the question of international line and in particular from the battle that Mao was waging against capitulation within that broad policy of the united front against the Soviet Union. In other words, I think that a lot of the analogies that were made about capitulation – for example, some of the historical analogies about the struggle between the Legalists and the Confucianists in ancient China – apply both to the people who wanted to capitulate to the Soviet Union and to the people who wanted to capitulate to the West in the name of fighting the main enemy, that is the Soviet Union. Both tendencies were there. It's clear to me that Mao and those with him were very much aware of and waged a fierce struggle around the question of capitulation, from either direction.

The irony involved in all this comes out if you remember the second visit of Nixon to China when he was no longer president, which was preceded and arranged by a visit of his daughter, Julie Nixon Eisenhower. At the end of 1975 she went to China and met with Mao, sort of paving the way for Nixon to come back. And then she went back to the U.S. and did an interview, it was with *McCall's* magazine I think (I don't know if everybody is familiar with that, but it's sort of like one of these women's fashion-type magazines), about her discussions with Chairman Mao and the thing that she kept coming back to was how he was all the time talking about class struggle, class struggle was everywhere and so on. He seemed completely preoccupied with this, with the class struggle. This is at the end of 1975. I think there you see concentrated, very sharply, the way in which Mao's line and policy divided very sharply into two, in sort of an ironic way, because, on the one hand here he's completely and correctly

preoccupied with the class struggle even when talking to this personage and on the other hand he is talking to *her* about class struggle and it ends up in *McCall's* magazine. The reason he's talking to her is because this class struggle is taking place within a certain arena, it's taking place within a certain framework of seeking a united front against the Soviet Union, which even brings you into an arrangement with U.S. imperialism and some of its spokesmen and leaders, whether in or out of office at the time. This encapsulates in a certain way the contradictory character of Mao's approach and the particular way in which this divided sharply into two: the class struggle was being waged not just over the very sharp domestic issues, on whether or not to reverse the verdicts of the Cultural Revolution in the various spheres of society, but that class struggle also had a dimension relating to the question of capitulation to forces of imperialism, and the problem of revisionism was seen by the revolutionaries as intimately bound up with that question of capitulation. Yet this was all taking place in the context of seeking a broad anti-Soviet united front including the U.S. as well as other imperialist and reactionary forces. The line of Mao and his headquarters emphasized that if the revisionists came to power and if they were able to implement a revisionist line inside China, that would inevitably be part and parcel of, and would strengthen the basis for, capitulation to imperialism. Only by waging the class struggle against them and carrying forward on the gains that were made through the Cultural Revolution could the revolution continue in China itself, but also – and in an overall sense more important than that in the present situation – this was the only means that a line of capitulation to foreign imperialism could be prevented from winning out within the broad united front that was being entered into with one bloc of imperialists to go against the main enemy, the Soviet social-imperialists.

This was their approach, and I think again it divides very sharply into two. On the one hand as compared to the Zhou Enlai forces and the others who *were* (objectively and, many of them, subjectively) for capitulation to imperialism, this shows that Mao and the others were still maintaining a revolutionary orientation and seeking to prevent the destruction of the Chinese Revolution, were seeking to promote its continuing advance and to prevent capitulation to imperialism. But, on the other hand, although that was their general orientation and that was their attempt, ironically the line and policy which they were seeking to carry out worked against that very anti-revisionist, anti-capitulationist struggle that they were attempting to wage. In other words, to put it bluntly, they were waging it on the wrong grounds and on the wrong terms. That is not to say that had they waged it on better grounds and better terms they would have necessarily won. I think that is both a pragmatic viewpoint and also one which goes along with a nationalist orientation of thinking that these questions are mainly conditioned and determined within the country of China and not in terms of what's happening in the world as a whole. It's possible that they could have won, and it's certainly true that had they had a better understanding of how the struggle in China fit into the

overall world struggle and handled that contradiction more correctly, this would have strengthened them considerably. It would have strengthened them considerably and *perhaps* it could have made the difference in whether they won or lost, but it's also very probable that it would not have and that the uphill battle being waged by the revolutionary forces would have been lost in the short run anyway, because there was a tremendous battle both in terms of conditions in China itself and in the world to keep going on the socialist road inside China. Neither victory nor defeat was inevitable, but I think that a certain conjuncture of forces that came together at that time – not in the same concentrated sort of way as is now occurring, but in a certain, more limited way in the early '70s – made it very difficult to carry forward a revolutionary line inside China. It goes back to the point I stressed in another presentation: even when you're in power you don't always have the broad masses with you politically, if you're maintaining a revolutionary line.

This raises a very important point: among the Marxist-Leninist forces that did arise in relationship to China and were specifically inspired by the Cultural Revolution and the broad dissemination of Mao Tsetung Thought and so on, a real dividing line has been whether or not people upheld the so-called "Gang of Four" (of course two of these four have now capitulated but the role of the Four as a leading core in the struggles against Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, et al., must still be upheld). Because those groups that did not uphold them and adopted instead this line of "well, they lost therefore they must have been wrong," or "the main reason they lost must have been their mistakes," and so on, those forces have degenerated and have either disappeared from the scene or should have. This is an important question in its own right, and even in one sense it's sort of an aside to the main point here which is that Mao and his comrades, beyond what mistakes they may have made, were waging the struggle under conditions which were objectively very difficult because even when you're in power you don't always have the masses, specifically the majority of the masses, with you politically. Now it is true that when you're in power, a certain force of tradition and of going along with the status quo on the part of broad masses may pass over to you, so to speak. In other words, where the masses before would more or less go along with who was in authority and would repeat what was acceptable, to the benefit of the bourgeoisie, there are certain ways in which, when the proletarian forces and Marxist-Leninists are in power and leadership, some of that passes over to them. Whatever the prevailing norms and winds are, there's a large section of the masses, who even – or especially, rather – in periods when there is not a revolutionary upsurge, will go along with that, will accept it; it's sort of the daily routine and people who are not advanced are not the ones to lead struggles against the daily routine, by definition. It is a very important point to sum up that this "going along" is *not* the same thing as supporting the revolution. If revolutionaries are in leadership, or in power, and people follow them, it's very dangerous to think that this is the same thing as people following you on a revolutionary basis. I don't

mean this as a criticism of the Four (or Mao, of course). I think that they (and Mao even more) were pretty aware of this phenomenon, but it's an important thing to sum up more broadly and more deeply.

Let's just put it bluntly. I think what occurred, what happened in China and to the masses who were part of the upsurge there in the late '60s is not that much different and is not separated from what happened in the world as a whole. There was a certain kind of upsurge which was centered in the national liberation struggles in the "third world," a certain kind of revolutionary upsurge, and a certain kind of expectation of which, for example, *Long Live the Victory of People's War*²² is an expression – the kind of expectation that accompanied that upsurge, namely that these struggles would batter and weaken and perhaps even destroy U.S. imperialism (consume it in the fire of these struggles and tear it apart piece by piece and other lively imagery that was used). That was sort of the expectation, whether spoken or unspoken at the time, that this wave of struggle would engulf and perhaps even destroy U.S. imperialism and there was the vague notion, consciously or unconsciously, that this would be the end of imperialism, or at least that the struggle would continue to advance wave upon wave, to use the slogan that was popular at the time. This did not happen for a number of reasons which have to do again with the process – the motion through contradiction – of the fundamental contradiction underlying this process on a world scale and the various particular contradictions and their expression and their interrelationship at that stage. To be more concrete, there was a shift in the position, role and actions of the Soviet Union, of the U.S., and of other forces in the world from the late '60s into the '70s, and particularly by the mid-'70s. And just as many people were demoralized, disappointed, disoriented and many fell away in large parts of the world – and we're all familiar with that phenomenon – I think without question the same thing occurred within China itself.

To put it another way, if you were a worker or peasant in China, when there's an upsurge in China, the Cultural Revolution, and when the Vietnamese people are waging a heroic struggle against U.S. imperialism against all odds and when there is an upsurge of national liberation struggles in many parts of the world, maybe you'll much more readily say, you know, "who gives a fuck about all these consumer goods, I'll go without this and that because I want to be part of the world revolution; I'll work an extra two hours to supply rice or ammunition or whatever for Vietnam," and so on. Not only the more or less hardcore of advanced forces, but much broader masses took this kind of stand – again there were some who went along with the tide, but there were much broader masses genuinely swept up into that kind of upsurge. But then when you enter the early '70s and the Soviets are clearly gaining the upper hand in terms of their influence within the Vietnamese party and the leadership of the struggle there, when there are growing setbacks, disappointments and defeats and shifts in many of the struggles in other parts of the world, when the Soviet Union shifts its position and a lot of its tactics, when the U.S. pulls back and regroups and

so on, then as part of all that it becomes clear that this upsurge in the world and including within China can't go straight forward. And then there's a lot stronger basis for the line the revisionists put out in China, that we've got to bend everything toward defending ourselves against the Soviet Union, we've got to get modernized, etc., etc. Even the crudest expressions of this line, of holding up a lot of the material benefits that exist in the West, now has more allure and attraction for a lot of the forces who are not the most advanced but who were genuinely swept up in the revolutionary upsurge. Maybe conditions were a lot more favorable to be a self-sacrificing revolutionary internationalist in the late '60s and into the early '70s than by the time of the mid-'70s. We've all witnessed and experienced this phenomenon and even felt this pull in our own experience. And it's not that much different just because the proletariat holds state power, if we understand how contradictory and complex that phenomenon is – the proletariat holding state power and the economy being socialist is full of, and is conditioned by, great contradiction.

So, that's by way of saying two things: had the revolutionaries fought on a better terrain and had a more correct understanding of some of these questions, they would not necessarily have won anyway – they wouldn't necessarily have lost but they would not necessarily have won these last major battles, or the ones that proved to be the last battles in this round in China; and second, even in order to carry out a more correct line in China would have been extremely difficult. It wouldn't have been as easy as just sitting around a table and formulating the correct line, though by that I'm not saying the efforts to sit around a table and struggle out a correct line are unimportant. Quite the contrary. They are extremely important. But there's also the material world these lines have to be carried out in and there's real social classes and social forces and social bases for different lines. And to win out with an internationalist line that had an essentially correct understanding and programme and policy on the relationship between defending China and advancing the world revolution would not have been easy. Now that's no reason not to fight for such a line, because as Lenin said, since when did Marxist-Leninists ever base their policies and their principles on whether or not it's easy to implement them, and on whether or not they have large or small numbers at any given time.²³ In fact, from a strategic standpoint, and even in more immediate terms, the movement internationally would be further advanced had such a correct line been formulated and fought for – a position that said in essence, "look, we're not going to have a united front with one group of imperialists against another (even a united front where we keep in mind that they are still imperialists and where we fight against capitulation); instead, we're going to seek another way of dealing with the situation and even if, because of our own situation, we enter into certain limited agreements and arrangements with some imperialists and reactionary states, we are not going to make that a strategy for the international proletariat."

From my point of view, I don't really think it's necessari-

ly wrong to enter into such agreements and arrangements as such, but that really should not be imposed on the international movement as a strategy; besides, I don't see why it's necessary to have Haile Selassie and Marcos and all the other assorted pimps and puppets run over to China. I mean if you have the master, you don't need all the puppets. Even from the point of view of China's relations and arrangements, if you want to deal with the U.S. bloc, just have the U.S. bloc over there and a few other imperialists; you don't have to parade a lackey-a-week before the people, which is more or less what was happening. But here's the more basic problem: if we have a contradiction between defending and advancing what we've got – speaking from the point of view of the international proletariat – and really trying to do that in the best way possible, while at the same time subordinating that in an overall sense to advancing the world revolution as a whole, how can it be (and this has generally been the tendency) that everybody else in the world has to adjust and make sacrifices and compromises – I'm not talking about sacrifices that are involved in the struggle, I'm talking about compromises and adjustments in line – and yet the socialist state doesn't make compromises and adjustments that might limit its defense capabilities but would be better for the world movement as a whole? In other words, why should it be that China enters into all these agreements and arrangements and then basically calls on Marxist-Leninists all over the world to adjust their tactics and policy and strategy accordingly? Why shouldn't it be the case that China as a socialist state, even if it has to enter into certain agreements, arrangements, etc., with certain imperialists and reactionary states for the needs of its own defense, should consciously restrict and subordinate *those* to the interests of advancing the world revolution and take more risks than it would if it only considered its own defense, in order not to compromise the fundamental principles and the concrete opportunities for the advance of the world revolution? Now that's very difficult to do. It's much harder to do than to say. But it's got to be the guiding principle.

Unfortunately, in the experience of the Soviet Union and again even in the experience of China, that is not the way that question was approached, even by the people with the revolutionary line, with the best line and in an overall sense a correct line. Instead they fell – or were pulled by circumstances and social classes and forces and their influences – into, or toward, a line that said, in essence, that everybody else had to do the bending. Now, of course, if there is a contradiction and you are going to try to handle it correctly, there is going to be a certain amount of bending both ways, but the main bending should be done by the socialist state, because it is after all a subordinate part of the overall world revolution. And if that meant that, for example, in the short run China had to lose, or risk losing, a part of its territory in order not to disorient the whole international movement, then it should do that. Not because we should take this lightly – "who cares?" – but precisely because you're looking toward one of these conjunctures sharpening up in the world and heightening and bringing together these contradictions.

Mao and the revolutionaries clearly saw that coming; it's not that they didn't recognize that in a general sense. But then you also have to recognize that it's precisely in those circumstances that revolutionary opportunities are heightened, that revolutionary possibilities are facilitated and that revolutionary situations may suddenly emerge, *including* where it may not have appeared possible previously. Certainly no one in 1911 would have predicted the Russian Revolution – despite 1905, no one would have predicted the Russian Revolution – of February, let alone October 1917.

To take a more recent example, no one in 1975 would have predicted the revolution in Iran in 1978-79. Now it's possible, looking back, to see what were the particular contradictions that underlay that development and how they sharpened and led up to that revolution – it's not mysterious. Yet these things are not always evident very far in advance. But precisely with this in mind, suppose that China had not carried out the policy it did, suppose instead the line that was fought for and that won out there was essentially of the kind we're talking about, of making certain agreements and arrangements but keeping that subordinate to the overall advance of the world movement, not making it an international line and policy and in fact even curbing and restricting the degree to which these arrangements were made in order not to compromise and in fact to further the preparation for, as Lenin said, really great, really revolutionary days. Suppose that had been the policy, so that instead of wining and dining with the Shah and everything else – and then ending up with the revisionist coup de grâce, Hua Guofeng's hopping into helicopters with the Shah a couple of months before he was overthrown (and it was Hua's just deserts to be able to and to have to play that role) – what if instead a more correct line had been fought for and perhaps had triumphed in China, specifically a more correct line on the international situation, and then something like the Iranian revolution had occurred. Think of where the proletarian forces inside Iran would be. Not that they should depend on China for their strength, but they certainly would have been strengthened. Instead, they were severely weakened by the line China carried out. Because China didn't just have certain agreements with the Shah: unfortunately they translated and broadcast in Farsi lots of lavish praise of the Shah and his "progressive programs." These are objective facts.

It's also a fact that the Soviet revisionists and their followers, who were responsible for setting up the masses for massacre in Chile, come out smelling like a rose, whereas all the Maoist forces in the world have had to bear the burden of what China did in relation to Chile. Now that's partly because of bourgeois machinations on the part of the pro-Soviet forces – and because the Soviet Union remains a world power that can exert great influence on that basis – but it's also true that if there had been a clear line in opposition to the Soviet revisionist pole, and specifically if China had *not* been into having a united front with all the Pinochets, all the Shahs and U.S. imperialism on top of it all, if the revolutionary forces had fought for the kind of line we've been talking about, then a much better revolutionary

legacy would have been left, not just in Chile (or Iran) but internationally, even if the revolutionary forces in China had still been defeated. It was very inspiring what happened in the trial of the Four – as far as the two who remained firm in their revolutionary stand are concerned (Chiang Ching and Chang Chun-chiao) – it was very inspiring and it was a great assistance to the revolutionary movement internationally, but it would have been even greater assistance still if these line questions we've been focusing on had been fought out more correctly from the side of the revolutionaries.

Essentially the problem with the line they did adopt is that you cannot take the experience and the policy of the Chinese Revolution, in one phase of it – that is in the new-democratic phase and in particular a sub-phase of that, the anti-Japanese war – and more or less directly extend that on a world scale, in present conditions, so that China's role is made analogous to the communist forces and their base areas in the anti-Japanese war, the Western imperialists are substituted for Chiang Kai-shek and the Soviet Union for Japan. Now a fundamental reason you can't do that is precisely that one country *is* a subordinate part of the overall process going on in the world as a whole. What may be, at least in the main and overwhelmingly, correct in one particular country, if elevated to the level of a world policy, becomes wrong. It doesn't *automatically* become wrong, but it may be wrong, and in this case was wrong.

For example, during the anti-Japanese united front, Mao was very clear and said so clearly, that when the communists united with Chiang Kai-shek they were ultimately uniting with, or having a certain kind of alliance with, Western imperialist powers – in particular he mentioned Britain and the U.S., on whom Chiang Kai-shek was dependent. He even made the point that Chiang Kai-shek wouldn't break up the united front unless British and U.S. imperialism told him to because he was their lackey.²⁴ So it isn't that he was either unclear about or hid the fact that, in making this distinction and forming a certain kind of united front, it was a question of making distinctions among the imperialists. In an article of Mao's I want to discuss a little bit, "On Policy," he said it was necessary to make a distinction between Japanese imperialism and its allies on the one hand and British and U.S. imperialism on the other; and between the British and U.S. imperialism of today and the British imperialism of the past when they favored a "Munich policy in the Far East" and so on and so forth.²⁵ So he openly advocated making such distinctions. Now, in terms of the struggle in China, okay. As a tactical orientation and even a basis for a united front policy for a certain stage this was correct – not just because in a narrow and pragmatic sense they won so they must have been right, but this did in fact lead to the overall advance of the Chinese Revolution and the strengthening of the Marxist-Leninist forces, not to their weakening. It constituted, as Mao put it once, preparation for the final victory of the Chinese Revolution, because that was mainly handled correctly, and it was not an incorrect policy to make those kinds of distinctions, if you were looking at the situation and the struggle in China itself at that point and figuring out how

to make certain policies and tactics for that. But even at that very time (the '30s and '40s), if you were to expand that onto a world scale and say the international proletariat should make distinctions among the imperialists, that is, ally with some to oppose the others, that would have been an incorrect line for the international communist movement (as was the case with the overall antifascist united front line in relation to World War 2). Even if that kind of approach was correct for the struggle in China, it represents an incorrect line if it is expanded and extended onto a world scale and made the guiding line and policy, the orientation, for the international proletariat.

In India, for example, it might have been correct to single out British imperialism at that very same time as Japan was singled out in China; in India it might well have been correct to focus on British imperialism and even make certain tactical adjustments and arrangements with forces that might have been more favorable to Japanese imperialism. But, you see, that was not allowed. If you tried to do that, even in Latin America in World War 2 – in Latin America(!) – if you focused on U.S. imperialism as the main enemy, you were a Nazi, a profascist and so on. I mean that's how bad it got. But as soon as you have said that in China they could single out Japan, while maybe in India they should single out the other side (British imperialism and its allies) right away you've broken out of the frame of reference of saying that the whole world struggle should single out *one* enemy, and you've made it much more what it should be, that within the different countries you can make certain tactical adjustments and maneuvers and shifts, but you can't make those the basis of a world policy by mechanical or direct extension.

This leads us back to the more general question of what *should* be the overall orientation for the international proletariat. I think in general our orientation should be more or less what I read earlier from Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism*. I'll come back to this in concluding, but in general the content of what we should be about is to seek a world front of revolutionary struggle against imperialism consisting of, in a basic sense, the unity between the proletarian revolutionary forces in the advanced countries and the revolutionary national liberation struggles against imperialism (as the first stage but a stage that cannot be skipped) in the colonial and dependent countries. That is the basic strategic orientation that should guide our overall approach. It should be a front against imperialism and the imperialist system. However, it has been argued, and used for incorrect purposes – it is a truth that has been misused – that there are particularities to the struggle at any given time and it's necessary also to take those into account in formulating more concrete policies. The problem, as I just alluded to, is that this has generally been made the basis for saying that we should single out one imperialist bloc or the other, because at the concrete stage it is more dangerous or more of an enemy than the other.

Here I want to return to that essay of Mao's, "On Policy," because while, again, the orientation and policy set forward there in 1940 were important and generally correct for China, an attempt to extend that onto a world scale as an

international strategy would not necessarily be correct at all. I remember in *Peking Review*, for example, I think in 1972, there was an article entitled something like "On Studying Chairman Mao's 'On Policy'"; what was very clearly being put forward was that we're going to apply this line to the world struggle now. And that's where it began to turn into its opposite and where certain things which were correct in the circumstances where Mao wrote them were beginning to be projected as general guidelines for the international movement. In fact they are even sort of set forward in that way in "On Policy," but that becomes much more of a problem and was more fully developed in this whole period of working for an anti-Soviet united front in the 1970s. In this regard the formulation that I think should be specifically referred to is what Mao calls, "the same principle" that guides all their tactics: "to make use of contradictions, win over the many, oppose the few and crush our enemies one by one."²⁶ Again, as for how they approached the united front against Japan in particular in the stage of struggle then, this was not wrong and in fact it was important and guided the advance of the revolution through and beyond that stage; but to make a general principle out of this I don't think is correct.

For example, let's take the principle that's at the heart of this: making use of contradictions and defeating your enemies one by one. Well it seems to me that the way that that has to be correctly understood is that's a policy dictated by necessity. Even where it's correct, it's something that's dictated by necessity and by the actual (this is a phrase that has a revisionist application but also can have a correct one), the actual relationship of forces at the given time, if that's understood in terms of its motion and development and not as something fixed and frozen. If because of the relationship of forces at a given moment you face the necessity of making use of contradictions among your enemies in order to defeat them one by one, okay, that may be quite correct. But if that's made a general principle, then it automatically becomes an argument, for example, against Lenin's approach to World War 1. Lenin repeatedly insisted – and it sort of almost sounds like he's mocking the misapplication of this one-by-one principle – that he refused to answer whether the victory of this or that imperialist bloc in this present war is better for the international proletariat; we can only say that they are both worse.²⁷ Now you see, that sounds like Lenin is being completely undialectical. It almost sounds like he's mocking this very approach of making a principle out of the approach of defeating your enemies one by one – or more specifically the attempt to apply this as a strategy on a world scale. In World War 1, for the international proletariat as a whole, it was most definitely *not* correct to single out one enemy and try to direct all the efforts toward defeating that enemy and then deal with the next enemy down the road and so on; instead, depending on exactly where you find yourself, you should direct your spearhead mainly against the immediate ruling class, but internationally you should work for the defeat and overthrow of all imperialism and reaction – that was the line Lenin fought for and implemented. In other words, Lenin was very clear that internationalism meant

that the proletariat in Russia sought to take advantage of the war and the weakening of the ruling class there to overthrow Russian imperialism and the Russian bourgeoisie, and at the same time the proletariat in Germany should be led to do the same with the German bourgeoisie, the English proletariat with the English bourgeoisie and so on, rather than all of them singling out one imperialist power (or bloc) and directing all their efforts against it.

I think that not only was Lenin's approach correct as a specific policy in relation to World War 1 but it is correct as a general strategic orientation for the international proletariat. Now Lenin certainly didn't ignore tactical considerations within that. For example, he thought it was quite correct for the Irish to take advantage of the weakening of England to fight mainly against England, even to make certain deals with or purchases from Germany and so on, involving munitions, etc. He didn't criticize that at all. He thought it was correct for them to do that. However, if they had made a principle out of it and said because of the needs of Ireland everybody should unite against England, well then Lenin would have thought that had gone too far, had turned things into their opposites – and he would have been correct. Similarly, Lenin himself wasn't called a German agent for absolutely no reason. I mean he did make certain arrangements with Germany about how to get back into Russia and so on and so forth. He was not a German agent but he did know how to make use of contradictions. The point is he did not develop that into a whole line, strategy and policy of singling out and defeating our enemies one by one on an international scale. Precisely the earlier example I gave of a policy of fighting mainly Japan in China while next door in India fighting mainly against British imperialism, this, to me, begins to indicate the more correct approach. It begins to show that it's not correct as any kind of strategic principle, especially on a world level, to single out one enemy and defeat it, and then move on to the next one.

I put it another time in terms of street fighting, like if you come upon a situation where you are confronted by five people who are ready to jump on you, and you make an assessment and say I can't deal with all five of these so I better make use of some contradictions here and single out one or two and deal with them and try to neutralize the others or even get them on my side temporarily, well maybe you have to do that. But it might be possible to sum up the situation and say, now look, I can deal with all five of them right now, and there's nothing good about any of them, so I'm just going to wipe them out and so much the better for everybody else as well as myself. Now it's possible that the situation could present itself one way or the other, and in one case one policy would be correct and in the other case another policy would be correct. In fact that did in a certain way happen in the Chinese Revolution where at different times they did single out one imperialist bloc. For example, after World War 2 they mainly fought U.S. imperialism but that did not involve entering into an alliance with other imperialists because the basis for that didn't really exist. Because of the character of the U.S. bloc at that time it wasn't even realistic. The point is

that this is a question of necessity and freedom, and the dialectical relationship between them. It is not a question of an overall principle or policy that you have to defeat your enemies one by one. If, for example, the socialist camp had really been consolidated and strengthened and developed as a socialist camp in the 1950s and after, I think analysis would show that it was very likely that the imperialists would have launched a war against that socialist camp sometime probably in the 1960s. They would have very likely had the necessity to do that. Well, maybe it would have been correct for that socialist camp to try to split the imperialists, and maybe it would have been better to say, "okay, 'Tis the final conflict,' and let's get it on," you know. "You want to attack the socialist camp, good – it's about time we had this showdown and when this is through there won't be much of imperialism left in the world." I'm not willing to say that the latter would not have been the more correct policy. It would depend on an analysis of the situation. But certainly you can't say it's a principle that, faced with that situation, a socialist camp, if it's proceeding from the interests of the international proletariat, should definitely divide the enemy camp and fight its enemies one by one.

Now to move to the present situation, I think that as an overall principle there is this question of the world front of revolutionary struggle made up of two basic streams. In other words, the world revolutionary struggle is not uniform. It is not everywhere in the world the proletariat fighting against the bourgeoisie, or even, as I just suggested, the masses of people fighting the *same* imperialism or the *same* bourgeoisie everywhere in the world. There are different conditions in different countries, different particularities, different tactical necessity; this applies not only in different countries but in different stages within countries as well. But there are at the same time two main streams of the world revolutionary movement in this era: the proletarian-socialist revolution in the advanced countries and the anti-imperialist democratic (or new-democratic) struggle in the colonial and the dependent countries. This latter, new-democratic, struggle, again, has its own particularities in different countries but overall forms a general stream of the world revolutionary movement – and where the proletariat is able, because of the conditions in the particular country and internationally, to win leadership (which is not guaranteed but is a possibility), the struggle becomes not only a general part of the world revolutionary movement against imperialism but is able to advance to socialism in the given country. So in an overall sense this anti-imperialist struggle in the colonial countries is part of the general world front of revolutionary struggle against imperialism, and further, where the proletariat is able to win leadership it is able to carry it forward to the socialist stage and it becomes more directly and immediately part of the proletarian-socialist revolution in the world.

Now that's our general, overall orientation. What should be our particular orientation to the international struggle, what should be our strategic and tactical approach in the present situation concretely? This has to be viewed in terms of its opposite, that is, in terms of incorrect notions of what it

should be. Before addressing that directly, I think it's important to discuss, and criticize, the idea that our strategic orientation should be a united front not against the Soviet Union alone (or the U.S. alone) but against the two superpowers. This is a line that is raised by various forces, including Marxist-Leninists who are strongly opposed to both Soviet and Chinese revisionism and their schemes for lining up forces with the one or the other imperialist superpower. More specifically, this united front against the two superpowers line is often put forward as the correct application of Mao's policies and principles today, in opposition to the Chinese revisionist "three worlds theory." It is argued that what's wrong with the "three worlds theory" is that it does seek to ally with one bloc of imperialists against another and that what we need instead is a united front against both superpowers. This line agrees that all the imperialists are the same in nature, but points out the role that they play in the world today is not the same and argues that therefore we should seek to divide the two superpowers off and target them as the main focus of our struggle. And it's true that in the world today, even in relationship to the two imperialist blocs, the role played by all the imperialists is not equal. In particular, there is a qualitatively different role – not a qualitatively different nature, but a qualitatively different role – played in practice by the U.S. and the Soviet Union, as compared with the other imperialist states, in relationship to world events and in relationship to their respective blocs. However, when the attempt is made on that basis to say that we should single the U.S. and the Soviet Union out and make them the object of a united front of struggle worldwide, it seems to me that two things happen there that indicate that this is incorrect.

One, the logic of that position will lead you first of all toward saying that the other imperialists are not really enemies. Otherwise, there's not real practical and concrete meaning to saying that you should single out these two superpowers as the main enemies and as the main target of the struggle. Because if you're going to try to build a united front against the two superpowers, then why not unite forces as broadly as possible? And if you're going to single out the two superpowers, if you're going to try to apply the method that Mao applied – well, he did unite with people that he certainly recognized were reactionary in nature, such as Chiang Kai-shek and U.S. and British imperialism, on the basis precisely of singling out Japanese imperialism as the main enemy. Again, I don't think he was wrong in that situation, but there's a certain logic and a certain consistency to such an approach and, in the world situation today, once you've said that the two superpowers are the main enemies, then to maintain that consistency you should seek to unite with the lesser imperialists, at least seek the kind of limited unity as Mao had with Chiang Kai-shek against Japan. The Chinese communists didn't really concretely unite very much with Chiang Kai-shek; in fact, they fought him a lot of the time, but the united front against Japan policy meant that they no longer sought to overthrow him and they sought to avoid antagonistic confrontations with Chiang Kai-shek's forces. Even when he initiated or provoked such confronta-

tions, they tried to stop it and keep it from developing further. So the analogy there to me would be that as part of directing the largest number of forces against the two superpowers you would actually hold back and not try to develop the struggle toward overthrowing lesser imperialists and reactionary forces in the world in order not to break up the broadest possible unity against the two superpowers. Here I think it can be seen how this approach is wrong and how in all the lesser capitalist and imperialist countries it would lead you into a social-chauvinist stand sooner or later – a stand of uniting with the bourgeoisie. It would play right into the hands of the bourgeoisies of Europe, for example, who are precisely portraying their own need, their own need to go to war to redivide the world as something being imposed on them by the actions of the two superpowers – willingly or unwillingly, you would play right into their hands and strengthen social chauvinism, and chauvinism without its socialist cover.

Secondly, it seems to me the very logic of this united front against the two superpowers line would sooner or later lead you to singling out only one of the superpowers as the main enemy. Because once you are going to start saying let's divide the enemy, then why stop with just singling out the two superpowers? The law of contradiction tells you that those two superpowers are in contradiction and they can't be absolutely even either, therefore you should single out one or the other as the main enemy – this logic will lead right back to the same position that you started out saying you disagreed with, if you take this sort of road. Lenin, I believe, is more in line with materialist dialectics when he says that from the point of view of the international proletariat we say the victory of either side is worse, and that both imperialist coalitions are worse. In other words there is nothing to choose between the imperialist blocs and there is in fact – not only as a general abstract principle but in today's concrete reality – no basis and no correctness to seeking to put to the side, to neutralize or to lessen the struggle against any of the imperialist states or any of the reactionary forces dependent on them. Now that doesn't mean that in a particular country you might not direct the struggle more against one or the other imperialist, or even make use of certain contradictions, as has been done. But it means on a world scale and as an overall strategy for the international proletariat the enemy remains imperialism and reactionary forces dependent on it and not just a couple of the imperialists, despite the fact that today the two superpowers do actually play a different role than the other imperialists; that fact is something to be taken into account tactically but it should not result in their being singled out as the main target and enemy of the revolution.

Sometimes in arguing for this kind of line it is said, yes, but look, the bourgeoisie seeks to divide the proletariat, why should the proletariat not seek to divide the bourgeoisie? Why should we not seek to divide and thereby weaken the enemy? It seems to me that there are two things that can be said about this, and they relate to the same basic point. First of all, there is no such thing as THE bourgeoisie, in the sense

implied in that kind of argument. Especially if you're talking about the world as a whole, that's a very mistaken and metaphysical and idealist notion, that there's such a thing as THE bourgeoisie. That's a basic point which is revealed precisely by Marxist-Leninist political economy and also in particular by the whole understanding of the compelling force of anarchy in capitalist accumulation. And particularly if you're talking about the international level, there is no such thing as THE bourgeoisie which has one unified headquarters and one unified interest, otherwise how would you understand why they would go to world war against each other? It would make no sense or would make it a question of Kautskyite analysis, of mistaken policies or subjectivity on the part of the imperialists rather than the compelling force of anarchy and its particular expression in terms of the contradiction between nationally-founded capital which, however, can only accumulate internationally and therefore comes into contradiction, even antagonism, with other nationally-founded capitals, especially in the era of imperialism. Different groups and blocs and in particular different states of national capital, of finance capital, repeatedly come into violent collision with each other, needing to go to war to redivide the world. So there is no such thing as THE bourgeoisie which seeks in a unified way to carry out policies. That doesn't mean that one group of imperialists never comes to the support of the other or that all (or virtually all) of the imperialists never unite together against the proletariat – they did in the Russian Revolution, at certain particular times, but if it was always possible for them to do that then there could have been no Russian Revolution in the first place. One of the main reasons cited by Lenin, and also Stalin, why they could make a break through the imperialist front in Russia was precisely because the imperialists were so divided and couldn't all unite to try to crush the Russian Revolution until it was too little too late at the end of World War 1.

That gets us to a second point – which is, if you want to talk about dividing the bourgeoisie, we could hardly ask for them to be more divided than they are right now on an international plane. I mean they are lining up in two blocs to go to war with each other which, while it does involve very real horrors – even the preparations for such a war and certainly the actuality of it involve real horrors – would also bring closer, if not bring about entirely at least bring closer, a horrible end to this system and the beginning of a whole new era, as Lenin once put it. It would certainly further that if the opportunities were seized on. It wouldn't by itself do it, but it would heighten the opportunities for that. Further, as far as dividing the bourgeoisie, the proletariat doesn't have the freedom in any significant way to do that. It can, where it holds state power, by certain tactical measures and maneuvers increase certain divisions, make use of and perhaps deepen certain divisions that do exist among the imperialists, that is a fact. However, the main error in the international communist movement in relation to this has been to overestimate and exaggerate the degree to which that can be done and to fall into serious errors on the basis of that.

For example, a line put out repeatedly in relation to World War 2 – and it goes along with this line that there was a socialist country that could lead the antifascist united front – is the notion that if there hadn't been the weight of the Soviet Union and the mass pressure that was rallied by the forces supporting the Soviet Union, somehow U.S. imperialism and British imperialism wouldn't have really gone at it with German and Japanese imperialism, that the masses in the Soviet Union and those supporting it had to push these imperialists to really wage a war. Well, to a very limited and secondary degree such efforts may have some influence. But fundamentally it's not really necessary for the proletariat to tell the imperialists what their interests are and try to get them to fight for their own interests. Not just in principle or abstractly but very concretely in World War 2 the imperialists were compelled to go to war with each other; they also, it's true, adopted certain specific tactics as to how they wanted to go about that. A socialist country and a strong international movement may be able to affect some of that in a secondary way, tactically, and that may be important in certain aspects, but to think that in any basic way or as a principal aspect of things you can affect the way in which the relations among the imperialists find expression is a very serious error and leads you in the direction of becoming a tail upon the bourgeoisie. In other words, U.S. imperialism fought Japanese imperialism the way it did in World War 2 largely because of the conflict of objective imperialist interests. Tactical considerations, military strategy, all of that – diplomacy, politics – all of it entered into it, nothing was pre-ordained, but objective, and ultimately economic, interests were much more fundamental as a driving force than anything done in the diplomatic arena or on the international scale tactically by the Soviet Union and the Communist International.

So really the divisions among the bourgeoisie are much more caused by the basic nature of the capitalist system itself and particularly the compelling force of anarchy and the expressions that assumes in the era of imperialism. And at the present time, very concretely, they are very sharply divided. This stands out in opposition, for example, to fifteen or twenty years ago (which is where Enver Hoxha wants to put us back to) when, if you want to take the relationship between the U.S. and its bloc and the Soviet Union and its bloc (in say, the early '60s), the main thing about them was that they were united, even while they were divided and contending, they were united in opposition to revolution and in opposition to the oppressed masses and their struggles in the world. To put it another way, collusion was principal over contention between them. That was true at that point, even though there were differences between them, even though there was contention, even though they were seeking spheres of influence in opposition to each other. But today, the opposite is the case. Contention is clearly principal over collusion and the principal aspect of the relationship between the U.S. and its bloc on the one side and the Soviet Union and its bloc on the other is not the ways in which here and there they come into unity in opposition to revolutionary struggles and the

masses, but the ways in which they are clashing and in fact moving toward an all-out confrontation with each other. And this in fact provides a very favorable potential. It heightens and is a part of – or certainly can be turned into – an advantage for the proletarian revolution if it's recognized and seized on. It's not accidental, as I said, that the Russian Revolution occurred in the context that it did – specifically antagonistic divisions among the imperialists, world war. Lenin and Stalin both insisted on that. Had the imperialists not been at war with each other, had they been in a position to all gang up on the Russian Revolution, they could almost certainly have strangled it in the cradle so to speak. By the time they got around to trying to do something, it was too little too late at that point and they weren't able to prevent its consolidation, though they tried to a certain degree. So I think that arguments of this kind, which base a whole policy orientation on the notion of dividing an already divided international bourgeoisie, do not correctly grasp reality. They are not based thoroughly enough on, and in serious ways depart from, materialist dialectics and a real understanding of what the real driving and motive forces are and what in fact their concrete expression is and what the actual possibilities and potential are in the present situation.

And I think that in opposition to this, the correct strategy that we should adopt is one which is founded first of all on the overall understanding of what the two main streams of the revolutionary movement are and what the common enemy is on a world scale, which is the imperialist system and finance capital. In other words, to focus on a crucial point and dividing line: all countries in the world, as a general phenomenon, are dominated by finance capital, but there's a handful of countries (and their bourgeoisies) that control it and a majority of countries where the bourgeoisie there (or you could say the country as such) does not control it. Another way of putting this is that in the world today there's ultimately only two forces that can rule and shape society. It's either going to be finance capital or it's going to be the proletariat in power advancing the revolution and building and developing it as a base area for the world revolution. Now that's ultimately or in the final analysis – it's important to understand that phrase "in the final analysis," because that does not mean that the immediate stage of struggle in most parts of the world is immediately a struggle for socialist revolution. Because precisely the domination of finance capital in most of the countries where it's not locally controlled reinforces and accentuates the kind of backwardness and disarticulation that is characteristic in the "third world" and makes both necessary and possible the waging of an anti-imperialist struggle with a democratic element too – generally an antifeudal, but in any case a significant democratic aspect – which constitutes the first stage in general of that revolution and prepares, and is a necessary preparation for, the socialist stage as the sequel. Nevertheless these are two more or less (because nothing is absolute, but two more or less) distinct stages.

It's important to say that this is not absolute because, again, the international arena and the development of the

contradictions on a world scale are more determining in a given country than what exists in that country by itself. If Germany had had a successful proletarian revolution at the same time as the October Revolution in Russia, the whole approach to the peasantry in Russia would have been different. Not that they should have then adopted Trotsky's policies, and said "okay now we can shoot all the peasantry" or whatever – that is, declare it all in the enemy camp – but they would have been able to deal with the peasantry differently. They might have been able to move faster to collectivize and in the process of collectivizing agriculture they'd have had a stronger material base to do that in a way that wouldn't drive the peasantry into opposition; there's a certain amount of speculation but I think there's also a certain reality there. Or if, for example, at the time socialist China was facing imperialist encirclement from both directions (both blocs) there had been a successful revolution in Iran and/or say perhaps even in one of the less powerful imperialist countries, that would certainly have had a significant effect on the class struggle and on policy on every level inside China. So you can say that there is an overall character to the world revolution in which there are two different types of revolution in the two different types of countries – those where finance capital is locally controlled, if you will, and those where it's not, and correspondingly, those where the immediate stage is proletarian-socialist revolution and those where there needs to be and can be a broader united front of anti-imperialist and democratic struggle as a preparation for the socialist sequel. That is a general phenomenon and a general principle that we have to grasp and apply, but at the same time it should not be treated absolutely because there is interpenetration between different situations and struggles and also it is the development of things on a world scale that is the most decisive thing in determining all this.

Well, with all that in mind and looking at the concrete developments of today, at the actual situation and the alignment of forces, it seems to me that there are certain tactical considerations that are important. One of them is the fact that you do have a particular role played by these two major imperialist powers, these two superpowers which do, in the role they play, stand out in some ways differently than the other imperialist powers. Now, it's important to underline that these other imperialists out of their own necessity and precisely out of their actual relationships are driven toward war to redivide the world. For example, let's take the Western imperialists, with their actual relationship with the rest of the U.S. bloc, with the relationships between that bloc as a whole and the "third world," between that bloc and the Soviet bloc, and given the actual concrete situation and motion of things, all of them have – it has different expressions of course in the different cases – but all of them have a compelling need for a redivision of the world. None of these Western imperialist states (and Japan is included here too) is capable of extricating itself from the situation that it's in and reshaping things in a way that could give it a new lease on life – as for example occurred after World War 2 in a partial and limited but nevertheless real way – none of them can

achieve that except through a redivision of the world. Even though the different imperialist states have different roles and different relationships within the different blocs and in the confrontation between the blocs, in relationship to the "third world" and so on – for all of them it is true that without a redivision none of them is capable of a new lease on life. Each of them needs and is compelled and driven toward this redivision.

At the same time, in terms of the actual motion towards war, and in terms of the way things are actually developing – specifically in the formulation of policy, the actual moves to line up the allies, and so on – it is true that these two superpowers play particular roles. First of all and most importantly they have a particular role and in a certain sense and an important sense a qualitatively different role with relationship to the two respective blocs. They are the actual heads of these blocs, they are the main forces pulling them together, and for both of them – this is very sharp, for example, for U.S. imperialism – a part of the particular thing driving them to war is precisely the difficulty they have in keeping their bloc together. That's not to say that the others all want to go their independent ways on a peaceful road. But there are so many conflicting imperialist interests, even though each and all need redivision, there are so many conflicting interests, it's hard to hold this bloc together. If you look at the Middle East: Camp David... good-bye Sadat... hello U.S. AWACS to Saudi Arabia, etc. It's very complicated to hold that whole thing together. Then you've got this whole anti-war movement going on in Western Europe and the U.S. imperialists especially need Reagan to be a cowboy tough guy right now to unleash their social base in the U.S. and help cast the mold of desired relations internationally precisely as preparation for war. But on the other hand that sort of stuff that he does has a lot of harmful consequences in all the allied countries because they don't want to hear about how the nukes are going to fly over Europe and so on and so forth; even though these Western European imperialists need to go to war they have their own particular interests and necessity. All this is another factor which from the point of view of U.S. imperialism in particular drives it to go to war even sooner because it's not like all these problems are going to go away or become more mitigated.

The Soviets from their own side obviously have a different role to play in holding that bloc together than any of the other revisionist bourgeoisies in the bloc, even the East German or Czechoslovakian bourgeoisies which rule over fairly developed and advanced countries. And the Soviet bloc has its own particularities, including among them – and this is an argument against Kautskyism actually – that some of the more industrially developed countries in the Soviet bloc actually send industrial goods to the Soviet Union in exchange for agricultural goods, which is not your classic Kautskyite view of imperialism – you know Kautsky said that imperialism is the domination of the backward agrarian countries by the advanced industrial countries. Well, actually and in certain limited and partial ways, there is sort of the reverse of that in the Soviet bloc; this has to do with the whole history

and development of that bloc but it doesn't alter the fact that it's imperialist as a bloc and that its interests are imperialist. It is, however, an illustration or reflection of the fact that the Soviet Union plays a particular role in that bloc.

So the particular roles of the two superpowers is a tactical consideration that has to be taken into account. How? Not by singling the two superpowers out as the main enemy or the main focus of our struggle, as the target of our struggle to the exclusion of the others, but by educating the proletariat as to the specific role of these two superpowers, as well as the nature and role of the other imperialists; and as an important part of this making clear to the masses that in the course of their struggle – this is a point stressed in the *Basic Principles* document – it is very likely, before you can win complete victory in revolution in almost every country in the world you're going to have to deal in one way or the other with the fact that these two superpowers are not only the main forces in terms of the leaders of the respective imperialist blocs and in the shaping together of these blocs, but they are also the main bastions of reaction, separately or even on some occasions together, in seeking to oppose and to suppress revolution. You can see that, for example, in struggles which aren't even yet consciously revolutionary, in Poland, or in other parts of the world. In the complex course of actually carrying out a revolution and advancing it particularly to the socialist stage in the present circumstances, it is very unlikely that you will be able to do that in any country or in any significant situation without having to deal in one form or the other with the force brought to bear by the one or the other (or sometimes both) of these two superpowers, seeking to suppress such a revolution. Even, for example, in Western Europe, where the main target and the immediate target should be the domestic bourgeoisie and not the two superpowers, that doesn't change the fact that you will almost certainly have to deal with these superpowers during the course of the twists and turns of a revolutionary struggle in those countries. So that's a tactical but important consideration that has to be part of our understanding and included in our strategic thinking at this point.

More generally, however, it's also true that precisely in approaching things from the world scale, we have to be at one and the same time seeking to make the greatest advances in building the revolutionary movement and preparing for the development of a revolutionary situation in all countries, as a general principle – with the recognition that revolutionary situations can emerge and sharpen without much warning and seemingly unexpectedly. But at any given point, it also has to be our tactical orientation to be alert precisely by viewing things from the international plane and in the world arena as our starting point, be alert to particular situations which at any given point become concentration points of world contradictions and potential weak links, potential points where we can make a breakthrough, as the international proletariat, and where therefore the attention and the energy of the proletariat internationally should be especially concentrated at the given point. Vietnam was an example of that 10 years ago or so. In a different way so is Poland under

the present circumstances. In short, we have to maximize our gains in relation to such concentration points that have clearly emerged and at the same time we have to be actively moving toward and preparing to make revolutionary breakthroughs wherever the situation might sharpen up, because these weak links are not pre-ordained and not something which can occur only once; they are precisely things which can shift the focus of contradictions, and the breaking point, if you will, of contradictions can shift and we have to be alert to this.

This brings me to the last point. Or rather, it is reinforcing from another direction the central point: that it is only by proceeding from the world arena that you can possibly carry out a strategy for making the greatest advances possible at any given time. This is why our party has increasingly emphasized that while we are trying to do everything possible to make revolution in the U.S. and to seize on a revolutionary opportunity, if as is possible – and we say possible, not certain, but possible – it does develop over the next period of years in the U.S., whether or not that happens, we see even that in an overall sense as a subordinate part of what our responsibilities are. Overall, while particularly concentrating in the U.S., since that's where our party is, we're trying to do everything we can to advance that worldwide struggle, and that's not just a platitude or even just a general principle – it means concretely examining things on a world scale to see where are these concentration points and potential breaking points. And it means bending our work and our struggle toward helping to seize on such opportunities and generally to advance the worldwide struggle even if in the short run it might bring certain added difficulties for the revolutionary work in the particular country we're in. What all that brings up very immediately is that any given party in any given country is still limited in how it can affect that and what it can do. Precisely what this points to is the need for an international organization of the proletariat and particularly of its communist vanguard – because you're not going to unite the whole international proletariat as one mass, but you can unite its vanguard. And there is a need, despite all the negative experience which should be summed up even more deeply, there is a need for a communist international. There is a need for a communist international which draws from the positive and negative experiences of the past and which bases itself on the understanding that ideological and political line is decisive and is the cornerstone for developing and furthering, giving expression organizationally to, the unity of the international proletariat, specifically its vanguard forces. It seems to me that the communist international is, if you will, the logical organizational expression of all the analysis and all the political and strategic thinking that I've been presenting up to this point. It's the logical expression of the fact that the development of things on a world scale and in the world arena is decisive and that you have to be able to take advantage of and seize to the maximum concentration points and breaking points even while carrying out all-around work in general in all countries and preparing for possible revolutionary breakthroughs wherever the opportunity might emerge.

It is true that there have been many negative experiences, the domination by more developed parties over less developed parties, by larger parties over smaller parties, by parties in power as opposed to parties out of power – all of this sort of thing has been real enough. But first of all, we can see that it's not solved by not having an international. The experience – specifically the negative aspect of the experience – of the Communist Party of China proves that you can have all that without having a communist international, and in fact have less chance of struggling against it. I'm not passing judgment specifically on, in fact I don't even understand fully, what the approach of the Chinese party was to the question of an international, in, for example, the '60s when they broke from the Soviet revisionists. I know that there certainly was a lot of complications in that, such as the fact that the Chinese were trying to win over the intermediate parties, like the Vietnamese, and perhaps they felt to force the issue of this international or that international might have hurt such efforts. I don't know if that was their thinking and I'm not prepared to say whether such thinking would have been correct. It needs to be looked into and summed up more deeply, but as a general principle and especially in today's concrete reality, there is not only a general but I would say an urgent need, not to try to bring it into being immediately, but to work concretely and step by step toward the creation of a new and a revolutionary communist international – one that learns from the past, both the positive and negative experience. All these things like "father parties" interfering in the internal affairs of other parties and so on – when raised as arguments against an international – can be rather politely dismissed as bullshit. Those things are questions of line as well. If we're really internationalists, if we really understand the importance of proceeding from the world arena and the interests of the world revolution above all, then there is a question of methods involved, and how we struggle with each other; there is a question of our epistemology, our theory of knowledge, and what we think the relationship between practice and theory, and perceptual and rational knowledge, is; there are all those questions of methodology that are also questions of line and have to be struggled out. But essentially the question is communists coming together in the most organized way to give the most powerful expression to formulating and carrying out the lines and policies to advance the struggle on a world scale and with concentration on particular key points at any given time in the world struggle.

Line will always remain decisive, both in the creation of these things, and in their future – of an international and its future development and role. That was true in the First International, it was true in the Second International, it was true in the Third, and it will be true in the new international which needs to be built. So I think that the whole understanding that has been presented here, the whole grasp of the decisiveness of the world arena and what internationalism really means – that it's not just something extended from one country, or the proletariat of one country to another, but it's the foundation and starting point for the proletariat – not only has to lead in terms of our guiding line, ideologically and politically, but

also in terms of organized expression: it has to be our guiding line organizationally as well. This suggests and demands certain objectives and certain goals in terms of the creation, the step by step motion toward the creation of a communist international, precisely in order to meet, particularly right now, the heightening opportunities and the very real challenges that there are. I think all of us share a profound sense of frustration or restlessness at the fact that the subjective factor is lagging very sharply behind the development of the objective situation and the possibilities, the prospects that are on the horizon. And to meet them is going to require not just a tremendous effort in general, but is going to require making leaps on the ideological, the political and also the organizational level. To really be able to act in a sort of a telescoped way, or to use that phrase, to come from behind, to really seize these opportunities is going to require the combined effort and struggle of the Marxist-Leninist forces on an international level, and in an organized way on the international level. □

Notes

¹ This has been referred to consistently in major publications of our party over the past several years, including the *New Programme and New Constitution of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*. For a thorough exposition of this see *America in Decline: An Analysis of the Developments Toward War and Revolution in the U.S. and Worldwide, in the 1980s* (Chicago: Banner Press, 1984), by Raymond Lotta with Frank Shannon.

² See V.I. Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question," *Collected Works (LCW)* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), Vol. 20, p. 27.

³ I am referring to this as Connolly's viewpoint on the basis of an account I have heard of the differences between Lenin and Connolly over this, but beyond the question of particular representatives of this tendency it is a fact that it has exerted a powerful influence and in an overall sense has been dominant within the revolutionary movement generally and the international communist movement particularly for a number of decades.

⁴ There are statements by Mao (and by the Communist Party of China when it was under his leadership) that do argue that the world outlook of communists is internationalism and not nationalism — a point that was made in the polemics against the Soviet revisionists (see for example *A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement*, also known as the "25-Point Letter" [Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1963] point 9). But taking the body of Mao's writings and speeches as a whole, it is fair to say that he did not recognize the contradiction between being an internationalist and at the same time attempting to be the representative of the highest interests of the nation.

⁵ See "An Open Letter to Boris Souvarine," *LCW*, Vol. 23, pp. 195-204.

⁶ Georgi Dimitrov, *United Front Against Fascism* (New York: New Century, 1945), speeches delivered at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International (July 25-August 20, 1935).

⁷ J.V. Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1975), Chapter 3: "Theory," p. 27.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Chapter 6: "The National Question," p. 77.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1977), pp. 44-45.

¹¹ Our translation of a letter from the Comintern Executive Committee to the Communist Party of France in 1939.

¹² See Stalin, "On the Draft Constitution of the USSR" (Nov. 25, 1936), in *Problems of Leninism* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), pp. 795-834.

¹³ See Lotta, *America in Decline*, p. 209, note 65.

¹⁴ Actually the question of leadership is bogus anyway in these opportunists' thinking, because why can't it be argued that China as a socialist country could also play that role of leadership, so why attack Mao's policies of anti-Soviet united front and uphold Stalin's anti-German (-fascist) united front?

¹⁵ See Lenin, "The War Programme of the Proletarian Revolution," in *Lenin on War and Peace, Three Articles* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), pp. 58-72; see also *LCW*, Vol. 23, pp. 77-87.

¹⁶ Of course, when we say Europeans we mean imperialists (or people living in imperialist countries) in general, including Japan, certainly the United States, and the Soviet Union too.

¹⁷ See "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism," *LCW*, Vol. 23, especially pp. 33-34.

¹⁸ See "British Pacifism and the British Dislike for Theory," *LCW*, Vol. 21, p. 264.

¹⁹ *The Collapse of the Second International*, *LCW*, Vol. 21, p. 254.

²⁰ See Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1979), Chapter 19: "The Journey to Peking," especially pp. 781-82.

²¹ See, for example, "Talks at the Chengtu Conference, March 1958 (a) Talk of 10 March," in ed. Stuart Schram, *Chairman Mao Talks to the People* (New York: Pantheon, 1974), pp. 96-103.

²² See Lin Piao, *Long Live the Victory of People's War!* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966).

²³ See, for example, "An Open Letter to Boris Souvarine," *LCW*, Vol. 23, pp. 195-204.

²⁴ See, for example, Mao Tsetung, *On Protracted War*, *Selected Works (MSW)* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), Vol. 2, pp. 113-194, especially p. 130.

²⁵ See "On Policy," *MSW*, Vol. 2, pp. 441-49, especially p. 443.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 443-44.

²⁷ See, for example, "Under a False Flag," *LCW*, Vol. 21, pp. 137-57.

Angola: A Case Study in Soviet Neocolonialism

by Nicholas Cummings

On November 11, 1975, the Portuguese High Commissioner for Angola lowered the Portuguese flag in Luanda, the capital city, for the last time. This marked the official end of centuries of Portuguese colonial rule in Angola. What replaced Portugal in Angola, however, was not some sort of independent and liberated society. The Portuguese withdrawal came in the midst of an intense battle for control of the country. By February 1976 the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) became the government and, since then, the MPLA has presided over a thoroughly neocolonial society dominated by the Soviet social-imperialists.

The MPLA's rise to power was the resolution (partial and contested, but a resolution nonetheless) of a whole period of intense political and military maneuvering and contention in Angola between the U.S. and Soviet imperialists and the various forces aligned with them. This contention had peaked in a proxy war between these two imperialist-led blocs. On the one side, the U.S. supported a major South African invasion of Angola, supplied Zairean troops and other mercenaries, and armed and financed the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). On the other side, the Soviet Union provided the MPLA with massive amounts of weaponry, hundreds of military advisors, thousands of Cuban combat troops, and a mercenary combat unit composed of the Katangese Gendarmes.

Angola was, and remains today, a focus of sharp contention between the imperialist blocs; it is also a focal point in the political struggle over the role and nature of the Soviet Union in the world today, especially in connection with national liberation movements. For the Soviets and their supporters worldwide, it serves as a rallying cry and proof positive that the Soviets can, and do, play a progressive and revolutionary role in the battle against U.S. imperialism. Others, including some who concede that there may have been ulterior, or even imperialist, interests involved in Soviet

actions, argue that nonetheless, the Soviet role in Angola objectively laid the basis for – indeed, was a prerequisite for – achieving liberation. Without the Soviet aid, it has been argued, Angola could only have ended up as a virtual South African colony. In this view, the war in Angola and its outcome serve as a prime example of the need to rely on Soviet military might if an oppressed people is to get out from under the domination of imperialism, specifically Western imperialism, and escape the neocolonial status of countries like Zaire and Zambia.

In fact, the Soviet role in Angola and their support for the MPLA had no more to do with liberation than did the U.S. backing of South Africa, the FNLA, and UNITA. As we shall show, the Angolan masses today suffer virtually the same oppressive social relations and conditions (if now in *neocolonial* form) as they did under Portuguese rule. Far from being independent, Angola's development and destiny is determined by the exigencies of the Soviet bloc – indeed, state power itself rests on the 20- to 30,000-man Cuban garrison stationed in Angola and the thousands of Soviet and East German government advisors.

But, before digging into this, a few other points need to be spoken to up front. Why did the struggle in Angola come down the way it did? Why did a struggle against Portuguese colonialism and Western imperialism, one which had gone on for at least fifteen years, finally erupt in the form of inter-imperialist contention? And, why did the MPLA, one of three Angolan nationalist organizations battling the Portuguese, end up as a vehicle for the establishment and maintenance of Soviet neocolonialism?

The MPLA was one of three nationalist organizations in Angola, each with a separate and distinct base among the Angolan people. The FNLA was based mainly among the Bakongo people of the north – mainly peasants and refugees in Zaire. UNITA was based primarily in the southern and central regions of the country among the Ovimbundu people, again mainly peasants. Of the three, the MPLA generally had the broadest base in terms of its tribal makeup and the range of political forces it encompassed. Although based mainly among the Mbundu tribe, the MPLA also took in a number of other smaller tribes from the northern and central parts of the country. It had, however, very little influence among the peasants since it was mainly located in the urban areas of the country, though it was the only one of the three that had some influence among the working class and which had a strong base among the urban petty bourgeoisie, especially among the intellectuals. Much of the MPLA's leadership was drawn from the urban intellectuals and included many "assimilados" and "mestizos" – the stratum which the Portuguese had attempted to set up as a sort of better off, middle class buffer in colonial Angola. The "assimilados" and "mestizos" were given special privileges and rights, including education, better jobs and certain political rights. Many of those in the MPLA were educated in Portugal and developed close ties with the revisionist pro-Soviet Communist Party of Portugal. Actually, the Communist Party of Portugal played an important role in the formation

of the MPLA and continued to maintain significant influence in it throughout the years – this was due both to the ties between the CP of Portugal and the MPLA leaders and to the fact that a number of Portuguese CP members who had emigrated to Angola also became members of the MPLA.

The class basis of the MPLA did not automatically dictate that they would eventually end up capitulating to imperialism and becoming a new comprador bourgeois class. In fact, the MPLA attracted forces from a very broad political spectrum. They ranged from very conservative nationalists, who from the beginning tended to hedge on fully unleashing the Angolan people and were more inclined to seek out a compromise or negotiated independence agreement – to radical and revolutionary nationalists, some of whom were very much influenced by Mao Tsetung and revolutionary China. No law of Marxism rules out people in such an organization taking up proletarian ideology and transforming it into a vehicle for genuine liberation, through sharp struggle. And most of the critical turning points in the history of the MPLA were marked by very sharp struggle between these conservative and more radical forces. In most of these struggles, however, the more conservative and "middle-of-the-road" forces grouped around Agostino Neto came out on top. Not surprisingly, it was also these forces grouped around Neto that the Soviets supported throughout the history of the MPLA and who were significantly strengthened by the massive Soviet military and political aid in 1975. (There was, however, one exception to this – in 1972 and 1973 the Soviets briefly supported Daniel Chipenda, the commander of the MPLA's eastern military zone, in his effort to depose Neto. Chipenda's political character is indicated by the fact that after he was expelled from the MPLA in December 1974, Chipenda joined the FNLA and later became the FNLA/UNITA liaison with South Africa through which the details of the 1975 invasion were worked out.)

Politically and ideologically there was actually very little difference between the MPLA, the FNLA and UNITA. Their general programs were all basically the same. In fact, the MPLA tried at least twice to unite with the FNLA – including once in 1972 when the MPLA even agreed to the appointment of Holden Roberto, the leader of the FNLA and closely tied in with the U.S., to the post of the chairman of the joint MPLA/FNLA Supreme Liberation Council.¹ And, while some may point to the relationship between the FNLA and the CIA as proof of a basic difference between the FNLA and the MPLA, it is worthwhile to note that the MPLA also maintained tight relations with other imperialists, including the Western European imperialists and the Soviets (although it should also be pointed out that Soviet aid to the MPLA was small and sporadic up until the end of 1974 and had even been totally cut off twice, including for most of 1972-73). In the early 1960s Agostino Neto even made a special trip to the U.S. to attempt to convince the U.S. to withdraw its support from the FNLA and throw it behind the MPLA – this was in spite of the fact that the U.S. was principally supporting the Portuguese colonial regime.²

Their military lines were also very similar. To all three

groups the armed struggle was a secondary aspect of the liberation struggle. Military actions were primarily used to carve out areas of influence inside the country where each organization could hole up while it exerted pressure on the Portuguese, established international credibility, and won recognition from organizations like the OAU and the UN. Although no revolution is going to proceed in a straight-line advance to victory, such a strategy is not one of a liberation struggle of the masses but rather of bourgeois-nationalist-style maneuvering with imperialism. Their military lines, likewise, were not based on people's war. All three relied primarily on relatively small armies as opposed to mobilizing the masses of Angolan people. The MPLA often makes quite a bit of noise about having been the first to initiate the armed struggle in Angola, referring to a February 1961 attack on the Luanda police headquarters and a prison fortress aimed at freeing imprisoned MPLA members. The attack was timed to coincide with the expected arrival of a Portuguese opposition leader in Luanda, in hopes of getting maximum international press coverage. It is also interesting to compare the response of both the FNLA and the MPLA to a peasant uprising a few months later, although this in no way changes the character of the FNLA. In March 1961 a massive uprising occurred in northern Angola which the FNLA attempted to join and lead. For its part, the MPLA echoed Portugal's denunciation of the "savagery" of the peasant uprising and used it to prove the backward tribal nature of the FNLA since the northern peasants not only attacked white settlers but also black "assimilados" and members of the other tribes.³

Up until 1975 the MPLA's military activity was mostly confined to the oil-rich province of Cabinda with a few scattered attempts to expand into the north-central and eastern regions of the country. Of course, both the FNLA and UNITA also carried out a minimal amount of military activity, mainly geared to protecting their traditional power-base areas.

In early 1974 the MPLA was in pretty dismal straits. The Soviets had totally cut off their aid, and the organization teetered on the brink of disintegration as three different factions vied for control. Beyond this, the struggle in Angola as a whole had reached its lowest point yet.

By April 1974, however, the situation in Angola took a dramatic turn. On April 25, 1974, the Portuguese government was overthrown in a coup by the Armed Forces Movement, an organization of Portuguese military officers. Portugal's colonial wars, in Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Angola, had been one of the main factors leading to the coup. Portugal's colonial empire had been crumbling from the beatings it was taking in Africa, especially in Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. One of the first moves by the new Portuguese regime was an attempt to salvage what it could of the old colonial empire, especially in Angola where the struggle had been the least developed.

The coup in Portugal also had a big effect on the three Angolan organizations themselves. UNITA immediately signed a ceasefire with Portugal and began to push for elections. The FNLA first sent its army back into Angola from

Zaire, concentrating on securing its traditional base area in the north and on establishing its presence in Luanda before signing the ceasefire. The new situation in Angola also forged a temporary unity between the factions of the MPLA, and they too moved to secure their position as much as possible before signing the ceasefire.

By January 1975 all three groups joined in signing the Alvor Agreement, a neocolonial scheme engineered by Portugal which set up a transitional government – including all three groups and Portugal – to pave the way for Portuguese-supervised elections (which UNITA, with the largest tribal base in the country, was expected to win). One of the key clauses in this agreement was the integration of 8,000 soldiers from each group's army with 24,000 Portuguese soldiers. The Alvor Agreement was very temporary. It officially broke up in March 1975 when the FNLA launched a series of attacks against the MPLA, including a massacre of fifty MPLA recruits at a training camp in Caxito.

Although the Portuguese were certainly pinning their hopes of salvaging their empire on the Alvor Agreement, most of the other parties involved perceived it more along the lines of a holding action. In part, the competing interests and aspirations of the three groups undermined the scheme from the beginning. UNITA, with an extremely small army, was banking a lot on winning the elections and used the time to woo the Portuguese and to attempt to spread its influence beyond its tribal base. The FNLA, with the largest army, had little or no significant influence in most of Angola; for the most part their base consisted of the northern region bordering on Zaire and among the hundreds of thousands of Bakongo refugees in Zaire. The FNLA seized the opportunity to move its troops into other parts of the country and to spread its political influence, especially in the capital. The MPLA at the time had an extremely small army, and although it had considerable influence in the urban areas the MPLA had little influence among the peasants. The MPLA used this time to build up its army and attempt to gain ground throughout the rest of the country.

But the most important factor contributing to the breakup of the Alvor Agreement was the machinations of both the U.S. and Soviet imperialists as they vied for control in Angola in the aftermath of the coup in Portugal. The U.S. had already begun to funnel large-scale support to the FNLA, including Zairean arms and \$300,000 in CIA money to help the FNLA purchase a major newspaper and radio station in Luanda. By that time the Soviets had also restored their aid to the MPLA, sending weapons and training the MPLA's army.⁴

In the months that followed, the battle for power in Angola intensified, with the U.S. supporting a joint effort by the FNLA and UNITA to crush the Soviet-backed MPLA. In June, yet another joint agreement was signed, this time at the behest of the OAU, which, together with the U.S., had a definite interest in preventing or at least limiting a Soviet gain in Angola. This agreement was called the Nakuru Agreement and it broke up before the ink on the signatures dried. The Nakuru Agreement highlights a couple of points. For one thing it underlined the intensity of the contention be-

tween the groups and their imperialist sponsors. And again, it also pointed out that the outlook and interests of all three groups were actually quite similar. One key point on which all three agreed was the necessity of disarming the Angolan masses (it should be kept in mind here that this was at the height of what was supposed to be the Angolan Revolution). Each of the groups had, to a certain extent, armed sections of the masses in order to use them to fend off their rivals. However, each of the groups also recognized the danger inherent in this. As the Nakuru Agreement put it, the masses should turn in their weapons since "as everyone knows full well, civilians are difficult to control once they are armed."⁵

The summer of 1975 found Angola divided into two heavily armed camps, each sponsored by a rival imperialist bloc and ready to explode. The U.S. had added mercenaries and Zairean troops to its support of the FNLA and UNITA. By July, the U.S., South Africa, and the FNLA and UNITA had already begun to work out arrangements for the South African invasion. During that same general period, pro-Soviet forces had made significant gains within the Portuguese Armed Forces Movement and the position of the MPLA was considerably bolstered inside Angola. Added to this, the flow of Soviet aid was steadily increasing and arrangements were being made for the dispatch of Cuban troops and advisors to complement the MPLA's army. By the end of the summer the MPLA controlled all of the major urban areas and a good portion of the rest of the country. The Soviet international propaganda network had already begun calling the MPLA the legitimate government of the people in Angola.

In October Angola exploded full force. The U.S.-sponsored South African invasion barreled through southern Angola and quickly pushed the MPLA back into a position where Luanda was their only stronghold. Meanwhile, the FNLA rolled towards Luanda from the north. This invasion was countered by the flood of Soviet weapons to the MPLA and the thousands of Cuban combat troops who manned those weapons. Based on this support the MPLA was able to defeat its rivals and roll back the South African invasion by January 1976.

To sum this up: the destruction of direct colonial rule in Angola had not come about principally through the efforts of any of the Angolan groups, but as a result of the crisis gripping Portugal [itself in large part caused by the struggles in Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique]. But the attempted shift to neocolonial rule came in a period very different from the '60s, one in which the actions of both the Soviet Union and the U.S. were increasingly conditioned not only by the changed relationship in strength that had developed out of the '60s⁶ but — connected with that — their strategic needs vis-à-vis a looming war between the blocs to redivide the world. In that context each bloc perceived Angola as very critical to its larger global interests, and the three independence organizations principally became the vehicles through which this conflict was carried out. Each waged war as a proxy for a bloc, and indeed none could have waged war — given their whole history, basis, and line by this point —

without the full-scale infusion of troops from their patrons.

When the MPLA finally captured Angola, the Soviets essentially established a foothold in an area that was, and is, of vital importance to the U.S. imperialists. The Soviets, however, were not acting on a plan for taking over the U.S. empire country by country, nor were they principally interested in short-term economic benefits. Instead, they were scrambling to best position themselves strategically for the coming military showdown. To the Soviets, the MPLA served as a vehicle for bringing Angola into their bloc and under their domination. For the MPLA, which entered 1974 with little hope of being able to seize power, their class aspirations could only be fulfilled by taking up the easy road to power offered by the Soviets. And today, although it is certainly not free from contradictions and sharp struggle both within the MPLA and between the MPLA and the Soviets, this relationship continues.

The fundamental change that the Soviet aid, Cuban troops, and an MPLA government have brought about in Angola has been the elevation of Angola to a highly contested and important position in the Soviet war strategy. This is what has conditioned subsequent developments in Angola, and what sets the terms for its future. Far from being a study in liberation, Angola is a case history of how reliance on the Soviet "liberators" leads back to imperialist domination and how such "aid" fits in with Soviet imperialist strategy.

Pattern of Colonialism Unchanged

South Africa and U.S. Multinational Corporations, a book whose authors are somewhat sympathetic towards the Soviet role in Angola and the MPLA government, describes Angola prior to 1975:

"At the time of independence Angola remained a typical warped colonial-type economy. Over 80% of its exports were still in the unprocessed form, mostly petroleum, \$230 million in 1973; coffee, \$205 million; diamonds, \$80 million; iron ore, \$49 million. Most of its imports were manufactured goods. . . ."⁷

Today, this could just as easily serve as a description of the economy of "liberated" Angola. It is a totally export-dominated economy, with four-fifths of its exports, mostly oil, going to the U.S. What is profitable for imperialism is what gets developed. The chief export, oil, completely dominates the industrial sector. It has been described by MPLA spokesmen as the "priority of priorities" and the cornerstone upon which all other sectors of the economy will rest. The vast majority of all available resources has been sunk into the development of the oil industry. In 1980 oil production reached 8.9 million tons, a substantial increase over

the 1979 production level of 6.7 million tons. In fact, oil production is the *only section of Angolan industry which has surpassed the production levels reached under Portuguese colonialism*, and the Angolan government has announced that it plans to invest still another \$1 billion in order to double the output of the oil industry by 1985.⁸ In the spring of 1983 the drop in oil prices and glut in production led the MPLA to announce that it would lower its prices below those charged by other oil producing countries so as to maintain and increase their own production of oil despite the current crisis. The other export- and foreign exchange-producing industries, particularly mining, rank next in importance. The extractive industries alone had a growth rate of 450% from 1978 to 1980.⁹ In 1980 diamond production was set at 1.5 million carats, double the output for 1979.¹⁰

Meanwhile the rest of Angola's economy wallows in stagnation and remains barely functional. Most of the things needed just to keep the society running, such as basic consumer goods and food, must be imported. According to the Soviet journal *Asia and Africa Today*, as of 1981 Angola could only meet its balance of trade deficit, brought on by its heavy reliance on imports, by concentrating even more on developing its export industries – a vicious circle typical of neocolonialism.¹¹ And with the deepening crisis of imperialism worldwide and the generally falling prices of Angola's mainstay exports, the situation will only get worse.

According to some estimates, Angola today has to import 90% of its food,¹² and in 1979 food imports made up at least one quarter of the entire imports cost.¹³ Of course, this situation is undoubtedly tied in with the fact that Angola's main farming region has been in a constant state of war and a good portion of it is occupied by UNITA and/or South Africa. However, what is revealing here is that, faced with this situation, the MPLA has not developed any policies that even attempt to alleviate this situation. And although agriculture as a whole has been subordinated to the more profitable export-oriented industries, not *every* section of agriculture has been neglected under the MPLA and Soviet imperialist domination. In fact, the cash crops of coffee, bananas, and cotton have received special attention. The MPLA recently announced that the acreage for cotton production (one of the areas where the Soviets play a direct role) was being expanded and that banana production had been restored to the levels it had reached under the Portuguese. The policy guiding the production of these cash crops was crystallized in the caption of a cartoon prominently featured in the July 15, 1980 issue of the official state newspaper, the *Jornal de Angola*. This cartoon called on the Angolan people to participate in the 1980 coffee harvest. The caption read: "Export coffee to the last bag! Harvest coffee to the last bean! It is only by exporting that we can buy food and equipment!"¹⁴

Various pieces of Soviet literature on the subject, and a number of authors inclined to sympathize with the Soviets or the MPLA, attempt to portray all of this as some sort of transitional phase in the development of the country and the "liberation process." In truth, this type of situation is a straightforward reproduction of the development of an op-

pressed nation, leading not to independence, but only to increasing dependence on imperialism. Even to the degree that development goes on, it is mainly development within the overall framework set by imperialist domination and oppression. A classic example of this sort of "development strategy" is Nigeria; while by far the most industrially developed country in Africa (with the exception of South Africa), it unquestionably remains a neocolony of U.S. and Western imperialism in every sense.

If an oppressed nation remains in the same basic relation to imperialism – indeed, if these relations are reproduced and reinforced, and the hole dug even deeper – then where is the liberation? Of course, the struggle to begin ripping out of the imperialist web is an incredibly difficult one and necessitates the full-scale mobilization of the masses in *political struggle* over the road forward. The MPLA and their Soviet mentors, however, have taken the opposite tack.

The Soviet rationale states that once political independence has been achieved, then "economic reconstruction" (or, as it is officially referred to, "building the material and technological base for socialism") becomes the main, and in fact, the only task confronting the masses. The basic line behind this is the theory of productive forces, which has been a common thread running through the programs of all revisionists, including the "anti-Soviet" Deng Xiaoping and his reactionary "Three Worlds Theory."

Analyzing the struggle waged by Mao Tsetung against the theory of productive forces in China, Bob Avakian wrote:

"What this theory said was that the class struggle was over, socialist relations had been established and the thing now was to concentrate on raising the level of technology and economic development of the country. The role of the masses was simply to work hard. This merged nicely with the line on economic policy that these revisionists had all along pushed – promoting reliance on bureaucratic methods of management, specialists in command and the treatment of the workers as mere labor power."¹⁵

Such a line inevitably generates *bourgeois* production and social relations, with the bureaucrats and new elite assuming the essential role of the bourgeoisie, i.e., the personification of capital. (Of course, the MPLA does not yet claim that "socialist relations have been established," only that they are "working towards that end," perhaps some twenty years hence – which makes Avakian's point if anything more applicable.)

In opposition to this, Mao maintained that an underdeveloped country cannot break the shackles of the imperialist legacy through passively awaiting mechanization of agriculture and development of the productive forces generally. To do so would only take the initiative out of the hands of the masses and leave it with those who controlled the technology – the upper strata of management and technicians, and ultimately the imperialists themselves. *Their* exigencies would set the priorities and shape develop-

ment, and inevitably the distorted economies characteristic of the oppressed nations under imperialism would be reproduced.

What came to be called the "Chinese Road," as crystallized in the Great Leap Forward and Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution under Mao's leadership, stressed raising the conscious activism of the peasants and workers, and *on that basis* developing the productive forces, including the extremely important task of mechanizing agriculture (and in such a way as to gain self-sufficiency in food for the oppressed nation). Movements for collectivization *preceded* mechanization and began to lay the basis for it through intermediate steps, e.g. developing local raw materials and drawing on know-how at the local level, diffusing education in skills and new techniques among the peasantry to help break down differences between peasants and workers, and between them and the managerial/technical personnel, etc. The same line of unleashing the masses was applied as well in industry, where the initiative of the workers in technical innovation and transforming the production process was fostered through part-time schools, worker participation in management, three-in-one teams of workers, party cadre, and technical personnel, etc. Industry and agriculture were developed in close relationship (with agriculture as the foundation and industry the leading factor) – and not to serve the imperatives of the imperialist world economic order. Key to all this was the cornerstone of the "Chinese Road" – Mao's insistence that the masses be led to wage struggle over the cardinal political questions of the day not only in the basic production units, but throughout society as a whole, and through this struggle determine the overall direction of society in every crucial sphere – including, of course, that of production.

All this is considered so much "ultra-leftism" by the Soviet mentors of the MPLA, as we shall see shortly; and the way that the "theory of the productive forces" comes down in Angola today was best expressed by Angola's president, Jose Eduardo dos Santos, in a speech on the role of the Angolan people in solving the problems plaguing Angola today. According to dos Santos, the role of the Angolan people is "... in fact for each one in his work place to produce – to produce constantly more and better. In other words, to work."¹⁶ This is not mere quibbling over "how best to advance" but is actually a question of whether or not society is advancing at all. In fact, guided by the Soviet theory of "socialist orientation," the MPLA has developed its policy in direct opposition to – and with a clear recognition of – the danger posed to their rule in politically unleashing and mobilizing the conscious activism of the masses.

The Soviets, of course, provide a "socialist" rationale for such suppression. Describing the conditions necessary for the maintenance of the political rule of their allies in the various neocolonial countries under their domination, the Soviets list the first and foremost "guarantee against counter-revolution" in the May-June 1981 issue of *Asia and Africa Today*:

"Political dissociation from the various sorts of leftist

factions in the revolutionary-democratic leadership. The importance of this has been proved, alas, by numerous concrete examples in history. A certain part of the leftist (and sometimes simply adventuristically inclined) leadership tries to exploit in its personal or group interests the objectively existing impatience among some sections of the population and desire to partake of the yet unripened fruits of the revolutionary transformation of society. The damage that can be inflicted on society if such elements grasp the political initiative is illustrated best by the example of the 'great leaps' and 'cultural revolution' in China."¹⁷

Robert McNamara could not have said it better! (We note in passing that the fruits of the masses in socialist China partook of were *not* a demand for instant wage hikes [as the Soviets imply], but to *politically* rule and transform society.)

Economic reconstruction of this character naturally necessitates the strict enforcement of a "law and order" society in Angola. The pages of the *Jornal de Angola* carry daily calls for the masses to respect authority, respect rank, and be obedient in carrying out orders. And, as an editorial in the *Jornal de Angola* put it, "Military discipline constitutes the fundamental premise for the accomplishment of our mission."¹⁸ Of course, military discipline in and of itself for a given period of time is not necessarily wrong – rather it is a question of discipline for what purpose and in whose interests. More on this later, though; first, let us see what sort of "basis for socialism" is being built in Angola today.

Agriculture

In early 1981 President dos Santos stated that "regrettably" the countryside faces some acute problems and the peasants have unfortunately made less "use of the benefits of the revolution" than any other section of the Angolan people.¹⁹ Concretely what this means is that for the vast majority of Angolans, life remains much the same as it was under the Portuguese.

Although 85% of the Angolan people are peasants, most of them remain shackled to individual farming on tiny plots of land, averaging 2.5 hectares each in size. Eighty percent of all peasant farming activity carried out in Angola today is done on a subsistence level – each peasant producing just barely enough to feed the immediate family.²⁰ Even land redistribution, or "land to the tiller" – which basically deals with feudal, but not capitalist, relations in the countryside – has never been a major part of the MPLA program in Angola. According to Soviet figures, only 4% of all the available farmland in Angola is actually utilized today, and a good portion of that is taken up by the growing of cash crops for export – much the same as it was under the Portuguese colonialists.²¹ Yet in neocolonial and dependent countries,

agrarian revolution is one of the most basic and pressing demands of the peasantry. Here it should be pointed out that both the U.S. and the Soviet imperialists have carried out "land reform" of a sort in a number of their various neocolonies; for example, the Soviets have done so in Ethiopia. But, in the interests of not disturbing the economic base for imperialist domination, the Soviets have not done so in Angola.

At the heart of this question is the need to mobilize the masses of people to begin to uproot the political and economic basis for feudalism and imperialist domination. As long as these nations remain dependent on the imperialists for their basic food supplies, they will be subject to blackmail and domination. Thus, there must be a rupture with the cash-crop orientation built up by the imperialists, and a radical reorientation to national self-sufficiency. Further, the gap between the city and the countryside, and the glaring unevenness within the countryside, must also be narrowed and combatted, or else these will begin (or continue) to express themselves as class antagonisms. Without such transformations, even such mechanization and development in the countryside as does occur will aggravate the inequalities and potential antagonisms. Such a full-scale transformation – such a *revolution!* – can only go on through mobilizing the masses to uproot feudal and semi-feudal relations through agrarian revolution, and to go forward to forms of collectivization which strike at bourgeois relations and lay the basis for socialist transformations.

To think that centuries-old social relations can be overturned short of "springing society into the air" is illusory at best. But the MPLA could hardly unleash such a storm, and could ill afford to at any rate. Nor, for that matter, were the Soviets capable of, or interested in, sponsoring such revolutionary transformation in Angola. Instead, the MPLA has maintained the oppressive social relations in agriculture, even keeping many of the Portuguese forms intact.

Certain aspects of the old colonial tax structure have been kept intact, and the old colonial barter system has been maintained as the main way of distributing consumer goods to the peasants and expropriating whatever surplus crops the peasants may have produced or are willing to part with.²² Under Portuguese colonialism the barter system meant that the peasants were forced to turn over a part of the crops they produced to Portuguese-run trading posts in exchange for rare consumer goods such as shoes, clothing, tools, soap and other basic necessities. For the most part the consumer goods offered to the peasants were priced way beyond their actual value. This is what has been adopted as the main system of exchange in the countryside today, with the only difference being that today the MPLA is running the state-owned trading posts.

Beyond the barter system, however, little or no system of exchange exists between the cities and the countryside. Although Angola has one of the most extensive highway systems in all of Africa, it is mostly used to bring the export crops from the countryside (especially from the Soviet- and MPLA-run state farms and cooperatives) to the urban port

areas. The secondary rural roads are most frequently used as a platform upon which the peasants dry out their cassava roots. In addition, Angola only has three major railroad lines. Each line runs parallel to the other in an east-west direction and ends up in one of the major port cities. The main railroad, the Benguela Railroad, is the only line which runs from one end of the country to the other – from the border areas of mineral-rich Zaire and Zambia to the port of Benguela.

The effect of this disarticulated system of urban-rural exchange combined with the one-sided emphasis on cash crops is twofold: tremendous food shortages in the cities and the virtual lack of consumer goods in the rural area. The ramifications of this are the enforced pauperization of the peasantry and the reinforcement of the whole system of individual subsistence farming. According to the Soviets, many peasants have straight-up refused to even attempt to produce surplus crops because there are so few consumer goods available for exchange. When the peasants do have a surplus available, it often ends up in the extensive black market operations instead of the official trading posts.

The preservation and strengthening of feudal and semi-feudal relations in Angola's countryside has been essential to maintaining the political rule of the MPLA, and overall, to the enforcement of Soviet imperialist domination. The Soviets have euphemistically referred to what is going on in the rural areas of Angola as "patient transformation"; as *Asia and Africa Today* puts it, "The centuries-old setup of life in the countryside cannot, of course, be radically changed in a matter of years."²³

With this as their rationale, the MPLA has not only upheld the traditional tribal chieftaincy system in Angola but has relied on it as one of the main bulwarks of its rule in the countryside. The tribal chiefs were also used by the Portuguese as one of the main supports for their colonial rule in their African empire. In exchange for helping to enforce Portuguese rule, these tribal chieftains were granted numerous privileges and extensive authority, including control over the tribal lands, local courts and laws, some taxes, and the distribution of goods among the peasants.

Describing the methods employed by the Portuguese in order to establish and keep their rule over the colonies, Eduardo Mondlane, one of the early leaders of the anti-colonial struggle in Mozambique, stated: "One of the means of ensuring authority was to break up our kingdoms into a multiplicity of chiefdoms, under carefully picked paramount chiefs, petty chiefs and head-men who were under the direct supervision of Portuguese white administrators and chiefs of post (*chefes de posto*). These administrators and *chefes de posto* are responsible for seeing that Portuguese law and order are maintained and that every able-bodied African serves Portuguese interests. The African chief is an instrument of the Portuguese government to carry out its political, economic and social policies."²⁴ In addition to the army and police, the tribal chiefs were one of the main weapons used to subjugate the Angolan people.

Today, the Angolan chiefs play a very similar role in rela-

tion to the neocolonial regime of the MPLA and Soviet imperialist domination. Lucio Lara, one of the top leaders of the MPLA, described the role of these chieftains and their relationship with the MPLA in an interview with the *African Communist*, the theoretical journal of the pro-Soviet South African Communist Party. In Lara's own words: "In other words the activist does not try to take the chief's authority away from him. The activist tries to raise the chief's consciousness and to make him understand the goals of the revolution. . . . But the important thing is that the chief should be made to understand that the Party is there not so much to act against him and his authority, but to improve the conditions of the people and of the chief himself."²⁵ Putting their official imprimatur on this, the Soviets state, "The party draws on the prestige of the chiefs, who are striving to develop cooperation with new, people's power."²⁶ It is certainly a revealing comment on what the level of prestige of Soviet imperialism and the MPLA must be among the Angolan people when they feel it is necessary to "draw on the prestige" of the patriarchal chiefs in order to boost their own. In Angola, this reliance on the "prestige and authority" of tribal chieftains is not a matter of respecting local tradition and customs. Actually, the more fundamental point is that, by their own admission, the MPLA finds these chieftains necessary for the maintenance of their rule and the building up of exploitative relations. In passing, it should be pointed out that the MPLA has made *one* change in the chieftaincy system that is worthy of note – instead of referring to them as chiefs, they are now known as "People's Elders!"²⁷

Meanwhile, the pauperization of the peasantry and their exodus from the countryside continues on a mass scale. The figures describing this peasant exodus into the urban areas are stunning. In the January-February 1982 issue of *Asia and Africa Today*, the situation is described as follows:

"The population of the Angolan capital, which was 600,000 before 1975, has more than doubled and, according to some estimates, is close to 1.5 million today. During the colonial years no city except Luanda had a population of 100,000 or more, whereas today Lobito, Benguela and Huambo are inhabited by 150,000 to 200,000 each. The actual proportions of urbanization are far more significant: the bulk of the 400,000 people who left Angola in 1975 were urbanites. This is how many Angolan farmers have turned from food producers into food consumers."²⁸

Many of these peasants come into the cities in search of work, and 80% of all Angolan industry is located in two cities alone – Luanda and Benguela.²⁹ But in addition to the peasants uprooted by the spontaneous workings of imperialist economic relations, many of the "food producers" who have turned into "food consumers" belong to the Ovimbundu tribe from southern Angola, the main ethnic base for UNITA (the U.S.-sponsored "liberation" group). They have been driven out of the countryside by the MPLA and into the

shantytowns of the cities in order to keep them away from the influence of UNITA.

Although for the most part the enforced backwardness of the Angolan countryside has continued under the MPLA regime, some changes have been carried out. But even these changes have been principally dictated by the Soviets' need to *politically* stabilize Angola while also sucking some profits from it. For instance, while the MPLA has not instituted a major land reform program in Angola, it *has* distributed some land to a select handful of peasants; some Ovimbundu tribe members, the traditional laborers on the Portuguese coffee plantations, have been granted tools and small estates in northern Angola on the condition that they move north and grow coffee for export.³⁰

Undoubtedly the fact that the Ovimbundus are experienced in growing coffee had something to do with the development of this program; however, the program itself is equally designed to undercut the tribal base of UNITA in the south while exacerbating tribal rivalries in the north where the other U.S.-backed organization, the FNLA, has its base. Of course, this program is also tinged with a bit of the profit motive: The land for the program has been carved out of farms which had failed while being run by the Cubans and the MPLA. Turning them over to the Ovimbundus was one way to attempt to boost the production and export of one of the most important cash crops in Angola, coffee.

The MPLA has also made some particular changes in the export crop sector of Angolan agriculture. The main direction here, based on Soviet agricultural models, has been the top-down formation of state farms (and to a certain extent "cooperatives," although by all accounts the "cooperative" movement has proven to be a dismal failure). These farms were meant to ensure at least a minimally functioning economy in the rural areas and were also tied into boosting the production of export crops to bring in foreign exchange. When the Portuguese fled from Angola in 1975 they abandoned 6,250 farms and plantations. The MPLA took over the largest and most profitable of these export-crop plantations, nationalized them and turned them into state farms run on a strict state-capitalist basis, i.e., with profit in command, production mainly for export à la imperialist relations, and with the agricultural workers subject to control and subordination typical of capitalism.

But of all the farms abandoned by the Portuguese the MPLA was only able to put 1500 of them back into operation by 1978. Soviet journals point to the labor and equipment shortage as the primary reason for this situation. However, the key question in the development of these state farms and cooperatives has been much more one of profitability. The MPLA acted very quickly to establish tight control over the most profitable of these farms and plantations. Resources, technology, and aid were channeled into them. The Soviets themselves, as well as other members of their bloc, even came in to run some of these farms directly. Compared to the other sections of agriculture these farms are thriving, free of any sort of shortage of labor, equipment, finances, skilled technicians, or foreign experts. The Soviets are directly in-

volved in cotton production, while the Cubans have their hands in the coffee and sugar plantations and different Eastern European imperialists run the fertilizer and other large agriculture-related industries.

Angolan Industry

Angolan industry also reflects the social relations typical of imperialist domination, albeit with a Soviet "prewar" twist. Everywhere, from the smallest factory to the largest, the industrial structure is designed both to maintain the political stability of the regime and to ensure the continued and intensified super-exploitation of the Angolan working class by imperialism.

Most of the industry is run and managed outright by the Western imperialists. A very large percentage of Angola's industry is controlled by the U.S. and its bloc, and this includes a very large chunk, if not all, of the industries with the largest concentration of capital and the greatest profits.³¹ Virtually every key economic lifeline in the country is in the hands of the West. Nowhere is the involvement of Western imperialism more evident than in the oil industry, which provides 80% of Angola's foreign exchange earnings and approximately 65% or more of the total government revenue.³² Gulf Oil, which produces 80% of all the oil produced in Angola,³³ literally controls the industry. In fact, through a series of management contracts negotiated with the MPLA over the years, Gulf has total control of its Angolan operations from top to bottom. Even in the industries supposedly nationalized by the MPLA the situation remains the same. The Angolan state nominally owns 77% of DIAMANG, the main diamond mining company, yet every aspect of its day-to-day operations and management is firmly in the hands of a management firm which is a subsidiary of the South African-owned De Beers Corporation.³⁴

In part, this is a question of just what the Soviets, as the new imperialist power in Angola and given their overall position in the imperialist world, can and cannot do today in terms of taking over economically from the West. More fundamentally, though, it is a matter of what they, as well as the MPLA, can afford to do politically, and what in fact their political objectives are in Angola. To kick the West out of Angola today would require either a revolutionary movement among the Angolan people – not a very enticing prospect for either the Soviet neocolonialists or their compradors in the MPLA – or else would mean a swift and firm order from the top down, a scenario which, from the Soviet standpoint, is not desirable either, since, economically, the Soviets are in no position now to deal with a totally dependent Angola and since, strategically, this would run counter to Soviet schemes on a global level to take advantage of contradictions in the West to aid in Soviet war preparations. And besides, a disadvantageous and premature military confron-

tation with the West might result.

Again, in our view the peculiarities of Soviet domination in Angola – the "freezing" of certain economic relations (including extensive Western holdings) coupled with the setting in place of a pro-Soviet state infrastructure and military apparatus – cannot be understood with a mechanical model of imperialism in which every single move by an imperialist power can and must be reduced to immediate profitability. The Soviets are not in Angola to grab up Gulf's profits (or still less to "liberate" Angola); their aim is a "holding pattern" in which Angola is nailed down as a springboard for a larger political-military move. (At such a point, the seizure of Gulf Oil, et al., may indeed go down, but then, too, it would principally be a move on the political-military chessboard.) This *dialectical* understanding of the relation between the economic necessity compelling imperialism to carve up the world, and the political-military medium – including, ultimately, war – through which that is most critically expressed, is crucial to grasping developments in the world; as Lenin stressed, "politics is the concentrated expression of economics."

Based on this, the Soviets have relied on the MPLA (backed up by the Cuban troops and Soviet-bloc advisors, of course) to use the power of the state to enforce relative stability in this complex and contradictory situation. It should also be pointed out here that while the MPLA is overall serving the interests of the Soviets, there is quite a bit of overlap between these interests and those of the MPLA itself – especially since the MPLA has its own pressing need for such stability in order to remain in power. A prime example of the role of the Soviet-style neocolonial state in all of this is the development of the "absolute authority of management" as one of the cardinal operating principles in Angolan industrial production. The development of this policy has been integrally bound up with the increasing need of the Soviets and the MPLA to carry out and enforce the suppression of the Angolan working class.

When the Portuguese fled Angola and abandoned their various industrial enterprises, a powerful upsurge swept through the main urban areas of the country, especially in the slum districts inhabited by the working class and urban poor. One of the expressions of this upsurge was a spontaneous movement to seize and run the abandoned Portuguese factories. The MPLA quickly moved to clamp down the lid on this upsurge. In December 1975 they hurriedly adopted a complicated and totally repressive set of rules and regulations to be followed to the letter by the workers in the process of production. The clear purpose of these "Laws of Discipline of the Productive Process" was, and remains today, the chaining of the workers to their "proper place."³⁵ Any infraction of these laws, from passive resistance to unauthorized strikes, is defined as "economic sabotage" and "crimes against production" punishable by anywhere from two to eight years in jail or a stiff fine and sometimes both. In essence, these laws mean that the Angolan working class is forbidden by the state to even so much as go on strike against the imperialist owners of industry.

In the October 1976 Central Committee meeting, and again during the First Congress in 1977, the concepts of "personal directorship" and complete authority of management were adopted as state law.³⁶ Ironically, these were the same meetings during which the MPLA officially adopted the revisionist caricature of Marxism-Leninism and turned itself into a revisionist-style "Marxist-Leninist" party. As periodic upsurges among the Angolan people continued and "labor discipline" remained a problem, it was not uncommon for the MPLA to use the military and the police to put down unauthorized strikes and demonstrations among the workers — demonstrations that included some actions which demanded the expulsion of Cuban troops and Soviet imperialism from Angola.³⁷ By 1977 the MPLA had even gone so far as to temporarily disband their official trade union commissions and basic party organizations within the individual enterprises in order to reorganize them on a tighter basis.

Again, it should be noted that it is not draconian measures in production discipline themselves that are being criticized here. In fact, in countries that are genuinely liberated some such measures may be both necessary and correct on a temporary basis to help establish the new, revolutionary power and its economic basis. In Angola, however, all of these measures serve only to reinforce the neocolonial regime of the MPLA and the bonds with Soviet social-imperialism.

Today, although there is little reliable information available on the activity of the Angolan working class, there are considerable hints that various forms of resistance, for different reasons, continue to plague the MPLA and Angolan industry. The Angolan press is filled with a constant barrage of official calls for an end to rampant absenteeism (the pro-MPLA magazine *People's Power* cites the current rate of "unjustified absenteeism" as being somewhere between 15% and 20%), sabotage, "petty-bourgeois attitudes," and other "crimes against production."³⁸ The May Day 1980 Communiqué from the Political Bureau of the MPLA again stressed the undisputed authority of managers in industry as a so-called revolutionary principle. According to this communiqué, in order to advance the Angolan Revolution it is necessary to:

"...definitely create in managers, cadres and all workers in all structures, the obligation to put into practice decisions made by higher organs of the party and the state... We must also struggle to strengthen the authority and role of management in all workplaces and at all levels. There cannot be confusion regarding decision-making power, and management personnel in companies and other places of work must be respected and obeyed."³⁹

A few months later the November 15, 1980, issue of the *Jornal de Angola* analyzed the shortcomings of the industrial sector in Angola and issued a call for the strengthening of the authority of the industrial managers to "sweep aside all obstacles to productivity."⁴⁰

Of course, since the MPLA is a comprador for the Soviet

social-imperialists, they do have a certain necessity to cover over some of the rougher edges in Angola. In general, they attempt to do this by cloaking the situation in the garb of "socialist orientation," with one of the main ways of doing this being the promotion of supposedly "pre-socialist" forms of "workers' control." To accomplish this the MPLA has tried to use the trade unions, management councils, and production assemblies. However, it has proven to be somewhat difficult to use these organizational forms to showcase "workers' control" since the reality of the matter is that these organizations serve mainly as arm twisters for the state in organizing and carrying out production.

The trade unions, often referred to by both the Soviets and the MPLA as the genuine representative and voice of "The Workers," serve primarily as part of the management bureaucracy. Among the official aims of the local trade union organizations is the task to "first, . . . stimulate political activity among the workers with the aim of creating the technical and material basis for socialism." Concretely, this translates out to a many-worded way of saying PRODUCE. In 1980 the MPLA attempted to use the trade unions to launch a "socialist emulation" campaign in honor of the convening of the first People's Assembly (the congressional branch of the Angolan government!). Actually, this was nothing more than a thinly disguised productivity drive aimed at increasing production by offering material incentives and punishments in order to stimulate competition among the workers. The response among the workers was revealing to say the least. Although the campaign was supposed to take place nationwide, only five workplaces in the entire country could muster enough workers to participate in it.⁴¹

Still another example of all this is provided by the "production assemblies." These are mass gatherings at the various enterprises during which the workers supposedly exercise their "right to consult" by offering up their comments and suggestions concerning the production plan. These assemblies are not very regular, nor are they very well received when they *are* held, since their actual purpose is to iron out problems and obstacles to production and productivity and the sole authority for calling them rests with management.

Using the West to Gain "Economic Independence"

Few would argue about the extent of Western economic activity in Angola today. Virtually every country in the U.S.-led bloc (and many, many major corporations) has some tie-in to the Angolan economy. Even the old colonial power, Portugal, has returned to Angola in a big way over the last few years. What's more, the colonial pattern of trade dependency remains much the same, with the same major trading partners, including South Africa, Angola's largest

trading partner within the African continent.

Since 1976 the MPLA has bent every effort to encourage the economic activity of the West. In June of 1979 the MPLA enacted the Foreign Investment Law to give greater incentives to the Western imperialist countries and their economic investments. Described by Chase Manhattan Bank as a "liberal investment code," the law assures the imperialists that once they invest in Angola they will be able to remain operating there for at least 10 years and it guarantees them repatriation of profits amounting to 25% of their investment annually.⁴² According to this law the Western imperialists are also guaranteed the right of compensation in case of nationalization and are promised special breaks on taxes and customs duties.

Some, more honest forces have expressed puzzlement over the contradiction between the MPLA's avowed goals of liberation, and their ever-deeper economic ties to the West. For these the Soviets offer a political rationale for relying on – or as they put it, "using" – the Western imperialists to achieve economic independence. In the Soviet book *Non-Capitalist Development, An Historical Outline*, the authors state:

"At present the social and economic development plans of most of the Asian and African countries with a socialist orientation as a rule envisage only measures aimed at restricting foreign capital, above all in large- and medium-scale industry. These countries generally begin with a policy of inviting foreign capital for the development of the national economy under state control. However, when foreign capital ignores the national interests, the governments of the developing countries resort to the extreme measure of nationalizing it. . . . The question is not whether or not to attract private foreign capital for the development of the national economy. The question is, on what conditions it should be attracted. . . . In attracting foreign capital into a country it must be deprived of the possibility of interfering in the political life of the country. In short, foreign capital must restrict itself to receiving a reasonable return on its investments."⁴³

Speaking directly to the situation in Angola the Soviets state in *Asia and Africa Today*:

"In enlisting the services of foreign big businesses, which serves as an important additional source of financing development programs, the Angolan government actively uses the differences in the imperialist camp in ensuring the most favorable terms for cooperation with foreign companies."⁴⁴

All this is presumed necessary because of the desperate need of the "newly-free countries" for industrialization and

development in order to achieve "economic independence." In *Neo-colonialism and Africa in the 1970's* the Soviets state:

"The contradiction between the need to oust foreign capital and the need to attract it for the purpose of economic development is the concrete form in which the young states' struggle for economic independence unfolds in conditions of backwardness and heavy dependence on the capitalist world economy."⁴⁵

This sort of sophistry is truly remarkable – although, again, it's not only doubletalk, but doubletalk with a very specific purpose conditioned by the Soviet strategy of gaining footholds in these countries short of an immediate rupture with the West, and at a time when the Soviets themselves cannot fully and profitably integrate them.

The application of this argument in Angola is expressed as the urgent need for technology, with the only source of this technology being the Western imperialists. Agostino Neto bluntly put it this way: "Can this problem be solved by a decree? Can we solve it with an angry editorial proclaiming that the bosses shall not fatten on the sweat of the workers? Obviously no. Cabinda oil is obtained through advanced technology. Do we possess this technology? No. Do the countries which are our friends and give us the most help possess this technology? No again."⁴⁶

Essentially this argument is a case of a whole lot of deceitful eclectics wrapped around a tiny kernel of truth. It recognizes the objective position of the U.S. and the other Western imperialists in the world today, especially in relation to what the social-imperialists are able to do, and tips its hat to the enforced distortion and lopsidedness of the neocolonial and dependent world in relation to the imperialist countries. However, the basic premise of the argument is wrong on a number of counts.

First, it is not a matter of simply buying technology but of allowing imperialist capital to control the critical spheres of the economy. Further, as Marx pointed out over 100 years ago, capital does not consist of steel mills, tractors, etc.; these only play the role of capital within certain social relations. Conversely, the export of capital to oppressed nations is fundamentally the export of capitalist social relations; i.e., such "industrialization" can only reproduce the distortion and dependency inherent in the imperialist power/oppressed nation social relation. When capital is exported to oppressed nations, it is done on the basis of consigning to the economies of those nations a very particular role in an international division of labor conditioned by the needs of finance capital based in the imperialist nations. Regions of these oppressed nations often exist in relative isolation and disconnection from one another, with rapid development in one part accompanied by total stagnation in another, and the overall economy locked into a pattern of disarticulation. And finally, imperialist economic subjugation does not reduce itself to a matter of technology – unless the MPLA considers Brazil,

the tenth largest economy in the U.S. bloc, to be liberated.*

The Soviets and their MPLA compradors say that the Western economic "investors" can be regulated and restricted into working for the national interests of Angola. To this end they promote various initiatives purporting to give the state control of the commanding heights of the economy. One of the main forms of "regulation" promoted by them is nationalization. Actually, Angola's nationalization program is very similar to the nationalization programs that exist in most African countries today, including countries like Zaire and Zambia, and, if anything, is more conservative than many. For the first few years after coming to power, the MPLA concentrated on nationalizing only the industries that had been abandoned by the Portuguese and those that were inactive or running at a loss.⁴⁷ The MPLA went out of its way to make sure that no foreign imperialist toes were being stepped on, even putting into their constitution the right of the imperialists to private property so long as it served the interests of Angola. And for the most part, when industries were nationalized the former owners were given compensation and sometimes even promised a share in any future profits.

The nationalization of the diamond mines and the DIAMANG Company is probably the most spectacular example of the implementation of this aspect of the MPLA program. By 1977 the government had nationalized all of Angola's diamond mines and had taken over a 60% share in DIAMANG. This only came about, however, after DIAMANG's main shareholders had requested that the MPLA nationalize it a full year earlier than they actually did, since it was running at a severe loss.⁴⁸ In the one area that the MPLA did carry out

* In opposition to this blatant slavishness to imperialism for technological and industrial development, it is worthwhile to review the achievements in the Taching oil fields in China under the revolutionary leadership of Mao Tsetung. Before and during the Cultural Revolution, Taching was one of the industrial institutions upheld by Mao as a "red banner" in the struggle against revisionism and the revisionist line on industrial development. Defying imperialist geological surveys which declared that China was "oil poor," and in spite of a series of natural disasters and the withdrawal of Soviet aid and technical experts all occurring within the same brief period of time, the Chinese revolutionaries began to struggle to develop the Taching oil fields in 1960. The initial work force consisted of demobilized People's Liberation Army men and veteran oil workers with their families, and they not only had to battle against equipment shortages, a lack of technical expertise, and generally unfavorable conditions, but they were also up against the fact that the Soviets had just begun an oil embargo against China (the U.S. had already had one going) in hopes of starving China out. And principally, the struggle to develop Taching in the face of all this had to go smack up against the revisionist line of Liu Shaoqi & Co. internally, which declared that China had no choice but to rely on the Soviets for its industrial development. The key to overcoming all of this was exactly the ideological and political struggle against revisionism and its line of slavishness to imperialism. And, on the basis of combating revisionism and studying and applying Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, the Chinese were able to develop Taching into one of the most productive oil fields in China as well as to invent dozens of technological innovations and, in the process, create new and revolutionary social relations (among the workers, technicians, managers, and even neighboring agricultural producers).

immediate nationalization, the banks, they exerted an extra effort to make sure that no one was unduly offended. The MPLA not only took over the resources and business of the Central Bank and three other banks, but they also took over and paid all of the obligations and debts of these banks to foreign creditors.⁴⁹

The other major form of state intervention is through the formation of state-owned enterprises and the negotiation of majority shares in joint ventures with the Western imperialists. The sharpest example here has been the oil industry. In most cases the state-owned oil company, SONANGOL, has anywhere from 51% to 60% of the shares in the joint exploitation of Angola's oil resources. While this may look good on paper, it actually has had little to no effect on the imperialists' oil operations. Describing the effect of neo-colonial countries acquiring a majority shareholding in an imperialist economic venture, a vice president of Chase Manhattan Bank stated: "Most successful projects have been achieved without hard and fast requirements for certain rigid percentages of stock ownership. The important element is that there be a meeting of minds at the beginning as to who does what - *who manages and controls*. Under these circumstances, a minority shareholder [i.e., the imperialist concern in question - *ed.*] can in fact functionally not only manage but control the enterprise."⁵⁰ The MPLA has been very straightforward about who manages and controls in Angola. At their 1980 Congress they made a special point of calling for the negotiation of management contracts with the Western bloc imperialists in all of the "priority industries." The MPLA has also hired the U.S.-based consulting firm of Arthur D. Little to negotiate the Oil Code for Angola's oil industry and has most recently signed Little up to restructure the export sectors of Angolan agriculture, that is, make them more efficient and profitable. (Little is the architect of most of the U.S. oil deals in Africa.)⁵¹

While the programs of nationalization and state ownership in Angola do not fundamentally alter the overall character of Angolan society, and often do not even change the character of Western imperialist penetration in the least, it would be a mistake to see the sole point of these programs as window dressing. They *do* form the basis of the state sector of the economy, which serves as both an economic and political base for the MPLA and the Soviets (and perhaps as an embryo of the dominant relationships following a redivision of the world).

Still, Western-bloc finance capital keeps its fingers deep into this arena too. When SONANGOL joined with Gulf Oil to open up further oil exploration, the MPLA not only had a 51% share in the venture but also had to put up a 51% share of the initial investment. In order to come up with this amount the MPLA had to turn to the U.S. Export-Import Bank for an \$85 million loan and to another consortium of Western bankers, led by the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company, for still another \$50 million. And, as an indication of the degree to which the Western imperialists exercise control here, this consortium demanded, and got, an agreement from the MPLA stipulating that proceeds from oil sales

would be put into an escrow account by the MPLA in order to assure the banks that they would be able to collect what is owed them.⁵² Since 1975 Angola has gotten increasingly wrapped up in the whole international web of finance capital. In 1981 Angola had its first payments deficit since 1975, and in order to finance this deficit the MPLA began negotiations with a number of Western banks for at least \$100 million in new loans.⁵³ To offset future deficits the MPLA has announced that it is cutting back on all but the essential imports and readjusting its development plans.

No Other Choice?

Before moving on, special mention should be made of one argument that has been advanced by the MPLA, the Soviets, and their supporters – including some honest people – to justify the MPLA's deepening economic ties with Western imperialism since 1976 and Angola's social stagnation under the domination of Soviet imperialism. This argument holds that, given the situation at the time the MPLA came into power "independent" Angola was only able to survive, and due to "reality" today can only continue to survive, by maintaining, and in fact increasing, Western imperialist economic activity in Angola. The bottom line drawn by this argument is that the war with South Africa and UNITA and the colonial legacy of Angola has made it impossible for the MPLA to maintain a functioning economy without the Western imperialists who are relied upon to supposedly build up the export sectors of the economy, transfer hard cash to the MPLA, and thus contribute to the development of all the other aspects of Angolan society. (Of course, this same basic argument is also used to justify the reliance on Soviet and Cuban military might to keep the MPLA in power.) The Soviets have often added a touch of political sophistication to this argument by citing the New Economic Policy (NEP) developed and implemented by Lenin in the early years of the Russian Revolution as the theoretical justification for this aspect of the Soviet theory of socialist orientation in practice.

It is certainly true that by the time the MPLA took state power in 1976, Angola was in a state of utter devastation. On top of a severe legacy of colonialism – both in terms of the division of labor in society and the overall distortion of the country – large parts of the physical infrastructure of Angola had been totally destroyed by the brief but intense war. Large chunks of the population of important areas of the country, including the "breadbasket" areas of the country, were uprooted and forced into the urban areas. Most of the productive farms and manufacturing industries had been in the hands of the Portuguese colonialists, and when they fled from the country they did so with a vengeance – taking as much with them as they could and destroying much of what they were forced to leave behind, including all sorts of machinery and vehicles. And since 1976 it has also been true that the South Africans and the U.S.-backed forces of UNITA

have waged constant warfare and sabotage throughout large sections of the country.

Given all this, the MPLA came into power faced with a pressing need to restore a functioning economy in Angola. If the MPLA had been a revolutionary regime this functioning economy would have been based upon, first and foremost, thoroughly breaking the bonds between imperialism and an oppressed nation – one of the decisive production relations in the world – and unleashing the masses of Angolan people to abolish all of the oppressive relations that spring from and reinforce this bond and begin to transform all of society as well as the economy. The MPLA, however, had come into power not as a revolutionary regime which had broken this bond with imperialism, but as one whose power was based upon simply shifting from one imperialist oppressor to the other and, at best, they sought only to renegotiate the terms under which even the Western imperialists were allowed to operate. The MPLA's vision of "getting the economy moving again" relied solely on increasing and maintaining the deals that the Portuguese colonialists had worked out with the various Western imperialist countries and corporations. The literal pleading that the MPLA engaged in with Gulf Oil immediately after they assumed power – begging Gulf to quickly resume its operations in Angola – testifies to this. (Again, this is more a question of just what the Soviets, who are the main imperialist power in Angola today, can and cannot do. And even more fundamentally, it is a situation which flows out of the Soviets' strategic needs and the desires of their MPLA compradors, not the needs of Angola.) And, in the years since 1976 dozens of new deals with Western imperialists have been made – aided by the enactment of several laws providing "incentives" for imperialist investment. Although all of this was done in the name of restoring and building up the economy, the results testify to the actual essence of the MPLA's vision: Angola remains a swamp of neocolonial relations, overall dominated by the Soviet imperialists but deeply entangled in the web of Western finance capital.

The attempt to justify this comprador scheme of "using the West to develop" by citing the New Economic Program (NEP) is a cheap scam and based on bold deceit. (For the Soviets, it is also the utmost in hypocrisy since the NEP in their view is a general strategy used even *today* in the Soviet Union – a country which no one could argue now faces the crush of immediate, post-liberation problems.) The NEP was a program developed by Lenin in the years immediately following the Civil War in the newly-born socialist Soviet Union. It was a period in which the Soviet economy was in a state of utter devastation as a result of the world war, the civil war, and imperialist attacks. The purpose of the NEP was to give the Soviet state some room to breathe. It was a tactic designed not only to help the Soviets in restoring and building up the economy but, more importantly, to aid the proletariat in consolidating and holding state power. Among other things, it allowed foreign imperialists and domestic capitalists to set up operations in certain areas of the economy inside the Soviet Union. At the same time,

however, Lenin made it clear that the NEP was by no means a strategy for the socialist development of the Soviet Union. Instead, it was an explicitly labeled temporary "retreat" to capitalist economic measures necessary for the consolidation of proletarian state power and the total transformation of society. And neither the political education and mobilization of the Soviet people nor the transformation of society were put on hold until the completion of the NEP, but instead were carried out even as the NEP was operating. In fact, the political education and mobilization of the masses was an important factor actually enabling the Soviets to successfully implement the NEP. And Lenin just as clearly defined the context in which the NEP could operate – first and foremost, the proletariat held state power and secondly, the imperialists would not be allowed to operate in the controlling heights and lifeline sectors of the economy.

In Angola the situation is entirely different. Angola, an oppressed nation under the domination of imperialism, is not the same type of country that the Soviet Union was even prior to the 1917 revolution. That is, the Soviet Union had been an imperialist country, backward but imperialist nonetheless. In the Soviet Union, even during the NEP, Lenin insisted on the need for the proletariat to control the key levers and commanding heights of the economy. Applying this principle to the different economic position of an oppressed nation would lead to policies diametrically opposed to those taken by the MPLA and counseled by the Soviets. In a country like Angola one of the most important tasks facing revolutionaries in power would be to break out of the dependency on international finance capital and the world market. In Angola, however, this dependency was fortified, not broken. The export-oriented economy has been nurtured and further developed through all of the deals with the Western imperialists and through the policies adopted by the MPLA. Angola's dependence on oil has only increased over the years. And beyond this, in Angola the definition of the commanding heights and lifeline sectors of the economy, (which, again, are different than what they were in the Soviet Union in the 1920s) that is, oil and other export industries, are all the industries in which the imperialists are most heavily involved. Interestingly enough, while the MPLA masks all of this as a strategy necessary for independent development, in fact it only increases the hold of imperialism over Angola and makes it even more vulnerable to imperialist attack and sabotage. Of course, Angola is "vulnerable" chiefly to the Soviet imperialists who now dominate it. But its basic economic lifelines are held by the Western imperialists, as demonstrated for example by the relations with bank consortiums. It is the imperialists of East and West, not the proletariat and oppressed in Angola, who are controlling the Angolan economy. (For an analysis of how the Soviet strategy of development worked in another Soviet neocolony, see *Cuba: the Evaporation of a Myth*, by the RCP, USA, cited in footnote 64.)

Since the MPLA has not broken this most decisive production relation between imperialism and an oppressed nation – principally in connection with the Soviets but also

with the West, at least on the economic front – it is certainly not surprising that the society they rule over, and all of the social relations within it, is a reflection of this basic relationship. And again, it is not simply a question of criticizing the MPLA for putting certain draconian measures into practice. However, in any liberated country attempting to develop its economy and transform society, one of the most important factors in doing so is not only mapping out a strategy but politically educating and preparing the masses for whatever problems might arise. It is within this context that the measures and laws enacted play out their role. In Angola, these measures are not designed to popularize the MPLA's development strategy or to educate and prepare the Angolan people for problems in implementing it. Instead, they are solely aimed at keeping the Angolan people producing for the imperialists and keeping them chained within the bounds of imperialist domination. Some supporters of the MPLA will even go so far as to admit, for example, that the Angolan peasants exist in the same basic conditions as the peasants in a country like Zaire. But they also argue that the essential difference between the two countries is the ideological position held by the ruling class. To these forces, we raise two questions. What evidence is there of any liberating change being stimulated by the ideology of the MPLA? And what is the difference between two ideologies that produce and reinforce the same conditions of imperialist domination and oppression up and down the line? The only basic difference between Mobutu of Zaire and the MPLA is which imperialist each is aligned with and dependent upon.

No other choice? Hardly! But even if the MPLA had taken a revolutionary path in Angola, there would not be any iron-clad guarantees about the success of the revolution. On the other hand, the path chosen by the MPLA does offer one guarantee – that Angola will remain tightly wrapped in the chains of neocolonialism and buried under imperialist domination and oppression.

Strategic Importance Key for Both Soviet & U.S. Imperialists

In *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism* Lenin stated that:

"(1) the fact that the world is already partitioned obliges those contemplating a *redivision* to reach out for every kind of territory, and (2) an essential feature of imperialism is the rivalry between great powers in the striving for hegemony, i.e., for the conquest of territory, not so much directly for themselves as to weaken the adversary and undermine his hegemony." (See *Collected Works*, Volume 22, page 269.)

In this quote Lenin captured the crux of what is behind the interests of both the Soviet and U.S. imperialists in Angola.

The fact that the Soviets have allowed Angola's economy to remain very heavily penetrated by the West stems from and reflects their need to fortify a stable neocolonial society in Angola as one of their more important strategic outposts. While the hard currency extracted by the Soviets via the triangular cycle that sends dollars from Gulf for oil to the Angolan government, and dollars from the Angolan government for arms and troops to the Soviets is important, that is not at the heart of what is happening; indeed, because there are more overriding and long-term strategic questions at stake, there is little doubt that if push came to shove the Soviets would even bankroll Angola and the MPLA at a loss to maintain their overall domination (though such an eventuality would deny the Soviets a highly beneficial and much needed financial arrangement and present them with serious problems).

And precisely because of its strategic importance to the Soviets, there is no way that the economic activity of the West in Angola is an indication of some sort of power-sharing scheme between the West and the Soviets. Nor is it an indication that the problem is that the Soviets have been too lenient with the West in Angola.

Of course, the preponderance of Western concerns in Angola does not mean that the Soviets themselves are not carrying out imperialist economic activity there, both on their own and in joint projects with the Western imperialists operating in Angola. In January 1982, Angola signed a \$2 billion economic agreement with the Soviets, the largest economic agreement ever signed by the MPLA. According to the terms of this agreement, these funds will be used to finance several projects to be carried out jointly with Brazil, Japan, and Portugal.⁵⁴

As touched on earlier, the Soviets actually take about 60 cents on every dollar of foreign exchange that the MPLA brings in.⁵⁵ Most of the money from the export of coffee and oil is being paid out to the Soviets for their arms shipments and other such "aid." In passing, it should also be noted that the MPLA spends an additional \$250 million per year in hard currency to repay the Cubans for their "selfless" contribution to "proletarian internationalism."⁵⁶ That all this is in hard currency is particularly important. The Soviets have worked out this particular arrangement as a specific form which they impose on some of their client states and neocolonies as a part of simultaneously extracting surplus value while subordinating them to the overall war preparations of the Soviet Union. The hard currency taken in by the Soviets is in turn used in trade with the West to help build up the Soviets' material and technical base for war. In fact, reflecting the increasingly urgent character of their contention with the U.S., the Soviets initiated a dramatic shift in their arms-supplying policies in the mid-1970s — shifting from sales on credit at 2% to 2.5% interest rates and payable over a ten-year period to immediate and direct payment in hard currency.⁵⁷ More recently the Soviets have taken an even harder line on the hard currency issue — demanding payments on time despite

the fact that many of these countries are experiencing substantial drops in the amount of hard currency they bring in as a result of falling prices for their exports and the present crisis of the imperialist system.

But again, the ultimate importance of Angola to the Soviets is strategic. By grabbing up Angola the Soviets parked a military garrison smack in the middle of central and southern Africa. This garrison consists of no less than one-sixth of the standing army of Cuba, the 30,000-man Angolan army, and 5-6,000 mercenary troops known as the Katangese Gendarmes (since signing on with the Soviets, however, this motley crew of mercenaries has taken to calling itself the Congolese National Liberation Front).⁵⁸ Within the confines of this region, sometimes referred to as the "Persian Gulf of minerals," lies one of the richest concentrations of strategic minerals in the world. In addition, Angola is strategically located near the Cape Sea Lanes and on the South Atlantic.

On a shorter-term basis, having Angola firmly in their hands has also provided the Soviets with some more immediate opportunities to strengthen and intensify their contention with the U.S. imperialists. Various agreements signed with the MPLA have given the Soviets many of the same privileges and rights of access to Angola's deep-water Atlantic ports and to the numerous airfields throughout the country that the U.S. imperialists enjoyed under the Portuguese. The advantages of all this can be readily seen in just a few recent developments. Angola has become the center for Soviet air surveillance and reconnaissance in the South Atlantic, replacing Guinea which bolted from the Soviet bloc to the U.S. a few years back. Soviet antisubmarine warfare flights go out of Angola on a regular basis today.⁵⁹ And, in the spring of 1982 the Soviet TU 95 Bear flew out of Angola in order to monitor the progress of the British fleet as it moved towards the Falklands.

On land, Angola has provided the Soviets with a base from which they can supply sanctuary and the sponsorship of an imperialist superpower, and everything that entails, to the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO). This has played an important part in enabling the Soviets to increase their already considerable influence in SWAPO and their attempts to use SWAPO to advance Soviet interests in one of the most important countries of the region, Namibia.

For their part, the U.S. imperialists, too, are using their economic activities in Angola principally for strategic reasons, as opposed to any immediate economic gains. Melvin Hill, the president of Gulf Oil, elaborated on this point in testimony he presented to the U.S. Congress: "To the extent that the U.S. and Western economic interests enter the country, its heavy dependence on the Soviet Union, the Eastern bloc countries and Cuba would be diminished. In the same vein, we would see Angola's admission to various international agencies and banks as a similar benefit."

The fact that Angola is a Soviet neocolony and yet relies on the Western imperialists for the bulk and most important part of its economic base is problematic and fraught with explosive contradictions for both the Soviets and the U.S. The very nature of the situation underlines just how temporary it

actually is. From the Soviet standpoint, the setup basically provides the U.S. bloc with a very sharp chisel which they can, and do, use. For example, Western economic activity has been used to attempt to pry certain factions within the MPLA away from the Soviets and closer to the West, and to attempt to create a social base for the Western imperialists more broadly throughout Angola. For the U.S. imperialists the problem boils down to the fact that their economic activity in Angola is literally the main thing shoring up the economy of one of the most important strategic outposts of Soviet imperialism in the world, one which is used to a very large degree for the straight-up fueling of a Soviet war base. Once again, it should be noted that Gulf Oil alone provides the majority of the entire revenue of the MPLA government.

Angola's Government — Soviet-Style Neocolonial State and Cuban Aid

There is absolutely nothing else that could serve as the core and the backbone of what exists in Angola today other than a neocolonial state. However, the particular character of Angola makes for a neocolonial state with several peculiar characteristics. First, there is the obvious contradiction involved in a Soviet neocolony with an economic base composed principally of Western imperialist operations. While the Soviets have no intention of "sharing power" with the West in Angola, neither are they about to rupture the connections between Angola and the Western financial circuits. Finally, Angola is a crucial military outpost for the Soviets, with the actual positioning of troops being a large part of this, in a region that is both vitally important to and generally controlled by U.S. imperialism.

To secure this outpost, the Soviets have had to solidify a whole ruling apparatus, one that is tightly tied to the aims and designs of social-imperialism. In Angola this meant forging a *new* comprador class in the form of the MPLA Party of Labor. As the Soviets put it in *Asia and Africa Today*:

"...no group of revolutionaries, however sincere and consistent, can ensure the socialist orientation of the bulk of the population and the work of the entire state apparatus without the existence of a vanguard revolutionary party of fellow thinkers. It is a characteristic feature of the 1970s that almost immediately upon coming to power revolutionary democrats realized the need of creating a vanguard party to ensure the success of socialist orientation."⁶⁰

With regard to this last point, the need for a party, the development of this requirement arose from and tied into the whole shift on the international scene that marked the

mid-1970s — especially in relation to the increased contention between the U.S. and the Soviets and the inroads that the Soviet imperialists were able to make in connection with various national liberation movements. It was an important aspect of the Soviet shift from the "noncapitalist path" — which held that almost anyone in an oppressed nation (as long as they related well to the Soviets) was capable of leading the revolution and building socialism — to the "theory of socialist orientation." The need for a party to run the countries of socialist orientation became a particularly pressing need as the Soviets moved from carrying out their contention by trying to elbow their way into U.S.-controlled countries of the neocolonial and dependent world (with an emphasis on economic penetration) to actually being able to capture outright (politically and especially militarily) whole countries in strategic regions of the world.

In part, it was also a reflection of the economic weakness of the Soviet imperialists. In the early 1960s the Soviets boasted that they would economically "bury" U.S. imperialism as they contended for empire. However, due to their position as "late arrivals" in the imperialist world — coming onto the scene as challengers — and to the deepening crisis of the international imperialist system, it has been impossible for the Soviets to implement their boast. Nevertheless, both the Soviets and the U.S. have sharply increased their contention as they are driven to redivide the world. However, since the Soviets are unable to carry out large-scale reorganization and replacement of U.S. bloc capital, when they do capture various countries they are obliged to structure very loyal client regimes in the form of revisionist-style "Marxist-Leninist" parties in power.

When the MPLA came into power it was one organization with many factions and vying loyalties. There was the Neto faction — which consisted of pro-Soviet forces, conservative nationalists, and most of the "External Leadership" group (who had been stationed outside of the country until 1974-75) — which overall held sway. But there were also remnants of more radical nationalist factions as well as factions of various political coloration grouped around different military leaders. In order to run the affairs of state in Angola, the MPLA had to be transformed from such a faction-ridden organization into a consolidated ruling class which could administer state power under the auspices of the Soviet Union. Carrying this out was a two-pronged process. On one hand, it involved both the mobilization of the entire international political and propaganda network of Soviet revisionism and, more tellingly, all of the benefits available from a revisionist government in power — "material aid," military occupation by tens of thousands of "fraternal" combat troops, and thousands of advisors assigned to help administrate the state and military at all of the key levels and departments. On the other hand, it also involved quite an effort on the part of the MPLA itself. This process had already begun in mid-1975 when Neto began to move against some of the more radical nationalist factions opposed to his leadership and the growing influence of the Soviets.

In May 1977 Nito Alves, a high-ranking MPLA member

and a leader of a faction that was composed of a number of provincial government officials and military leaders opposed to Neto, unsuccessfully attempted to launch a coup against Neto. (The coup itself will be gone into later.) In the aftermath of this coup attempt the MPLA launched a massive effort to restructure the organization as part of the process leading up to its transformation into a revisionist party. Many of the key leading people in the MPLA's army, FAPLA, were arrested, including the Deputy Chief of Staff. A number of MPLA ministers and seven provincial commissioners were replaced. The Angolan Constitution was amended to concentrate power in the hands of the president, Agostino Neto at the time. (After his death in Moscow in 1979, Neto was replaced by dos Santos.) Against the broad rank-and-file of the organization the MPLA leadership launched a massive rectification and purge campaign. And, although the MPLA was formally transformed into a "Marxist-Leninist" party in December 1977, the purges and rectification campaigns lasted for three more years. During this time no new members were brought into the organization and a commission was established to review the membership qualifications of all MPLA cadre. An internal control commission was created to keep a watch over the party's activities and activists. These purges mainly concentrated on the lower and middle ranks of the party, getting rid of what the MPLA called "undesirables" and "anticommunists." Following the purges the social composition and base of the MPLA was mainly among the military, other security forces, the bureaucrats and technicians (although the security forces remained somewhat of a problem for Neto as was indicated by his dissolution of the secret police [DISA] in 1979 and the formation of a new organization with greater loyalty to him).⁶¹

Taking a page from the methods used by the French imperialists in running their neocolonies in Africa, the Soviets oversee the functioning of all the most important ministries in the Angolan government through a "shadow high command." The MPLA member at the head of each of these ministries is shadowed by Soviet, East German, or Cuban advisors. The Angolan Finance Ministry is overseen by the Cubans.⁶² The Soviets preside over the Ministry of the Interior (which is responsible for all of the various police and security agencies), the Foreign Ministry, most of the ministries dealing with economic policy, the ports, borders, and all points of entry into the country.⁶³ Both Soviet and Cuban specialists play an important role in Ministries of Foreign Trade, Transportation, and Health and Public Works. The East Germans play a very major role in both the security and police agencies as well as all of the state-run industries through the presence of approximately 2,000 technical advisors.⁶⁴

One area that has received extensive attention from the Soviets has been education. Thousands of Angolans have been granted scholarships to study in the Soviet Union, Cuba, or some other Soviet-bloc country. This education follows the typical neocolonial patterns; that is, it concentrates on the training of the military, the police, and the technocrats necessary for protecting and administering the

neocolonial society. The current Angolan president, dos Santos, is himself a product of this type of education, having been trained in oil engineering and later in military communications in the Soviet Union during the late sixties and early seventies. An example of what this education is all about is shown by the fact that one of the earliest schools to open up under the MPLA was the National School for Penal Technology, which opened its doors as soon as it could be staffed in 1976.⁶⁵ And one of the courses of instruction offered to the Angolans studying in Cuba is "specialist training in penology."⁶⁶

The most important part of the Angolan government to the Soviets, and the one which has received the bulk of all Soviet aid to Angola, is the military. The Soviets exercised great care in swiftly establishing the tightest control possible over the Ministry of Defense and each branch of the military, especially the army. Beginning right away in 1976, top-level Soviet military delegations worked hand in hand with the MPLA to set up Angola's military establishment and tie it as closely as possible to the Soviets. In addition to the hundreds of Soviet and Cuban advisors, East Germany alone has 2,500 advisors attached directly to the Angolan army.⁶⁷ The first MPLA Minister of Defense, Iko Carreira, resigned from his post in 1980 in order to take special military training in the Soviet Union.⁶⁸ In late 1982 Carreira returned to Angola as the first, and only, general of the Angolan army. Beyond all this, the Soviets and the Cubans are responsible for equipping, organizing and training all of the Angolan armed forces. The MPLA itself attributes the structure of the Angolan army to the fact that it is modeled after the Soviet and Cuban armies – that is, along totally bourgeois lines with the same rank structures and trained solely for fighting a conventional war. The general staff, political commissars, and officer corps of the Angolan army have all been trained in either Soviet military institutes in the USSR or in Soviet- and Cuban-staffed military schools inside Angola.⁶⁹ The content of this training was amply spelled out by Agostino Neto during his speech to the graduation ceremony of the first group of army officers to come out of these Angolan schools. According to Neto, the course of instruction in this training concentrated on teaching the skills that would build an army "capable of waging a modern war by mastering military techniques and tactics."⁷⁰ In addition to the army, the Soviets and the Cubans have also been responsible for the training and organizing of Angola's navy and air force.

Our point here is not that professional armies are no good *per se*. But – leaving aside for now the fact that the Angolan army is totally the creature of the Soviets and Cubans – even in a *genuinely* socialist country the professional army must also be schooled in relying on and mobilizing the masses for protracted warfare. Especially in an oppressed nation like Angola, the stress must be on preparing for people's war rather than highly technological conventional war.⁷¹

And from a purely practical point of view, confining the terms of the battle against South Africa and Western imperialism to a conventional war with South Africa amounts

to a setup. There is no way that Angola could win against, or even match, South Africa in a conventional war. By relying on conventional warfare to defeat South Africa, Angola is both bound to lose and, at the very least, to increase its vulnerability to attacks from South Africa and Western imperialism. Such a situation can only bring about an ever-increasing dependence on Soviet military might or defeat by surrender to the U.S. bloc and its allies.

The police and security agencies, the agencies whose task is the suppression of the Angolan people, are second only to the military in their importance to the Soviets. While the Soviets and the East Germans both played major roles in setting up and equipping these agencies, the Cubans had the most important part in organizing and training all of the various police and intelligence agencies. This extended from the Angolan Secret Police, the Directorate of Internal Security in Angola (DISA), to the People's Defense Organization (ODP), the so-called people's militia which, in the context of neocolonial Angola, amounts to little more than a paramilitary auxiliary police force. In a speech given on the anniversary of the founding of the National Police Force, the police commandant credited the Cubans with invaluable assistance in advising the police at all levels and providing the faculty for police training schools.⁷² According to the 1977-78 issue of the *African Contemporary Record*, an important aspect of the curriculum offered by the Cubans in these police academies was training the Angolans in methods of crowd control.

Although the Soviets have established tight control over the state and military apparatus in Angola, this has by no means eradicated contradictions produced by the situation – especially vis-à-vis the U.S. imperialists but also within the MPLA and between the MPLA, or sections of it, and the Soviet imperialists. Undoubtedly, as the world situation approaches world war, all of these contradictions will intensify. Interestingly enough, although the internal security agencies in Angola have been very closely supervised by the Soviets and the Cubans, they have also been the source of quite a few problems for the Soviets and their MPLA compradors. In 1979 the Directorate of Internal Security (DISA) was dissolved and replaced by a new agency under the direct control of the Angolan president, supposedly because of "corruption." But by far, the sharpest example of some of the contradictions that the MPLA and the Soviets have to deal with inside the ranks of the MPLA is provided by Nito Alves and his May 1977 coup attempt. Alves was a wartime leader of the MPLA and the Minister of Internal Security since 1976. In May 1977 Alves joined with some military leaders and provincial political leaders in an attempt to overthrow the Neto regime. The Alves coup was not initially out to break away from the Soviets but instead started out as a contradiction within the ranks of the MPLA over just what role and how big a share of the spoils the MPLA would get in "liberated Angola." Alves cloaked his coup attempt in the garb of nationalism and opposition to Neto's leniency towards Western imperialist economic activity in Angola. He played on nationalism and discontent with the rotten condi-

tions facing the Angolan people, especially those still living in the slums, in order to utilize this discontent among a section of the masses as leverage against Neto and as an "in" with the Soviets. While Alves was actually very close to the Soviets, his push for a greater share of Western imperialism's economic activity quickly put him at odds with the overall Soviet interests, especially since, as we pointed out earlier, such a move would have been quite dangerous in terms of maintaining stability in Angola and provoking the West. Alves' coup attempt was unsuccessful and was put down in ten hours, in large part because the Cuban troops stationed in Luanda intervened on behalf of Neto.⁷³

All of this closely ties in with the overall task of the Cubans in Angola. In order to bring the MPLA into power, and keep them there, the Soviets dispatched the Cubans to carry out a two-fold task: (1) to protect the MPLA from all of the numerous pro-Western forces inside Angola and in the region, and (2) to carry out the suppression of the masses of Angolan people. Even before the first massive wave of Cuban troops arrived in Angola in 1975, and especially before the South Africans and other pro-Western forces could be taken on in battle – in fact, as a preparation for taking them on – the Cuban- and Soviet-organized DISA began the full-scale suppression of the revolutionary activity of the Angolan people. No sooner had DISA been organized, around September 1975, than it launched an all-out assault against the slums of Luanda and the organizations based in those areas.⁷⁴ These organizations had quite a bit of influence among the working class and urban poor who inhabited the slums and included some groups who were influenced at the time by the line of revolutionary China and some Trotskyites as well as more strictly nationalist groupings, including factions of the MPLA itself such as the Active Revolt Group led by the de Andrade brothers. Some of these groups expressly opposed the influence of the Soviet Union within the MPLA and the growing role of Soviet and Cuban advisors within Angola. This was not a question of the MPLA crushing a counterrevolutionary uprising. Instead, this actually was a good part of the revolutionary upsurge of the Angolan people at a time when the Angolan Revolution demanded just that. While these groups did not constitute the vanguard party in Angola, and overall were a very mixed-bag politically, the demands of some of these *poder popular* groups included, among other things, demands to arm the masses and mobilize them as the main force in the liberation struggle and to begin immediate land reform among the peasants. Some of these groups also stated that the dissemination of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought was one of the important tasks to be carried out in this situation. All newspapers and literature from all of these organizations were immediately banned and thousands of Angolan people were rounded up and thrown into jail. And, beyond the assault on these organizations and the attempt to uproot their influence, an important aspect of this attack involved the straight-up disarming of the Angolan masses, many of whom originally received their weapons as part of an early attempt by the MPLA to combat the influence of the U.S.-backed groups

within Luanda. The fact that the MPLA and their Cuban advisors found it necessary to assault and disarm the Angolan people in the period immediately before – in fact, according to the Cubans, even as the South Africans were beginning to invade Angola – is indicative of the content of the “liberation” that the Cubans were supposedly fighting for.⁷⁵

After being placed in power, the MPLA invited the Cuban combat troops to remain stationed in Angola in order to protect the new regime from its enemies, especially South Africa. Stationed in the key areas of the country – including guarding Gulf Oil's operations in the Cabinda Province and maintaining a guard over the main towns along the major north-south highway from Luanda to the Namibian border – it is clearly the Cuban troops who are the most important element of the Soviet garrison in Angola.

By all accounts, including the MPLA's, it was the Cuban troops battling against South Africa and the other pro-U.S. forces that were key to putting the MPLA into power in the first place. Since that time, however, any kind of battle at all between the South Africans and the Cubans has been rare. Although South Africa has flown daily bombing runs over Angolan towns, has carried out more than 100 armed raids into Angola since 1976 and has literally occupied a large portion of southern and central Angola since the summer of 1981, the Cuban troops have only engaged the South Africans in battle once or twice since 1976 – and then it was only because they were directly attacked by the South Africans. The usual pattern is that when South Africa invades, the Cubans withdraw to positions that insure the least possibility of a face-to-face confrontation. During the summer of 1981 invasion, the largest and most extensive South African attack against Angola since 1975-76, the *Washington Post* reported that the number of Cuban troops in Angola was actually reduced by 2,000 and only increased a few months later when the invasion had definitely ebbed.⁷⁶ Toward the end of 1983 this was modified to a degree when the South Africans started to attack strategically important outposts in southern Angola that are manned by Cuban troops, as part of a U.S. decision to step up the pressure on the Cubans to get out of Angola.

Contrary to what it seems, all of this does not prove that the Cubans “are not doing their job” in Angola. In fact, it reflects just the opposite and reveals just what that job really is. As Castro himself put it in a recent speech, the Cuban troops are “the last leg of defense” in Angola. Concretely what this means is that the role of the Cuban troops is to anchor Soviet imperialism in Angola by securing it in an all-around way as a strategic outpost of the Soviets pending, and crucial to, a redivision of the world in favor of the Soviet Union. More than anything, the armed presence of large numbers of Cuban troops in Angola today is intended to put the U.S. and its allies on notice. While the Soviets may temporarily tolerate the U.S./South African forays into Angola, and may even be willing to concede some territory, if the U.S. and its allies make any attempt to gun their way full-force into Angola and militarily rip it out of the hands of the Soviets, then, from the Soviets' standpoint, the stakes would be raised

to an extremely high level. However, it should also be pointed out that for the Soviets the positioning of troops is not limited to the positioning of Cuban troops in Angola. In fact, it is possible that the Soviets would actually agree to some sort of deal which would guarantee Angola's security in exchange for pulling the Cubans out of Angola. After all, the Soviets would still have a sizeable military force in terms of the Angolan army, and such an agreement would also have the advantage of freeing the Cubans up for further adventures. [Freeing up the Cuban troops would also undoubtedly help alleviate some of the internal pressures in Cuba today.]⁷⁷

Still another aspect of the Cuban role in Angola that further illuminates the nature of their “fraternal” foreign and military aid is the activity of the thousands of Cuban doctors, technicians and teachers that have flooded into Angola since 1976. While this activity has been highly touted throughout the world, in reality there is much more involved here than the simple good samaritanism of healing the sick and teaching the illiterate to read. In fact, it is a crucial ingredient for the maintenance of Angola as a Soviet neocolony. The whole program is very similar to what the U.S. did under Kennedy with the Peace Corps. The activity of the Peace Corps was integrally bound up with the expansion of U.S. imperialism in the 1960s and in addition to its primarily ideological functions the Peace Corps also aided the U.S. imperialists through counterinsurgency work and building up the necessary neocolonial infrastructure within the various countries. Through the Peace Corps the message conveyed was: “Where else could these kinds of benefits be obtained other than under this kind of domination and enslavement?” This very same logic was often used to gain support for the U.S. imperialists as they ushered old-line colonialism out of many countries in order to replace it with their own neocolonialism. And, just as the Peace Corps extolled the “American Way of Life,” the Cuban version extols the “Soviet Road to Liberation.” Just as the Peace Corps had its military aspect, so too does the Cuban rendition. Many of the doctors, technicians, and teachers assigned to Angola are either recently demobilized military men or civilians directly under military command, otherwise known as “civic soldiers.”⁷⁸ In Angola many of these good samaritans were immediately mobilized into the military and took part in frontline combat against the South Africans until the regular Cuban troops arrived in 1975.⁷⁹ As a secondary aspect of all this, it should also be pointed out that none of this Cuban “humanitarianism” comes without reciprocity in the form of hard currency. Angola pays \$600 per month for each Cuban technician, doctor, or teacher.⁸⁰

Conclusion

One of the main arguments used to justify the way things are in Angola is that anything, literally anything, is justified in opposition to the apartheid regime in South Africa. In fact, Angola's stagnation is often presented as being necessary,

and all that is realistically possible, because of South Africa and Western imperialism and their continual military attacks on Angola as well as their political and economic strength in the region. Basil Davidson, a well-known "critical supporter" of the Soviets in Africa, puts it this way:

"That the tasks of this transition pose an equivocation between the aims of nationalism and the aims of socialism was always apparent. No serious thinker within the MPLA, for example, has ever proposed that Angola can hope to build socialism in a single country. That may be a possible proposition in subcontinents, although history, even with them, can strongly suggest the contrary; it is manifestly impossible in any African country."⁸¹

Thus the very same forces who once argued that the only way Angola could escape from neocolonialism was through reliance on the Soviet imperialists and the Cuban troops turn around today and argue that perpetuation and fortification of neocolonialism in Angola, or, as it is sometimes put, the "lack of transformation," is an objective necessity in order to avoid the full wrath of South Africa and the U.S.-bloc imperialists. Out of one side of the mouth the MPLA and their supporters plead that the power of South Africa in the region prevents genuine revolutionary transformations within Angola, while out of the other they say that the internal weakness, poverty, and lack of cohesion make it impossible to challenge South Africa. Thus, as Lenin once said in another context, is dialectics related to sophistry.

All this is hardly to deny the serious effect of the vicious military campaigns of South Africa and the U.S.-sponsored UNITA. For one thing, one-third of the entire country – including the central breadbasket regions – is now occupied by South Africa and UNITA! Further, the war has caused massive amounts of destruction in Angola and has cost the MPLA government more than \$10 billion over the years.⁸²

Such pressure, however, is not in itself an argument for a neocolonial regime sheltered under the Soviet wing – at least not one that should sway anyone interested in genuine emancipation and the real destruction of imperialism. In fact, *revolutionary* regimes can count on encirclement, subversion, blockade and armed attack *wherever* they are established (and not only in Africa) – witness the history of the Soviet Union and China during the period of proletarian rule in each. Obviously, that doesn't mean that such encirclement and subversion should not be resisted, nor still less welcomed, but that any revolutionary regime must both prepare to resist such encirclement and subversion, *and* grasp (and apply) the principle that so long as imperialism is dominant on a world scale any breaking of that encirclement will only be relative and temporary.

Even, however, taking this argument on its own terms (that is, that the power of South Africa prevents genuine revolutionary transformation within Angola while the consolidation of the MPLA regime somehow forms a potential base area against South Africa) and leaving aside its funda-

mental flaw of attempting to isolate southern Africa from the international contradictions that are concentrated there and set the parameters and overall direction of the major developments in the region, it's bogus! We have exposed at great length and depth how the MPLA has reinforced the neocolonial and semifeudal relations, how the masses have been politically (and literally) disarmed at every critical juncture, how the policies and development of Angola have been fundamentally conditioned by the international needs and moves of the Soviet Union. This has nothing at all to do with preparing the masses to play an important role in the actual armed struggle that must go on against the apartheid regime (as well as other neocolonial oppressive regimes and imperialism, for that matter); indeed, it's diametrically opposed. The only standpoint from which this argument makes any sense is one which ultimately conceives of liberation as necessarily flowing from the barrels of Soviet tanks in the coming world showdown. Actually, it is quite ironic that even while upholding the banner of "combatting South Africa," the MPLA has continued to allow South Africa to economically penetrate Angola, a situation which can only make Angola more vulnerable to South African attacks and sabotage.

However, were a real, proletarian-led, new-democratic revolution to take place in Angola, it *would* in fact have to conceive its tasks in the framework of the world revolution; the extent and character of the transformations it would carry out in Angola would turn on that, and would be conditioned both by the fierce imperialist contention in the area (including the power of South Africa) and the lopsided development of countries such as Angola on the one hand, and the supercharged political volatility of the masses in the region on the other. While such a country could not be expected to construct a socialist economy overnight (at least without the aid of other genuine socialist countries), it would at minimum have to mobilize the masses to oust imperialist capital and carry out the new-democratic revolution generally, including antifeudal transformation of the countryside, so as to prepare for the earliest possible transition to fully socialist forms of ownership. And more, none of this is possible short of proletarian control and transformation of the superstructure.

To reiterate, such transformations have to be seen as part of preparing the (in this case, hypothetical) socialist country as a base area for further gains, when the time is ripe, in world revolution. And with regard to this as part of the dialectic, the point would not necessarily be to immediately declare war on South Africa, but to train and prepare the masses to seize the opportunity for major revolutionary advances whenever they present themselves. *That*, and not the double-bind excuses of the MPLA et al., is the real dialectics of the tasks of the revolution: to carry through the greatest possible transformations internally (and in doing so above all raise the political consciousness and initiative of the masses) as part of aiding, and preparing to aid, the greatest possible advances in the world revolution.

Of course, the rationale expounded in Luanda is heard

elsewhere in the world, too. Those who advance this logic, in whatever form, should really come all of the way out of their bag and explain the real way forward that they see out of the cul-de-sac they describe. For them, everything really hinges on the coming U.S.-Soviet redivision; indeed, their argument boils down to a conviction that liberation, as they conceive it, pivots around the victory of the Soviets in the coming world war. The Soviets make this point themselves, in scarcely veiled form: "the main and decisive condition for the successful development of these countries is the fundamental change in the world balance of forces in favor of socialism."⁶³ But their conception of liberation is one in which a new set of compradors takes charge of the masses in the service of a different imperialist power.

This, we are told, is realism. Well, there are two sorts of realism in the modern world: the pragmatism of the bourgeoisie and the materialist dialectics of the proletariat. Realism, as Bob Avakian has pointed out,

"depends on what you're fighting for. If we are out to completely change the world, all the way to eliminating the division of society into classes everywhere, then only a revolutionary communist/proletarian internationalist line can lead us to finally do that, and it is therefore the only 'realistic' line in that sense. On the other hand, if all you want to do is preserve the old world and the old order, maybe just change some of the faces and names, change some of the forms but leave the same basic content, leave all the same basic relations of exploitation and oppression, all the plunder and wars of conquest, all the degrading and backward ideas that go with this – if that's all you want to do, then one kind of pro-imperialist line or another, in particular a revisionist or reformist one, is the only 'realistic' choice. Of course, that revolutionary communist/proletarian internationalist line means no shortcuts. But since all these shortcuts are shortcuts back to the same misery and horror and only serve to prolong it, maybe we are better off without them.

"... In the more short-term and narrow sense, it is no doubt harder to carry out a revolutionary communist/proletarian internationalist line than it is to compromise fundamental revolutionary principles and depend on one imperialist power to fight another under the guise of 'socialism' or 'democracy' or some other mask. But this takes us back to the basic question: what are you trying to do, what is the vision you are guided by and the goal we are fighting for?..."⁶⁴

The outcome of such a revolutionary struggle is not guaranteed. Nor is it a case of "hopeless idealism" to wage such a struggle – especially given the character of the approaching period. As Bob Avakian states in the above cited article, "The imperialists will be stretched to the limit, and unless revolutionary advances prevent it first, the imperial-

ist powers will be putting it all on the line, one bloc against the other, in a devastating war. In such circumstances many different 'weak links' in the imperialist system will emerge and may well be shattered by revolutionary action, now here, now there. . . ." What is guaranteed both in this situation and in other times – and is born out by the current state of affairs in Angola – is the fact that unless a revolutionary struggle, guided by a thoroughly revolutionary outlook and line, is waged, an oppressed nation, an oppressed people, will simply end up shifting from pillar to post, remaining under the domination of imperialism and locked into neo-colonialism. And conversely, in the final analysis, it is only such a revolutionary struggle and outlook that can win genuine liberation, transform all of society, and make the greatest contribution possible to the achievement of a communist world and the liberation of all humanity. □

Notes

¹John Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, Volume 2 (1962-1976) (MIT Press, 1978), p. 210.

²In connection with the issue of alliances, it is interesting to note that although the MPLA today attempts to feather its cap by pointing to its support for the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), it was quite a different story up until 1974 or so. Up until that time SWAPO had a close working alliance with UNITA which only broke up when it became obvious that UNITA had sold SWAPO down the river by forming an alliance with South Africa in 1975. Marcum, in Volume 2 of *The Angolan Revolution*, even cites a June 1973 letter from Agostino Neto to the Zambian government which calls on Zambia to take appropriate action against UNITA bases in Zambia and urges the Zambian authorities to take heed of the fact that SWAPO was one of the main conduits for arms and supplies to UNITA.

³Richard Gibson, *African Liberation Movements* (Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 215.

⁴While a full analysis of China's foreign policy is well beyond the scope of this article, it is necessary to speak to the Chinese role in relation to Angola. First off, China supported all three Angolan groups in their struggle against Portuguese colonialism, supporting the MPLA since 1958 and the FNLA and UNITA beginning in the early 1970s. With the signing of the ceasefire with Portugal and the Alvor Agreement, China was supposed to have ended its support to all three groups. However, a few months later China was still aiding the FNLA and UNITA and continued to do so for the next few months.

In relation to Angola, China made a number of significant errors. Before going into these, however, it should also be stated up front that we are not criticizing China for interference in Angolan affairs. Noninterference is not some sort of sacred revolutionary principle. Rather, our criticisms of China's activities have more to do with what these activities were and what they were based on. China's er-

rors were due both to the fact that revisionists had a great deal of influence in matters involving China's foreign relations and to certain errors on the part of the Chinese revolutionaries themselves, particularly in tending to view the Soviet imperialists as the main danger in the world against whom an international united front should be formed. This latter error has a long history in the international communist movement, dating all the way back to the time of the Third Communist International. (For a deeper and more extensive analysis of this, see Bob Avakian, *Conquer The World? The International Proletariat Must and Will*, [Revolution No. 50] and the essay that begins this current issue.)

The Chinese errors in Angola were expressed in a couple of different ways. For one thing, the Alvor Agreement, which the Chinese supported, was a neocolonial agreement along the lines of the U.S.-orchestrated Lancaster House Agreement in Zimbabwe. Secondly, China's continued support for the FNLA and UNITA, even after it was clear that they were being used to advance U.S. interests against the Soviets, was wrong. South Africa's invasion of Angola on behalf of the U.S. and on the side of the FNLA and UNITA had the effect of considerably raising the stakes involved for China in continuing this support and consequently China withdrew this support in mid- to late October of 1975.

⁵The text of the Nakuru Agreement as cited in Colin Legum and Tony Hodges, *After Angola, the War Over Southern Africa* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1976), p. 71.

⁶For a full analysis of the shift in the principal contradiction at that time and its effects on the expression of other contradictions in the world, see Bob Avakian, "The '60s-'70s Shift," *Revolutionary Worker*, No. 149 (April 2, 1982), p. 3.

⁷Ann Seidman and Neva Seidman Makgetla, *South Africa and U.S. Multinational Corporations* (Lawrence Hill, 1978), p. 98.

⁸"Angola: Orchestrated Optimism and Intensified War," *Africa Now*, September 1982, p. 32; also "Angolan Oil to Follow Nigerian Lead," *African Business*, September 1982, p. 23.

⁹Ivan Vodopyanov and Vladimir Kokorev, "Angola, The Country Today," *Asia and Africa Today* (bimonthly scientific and socio-political journal of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Institute of Africa under the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences in Moscow), January-February 1982, p. 40.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Africa Index*, Vol. 4, No. 12 (August 5, 1981), p. 17 (information compiled by U.S. and Angolan sources for a 1981 conference).

¹³Colin Legum, *African Contemporary Record 1979-80, Annual Survey Records and Documents* (New York: Africana Publishing Company), p. 656.

¹⁴*Jornal de Angola*, July 15, 1980.

¹⁵Bob Avakian, *Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions* (Chicago: RCP Publications, 1979), p. 111.

¹⁶*Jornal de Angola*, February 27, 1980.

¹⁷Nodari Simoniya, "The Present Stage of the Liberation Struggle," *Asia and Africa Today*, May-June 1981, p. 4.

¹⁸*Jornal de Angola*, July 9, 1980.

¹⁹Quoted in Leonid Fituni, "Angola, Five Years on the Path of Socialist Orientation," *Asia and Africa Today*, January-February, 1981, p. 45.

²⁰Vodopyanov and Kokorev, *Asia and Africa Today*, January-February 1982, p. 39.

²¹See David and Marina Ottoway, *Afro-Communism* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1981), p. 120; Irving Kaplan, ed., *Angola, A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: American University, 1979), pp. 204-8; also *Asia and Africa Today*, November-December 1978 and January-February 1982, pp. 50, 39, respectively.

²²Kaplan, ed., *Angola, A Country Study*, p. 247; Fituni, *Asia and Africa Today*, January-February 1981, p. 46.

²³Fituni, *Asia and Africa Today*, January-February 1981, p. 46.

²⁴Eduardo Mondlane, "The Struggle for Independence in Mozam-

bique," in Wilfred Carey and Martin Kilson, eds., *The African Reader: Independent Africa* (Vintage, 1970), p. 344.

²⁵"How the Angolan Revolution was Built" (An interview with MPLA leader Lucio Lara), *The African Communist* (Journal of the South African Communist Party), No. 74 (Third Quarter 1978), pp. 34-35.

²⁶Fituni, *Asia and Africa Today*, January-February 1981, p. 46.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸Vodopyanov and Kokorev, *Asia and Africa Today*, January-February 1982, p. 39.

²⁹*Jornal de Angola*, November 17, 1981, cited in *People's Power in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau*, No. 20 (Summer 1982), p. 21.

³⁰David and Marina Ottoway, *Afro-Communism*, p. 121.

³¹The January-February 1981 issue of *Asia and Africa Today* states that the Angolan state controls 55%-65% of production potential in the country. However, other Soviet sources claim that the MPLA controls anywhere from 80%-90% of all manufacturing and industrial activity in Angola today. But these figures are deceptive at best — the Soviet figures include joint enterprises and ventures with the Western imperialists and most of the small manufacturing firms that were abandoned by the Portuguese. And even here it is worth noting that the MPLA has been recently encouraging the return of "private enterprise" in a number of areas once controlled by the state.

³²David and Marina Ottoway, *Afro-Communism*, p. 118; and "Shaky Economy Further Hit By Fighting," *Africa Economic Digest*, September 9, 1981, p. 27.

³³"A Shake-up in Angola Puts Gulf in the Middle," *Business Week*, December 21, 1981, p. 47.

³⁴Legum, *African Contemporary Record, 1977-78*.

³⁵*IKWEZI* (A journal of South African and southern African political analysis published in Nottingham, England), No. 6 (August 1977), pp. 65-67.

³⁶David and Marina Ottoway, *Afro-Communism*, pp. 119-20.

³⁷Legum, *African Contemporary Record, 1976-77*; see also *IKWEZI*.

³⁸*People's Power in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau*, No. 20 (Summer 1982), p. 27.

³⁹*Jornal de Angola*, May 1, 1980.

⁴⁰*Jornal de Angola*, November 15, 1980.

⁴¹Ronaldo Munck, "Contradictions of the Angolan Elite," *Critique 15* (A journal of socialist theory published in London), 1981, p. 129.

⁴²*Africa Research Bulletin*, June 15-July 14, 1979, p. 5168; Legum, *African Contemporary Record 1978-79*; and David Neigus, "Angola," *Multinational Monitor*, Volume 2, No. 8 (August 1981), p. 14.

⁴³V. Solodivnikov and V. Bogoslovsky, *Non-Capitalist Development, An Historical Outline* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), p. 115.

⁴⁴Fituni, *Asia and Africa Today*, January-February 1981, p. 47.

⁴⁵E.A. Tarabrin, ed., *Neo-Colonialism and Africa in the 1970's* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), pp. 316-17.

⁴⁶Agostino Neto, cited in Makidi-Ku-Ntima, "Class Struggle and the Making of the Revolution in Angola," *Contemporary Marxism*, No. 6 (Spring 1983), p. 137.

⁴⁷David and Marina Ottoway, *Afro-Communism*, pp. 117-18; *African Contemporary Record 1976-77*; and Kaplan, ed., *Angola, A Country Study*, pp. 203, 230.

⁴⁸David and Marina Ottoway, *Afro-Communism*, p. 119; Kaplan, ed., *Angola, A Country Study*, p. 223.

⁴⁹*Africa Index*, Volume 4, No. 12 (August 5, 1981), p. 47.

⁵⁰Issa G. Shivji, *Class Struggles in Tanzania* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1976), pp. 167-68.

⁵¹David and Marina Ottoway, *Afro-Communism*, p. 118. Little's role in Angola includes negotiating the deals between the Western oil companies and SONANGOL. The August 20, 1982, issue of *Africa Economic Digest* reports that the MPLA has recently retained Little to reorganize the coffee sector — actually to reduce the state involvement in this sector to "manageable levels."

⁵²Howard Schissel, "Building on Oil," *West Africa*, June 13, 1983,

p. 1399.

⁵³*Washington Report on Africa*, Volume 1, No. 5 (September 15, 1982).

⁵⁴*Africa Economic Digest*, January 11, 1982, p. 10, describes a recent Soviet deal on the export of cotton-picking machines to Angola to help build up the cash crop of cotton – cotton is one of the crops the Soviets have taken a special interest in; see also, *Africa Economic Digest*, March 16, 1982.

⁵⁵*Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 1980.

⁵⁶*Africa Reports* (a publication of the African-American Institute), Volume 26, No. 6 (November-December 1981), p. 36.

⁵⁷Fred Halliday, "Moscow and the Third World: the Evolution of Soviet Policy," *Race and Class* [A journal for Black and Third World liberation], Volume XXIV, No. 2 (Autumn 1982), p. 146.

⁵⁸"The Curious Transformation of the Katangese Gendarmes," *Revolutionary Worker*, No. 211 (June 24, 1983), p. 8.

⁵⁹Jennifer Seymour Whitaker, ed., *Africa and the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), p. 168.

⁶⁰Simoniya, *Asia and Africa Today*, May-June 1981, p. 4.

⁶¹Legum, *African Contemporary Record*, 1977-78.

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴Kaplan, ed., *Angola, A Country Study*, p. 194. In addition to all this, it should also be noted that the West has been totally barred from participating in a few select and important areas of Angolan society – the press and media, the Finance Ministry and the Ministry of Defense. And, while the Soviets have overall control over ideological and political training, it has often been carried out through the Cubans and the Portuguese Communist Party. In 1978 Cuba signed an agreement with the MPLA formalizing Cuba's role in ideological training and both Cuba and the Portuguese Communist Party played big roles in preparing the ground for the transformation of the MPLA into a revisionist party. Since the mid-1970s, Cuba and the Cuban Communist Party have been used as a sort of model for the formation of similar revisionist parties in other Soviet neocolonies and client states. Cuba's role in providing ideological training and assistance has undoubtedly been enhanced through their own experience in welding together such a party, including the coincidence of the formation of the party with a criticism of "left errors." This process often includes the purging of various other "nationalistic" tendencies and a tightening up of the overall bonds with the Soviet imperialists. For further analysis on Cuba, see *Cuba, the Evaporation of a Myth* (Chicago: RCP Publications, Third Printing, 1983).

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷*Soviet Business and Trade* (1511 K Street NW, Washington, D.C.).

⁶⁸*Africa Reports*, Volume 25, No. 5 (September-October 1980), p. 36.

⁶⁹Kaplan, ed., *Angola, A Country Study*, Chapter 4: "National Security."

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁷¹For more on a revolutionary line on the military, see Avakian, *Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions*, Chapter 2; and Mao Tsetung, *Selected Military Writings* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1968).

⁷²Kaplan, ed., *Angola, A Country Study*, pp. 192-93.

⁷³David and Marina Ottoway, *Afro-Communism*, p. 115.

⁷⁴See "Social Fascism in Angola," and "Angolan Marxist-Leninists on the MPLA," *IKWEZI*, No. 8 (March 1978) and No. 5 (April 1977) respectively.

⁷⁵*IKWEZI*, No. 5 (April 1977).

⁷⁶"Cuba Reinforces Its Expeditionary Force in Angola," *Washington Post*, December 2, 1981.

⁷⁷The argument is made that without Soviet aid Angola would be a South African colony. Those who propound this argument often couple it with demagogic assertions that anyone exposing, or even raising the question of, the character of Soviet "aid" lacks faith in the

African people." But what kind of faith is this? Why would it be so impossible for the Angolan masses to mobilize and defeat South Africa in a *people's war* should it have attempted to assert colonial domination – history is rife with examples. Even a defeat suffered carrying out this course would be better than the existing state of capitulation to imperialism. Actually, most observers doubt that South Africa's offensive was designed to dislodge the MPLA so much as to keep the pot boiling, and that South Africa's aims in Angola – as in Mozambique – are not so much to seize power as to keep the government there in a constant state of disorder.

⁷⁸Jorge I. Dominguez, "The Armed Forces and Foreign Relations," in Cole Blasier and Carmelo Mesa-Lago, eds., *Cuba in the World* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979), pp. 64-65.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰"East Bloc Aid Little Comfort to Angola," *Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 1980, p. 23.

⁸¹Cited in *Contemporary Marxism*, No. 6 (Spring 1983), p. 136.

⁸²*West Africa*, November 22, 1983, p. 3049.

⁸³Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution* (London: Verso Editions, 1981), pp. 277-78.

⁸⁴"Stepping Up... Stepping Out – Bob Avakian Speaks to Some Sharp Questions Focusing on May First," *Revolutionary Worker*, No. 151 (April 16, 1982), p. 15.

The First Significant Deepening of Lenin's Theory of Imperialism

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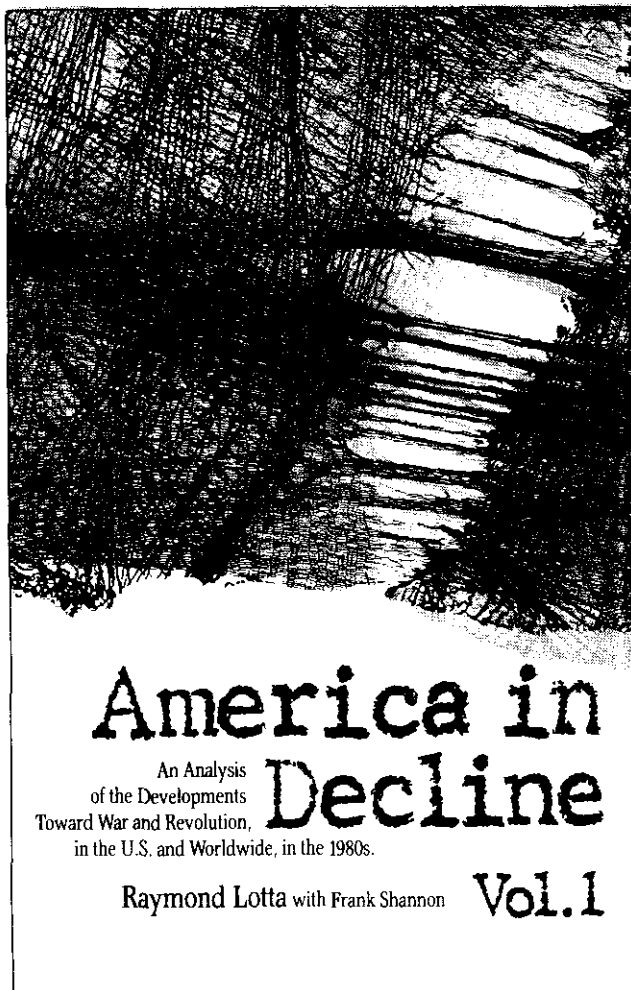
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Observations on the French Left During the Algerian War

by Albert Lefevre

*This article,
originally written for academic purposes,
has been translated from the French
and edited for publication in Revolution.*

I. Introduction: The Left and Colonialism

Few events have so deeply marked France as the Algerian War. Although it has been twenty years since the end of that war, the wounds are still open. A film on the subject, *The Battle of Algiers*, considered by some a masterpiece and by others treason, was banned in France until the 1970s. Even a recent decision to pardon a number of generals of the OAS [a right-wing terrorist organization based in the military which opposed de Gaulle's concession of independence to Algeria — ed.] reawakened intense sentiments on the part of many.

From the point of view of world history, the Algerian War represents a sort of bridge between the colonial world's struggle for independence which arose right after the Second World War, and the national liberation wars, including the war in Vietnam, which shook the world during the sixties.

From the point of view of France, the Algerian War was the executioner of the French Empire and the midwife of the Gaullist "hexagone" (i.e., continental France, stripped of its overseas "departments"). It is not surprising that an event of such importance for French history and for world history put the French Left to the test, a test that it failed miserably.

The facts are clear enough. The Socialists were in power at the beginning of the bloody and vicious war and remained there for three long years. The French Communist Party (PCF) voted to give them the special powers needed to wage the war. Later on, when the PCF recognized, at least in words, the justness of the Algerian cause, it did nothing to develop an effective opposition to the war. And those who tried — a handful of young philosophers, stage actors, and marginal elements considered heretical by the traditional left groups — were condemned for it.

A party which always professed its commitment to the principles of "proletarian internationalism" fought the "nar-

row nationalism" of the Algerians to the point of even negating the existence of the nation — a nation that was to "prove" its existence by waging a national liberation war. The Socialist trend, proud of its "democratic tradition," sided with the French hangmen of Algeria and its people. Was this an aberration, a deviation from the basic tradition of the French Left, or on the contrary, the logical conclusion of the political line the Left had been following for a long time?

The National Question and the Socialist Movement before World War 1

The "national and colonial question" has been one of the most burning questions in the history of the Left for a long time, in France as well as in the world as a whole. Karl Marx himself emphasized the relationship between the Irish revolutionary movement and the possibility of a proletarian revolution in England, and he lambasted the socialists of his time who refused to support the Irish movement. "A people which oppresses another," he wrote, "is itself forging its own chains."¹

However, before World War 1, this "national question" remained very narrow, limited to Ireland and to the so-called "multinational" states in Eastern Europe (Russia, the Austrian empire, etc.). As far as Africa was concerned, few socialists considered anything other than the "obligation" of the advanced countries to "civilize" it. Thus, Rudyard Kipling's "White Man's Burden" found its echo within the socialist movement of the twentieth century.

This was no less true for the French Socialists. Jean Jaurès, the Socialist leader, made it clear that his unimpeachable humanism did not exclude colonialism. In the following excerpt from a speech made in the name of the *Alliance Française*, Jaurès not only defends colonialism but even gives advice on how to strengthen it:

"For France, language is the necessary tool for colonization: unlike England and Germany, emigration is not widespread here; try as we may to promote it, it will never be sufficient to distribute Frenchmen, who by their mere presence propagate our influence and our ideas, throughout the vast territories of Algeria, Tunisia, Annam and the Tonkin. . . .

" . . . [I]f we do not teach French to the most intelligent among [the colonized peoples], how will we be able to subordinate them to our officers, entrust them, under our supervision, with managing their interests, and introduce them to the perfected practice of our trades?

" . . . That is why, when we take possession of a country, we must bring with us the glory of France, and rest assured, it will be welcomed, because it is as pure as it is great, imbued through and through with justice and goodness. We can tell these peoples, without deceiving them, that we have never voluntarily hurt their brothers; we were the first to extend to the

colored people the white man's freedom and to abolish slavery. . . ."²

Jaurès and the great majority of his comrades believed that European capitalism's conquest of the Arab world was inevitable, even progressive. They were not indifferent to the hardships and the misery of the indigenous population; but they had convinced themselves that progress for the local population was dependent on unity with France. The fact that this "unity" had been based on military conquest and domination over the great majority seemed to them a necessary evil until the indigenous people were civilized enough to voluntarily accept being loyal subjects of the French Republic.

The developments leading up to the First World War (the growth of militarism, the colonial conflicts between the European countries, etc.) and the disclosure of various atrocities committed by the French army in North Africa, led to a modification of the Socialist position. In 1905, Paul Louis, a French Socialist, published his study *Le Colonialisme*, in which he scathingly exposed the vicious nature of the colonial system. In 1905-1906 Jean Jaurès denounced the French military expedition to Morocco in the Chamber of Deputies. *L'Humanité*, then in Jaurès' hands, published articles denouncing colonialist crimes.

However, the really anticolonialist trend remained very weak within the Socialist Party (SFIO, or French Section of the Workers International). While most Socialists could no longer ignore the flagrant abuses of the colonialist system, very few aimed to abolish colonialism itself.

The Colonial Question and the Split in Socialism

Only with World War 1 and especially after the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917 did the colonial question become an important topic of debate within the European workers' movement. Lenin and other leaders of the left wing of the international socialist movement had condemned the war as imperialist and had fought unceasingly against the majority of the Socialist parties making up the Second (Socialist) International because of their attitudes towards the war and imperialism. The first efforts to rally the forces of the left wing of the Socialist movement — the moves to establish the Third International (Comintern) — provided the opportunity to seriously take up the colonial question.

However, the resolutions of the Founding Congress of the Comintern were far from clear. Although they denounced colonial domination without ambiguity, and called on the oppressed peoples to fight against Western imperialism, the resolutions implied that the liberation of the colonies depended on the victory of the revolution in the imperialist metropolis.³

The resolution of the Founding Congress of the Third International (1919) concerning the "colonial question" makes the following statement:

"The workers and peasants of Annam, Algeria or Bengal, as well as Persia and Armenia, will not enjoy an independent existence until the day that the workers of England and France, after overthrowing Lloyd George and Clemenceau, take state power into their hands. . . .

"Colonial slaves of Africa and Asia: the hour of proletarian dictatorship in Europe will signal the hour of your deliverance."⁴

This resolution proposed by Trotsky, if partly explained by the hope (at the time by no means totally unfounded) of successful revolution in the West, still contains in embryo the political line that, under the cover of "internationalism," in fact denigrated the real revolutionary potential of the movement in the colonial countries. Lenin had already begun to develop a correct position regarding the link between the socialist revolution in the West and the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the colonial world; in 1916 he noted:

"Socialists . . . must also render determined support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their uprising — or revolutionary war, in the event of one — *against* the imperialist powers that oppress them."⁵

In fact, this question was an important subject of debate in the early years of the Comintern as Lenin and Stalin fought against Trotsky, Roy and other Comintern leaders who refused or hesitated to support the national-democratic revolution in the colonies. It was only after several years of struggle and the recognition that the revolution in Western Europe was not imminent that the Leninist position became consolidated in the Third International.

The same political weaknesses of the Founding Congress of the Comintern were echoed and in fact magnified at the Congress of Tours in 1920 which marked the formation of the French Communist Party. This congress took place at the end of the war, during the revolutionary high tide which followed the Russian Revolution. Intent on gaining admission to the Third International, the delegates voted their adherence to the Comintern's 21 points and adopted its theses on the colonial question which went much further than the previous positions of the SFIO and Jaurès.

The delegate from Indochina, Nguyen Ai Quoc, better known by his other pseudonym, Ho Chi Minh, attacked the colonial policy of the Second International:

"The Third International pays close attention to the problem of the emancipation of the colonies; it has declared that it will help the oppressed peoples to win back their freedom and their independence. As for the Second International, it never made the slightest reference to the fate of the colonies. What I want is freedom for my compatriots, independence for my country. That is why I have opted for the Third Inter-

national."⁶

Ho Chi Minh's reasons for opting for the Third International, as infested with nationalism as they were, were better than those of some other delegates, including those from North Africa. The Socialist federations of Algeria, aware of the Comintern's discussions on colonialism, had sent their delegates to the Congress of Tours so as to "point out to the Congress the dangers of the native rebellions and of the nationalist movements."⁷ So one can see that while the Congress of Tours adopted certain fine resolutions to "denounce colonial imperialism and to actively take sides with the populations subjugated by European capitalism in their struggle against oppression in all of its forms,"⁸ it was a far cry from a complete rupture with the old position of Jaurès.

At least that is what the Socialist federations of Algeria thought. Right after the Congress of Tours, these openly colonialist federations accepted the decisions of the Congress and reconstituted themselves, under the official tutelage of the PCF, as the Communist Party of Algeria. From its inception, this party was mainly made up of European workers who benefited from a privileged position in relation to the native population and who never showed much inclination to do away with French Algeria!

The Popular Front

We will skip over the 1920-35 period — during which, due to pressure by the Comintern and the Soviet communists, the PCF followed a line more favorable to the struggle of the native Algerians — and go to 1935 and the period of the Popular Front, which marked an important turning point in the history of the French Left, and especially the PCF.

The Socialist government of Léon Blum, which was supported by the PCF, followed the old line of the French Socialist tendency toward Algeria — that is to say, *assimilation*. This line was expressed by a draft law named after Blum and Viollette (the former governor-general of Algeria) which aimed to correct the 1919 law that granted French citizenship only to those Algerians "who agree to renounce the Koran."⁹ The Blum-Viollette bill was designed to eliminate this humiliation while limiting French rights to a handful of Algerians. The authors of this bill (which was never adopted) had written:

"... It seems impossible to immediately call on the general native population to exercise political rights since the immense majority of them do not at all yet wish to exercise these rights and in any case they do not appear to be capable of doing so in a normal and intelligent manner. . . . [but it is no longer possible to] continue to treat as subjects deprived of essential rights French natives who have completely assimilated the French manner of thinking and who, however, for family reasons or religious considerations, cannot abandon their personal status."¹⁰

It is not surprising that this bill met with opposition from the Algerian nationalists. What is more interesting is the support which the PCF gave to this bill as well as to the overall policies of the Blum government.

Whatever the reasons, the PCF had adopted a position which recognized the right of self-determination (independence) for Algeria. But with the formation of the Popular Front this was at best put on the back burner. During the short years of the Popular Front, the PCF's position on Algeria became so rotten that it adopted an explicit position against Algerian independence. And although the Comintern's role in relation to this change is still not clear, it can be said without any hesitation that the PCF did not encounter any serious objection from the international communist movement.

The democratic principles proclaimed by the Popular Front were not extended to those who refused to be assimilated by France. In 1937 the Blum government dissolved the Etoile Nord-Africaine (North African Star — *tr.*), a revolutionary nationalist organization which had exposed the Blum-Viollette bill as a "bone to gnaw on." The "ministry of the masses" did nothing.*

The patriotic politics of the Popular Front and the PCF translated into straight-out chauvinism in Algeria. In 1936, the widespread presence of the French tricolor during an important strike in Algiers led by the CGT signaled the PCF's rapprochement with colonialism. Three years later, on the occasion of a trip to Algeria, this is how PCF head Maurice Thorez justified the concept of "*Algérie française*":

"When I say Frenchmen of Algeria, I mean all of you who are present here, those of French origin, the naturalized French, the Israelites, and also you Moslems and Berbers, all of you sons, if not by blood, then at least through the heart, of the Great French Revolution, which made no distinction between races and religions when it declared that the French Republic was one and indivisible."¹¹

Thorez explained this new definition of "Frenchmen" by giving "Algerians" a new definition. According to him, there was no "chosen race" in Algeria who could say: "this land has been the land of my ancestors exclusively and it must be mine." Thorez negated the already existing indigenous Algerian nation by referring to an "Algerian nation which is also being formed in the melting pot of twenty races."¹² The political aim of this theory is made explicit in the concluding remarks of his speech:

"United to defend our bread, protect and extend our free rights, and to maintain peace — that indeed is what is most precious to men in the honor and integri-

* The PCF had no ministers in the Blum government. Nonetheless it proclaimed itself the Popular Front government's "ministry of the masses."

** Originally: "une nation algérienne qui se constitue, elle aussi, dans le mélange de vingt races." — *tr.*

ty of most noble France.*

"... Let's go forward, calm and peaceful. Our cause, the cause of freedom, the cause of peace and of France will triumph through unity. Long live unity!"¹²

The line which Thorez developed remained the basic position of the party until 1958, when the armed resistance of the Algerian people forced the PCF to modify its most blatant positions on this subject without ever repudiating its basic error.

Even a brief study of the history of the French Left in relation to Algeria reveals some of the factors which led it to capitulate during the Algerian War:

(1) Refusal to distinguish between metropolitan France and the French colonies. It is hardly important whether this refusal stemmed from a mechanical and antihistorical application of the lessons of the French Revolution's successful assimilation of different areas and peoples into a united France, or whether it served as a crude excuse for maintaining the imperialist position of the metropolis.

(2) Praise of French democracy without recognizing that it masked the real oppression of the colonized peoples.

(3) Belief that North Africa's material and cultural development depended on the benevolence of France. The main leaders of the Left did not understand that colonialism itself had blocked the development of Algeria.

(4) Fierce patriotism which led the majority of the politicians of the Left to believe that their interests lay more with the French colonialists than with the Algerian peasants and workers.

A fifth point must also be added: a deep conviction that change was possible only with the support of the average French citizen.

In 1959, Jean-Paul Sartre, in an interview with the illegal magazine *Vérités Pour*, tried to explain the inability of the traditional Left to side with the Algerian revolution. The Left, he said, "allows itself to be taken in by the rightist myths of nationalism. It is afraid of 'treason,' it seeks the approval of all the French; it demands a certificate of patriotism."¹³

All these tendencies blossomed during the Algerian War.

II. The Traditional Left's Attitude at the Beginning of the War

"The first impression is that Oran is quite an ordinary city and nothing more than a French prefecture on the Algerian coast."

—Albert Camus¹⁴

If these words seem strange to us today, twenty years after Algeria's independence, it is very unlikely that many French

* Originally: "la plus grande France." — *tr.*

readers hesitated when they read them at the time that *La Peste* (*The Plague*) was published in 1947. In fact, Oran was not at all ordinary. Oran, the second largest city of Algeria, was the only one in which Europeans made up the majority of the population, a European enclave on the edge of Africa.* But for the overwhelming majority of the French, Oran, like all of Algeria, was France.

Of all the old French colonies, Algeria was the main one to be subjected to a high degree of European settlement. According to estimates, there were 1,300,000 people of different European origins (Spanish, French, Italian, etc.) living in Algeria at the beginning of the war. Whatever their origin, these Europeans, or *ped-noirs* (literally, black feet — *tr.*), were assimilated into the French language and culture.

The French community in Algeria was tightly linked to the imperialist metropolis. If the French considered their countrymen in Indochina or in Senegal to be colonialists or adventurers, the *ped-noirs* were "like next-door neighbors." The *ped-noirs* took part in every sphere of the economic, political and cultural life of France. This was no less true for the average Frenchman: everyone had a friend, a cousin, or a schoolmate "over there." Furthermore, Algeria's geographic proximity to France ensured a stream of reciprocal visits. Algeria ranked among the most important of France's commercial relations as well.

The term *Algérie française* (French Algeria — *tr.*) which was to become the rallying cry of the *ped-noirs* and of France's most reactionary and chauvinist elements (the "ultras") — symbolized this spiderweb between the "motherland" and the *ped-noirs*. This conception of Algeria was so embedded in French thinking at the time that even Robert Davezies, a Catholic priest who later on would fight side by side with the FLN, wrote:

"Before Nov. 1, 1954, I thought that France extended to both shores of the Mediterranean and that its population included a Moslem minority."¹⁵

But, as much as the *ped-noirs* were part of France, the Algerians were set apart from it. For them, "Algérie française" meant France's domination over Algeria, a domination which the *ped-noirs* reinforced.

The apologists of the Algerian War used the *ped-noir* community to justify the war or to explain the difficulty that France faced in withdrawing. Such logic was patently mendacious: the more colonization, the more justification for this colonization. Furthermore, the European population was only one-ninth that of the Moslems, a percentage three times less than that of the white population of South Africa.

* At the beginning of the war, Oran's population numbered 300,000 Europeans and 150,000 Moslems.

The Socialist Government

On Nov. 1, 1954, the Algerian War exploded with simultaneous attacks against the French authorities launched by the National Liberation Front (FLN), unknown before then. The new government of Pierre Mendès France and his Minister of Internal Affairs, François Mitterrand, had to face their first test.

Mendès France, leader of the Radical Party, was a politician of the Left. Far from being an ardent defender of the French Empire, he claimed to support decolonization. After all, he had just put an end to the Indochina War four months earlier and negotiated the independence of Tunisia and Morocco. However, faced with the uprising in Algeria, Mendès France was intransigent, because "Algeria is France."

As for François Mitterrand, who as Minister of Internal Affairs had the most direct responsibility for maintaining order in Algeria, his position was more straightforward. He visited Algeria a few weeks before the outbreak of fighting and found the situation disquieting. He confided to Mendès France: "The atmosphere over there is getting worse and worse. We are going to have to act very quickly."¹⁶ There were two aspects to the actions Mitterrand would take: a draconian repression against the emerging FLN (and the Algerian nationalists generally) and an illusory effort to institute reforms in Algeria to help pave the way for its integration into France.

On Nov. 5, Mitterrand responded to the FLN's declaration which had accompanied its military actions. Before the Assembly's Commission on Internal Affairs, he declared: "War is the only possible negotiation."¹⁷ A few days later, during an important debate in the Assembly, Mitterrand, as well as Mendès France, made this position clear: "Algeria is France. And who amongst you, ladies and gentlemen, would hesitate to use all means necessary to preserve France?"¹⁸

During this same session of the Assembly, Mendès France declared:

"One must not compromise when it's a question of defending the internal peace of the nation, the unity, the integrity of the Republic. The departments of Algeria constitute a part of the French Republic. They have been French for a long time, and irrevocably so. . . . There is no conceivable secession between it [Algeria] and the metropolis. This must be clear, once and for all, in Algeria and the metropolis as well as in other countries [applause by the left, the center, the right and the extreme right]. Never will France, never will any French government or parliament, whatever their particular leanings might be, give in on this fundamental point.

"Ladies and gentlemen, various deputies have stated that there are similarities between French policy in Algeria and Tunisia. I insist that no comparison is more erroneous, more dangerous. This is France!"¹⁹

On that same day, Nov. 12, the Mendès France govern-

ment was almost toppled by a vote of no confidence. He managed to stay in office thanks to the twenty votes that the *pied-noirs* controlled in the Assembly. Indeed, during the six tumultuous months of the Mendès France government, the "Algérie française" lobby exercised a real veto power over the government.

Thus it is clear that from the very first weeks of the Algerian War, the main Left groups in power, the Radical Party and the SFIO, unequivocally adopted a position in favor of "Algérie française" at whatever cost. It was to cost a lot more than they thought. Three years later, it was the Fourth Republic, and not just the Socialist government, which had to pay the price.

Jacques Soustelle

At the beginning of 1955, Mendès France decided that in order to pursue his policy, the governor-general of Algeria had to be replaced. He chose a man whose name became a symbol of the uncompromising struggle for "Algérie française": Jacques Soustelle.

Although Soustelle ended up associating himself with the "ultras" (de Gaulle accused him of having relations with the OAS), he was not at all a "fascist." On the contrary, he had impeccable references as a democrat and even as a representative of the Left. An eminent ethnologist, Soustelle had been one of the leaders of the "antifascist intellectuals' vigilance committee" in 1935. He had been among the first to rally to de Gaulle in 1940 when de Gaulle opposed the policy of collaboration with Germany favored by much of the French bourgeoisie under the conditions of German occupation. De Gaulle chose Soustelle to be chief of his first intelligence service. After the war Soustelle had been a Gaullist minister and then a Gaullist deputy, supposedly of the Left.

Mendès France gave him the double task of smashing the rebellion and instituting a program of reforms. The content of these reforms was about the same as the "charter of rights" for Algeria which had been approved in 1947 but never applied due to the veto of this law in the Algerian Assembly dominated by the *pied-noirs*.

Upon his arrival in Algeria, Soustelle presented his new policy before the Algerian Assembly, which was wary of his reputed "leftism." He declared: "Algeria and its entire population are an integral part of France, one and indivisible"; but, he stressed, its "integration will be based on the equality of all its inhabitants." He made Arabic a compulsory official language in the Moslem schools, announced measures to increase the political representation of the Moslems, and launched a big campaign against illiteracy and poverty. It was indeed the policy of "reconciliation" that Mendès France had spoken of on Feb. 6 during a session of the National Assembly which ended up bringing down his government. (Mendès France was replaced by Edgar Faure, a Socialist-Radical.)

However, reconciliation did not extend to the FLN or to the other nationalist movements which didn't agree to be

French. For them it was still the "reconciliation" of the machine gun and prison.

François Mitterrand gave instructions prohibiting the napalming or indiscriminate bombardment of suspect villages. Soustelle also leaned in that direction:

"All indiscriminate reprisals are prohibited. . . anyone who is arrested, whether their guilt be certain or probable, should be turned over to the qualified authorities, police, gendarmeries, etc.; no one has the right to act in the place of these authorities in re-establishing order or punishing the guilty. . . Police operations. . . interrogations, etc., must be carried out without brutality. . . Any offense against human dignity is rigorously forbidden."²⁰

What beautiful words! But words were all they were.

The experience of all the wars launched by a modern army against guerrillas based among an indigenous population shows that massive, brutal, and indiscriminate reprisals are the rule. The same was true for Algeria. Indeed, the doctrine put into effect by the army was called "collective responsibility." Every historian with the least respect for the truth has had to mention the innumerable cases of brutal reprisals against Algerian civilians suspected of having sheltered the FLN. And at this point attacks against the *pied-noir* civilian population were scarce. The first major attack against *pied-noir* civilians occurred at Phillippeville on Aug. 20, 1955, when, by Soustelle's estimate, 71 Europeans were killed by a Moslem throng. In the vicious retaliation, 1,273 rebels perished, according to official statistics. (The FLN insisted that 12,000 Algerians were murdered.)²¹

Even before the Phillippeville massacres, the uselessness of attempts at "integration" had become apparent. Germaine Tillion, a heroine of the World War 2 Resistance who handled social programs for the Soustelle administration, said in May 1955: "The cycle of rebellion is steadily intensifying and will ruin our pacification efforts. . . ."²²

Among the French men and women who participated in Soustelle's programs were those who, like Germaine Tillion, were motivated by noble sentiments. Perhaps they were like some of those in the U.S. who, deluded by false propaganda, joined the Peace Corps in the '60s and then quit after becoming conscious of its role in U.S. foreign policy. But whatever their motivation, they formed part of the colonial war machine. Belkacem Ould Moussa, a contemporary Algerian writer, testifies to the attitude of young Algerians towards these French social-worker types:

"We found the French from France nice. When we got exasperated, they stayed calm. They kept their little smile, a very French smile. A great people, nevertheless. But for the moment they were making us sweat blood and water. The crash of bombs and machine-gun fire reminded us that France was the colonizer."²³

Little by little any pretense of reform was abandoned, at least in Algeria itself. The leftist governments in France continued to harp on "reform," while in Algeria the generals made their own kind of reform in the *bled* (Algerian countryside — *tr.*).

Initial Reactions to the Algerian Uprising

In the fall of 1954, few in France recognized the gravity of the situation. On the day after the FLN's attacks the front page of *Le Monde* featured a report on the U.S. elections, giving little prominence to events in Algeria. In spite of this climate of unconcern, there were some important forebodings of the future.

The famous writer and Catholic humanist, François Mauriac, was the first to sound the alarm:

"I did not believe the worst was so near. . . . But as my friends know, I was overwhelmed by it. The immediate responsibility of the *fellagha* [Arab fighters — *tr.*] does not at all lighten that which, for one hundred and twenty years, has hung on us with a weight increased from generation to generation. The horror which is about to break loose must be immediately mitigated by a concerted offensive against low wages, unemployment, ignorance and poverty, and by structural reforms the Algerian people have called for. And at all cost we must prevent the police from using torture." (Emphasis added.)²⁴

What is striking in Mauriac's article is his profound pessimism despite his call for "a concerted offensive" to redress social injustices in Algeria. Mauriac drew a line of demarcation between himself and those who, like the government of the period, considered the crushing of the revolt as the prerequisite to any political solution.

In raising the spectre of torture, Mauriac put his finger on something that would haunt the liberal French conscience throughout the following years. With the memory of the German occupation still alive, French public opinion was very sensitive to this question. This was only the beginning of a long campaign directed against torture by liberals like Mauriac as well as the genuine leftist opponents of the Algerian War.

Revolt of the *Rappelés*

As important as these initial protests against torture were, another event showed even more clearly the potential opposition to the war: "the revolt of the *rappelés*."^{*}

The scale of military confrontations in Algeria developed steadily throughout 1955. Gradually French citizens realized

* A *rappelé* is a soldier recalled to active duty in the army after having served his time. — *tr.*

that it was a matter of outright war. Obviously the soldiers were among the first to realize this.

On August 28 Prime Minister Edgar Faure (who had replaced Mendès France) announced a prolongation of military service for those who had been drafted in 1954. In addition he recalled to active duty a contingent which had just finished military service.

During the fall of 1955 a series of incidents took place among troops being regrouped and dispatched. On September 11, hundreds of *rappelés* at the Gare de Lyon refused to board the train for Marseille, from where they were to be sent to North Africa. Only after several hours of battling the military police did the soldiers agree to get on the train. Once underway they pulled the emergency brake every chance they got. They were taken from the train and led to paddy wagons by the MPs. Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman* consider this incident to be the first collective resistance to the Algerian War; the Parisian press at the time, however, preferred to describe the affair as the result of general drunkenness. Other incidents were even clearer; on September 29, three hundred soldiers took part in a "Peace Mass" in Paris. A leaflet was distributed at the end of the mass:

"... Our conscience tells us that this war which we are to wage against our Moslem brothers, many of whom have died defending our country, is a war contrary to every Christian principle, to all the principles of the French Constitution, to the rights of peoples to determine their own destiny, to all the values of a civilization of which our country is justly proud. . . .

"We are not calling on the soldiers to refuse to obey the government's orders individually; but the French people must know that if we do obey, it will mean spiritual death."²⁵

As Hamon and Rotman remark with some sarcasm, "This dignified moderation would not be heard. Unable to blame them for drunkenness, the press ignored these soldiers."²⁶

The most outstanding confrontation between the *rappelés* and the authorities took place the following week at Rouen. The soldiers of the 406th anti-aircraft artillery regiment refused to leave their barracks. This led to violent clashes with the MPs. A demonstration called by the local PCF in support of the soldiers was attacked by the police. According to *Le Monde* of October 11, "actual urban guerrilla warfare has raged for three days on the streets of Rouen."²⁷

The PCF was not the only party to be pressured by the actions of the *rappelés*. The SFIO, despite the fact that it was in the government at the time, organized a meeting against sending troops to North Africa.²⁸ But the PCF's actions at Rouen and the SFIO meeting in Paris did not represent a real commitment to fight against the war.

* Hamon and Rotman's book *Porteurs des Valises*, published by Albin Michel in 1979, is an extremely interesting account of the men and women in France who aided the FLN; unfortunately, the work has not yet been translated into English.

Was resistance to the war possible?

Before examining the politics pursued by the PCF at the beginning of the war it is useful to draw some preliminary conclusions from two contradictory facts: first, the overwhelming majority of the French at the beginning of the war accepted as an axiom that "Algeria is France." On the other hand, several intellectuals had protested since the outbreak of hostilities, and the actions of the soldiers in the fall of 1955 revealed a growing discontent among the troops.

Of course it would be easy to exaggerate the significance of the *rappelés*' actions. Undoubtedly the majority of them were more concerned with their own personal interest than with justice in Algeria. But without making superficial comparisons, it should be noted that during the U.S. war in Vietnam the resistance of the troops, which became such an important element of the antiwar movement, did not develop until several years after the beginning of the war and after the growth of the civilian antiwar movement. Likewise, the great soldiers' movements against the First World War (notably in Russia and Germany) followed a period of political work by the revolutionary elements of the socialist parties. The fact that at this time in France public opinion was squarely in favor of the war made the soldiers' actions all the more significant. They risked military punishment even in the face of disapproval by their peers, a sure sign of the depth of discontent.

There are other reasons to believe that it would have been possible to carry out an effective struggle against the war in 1955. Having experienced the war in Indochina, a significant section of the French population was in one way or another opposed to colonialism. Public sentiment was far from militaristic. Even though Mendès France had been able to portray himself as the man of peace in Indochina, many remembered that Mendès France's SFIO supported and had helped carry out this war, despite its anticolonial talk.* A serious effort to mobilize the anticolonialist sentiment that had become widespread during the Indochina War would have certainly reaped some success.

Finally there were several hundred thousand Algerian immigrants living in France in 1954, and a similar number came over during the course of the war. Despite the political divisions within this community (especially, in the beginning, between the FLN and the supporters of Messali, an early exponent of Algerian independence) the Algerians were almost unanimous in their opposition to French aggression. This substantial force should have been a solid base of support for antiwar work aimed at all the residents of France. In reality, the traditional Left, including the PCF, kept its distance from these immigrant workers for fear that too close a relationship with them could alienate the French workers and that the revolutionary zeal of these masses could disturb the conservative politics of the Left.

* In May 1951, the SFIO Congress adopted a unanimous resolution saying that, "Indochina is henceforth on the international frontlines of the struggle against imperialist Stalinism. . . . It is incumbent on France to make its contribution."²⁹

These three factors — the acts of insubordination among the troops, the legacy of the Indochina War, and the presence in France of a sizeable Algerian community — show that it would have been possible to carry out an effective campaign against the war. Claude Bourdet, an intellectual of the "extreme left" (i.e., to the left of the PCF), said as much:

"Let no one object that the people are not in motion and will not follow us. It is the minority that always 'makes' politics. To know whether the people will follow it is first necessary to show the way. We're all paying today for our lack of courage in 1955. Then it was the *rappelés* — the people — who set an example by refusing to go. And it was us — 'the leaders' — who analyzed and procrastinated."³⁰

But the force in the best position (seemingly!) in 1955 was the French Communist Party. The non-Communist Left, apart from the "extreme left," was in power. And who would have heard of opposing one's own ministers! The PCF was better organized and more solidly grounded in the working class than the other leftist groups. In addition the PCF had a reputation, thanks to its history and to the incessant attacks by the bourgeoisie and the Socialists, of being a "revolutionary" party. Everyone was waiting for the "revolutionary party" to take a stand in the face of a real revolution in a French colony. The PCF was forced to choose: to struggle on the side of the "enemy" was to risk a direct confrontation with the Fourth Republic; to abstain from this struggle was to condone the bloody repression of an oppressed people. The third road they tried to follow proved illusory.

The French Communist Party at the beginning of the war

On November 9, 1954, *l'Humanité** published its report on the November 1 uprising and its aftermath. This article condemned the repression in Algeria and demanded that the police forces be brought back to France. But this declaration is far from being the "proof" of the PCF's support of the Algerian Revolution that partisans of the PCF would later claim. First of all, the article made no mention of *independence*, which was, after all, the fundamental question. The article supported "the national demands of the overwhelming majority of Algerians" without ever specifying the content of these demands.

But worse was a paragraph which unequivocally condemned the uprising: "Loyal to Lenin's teaching, the French Communist Party, which cannot approve of the recourse to individual acts likely to play into the hands of the worst colonialists, even if not fomented by them, assures the Algerian people of the solidarity of the French working class."³¹

Thus the first declaration of the PCF on the Algerian War

* PCF newspaper.

relegated the FLN to the ranks of terrorists and provocateurs and dirtied the name of Lenin in the process.³²

A few days later, on November 12, the Central Committee of the PCF met. Algeria was not even brought up. Six months later, in April 1955, the Congress of the UJRF (the PCF youth organization) did not talk about it either, even though the war directly affected French youth.³³

If the PCF was embarrassed by the beginning of hostilities in Algeria, the Algerian Communist Party (PCA) was even more so. The PCA, formally independent since 1936 but still controlled by the PCF, adopted the same position expressed in the PCF's declaration. According to ex-PCF historian Philippe Robrieux, "on the spot, the PCA condemned the insurrectional movement."³⁴

One year before the beginning of the insurrection the PCA published a declaration which called for the formation of an "Algerian democratic front" to "liberate" Algeria — without specifying whether this meant independence from France. In fact, it explicitly made the reactionary but true statement that it (the PCA) "always emphasized the necessity to draw every Algerian into this struggle, without distinction of origin, every man and woman for whom Algeria was the common fatherland."³⁵

This is the program with which the PCA confronted the insurrection of the FLN. It obstinately refused to abandon Thorez's conception that the "Algerian nation . . . is being constituted in the melting pot of twenty races."

As the development of the war inevitably underscored, the *pied-noir* community was never part of the Algerian nation. The French Algerians were a force external to this nation and as a group their interests were opposed to those of the majority. The *pied-noirs* understood this well and consequently blocked any political reform concerning the "integration" of the Algerians in France.

This does not mean that the PCF was wrong to conduct political work among the "poor whites" of Algeria. But this political work should have been based on the recognition of the *antagonism* between the indigenous nation and the *pied-noir* community. The *pied-noirs* could have integrated with the Algerian nation to the degree that they renounced and struggled against their colonial community.

Having taken a stand for the "common fatherland" of the *pied-noirs* and Algerians, the PCA found itself in a difficult situation with the Algerian rebellion: the more the war expanded, the fewer were those interested in its line of "integration." In May 1955 the Central Committee of the PCA decided to participate in the revolution in order to preserve their own organization.

In April 1956, a young Communist draftee, Henri Maillot, seized a convoy of arms. A few days later the creation of a "*maquis rouge*" (red guerrillas — *tr.*) independent of the FLN was announced. However, the *maquis rouge* was destroyed in September and what was left of the PCA joined the FLN.

In France, the PCF began to act following the autumn of 1955. Faced with the imminent dispatch of troops, a committee consisting of all the leftist youth organizations was pulled together. Under pressure from the SFIO, the Socialist youths

left the committee.* The UJRF used this as a pretext to retire from the committee. The Communists did not take part in the October 13 demonstration against sending the troops.

However, the PCF's position evolved. Gradually Thorez's thesis on Algeria disappeared: Algeria was no longer France; the nation that took so long to form had arrived on earth! The PCF's propaganda even began to give a more accurate reflection of the role of the French community and French interests in Algeria.

Despite this evolution, the political line of the PCF was far from satisfying to the Algerian revolutionaries. So far, the PCF neither supported the FLN nor broke with the government. It limited itself to conducting a campaign for "peace." But which peace: that of Soustelle or that proposed by the FLN? The best that can be said is that the PCF's propaganda lacked precision.

March 12 — the great treason

Notwithstanding the ambiguity of the Communist Party's official position, some members and sympathizers took up the struggle. It was they who became most disillusioned on March 12, 1956.

In February 1956 Guy Mollet became chief of state. During the electoral campaign Mollet had been calling the Algerian War, "a stupid, deadend war."³⁶ It's not surprising therefore that the election of Mollet inspired hope in the growing ranks of the war's opponents. But right after taking office Mollet toughened his Algerian policy. He submitted to the Assembly a "special powers act" to govern Algeria. The first four articles promised various social and economic reforms, but the fifth was a veritable *carte blanche* to pursue the war:

"The government shall have the broadest powers in Algeria to take any exceptional measure required by the circumstances with a view toward the reestablishment of order, the protection of persons and property and the safeguarding of territory."³⁷

Hamon and Rotman relate that discussion within the Communist Party was intense. A dozen Communist deputies from the provinces wanted to vote against the law, but Jacques Duclos dissuaded them. On March 12 the Communist deputies approved the "special powers act," explaining that they did not wish to break up the "united front" with the government, even though the war "troubled" them.

The testimony of a young CP member at the time reflected the sentiments of many of his comrades: "I felt like the party's vote was a real act of treason."³⁸

* The Socialist students led by Michel Rocard stayed in.

III. The Enraged Philosophers

At the start of the war the politicians who represented the traditional Left were at best vacillating between complicity and paralysis; it was up to others to take over responsibility.

It was mainly a handful of intellectuals of various ideological tendencies who attacked the Algerian War. The voices of André Mandouze, a co-founder of *Témoignage Chrétien* (*Christian Witness*), and Robert Davezies of the French Mission, both Catholics, joined with those of Communist historian Etienne Bolo and the editorial staff of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Les Temps Modernes*. Certain intellectuals associated with Pierre Mendès France, like the historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet and Jean Jacques Servan-Schreiber, began to sharply criticize the war.

Among all those who sooner or later came to oppose the Algerian War, none played a more important role than Francis Jeanson. His previous history gave no clue that he would become one of the French justice system's most sought after "criminals." In 1954 the young Jeanson had already acquired a certain reputation in philosophical circles. He entered into the circle of Sartre's intimates after having published a study of him in 1949. He edited a collection for Editions du Seuil ("Ecrivain de toujours") and wrote a book on Montaigne and another on Sartre.

In 1951 Sartre entrusted Jeanson with the task of responding to Camus' book *L'Homme Révolté* (*The Rebel*) in the pages of *Temps Modernes*. The severity of this critique entitled "Albert Camus ou l'âme révoltée" ("Albert Camus or the Rebel Soul") played an important role in the split between Camus and Sartre.³⁹ Jeanson proved resolute during the war.

In 1955 Jeanson and his wife, Colette, published *L'Algérie Hors la Loi* (*Outlaw Algeria*). This remarkable book did not limit itself to criticizing the government's policy or exposing the excesses of the French army; it squarely took the side of "the bandits, the extremists, the outlaws, the insurgents — the people."⁴⁰

In *L'Algérie Hors la Loi* the Jeansons examined the arguments of the war's apologists and reported a growing uneasiness in regard to "abstentionism" of the French, including within the Left. In dealing with the problem of the *Pied-noirs* they clearly state:

"Most French people see in them nothing but an alibi, the justification of their abstentionism concerning official policy. We easily tell ourselves: Of course everything is not so wonderful, but can we abandon a million of our compatriots struggling with such difficulties? So let things run their course, and since nothing can be done, let's think about other things.

"Such is our infinite cowardice!"⁴¹

From the beginning of his opposition to the war Jeanson defended himself against any accusation of treason. For him,

as well as for the others who shared his philosophy, there was no contradiction between support for the "enemy" and the true "national interests" of France. *L'Algérie Hors la Loi* predicted the "total defeat" of France in Algeria and argued that to recognize this fact "is to be neither defeatist nor anti-French."⁴² Jeanson later noted that this little book had been poorly received by the Left.⁴³ Despite this somewhat bitter remark, Hamon and Rotman report that the book "[had] a very important influence on anticolonialist activists."⁴⁴

Shortly after the appearance of *L'Algérie Hors la Loi* Francis Jeanson enlisted in the service of the FLN.

Jean-Paul Sartre and the staff of *Temps Modernes* took a militant stand against the war early on. In November 1955 *Temps Modernes* declared without ambiguity that, "Algeria is not France." The editorial of this issue was clear and sharp: "To this violence [of France] only violence could respond — the Algerians have taken up arms."⁴⁵

Some months later Sartre himself published an article, "Colonialism is a System," which linked the struggle against the Algerian War with the larger struggle against colonialism and the evils that accompanied it and poisoned the French body politic:

"[Colonialism] is our shame; it makes a mockery and a caricature of our laws; it infects us with its racism; . . . it forces our young men to die *despite themselves* for Nazi principles we fought ten years ago; it seeks to defend itself by stirring up fascism right here in France. Our role is to help it die, not only in Algeria, but everywhere it exists. . . . But above all, let us not be diverted from our task by reformist mystification. . . . The only thing that we can and should strive for — and today it's the essential thing — is to struggle side by side to deliver the Algerians and the French *together* from the colonial tyranny."⁴⁶

In the years that followed, Sartre continued to denounce the war. On the occasion of the executions of the FLN cadres Sartre turned the "collective responsibility" theory inside out, proclaiming that "we are all assassins."⁴⁷

Sartre's criticism of the Algerian War was not limited to his formal political writings. His criticism infused his work. In his book *Critique de la Raison Dialectique* (*Critique of Dialectical Reason*) Sartre made several interesting observations using Algeria as an example. He described colonialism as "a perpetual violence" carried out against the indigenous population. The colonists, Sartre said, participated in this violence. He refused to accept the "civilizing role" of France in Algeria; he preferred instead to speak of the "immiseration" of the country. He drew the conclusion from this that any coexistence between colonists and colonized was impossible.⁴⁸

This taking of a stand by the most famous contemporary French writer provided the opponents of the war with an important weapon. But it was not only his celebrity that Sartre provided; for his was among the sharpest summations of the traditional Left.

Albert Camus

It is fitting to pause briefly at the name of a great French writer who followed another road concerning Algeria, Albert Camus. The philosophical and political dispute that pitted Camus against his former friend, Sartre, became only sharper during the war.

Since the war was increasingly becoming the principal political question in France, everyone was waiting to hear Camus' position. Camus was more than a great writer, his activities during the WW2 resistance had earned him the reputation of an "engagé" — a committed writer. Moreover, his *pied-noir* origins invested him with a certain authority as far as Algeria was concerned.

Although Camus had written some articles on the misery of the Algerians, his two famous works set in Algeria, *The Plague* and *The Stranger*, betrayed a sort of blindness in regard to the indigenous population, as if the young Algerian shot down on the beach did not have friends or family and as if Algerian children did not die of the plague.

On the theoretical level as well, elements of French chauvinism influenced his stand on the Algerian War. In *L'Homme Révolté* he described Europe as a battlefield between "German ideology" and the "Mediterranean spirit." Evidently the "Mediterraneans," on whom the future of Europe depended, did not include the Arabs.⁴⁹

In 1956 Camus proposed a "civil truce" in which the French army and the FLN would agree not to attack the civilians of the other side. What escaped Camus was that revolutionary war draws in the population: any effort to crush a revolution must target "the popular base" of the insurgents. The "civil truce" also obscured the fundamental question of Algerian independence. Camus clearly saw the horrors of the war, yet his proposal ignored the "perpetual violence" that Sartre spoke of regarding colonialism. Responding to Camus, Simone de Beauvoir pointed out: "the conflict was between two civilian communities."⁵⁰

If the Algerians seemed little interested in Camus' remarks, it was the *pied-noirs* who ruined his plans at the first (and only) meeting called in support of his proposed "civil truce." A crowd massed outside the hall shouting "Send Camus to the firing squad," and forced him to abandon his speech before finishing.*

After the collapse of the hope for a "civil truce" Camus hardly spoke about Algeria. He refused to sign petitions against torture and executions. Although he never adopted a position "à la Soustelle," the partisans of independence considered Camus an accomplice of French Algeria.

The beginning of the Jeanson network

From the beginning of the war, French men and women

* A year later the theme of a "civil truce" was taken up again by Germaine Tillon, who obtained the FLN's promise to cease attacks against civilian *pied-noirs* if the French authorities halted its executions. The French government played deaf.

began offering their individual services to Algerian activists living in France. Apart from some Trotskyite groups who began publishing illegal leaflets and newspapers for the FLN, however, this assistance remained spontaneous and embryonic. It was only in 1957, when Omar Boudaoud arrived in Paris with the task of reorganizing the Federation of France (an affiliate of the FLN), that the "Jeanson network" took form.

Thanks to *L'Algérie Hors la Loi* Boudaoud hurried to make contact with Francis Jeanson. Boudaoud was not disappointed; Jeanson willingly agreed to organize material support for the FLN. According to Jeanson, "We never had a problem of manpower,"⁵¹ and the network grew and became stronger. The network's many responsibilities included harboring FLN members, supplying false papers, and at times transporting arms. However, the central task was to transfer the enormous funds collected each month by the Federation from the Algerians residing in France.

Among those who united with the network was Henri Curiel, who, next to Jeanson, played the most important role. Curiel, a Jewish Egyptian, was an "orthodox" Communist. He had taken the side of André Marty at the time of the dispute between Marty and the "Thorezian" leadership of the PCF. Like Marty, Curiel accused Thorez of having abandoned a revolutionary line. Nevertheless, Curiel believed that any hope of a socialist revolution in France depended on the "conversion" of the PCF, with which he maintained ties.

Curiel brought an incontestable expertise to the Jeanson network. As Jeanson's activities became known to the French police, Curiel took in hand the practical direction of the network while Jeanson devoted himself to the illegal journal *Vérités Pour* and the public defense of the network. Despite their joint endeavors, ideological differences between Curiel and Jeanson surfaced in the course of the struggle.

For Jeanson, the FLN represented a "third road" between the West and the East; he thought that the Algerian revolution could open a new chapter in political history and bring about a revolutionary process in France itself.

"If the Algerians achieve an original form of socialism, all the peoples of Africa will see this as the decisive confirmation of such a possibility.

"... If, on the other hand, Algeria is forced to play the card of the East, all of Africa will topple through the breach thus created into an imported socialism."⁵²

Curiel did not care for these views. Perhaps his own experience with Nasser in Egypt had left him less naive about the socialist character of Arab nationalism. In any event, he remained convinced that the Soviet Union was the indispensable "friend" of the oppressed peoples.

Later Curiel would be accused of being a secret Soviet agent and then assassinated under (still) mysterious circumstances. What is certain is that Curiel increasingly sought to establish a link between the network and PCF "dissidents" and to largely ensure the independence of the FLN's Federation of France.

IV. The End Of The Socialist War and the Beginning of the Gaullist Peace

It's easy to imagine the relief of the Socialist and Radical leaders when they handed power over to General de Gaulle. The Socialists' two-faced game had broken down.

The war continued throughout 1957. The combat on the battlefields was becoming fiercer than ever. The famous Battle of Algiers took place from January to May of that year. But in Paris, nice words were still the order of the day. On January 9, Guy Mollet declared:

"France will never permit Algerians of European origin to abuse their economic advantages and seek to exploit the Moslems. Neither will France allow the Moslems to profit by their numbers and condemn the minority of European origin to tutelage or departure. France will never abandon Algeria. The problem of Algeria is to assure the coexistence of these two collectives without one being able to oppress the other."⁵³

This pleased no one. The Moslems were already tired of waiting for the establishment of the "new order" in Algeria. They knew very well that the "Algerians of European origin" (sic) would never give up exploiting them, for this exploitation was the very foundation of "Algérie française." As for the *pied-noirs*, they did not consider themselves "Algerians" and would no longer hear of any promises of reform.

In Algeria, however, it was the rifle, bomb, and guillotine that did the talking. The FLN decided to launch attacks against the *pied-noir* population of Algiers. The result of this dubious strategy was predictable. The French authorities responded in kind. The first contingent of the famous "paras" was sent to Algiers. The Casbah as well as other Arab quarters were tightly cordoned off and three thousand "suspects" disappeared.⁵⁴ General de la Bollardière was condemned to sixty days' confinement for having publicly criticized the army's infringement of "human rights." Mitterrand protested, but did not resign.

The guillotine was also kept busy. Three people were executed in Algiers on February 11. Another execution took place in Oran on February 14 and yet another in Algiers on the 19th; two people were executed in Constantine on February 21. The following month brought fifty new death sentences.⁵⁶ Among

* It's hardly debatable that the French army used torture on a massive scale during the Battle of Algiers. Even General Massu, head of the "paras," and Robert Lacoste, Soustelle's successor, admit it.⁵⁵

the three executed on February 11 was a former PCA member of European origin. Today the PCF claims him as a hero; at the time, however, it seems that the PCF kept its distance.⁵⁷

France won the Battle of Algiers, but the price was very high. World public opinion began to develop in favor of the FLN. The French public was getting tired of the war. Worse yet, there was no end in sight. Increasingly "Algérie française" signified a permanent state of war against the indigenous population. But this was not acceptable to the Socialist leaders (remember Mollet's "stupid war") nor to their social base in France. Only the "ultras" were resigned to permanent war.*

The "ultras" among the *pied-noirs* and the French military foresaw the general war-weariness. They certainly had nothing to blame the Socialist leaders for, since the Socialists had accepted every demand of the general staff. The "ultras" saw, however, that the Socialist French government could not pursue the war indefinitely. Like the generals of any country faced with a desperate situation, the French generals believed that they could perform miracles if "the politicians" would give them a free hand.

Enter de Gaulle

Sometimes history is ironic. General de Gaulle and the Fifth Republic he inaugurated were brought to power in May 1958, in large measure by the rifles of the "ultras." General Salan, head of the French army in Algeria, General Massu, and *pied-noirs* influenced by the extreme right had taken over the provincial government in Algiers. In the days that followed, Salan demanded that de Gaulle be recalled to the Elysée (the presidential palace — *tr.*). The generals made it known that, if need be, the Fourth Republic should expect the "paras" to descend on Paris.

Although de Gaulle did not participate in the plot, he refused to condemn it. De Gaulle did not wish to make his return by means of a coup d'état; he therefore insisted on having the blessing of the National Assembly.

The Socialist leaders had little choice. They could either welcome de Gaulle or prepare for a civil war without much hope of winning. Moreover, public opinion was very favorable for the general's return. The SFIO split over this question; most of the Socialist deputies voted for the strict conditions demanded by de Gaulle.

The *pied-noirs* and "ultras" were euphoric. Given the role they had played in toppling the Fourth Republic, they believed they would have a veto power over the Fifth. They were also blinded by the General's uniform, persuaded perhaps that a military hero would never consent to "abandoning" French Algeria.

The Communist Party was scared. They saw de Gaulle as

* In his memoirs General Salan, without much foresight, gives the Rhodesia of Ian Smith as an example of the road French Algeria should have taken.⁵⁸

another Generalissimo Franco. They feared that French democracy was now veering towards fascism. There were many among de Gaulle's supporters who had demanded that the PCF be suppressed. Michel Debré (later a Prime Minister under de Gaulle) himself had said the year before that, "we must outlaw the PCF."⁵⁹ The fear of "fascism" would preoccupy the PCF until the end of the war.

De Gaulle's politics in relation to the war were not, in the beginning, without some ambiguity. It seems that de Gaulle did not reveal his innermost thinking even in the most guarded counsels.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the outlines of his politics took form little by little.

De Gaulle understood that the French Empire was doomed to destruction, at least in its old form. He knew that any struggle aiming to forestall the inevitable could only harm French interests. At the same time de Gaulle did his best to reaffirm the power and prestige of France in the postwar world. He wanted to pull out of Algeria, but on the condition that France avoid a humiliating defeat on the battlefield. De Gaulle came to pursue a two-pronged Algerian policy: attempting to crush the military forces of the FLN while seeking a negotiated solution. This was an explosive contradiction, since pursuing the war required relying on the army and the *pied-noirs* who did not want a political solution, and the generals had trouble understanding why they were fighting if not to keep Algeria French.

Although the PCA had dissolved and joined the FLN, the PCF had never made official contact with the FLN. In May 1958 the Communist leadership, frightened by de Gaulle, approached the "Jeanson network" in order to explore the possibility of a political agreement with the FLN.

Laurent Cassanova was Jeanson's contact. An important leader of the Communist Party and, in addition, a leader of the opposition within the party, Cassanova took his mission seriously. He explained the PCF's position to Jeanson. According to Cassanova:

"Today more than ever it is clear that the Algerian and French people face a common enemy. It's a Republican government, based on the working class, that will make peace in Algeria."⁶¹

Cassanova criticized the FLN's position on de Gaulle.* Jeanson apparently approved of Cassanova's remarks. At this time Jeanson also shared the fear that de Gaulle might lead France to fascism, and he proposed to Cassanova that the PCF combine "the two slogans: struggle against fascism and *independence* for Algeria (not *peace*)."⁶²

As soon as the threat to the PCF seemed to subside, the leadership of the party lost all interest in maintaining contact with the FLN. A meeting which was supposed to have taken place in Switzerland between Waldeck Rochet (another top PCF leader) and Omar Boudaoud was cancelled by the PCF.

* The FLN maintained a wary silence until June when de Gaulle, for the first and last time, proclaimed " *Vive l'Algérie française!* "

The division within the PCF grew as de Gaulle's politics came to light and it became clearer that he was no Franco. Cassanova advocated centering the work of the party on the struggle against the war, while Thorez believed that conducting a struggle on the side of the "enemy" could strengthen the influence of those around de Gaulle who wanted to strike at the PCF. The main thing for Thorez was keeping the party legal and pursuing the peaceful and parliamentary road to socialism.

Cassanova's political reasoning was less clear. He was well aware of the discontent among the intellectuals, including the *Communists* . Alleg* relates that even in 1956:

"Certain people, including some Communist intellectuals, criticized the orientations of the PCF, especially the quest for unity with the SFIO which had led the PCF to vote for the Special Powers Act, and according to them, had restrained its action. They also criticized its propaganda themes, which, taking into account the 'middle of the road' mood of the country, favored the recognition of the 'Algerian national fact' over the demand for 'the independence of Algeria' at this stage, or raised the 'mutually advantageous links' between France and Algeria. In brief, a selection of these intellectuals, teachers and students voluntarily placed themselves 'on the fringe' in relation to the level attained by the antiwar campaigns."⁶³

This "fringe" grew larger and larger in 1958 and was not limited to the intellectuals. Insubordination gradually developed among the young men called into active service.

Cassanova did not want the PCF to lose this "fringe." In addition, he saw here a possible ally for his struggle against Thorez. After the shock of the May events had dissipated, Cassanova no longer feared the danger of fascism under de Gaulle.

Robrieux attributes Cassanova with motives for supporting the antiwar movement that are hardly flattering:

"Cassanova and Sevrin were convinced that de Gaulle was going to put an end to the Algerian War and were anxious to keep his success from overly strengthening Gaullism. In the political bureau they advocated that the struggle against the war be intensified. They wanted the actions of the masses under the Party's influence to *appear* to be one of the essential components of the approaching settlement of the question. On the basis of this analysis they favored various forms of participation, support, or at the very least, understanding of the most audacious initiatives by the leftist intellectuals, such as the Manifesto of the 121 or the direct aid of the FLN." (Emphasis added.)⁶⁴

* PCF historian.

Whatever his motives were, Cassanova continued to struggle among the top ranks of PCF leadership for the party to play a consistent role in the antiwar movement. But he remained in the minority and did not break with the PCF.

Francis Jeanson, for his part, recognized quickly that de Gaulle wanted to put an end to the war. But this did not lead him to renounce his direct support of the FLN. On the contrary, he developed a lucid critique of neocolonialism and attempted to warn the Left about it. Jeanson was among the first to recognize that after de Gaulle's coming to power it was no longer a question of "independence" or not, but of what kind of independence. In September 1958 Jeanson wrote with remarkable foresight that, despite the intensification of the war, "big capital finds it necessary to put an end to the Algerian war as rapidly as possible."⁶⁵

V. The Shift in Public Opinion and the Jeanson Network

In 1960 French public opinion turned definitely against the war. General de Gaulle vigorously pursued the war even as his declarations (although often contradictory) implied that the end was near. The famous "week of the barricades" — when a number of top generals aided by the "ultras" tried to stage another coup in Algeria, this time against de Gaulle — clearly revealed the distance between de Gaulle and the relentless partisans of French Algeria. (The coup quickly fizzled out since the great majority of the bourgeoisie was united around de Gaulle and his plan to end the war.)

The Algerian problem became simplified for the leaders of the traditional Left. Relieved of responsibility for waging the war, they were now free to criticize it. They called for negotiations, criticized Michel Debré (who, among de Gaulle's entourage, seemed to have the task of appeasing the *pie-noirs*) and stressed the fluctuations of the government's Algerian policy — without, however, withdrawing their support of it.*

To the degree the "ultras" threatened de Gaulle, the Left united with him in a sort of tacit "Republican front." Almost without exception the Left's propaganda targeted fascism as the principal enemy. The government was judged by its attitude toward the "ultras."

Two important splits took place within the SFIO in 1959. Reflecting the discontent among intellectuals over the war, the leaders of the two new groups that came out of the splits in May 1960 negotiated the creation of the Unified Socialist Party (PSU), the main present incarnation of the Socialist

* In the aftermath of "the week of the barricades" the National Assembly once again gave de Gaulle special powers by a vote of 441 to 75.

tradition (now led by Mitterrand). It's likely that this move, at least for certain leaders, was meant to "co-opt" the growing number of youth and intellectuals who no longer followed the parliamentary left. One might be astonished that they accepted Mendès France, who had just left the Radical Party and united with the PSU, as one of the spokesmen for the antiwar movement. Mendès France carried out this conversion without the slightest self-criticism of his prior role as an apologist for "Algérie française" and initiator of the war!

One historian offers the following observation on the relationship between the Left and de Gaulle:

"The history of the Gaullist years of the Algerian War is one of a double rupture between the government and the section of the Left (SFIO and the Radicals) which had supported it in 1958 on all the questions other than Algeria, and between the government and the 'ultras' and a part of the army on Algeria. Conversely, and with much fanfare about the purity of their overall anti-Gaullism, the Communist Left and the 'new Left' became the *objective allies* of the Gaullist Algerian policy."⁶⁶ (Emphasis added).

Though this was undoubtedly true for the PCF and at least a part of the PSU, it does not apply to the "Jeanson network" and the insubordination movement organized under the heading "Young Resistance." The arrest of dozens of members of the clandestine resistance to the war, a resistance which involved only a few hundred members in total, brought these people into the limelight. The mass-consumption press labeled them the *porteurs de valises* — an intended pejorative on the order of "lowly porters," which the Jeanson network promptly turned around by proudly claiming the title as their own. From then on, a revolutionary position made itself heard.

Francis Jeanson barely escaped a police dragnet. He began to prepare the political and legal defense of the accused. Jeanson hardly bothered himself with the slanders of the daily press. But the reaction of certain leftists provoked him to respond dramatically.

On March 3, Claude Bourdet published an editorial in *France-Observateur* which stated that, "the men and women who aid the FLN lose all authority as far as the struggle for peace is concerned."⁶⁸ This attack hurt Jeanson all the more since Bourdet had been, from the beginning, an outstanding opponent of the war and of the traditional Left. The *France-Observateur* refused to publish a response by Jeanson, not for fear of repression,** but for fear that such an association with Jeanson could harm their effort to create the PSU.⁶⁹ Even the most antiwar wing of the legal Left chose collaboration with Mendès France over collaboration with Francis Jeanson.

* The *Paris-Presse* suggested, for example, that the high percentage of women among the "porteurs de valises" was due to the "North African Don Juans."⁶⁷

** Bourdet, himself an editor of this journal, was among the first to go to prison in 1955 for having criticized the war.

On April 15, Jeanson struck back at those who were criticizing him. He held a news conference in the middle of Paris. Photographers and about 15 journalists, including one French journalist, George Arnaud, took part. Jeanson declared that the network transferred four hundred million francs each month, and despite arrests, the network was still functioning. The interview was published in *Paris-Presse* and George Arnaud was indicted for "failing to inform the authorities of the activities of a 'criminal.'"

The press conference and the arrests that had taken place unleashed a broad debate in the ranks of the non-Communist Left. In the pages of *Esprit*, *Le Monde*, *Temps Modernes* and especially *L'Express*, intellectuals commented on Jeanson's position and called the role of the left into question.

Though *Temps Modernes* defended the "porteurs de valises," most of the participants in the debate condemned Jeanson for wanting to "replace the people" or "renounce any hope of restoring a fallen France."⁷⁰ Jeanson angrily responded in June.

Notre Guerre

His counterattack, entitled *Notre Guerre (Our War)* was of course seized by the government. Nevertheless, thanks to precautions taken by the publisher, Editions de Minuit, some copies escaped censorship. This booklet (119 pages) was a veritable manifesto of the "porteurs de valises." He did not spare the leaders of the Left:

"Isn't it necessary instead to seek the real traitors from among those who call themselves progressives and who reinforce systematic opposition to progress? Among those who, pretending to struggle for a revolution for which they have never felt the need, daily play into the hands of the adversaries of this revolution? For they are playing with two decks; they serve the old world even as they bleat hymns in honor of the new. From articles to meetings and from petitions to special issues of journals, they never cease applying the brakes to a movement that they pride themselves on promoting. They speak of putting an end to a war that they themselves declare absurd, but they do not allow that one might help the French youth who refuse to die for it. They denounce colonialism, yet they denounce any form of practical solidarity with the colonized as a criminal act."⁷¹

Notre Guerre also reflected Jeanson's political development since *L'Algerie Hors la Loi*. The latter was full of sympathy for the oppressed and of condemnation for the authorities. But *Notre Guerre* was the work of a revolutionary, albeit a confused one. Explaining his theory of the connections between the Algerian Revolution and a socialist revolution in France itself — Jeanson thought that the Algerian Revolution could bring about a revolution in France — he rejected the Left's traditional view of the working class, remarking bitterly that the ruling

bourgeoisie "has succeeded in poisoning the working class."⁷² Yet at the same time Jeanson still defended himself against the charge of treason. According to him, the "national community" no longer existed, and the task of revolutionaries was to reconstruct it.⁷³

Jeanson's claims of patriotism reflect his confusion about the nature of the imperialism he was fighting, though his revolutionary confusion was infinitely preferable to the reactionary clarity of the PCF's defense of French imperialism. He defined the contradiction in France as that between "fascists" and "internationalists,"⁷⁴ drawing the conclusion that it was necessary to form an "anti-fascist front" with the FLN. In what sense did Jeanson use the word "fascist"? Did he consider the Socialist Mollet or the Republican de Gaulle to be fascists? He did not specify. It appears that for him "fascism" meant "evil" or "reactionary" and no longer had specificity. In fact, this "anti-fascist" united front was a political theory more useful to Jeanson's enemies on the Left than to those who sought a revolutionary solution.

We see in *Notre Guerre* a contradiction in Jeanson's political thought; a contradiction, moreover, that he shared with other disciples of Sartre. He was a revolutionary democrat in a country where the democratic revolution was a dead letter a long time ago. From this flowed his absolute faith in the FLN, which was leading a democratic revolution. And this in turn was linked to his failure to understand the possibility and necessity of a proletarian internationalist revolution in a country like France itself, based especially on a section of the proletariat and the masses who could more readily grasp their interests in overthrowing imperialism.

While Jeanson was busy with the debate in Paris, Henri Curiel established a new organization, the French Anti-colonialist Movement (MAF). Curiel wanted to transform the "network" and the organization of insubordination, Young Resistance, into a "mass organization." He also wanted to ensure the highest degree of independence from the FLN. Jeanson reproached Curiel for the nebulous politics of the MAF.

The Trial and the 121

The "Jeanson trial" opened on September 5. Eighteen French and six Algerian defendants were represented by 20 lawyers. It was by far the most important trial of antiwar activists.

The lawyers and the defendants hammered away at the military tribunal and the Algerian War. During the three weeks that followed, it was the French government and not the defendants that was on the bench of the accused.

Even as the government was being quite embarrassed by the trial and its inability to control the proceedings, the antiwar forces launched a new challenge — the Petition of the 121. This "Declaration of the Right of Insubordination in the Algerian War" was very frank. After attacking the war, the declaration took up the central question: "Are there not times when refusing to serve is a sacred duty, when 'treason' signifies

courageous respect for the truth?" The declaration ended with three short phrases that subjected its signatories to the risk of heavy penalties:

"—We respect and deem justified the refusal to take up arms against the Algerian people.

—We respect and deem justified the conduct of those French who consider it their duty to provide aid and protection to Algerians oppressed in the name of the French people.

—The Algerian people's cause, which is contributing decisively to the destruction of the colonial system, is the cause of all free people."⁷⁵

The signers of this courageous declaration "counted for a lot." Their signatures brought immediate criminal indictments. Included among them were not only well-known anti-war intellectuals like Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, but also others considered more mainstream, like the writer Françoise Sagan and the film director François Truffaut. The Declaration of the 121 marked a shift in public opinion against the war and against the passivity promoted by the traditional Left.

There were, however, some famous names that were missing from the list of the "121" — CP leaders like Aragon, Cassanova and, of course, Thorez. While there is some disagreement among historians over how many CP members *did* sign, most estimate something on the order of "a handful" — and those who signed did so on their own, against the party leadership's will.

As it had been throughout the whole war, the "vanguard" party was in the rearguard. But the PCF could not remain completely inert without losing still more of its influence among the staunch opponents of the war. After a long internal debate at the highest level of the PCF, *Humanité* published an article entitled "Support Those Indicted, Defend the 121." It said,

"We thus say calmly to the government that, despite our disagreement with certain means chosen by the defendants or proposed by the 121, we consider their call to have the merit of contributing to the awakening of public opinion and expanding the debate on the nature of the Algerian War and the means to put an end to it."⁷⁶

This stand by the PCF was made necessary by the fact that the "porteurs de valises" and their supporters had become a powerful political current in France.

At the trial of the Jeanson network things went from bad to worse for the government. Paul Teitgen, head of the prefecture of Police of Algiers during the Battle of Algiers who broke with the government and became a vocal critic of torture, testified for the defense. Claude Bourdet, despite his polemics with Jeanson, did likewise. Sartre signed a letter to the tribunal saying he would have carried valises himself if asked, and 20 of the "121" repeated their support of the "porteurs de valises" before the court. The Jeanson trial ended up striking a political

blow as valuable to the Algerian cause as the network's clandestine activities had been.

VI. The End of the War

In June 1960, General de Gaulle for the first time appealed directly to the Provisional Revolutionary Government of Algeria (GPRA), even though six months before he had declared that he would never negotiate with "these men from Tunis" (where the GPRA was headquartered). The FLN responded immediately. On June 25, an official delegation from the GPRA arrived at Orly to open negotiations. Although this initial meeting led to nothing, the presence of the enemy's spokesmen in France indicated to the whole world that the Algeria of the FLN was, sooner or later, to be born.

The opening of negotiations accelerated the activities of the "ultras" in Algeria and elsewhere. Plots multiplied. The infamous Secret Army Organization (OAS) — later linked to an attempt to assassinate de Gaulle — was formed. Officers of the Algerian army (including its commander, General Challe) leaned more and more toward rebellion.

In France, the Jeanson trial and the Declaration of the 121 were only the prelude to a series of demonstrations in the fall of 1960 which drew hundreds of thousands of participants. Although these demonstrations, like all mass movements, were not homogeneous, the political line of draft resistance and of support to "the enemy" was a strong current.

The leaders of the traditional Left were thus caught between two quite different social contradictions: on the one hand the struggle which pitted de Gaulle and most of the French bourgeoisie against the "ultras" and, on the other hand, a revolutionary war in Algeria and a mass movement in France increasingly directed at French imperialism, including the Republicans. By now, the Left was pretty much united in struggling against the war. But the question had become the *context* of this antiwar struggle. Hence the Left had to choose between remaining (to take Poperen's term) "the objective allies of de Gaulle" and by extension, the majority of the French bourgeoisie or, on the contrary, supporting the development of a movement which could lead to a battle between the government and a significant section of the masses in France.

The National Union of French Students (UNEF) had developed a more advanced position on the war during the year. The "core" of UNEF was made up of antiwar activists who favored close collaboration with Algerian students, whose organization (General Union of Algerian Moslem Students or UGEMA, which was close to the FLN) was forbidden in France. In June, UNEF and UGEMA published a joint communiqué against the war.

In October the leaders of UNEF called a demonstration against the war. Pierre Gaudez frankly admitted the reason for the call:

"If we don't organize an event, we will both lose our best members and give way to the *porteurs de valises*;

we are condemned either to lead a massive action or to go underground."⁷⁷

The leaders of the UNEF proposed a joint action to the Union of Communist Students (UEC), which willingly accepted. This provoked a lively dispute in the Central Committee of the PCF. Robrieux, a leader of the UEC at the time, recalls:

"At the Central Committee meeting in October a few days before the demonstration, Jeanette Vermeersch [the Central Committee's representative to the student organization] gave a vehement speech in which she developed the theme of police provocation to an obsession. . . . The most urgent task was to avoid the bloody 'trap' set by de Gaulle."⁷⁸

The Central Committee called separate demonstrations for the same day and forbade the young Communists to participate in the meeting at the Mutualité (which changed participants after the demonstration was banned, but which was attacked by the police anyhow).

The CP youth intended to go to Switzerland to make contact with the UGEMA. Apparently Cassanova supported them, but Thorez vetoed the idea. According to Thorez the task was to create committees "for peace in Algeria."⁷⁹

Avoiding "provocation" remained the slogan of the PCF until the end of the war. For the PSU and the leaders of the UNEF things were a bit more complex. As we have seen, they took upon themselves the role of regaining and safeguarding the youth from the "porteurs de valises."

The PCF claimed to represent "mass action" but did not show any interest in the section of the people in France most affected by the war — the hundreds of thousands of Algerians. This was especially underlined by the murderous events of the last months of the war.

Hamon and Rotman point out correctly that the date of October 17 is a "day stricken from the history of France." 30,000 Algerians marched peacefully in the streets of Paris. They did not chant slogans. There were neither flags nor banners. Photographs show that most of the demonstrators wore a coat and tie. And yes, there were women and children also.

In the *Petit Robert* (French dictionary — *tr.*), one finds a remarkable citation under the entry "raton(n)ade":* The February 14, 1960 *Le Monde* is cited as writing, "Since May 13, 1958, this awful thing called ratonnades had disappeared." Alas, October 17 belied the prestigious newspaper. For it was certainly a "ratonnade" or, if one prefers a less vulgar word, a pogrom, which awaited tens of thousands of Algerians that day, a pogrom organized not by the terrorist "ultras" of the OAS but by the Paris police. The authorities say that 141 persons were killed on that evening, but no one can be sure. In the days following corpses were found in the Seine River, or hanging from trees or hidden in caves. 11,538 Algerians were arrested that night.⁸⁰

* a French word for pogrom literally meaning "coon hunt" — *tr.*

What did the Left do in the face of this massacre in the middle of Paris? Not much. There were neither strikes nor massive demonstrations — after all, it was only Algerians. . . .

It was against the fascists of the OAS that the Left rose up. A big demonstration was called for February 8 at Place de la Bastille to protest against the wave of OAS attacks against de Gaulle's government. The police attacked this demonstration, which had been banned, and nine persons — mostly CP members — died at the Charonne subway station following a police charge.⁸¹ A largely successful general strike followed in the wake of this murder. On the twentieth anniversary of the "Charonne Station," Socialist Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy honored the memory of nine martyrs of the French Left. *Le Monde* devoted a long article to them. But the Prime Minister did not offer roses to the memory of the Algerians killed in Paris and *Le Monde* misreported how many of them were killed.*

VII. Conclusion: The French Left Was, and Wanted to Be, Non-Revolutionary

"In the final analysis there is a more radical contradiction between the Left which proclaims itself 'the Left' and *revolution* than there is between the typical leftist and the typical rightist. . . .

"The distinction left/right thus has only one meaning. It allows the various bourgeois to distinguish between themselves. The word 'Left,' therefore, has a certain content. But this content is above all nonrevolutionary."⁸²

The above appeared in *Les Temps Modernes* early on in the Algerian War. The French Communist Party, of course, disputes the above definition of the word "Left." The PCF calls itself a revolutionary party and demarcates itself on this point from what it calls the "reformist left." It seems, however, that the PCF uses the word "revolutionary" as Madison Avenue does to advertise a new toothpaste. Even at the time of the Algerian War, when the PCF employed more of a revolutionary vocabulary than today, the word "revolutionary" had nothing to do with what one normally means by this word, namely the violent overthrow of a social system and its replacement by another. The actions — or rather the *lack* of action — by the PCF during the Algerian War were the most striking proof of the nonrevolutionary character of this party.

The PCF is very aware of the judgments that have been passed on its conduct during the Algerian War. In 1981 and

* The February 6-7, 1982 *Le Monde* reported that "dozens of North Africans were assassinated or thrown into the Seine," while the Paris police admit a much higher figure and other observers insist there were hundreds of deaths.

1982 the French Communist Party launched a counterattack on its critics with the publication of a detailed study of the Algerian War edited by Henri Alleg.

Among all the historians of the Algerian War, Alleg is, in a certain sense, in the best position to discuss the role of the PCF during the war because he was one of the leaders of the Communist Party of Algeria who united with the FLN after the dissolution of the party. His book, *La Question*, in which he describes the atrocious cruelties he was subjected to by the French authorities, played an important role in the public repudiation of torture.⁸³

The work of Alleg and his team, while extremely thorough on many points, is filled with gaps, half-truths and outright lies about the role of the French Left during the war. For example, Alleg correctly describes the attitude of the French at the beginning of the war: "Everybody was grouped around a single axis — Algeria is not a colony, it's France." The following sentence, however, is more questionable: "Everybody said this, except the Communists."⁸⁴ But the Communists said it too! To justify this Alleg cites the famous Thorez speech describing Algeria "as a nation being formed in the melting pot of 20 races," but omits his remarks *in the same speech* concerning the "French Republic . . . one and indivisible." Alleg does not hesitate to distort well-known facts in making his apology for the PCF.

Alleg (like other writers close to the PCF) describes an event so well known and so important that no one would dare sidestep it — the vote for special powers in 1956. No PCF historian is very proud of this decision. Etienne Fajon, one of the secretaries of the PCF at the time, recounts that he "thinks today that [the decision] was very questionable."⁸⁵ Roger Martelli admits that "the vote of March 12 brought little to the PCF except disarray among its members."⁸⁶ Alleg does not give a personal opinion and notes with a certain wisdom that "the PFC has not officially summed up its positions of that period."⁸⁷

But Alleg goes on to justify the logic, if not the decision, of the party's leadership at the time, offering an explanation which, it seems, it intended only for the naive: "The Guy Mollet government, contrary to what it had promised, did not use the special powers to make peace in Algeria."⁸⁸

More seriously, the PCF suggests that the vote was necessary to "counterbalance the pressure of the right"⁸⁹ in order to set off the "republican reflex"⁹⁰ and win over the "hesitating social base" of the Socialists. It seems, in other words, that the PCF wanted to issue itself a certificate as *bona fide* French chauvinists!

The question of mainstream France

Although we could not accept the arguments of the Alleg team, we must thank them for an accurate description of the thinking of the PCF at the time:

"The leadership of the PCF foresaw that the Algerian

War would not be a colonial war comparable to the preceding one in Vietnam. Support to the peoples subjugated by French capitalism at the stage of colonial domination was part of the long-term strategy of the PCF, but it was pursuing at the same time its own objectives; it was acting within the limits of French society which were partially determined by its own place within this society. . . . Certain ideas that affected the French affected the PCF's electorate, and sometimes its ranks. It . . . was constrained to take into account some prevalent ideas, the image the French had of Algeria. To make them conscious of the Algerians' aspirations for freedom, their national aspirations, their demands for independence: so many steps, so many uneasy tasks."⁹¹

What a reactionary conception of a vanguard party! The defense of oppressed people is an objective, certainly, but a long-term one; in the immediate it would be better to bow to the "limits of the society" and "take into account the prevalent ideas."

One of the most important "prevalent ideas" was French patriotism. The Left had long ago abandoned the internationalism that marked the Paris Commune. Everything that happened during the Algerian War was enveloped in the tricolor. The "fear of treason" which Sartre talked about was so strong that even Francis Jeanson felt he had to defend himself against such charges.

Revolution is, by definition, a treason. The question during the war was not to identify and serve the real interests of *France* but rather to recognize that the interests of the French state, and even the French nation as such, were in contradiction to a higher, global interest — which in the contemporary period can only be represented by the international proletariat and its march to communism. World history could only advance over and *against* the interests of France; one of the really positive features of the Algerian War is that it helped to undermine imperialist France and, as Jeanson put it, destroy the "national community." The task was not to "reconstruct" a national unity (as Jeanson claimed) but to take advantage of the cleavages produced by the war to advance the struggle for the overthrow of French imperialism.

Of course one cannot demand that Jeanson act like a Marxist-Leninist — he never made such a claim. Furthermore one can say with certainty that his petty-bourgeois radicalism, which pushed him to take a revolutionary position, is a hundred times preferable to the non-revolutionary "Marxism" of the PCF which was only theoretical justification for defending France and French interests. Jeanson, the "unconditional" of the FLN, was blinded by his own democratic prejudices to the point of seeing the FLN as a vehicle of progress and socialism; but again, his position is infinitely better than the position of the PCF and other so-called Marxists who hid behind the non-socialist character of the FLN to avoid supporting a movement directed at their own imperialist state.

Lenin (as well as Stalin) was quite clear on the necessity and duty of communists in the imperialist countries to support

movements of national liberation aimed at their "own" bourgeoisie, including in those cases where such movements were not led by the working class and its communist party. The FLN, a heterogeneous grouping containing everything from left-leaning intellectuals to fundamentalist Moslems, was certainly the case of a movement where the proletariat did not have hegemony. The inability of the FLN to fundamentally extricate itself from imperialist dependency (let alone fulfill its "socialist" promises) is testimony to this. But it must be said that the chauvinist attitude adopted by the PCF (as well as the revisionist Soviet Union's refusal to support the FLN) only made it that much more difficult for a genuine proletarian current to emerge in the struggle.

The current of the mainstream can indeed lead into some backward eddies and whirlpools, as it did with the PCF during the Algerian War; certain leftist forces set off not only the "republican reflex" among the workers, but the "Vitry reflex" as well.*

In this study we have tried to demonstrate that it would have been possible to conduct an effective struggle against the Algerian War, and to do so for the *victory* of "the enemy." Support for the "enemy" meant opposition to the "mass struggle" only in the thinking of those who refused to go beyond the limits of the "acceptable."** While this internationalist stand might limit the size of the actions most directly in support of the "enemy" at particular moments, it was this advanced section that propelled the development of broader mass opposition to the war — and events proved there was a significant basis of support for this internationalism.

The choice presented to the Left by the "porteurs de valises" was not principally one between clandestinity and the "mass struggle," but rather a political choice: the necessity of working for the *defeat* of the French government in Algeria. Without taking this position, all the propaganda about the solidarity between the French working class and the Algerian people was meaningless or worse.

No one can say what would have been the *result* if significant forces on the Left had conducted revolutionary work during the war. In retrospect Francis Jeanson was wrong when he thought that the Algerian revolution could bring about a revolution in France. Nevertheless, the Algerian War shook France and provoked a constitutional crisis and a new Republic. If tens of thousands of leftist militants, and not only a few hundred "porteurs de valises," had followed a genuine revolutionary line, the impact on the French public would have been enormous, regardless of the immediate results. At the end of the war the mass upsurge of May 1968 was only six years away.

* In December 1980, the Communist mayor of Vitry led an attack against an immigrant dwelling.

** Daniel Tartakowsky writes: "In a country where colonialist ideology is an enforced idea even in the working class, the PCF wanted to assign itself the principal task of creating the conditions for a large solidarity between this working class and the Algerian people. A choice which responded with mistrust toward insubordination and with reservations regarding the porteurs de valises, who, in taking the side of the FLN and its positions, left uncovered a different but difficult terrain of mass struggles."⁹²

If the guarantee of success were the preliminary condition of every revolutionary movement, and if the leaders had to be assured of the acceptance of their ideas before acting, progress would have stopped a long time ago; Copernicus and Galileo would never have revolutionized science. The Leftist politicians claimed the mantle of the successors of the Communards, but they didn't want to follow the Communards in daring to do the "impossible." On the contrary, the French Left remained, throughout the long years of the Algerian War, acceptable, respectable, and above all, non-revolutionary. It was up to others, not bound by the same reactionary worship of the mainstream, to give a glimpse of what was — and will be — possible. □

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The Military Line of the PLO and the Lessons of Beirut: A Letter

by Paul Case

*The following letter was submitted
to contribute some basic ideas
and stimulate further thought and exchange
on the subject.*

"The revolutionary transformation of society," declares the *Basic Principles* document,

"is impossible without the armed overthrow of the reactionary state power. While taking into account and making a concrete analysis of the nature and specific conditions in different countries, communists everywhere must base themselves on and apply the fundamental principle, expressed in concentrated form by Mao Tsetung, that 'The seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds good universally, for China and for all other countries.'" (*Basic Principles For the Unity of Marxist-Leninists and For the Line of the International Communist Movement*, A draft position paper for discussion prepared by the Revolutionary Communist Party of Chile and the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA [Chicago: RCP Publications, 1981], p. 33, paragraph 163.)

The recent experience of the Palestinian people's struggle for national liberation demonstrates vividly the urgency of grasping this principle and its implications. A correct military strategy for the Palestinian revolution, far from a task that can or ought to be postponed indefinitely in light of recent setbacks, is on the order of the day; if recent experience demonstrates anything, it is that illusory schemes of a relatively cheap and painless road to liberation through brokered deals with "enlightened" or pragmatic great powers lead, not to victory, but to paralysis and disaster. This poses the task of criticizing past approaches which have strait-jacketed the revolutionary forces and hampered them with blinders, ruling out of court any attempt to wage revolutionary war as a war of the masses as a "hopeless pipe dream." Popular revolutionary war has not been made obsolete by circumstances; indeed, it is a doctrine luminous with potentialities.

The Palestinian revolutionary struggle will undoubtedly have a great impact internationally – even more than in the 1960s. The Middle East is a concentration point, both of regional and global conflict and of imperialist confrontation and class and national struggle. Such terrain provides fertile soil for mass armed insurgency, but also poses numerous difficulties and complex problems. Attempts to map out a blueprint or to construct a “closed” scenario in which the Palestinian struggle against Israel is carried out in isolation from many external yet interwoven considerations, while perhaps analytically useful at a certain stage of coming to grips with the problem, of course also have their pitfalls. The dynamics of world conflict might bear heavily on the resolution of any particular struggle while remaining more or less out of control of those leading the struggle. But while noting the international situation, the last conclusion one ought to draw is that nothing remains but to wait for one’s own small craft to be buffeted, swamped and sunk in the inevitable global storm. Danger and opportunity are inseparable. When the seas are turbulent, it is possible for a vessel seemingly vanished in the wave’s trough to emerge at the crest of the next great swell.

There are two ways of looking at the strategy and prospects of the Palestinian revolution in light of the international situation. One view proceeds from the division of the world into two hostile camps led by the U.S. and by the Soviets to conclude that the essence of strategic wisdom lies either in soliciting the support of one or another camp, or else in playing one camp off against the other with a view to gaining the maximum concessions and rewards from both. This has, up until now, marked the line of every main faction of the Palestinian movement, whatever the tactical differences over which superpower to side with and how. Military actions are conceived of primarily as a means to strengthen the diplomatic bargaining position of the PLO.

The opposite view holds that the interimperialist conflict and the deeply-rooted international crisis, while presenting a complicated situation for the revolutionary forces, provide as well important opportunities for revolutionary struggle and revolutionary victories. The contradictions between the hostile blocs can either be “taken advantage of” as would a sly merchant in the marketplace, dickering and bickering over price and terms of sale; or by using the opportunity presented to advance specifically revolutionary interests – interests which can perhaps make use of fissures and cracks, but which are fundamentally opposed to and by both the Soviet Union and the United States.

In this latter approach, launching revolutionary war at the earliest opportunity is the highest priority, and diplomacy must be seen as subordinate and auxiliary to that war. It is this orientation that forms the framework for the following critical analysis of the military line and practice of the PLO.

The impotence of the overall PLO strategy since the 1970s – “emphasizing diplomacy” in the quest for a territorial

compromise and relying on patrons and false friends in both imperialist blocs and within the Arab world (and the paralysis and passivity which this strategy imposed, both militarily and politically) was never more starkly evident than in the long period of the buildup to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon on June 6, 1982.

The invasion had been planned for over a year. During the first half of 1982, it was public knowledge that the Israelis were planning a “major military initiative” in southern Lebanon. The key objectives of the operation were known well in advance.*

The PLO leadership was itself of course keenly aware of the coming blow, and regularly exposed the step-by-step preparations by the Zionists as they occurred. The chief question was when the Israelis would strike and, once they did strike, how far they would attempt to take their drive, or be able to take it.

But militarily, it seemed the PLO had no alternative [given its overall strategy] but to “dig in” deeper and reinforce its static defenses in southern Lebanon, of which the most prominent symbol perhaps was its fortress at Beaufort Castle. Although the PLO military leaders knew that to take on a concerted drive by the Israeli military machine alone in a fixed-defense frontal battle would be to fall into a strategic trap, the PLO diplomatic and political strategy dictated, on the one hand, strict adherence to the Habib ceasefire (negotiated in the summer of 1981 in the aftermath of the so-called “Syrian missile crisis”) and on the other hand, reliance on diplomacy to head off the Israeli assault.

Arafat, in his March 30th Land Day speech in Beirut, said, “I tell Begin, Sharon and Shamir and their whole military junta that we know that the force with which they strike us is nothing but an expression of American strength moving in accordance with orders from the White House.” But the conclusion Arafat draws is not that U.S. imperialism must therefore be faced as an implacable enemy to the Palestinian cause and as the chief backer of Israel, but the opposite: if the U.S. pulls Israel’s strings, then logic dictates lobbying for a change of policy at the White House. Hence:

“I say these words so that Reagan will hear me before Begin, I tell them there will be no peace, stability, or a solution in the area, by leaping over the rights of the Palestinian people. . . .” And on the other side of the coin, it is noteworthy that when Arafat refers to the Palestinians’ allies, his emphasis is on the “powerful states” who have professed themselves PLO supporters: “All the free people of the world, from

*For a pre-invasion survey of press commentary on a probable invasion, see *Revolutionary Worker* No. 147, March 19, 1982, p. 5, “Mid East: Consensus at Gunpoint,” written two and a half months before the invasion: “The U.S. press in recent weeks has been percolating speculation about the possible imminence of a major Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon. . . . It is often difficult to predict particular U.S. tactics in the Middle East, because one must peer through a haze of ambiguous signals generated by the United States’s so-called ‘two-track’ policy aimed at forging a regional strategic consensus. Nevertheless, there is growing evidence that the U.S. may be preparing to give a discreet and ‘deniable’ green light to a major military initiative in Lebanon. . . .”

the nonaligned states to the Islamic and Socialist states, at the head of which is the Soviet Union, they all support us. . . ."

In a number of television interviews in the United States during the first half of 1982 (e.g., an appearance on ABC News *Nightline* on March 16th) Arafat struck the theme of referring to Begin as the "naughty Israeli baby" – appealing to the sentiment in the United States that the Israeli regime ought to be brought down a peg or two. He coupled this with "pragmatic" explanations of how Israeli expansion was very injurious to the foreign policy interests of the United States.

The Middle East magazine, in its May 1982 edition, described PLO strategy in these terms:

"There is an air of realism about the current round of PLO diplomacy, whose aim can be summarized as 'a state at almost any price in the short term.' One prominent Palestinian commentator admitted that the PLO might even accept a version of the Jordanian option [a general term covering a variety of schemes envisioning Palestinian "autonomy" under Jordanian sovereignty and control – *ed.*], in the expectation that King Hussein could not keep control of the West Bank indefinitely. . . ."

But the question of the hour was not what territorial plan the PLO would or would not accept; instead, the Israeli army, encouraged by the United States, was preparing to wipe out the PLO's only base areas in Lebanon. One is confronted with a persistent contradiction in studying the problems facing the Palestinian resistance over the last 15 years. The problems have been and are formidable. But experience has shown that strategies adopted because they seemed to offer "pragmatic" or "realistic" ways of avoiding these formidable difficulties have actually just ended up backing away from the contradiction they are supposed to address: until finally the contradiction is resolved on unfavorable terrain and with unfavorable results.

Once encircled in Beirut by the Israeli army, the PLO decision to surrender and leave the city under the "protection" of a U.S. imperialist-led multinational task force, rather than fighting the Battle of Beirut through, is another example of the same "pragmatic" logic, and a clear illustration of how this logic leads, not only to capitulation, but (in this case at least) to the sacrifice of even those interests supposedly being safeguarded by a "coolly realistic" policy. The argument of the PLO leadership and the revisionists that to fight on in Beirut would have been tantamount to an "insane" act of "revolutionary suicide" is a slander – a slander first of all, it might be noted, on thousands of guerrillas in Beirut who argued for rejecting the imperialist-imposed surrender agreement, and beyond that on the hundreds of thousands of Beirut civilians who resisted over a month of some of the most intense bombardment any city has ever been subjected to in the Israeli effort to drive them out and strip the guerrilla positions.

There were compelling political reasons to refuse an imperialist-brokered surrender. That is the overriding point.

The "humanitarian" argument – that by surrendering, the PLO leadership "spared the lives of many innocent civilians" – is disingenuous nonsense. The fruit of that argument was eaten by the Palestinians at Shatila and Sabra: and those massacres were grimly predictable, and had been predicted, once the armed organizations that had protected them had been shipped off to the deserts in Jordan and Tunisia. Furthermore, by the time the surrender was negotiated, the Israeli saturation bombing had already reached the point of diminishing returns. Among the guerrillas, dug-in in their fortified and virtually bomb-proof shelters, casualties had been relatively low. The military situation had reached its starkest point: either the PLO surrendered, or the Israelis would be finally forced to go in against 15,000 entrenched guerrillas and take them on in urban warfare (or else maintain the siege indefinitely which, by virtue of exposing their inability to take the battle to the heart of the city, would have been an untenable course for the Israelis).

Would it have been an "insane" act of "revolutionary suicide" for the PLO leadership to have issued a defiant manifesto, explained to the people of the world the stakes involved in the Battle of Beirut, and organized the Battle of Beirut in the spirit of the Battle of Karameh? No. This was, in fact, the course *required* by the political circumstances, and the course many in the Palestinian ranks advocated. Militarily, it is *not* clear what the outcome would have been. What *is* clear is that the job for the Israeli army would have been formidable, long, and costly; both Israel and the United States were desperately trying to avoid having to send in the Israeli army (IDF) to fight house-to-house in the capital. The limited incursion made by the IDF into Beirut, when it appeared briefly that the assault was in progress, was a notable failure. Morale of the IDF forces was not very high. Israeli public opinion was strongly against a block-by-block fight. In short, though the principal argument for waging the Battle of Beirut "to the end" is political, the military situation and the necessity facing the Israelis and the United States were part of this picture and also afforded ground to support such a course. Despite the many well-known advantages of the Israeli Defense Forces, an urban war against a dug-in PLO in Beirut would have neutralized many of those military advantages and put them at a sharp political disadvantage.

An article on the defense of Beirut appearing in *Race & Class* (Vol. XXIV, No. 4, 1983), argues that

"The Israelis did, in fact, attempt to take the city many times, and failed in the face of a determined resistance. After every failure, they escalated their bombing to soften that resistance. With every escalation, steps were taken within the city to stiffen resistance. As resistance grew and solidified, the

*The Battle of Karameh erupted in March 1968, when a small band of fedayeen successfully defended the guerrilla base at Karameh, Jordan against a vastly superior Israeli force. It can be said without exaggeration that Karameh marked a phoenix-like rebirth of the Palestinian cause, and galvanized youth throughout the Arab world.

Israelis found an increase in the norms used to measure the possible effects of an assault on the city: estimated (Israeli) casualties, estimated loss of military hardware, estimated duration of battle. The strength of the resistance was the major factor in inhibiting the Israeli entry in Beirut."

In one of the most detailed documentary accounts of the Battle of Beirut that have appeared to date, Michael Jansen points out that a major objective of the Israeli siege and bombardment – forcing a mass exodus of the civilian population of West Beirut – never was achieved. "By the third week of July, the Israelis saw that their siege strategy had not succeeded because the vast majority of Lebanese civilians would not leave. . . . The Israelis secured the Palestinian evacuation they demanded, but they did not defeat the city they besieged." There is very little evidence that can be adduced to show that either the civilian population of West Beirut or the rank-and-file PLO fighters demanded or supported a policy of PLO evacuation "in order to spare innocent lives." Rather, there were numerous reports of fedayeen openly expressing opposition to any policy of surrender and arguing for an all-out struggle. Political support for the Palestinian cause in West Beirut was, if anything, stronger at the end of the siege than it was before June 6th – as the mass demonstrations during the evacuations testify to. Moreover, many Palestinians and revolutionary Lebanese were acutely aware that the departure of the fedayeen and the other popular militias from the city would not bring an end to the reign of terror, but merely usher in a new stage. The massacres at Shatila and Sabra, where the camps were stripped of their armed security and left exposed to the depredations of the fascist Phalange without defense, came as no surprise to most of the Palestinians who were left behind after the evacuation – and it certainly should not have come as a surprise to the PLO leadership. Even supposing the Israelis had attempted to storm the city in the face of implacable fedayeen defiance and had gone ahead, regardless of the cost, with the task of extirpating all resistance – far better such a struggle than the voluntary retreat of an intact armed force of almost 15,000 fighters and the subsequent appalling massacre of defenseless men, women and children.

The prospects for a successful defense of Beirut were, of course, debatable at the time and are so in retrospect. At any rate, the vast superiority of Israeli arms and firepower is not at issue. But even if the position of the Palestinians and their allies within Beirut were judged to be "hopeless," a tenacious last-ditch struggle still would have been preferable to the course the PLO leadership eventually chose – that of seeking a political accommodation with U.S. imperialism that went hand in hand with military capitulation. As the *Revolutionary Worker* (No. 166) observed on August 13, 1982:

"Similar junctures have confronted revolutionary movements in the past, and certainly will in the future. It is quite relevant and timely to recall the insight of Lenin in a discussion of Marx's attitude

toward the Paris Commune: 'Marx was also able to appreciate that there are moments in history when a desperate struggle of the masses even in a hopeless cause is essential for the further schooling of these masses and their training for the next struggle.'

"It's hard to say this, but it has to be said. Such struggle would not necessarily or automatically be better than any retreat, as a matter of abstract principle. But it would certainly be better than an 'arrangement' that amounts to political capitulation to imperialism. It would be better first of all from the standpoint of advancing the struggle of the proletariat and the oppressed internationally – and better as well for the Palestinian struggle."

It is quite probable that had such a stand been taken at Beirut, the galvanizing political effect on the masses throughout the Arab world and beyond would have drastically altered the political climate – conceivably even triggering a new upsurge and endangering more than one Arab government. And in spite of the undeniable losses which would have resulted from a fight of this kind in Beirut, such a stand would have put revolutionary forces among the Palestinians in a much better position to go forward to wage the kind of struggle required for Palestinian liberation – a struggle whose basis and broad outlines I would now like to explore.

The Basic Principles document emphasizes that

"... the armed struggle for power, though it will assume different forms and pass through different stages depending on the different conditions in the various countries, must in all cases involve, mobilize and rely on the broad masses under the leadership of the proletariat and its party. The party must undertake to lead in creating and directing the armed forces of the popular masses themselves as the principal factor in waging revolutionary warfare – and also in conducting political work within the reactionary armed forces to disintegrate them and to win over as many of their soldiers as possible during the course of the revolutionary struggle – and guide the armed struggle of the masses to final victory. And the party must lead in really and ever more thoroughly developing the revolutionary war as a war of the masses, in which they are trained ideologically and politically and on this basis organizationally and prepared to exercise political power when it is won through the mass armed struggle. . . ."

"... whether or under what conditions the armed struggle should proceed from the countryside to the cities or the other way around must be determined by concrete analysis, study and summation of experience. But in all cases the proletarian party should conduct its work and develop the mass struggle with the concrete aim of taking up armed struggle

as the main form of struggle at the earliest possible time; it should place great importance on revolutionary work and the role of armed struggle in the countryside, even when its center of gravity is correctly in the cities; it should prepare for complex and protracted armed struggle and be ready for surprise attacks by the reactionaries, including imperialist intervention; and it should most fundamentally be guided by and consistently apply the principle that the armed struggle must involve, rely on and mobilize the broad masses under the party's leadership and that the revolutionary war must really be a war of the masses. . . ." (*Basic Principles*, p. 33, para. 165; p. 41, para. 214, respectively.)

Is it possible to wage revolutionary war against Israel? Mao Tsetung observed that

"In his endeavor to win a war, a military man cannot overstep the limitations imposed by the material conditions; within these limitations, however, he can and must strive for victory. The stage of action for a military man is built upon objective material conditions, but on that stage he can direct the performance of many a drama, full of sound and color, power and grandeur." (Mao, *Selected Works* [Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967], pp. 190-91.)

It is past time to debar the policy of defeatism, of resigned passivity, of gambling that whatever imperialist bloc triumphs in the next world war will for some reason extend "justice to the Palestinians." The policy of revolutionary initiative, based on the understanding that just such profound upheavals as might open up the road to the overthrow of Israel and imperialism's other bulwarks in the Middle East are already in a process of inexorable development, demands seizing the initiative *where possible* and in the *forms possible* today – and this includes forms of revolutionary armed struggle there.

Although the Israeli army has occupied much of Lebanon and dispersed the PLO military forces from Beirut and southern Lebanon, and the Palestinians have suffered sharp setbacks, this does not rule out mobilizing the masses under a revolutionary banner and fighting for the strategic orientation of waging revolutionary war as a war of the masses.

It is a great historical irony that has been pointed out before in other contexts, that it is when the actual opportunities for revolution are in many ways most imminent and striking that the tide of capitulationism and of temptation to dismiss revolution as an "unrealizable pipe dream" runs strongest. This isn't necessarily very surprising, for it is hardly ever the case that historic opportunities present themselves without being accompanied by huge difficulties, dangers and hardships. The point is not that there is a fully developed revolutionary situation presenting itself to the Palestinians; however, despite apparent successes by the

Israelis of late, there are in many ways new and real opportunities.

Israel's military strength, real as it is, cannot hide or negate its fundamental weakness: it is a small settler state surrounded by hundreds of millions of potentially revolutionary masses. And increasingly it is not only surrounded, but within its own borders harbors one million Palestinians (as well as several hundred thousand other Arabs) whom it oppresses and enslaves. Meanwhile, the fabric of its own society decays and rots faster than even the partial admission of the Zionist and imperialist presses suggest. The introduction of the U.S.-led "multinational peacekeeping force" in Lebanon after the invasion has many ramifications; one of them is that not only is Israel spread thinner than ever before, but the United States is far more likely to become directly embroiled in the next major war in the Middle East – in other words, both Israel and the United States, despite the many ways in which the invasion did strengthen their position, are in a *more exposed* position in certain respects than before June 1982. It is not the intention here to blow this fact out of proportion; nevertheless, it is not insignificant. (For example, as has already been demonstrated, it is much easier to mount guerrilla operations against the Israeli army in southern Lebanon than it ever has been on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, where topography and other factors weigh heavily in favor of the Israelis.)

There is a dialectical relationship between the Palestinian population "in Israeli-occupied territory" and that population "in diaspora." Israel has historically sought to drive the Palestinians from their homes in the service of its expansion to preserve its homogeneity, build a Jewish labor force and avoid the creation of a dispossessed revolutionary enemy festering from within. And yet, although Israel has driven and continues to drive the Palestinians and the broader Arab population out, this policy has been less and less successful; at the same time Israel has continued to expand and to swallow up more and more territory, absorbing more and more Arabs. Many Arabs who were driven out from beyond the boundaries of 1948 Israel settled on the West Bank of the Jordan River, and thus found themselves in diaspora; but in 1967, Israel took over the West Bank, and now they are once again in Israeli-occupied territory. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled Israeli occupation to refugee camps in Lebanon; today many of these half-a-million Palestinians are once again under Israeli occupation. In earlier stages of Israel's development, although there have always been large numbers of Arabs within Israeli borders, one could describe the strategy of driving out the Arabs and the preservation of Israel as an homogeneous monolith as relatively successful. But by the 1980s, including the occupied territories, the ratio was 3.2 million Jews to 2 million Arabs. The Arab minority within the 1948 borders was (and is) multiplying more rapidly than the Jewish population, and the Zionists have not been mainly successful in driving the Palestinians out of the newly seized territories. Israel's intensive settlement program on the West Bank has placed 30,000 Jews there; meanwhile there are over 700,000 Palestinians on the West Bank alone,

with 100,000 in occupied Jerusalem and 500,000 in Gaza.

The Israelis are stepping up their terror against the West Bankers in an effort to drive many more of them out and thoroughly cow those who remain: breaking the back of the PLO and the dismantling of all symbolic Palestinian authority on the West Bank have gone hand in hand.

The Israelis are also accelerating their settlement policy. But as the settlements expand, they become far more vulnerable to any threat to "stability." Now, not only fanatical zealots are being encouraged to settle there, but condominium buyers and investors as well, whose main preoccupation is with a profitable and peaceful environment.

Moreover, the expansion has already hurtled past the previous occupied zones; however long the Israeli army may occupy Lebanon (and Israel cannot decide this question on its own), there are already clear indications that it is planning to annex Lebanon south of the Litani River, and to integrate it economically and politically (if not by formal annexation) as part of Greater Israel. And so Israel now has more hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and other Arab peoples under its rule; and, as the spiraling process continues, it is trying to drive them out, too, employing hideous methods of terror.

But with each cyclical reiteration of this expansionism, the Israelis are undermining and losing that "special quality" of Zionism: internal cohesion, its relative success in "locking the enemy out," beyond the borders, out of sight and – for the greater part of the civilian population, for the greater part of the time – relatively "out of mind," enough so to preserve social stability. The war in Lebanon and the protracted occupation are a tremendous drain on Israel's crisis-ridden economy. The Jewish emigration crisis has not abated and may well intensify. While the invasion of Lebanon was partly intended to help hammer out a "consensus" among various Arab states and reactionary forces that would be amenable to U.S. and Israeli strategic interests, there has been no such development. Instead, there are new cracks and fissures – all of which is potentially favorable to revolutionary forces, including to their ability to wage the armed struggle.

None of this, of course, denies that Israel may be able to alleviate and even partially reverse some of these trends in the short run through creating "new facts" through military might. Certainly, Israel will not "spontaneously" break apart, nor will the U.S. cease to prop it up and support it economically and militarily. The direct presence of the U.S. Marines and the multinational force in Lebanon today also further complicates the task of the revolutionary forces (although in some regards, given a rectified political line and practice, this too could be transformed into a "favorable" factor). All in all, while it obviously won't do to underestimate or ignore the strength of Zionism and the strong backing it has from U.S. imperialism, it is clearly preposterous to suggest that Zionism is a dynamo. Rather, its weaknesses are very sharp, and a revolutionary struggle can exploit those weaknesses.

It seems clear, for example, that there are possibilities for guerrilla warfare in Lebanon (some of which are already being explored in practice) and for reinvigorating the alliance

between revolutionary Palestinians and Lebanese Moslems. For this activity to become meaningful, it must from the outset repudiate any Syrian "patronage" and defy Syrian dictates. Syria, the Soviet Union's chief client state in the region, has proven exceedingly obdurate in clinging to its strategic position within Lebanon; while war between Syria and Israel is possible at any time, it is also possible that the partition of Lebanon may persist indefinitely. Either situation will present both pitfalls and opportunities. Syria, despite its sometime and current pose as a defender, even a "radical" defender, of Palestinian rights, and its campaign to hound Arafat and the Al-Fatah "moderates" from power in favor of actions more pliant to their own dictates, is yet another accursed burden on the backs of the Palestinian people. While contradictions between Syria and various other parties may have to be played upon, the Assad regime in Syria (veterans of the slaughter of the Palestinian-Moslem insurgency in Lebanon in 1976, among other noble campaigns) is a ruthless enemy, and no "liberation movement" dominated by Syria or its cats-paw will amount to anything more than a puppet front and cannonfodder for sundry Levantine and Soviet power plays.

King Hussein of Jordan, who rules over a large Palestinian population and was slated in the now moribund "Reagan Plan" to become the "guardian of the Palestinians" in perpetuity, is clearly a target of the revolution – and *not* a "vacillating ally" or a "legitimate spokesman" for the Palestinian people.

There has never been a coherent, internal guerrilla war within the Israeli occupied zones. But although numerous objective problems have confronted attempts to wage war against Zionism from within the occupied territories in the past, it is highly likely that even now an objective basis for such a phenomenon to develop under revolutionary leadership exists. The political temperature of the West Bank/Gaza Strip area was taken in the March-April 1982 uprisings. It is true that the repression in these zones and the defeat of the PLO in Lebanon are likely to demoralize certain strata, and induce a small number of corrupt elements to betray the Palestinian people and join such fascist organizations as the Village Leagues. Israel is trying to force the Palestinian people to accept subjugation and extinguish even the hope of liberation. But, as Mao Tsetung put it in a different context in his work, *On Protracted War*, "... the question of compromise has its social roots, and as long as these roots exist the question is bound to arise. But compromise will not avail." Mao goes on to make a point about the nature of the Japanese aggressor's occupation of China in the 1930s, which is worth noting when considering the impact of the latest Israeli atrocities on Palestinian morale and fighting spirit:

"At the very beginning of the War of Resistance, we estimated that the time would come when an atmosphere conducive to compromise would arise, in other words, that after occupying northern China, Kiangsu and Chekiang, Japan would probably resort to the scheme of inducing China to capitulate. True

enough, she did resort to the scheme, but the crisis soon passed, one reason being that the enemy everywhere pursued a barbarous policy and practiced naked plunder. . . . The enemy's predatory policy, the policy of subjugating China, has two aspects, the material and the spiritual, both of which are being applied universally to all Chinese. . . ." (Mao, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 129.)

I think that Mao's observations can be applied to assessing the political results of this whole gamut of latest Israeli moves. Although capitulationism has been embraced by the PLO leadership of all factions, and capitulationist and compromise currents and moods of demoralization will not be absent, overall and probably overwhelmingly we will see the crystallization of a "mood of absolute hostility."

Another question which deserves serious study is the potential for establishing revolutionary base areas or "contested guerrilla zones," both inside and outside the Israeli-occupied zones. This latter possibility raises, in turn, the question of struggle against the Arab regimes. The rightist conception of "base areas," which views them only in terms of deals struck with one or another local ruler (e.g., Jordan before Black September) or as "state within a state" rather than a staging ground for revolutionary war (to wit, the PLO infrastructure in Lebanon before June 1982), must be opposed. In mobilizing the real allies and reserves of the Palestinians – most immediately, the revolutionary Arab people – the contradiction within the Arab regimes must inevitably become still sharper. Experience shows that the pro-U.S. and pro-Soviet regimes of the region do not and will not "stand on one side" while the Palestinians and the Israelis "settle their differences"; still less do they stand on the side of Palestinian liberation. Instead, they collaborate with the U.S. and Israel against the Palestinians at every opportunity (while sometimes seeking, in a "friendly" guise, to forcefully bring the Palestinian struggle under their control to serve their reactionary aims and state interests).

But it does not seem correct to attempt to impose a series of "first comes this and then comes that" stages on the struggle, especially in what must be a period of struggle against a long period of passivity, stasis, and the suppression of mass initiative. While paying full attention to the limitations imposed by the current balance of forces and the importance of developments in the overall international situation, full play must be given to the initiative and the conscious dynamic role of man. Mao Tsetung wrote in *On Protracted War* that,

"By conscious dynamic role we mean conscious action and effort. . . . The initiative here means an army's freedom of action as distinguished from an enforced loss of freedom. Freedom of action is the very life of an army and, once it is lost, the army is close to defeat or destruction. The disarming of a soldier is the result of his losing freedom of action through being forced into a passive position. The same is true of the defeat of an army. For this reason

both sides in war do all they can to gain the initiative and avoid passivity. . . . [I]nitiative or passivity is inseparable from superiority or inferiority in the capacity to wage war. Consequently it is also inseparable from the correctness or incorrectness of the subjective direction of war." (pp. 161-62)

The year and a half since the Battle of Beirut has demonstrated no shortage of forces eager to exploit the opportunities for military action and initiative against the Israelis, their imperialist patrons (i.e., the "multinational peacekeeping force"), and various rightist militias and governmental armies. These actions have, on the other hand, often tended to either be directly in the service of Syrian designs (and behind them, the Soviet Union) or else have often (whatever the intentions of those involved) objectively formed part of a struggle to position one's forces for what are viewed as inevitable imperialist-sponsored negotiations on the exact way in which Lebanon gets carved up. In such a situation, revolutionaries must not only criticize erroneous lines of past and present, but at the least sketch out what a revolutionary military line might look like.

Of course, underlying the need for a revolutionary military strategy lies the need for a proletarian class leadership, a proletarian revolutionary party, in the Palestinian struggle. This is an element which has never existed in that struggle and is fundamental to the success of any movement. Without such a party it is impossible to conceive of victory in the first, new-democratic, stage of the revolution, nor of laying the basis for the further advance of the revolution to the socialist stage. A party with an internationalist orientation and a proletarian ideological and political line is essential for steering through the very complex shoals of developments in the Middle East. Clearly, in these circumstances, a correct political line is the fundamental basis for developing a correct military line. There is no lack of trained, heroic fighters and even skilled commanders (though many have been trained only in bourgeois methods of warfare). What is lacking is the correct orientation to guide a revolutionary strategy.

In the present situation, it is necessary to bring into being an independent revolutionary Palestinian front. This front will have as its explicit strategic goal the military overthrow of the Zionist settler state, and its tactics – while varied – will be dialectically linked to that end. Such a front will take responsibility for organizing the armed struggle as a revolutionary war of the masses, and will hoist a banner designed to attract the broad number of revolutionaries in the Middle East who are rejecting the bankrupt and opportunist line that seeks to expel one powerful slavemaster by selling oneself to a rival overlord.

We have already pointed to some of the opportunities and some of the dangers likely to face such a front. But let us suppose, for example, that such a force were to initiate an armed campaign in the West Bank with the immediate aim of turning it into what Mao Tsetung called a "contested guerrilla

zone." Let us say straight up: *The political impact of coherent and on-going armed guerrilla activity in these zones, even if initially on a fairly low level, would be enormous.* The crucial thing would be that such activity be clearly marked politically as the expression of an independent popular revolutionary Palestinian front – and not that of some cats-paw in thrall to Syria (or some other power).

Exactly how such an armed struggle could then progress from guerrilla warfare to higher forms of war, including mobile warfare, and eventually go over to the strategic offensive is, of course, not predictable at this time. But it is likely that the opportunities for such progression would be marked by great leaps and changes, and not be gradual, on account of the various interconnected contradictions in the whole area and its general explosiveness. The possibility of revolutionary base areas being developed also exists, even though in the main up until now that notion has been linked with various schemes for compromise and capitulation to "buy space." In any case, the key link to grasp to prepare for all such opportunities, twists and turns, would be initiating the popular armed struggle under revolutionary leadership.

Such an initiative could seriously weaken the Israeli ability to act as gendarme for the U.S. regionally, particularly in Lebanon but elsewhere too. It would of necessity raise the question among the masses in the Middle East – who look toward the struggle of the Palestinian people and support it – of taking revolutionary action independent of either imperialist bloc. It would force the Arab governments to further expose their hand vis-à-vis the Palestinian struggle – this would be particularly true for Jordan with its 1.5 million Palestinians, or Kuwait with its 300,000 – and perhaps set off answering revolutionary upsurges in some of those countries. Additionally, while it would undoubtedly strengthen the settler-state siege mentality within Israel, it would simultaneously exacerbate the tensions of an artificial social fabric now stretched increasingly thin – that is, Israel itself would further polarize.

Another scenario: none other than Henry Kissinger recently suggested that either the U.S. must field forces in Lebanon adequate to the task it has taken on (i.e., installing a new regime), or else clear out altogether. Should the U.S. actually attempt to fully "secure" Lebanon with a huge infusion of U.S. troops and an aggressive military campaign beyond the environs of Beirut, and should a revolutionary popular front launch a people's war against it, a whole range of unpredictable developments and outcomes presents itself. In such an event, the revolutionary forces should take the stance of luring the imperialist force "in deep" and engaging it on terms politically and militarily favorable to the revolutionaries. If the U.S. takes this course, they lay themselves open to an indisputable fact: such aggression can meet very determined resistance. How, on what basis, and under what leadership this resistance is carried out may prove to hold fateful implications for the prospects of revolution in the Middle East.

Were the U.S. to launch such an invasion, a people's war against the U.S. as the main enemy – one which included

resistance to attempts to bring it under the thumb of Syrian (and ultimately Soviet) interests and was fought with a determination to oust the U.S. and not just win a bigger cut of the pie at the partition table – would have galvanic effects internationally. This would doubtless be a difficult and tactically delicate task, one which would call for a degree of unity (including military unity) with a shifting range of forces, including some being utilized by different imperialists; but such a task (and such an achievement) is hardly unheard of in the annals of revolutionary war. The *Basic Principles* document notes that at times

"it may be necessary and correct not only to direct the spearhead of the struggle against that particular power (or bloc) but even to ally with or at least seek to neutralize – 'put to the side' – certain domestic reactionary forces who are dependent on and serve other imperialists (in particular the rival imperialist bloc). But in such cases it is all the more important to expose the class nature and interests and imperialist connections of such forces; to resolutely combat and defeat their treachery in the struggle and particularly their attempts to suppress the masses; to insist on and establish through struggle the leading role of the proletariat and the independence and initiative of its party; to continue the policy of refusing to join with or support any imperialist power or bloc; and to keep clearly in mind and lead the proletariat and popular masses toward the goal of victory not only in the immediate stage (or sub-stage) but in the anti-imperialist democratic revolution as a whole, and through that to the socialist revolution, in unity with the international proletariat and the worldwide struggle." (*Basic Principles*, p. 43, para. 227)

Flowing from these or similar hypothetical situations – which are hardly far removed from reality, or utterly impracticable – one can envision not only further stresses and cracks in Israeli power, but also the possibility of the revolutionary flames spreading to countries such as Jordan or Syria (which only last year saw the government drown a struggle in the city of Hama in blood, and which is far from as awesomely powerful and steady as it likes to make out), and beyond that reverberations and shockwaves with unimaginable importance on a world scale.

Again, however, all this hinges on a program of a genuinely revolutionary force launching a protracted people's war against the Zionist state and the imperialist power(s) standing behind it (and even "opposed" to it – *vide* the Soviet Union). Such a program is bound to find adherents – indeed, large numbers of potential adherents to such a program no doubt already exist. Sooner or later, there must be a remobilization of the revolutionary forces under a clear revolutionary banner – and the sooner the better. Operations should be conducted both in the cities and in the countryside, both in Lebanon and in the West Bank and Gaza, both against Syria and against the U.S./NATO and Israeli forces.

Such a vigorous, revolutionary, and independent stance will certainly attract support; such a strategy is far more "realistic" and frankly far more appealing than the other programs people are confronted with: consigning the future of the Palestinian people to King Hussein, for example, or to Assad of Syria, or bargaining with U.S. or Soviet imperialism, or lobbying with "sympathetic" governments in Europe, or relying on "Saudi influence." These and other such reactionary fantasies have been seriously exposed among broad sections of masses, including the new generation of fighters now ready to take up arms. Those who condemn a strategy of independent revolutionary action and who sneer at the possibility that the masses might take to the field with guns representing their own historical interests may be surprised at how quickly such "unfortunate" developments may materialize. The difficulties and the obstacles, it is true, are manifold. This letter does not claim to thoroughly address them all, nor even to list them all. But the situation is not entirely composed of "difficulties." To assume that is merely to turn every difficulty into an excuse. In fact, the present situation is favorable despite the difficulties. The decisive question is not whether there is opportunity to wage revolutionary war; it is not whether there are forces willing to fight such a war or capable of being won over to a revolutionary program. The decisive question is leadership and initiative.

The banner of the independent revolutionary Palestinian front, the banner of the popular revolutionary war, must be raised; those who would rally to such a flag cannot do so until it is held aloft.

Doubtless many will object to all this as idealism; reliance on Arab governments (and beyond that their imperialist patrons) is a road with a powerful objective basis, and such a trend cannot expect to take the movement by storm. On the other hand, the entire course of the Palestinian movement since 1967 makes clear the urgent necessity for such a trend to take the field and the objective basis for significant growth and impact. A review – necessarily brief – of the development of the military line and practice of the Palestinian revolution brings this out in sharp relief.

During the period following the 1967 war, when King Hussein was too weak to attempt to drive the Palestinians from Jordan, there was sharp struggle within the fedayeen movement on whether to push ahead with a revolutionary struggle against Hussein. Fatah, led by Arafat, claimed that, in a certain sense, the problem of a Palestinian "liberated zone" or base area was solved because Hussein "allowed" the guerrillas to operate in Jordan; therefore the correct strategy was to cement the situation that already existed by a policy of cordial relations with Hussein. Fatah argued that it was impermissible to risk what was already in hand – Hussein's permission to operate in Jordan – by undertaking the broader enterprise of overthrowing Hussein.

In 1967-69, however, Hussein was only "allowing" the guerrillas to operate in Jordan because he was too weak to do

otherwise. He could, however, plan to crush the guerrilla movement in Jordan at the first opportunity. So, though obviously a concerted attempt to establish a revolutionary pro-Palestinian regime in Jordan during a period when Hussein was at his weakest would have incurred great risks, would not have been a "sure thing," and might quite probably have provoked Israeli and U.S. intervention – the actual strategy employed, that of passivity, indecision, and attempts at "compromise" and "cooperation" with Hussein yielded the result of Black September: a brutal defeat for the Palestinian cause which had a wide and demoralizing impact throughout the Middle East and the world. Moreover, this result was *predictable*, not at all an unforeseeable "bolt from the blue." (Indeed, Hussein had hunted down and killed a number of fedayeen even before the 1967 war, and Black September itself was preceded by a long series of military clashes.)

Viewed from the standpoint of principle, the problem of whether Jordanian soil could be a secure "base area" for the fight against Israel – which is what the fedayeen in Jordan claimed as their right – could really only be "solved" by the overthrow of Hussein (even then, of course, "solved" should only be understood conditionally and in a relative sense). If Hussein had been overthrown in 1970, not only the Palestinians but the whole world would have been faced with a whole host of new "problems." The United States, even though bogged down in Vietnam at that time, might very well have sent in troops, or Israel might have invaded Jordan to intercede on Hussein's behalf. (Syria and Iraq were at that time both strongly anti-Hussein, and Syria in particular was calling for Hussein's overthrow; thus the possibility did exist, despite the unreliability of the Ba'athist regimes, that a revolutionary regime in Jordan could have forged temporary alliances with some militarily significant neighbors.) Other Arab regimes would have been in a state of shock; though Arab intervention against the new regime would certainly have been possible, it is quite possible also that a revolution in Jordan might have triggered a tremendous mass upsurge in many places. Whether the revolution would have been able to ultimately "consolidate" (in the conditional sense that one should understand the concept of "consolidation" of a revolutionary base area, which can really only ultimately continue through the opposite of consolidation – that is, to strike out and conquer new territory for the revolution) or not, this would have been a tremendous achievement. We don't *know* what "would have happened," and all we can analyze directly is what *did* happen. Though after a certain point historical speculation might become counterproductive, it is important also to open one's mind to the fact that there were many possible outcomes; there was nothing "inevitable" about the triumph of Hussein in 1970-71, and the record shows Hussein himself was well aware of his vulnerability.

But by 1974, official PLO policy (represented by Arafat's speech to the UN) had gone from an erroneous – though in many respects still revolutionary – line, to a consolidated orientation of subordinating the armed struggle to deals and diplomatic maneuvering with one or another imperialist.

The "military solution," the armed overthrow of the Zionist state and the liberation of Palestine by force of arms, was put forth as an unrealizable dream, at least for the foreseeable future; the Palestinian strategy should aim at securing a territorial compromise – such as, for example, the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from the West Bank and the establishment of a Palestinian "mini-state" there – in return for PLO recognition of Israel and a comprehensive peace treaty.

While numerous factors fed into this shift – the reactionary Arab regimes regained their equilibrium, buttressed by the U.S.; the bloody defeat and expulsion of the fedayeen by King Hussein in 1970-71 had a demoralizing effect on the movement; the Arab regimes were willing to reward, politically and financially, a "moderate" Palestinian quest for a negotiated solution while simultaneously refusing to tolerate people's war against Israel from their soil; and difficulties arose in waging armed struggle in the occupied territories – the overriding dynamic at work was the overall shift in the principal contradiction in the world as a whole in the late '60s and early '70s, and the ideological and political limitations of the Palestinian movement in confronting that shift.

Bob Avakian described in an interview on the " '60s-'70s shift" the world context in which these changes were taking place, and which to a large extent determined their direction:

"On a world scale things were changing. U.S. imperialism was suffering defeat in Vietnam and had a need to try to extricate itself from that situation. Yes, the U.S. tried to win, but when it became clear that wasn't really possible without throwing everything in and literally risking everything, the U.S. imperialists tried to extricate themselves, pull back, maneuver and regroup on a world scale the best they could. All that gave openings to the Soviets. . . .

"Under these circumstances a lot of these petty-bourgeois forces and even the bourgeois forces who had the initiative and had a leadership role in many of these struggles tended to gravitate toward the Soviet Union because the Soviet Union offers a seeming short-cut to winning the struggle against U.S. imperialism – which is genuinely powerful. It's not easy to wage a struggle against U.S. imperialism. . . . It's not without tremendous sacrifice, and the Soviets offer a way that seems easier to do that. And not only were some of these petty-bourgeois and bourgeois forces drawn towards that, but also, they're not a monolith either. There are different forces among them, and those who tended more to gravitate toward that illusory but seemingly easier course tended to be strengthened." (*Revolutionary Worker*, No. 149, April 2, 1982, p. 18.)

All this set the context for turning the relationship between the armed struggle and the struggle for power upside down by the early '70s. Of course, it is well known that the PLO has never "laid down the gun"; indeed, since the strategy of political compromise has dominated, PLO armed

forces steadily grew in both size and sophistication up until the June 1982 war in Lebanon. But the role of armed action in PLO strategy was reduced to a subsidiary role, actually an "irritant" designed to constantly remind the Zionists and their imperialist backers that "the Palestinian question will not go away" and that "a negotiated solution is unavoidable." The Fatah policy of "limited confrontation" with Israel entailed the mounting of occasional commando operations and the shelling of the border zones in order to "keep the psychological pressure up" inside Israel. At the same time, not only was no effort made to organize a genuine guerrilla war among the Arab population of the occupied territories, but the opposite course was adopted: the population was encouraged to pursue the electoral path in support of a compromise that would eventually lead to "home rule" on the West Bank. While there may well have been a place for electoral forms of struggle on the West Bank in the political conditions of the 1970s – at the very least, such forms of struggle cannot be mechanically ruled out – the envisioned *end* for which the tactics of electing Palestinian mayors and town councils were employed was, quite explicitly, peaceful compromise. For this reason, all that ran counter to this road was generally excluded from consideration – and certainly from systematic implementation.

The content of the various spectacular commando operations on an international scale that proliferated during the first half of the 1970s, stripped down, amounted to an attempt to "pressure world opinion" to "come to its senses" and "support Palestinian rights." Indeed, implied by the more and more wide-ranging and tenuous nature of these commando operations, whatever their impact on "public opinion," was a dismissal of the need or possibility of actually waging a serious war – the view that the role of the armed struggle was really to "set the table" for negotiations with imperialists, rather than the essential means to power itself.

Meanwhile the PLO embarked on a campaign of regularization in the armed forces during the mid-'70s, pushed forward principally by the Soviets. Yezid Sayigh, in a recent *Journal of Palestinian Studies* article summing up the performance of the Palestinian military, wrote that:

"Israeli Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan expressed his satisfaction that the PLO was 'going regular,' since that gave Israel a better chance to isolate and destroy it. The Palestinian forces had lost the guerrilla's advantages of mobility, flexibility, and relative invisibility, without gaining the advantages of a regular army. The PLO found itself fighting with medium and heavy weapons, mounted on or towed by assorted vehicles, without the necessary levels of firepower, defense, training, organization, and management required by regular units when fighting a technologically and numerically superior enemy." (Vol. XII, No. 4, p. 8)

[Sayigh later remarks that "political and diplomatic objectives were more influential in this matter [i.e., the

regularization of the army – *ed.*] than purely military considerations.”)

Whereas in 1970, Vietnam was being pointed to within the Palestinian Resistance Movement as an example of “people’s war,” by 1975 George Habash of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) was citing the key lesson of Vietnam as “Soviet arms and Soviet support are the road to victory.”

And yet in practice, “Soviet support” has been thrown foursquare behind the line of a so-called “territorial compromise.” The Soviets, who, during the rise of the fedayeen movement, fulminated repeatedly against the line of waging revolutionary armed struggle against Israel, and who only in the mid-’70s reluctantly endorsed the Palestinians’ formal right to self-determination, fit their Middle East strategy into the context of their imperialist rivalry with the United States. Their priority is to bolster Soviet influence and to dislodge American influence in the region in numerous ways. While influencing and “supporting” the moderate leadership of the PLO is consonant with this aim, the overthrow of Israel is not only considered unrealizable, but counterproductive to the Soviets’ main thrust and strategy in the region, a policy of influence-peddling in the Arab states based on a state of “no war/no peace.” At the same time, the key Soviet programmatic goal for the Middle East throughout the ’70s was the convening of a Geneva conference dominated by the U.S. and the Soviets, where the outstanding questions vexing the region, including the most troublesome one of all, the Palestinian question, would be settled with due regard to Soviet interests and Soviet opinions.

As distant as such a “Geneva conference” may have seemed then, and might still seem now, the underlying logic of such a scheme depends on Soviet military, political, and diplomatic gains in the region at the expense of the United States which might force the U.S. to accede in calling such a conference. Thus understood, the concept of a “Geneva conference” is not just a pious abstraction, but a reflection of how the Soviets view political dynamics in the Middle East – as an expression of the balance of forces prevailing between them and the United States regionally, but, more importantly, globally. At different times, the exigencies of Soviet policy might even call for a more “militant” line on the Palestinian question. (For that matter, it has always, while diplomatically and politically giving support to the dominant Fatah faction headed by Arafat, also encouraged pseudo-leftist factions and terrorist grouplets within the PLO as well.) But any Palestinian leadership which pins itself like a tail to the Kremlin donkey isn’t looking for liberation, but for a piece of the action in a postwar Soviet imperium.

The so-called “Rejectionist” view, which purports to reject any settlement with Israel and to adhere to the line of “Revolution Until Victory,” actually represents another variant of the same basic approach to the question of the seizure of power by armed force. The Rejection Front includes the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a pro-Soviet grouping under the leadership of Dr. George Habash; the Ba’athist regimes of Syria and Iraq, which in

many ways typify the essential outlook of Rejectionism; and a few other regimes with close ties to the Soviets, including South Yemen and Libya. Dr. Habash has often stated the seemingly “left” slogan that “the road to the liberation of Palestine lies through the Arab capitals.” This line has served as political justification for “postponing” the actual initiation of a systematic popular armed struggle against Israel, arguing that an essential precondition for the success of that struggle is that the Palestinians unite with their Arab brethren to overthrow the regimes that pose an obstacle to the advance of the cause. Habash even attempted to use this argument as a screen for his support of the evacuation of Beirut, claiming that it would put the revolution in a “better” position since the dispersed fedayeen would be closer to the Arab capitals where the struggle had to be waged. The need for revolution in the Arab countries is, in fact, a strategic question facing the Palestinian liberation struggle, but to pose this as precondition to waging people’s war in earnest against the main enemy – Israel – is an arbitrary fallacy. Furthermore, the PFLP does not actually strive to create revolution against the Arab regimes either. It maintains very cordial relations indeed with the reactionary Ba’athist regimes, receiving substantial subsidies from Iraq; indeed, their conception of “revolution in the Arab world” appears to envision a series of pro-Soviet coups.

Before 1967, Habash was a firm proponent of the Nasserist view that only the mobilization of the coordinated conventional armies of the Arab states in war against Israel could free Palestine. In the mid-’60s, Habash, then leader of the Arab Nationalist Movement, the forerunner of the PFLP, polemicized virulently against the pointlessness of fedayeen tactics; the ANM “saw in Nasser the instrument of Arab unity and the liberation of Palestine through a conventional war he would fight in his own good time.” The essential standpoint of this trend has not changed; but in the conditions of today’s world situation, this outlook interpenetrates with the polarization of the Arab bourgeoisies in the two superpower-led imperialist blocs. Increasingly the hopes for the “liberation of Palestine” are being pinned on a pro-Soviet Arab coalition and the defeat of Israel as a concomitant of a Soviet-bloc victory in the Middle East theater in World War 3. This program is more and more clearly defined in PFLP theory and practice, despite the extensive slinging around of such terms as “Revolution Till Victory,” “People’s War,” “Marxist-Leninist vanguard,” etc.

The decisive juncture of the Lebanese civil war is a prime example of both the bankruptcy of PLO political and military line, and the real opportunities which that line smothered. When in mid-March of 1976 the reactionary Lebanese Army disintegrated and the PLO-LNF forces were shelling the Presidential Palace, with the Maronite pro-Western population in exodus, Syria stepped in to insist on a unilateral ceasefire. On April 16, Arafat and Syrian President Assad “agreed to take a united stand against any resumption of the fighting”; the LNF, too, was reluctantly brought into line. After the momentum of the offensive was broken – and not before – the Syrian Army entered Lebanon in force, in

cooperation with the Phalange, and wheeled around to massacre the Palestinian-LNF forces.

Of course there are no guarantees of any kind. It might be pointed out that even if Syria had not intervened, Israel surely would have. Perhaps so. But if that had been the case, then far better to take on the Israelis under conditions where they are forced in at a time not of their choosing; when the Phalange and Israel's other allies within Lebanon have already been defeated; when the masses are politically mobilized, armed, and flushed with victory – far better to wage the battle under *such* circumstances than to allow the enemy to dictate the time and place of every battle and to call cease-fires at his convenience. Yet it is just this sort of passivity that was elevated to a principle by the PLO, and continued to manifest itself – rather starkly it must be said – right up until the June 1982 invasion and even beyond.

There is, of course, no principle that must be obeyed which calls upon revolutionary movements to take on all enemies at one time. But this business of whether one takes on one's enemies "all at once" or "one by one" is more complicated than it might appear. In the first place, one's enemies *have something to say about it* – what if *they* decide to gang up, disregarding the "principles" of their revolutionary opponent? Much of the problem concerns timing: who decides when the battle will commence – the revolution, or its enemies?

It is one thing to deal with those contradictions, but quite another to sum up: "Israel is militarily too powerful, there's no way to gain a military victory in the foreseeable future, what we have to do is seek a political settlement, a compromise; this means curtailing guerrilla operations, becoming 'respectable' and 'responsible,' showing willingness to abide by international agreements, emphasizing the diplomatic struggle, appealing to 'reasonable' forces in the West on the basis of their own interests, etc."

So who is such a strategy intended to impress? Such a strategy "voluntarily" ties one to a certain set of "realistic" assumptions; the game will be played essentially by the rules of those who "have the power" to "meet the movement's just demands." So it was the PLO that scrupulously adhered to the U.S.-orchestrated ceasefire in Lebanon; the 25,000-man military force in the south was forbidden to launch a single rocket into Israel for months, while PLO diplomats lobbied furiously.

Then, after an exquisite period of "choosing the exact right moment" had gone on for months, with several Israeli mobilizations called and then cancelled, it was the United States that unleashed Israel. The one thing the PLO had started out, in the early '70s, deciding it could not afford to undertake – a military confrontation with Israel – is exactly what it got: but the confrontation was carried out on terms impossible for the PLO and extremely favorable for U.S. imperialism and Zionism. So where, after all, is the "realism," the "hard-headed pragmatism," the "results-oriented approach" here?

The 15 years between the Battle of Karameh and the Battle of Beirut have provided a wealth of experience; this ex-

perience must be critically summed up. The world situation has changed in critical and strategic ways between 1968 and 1983; the significance of these changes, and the new challenges and opportunities inherent in the present and developing situation, must be comprehended and gone into deeply. Views which see only the temporary setbacks suffered by the revolutionary and popular struggles, and which fail to see the fundamental ways in which imperialism continues to weaken and to expose itself to retribution, are wrong and must be repudiated. In the drive of the two imperialist blocs to prepare for world war, they are placing incredible strains on the entire fragile structure of oppression, exploitation, and enslavement that is held in place by Israel on the one hand, and the reactionary Arab regimes lining up with one or the other imperialist giant on the other. Contention between the imperialists exacerbates all the other acute contradictions already manifest in the region. Millions of people have been dragged into the vortex. Each attempt by the imperialists to consolidate their hegemony over a particular area, or to decisively weaken the opposing camp in its "eminent domain," further undermines the whole foundation of imperialist rule. Having soberly assessed the difficulties, it is still quite appropriate to observe that the prospects for revolution are excellent. "The seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds good universally, for China and for all other countries."

The revolutionary struggle of the Palestinian people, at the center of this great churning vortex, may yet play an historic role that will vastly influence the whole world "for decades to come." □

Postscript

The above letter was received before the Syrian-inspired and supported offensive against the Arafat-led faction of the PLO in northern Lebanon. Whatever the announced intentions of the forces conducting this offensive, it is long since obvious that they've become little more than a military and political detachment for Syrian interests and designs in the area – designs which basically amount to subsuming and subordinating both the Palestinian movement and Lebanon itself in a bid to rival Israel as a regional power. The treacherous hand of the Soviets is evident as well in this undertaking.

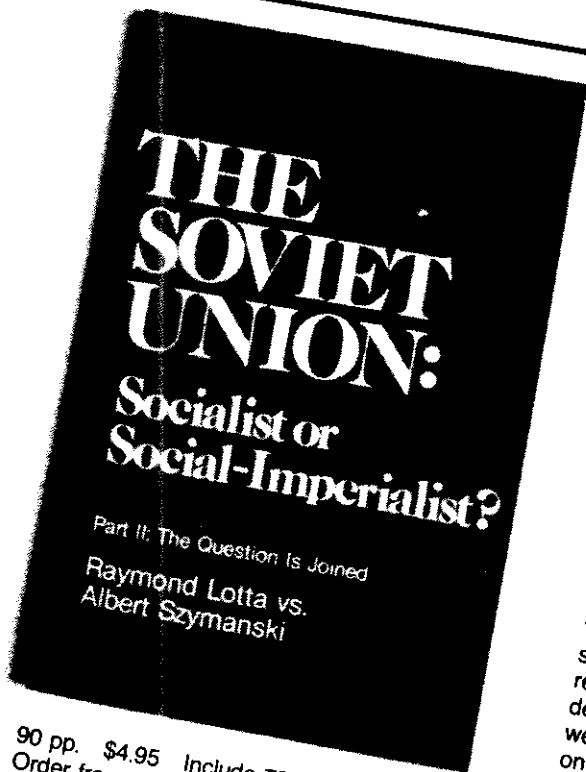
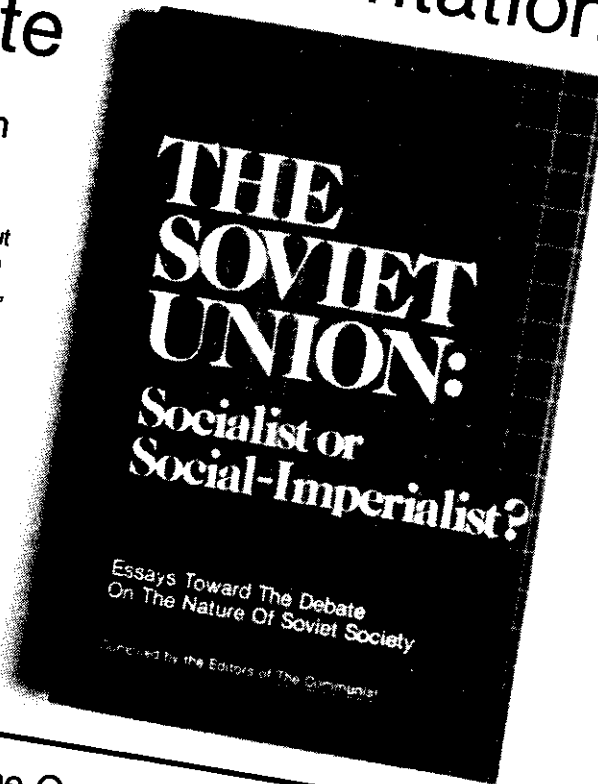
Ironically, some of the leaders involved in this faction apparently fought Syria in 1975-76. Now their pragmatism and search for a great-power patron leads them into the arms of their erstwhile foe, and puts before the Palestinian people still another deadend. Above all this recent episode points up the need, as the letter stresses, not only for a revolutionary military strategy but beyond that (and as a fundamental prerequisite to it) for a genuine proletarian revolutionary party, guided by Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought. As the letter emphasizes – and as recent events point up even more clearly – "A correct political line is the fundamental basis for developing a correct military line. There is no lack of trained, heroic fighters and even skilled commanders (though many have been trained only in bourgeois methods of warfare). What is lacking is the correct orientation to guide a revolutionary strategy." – ed.

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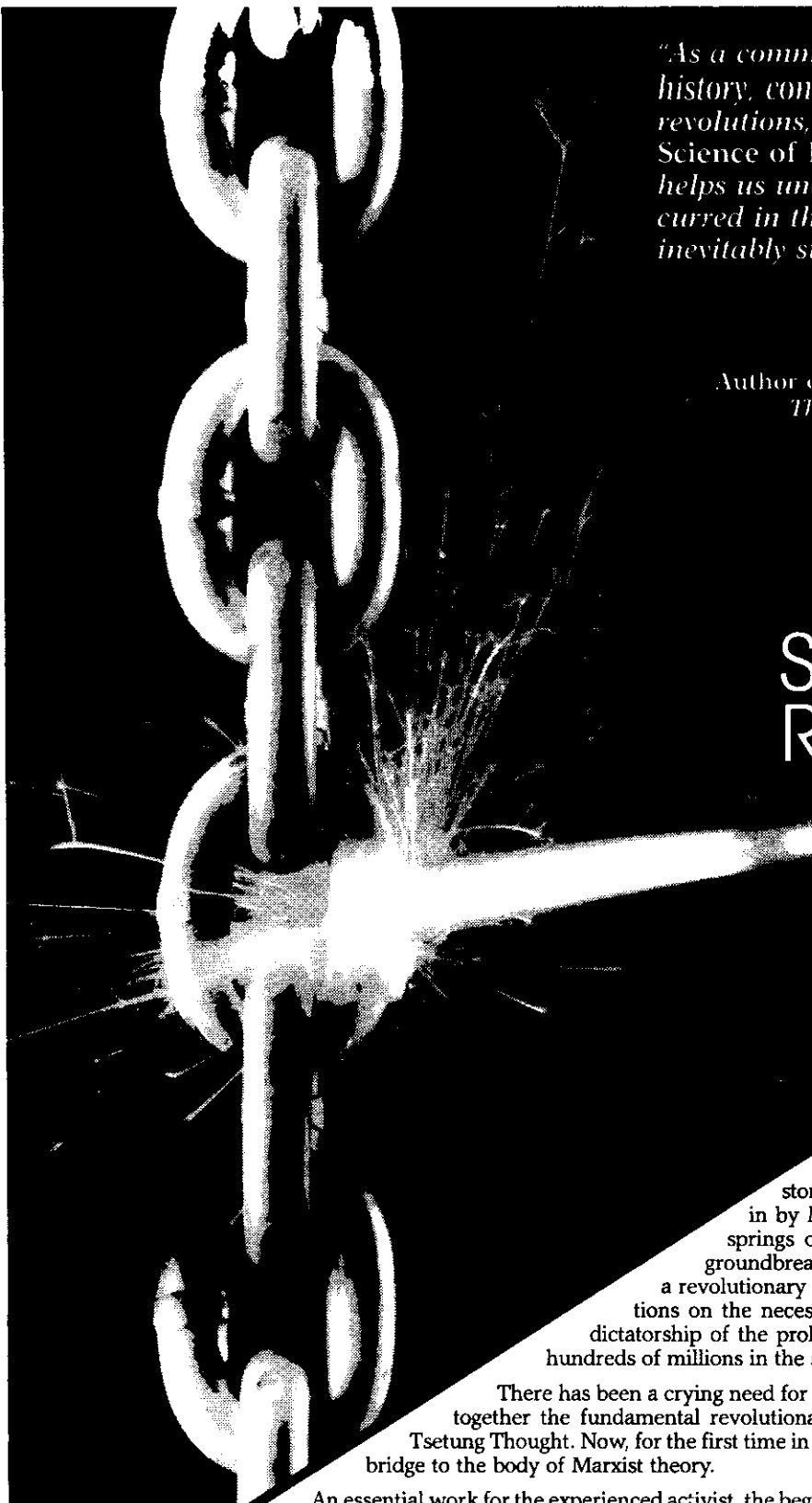
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By Bob Avakian

"We, in our turn, must also understand the specific features and tasks of the new era. Let us not imitate those sorry Marxists of whom Marx said: 'I have sown dragon's teeth and harvested fleas.' "

V.I. Lenin

1983 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the death of Karl Marx. Over this past century and more, Marxism has animated and aroused millions. Few can deny that the political landscape of the world today has been profoundly shaped by the struggles and revolutions Marxism has inspired. On the occasion of this anniversary, Bob Avakian has written a landmark essay, *For A Harvest Of Dragons*. Avakian's previous books include a major study of the thought of Mao Tsetung and an analysis of the events leading up to and the significance of the 1976 coup in China. Here he guides the reader through a synoptic history of Marxism.

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