THERE WILL BE REVOLUTION

But Wishing Won't Make It So

Voluntarism, Metaphysics and the Communist Workers Party

This past October, the Workers Viewpoint Organization, a dogmatist and sectarian organization, became the Communist Workers Party, U.S.A.

On November 5, the ruling class used the KKK, Nazis and the police to carry out a massacre of five CWP members at an anti-Klan rally in Greensboro, North Carolina, to declare "open season" on communists in this country and throw fear into the hearts of all potential rebels.

The Greensboro massacre presents a clear case of right and wrong, and our Party has condemned these brutal murders and mobilized the people against the perpetrators and those who stand behind them. We have also condemned those opportunist sycophants of the bourgeoisie, like the Communist Party Marxist-Leninist and the *Guardian* newspaper, who blame the massacre on what they call the CWP's "ultra-left actions" and provocations."[1]

As the RCP stated immediately following the Greensboro massacre, "The Revolutionary Communist Party once again firmly condemns these brazen, brutal murders by the Klan and the Nazis, and the obvious role of the police and their bosses. The RCP, as has been stated before, has serious, deep disagreements with the Communist Workers Party, who called the demonstration, over many major political questions. These differences have been and will continue to be made clear in our Party's press..."[2] That is the subject of this article.

It is especially important to make these differences clear at present because there has been an unscrupulous lumping together of the RCP and CWP under the heading of "ultra-'leftism'," and the fact that the RCP was one of the few organizations to stand firmly and clearly against the bourgeoisie's attack in the Greensboro massacre has been used to confuse the two organizations in some people's minds.

Further, there is the fact that the CWP offers a sort of distorted mirror-image of the RCP's line. In fact at times this "mirroring" becomes very weird indeed. For instance, following the Mao Memorial Meetings which the RCP held in September 1978 to uphold Mao Tsetung in the face of the revisionist coup in China, the RCP announced the Mao Tsetung Enrollment into the Party. Some months later WVO proclaimed its own Mao Tsetung Enrollment. Or take the recent campaign to stop the railroad of Bob Avakian and free the Mao Tsetung Defendants, during which (as the trial approached and 150 volunteers descended on Washington, D.C.) the RCP put out the slogan, "Turn D.C. Upside Down!" And a little later, CWP puts out a slogan of its "own"—"Turn the Country Upside Down!" Cases of political pickpocketry such as these are indeed shallow, and rather strange as well, guaranteed to create confusion.

Out of the sorry rag-tag crew of "Marxist-Leninist" opportunists in this country, the CWP is the only organization which, first of all, claims to uphold Mao Tsetung and the four revolutionary leaders in China who were thrown down by the revisionist coup in that country and, second, particularly of late, actually talks about making revolution in this country. (This in itself is a sharp commentary on the extremely powerful rightward pull of the present overall situation in the U.S. which conditions and limits the CWP's "leftism.") The CWP's surface similarities to the line of the RCP however, makes a study of it useful, in conjunction with studying the RCP's line (as concentrated in the latest CC Report). An examination of the CWP's line makes it much clearer exactly what our line is and isn't.

Previous analyses by the RCP of the Workers Viewpoint Organization (WVO) have focused on its metaphysics and dogmatism, and have pointed out that this very dogmatism does not exclude—and in fact makes inevitable—*reformism* when the organization engages in political practice among the masses.[3] In recent months, though, while the above still fully applies, an aspect of their line which has come particularly to the fore is *voluntarism*.

What binds together all these forms of error on the part of WVO/CWP, and what has always characterized this organization, is an inability to understand or correctly deal with the unity and contradiction of the subjective and objective factors. They understand neither what the objective situation actually is, nor what the role of the subjective (conscious) factor is in relation to it. Unlike other current opportunists, for whom the present overall non-revolutionary objective situation is a giant stop sign to all revolutionary activity (which they claim does not correspond to the actual situation), the CWP talks about revolution and the subjective factor constantly—but they, too, see no real basis for revolutionary work within the present situation, and retreat into voluntarism—"wishing makes it so."

The line of the CWP is a form of subjective idealism; rather than seeing things as they really are—objectively—their own subjective conceptions are substituted. The CWP's voluntarism is a "left" error, and it is this "leftism" (in which the CWP has been engaging since the formation of their party three months ago) which differentiates this organization from most other opportunist groups, with their open rightism. But at the same time it should be noted that, first, right opportunism, economism, etc. are also forms of subjective idealism, for this line equally does not analyze the actual contradictions which are driving the present state of things toward revolution. And second, as we shall see, CWP's "leftism" is completely shot through with the most blatant rightism.

Why does the RCP's Central Committee report speak of "the real possibility that a revolutionary situa-

tion might actually ripen within this country in the next decade"? Is it principally because of the existence of our Party and its revolutionary work? No—it is because of our analysis that U.S. imperialism has entered a "downward spiral" which already has begun to show itself in economic crisis and which will give way to world war—already manifesting itself in beginning skirmishes—unless prevented by revolution. This is a situation that will draw millions upon millions into political life—not just the advanced, but even the most backward—and most likely result in a situation in which the bourgeoisie cannot rule in the old way and the masses can't live in the old way either—in other words, a revolutionary situation. Although no one can say right now whether such a situation will occur for sure, or whether it will in fact result in revolution, it is absolutely certain that only the preparation of the conscious revolutionary forces today, including drawing thousands upon thousands of advanced elements from among the working class into the revolutionary ranks, can allow the masses to unite and overthrow the bourgeoisie when the time is right. It is this analysis which guides the RCP's work and determines the Party's strategy and tactics. As Bob Avakian said in his opening remarks at the recent Central Committee meeting of the RCP:

"If our basic analysis is wrong, that they're not really getting ready to, and being driven to, go to war and there's not really any serious crisis—already serious crisis and deeper crisis on the horizon, including world war—then what we're doing and what we're talking about doing, our political line and specific policies, etc. are all off, all wrong. They wouldn't fit the circumstances and would in fact subject us to unnecessary risks and sacrifices."[4]

But for the CWP, it seems, the situation is always ripe. In its front-page story announcing the formation of the Communist Workers Party, their newspaper, *Workers Viewpoint*, declares: "Comrades, we are still in the era of imperialism, the eve of proletarian revolution... Following from this, the proletarian revolution is an immediate and practical question."[5] No ups and downs, no spirals, no change in the balance of forces, but just a constant revolutionary situation throughout the era of imperialism!

What has kept the revolution from happening through the eight decades of this century? Apparently all that has been wanting is revolutionary will on the part of Marxists. The CWP claims, in all seriousness, "The bourgeoisie rules by *default*." (Italics in original.)[6] For them, the bourgeoisie does not rule by means of a whole carefully built-up superstructure which includes institutions for the violent suppression, the ideological domination and the political co-optation of the masses of people at home and abroad, but only in "default" of anyone challenging their rule! The only thing missing that's necessary for their overthrow is for a group to come along with the revolutionary will to actually challenge the rule of the bourgeoisie.

The CWP does not usually put it out so crudely as in the above "indiscreet" statements. Good dogmatists that they are, they are aware that Lenin said something about a revolutionary situation, contrasting it with more ordinary times, even during the era of imperialism. But what they have to say about this only further illustrates their voluntarism (and closely linked, their economism, as well).

In the supplement to their paper on the occasion of the formation of the CWP, there is a whole section on this topic, titled "Revolutionary Situations Frequent Under Imperialism." Actually, when it comes down to cases, they say there have only been two such situations in the history of imperialism, linked to the two world wars. Regarding the second of these, CWP puts forward the following fantastic analysis:

"The U.S. imperialists, the only imperialists to gain from the war, faced overwhelming odds. They faced 13 socialist countries, a powerful rising storm of national liberation wars in the third world, and daily growing resistance from the U.S. workers (the largest strike wave in U.S. history) and other oppressed U.S. peoples. The imperialists were staring in horror at their graves!

"In this excellent situation, the Communist Party (USA) and communist parties throughout Europe lost their nerve... What was one of the best opportunities for proletarian revolution in the U.S., these revisionists now speak of as the 'horrors of the McCarthy era'."[7]

In a word, "...the labor aristocrats and other bribed agents in our ranks had handed state power *back* to the bourgeoisie on silver platters after World War II. In the face of the seemingly more powerful enemy, they lose their nerve..." (Italics added.)[8]

Here a dogmatic application of the correct Marxist teaching that war gives rise to revolution—and World War 2 did give rise to revolution in some countries and raised the question of a revolutionary situation in others—leads to ignoring the particularity of the contradiction in the U.S., namely that the U.S. won. In the aftermath of World War 2, U.S. imperialism was on the offensive, at the apex of its power—a power which was certainly not either unopposable or invincible, as was shown especially by the Chinese revolution and the Korean war. But this power was quite real, particularly in its home base within the U.S., which was definitely not at that time the weak link in the imperialist chain. In postwar western and southern Europe there were revolutionary possibilities (although it is impossible to say whether successful revolutions could have occurred even in the absence of the revisionist capitulation to the bourgeoisie by the communist parties of these countries—which made revolution impossible).[9]

But the postwar U.S. did *not* present a revolutionary situation, even had the CPUSA maintained a revolutionary stance (which it of course did not). What a revolutionary party could have done, given this objective situation, was to lead the fight, under an openly revolutionary banner, against the reactionary onslaught of the bourgeoisie. This situation would not have led to a revolution in the U.S., and in fact there were bound to be some losses for the revolutionary forces—but a fighting revolutionary stand would have kept the spark of revolution and the science of Marxism-Leninism alive, and this in turn would have made the next wave of mass struggle—that of the '60s—immeasurably stronger, fiercer and more revolutionary. This is the lesson of that period, and not some stupid fantasy of automatic revolution if only revolutionaries don't "lose their nerve." This is also what makes that period different from today—and anyone who misses this distinction is definitely going to throw the developing opportunity away.

What leads CWP to say that there was a revolutionary situation in the U.S. at that time? "The largest strike wave in U.S. history." In a fashion we will find to be typical of the CWP, the most fire-eating voluntarism is coupled with the same old tired economism.

Indeed, despite their going on and on about the CP losing its nerve, it is striking that, first, the CWP offers no concrete analysis of the old CP and its line, and that, second, the CWP in effect mimics many aspects of that same CP's line, particularly that of the early 1930s, which may be characterized as "left" economism—tacking general propaganda about socialism and revolution onto reformist politics growing out of the economic struggle.[10]

The CWP's analysis of the present situation is different in one crucial respect—rather than seeing a revolu-

tionary situation where there wasn't, they don't see one where there is. Of course, they *say* they see a revolutionary situation—in fact, they go us one better, because while we say that there is the very real possibility that a revolutionary situation might ripen within the next decade, they say that a revolutionary situation has already arisen. But what do they describe?

"The bourgeoisie increasingly cannot rule in the same way. The economic crisis is deeper than ever before. Second world countries are resisting the U.S.' attempt to pass on inflation to them, threatening to go over to the Soviet Union. The third world countries are demanding equal exchange for their resources. The U.S. imperialists are no longer able to pass the crisis along to other countries like they used to. They are entangled among each other, fighting over which monopolist will have to be cut. Old tricks of Keynesian economics won't work any more. They are stuck! It took Franklin Roosevelt four years to unite the bourgeoisie around the New Deal state monopoly capitalism to get the capitalists out of crisis, and today the crisis is a lot deeper. There's no way the monopoly capitalists can get themselves together in less than five years.

"The masses are increasingly not willing to live in the same way. The powerful lever of economic crisis is pushing forward the awakening of the proletariat. The U.S. defeat in Vietnam, Watergate, and all the rest has broken through illusions about capitalist 'democracy'. The 'American Dream' is the American nightmare. As workers are kicking out union hacks across the country, the bourgeoisie does not have the influencial *[sic]* social-democrats, revisionists or the trade union bureaucrats' stranglehold to shackle the rapidly growing anger."[11]

Three things must be said about this: First, it is the same complete disregard for the consciousness of the masses and the same foul economism as noted above. It *says* the "masses aren't willing to live in the same way," but to the U.S. defeat in Vietnam and the inter-capitalist rivalry which resulted in the debacle of Watergate what they counterpose, again, is the economic struggle.

Second, it is a fantasy—because this country has not yet suffered a sharp economic collapse like the 1930s and the economic struggle is still at a relatively low level. Why do they claim otherwise? Can't they read the newspapers and the statistics? The answer is that since for them the economic struggle is the motive force of revolution, and since they feel very strongly that there must be one soon, then the economic struggle must be at a high tide. Pure subjective idealism.

Third and most important, this is *rightist* idealism—an underestimation rather than an overestimation of the current situation. At bottom they don't see that U.S. imperialism is caught in a downward spiral "which will only give way to another spiral through a major change in the relation of forces in the world—redivision of the world, through war among the imperialists, revolution, or—most likely—both, on a world scale."[12] All they can say is, last time it took the bourgeoisie four years to get out, this time it will take them at least five. Obviously, this isn't much of a crisis. Perhaps the CWP hasn't noticed that it wasn't the New Deal that ended the Depression—it was the new and very favorable redivision of the globe for the U.S. following World War 2. (Of course, war production temporarily took the unemployed off the streets—but only the expansion of U.S. imperialism into the markets of the U.S.'s imperialist enemies and allies alike provided the basis for the whole post-war 25-year relative "boom.") Today, no amount of "getting themselves together" can reverse the direction of the downward spiral—only winning another world war—or revolution—will turn this spiral around.

When the CWP talks about the monopoly capitalists getting themselves together in five years, what they mean is reaching agreement among themselves to "reindustrialize America"—to "get a few productive sections going to temporarily stabilize the economy" "through state monopoly capitalism" just like FDR supposedly did with the New Deal.[13] But the New Deal did not "reindustrialize" the U.S. The bourgeoisie was not capable of this then, and they are far less capable of doing so today. They have already played their historical role of advancing the productive forces through modern industrialization. In the era of imperialism their only escape from deep crisis is to restructure capital through the tremendous devastation of inter-imperialist world wars. And "reindustrialization" is not even their plan. As Paul Volker, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, said in a speech in London late last year, more nearly expressing the rather modest prospects his class has set for itself pending a redivision of the world, "A controlled disintegration of the economy is a legitimate object for the 1980s."

For the CWP, the theoretical possibility of war is unlikely as an actual prospect. In fact, in an entire article on the economic crisis and how the imperialists plan to deal with it (entitled, in typical WVO/CWP style, "30s Depression Haunts Bourgeoisie But Fear of 80s Freaks Them Out"), this is their one mention of war:

"With the U.S. people deeply cynical about imperialist wars of aggression abroad after Vietnam and Watergate[!], there's little opportunity for the bourgeoisie to use the tanks, aircraft and other weapons that $billions in taxes goes to produce."[14]

But here they do not seem to be talking about world war at all. And in addition there is the strong suggestion that the primary reason the bourgeoisie has for pumping money into the military is that it provides profits for defense contractors (a classic expression of economism and the liquidation of politics in favor of economics), for this passage comes up in the context of presenting increased military spending as one of the bourgeoisie's avenues of escape from economic crisis. Thus for the CWP, the "option" of war is another expression of the freedom the imperialists have to more or less smoothly get themselves out of a crisis.

The CWP, like the RCP, considers itself in a race against time. Only, while for the RCP the race is for the subjective forces to keep up with the development of the objective situation, so that the masses are prepared to seize the time when the situation ripens, through crisis and, most likely, war, for the CWP the race is . . . to make revolution before U.S. imperialism saves itself through reform. For the CWP it is a contest of wills between themselves and the bourgeoisie—revolution *vs.* New Deal. They grant the bourgeoisie the same unlimited freedom they grant themselves.

The last point that needs to be pulled out here is the link between the CWP's clinging to the "three worlds" theory, and their disregard of the looming question of world war. (Of course they do mention that imperialism means war—being good dogmatists, they have to because Lenin said so—but when it comes down to the concrete world this little fact has no consequences for them.)

"The struggles of the third world have pushed back the danger of world war by ripping off corner after corner of the globe—the markets for the exploitation of capital and the basins of raw materials—away from the clutches of the superpowers."[15]

Why does CWP imagine that removing "corner after corner of the globe" from the sphere of capitalist exploita-

tion would "push back the danger of world war"? On the contrary, if this were true it would accelerate the tendency toward war, as each of the imperialist powers would have more and more necessity to try to redivide the world in its favor.

This is the line put forward by Teng Hsiao-ping in his 1974 "three worlds" speech at the UN. By forming raw materials associations and such, countries under the domination of imperialism can free themselves from this domination without having to go through the nasty business of revolution.

Is this what has been happening? Have the countries of OPEC ripped themselves out of the clutches of imperialism?[16] Have the newly "independent" countries of Africa done so? No, it is clear that they have not. To say that they have is a fantasy—or, more to the point, a counter-revolutionary justification of their continued domination by imperialism. In fact this is the whole thrust and purpose of the "three worlds" strategy which China's new rulers purvey.

Why does the CWP continue to uphold it, despite their supposed recognition of the revisionist nature of these rulers?* Since the "three worlds" theory is a Kautskyite theory of ultra-imperialism, it hides the real contradictions which will give rise to a revolutionary situation. The CWP doesn't want to see war coming.

"Indeed without understanding Chairman Mao's theory of Three Worlds, we cannot understand the contemporary situation and how deeply the bourgeoisie is stuck, and how excellent the situation really is. Without understanding Chairman Mao's theory of Three Worlds, we cannot understand our strength and how *it gives us the time* to rally our forces for the revolutionary onslaught."(Italics added.)[17]

This is the "three worlds" theory's great merit for these opportunists—it "gives us the time"—i.e., it means that revolutionaries aren't in a race with world war after all, because the development of the objective situation will hold off until the subjective forces are ready. When the wind blows, these head-in-the-sand ostriches are going to break their necks.

But the subjective idealism which gives rise to voluntarism regarding the development of the objective situation also gives rise to determinism in regard to the role of the subjective forces:

"There is an awakening of the working class like never before... This is the historical lever of economic crisis at work." "...the economic crisis helps break all the illusions people may have."[19]

What is this but the utmost in determinism and economism? Economic crisis is certainly an important part of what creates the possibility of a revolutionary situation; but, first, it is not the only factor in this process (there is also the closely connected spectre of war—that "little fact" which CWP prefers to "forget"); and second, economic crisis does not *automatically* dispel the illusions of the masses and "lever" them into revolutionary motion—if it did, the capitalist system would have been dead and buried some time ago.

Today, only a small minority of the masses are ready to die rather than live this way another day, and even the advanced workers tend to be pulled back by the relative inactivity of the vast majority. As a revolutionary situation develops, even the backward are drawn into political life. (The present Iranian situation gives a glimpse of how, in a crisis, the bourgeoisie is forced to draw the masses into politics. And in this situation, true to their continuing economism, CWP is hard to find in the struggle.) Growing millions then will see *no other way out* but revolution. But how can the advanced put themselves at the head of the masses and transform a situation of turmoil and confusion into a mass, organized, disciplined uprising under the leadership of the proletariat and its party to seize power from the bourgeoisie?

"The Party members and advanced elements of the proletariat must seize the time, actively learning to assume leadership by actually assuming leadership in *all spheres of life without exception.* Kick out the hacks and misleaders of all shades and colors." (Italics added.)[20]

In other words, communists should work to get them*selves* in those important union offices instead of the hacks (especially given that, as we saw above, "workers are kicking out union hacks," and the bourgeoisie is running out of their supply of "influencial social-democrats, revisionists [and] trade union bureaucrats...to shackle the rapidly growing anger")!

And what will be the basis on which communists will win the leadership of the trade unions? CWP leaves little room for doubt: "Today, with the collaboration of the trade union bureaucrats, the unions cannot even wage the economic struggle effectively. In the long run, only the Communist Party can rally the workers to build up the trade unions as fighting organizations."[21]

Communists will become leaders of the unions on the basis of being the best fighters in the economic struggle. Now let's see, where have we heard that before?

And lest it be thought that CWP has "moved beyond" any of this, in its "left" flip of the past three months, their official sum-up of their own history makes it clear that they fully uphold every bit of reformism and economism they've practiced in the past:

"For almost two years, the WVO stressed biting into the spontaneous struggles of the masses...the WVO focused on systematizing and concentrating our understanding of the different movements of U.S. people, particularly the trade union movement, the movement of oppressed nationalities and national minorities, and youth/student movements."[22]

Further, these opportunists make it clear that they continue to adhere to (and to uphold) the same sort of practice today. Recently, for instance, in illustration of how "a glance at the history of our five Party martyrs is like a glance through the encyclopedia of the struggle of the U.S. workers and Afro-American work-

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*See *Revolution*, January 1979, pp. 8-9, and June 1979, pp. 18ff., for accounts of how WVO tried to publicly pretend that revisionism had *not* triumphed in China long after they'd summed up that in fact it *had*, their reason being that they were afraid of demoralizing the masses. This, as well as "RCP ultra-leftism" was the basis on which WVO attacked our Party's 1978 Mao Memorial Meetings, at which our analysis of the Chinese coup was made public. WVO remained silent on these questions until quite recently. An interesting sequel to this performance is the following passage from a recent issue of their paper, speaking of the period after the revisionist coup in China:

"Once again, the leadership of the WVO *immediately* [italics in original] took a clear position defending Mao and the historic lessons of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and consolidated the whole Party on the correct position...All this was in sharp contrast to...those, like the RCP, who sat on the fence for over a year, and even after their organization split in half on the question, did not take a clear stand for months."[18]

Yes, an interesting passage, at least for those interested in the pathological symptoms of an apparently total subjectivism. In fact their going-on about "Chairman Mao's theory of the Three Worlds," in perfect harmony with the vile usurpers who now rule China and their sycophants around the world, is an especially vivid demonstration of the hollowness of their pretense of upholding Mao and the Four.

ers," CWP says:

"For example, comrade Jim Waller was elected president of an Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union local after he led a bitter strike at Cone Granite mill, a strike which strengthened the local tremendously and swelled its ranks from 15 to 200. This is just one example of the CWP 5 which represents the Party's resounding national success in fusing communism with workers and the broad masses."[23]

What this does illustrate and represent is the concrete meaning of WVO/CWP's "biting into the spontaneous struggles" and "concentrating our understanding of the trade union movement." It is also a good illustration of how a reformist, economist and trade-unionist line and practice can coexist quite happily with "left" phrasemongering and posturing.

On the one hand voluntarism—an overemphasis on the subjective element and the malleability of the world to the human will, an overestimation of the freedom of conscious revolutionary forces. On the other hand determinism—an over-emphasis on the objective factor and what will happen independently of human will. The first appears to be a "left" error; the second clearly leads to rightism. We have seen how these two contradictory aspects together characterize the CWP's line. In fact it is a rather familiar "left/right" combination. And the rightism in this case takes a very familiar form—economism.

The particular essence of this group lies in its dogmatism and voluntarism. While it is crucial to see how CWP's "leftism" coexists with a very thoroughgoing rightism (and not just rightism in its objective effect, but a rightist political line), it is obvious that this group is not the same as the CPML or the Mensheviks (RWH). As mentioned above, previous articles on CWP's immediate predecessor, WVO, have delineated its dogmatism, which arises out of a particular way of metaphysically separating theory from practice and the universality from the particularity of contradiction. Dogmatists metaphysically separate the aspects of these contradictions and then put their emphasis on theory and universality. At the same time, and this is important to recognize, this very fact means that they do not actually *understand* the theory. To quote an earlier article, this dogmatism of WVO/CWP's

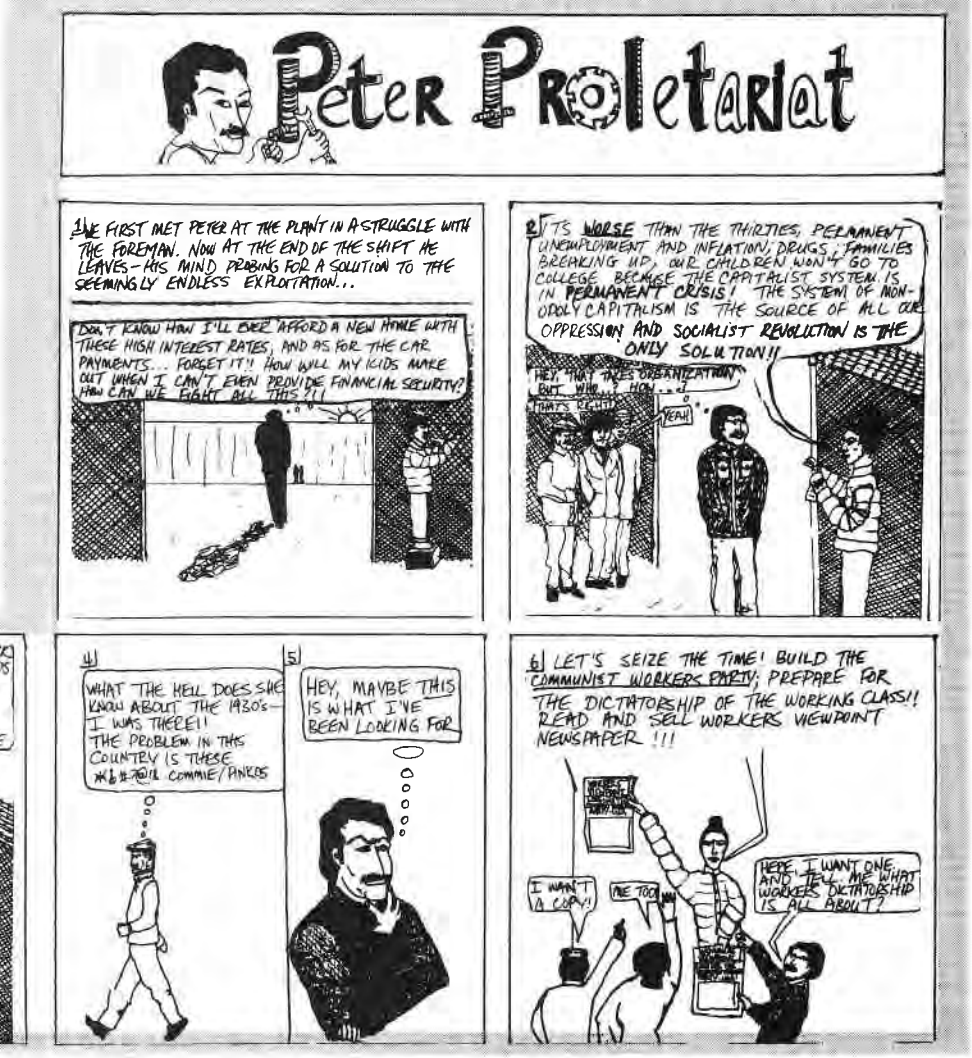
". . . not only has the result that they do not apply *Marxism* to their practice (so that they fall into economism and reformism, as we've seen), but it also means that they cannot reach a correct understanding of the theory of Marxism, either—for Marxist theory is the summation of revolutionary practice. Of course this does not mean that Marxism is the summation of one's own immediate practice; it sums up the revolutionary practice of the proletariat and on this basis man's historical practice in the struggle for production, scientific experiment and the class struggle, and this theoretical summing-up can (and must) be studied *in its own right* as well as in connection with particular struggles and events. But the purpose of studying it is in order to apply it, and thereby to change the world—and those who are not engaged overall in revolutionary practice, in changing the world in a revolutionary way, cannot fully understand the theory itself, because of the dialectical link between theory and practice.

"Thus what WVO calls 'theory' is nothing but stale phrases and long quotations, bits and pieces torn out of context and bombastically displayed."[24]

Marxism is not a dogma, and dogmatists can neither understand nor apply Marxist theory. It is for these reasons that Mao is reputed to have said that dogma is less useful than shit.

The twin errors of dogmatism and empiricism arise out of not dialectially un-

CWP's new cartoon strip may not be proletarian art, but it is a good illustration of how "left" dogmatism and economism can be married and find a happy home.



derstanding and handling the contradiction between theory and practice. A person or organization may be characterized primarily by one or the other of these deviations, but at the same time not dealing with this contradiction correctly will mean vacillating or oscillating between the two errors. And there's no doubt that CWP often swings over into empiricism as well. This is the reason, for instance, that they really do not see an approaching world war. Of course they will dogmatically *mention* it once in a while, but as we've seen above, their line shows that they don't actually *believe* that it's on the horizon, especially not inter-imperialist world war. The reason is at least partly empiricism—it is not obvious at all on the perceptual level.

In talking about voluntarism, however, a different set of contradictions come to the fore, namely the contradictions of subjective and objective and of freedom and necessity. In the case of these contradictions, as well, metaphysically separating the two aspects, then putting all the weight on one, means that in the first place not even the one that's emphasized is correctly understood or acted on; and in the second place those who do not dialectically understand and handle these contradictions are also condemned to oscillate between twin errors—in this case between voluntarism and determinism.

What is the correct and dialectical relationship between freedom and necessity? Engels expressed it by repeating the Hegelian formula: "Freedom is the recognition [or understanding] of necessity." In other words, freedom does not consist in escape from necessity, but in understanding the laws that necessarily govern the material world, the laws whereby things must happen as they do, and then using the knowledge of these laws to gain control over the material world—including both the world of nature and the social world. Mao pointed out that, since this is its meaning, Engels' Hegelian aphorism does not really sum up the relationship:

"This sentence is not complete, it only says one half and leaves the other half unsaid. Does merely understanding it make you free? Freedom is the understanding of necessity *and* the transformation of necessity—one has some work to do too."[25]

Freedom does not mean abolishing necessity, nor does it lie in freedom *from* the laws of the material world, but in transforming the material world by means of the knowledge of these necessary laws. Human beings didn't gain the freedom to fly through the air by abolishing or ignoring the law of gravity and similar laws, but by gaining knowledge of them—recognizing and understanding necessity—and using that knowledge to build airplanes, etc. But voluntarism is an outlook which holds that man can shape reality by mere strength of will—in other words by ignoring necessity, or vaporizing it through will-power. And obviously, by not seeing the dialectical unity of freedom and necessity, and metaphysically emphasizing freedom as a thing in itself, the voluntarist ends up not having the slightest understanding of freedom—and ends up not being free, either, but a pitiful slave to circumstance.

Likewise, for the same reasons as we saw in the case of the dogmatism-empiricism couple, voluntarism has a constant tendency to swing over into determinism, into the attitude that everything is already determined by impersonal forces, "in the cards," and therefore that the active subjective element counts for nothing. It can easily be seen how this is simply the flip side of voluntarism, arising from the same inability to see the dialectical unity of freedom and necessity. And it is also easily apparent how the CWP voluntarists also flip over into determinism, with their ridiculous and puerile vision of the economic crisis automatically making the bourgeoisie helpless and revolutionizing the masses.

All of this, in turn, has everything to do with the contradiction between objective and subjective. The beginning of the 1976 RCP Central Committee Report expresses very well the relationship between the aspects of this contradiction, in relation to revolutionary work, and is worth quoting at some length:

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

"It is in this light that the statement by Mao in *Oppose Book Worship* has to be understood. 'Communists should create favorable new situations through struggle.' They cannot create these favorable new conditions out of thin air—or out of the mere subjective desire to see more favorable conditions, or the will to create them—but by concretely analyzing objective conditions, the immediate contradictions that have to be moved on to push everything forward, and *on that basis* developing lines and policies to advance. . .

"The point, then, of analyzing the objective conditions, of making a concrete analysis of concrete conditions, is to be able to determine how to change those conditions in accordance with the laws of development of society (and nature) and the revolutionary interests of the working class—which in turn are determined by and in accordance with these same laws of development."[26]

The revolutionary subjective factor *can* change the world—it can be the decisive factor—by means of reflecting in thought the objective situation, summing it up correctly through knowledge of the laws of social reality, then acting on that basis. The subjective factor can change the objective situation through voluntary action only through correctly handling the contradiction between freedom and necessity.

The contradiction between subjective and objective is also the contradiction between ideas and matter, and to understand either of these contradictions dialectically and as they really are is to understand how their opposing aspects mutually interpenetrate and transform themselves into each other. Subjective becomes objective and objective becomes subjective; matter becomes ideas and ideas become matter. Marx expresses these relationships, with reference to revolutionary change, in the following sentence:

"The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism by weapons, material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses."[27]

Ideas in and of themselves cannot change material reality—to think that they can is pure idealism. But because ideas can be dialectically transformed into their opposite, into matter, they can become a material force and change the material world.

Likewise the subjective can be transformed into the objective, and thus become part of the objective situation,

helping to change it. This mutual interpenetration and mutual transformation of objective and subjective must be concretely grasped and put into practice by communists in order to play their necessary role in making revolution. For instance, what is subjective for the masses or a section of the masses (their own ideas) is objective, part of the objective situation, for conscious revolutionaries. Thus when what is subjective for revolutionaries becomes subjective for the masses (or the advanced) as well—when revolutionary ideas have "gripped the masses"—this is a case of the transformation of subjective into objective and a change in the objective situation. But it also means a change in the subjective factor too, in both quantity and quality. For on the one hand the subjective factor in the revolutionary process—that is, the body of people consciously trying to move history forward on the basis of revolutionary theory—has broadened, encompassing more people, and has thus changed quantitatively. On the other hand the ideas and the theory held by the conscious forces have changed and deepened in this process, thus changing the subjective factor in quality as well.

All this is a closed book to the leaders of the CWP. Here as everywhere they metaphysically separate the aspects of the contradiction and thus end up understanding neither the contradiction nor either of its aspects. In this case their metaphysics means that subjective and objective are seen as quite separate and static, not characterized by mutual interpenetration, nor undergoing mutual transformation. They see the masses and their consciousness as part of the objective situation (which they *are* for the conscious revolutionary forces), but then their metaphysical separation of objective from subjective means that the development of the objective situation automatically revolutionizes the masses. In practice this comes out as the claim that the masses are already (after Vietnam and Watergate!) revolutionary. For example, consider the following description which the CWP makes of one of the spectators of the funeral march following the Greensboro massacre:

"One elderly woman sat on her front porch, sweaterless on that cold, rainy day, and watched without saying a word. But she didn't have to, because the marchers knew where her heart was. They knew that sitting out front was her way of showing her hatred of capitalist oppression and defying the bourgeoisie. It was her way of showing her solidarity with the Communist Workers Party fighters who had given their lives fighting the Klan and the Nazis."[28]

How little the CWP requires of the masses—merely that they sit and watch as the CWP (the real heroes) march by! More to the point on the present topic, this little vignette illustrates the *a priori* assumption that the masses are already revolutionary. The contradiction between Marxism-Leninism and the ideas of the masses (and this includes the ideas of even the most advanced) is simply glossed over. The role of the conscious forces is not to transform subjective into objective, not to arm the masses with the correct line—which involves *struggling* with them—but merely to hoist a dogmatic flag and "know" that the masses are rallying to that flag "in their own way."

It should be clear now why this line flips over so completely into rightism at the merest touch of involvement with mass work. For it has a clear consequence: if the masses are revolutionary, then wherever the masses are at in their outlook must *be* revolutionary consciousness. If people spontaneously tend to trade unionism, nationalism, or reformism, then this must be revolutionary—or at least must contain the seeds of revolutionary consciousness, needing only to be nurtured and extended, rather than *diverted* from their spontaneous course. After all, the masses are merely expressing their revolutionary ideas "in their own way." Here we are on familiar ground—the bowing to spontaneity characteristic of the whole opportunist lot.

Mao spoke sharply to the roots of all this:

"The political tendency of the petty bourgeoisie is apt to manifest itself in vacillation between the 'Left' and the Right because of its mode of life and the resulting subjectivism and one-sidedness of its method of thinking. Many representatives of the petty-bourgeois revolutionaries hope for an immediate victory of the revolution in order to bring about a radical change in their present status; therefore, they lack the patience needed for protracted revolutionary endeavour, are fond of 'Left' revolutionary phrases and slogans and, in their sentiments and actions are given to closed-doorism or adventurism . . .

"But the same petty-bourgeois revolutionaries when placed in a different set of circumstances—or another section of the petty-bourgeois revolutionaries—may become pessimistic and despondent and express Rightist sentiments and views . . . But whether 'Left' or Right, these tendencies benefit not the revolution but only the counter-revolution. Vacillation to the 'Left' or to the Right, the fondness for going to extremes, flashiness without substance and slick opportunism, all of which occur under the stress of changing conditions, are features of the bad side of petty-bourgeois ideology. They are all reflections in the ideological sphere of the unstable economic status of the petty bourgeoisie."[29]

What all this adds up to is that the CWP does not see the revolutionary elements in today's non-revolutionary situation. They have some sense that a revolutionary situation may arise in the U.S. in the coming period. But they have no idea of how things get from here to there, and they have very wrong ideas about how revolutionaries should work now to prepare for revolution. Not having a dialectical understanding of the non-revolutionary character of the present situation is bound to lead to errors—either to conservatism and demoralization and retreating from revolutionary work, or to teeth-gritting, eyes-closed attempts at carrying out revolutionary work anyway, which will sooner or later give way to the former tendencies.

This is what we can see all around us in the litter of "communist" groups which sprang into being off the movements of the sixties, most of which have indeed retreated, demoralized, into more or less open conservatism and abandonment of any revolutionary perspective. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, CWP is notable mainly in not falling into this pattern; rather, this group falls into the opposite pole of the same stupidity, into a teeth-gritting voluntarism which oscillates between saying that "we're going to uphold revolution no matter if *nobody* follows us," and on the other hand that "this *is* (at least almost) a revolutionary situation no matter what it may look like."

Thus the wild and boastful fantasizing so characteristic of CWP is mainly just an aspect of this sort of teeth-clenched, eyes-shut-tight voluntarism. The preoccupation with "getting our nerve up" is for the most part an attempt to hype themselves up in the face of an underlying analysis which really doesn't see the revolutionary aspects of the present (non-revolutionary) situation.

What else is it but hype to talk about ". . . the spirit that puts the third world peoples and the Communist Workers Party beyond defeat,"[30] or to say:

"The forging of the Communist Workers Party beyond the possibility of defeat in the coming period is the most crucial part of the preparatory work to seize the country in the bloodbath."[31]

How can a party be beyond the possibility of defeat? Weren't even the communist parties of the Soviet Union and of China finally defeated, made into instruments of the bourgeoisie for the oppression of the people? The working class and the proletarian revolution is beyond the possibility of defeat in the historical sense—they will eventually triumph. But in any particular battle, defeat is by no means precluded—so when CWP adds "in the coming period" in the second quotation they compound their errors, for it makes it into a tactical matter, saying that their party cannot be defeated even in the short run.

Further (this one little passage, like so many in the CWP literature, is a veritable gold mine of errors), notice how the focus, here as elsewhere, is *entirely* on the CWP; the impression is that these heroes alone will make the revolution. This is another indication of the fact that these metaphysicians are unable to dialectically grasp or handle the contradiction between the conscious forces and masses of people, or between the party and advanced. They oscillate between seeing no distinction at all (as we've seen above), and erecting a rigid barrier between the two aspects (the party alone is the maker of history). In either case they do not see these dialectically as contradictions, with both unity and struggle between the aspects.

On the other hand, although this quotation we've been discussing is quite wrong, it is true that if CWP had been talking about the forming of a party which would nurture and develop the revolutionary aspects which objectively exist within today's situation, a party which neither pretends to *create* the revolutionary situation, nor stands aside cultivating itself and waiting for the revolutionary situation to ripen so that it can intervene and "assume" leadership, but rather a party through whose leadership, in conformity with the laws of society and the development of the objective situation and the class struggle, the masses are concretely trained and prepared ideologically, politically and organizationally for the revolutionary situation, a party which can on this basis then lead the masses in actually making revolution when the time is ripe—if this were the party which the CWP was talking about, then it would be true that the forming, consolidating and tempering of *such* a party would be the crucial step for revolutionaries in preparing for a revolution.

Rather than anything like this, the CWP's political program amounts to a program for the preservation of a little sect.* Lacking any dialectical understanding of the relation between subjective and objective and between party and masses, they are doomed to oscillate between tailing the masses and isolating themselves—and certainly cannot play a vanguard role. Lacking a Marxist analysis and dialectical understanding of the present non-revolutionary situation, they are incapable of either preparing for, or of actually providing leadership in, a developing revolutionary struggle. What is the CWP talking about with their slogan, "Seize the Time—Build the CWP to Prepare for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," and their constant talk about "making immediate and systematic preparations for the dictatorship of the proletariat"? They're not talking about preparing the masses to make revolution; all they're talking about is "preparing" themselves—as though a real vanguard party could prepare itself except in the process of preparing the masses.

CWP has no idea of how to prepare for revolution. Despite their dogmatism (actually because of it) they totally miss the point of *What Is to Be Done?* They have no understanding of the role of broad exposures and revolutionary agitation. They do not see the necessity, the possibility or the way to prepare the masses politically, ideologically and organizationally for revolution, and the crucial role of agitation and a national revolutionary communist newspaper in doing so. Their conception of agitation—wooden, dogmatic and economist—is well illustrated in the "Peter Proletariat" comic strip (reproduced on page 34), which shows CWP's idea of how a supposedly advanced worker is revolutionized by the economic situation ("Don't know how I'll ever afford a new home with these high interest rates"), comes upon a "communist" who provides a "scientific" analysis ("It's *worse* than the thirties . . . The capitalist system is in *permanent crisis*!") and who provides a transition from economics to "revolutionary" politics ("Giving up our pension fund to the company can't save our jobs. That's why workers have to smash the capitalist system . . .").

Such is the CWP's conception. It has nothing in common with real revolutionary agitation and propaganda, which applies Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought to the ever-changing concrete situation, which not only fans every spark of discontent and arouses indignation at every outrage, but knits together all these outrages into a coherent picture, tracing each to its source, and probes beneath the surface, scientifically analyzing the development of events by means of capitalism's inherent laws and arming the masses with an understanding of historical developments in terms of these laws and with a knowledge of the laws themselves. It is only by carrying out this task (along with the secondary task of leading struggles around the most important questions and battles facing the working class), that the masses of people, and not just a handful of revolutionaries, will be ready to seize the time when the revolutionary situation ripens and strike the death-blow to the heart of this murdering monster. This is what it really means today to "prepare for the dictatorship of the proletariat"—in other words, to prepare the masses to seize power.

The possibility of revolution in this country may well exist in the coming period, because of the development of the objective situation. If a revolutionary situation does arise, the crucial factor will be the conscious forces—how well they have done their work both up to and at that point. But this work can only be done well and correctly by basing line and policies on a dialectical materialist understanding of the developing reality, and not through voluntaristic huffing and puffing. ■

*It is interesting to note, speaking of programs, that despite having formed a party (although WVO had already been referring to *itself* as "the Party" off and on for the previous two years), CWP shows no sign of having put out a party program. Well . . . *almost* no sign. In the November 5, 1979 copy of *Workers Viewpoint* they feature a drawing showing someone holding a book entitled "Program of the Communist Workers Party USA." Apparently for a good subjectivist a picture of a program is just as good as an actual program.

Footnotes

1. See the *Revolutionary Worker*, Nov. 9 and 16, 1979.
2. *Revolutionary Worker*, Nov. 9, p. 15.
3. See "Anatomy of a Puerile Leftist Sect: The Religious Disorder of the Workers Viewpoint Organization," *The Communist*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (May 1, 1977), pp. 73-108; and "Closet 'Maoists' Expose Themselves," *Revolution*, June 1979.
4. "The Prospects for Revolution and the Urgent Tasks in the Decade Ahead," *Revolution*, October/November 1979, p. 8.
5. *Workers Viewpoint*, Nov. 5, 1979, p. 1.
6. *Workers Viewpoint*, Oct. 15, 1979, p. 8.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. S/1-S/2. In another place CWP puts it like this: "The *major factor* leading to the stabilization of capitalism in the west was the degeneration of the Communist Party, U.S.A. and the rise of revisionism around the world." (*Workers Viewpoint*, Sept. 1, 1979, p. 21.)
8. *Workers Viewpoint*, Nov. 5, 1979, p. 8.
9. See "On the Outcome of World War 2 and the Prospects for Revolution in the West," *The Communist*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Summer/Fall 1978).
10. See "Some Notes on the Study of *What Is To Be Done?* and its Implications for the Struggle Today," *The Communist*,

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provides the bourgeois state with all the "legal" justification it wants to jail revolutionaries, arrest strikers who threaten their national interests, and generally run rampant with repression?

At the funeral of Bobby Kennedy in St. Patrick's Cathedral there was a revolting scene, described by Schlesinger. In one of the front pews was Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago, "his head bowed, the cords of his neck standing out, crying uncontrollably." In a back pew knelt Tom Hayden, "green cap from Havana sticking out of his pocket, weeping silently by himself."[59] This was a scene that must have delighted the bourgeoisie. It symbolized all too well the role of the Kennedys, for in death as in life they unite open reaction and the illusion of reform.

Footnotes

1. V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,* Foreign Languages Press, Peking, p. 118.
2. See Joshua Muravchik "Kennedy's Foreign Policy: What the Record Shows," *Commentary,* December, 1979, pp. 31-42.
3. Michael Coakly, *Chicago Tribune,* December 9, 1979.
4. Kennedy speech in Iowa, December, 1979.
5. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times,* Ballantine Books, N.Y., 1978, p. xiii.
6. John Gregory Dunne, "On the Matter of Chappaquiddick," *New West,* Dec. 3, 1979, p. 49.
7. Lenin, *Imperialism,* p. 132.
8. *Triumph and Tragedy, The Story of the Kennedys,* by the writers, photographers and editors of the Associated Press, William Morrow, 1968, p. 43.
9. *Ibid.,* p. 40.
10. Richard J. Whalen, *Founding Father,* New American Library, 1964, p. 248.
11. *Ibid.,* p. 249.
12. *Triumph and Tragedy,* p. 125.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.,* p. 126.
15. Schlesinger, *op. cit.,* p. 124.
16. *Ibid.,* p. 125.
17. *Ibid.,* p. 107.
18. *Triumph and Tragedy,* p. 124.
19. Schlesinger, p. 125.
20. *Triumph and Tragedy,* p. 151.
21. Schlesinger, p. 309.
22. *Ibid.,* p. 324.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.,* p. 332.
28. Quoted in Paul Sann, *The Angry Decade: The Sixties,* Crown Publishers, N.Y., 1979, p. 97.
29. Schlesinger, p. 372.
30. *Ibid.,* p. 374.
31. Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks,* Grove Press, N.Y., 1966.
32. Schlesinger, p. 375.
33. *Ibid.,* p. 376.
34. Malcolm X, p. 15.
35. "A Comment on the Statement of the Communist Party, USA, *Peoples Daily,* March 8, 1963.
36. Robert Sherrill, *The Last Kennedy,* The Dial Press, N.Y., 1974, p. 23.
37. John F. Kennedy, *Strategy for Peace,* quoted in Schlesinger, p. 449.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.,* p. 478.
40. *Ibid.,* p. 477.
41. Sherrill, p. 30.
42. Schlesinger, p. 512.
43. *Ibid.,* p. 455.
44. Schlesinger, p. 456.
45. *Ibid.,* p. 457.
46. *Ibid.,* p. 509.
47. Jorge Palacios, *Chile: An Attempt at "Historic Compromise," The Real Story of the Allende Years,* Banner Press, Chicago 1979, p. 128.
48. *Ibid.,* p. 131.
49. Schlesinger, p. 495.
50. *Ibid.,* 496.
51. *Ibid.,* p. 498-99.
52. *Ibid.,* p. 500.
53. John F. Kennedy speech on July 17, 1963, quoted in *The Pentagon Papers,* Gravel ed., Beacon Press, Vol. 2, p. 162.
54. JFK, Sept. 9, 1963 speech, *ibid.*
55. JFK, February 1962 speech, *ibid.*
56. A.J. Langguth, *Hidden Terrors,* Pantheon Books, 1978, p. 116.
57. Schlesinger, p. 750.
58. Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years,* Little Brown, 1979, p. 292.
59. Schlesinger, p. 983.

CWP . . .

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No. 5 (May 1979), pp. 120ff.

11. *Workers Viewpoint,* Nov. 5, 1979, p. S-2.
12. *Revolutionary Work in a Non-Revolutionary Situation* (RCP Publications, Chicago, 1978), p. 31.
13. *Workers Viewpoint,* Nov. 5, 1979, p. 3.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.,* p. 8.
16. See "OPEC: Friend or Foe of U.S. Imperialism?", *Revolution,* May 1979.
17. *Workers Viewpoint,* Nov. 5, 1979, p. S-3.
18. *Ibid.,* p. 8.
19. *Workers Viewpoint,* Oct. 1, 1979, p. 17, and Oct. 15, 1979, p. 7.
20. *Workers Viewpoint,* Nov. 5, 1979, p. 8.
21. *Workers Viewpoint,* Sept. 1, 1979, p. 9. For another gem along the same lines, see *Workers Viewpoint,* Aug. 1, 1979, p. 4: "Only the Communist Party, the vanguard force of the working class, can overhaul it and build on the strengths of the elementary organization in the trade unions. It is through studying and struggling together with [advanced workers] one by one, that we will build up the Party, turn the trade unions into fighting organizations, and make every factory our fortress. This is the task before us all."
22. *Workers Viewpoint,* Nov. 5, 1979, p. S-3.
23. *Workers Viewpoint,* Nov. 19, 1979, p. 15.
24. *Revolution,* June 1979, p. 22.
25. *Chairman Mao Talks to the People,* ed. Stuart Schram (Pantheon Books, N.Y., 1974), p. 228.
26. *Revolutionary Work in a Non-Revolutionary Situation,* p. 1.
27. "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction," Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works,* Vol. 3 (International Publishers, N.Y., 1975), p. 182.
28. *Workers Viewpoint,* Nov. 19, 1979, p. 15.
29. "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party," Mao Tsetung, *Selected Works,* Vol. III (Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1965), pp. 216-17.
30. *Workers Viewpoint,* Nov. 19, 1979, p. 4.
31. *Workers Viewpoint,* Nov. 5, 1979, p. 8.