

The '60s-'70s Shift

by Bob Avakian

Chamber of Commerce Types vs. Revolutionary Nationalists

Q: In "Conquer the World . . ." you put forward the need to look at the '70s developments from a more international viewpoint. You raised Lin Biao's *Long Live the Victory of People's War* and the Chinese line of that time (the late '60s) and what it has in common with the "three worlds" theory of later on. Could you expand on your thinking on what happened in the '70s internationally, this whole ebb period in the movement?

BA: Take Lin Biao *Long Live the Victory of People's War* on the one hand and the "three worlds" theory on the other. First of all, I think the Lin Biao document is a much more revolutionary document. It has errors in it; especially with what we've learned since we can sum them up more clearly as errors. Whereas the "three worlds" theory, especially as it has been developed and put forward by Deng Xiaoping and in particular after the coup d'etat in '76, is a counterrevolutionary theory. If I were to describe the line of *Long Live the Victory of People's War* I would say that it is a document that contains both Marxist-Leninist analysis and also a lot of revolutionary nationalism. I think it is correct in identifying the third world as the storm center and focal point of revolutionary struggle at that time against imperialism and in particular U.S. imperialism. I think it is correct even in identifying the principal contradiction in the world at that time as the one between the oppressed nations and imperialism, especially U.S. imperialism. That's a basically correct position.

However I also think that there are some things that are clearly wrong in there. I pointed some of them out in that ex-

What happened to the movement of the '60s? What accounted for the lull of the 1970s, and the different character of the struggles today from what has gone before? How should that entire period be summed up so as to serve and advance revolutionary practice now? Bob Avakian, in the following interview, elucidates the sources of the often disorienting twists and turns faced by revolutionaries and the masses over the past twenty years, tracing them to the shift in the relationships between the main contradictions in the world. This interview originally appeared in issues Nos. 148, 149, 150 and 154 of the Revolutionary Worker in early 1982. [Other interviews in that series were reprinted as If There Is To Be A Revolution, There Must Be A Revolutionary Party and Nothing Is More Revolutionary Than Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought.] The interview has obvious relevance to several articles in this and earlier issues of Revolution, but its importance extends far beyond that, and for that reason is here reprinted for the first time.

cerpt, "What's Wrong With Impatience..."* that was reprinted in the *RW*. In particular there is a tendency to try to take the experience of Vietnam and mechanically project the reproduction of it throughout the third world as though it could be done everywhere there. On the one hand it says that Vietnam becomes sort of a concentration point or focal point of world contradictions, but on the other hand it doesn't apply that in the sense that it projects the idea that what's being done in Vietnam can be done everywhere in the third world. Things are more complex than that, and precisely because Vietnam became a kind of focal point and a concentration point, it's a little unusual. Not everything is, obviously, a concentration point at the same time. Similarly there is the idea of surrounding the cities by the countryside, which was taken from the experience of the Chinese struggle. In particular that whole essay hinges on extending the analogy of the anti-Japanese war in China to the world situation at that time with U.S. imperialism being cast in the role that Japan played in the struggle in China during the pivotal period in the Chinese revolution.

Now to put *Long Live the Victory of Peoples' War* in context, it was also written as part of a line struggle in the Chinese party and in opposition to the line of reliance on the Soviet Union. It was struggling against a line in the Chinese party at that time which was summing up historical experience in such a way as to erroneously project the idea that reliance on the Soviet Union and cooperation with the Soviet Union is essential and correct, in the conditions of the mid-'60s when the Soviet Union, as is pointed out in Lin Biao's essay, is betraying national liberation struggles everywhere and collaborating with U.S. imperialism in pursuit of its own developing and more strongly emerging imperialist interests. At that time the Soviet Union is collaborating with U.S. imperialism to suppress revolution and in particular to suppress national liberation struggles for fear that they will heighten contradictions and set things in motion which will disrupt and shatter the whole attempt and scheme of the Soviets at collaborating with U.S. imperialism in pursuit of the Soviet Union's own imperialist interests, and for fear that these struggles will cause the U.S. imperialists to come down on the Soviet Union, particularly at a time when the Soviet Union was unprepared for such a confrontation. So, *Long Live the Victory...* played that kind of role within the Chinese party and more broadly in the international movement in that struggle.

2, 3, Many Vietnams?

But at the same time, when *Long Live the Victory...* attempts to extend the analogy of the anti-Japanese war in China onto a world scale, it runs into some troubles. For one thing, it makes an absolute, almost a principle out of a fact

* "What's Wrong With Impatience in the Service of the International Proletariat?" (*Revolutionary Worker*, April 24, 1981)

that it correctly cites, that for a number of reasons the revolutionary movement of the proletariat in the advanced countries had been retarded, especially since World War 2. But one thing which is a problem in *Long Live the Victory...* and in fact was a general problem in all the documents that were mainly revolutionary and coming from the revolutionary camp in China was that they didn't really analyze the reasons for this retardation. And when some analysis was made, it didn't put enough emphasis on the objective situation and, ironically, it didn't see that the intensified plunder in the third world, and also certain changes that were made there to carry this out, were the underlying basis for the temporary lull and retarding of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat in the advanced countries. They didn't really get into analyzing some of the things that more recently, for example, we've been forced to analyze in order to be able to continue to advance on the revolutionary road in the context of the sharpening world situation. So the fact of that retardation is noted, but is not analyzed, and is basically absolutized, and along with this what was happening in Vietnam is presented almost as proof of the validity of this notion of repeating the Chinese experience in the anti-Japanese war, the idea that you can spread that throughout the third world.

Ironically in some ways it is somewhat similar to Che Guevara's concept of "two, three, many Vietnams." Che Guevara didn't just confine himself to Latin America. He went to the Congo at one point in the early '60s and so on. And there is some similarity with this Chinese line, although I wouldn't want to get into analyzing all the similarities and differences right now. But it's an interesting aside, somewhat ironic, because the Guevara line and the Chinese line would come sharply into conflict (maybe not so sharply then, but soon afterwards). And that was also complex because Guevara's line was incorrect, but so were some of the lines that in particular the *revisionists* in the Chinese party used to oppose Guevara and Guevara's influence. On the other hand there was a more correct opposition to Guevara coming from Mao and his revolutionary comrades, in opposition to the short-cut methods that Guevara tried to use which did contribute to his being isolated and cut down.

But in any case, *Long Live the Victory...* tries to take the idea that you can repeat or extend the Vietnam experience all throughout the third world. So while on the one hand it makes a principle out of and treats undialectically the lull, the ebb, the retreat and retarding of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat in the advanced countries, it also treats rather metaphysically the prospects for and the development of the revolutionary struggle in the third world, as though it's all uniform and there's all the same possibilities, and as if it's merely a question of the understanding and the will and determination to wage people's war. In fact, as I pointed out in "Conquer the World..." they even made the dividing line between genuine and sham Marxism whether you dare to and whether you do wage people's war and whether you support it.

This is a case where some of the more glaring errors did not show up right away because of the importance of the

Vietnam struggle at that time in particular and because of the fact that it was in the third world in general that the storm center of revolution against imperialism was concentrated. But especially with further developments since then, and by deepening our grasp of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought as an integral ideology, we can more clearly see some of the errors. The error of attempting to extend the experience and analogy of the anti-Japanese war in China onto a world scale, and to project the struggle in Vietnam throughout the third world and as the basis for encircling the imperialist citadels, in particular the U.S., begins to run up against its limitations and begins to turn into its opposite. One incorrect tendency that appears not just in *Long Live the Victory of People's War*, but in the General Line polemic* and generally in the line put forward by the Chinese, including Mao at that point, is that the other imperialists besides the U.S. are treated unevenly. The other Western imperialist powers are sometimes treated as part of the enemy camp along with the U.S., but in other contexts, even in the context of talking about possible allies for the national liberation struggles, at least some of those imperialists are treated as possible allies, if vacillating and temporary allies. They are treated as possible allies of the national liberation struggles in that period against U.S. imperialism, or it is presented as if the contradiction between them and U.S. imperialism can be made use of in such a way as to neutralize or partially and temporarily win over some of these imperialist powers to support these national liberation struggles. And this in fact was not correct. Along with this is the idea that if the fires of national liberation wars are lit up throughout the third world this will literally consume U.S. imperialism. *Long Live the Victory*... says: "U.S. imperialism like a mad bull dashing from place to place, will finally be burned to ashes in the blazing fires of the people's wars it has provoked by its own actions."

Correct Thrust – But "Left" and Right Errors

As that letter "What's Wrong With Impatience..." pointed out, I believe it's correct to overall uphold the revolutionary thrust of this kind of position in this time, because it was an attempt to make the most out of a revolutionary upsurge that was occurring in the national liberation movements in many parts of the third world. That's the correct thrust which should be upheld down to today and that attitude and the attempt to do that should be united with and learned from. But still there were these errors. And it's not simply that there was an overestimation of the situation, but along with that were certain errors of line – both "left" and right. In a little bit we'll get around to what features this *Long Live the Victory*... line has in common with the Deng Xiaoping "three worlds" theory. But it might be possible to say in

* "A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement," (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1963).

certain ways that the errors involved in *Long Live the Victory of People's War* were "left" errors in the sense that I've just been talking about, that is, overestimating the possibilities of just spreading the experience of Vietnam, or extending the experiences of China in the anti-Japanese war uniformly, and overestimating the advances that could be made and attempting to push things further than they could actually go. If on the one hand you could say there was a "left" error of that kind, there were also some tendencies expressed in *Long Live the Victory*... which called for a very broad united front of forces, and this, as I said, even implied at least certain imperialist forces – states or sections of the imperialist ruling classes – other than the U.S. imperialists.

This, too, was an attempt to extend the anti-Japanese war analogy and in part at least the Vietnam experience where there was an enemy of the nation and the overwhelming majority of the nation could be, should be and was united against that national enemy, Japan in the case of China, and the U.S. in Vietnam. This kind of invasion by a foreign imperialist power, and a war of national resistance, makes possible a very broad united front in colonial and semi-colonial countries. But the accumulating of forces and the actual political preparation for revolution in the advanced countries – the imperialist countries – was not taken up. That merged with the oversimplified and metaphysical tendency to try to project uniformly the Vietnam experience or the anti-Japanese war experience in China onto a world scale. That interpenetrates with the error of generally calling for very broad united fronts without making all the necessary distinctions. Yes, in Vietnam it was correct, but in other parts of the world at the same time, or in other situations it may not be possible and may not be correct to try to establish such a broad united front.

The situation in China was not the same, for example, after the anti-Japanese war as it was during that war. It still was correct to try to build the united front of all forces that could be united against the enemies of the time but certainly it wasn't correct to try to continue a united front with Chiang Kai-shek as in the anti-Japanese war, because that was now the very force you had to concentrate your blows against. And, leaving aside the fact that the question of strategy for revolution in the imperialist countries wasn't even addressed, another problem was that the situation isn't uniform in the third world. There were and are different situations. In some situations, even though in these countries the domination by imperialism must be broken, nevertheless the form of the struggle may at a given point more closely approximate revolutionary civil war than the kind of national war of resistance with a very broad united front that correctly characterized the struggle in China during the anti-Japanese war. In other words, it might be more analogous to the war against Chiang Kai-shek afterward. (That war was in fact a national liberation war because it was U.S. imperialism that was the bulwark behind Chiang Kai-shek and without breaking its stranglehold on China no real social change was possible; but nevertheless it has been described often as a *civil* war and did take that form with the imperialists operating

through Chiang Kai-shek and through supplying material and so on.) Plus in some countries in the third world half of the population, or nearly half, is in the urban areas — in some cases even more. While there still is a national liberation character to the struggle there, it is not the same as the situation in China before, during and after the anti-Japanese war, during the whole phase of the new democratic revolution and the national liberation struggle.

So, you get into problems when you try to project this internationally; and unfortunately this had some harmful effects, misleading influences on people in terms of thinking they could simply one-to-one reproduce the experience of the anti-Japanese war in China. This produced both "left" errors and also right errors. Promoting the idea that you ought to be able to unite a very broad array of forces when that might not be possible in a particular country and its situation within the web of world contradictions, which is a strong thrust through the Lin Biao *Long Live the Victory of People's War*, promotes errors to the right. Errors to the "left" come in the form of the tendency to overestimate the possibility to advance, to see a possibility for a uniform advance throughout the Third World.

I think that *Long Live the Victory* . . . , even though it was written by Lin Biao, was not just Lin Biao's document; it was a document of the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party including Mao, though I think that it contained errors that reflected the influence of Lin Biao and I think the influence of Lin Biao was in an opportunist direction even then, in 1965. (I'm not going to try to get into dissecting whether or not he was mainly an opportunist at that point or not, but I think there were some definite opportunist tendencies in there that were his.) Had Mao taken on the task of writing this document and not had to unite with Lin Biao at that point, the document would have been better than *Long Live the Victory of People's War* was. It wouldn't have had some of the errors that are in there. But on the other hand, I do think that the general thrust of it was the position of the Chinese leadership including Mao, and there is a basically correct thrust in the sense that there is a basically revolutionary thrust. It is an attempt to figure out how to make the greatest advances against the main enemy on a world scale at that time. It does identify the most powerful reactionary force, the head of the imperialist camp at the time, it does identify where the main revolutionary storm center was and it does attempt to give impetus to the one against the other. In that sense and in that aspect it is correct. However, the way in which it attempts to do that, the line it puts forward, and the strategy it projects, contains a number of fairly significant errors.

Revolutionary Nationalists

To make it a little more provocative and sharpen it up, the Lin Biao line is basically what the revolutionary nationalist position in China was; it is the position held at that time by the most radical of the bourgeois democrats in China. Lin

Biao had not really ruptured beyond being a radical bourgeois democrat. Nevertheless, given the situation at the time — a period of upsurge of national liberation struggles — and the concrete position of China in relationship both to the imperialists and to the revolutionary peoples, given the relationship of the different contradictions in the world, there was a section of this stratum in China that took a strong revolutionary position against imperialism, even if on a revolutionary nationalist basis and not a really thoroughly or fundamentally Marxist-Leninist one. That's different than Mao. But I think that it was possible for Marxist-Leninists to unite with these forces at that time, at least up to a point, and that included within China, even within the same party.

Despite all the Hoxha-ites and their erroneous ideas of pure, monolithic parties, and the purity of Marxism-Leninism and so on, things are not pure and monolithic and even within the party you will find yourself forced to unite with people whose position if not broken with will lead them in the future to be against the thrust of revolution, and against the Marxist-Leninist line. But for the time their position does not bring them into antagonism with the Marxist-Leninist line. That occurs broadly in society and also even within the party, though on a different basis and a different level because these people in the party uphold Marxism-Leninism in name and present their theories and political programs in terms of Marxism-Leninism. Maybe even in their own subjective understanding they think that they are Marxist-Leninists; that's impossible to gauge, but they present themselves as Marxist-Leninists and present their positions and arguments as Marxist-Leninist. This is different than people outside the party who either are openly not Marxist-Leninists or even sometimes opposed to Marxism-Leninism, but at various junctures take a revolutionary position from a nationalist or radical democratic position. You will find such people outside the party and you will find them of a different variety and in a different context inside the party.

At that point in the 1960s there was a good section of bourgeois democrats in China that was driven to take a radical democratic and even revolutionary position in the world. Such a position did not bring them into antagonism with the whole upsurge of national liberation struggle that was going on throughout various parts of the third world. You saw the same phenomenon in the U.S. People whose ideology was still ultimately bourgeois, who hadn't really ruptured with bourgeois democracy, still took a very revolutionary stance. I'm talking about forces that took a genuinely revolutionary stance, or a radical stance of opposition to the system, especially among the Black people and other oppressed nationalities in the U.S. itself during the height of the '60s movement; that was a very real and significant phenomenon. The same thing was true throughout the third world in general, and also was true in China. And those forces tended to group around Lin Biao.

I think that it was necessary for Mao to unite with them. And under the conditions, they influence you and you influence them. Principally, you influence them if you're on

the correct road and you maintain a principled position and fight for it — which Mao did. Mainly you influence them, but they also influence you, and the times and the conditions that drive you together influence you and pull you in certain directions. So Lin Biao is not in the camp of Mao, in the sense of being a Marxist-Leninist; still there's able to be unity there and Mao influences him, but secondarily, he and the conditions that make this unity possible temporarily also influence Mao.

On the other hand, Deng Xiaoping represents a wing of these bourgeois democrats which tends to come to the fore when there is not an upsurge but a lull and a reflux, an ebbing of the tide of the revolutionary movement. These kind of bourgeois democrats who are not so radical, who are much more openly reformist, capitulationist and pro-imperialist are the ones among that general stratum of bourgeois democrats who tend to come to the fore and have the upper hand. Not inevitably, not mechanically, not directly and one-to-one as a result of the change in the overall conditions, but the conditions tend to foster and support them. They did not triumph inevitably, but the way the contradictions were shaping up in the world as a whole in the mid-'70s tended to favor these forces. Much more than Lin Biao, they tended to be that section among the bourgeois democrats who came to the fore. Now they are not absolutely distinct, pure sections that are completely unrelated to each other. Some people may have been in one at one time and in another at another time.

Analogy to Black Liberation Struggle

Just for a second let's put this phenomenon in terms of the U.S. situation, which people in the U.S. maybe are more familiar with (although we don't want to promote narrowness and nationalism and chauvinism), but just to put it in those terms for a second and use an analogy: In the Black liberation struggle, there were a lot of people whose ideology was still ultimately bourgeois and even whose politics were ultimately reformist, who were however extremely radical — it would even be correct to call them revolutionary in their stance. They were revolutionary nationalists during the upsurge of the '60s. Some of them were out championing the upsurges of the Black masses and seeking to give expression to them politically and organizationally. That was wrapped up, of course, with a great deal of what was called cultural nationalism at the time, openly bourgeois nationalism. But the types that came to the forefront roughly in the late '70s, were much more your three-piece suit types. You know, the ones with a briefcase who are "beating the man at his own game" or "hustling him" and who may or may not wear a Dashiki, but still basically the only thing they have in common with what was going on earlier is some of the rhetoric and some of the external forms. They may have some of the cultural trappings of the earlier period, but it no longer has the same content and thrust of "fuck you and fuck your

whole system and your racist oppression" and is much more an expression of upwardly mobile bourgeois aspirations. It's like Sister Sledge with her all-American girls theme. Even when Curtis Mayfield was singing, "we're moving on up," it divided very sharply into two. It had the bourgeois upwardly mobile character to it, but also was more speaking for what the masses were doing, even though it was certainly not the fullest or most radical expression of it. But now, "we're all-American girls" is an expression of that negative side in the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois strata.

It's not fair to take Andy Young as an example of this because he never was a radical; I don't imagine he even pretended to be a revolutionary, but he did pretend to be a so-called civil rights activist. He isn't really an example, but there are others who were active in that time, who even took a radical, revolutionary stance and have since gone the three-piece suit route. It's not just that the same people have changed their stance, there's also different strata who have come more to the fore. There were some people who put down their Molotov cocktails and picked up their briefcase. Some of them were sincere about what they were doing when they were throwing Molotov cocktails and that really was their stance. And some were only pimping off it at the time and maybe didn't throw them but assumed the posture after the danger was over. There were both kinds. And, of course, there were also some who didn't give in and capitulate, even if they became confused or temporarily demobilized, disoriented.

In the mid-to-late-'70s in the U.S. too, this was part of an overall world phenomenon; the U.S. had its own dialectic but it was in an overall sense part of this larger phenomenon, particularly part of the larger ebb in the revolutionary struggle. And this phenomenon of the bourgeois nationalists in the U.S. can in some ways be used as an analogy for what happened on a world scale and also for what happened in China. You had these different wings, or sectors within the general group of bourgeois democratic forces, some of whom were extremely radical, even revolutionary in their stance, and some others who were much more reformist and openly capitulationist. And it's the latter — whether the same people or others — but the latter as a social phenomenon that came much more to the fore from the mid-'70s on.

What's in Common?

The "three worlds" theory has some things in common with the Lin Biao line in the sense that it also treats the prospect of revolution in the advanced countries as null and non-existent, and insofar as this "three worlds" theory makes an analysis of it, it attributes it entirely to the victory of the revisionist parties; that is, it just uses that as another example of how the Soviet international apparatus and the Soviet bloc and its extensions inside the West is holding back everything and has a strong, unbreakable hold — in other words, another reason why the Soviet Union is the main

danger. That's a subjective analysis of the reasons for the temporary (even if temporary means a few decades) retarding, temporary lull, and temporary setback in the revolutionary movement of the proletariat in the advanced countries. And the *objective* basis for all this — and much more significantly than that, the contradictions within the objective basis for that and the changes, motion, development and the prospects for that to turn into its opposite, that is, for revolutionary prospects to develop and ripen at least in some of these countries for the first time in a long time — all that is ignored and thrown out the window. But there is that element of similarity between that Deng Xiaoping analysis and the Lin Biao line, even though the latter one is a radical expression.

Also, in the Lin Biao *Long Live the Victory of People's War* there is, as I pointed out, a tendency to project a very broad united front. In the "three worlds" theory what's preserved is the bourgeois forces part of that united front. Whereas Lin Biao said, "rely on the revolutionary masses" and did talk about the worker-peasant alliance as the backbone of the revolution — that basically correct, Marxist-Leninist thrust is all gone in the "three worlds" theory. And as for the whole idea of relying on the masses as a revolutionary force . . . well, the idea of making revolution itself is thrown out. If you're not going to make revolution, there's not too much point in relying on the masses either, because really that's all they're good for. They're not good for carrying out all this bourgeois stuff. The bourgeoisie is better for that.

To get at it another way, the "three worlds" theory is what "the third world will take the lead" is at a time when the forces in the third world who have the upper hand are much more the bourgeois forces and even the ones who are openly the props of imperialism. Temporarily in the late '70s that was more the character of things than in this tremendous revolutionary upsurge of the '60s, when even if a lot of the leadership was petty-bourgeois and not Marxist-Leninist, not representing the proletariat, nevertheless, it was a revolutionary expression. In the mid-to-late '70s, in this period of lull and ebb on a world scale, what you have coming to the fore temporarily is a lot more of these bourgeois forces and their "militant" activity, is the kind of things that are cited in the "three worlds" theory — all these sheiks and feudal princes, bourgeois comprador forces and all the rest of them trying to negotiate with the imperialists for a little bit better deal or use one imperialist bloc against the other. In the shifting of forces in the mid-'70s, there was a little bit more opening than there was before or certainly than there is now for these forces to do this kind of thing. Not that there's no more maneuvering room now, but certainly there was a unique and temporary situation in the mid-'70s which gave some sustenance to this "three worlds" theory type of thing.

So, we get the Better Business Bureau expression of third world-ism; this is what the "three worlds" theory is. It's your Chamber of Commerce wing of the bourgeois democrats, instead of your radical democratic, revolutionary nationalist section. In general you can see the possibility of

unity, and sometimes even the real importance of unity with those latter kind of forces. Whereas those who are in fact the props and retainers of imperialism obviously must be targets of the revolution. It wasn't just in China, but it was throughout the Third World in general that these kind of forces got more initiative and had the upper hand more than they had during the period of revolutionary upsurge of the '60s. They came to the fore in China and they also sought out and projected theories as an extension of their attempts to unite (as bourgeois will unite, that is, unite with ME on top) with their kind who also were getting a little bit of initiative in other parts of the third world. Deng Xiaoping was seeking out his own types, both in terms of the bourgeois types in the imperialist countries who were the overlords of the third world, but also the lackeys and props of imperialism inside the third world countries themselves, as he was maneuvering to be inside China.

So analyzing what there is in common between Lin and Deng also brings out the differences in the kind of expression that Lin Biao represented in the '60s versus the political programmatic thrust that Deng Xiaoping represented in the mid-to-late-'70s — and he still represents it. But overall there is an ultimate similarity between the two in the fact that neither of them represents a rupture beyond bourgeois democracy. Bourgeois democracy is what they all have in common in terms of their ultimate framework and their ultimate point of view, but they are very sharply opposed in terms of the expression that takes, and also sharply opposed are the kinds of circumstances which tend to bring forward and give the initiative to the one and then the other.

The '60s-'70s Shift

Why did Mao and Lin Biao come into such sharp conflict? Well, there were a lot of different reasons, having to do with the revisionist lines of Lin Biao and the fact that he refused to advance with the continuing advance of the revolution. But also there is the fact that on the international plane, his line ended up capitulationist to Soviet social-imperialism. If people have trouble understanding how Lin Biao could be anti-Soviet in the way that is reflected in *Long Live the Victory of People's War*, but not be a *thoroughgoing* anti-Soviet revisionist, they should look at people who in the '60s were against Soviet revisionism and now are apologists for Soviet revisionism. That phenomenon is significant in the movement in the U.S. and around the world. Some of the forces who were in leadership of national liberation struggles — whether in Palestine, Africa, Latin America, Asia, a number of places — with the changing expression of the contradictions in the world and the shifting forces, have gone over to being pro-Soviet and apologists for Soviet imperialism at a time when it's pushing out much more ag-

gressively in confrontation with the U.S. and its bloc in the world. In the "Basic Principles . . ." document we called attention to this type of force. And Lin Biao was a major exponent of this view—the view that the Soviet Union was bad, it was revisionist, but it was socialist, and a bad socialist country or a revisionist socialist country is better than an imperialist country.

Look at the CWP [Communist Workers Party] in the U.S. today. That's their position. If you want to understand this phenomenon, they are also people who in their best expression have been radical democrats and radical nationalists. I hesitate to call them revolutionary nationalists. Maybe some of them have revolutionary sentiments. They are bourgeois democrats in the final analysis. If you want to take the U.S. movement, again they're a good example of this phenomenon of Lin Biaoism, although at this point their line is not the same as Lin Biao's. And if Lin Biao had survived to this point, his line might not be the same either. Or if he did cling to that line he would be an insignificant figure because there's not the same kind of basis for that line as there was then.

Lin Biao and Mao came into conflict because already by the early '70s, even by '71, which is as long as Lin Biao hung around, that kind of line was already beginning to run up against its limitations. There was a shift going on. In retrospect you can see it a lot more clearly; U.S. imperialism, while it was still trying to win the war in Vietnam, was also moving toward a position of trying to get out of Vietnam on the least damaging basis to its international interests and position. There already was that kind of maneuvering beginning, which became tied up with the contradictions between China and the Soviet Union, China and the U.S., and the U.S. and the Soviet Union. All these different contradictions interpenetrated. Lin Biao basically thought that it was better to ally with the Soviets and on that basis "support" the Vietnamese than it was to enter into certain relations and even a certain kind of alliance with the U.S. to deal with the Soviet threat.

To this day, and looking back over these events, I still can't say that in principle the idea of entering into certain agreements with the U.S. to deal with the Soviet threat to China, especially agreements in a more limited tactical sense, was in and of itself wrong—or would be wrong as a matter of principle. In other words, when we analyze what China was doing and when we try to evaluate its policies, we have to actually analyze the necessity it was up against. Then we can determine whether it kept the larger picture in mind and whether it correctly dealt not only with the necessity that it faced but the objective conditions and the necessity facing the international proletariat as a whole. There were significant errors made, that's obvious. But there was a situation where I think it's very clear the Soviets were planning to

* "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, Jan. 1, 1981.

launch a major attack on China, very probably a nuclear attack to knock out China's developing nuclear installations, and very probably other facilities besides. It was a real threat and a real danger, and it was an immediate one. Nixon in his memoirs says that the Soviets were at the point of testing to see what would be the U.S. response if they went ahead and did this, and that means they were quite serious about it. So it's wrong to condemn the Chinese out of hand and state as a matter of principle in an absolute way that they should not have made certain temporary agreements with the U.S. and that this represented betrayal of principle and of revolution and of the interests of the international proletariat. Now that's one thing.

On the other hand, the line that developed was an attempt by Mao to apply the lessons of the anti-Japanese war in China in different circumstances and on a world scale. I was saying earlier that Mao influenced Lin Biao, and Lin Biao and the conditions that made unity with Lin Biao possible and necessary (at least up to a certain point) influenced Mao in turn. So here on the other side, unity of a sort and up to a point became possible with Zhou Enlai and the kind of forces he represented; and Mao fought to maintain the correct line in command and influence those people, or to impose certain conditions, limitations and necessity on them. But they also did the same with him, and you can't say there was no influence. I'm not talking about some sort of metaphysical process where things rub off on people because they have contact with each other and you have no freedom to influence to what degree and in what ways that happens, I'm just talking about a general tendency.

Here we see from a different angle that Mao was again attempting to apply the anti-Japanese war analogy, which was that they singled out one main enemy among the imperialists, not that Mao ever said the others *weren't* imperialists, or that Chiang Kai-shek wasn't ultimately a target of the revolution, that he was a long-term and permanent ally of the revolution. He never said those things. He said the opposite, and educated people to the opposite, and to the overall long-term picture of the struggle against all imperialism and reaction. But he did make a distinction, and he did develop the policy, which was correct under those conditions, of forging a united front with Chiang Kai-shek and ultimately that meant unity of a limited and conditional sort in China with the imperialists, particularly the British and U.S., who were behind Chiang Kai-shek. In the context of the anti-Japanese war in China, that was correct. I think that viewing it with the perspective of more experience since then, of historical development and of the work and struggle to sum that up, we can and should still say it's correct. It's not just correct because in the short run it won out, because that's opportunist and pragmatist if that's all you say. But looking at it overall, even with the deepening understanding that we're struggling to forge around some of these questions, and the criticisms that we make of certain aspects, even some important aspects, of Mao's policies as a secondary thing in terms of his overall role, certainly a very secondary thing in that context—still I don't think this anti-

Japanese united front was wrong as a basic policy and the way it was applied. It was necessary and correct.

But again, it was wrong for Mao to project that experience onto a world scale in such a way that it meant on a world scale singling out one imperialist power or one imperialist superpower and its bloc (that is, the Soviet Union) as the main enemy and the most dangerous source of war, and putting it in the role of Japan. If you want to extend the analogy, China was seen in an analogous position to the base areas within China during the anti-Japanese war, with the people of the world as a whole being like the people of China at that time. There was acknowledgement of differences regionally and within countries, but still overall it was seen as necessary to wage wars of national liberation converging against the Soviet Union with China being the base area.

Mao No Capitulator

I think this kind of anti-Soviet united front in the way that I have described it, was the basic approach of Mao and defined the basic policies he attempted to implement by the early 1970s. This brought him into conflict with the Lin Biao forces, who were in fact taking a position that would have meant capitulation to the most immediate and direct enemy of China—the Soviet Union—and would have meant betrayal of the Chinese revolution as well as the people of the world by selling out to Soviet social-imperialism. But on the other hand Mao's approach brought him into unity with forces who wanted to use this anti-Soviet united front policy and the tactics associated with it to capitulate to U.S. imperialism. Mao's intentions, actions and policies during this period included the thrust of *not* capitulating. In other words, he was maintaining and carrying forward the same stand he had always had of not capitulating to imperialism and reaction from any quarter. That was made clear during the anti-Japanese war. They never would have had the Chinese revolution afterwards if Mao had not prepared for it, including doing ideological and political preparation and exposing even the imperialist and reactionary forces with whom they were temporarily allied. It's very clear that his actions and intentions were aimed at doing the same thing during this period of the early '70s up to his death, when he was trying to give leadership to a policy of the anti-Soviet united front internationally.

That's clear for example in the Henry Kissinger book. Kissinger tells the story about when they were initiating the U.S.-China official relationship, working with Zhou Enlai on a draft of what became the Shanghai communiqué. The U.S. drew up a draft which was basically a typical bourgeois diplomatic statement and Zhou Enlai approved it. Then Zhou came back later and had to give this whole rap about how Chairman Mao had said that we can't have this kind of statement and the differing and opposing positions of the two sides have to be clear as well as the points on which they agree. What was added was a whole dimension on the part of

the Chinese on their support for revolution in the world, which obviously was not mere rhetoric, but was Mao working to keep their independence and their independent line and making clear to the revolutionary forces and the oppressed masses of the world that revolution was still necessary and the Chinese were still supporting it. That could not be sold out, in Mao's view, because of the necessity as he saw it of certain agreements during that period of time with U.S. imperialism. But despite steps like these, and Mao's clearly revolutionary intentions, it was still not correct to extend that earlier (and correct) anti-Japanese united front policy onto a world scale and in the conditions which were beginning to sharpen up in the '70s. We cannot avoid saying that it was incorrect, and we cannot avoid the conclusion that Mao himself—and not just the revisionists in China—was seeking to implement this policy.

One thing as an aside here; it's absolutely ridiculous for anyone to on the one hand uphold the policy carried out by the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership before, during and after World War 2, and on the other hand turn around and criticize Mao for implementing a similar policy (and frankly, done in a better way) during the period of the early to mid-'70s. If you're going to criticize Mao, you certainly have to criticize the policy of the Soviet Union under Stalin, and I think that in fact you should, and in a much more thorough way, criticize it because it had the same weaknesses, the same erroneous basis, but *not* some of the same strengths and *not* some of the independence (as represented by that episode around the Shanghai communiqué, as related by Kissinger). But still with all that I think you would have to say this policy was incorrect and not only did it bring Mao into unity with forces like Zhou Enlai and even in a certain limited way at a certain point with Deng Xiaoping, but also by Mao's furthering this policy, even if in a way it was opposed to these revisionists, I believe it also gave them more ground, more initiative and strengthened them in their struggle to betray revolution internationally and, as a crucial part of that, to betray it in China, to restore capitalism there and to sell out to imperialism. It's very important to sum up this error; you can't avoid summing this up if we want to really draw the most profound lessons.

All this is not to say that if a basically correct line had been upheld and fought for, if Mao had not made the error of trying to project the lessons of China during the anti-Japanese war into a different situation and onto a world scale 30 years later, then the revolutionaries would have won in China in 1976. Even had they not made those errors, that's no guarantee they would have definitely succeeded in that there would not have been the temporary triumph of revisionism and the restoration of capitalism in China. Just having a correct line does not in the short run guarantee that. Mao himself pointed that out: sometimes you can have the correct line but the forces of reaction are temporarily stronger and gain a temporary victory. But still, in terms of the overall development of the revolutionary movement, we would be further ahead had a correct line been fought for and put forward not only around the crucial questions where that

was the case in terms of the class struggle within China itself, but specifically in terms of the international line.

Frankly, there's an irony here because the very last thrust that was made by the revolutionaries before they were defeated, right before and right after Mao's death, was an attempt to popularize the very important analysis of bourgeois-democrats becoming capitalist roaders. They were trying to point out the limitations of the bourgeois democratic outlook, but what was missing from their analysis was the expression of that outlook around the national question and around the international situation. On the one hand, here were the proletarian revolutionaries trying to fight bourgeois democrats and expose how they haven't made a radical rupture, how bourgeois democrats become capitalist roaders as the socialist revolution enters the socialist period and advances are made; on the other hand, here these same revolutionaries were taking a line which deviated in the direction of nationalism and reflects bourgeois democracy in that way. So they were undermining the very base on which they were attempting to fight these things.

That's not saying that having any kind of united front with any kind of reactionary force, even imperialism under certain conditions, having certain agreements or relations with them, is automatically betrayal or a reflection of bourgeois-democratic thinking. But concretely in those conditions it was an error in the direction of nationalism and ultimately an error in the direction of bourgeois democracy—not a thorough rupture with it in that regard. It went along with promoting bourgeois democracy, nationalism, even in fact chauvinism in the imperialist countries other than the two superpowers (this was even true in the U.S.). It promoted national defensism, social-chauvinism, defense of the fatherland in the name of the great anti-Soviet patriotic war, war against the Soviet main danger.

So even while the revolutionaries were fighting the bourgeois democrats who were turning or had turned into capitalist roaders, they were undermining some of that very ground by their international line—in which they found themselves to a significant degree in unity with these same bourgeois democrats. Of course, we don't know how the overall struggle that was being waged would have been carried out, what expression it would have taken in the field of international line had the revolutionaries won out. Maybe carrying through that struggle and what it would have taken to win would have caused them to call into question some of these very lines and policies and to change them, I don't know. But that's speculation; what we do know is that, while the revolutionaries were very clearly opposed to these capitalist roaders on the question of maintaining independence and not capitulating to imperialism and reaction, at the same time they had a common ground, that they should not have had under those conditions, with the policy of a united front against the Soviet Union internationally. That's on the one hand, Mao and his comrades made errors; but on the other hand, theirs was an entirely different class viewpoint than the viewpoint of counterrevolution, of

restoring capitalism and selling out to imperialism, on the part of those who were grouped around Zhou Enlai and particularly around Deng Xiaoping in the last period.

Shifting of World Forces

It's also necessary to sum up some things about the objective situation in order to be able to most profoundly sum up the errors of the revolutionaries in China, and in order to be able to oppose the counterrevolutionary revisionists there, as well as to be able to oppose the other errors and the opposite pole of revisionist stupidity, as for example the line put forward by the Albanians in the last few years or any of those who would be soft on or even apologize for Soviet social-imperialism. To be able to analyze and deal with a very complex and sharpening situation, to be able to correctly assess friends and enemies, it's necessary to understand what was happening in the world in the late '60s and early '70s, in particular with regard to the role of the Soviet Union and some of the things that were favoring it then and which still have relevance and importance today. This gets us back again to the problems with Lin Biao and the *Long Live the Victory of People's War* analysis. While that analysis talks about the need for a Marxist-Leninist party to lead the struggle, one of the problems with the attempt to project a uniform extension of the Vietnam experience around the world, or the Chinese experience from earlier in the anti-Japanese war into the present-day, third-world-wide scale, is that in general the forces that had the initiative and were mainly the leadership of these national liberation struggles were, in one form or another, bourgeois or petty-bourgeois forces. Under the conditions of the time, these forces might have been taking a genuinely anti-imperialist stand, even a revolutionary stand, but changes were taking place in the world. This had its effects whether you're talking about Cuba, Algeria, Palestine, a number of struggles in Africa, or ultimately whether you're talking about Vietnam itself. Because the Soviets were stabbing the Vietnamese struggle in the back and attempting to sell it out and suppress it in the mid-'60s, the more pro-revolutionary, anti-revisionist and pro-Chinese tendencies (and undoubtedly some forces) gained some ground within Vietnam—perhaps to no small degree on a pragmatic basis. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, because of the shifting relation of forces in the world and the changing expression of world contradictions, these were not the forces and tendencies that gained the upper hand in the Vietnamese party—to say nothing of a lot of these other parties.

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. This, together with the driving compulsion of Soviet social-imperialism itself to redivide the world and the things that it had to do, brought about a change increasingly through the late '60s and into the '70s. In particular there was a change in the whole Soviet stance and policy in the world vis-à-vis the U.S. and toward struggles opposed to U.S. imperialism. While of course the Soviet Union still sought to stab these struggles in the back, and use them for its own ends and suppress any genuine revolutionary struggle, the Soviet Union nevertheless would supply arms when before it wouldn't; it would in fact give backing to struggles that before it would openly oppose.

Under these conditions 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. Even though we can say that it's been proved possible to puncture and batter U.S. imperialism, it's not easy. 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 toward 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.

So, here's China in the early '70s in a difficult position where if you want to put it in crude, almost bourgeois, terms it can't compete with the Soviets on that level. And the Marxist-Leninists in China didn't want to, either. But nobody, neither them nor even the revisionists, could compete on that kind of a level. Even those who wanted to use these struggles for their own ends couldn't compete with the Soviets on that kind of level. The revolutionaries in China were fighting for a policy (and in a large part it was implemented) of extending genuine internationalist aid to these struggles, charging little or often nothing for the arms they were supplying, fighting for the line of sending Marxist-Leninist literature along with the technical equipment. They were waging ideological struggle on a principled basis among the forces within this movement, and attempting to build up the Marxist-Leninist forces. But there's a problem. And the problem, to put it provocatively, is you can't make people be Marxist-Leninists if they don't want to be. And you're dealing with the fact that a Marxist-Leninist line doesn't always win out. In fact, it's the line that demands—because reality demands, and as a reflection of that, the Marxist-Leninist line demands—that you take the most arduous path, and one that involves the most sacrifices. And so, in the short run, things don't always favor the Marxist-Leninist forces.

Soviets in the '30s, China in the '70s

In a number of ways, the kind of line the Chinese revolutionaries were fighting for, and the forces, the tendencies that they were representing and seeking to help come to the fore, were suffering setbacks in the face of the changing conditions, and the changing stands and tactics of the Soviet social-imperialists. There's an analogy here to what happened in the Soviet Union in the '30s after some of its attempts to support revolutionary movements (including some of its errors) led to frustrating results, even crippling and devastating defeats such as in Germany. There was then a kind of retrenchment of forces and tendencies, both socially and also even within individual leaders such as Stalin. They tended to retrench and adopt a more nationalist position—a position of, "well, I guess we have to defend what we've got," which converges with defending the fatherland, or the "socialist fatherland." That comes to the center, and you lose sight of the fact that while there may be temporary defeats due to the developing and sharpening contradictions, the opportunities and the prospects for advance may actually ripen and increase exactly as everything comes to a head. This includes the need to figure out how to defend what you do have to the greatest degree on the best basis—that is, overall as a subordinate part of the international struggle and in a way that seeks to enhance the whole international movement.

It seems to me the same kind of phenomena occurred in China partly on the basis of some of the setbacks that were being suffered internationally. Not so much in Vietnam, ironically that struggle was not losing, in fact it was winning, but there were some other struggles that had run up against their limitations, were either getting bogged down, were suffering defeats, or weren't getting off the ground, depending on the concrete circumstances. Some even got drowned in blood and crushed—temporarily but in a fairly thorough, if temporary way. And beyond that, even within those struggles that weren't suffering such setbacks at the time, the Marxist-Leninist forces and line were suffering setbacks, in particular vis-à-vis the Soviet revisionists and their influence, their forces and allies. So in this kind of context, somewhat analogous to the Soviet Union in the early and mid-'30s, there was a retrenching in China. The political result was the uniting around the line of an anti-Soviet united front, analyzing the Soviet Union as the main danger on a world scale, and losing sight again of how the sharpening contradictions would also mean, not only more difficulty and more dangers in the period ahead, but also increasing opportunities and the prospects for revolution and for advance, taking the world as a whole.

And again, this related to some of the limitations of the Lin Biao line and of revolutionary nationalist upsurges with a Marxist-Leninist current of varying kinds, and of varying strength within them. The limitations of all that began to much more sharply assert themselves in this whole changing situation of the late '60s and particularly in the early '70s. And as that began to happen, the opposite pole of the Lin Biao-type errors, and the one which has no revolutionary ex-

pression, but has an openly capitulationist expression of the bourgeois-democratic outlook, began to assert itself much more strongly. Even the revolutionaries were pulled toward that because of some deviations toward nationalism and methodological limitations in how they tried to sum up and apply the lessons of the past struggles that they'd been a part of and, more broadly, some errors in summing up and applying the lessons of the international communist movement, particularly around World War 2. They had summed up basically that the Comintern line around World War 2 was correct, but the problem was that there was a capitulationist tendency within that which was to a large degree fostered and encouraged by Stalin and the Comintern, but which also had its expression within most of the parties that were a part of the Third International. The Chinese Marxist-Leninists summed up *that* was what was wrong but the overall line was correct. And they generally tried to apply the same line that was applied in World War 2, and in particular they tried to extend the experience that *they* specifically had in the anti-Japanese war onto a world scale. That's where their own errors interconnected with the openly capitulationist stand of the Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping-type forces—even though there was a qualitative difference, and ultimately an open antagonism between the forces grouped around Mao, who were overall upholding a revolutionary line while making significant errors of this kind, and the forces grouped around Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping and that whole counter-revolutionary farrago grouped around them, which unfortunately won a temporary victory and now are in power with various differing and conflicting tendencies.

There are real reasons why the Soviet Union was able to make headway and why sticking to and upholding a Marxist-Leninist line became more difficult in many instances within some of these revolutionary movements in the third world at that point. In the imperialist countries, too, there were difficulties of a not totally different nature: bourgeois and petty-bourgeois tendencies and forces, tendencies toward reformism and capitulation toward imperialism (often in the form of capitulation to Soviet social-imperialism with a socialist mask). These tendencies were temporarily strengthened—not uniformly, not without contradiction, not everywhere and all the time, but as a general phenomenon this was occurring. And this was a factor contributing to the erroneous position and errors taken up and made by Mao and those forces grouped around him.

We have to learn not only from the heroic contributions of these revolutionaries, but also from these errors, and we have to sum up very deeply both the objective and subjective aspects that contributed to these errors and to the defeats that were suffered. This is particularly important because today is not a time when there's been a tremendous revolutionary upsurge and now there's an ebb; instead we're in a period when the ebb is beginning to give way to something else. We are approaching an historic conjuncture on a world scale where all these contradictions are, as Stalin correctly described it, being gathered together into a single knot and thrown on the scales for resolution. This is an important

analysis as long as we don't understand it to mean (and Stalin didn't put that forward) they all literally become one contradiction, but they are much more closely interknit and interconnected with each other at this point, they are all brought to a head and thrown on the scale for resolution. And in that light it's all the more important and urgent that we sum up the objective and subjective factors leading to this temporary ebb, and also how that influenced the terrain on which the revolutionary leaders such as Mao were struggling. We can only sum this up correctly by looking at the overall development of the contradictions and the ways in which there was a shift in the situation and conditions. We can't do it by just ignoring the necessity that posed itself, nor of course can we do it by failing to recognize that given that, they still made errors. Not that they would have been guaranteed to win or not suffer any setbacks if they hadn't made those errors, but given the necessity, they still in some aspects (again, secondary but still important!) responded to and incorrectly dealt with that necessity.

Mao's Contributions, Our Tasks

To sum up the specific point of what there is in common with *Long Live the Victory of People's War* and the Deng Xiaoping "three worlds" theory, and how does Mao relate to the one and the other: you could say that there was some of Mao in each, but in a qualitative sense he was different from both. He was different in the sense that he was a Marxist-Leninist—whereas the Lin Biao line, even *Long Live the Victory of People's War*, had errors and deviations which reflect revolutionary nationalism and bourgeois-democratic thinking as opposed to Marxism-Leninism, and on the other hand, the "three worlds" theory is openly capitulationist and counter-revolutionary. So, you could say there is some of Mao and Mao's positions in each, but Mao is qualitatively different from both of them. Mao was a revolutionary and a Marxist-Leninist who advanced both Marxism-Leninism in the realm of theory and also the struggle of the international proletariat concretely—advanced them, in fact, to new and unprecedented heights.

Just one point that I think we should further add here: it's not so simple a question as the ideological question of whether you dare to make revolution or whether you become conservative and just simply try to hang on to what you have. I mean, Mao said a number of times after they had power, that we came from the caves of Yenan, we fought for years in the hills, and if we have to we'll go back to them. And he said it in the context where he was putting it on the line; it wasn't just empty bombast and rhetoric, he put it on the line. Mao said this in the context of inner-party struggles and in the face of threats of attack from the imperialists, so I think it clearly was his stand that for the interests of the revolution he'd be willing to take a temporary step back. He did that in a more limited but important way for example during the struggle against Chiang Kai-shek in 1947, when

they temporarily abandoned the center that they had in Yenan in order to lure in Chiang Kai-shek more deeply and to be able to annihilate his forces and win victory throughout the whole country. I think Mao was ready to do that again on a broader scale, even taking into account the possibility of imperialist attack on China, and also the class struggle against the bourgeoisie within China, particularly the revisionist forces within the party. In the face of the one or the other or both, he was ready to do that.

That basic stand is indispensable and without it you never could be a Marxist-Leninist and never could contribute to advancing the revolution. It's basic to any revolutionary, and to any revolutionary outlook, any revolutionary program. Nevertheless, it's not enough. There's still the question of what political line you have and there's also the question of correct versus incorrect methodology, even in someone like Mao. Mao made tremendous contributions in the area of philosophy, Marxist-Leninist methodology and outlook in general, but there were still some aspects of his methodology that were incorrect, and in political line, some tendencies toward nationalism, which were in some ways a significant (even though secondary) counter-current to his tremendous contributions. So it's not simply a question of do you have the interests of revolution at heart, or even more than that, are you willing to risk what you have in order to maintain principle and to continue fighting for revolution. There's also the question of methodology and especially the question of political line—the struggle around political line and what's your understanding and what the concrete actions flowing from that are in the realm of political line. Mao's errors, for example, their expression in terms of anti-Soviet united front, were not due to the fact that he was freaked out or panicked in the face of the Soviet threat or because he was afraid of a Soviet attack on China and afraid to risk what had already been gained. The mistakes stemmed from some errors in methodology and some erroneous political tendencies which found their expression in a sharp way in the '70s in terms of this united front against the Soviet Union policy. That's very important to sum up, because, again, clearly in Mao—and in a qualitatively different way I would even say than in Stalin—there was that willingness to risk what had already been won; there was the insistence on the necessity to do that rather than to give up principle and sacrifice the revolution. There was that ideological stand on Mao's part. But what that proves is that on the one hand that's indispensable, but on the other hand just that is not enough. And we have to learn and sum up more deeply than that.

The '70s: The Appearance & the Essence

Q: Why don't we continue with this thing about coming out of the '60s into the '70s, and talk a little bit more about the '70s?

BA: In "Conquer the World . . ." the point is stressed with respect to some of these tendencies and line deviations, that we have to look first of all and most importantly to the international arena and in that context look at the situation inside any country, rather than the other way around, rather than ignoring the larger international arena. Some of the things we touched on before can perhaps be brought together here a little bit more. We talked about the U.S. in terms of some of the neo-colonial policies it carried out in much of the third world, or the equivalent of neo-colonialism that it practiced in Latin America, Africa and so on. And, on the other hand, we also talked about how Vietnam was both consciously and deliberately treated by the Kennedy administration and U.S. imperialism in general, as a test case in their attempts to suppress the national liberation struggles of the third world against imperialism—and how that turned into its opposite. Vietnam became the tail of the tiger that they couldn't let go of. And in the long run, it contributed to greatly weakening U.S. imperialism. But along with that we should more generally talk about the fact that in the aftermath of the last historic world conjuncture, around World War 2, there was a certain restructuring of capital internationally in that part of the world which was controlled by the imperialists and dominated in particular by U.S. imperialism, not only in the advanced countries, but, for a certain time and in particular as a concentrated expression of this, in the third world.

Specifically there were some changes in the late '50s, and, as a concentrated development, in the early '60s, with the Alliance for Progress in Latin America, the White Revolution in Iran, and similar programs and developments in a number of other countries—which both because of their position in world relations and because of their own situation domestically, their own particular features, were situated in a position where these changes could be brought about. There were some changes, not only in policies and in the superstructure of the imperialist domination of these countries, but there were also some significant changes in the economic base. While these changes, of course, did not change the relationship between imperialism and these countries, that is, did not in any way alter or, certainly, eliminate imperialist domination and distortion of these countries and the disarticulation of their economies, these reforms did, nonetheless, result in the introduction of some production relations more characteristic of capitalism including the further development of capitalist relations in the countryside in some of these countries, and also some infrastructural development such as roads, harbors, canals, things like that, to lay the basis for more investment in industry in these particular countries as well. Again, this was not an all-round, all-sided, harmonious, articulated development. Although that's never absolutely the case in any coun-

try, especially where there is the anarchy of capitalism, in the third world countries there was a lack of even that degree of articulation existing in an advanced capitalist country where finance capital is centered and controlled. Nevertheless, there were some transformations, under the domination and initiative of the imperialists, in certain third world countries which, again, because of their international position and internal features, made these sorts of changes both possible and necessary.

The imperialists faced the necessity of trying to break through certain obstacles that were already beginning to gather in the way of the accumulation process of capital internationally and the necessity of dealing with certain political developments, especially the national liberation struggles and the anti-colonial movements that were intensifying and spreading in large parts of the third world. U.S. imperialism carried out and orchestrated this in a specific context: that is, in light of its position relative to other imperialists, and in the world as a whole relative to the development of the Soviet bloc which had gone from a community headed by a socialist Soviet Union to an emerging and developing imperialist bloc; and also vis-à-vis China, which was emerging more strongly in the world, playing a stronger role in the world as a socialist country and a bastion of revolution, especially in relation to the national liberation struggles. In the context of and in the face of these different contradictions and their different expressions, and the contradictory position that the U.S. held coming out of the second imperialist world war and the re-ordering of the imperialist order in a world still dominated and under the baton of the U.S.—because of all that, the U.S. imperialists were able to and had a necessity to carry out certain changes of the kind I've been referring to in a number of these third world countries.

Crisis—But Not Straight Down

A lot of this has been gone into much more deeply in the investigation that's been done and is being drawn together now for the book *America in Decline* and will be presented in this book in a concentrated and much more all-round way. I'm not going to even try to duplicate that here, but just to trace the developments confronting U.S. imperialism in the '60s and '70s. There were these changes that in turn gave a certain impetus to the accumulation process that was going on within the U.S. bloc, within the general sphere of its overall domination, and to which it gave overall direction (not without contradiction, not without opposition but as the overall principal aspect). But already, both politically and economically, there were the seeds and beginnings of this turning into its opposite. Vietnam was in a sense a focal point of that, too. Again it was a question of where they went in to make a test case out of it and then found themselves unable to let go of it. Initially after the fairly severe recession that struck not only the U.S. but more or less all the countries of the U.S. bloc in the late '50s—'57-'58 or so—after that, while there was a very partial sort of

downturn in 1960-61, there was, in any case, a very long period of expansion of the U.S. economy and many of the economies of the U.S. bloc.

You can see how the Vietnam war figured into this and how that ultimately turned into its opposite also. In the short run, the spending associated with that war generated a temporary economic stimulus, not only for the U.S. but especially for the others, Japan and West Germany, which had sold quite a bit of materiel to the U.S. to carry on the war and were also able to ride that stimulus. But by the late '60s and going into the early '70s, this war was beginning, politically and economically, to turn into its opposite. This was a concentration point where politically U.S. imperialism was being battered, was being weakened and having a more difficult time holding its bloc together. France under DeGaulle, for instance, began to challenge the U.S. politically, even while accepting overall and in fact relying overall on the U.S. nuclear umbrella and its international strength, particularly in standing off the Soviets. Within that context and only within that context, France began to challenge the U.S. within its sphere, politically and economically. There were also challenges coming from other imperialist states within the U.S. bloc. And, by the late '60s and early '70s, there were the beginnings of what has now become very clear: an ongoing and deepening crisis, though it hasn't gone straight line down either. Even in this last decade which has been marked and characterized overall by crisis, it has not been a straight line down. It has gone in the motion of a spiral and through twists and turns because it is developing through contradiction and through the interpenetration of different contradictions. But, still, there is a clear motion which began to emerge by the late '60s and early '70s, which saw the turning into its opposite of a number of things: the running up against, in a much more profound way, the limitations of what had been done earlier; the limitations of some of the transformations that went on in a partial and distorted way in some of these third world countries, the turning into its opposite of that in a significant way; and the turning into its opposite in both the political and economic dimension of the whole Vietnam experience of U.S. imperialism. 1968, the year of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, was also the year that saw the first major assault on the dollar by other imperialists; the dollar's weakening was very much linked with the financing of the war.

As this was happening at that time in the late '60s and early '70s, it's not that surprising that there was a certain expectation, and in a certain way many of us who were active, and in far greater numbers than just those of us who were in and around the RU,* tended to fall into this, despite maybe even knowing better in a theoretical sense, at least partially: we saw U.S. imperialism going much more straight down; and even if we saw the revolution being a ways off, we saw things developing, if not absolutely in a straight line, still generally heading in that direction. We didn't anticipate that there would be contradictory motion within that overall decline of U.S. imperialism in this period, including a significant lull and

* RU—The Revolutionary Union, the organization which played the key role in the founding of the Revolutionary Communist Party.

even an ebb, a retreat, if you will, in the revolutionary movement—not only in the U.S. but generally internationally for a period. And it's not too surprising, I say, because a lot of things were coming together and being concentrated in an adverse way for U.S. imperialism and its bloc on the whole in those years. What seemed to be an impregnable bastion and citadel of reaction was really taking an ass kicking. And not only was that true in the military sphere, not only was it being politically exposed and being shown ideologically to be bankrupt and criminal even more profoundly and even more broadly than before, but also economically it was shown that it was, as Lenin once called imperialism, a colossus with feet of clay. There were very sharp contradictions and despite all the vaunted prosperity of the U.S., there was within that the clear signs of decay and stagnation and crisis, signs that U.S. imperialism had not conquered and overcome the laws that are inherent in its own motion, its own contradictions.

So this began to appear, but what was not so clear or perhaps to a significant degree was not so clear at the time, were the reserves it still had and the way in which it could maneuver. And eventually the leaders of U.S. imperialism made a conscious choice, and obviously through a great deal of struggle (the terms of which aren't entirely clear to us); but clearly such struggle was part of this whole process of trying to deal with changing relations in the world and the emergence of a spiraling motion of deeper crisis and things turning into their opposites and coming to a head in a way. For example, Nixon, who at one point was very strongly backed by the great bulk of the bourgeoisie, was thrown out by the bourgeoisie. This was just one manifestation, in the form of the whole Watergate scandal, but obviously this was about much more profound and significant things than a few tapes and so on. But on the other hand there were the reserves and there was some maneuvering room and, through a tremendous amount of struggle, there was a resolution to do certain things, to maneuver, regroup and try to recoup certain losses, to pull the bloc back together and, on the basis of and as part of tightening things up, to prepare for meeting the rising challenge that was coming from the Soviet Union.

Soviet Challenge

Now this is a complex question, but this challenge from the Soviets was governed both by the greater necessity it faced and the greater freedom it enjoyed. Necessity because of its inner compulsion, its internal contradictions, contradictions of the imperialist system, which were determining the Soviet Union's motion, but also freedom because of what was happening with U.S. imperialism in the sphere of international relations, the way in which various elements, such as the revolutionary struggles in the third world and the contradictions within the U.S. bloc were interpenetrating. The Soviets on the basis of necessity were able to take advantage of both the weakened position of U.S. imperialism and

the internal contradictions of these revolutionary struggles in the third world, in terms of the class forces contending, and some of their weaknesses, in the sense of the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois forces and ideologies having the upper hand and having the initiative in a lot of them. All this provided openings to the Soviets and presented the U.S. with a much sharper challenge to draw together and regroup its own forces, to restructure and refortify its alliances on a new basis to meet this challenge, both because of the deeper crisis in which it was caught and also because of the rising Soviet challenge.

So, this was what was generally on the agenda in the '70s, although it was full of contradiction and had different phases within it. And there are certain things that are clear in this as we look back over that decade, for example, the whole phenomena of OPEC and the oil price rise in particular coming after the '73 war between the Arab states and Israel. This price rise was not from the beginning, and simply, a plot by or at the initiative of U.S. imperialism, but it was seized on by U.S. imperialism, which is much less dependent on the oil from the Middle East than its allies in Europe and Japan where this dependence is especially acute. This was seized on by U.S. imperialism which, after all, still had the upper hand in the bulk of these OPEC states, including some of the especially crucial ones like Saudi Arabia and Iran under the Shah. While on the one hand the price rise created difficulties for U.S. imperialism and for its bloc, on the other, it was seized on by U.S. imperialism to strengthen its position vis-à-vis the other imperialists *within* its own bloc—those who remained within the general framework of the bloc led by the U.S. but who, like all dog-eat-doggers, were pursuing their own interests, even stepping up their competition and rivalry with the U.S. in the context of the kind of ass kicking it was getting in Vietnam and of all the chickens that were coming home to roost for the U.S., as these things were, in a concentrated way, turning into their opposite in the late '60s and early '70s. So the U.S. struck back. It struck back with the oil price rise and even before that in '71 with the tariffs and then especially the dollar devaluation. Nixon's whole so-called "new economic policy" and so on was in significant measure aimed at doing certain things within the U.S. but was also, perhaps in an overall sense and in a more important way, aimed at the whole structure of international economic relations and particularly the relations within the U.S. bloc. With a larger view towards pulling the bloc together, there was a degree of far-sightedness on Nixon's part, from the imperialist standpoint. But it wasn't just pulling it back together more strongly, it also meant and means doing this on the basis of a firmer hand and the reassertion on a new basis, that is, under new conditions, but a reassertion, of U.S. dominance and leadership of that bloc. The U.S. imperialists still (for example with OPEC) had the reserves and the ability to do this even while the general motion was toward deeper and deeper crisis. They were more and more sharply facing the need to deal with the challenge coming from the Soviets and to prepare to take that challenge head on. And the other imperialists within the U.S. bloc were also, by the same mo-

tion and by the same contradictions, propelled toward seeking to refortify that bloc even as they were still trying to strengthen their position vis-à-vis the U.S.

Vietnam and the Coming Conjunction

The fact is that U.S. imperialism, while it did come to a sort of crucial juncture in the late '60s and early '70s in which things were turning in a very powerful way into their opposite, particularly as focused up around Vietnam, was not in a situation in which it had to put everything on the line. If you want to make a certain analogy (in fact, we've made this before, in the last Central Committee report), as long as it's not applied mechanically or taken too far, but there is a certain analogy with the difference between the situation of Russia in the 1904-1905 war with Japan, on the one hand, which gave rise to a revolutionary situation and a revolutionary movement on a certain scale, but not one which succeeded, a situation which in fact found the ruling class in Russia with more room to maneuver and not with all of its reserves having to be brought into play and exhausted to a large degree, versus World War I, on the other hand, when their reserves were in fact exhausted and when Russia did, for a number of different reasons, become a focal point of world contradictions. In that sense, again as long as we don't treat this mechanically, Russia did become a, not by necessity the only, weak link of the imperialist system which was broken at that point—owing both to those objective conditions and to the subjective factor and the correct line, work and preparation that had been carried out under Lenin's leadership. So, there is a certain analogy: Vietnam was, again without being mechanical about these analogies, more like a 1904-1905 war with Japan; it was very important and in a certain sense signalled what was yet to come and what is in large part still to come in terms of the much more profound expression of the concentration of these contradictions. In and of itself, Vietnam revealed the internal contradictions and their sharpening up and the underlying weaknesses of U.S. imperialism, despite its remaining reserves and remaining strength. But it was not the case that U.S. imperialism was forced to throw all its reserves into that kind of situation. It was not forced to put everything on the line and do or die in a certain sense around Vietnam. It threw a tremendous amount in, but then it maneuvered its way out and began to pay attention to some of the other key aspects of its sphere of influence. It had the "Year of Europe" in 1973 and began to pay attention to shoring up, refortifying and regrouping its whole international sphere of influence and to dealing with both the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and also the rivalry and competition within its own bloc from the other imperialists, on the other hand. It was able to do that. That's not to metaphysically say that in some absolute sense and abstractly that the situation could not have become more serious at the time. Vietnam was a concentration point, but it was not the case that Vietnam became—and it was unlikely

to, given the way things were developing and had developed to that point—a concentration point which would in turn spark off a whole international confrontation.

In other words, something like Vietnam may be the particular thing that becomes a concentrated "flash point" (or whatever they call it) that may react back upon the whole of world relations as they're shaping up and be the thing that compels all the forces—in particular the two rival imperialist blocs—to throw everything on the line against each other, or virtually all their reserves. Of course, there'll be unevenness within that. U.S. imperialism didn't have to throw anything like all of its reserves into World War 1 or World War 2, but this time U.S. imperialism will. Now, whether there'll be other imperialists that will be able (undoubtedly in a more limited degree or almost certainly more limited degree) to keep some of their reserves "in reserve" and be able to maneuver to come out of the next world war stronger is something we can't predict now. It depends a lot on things which can't be certainly, fully foreseen, including the revolutionary struggles in the world, and even what we do will help influence that one way or another. But that is what is shaping up now. And this is calling forth various different forces: the imperialists are being forced into much more direct and sharp confrontation with each other, particularly the two blocs of imperialists, and the masses of people throughout the world are being called into motion, into action, and into deeper thinking by the heightening of these contradictions; there is again a rise of upheaval, of struggle and of revolutionary movement in various parts of the world.

A Shifting in the '70s

I used the analogy before of war communism, talking about why some people, for example in the U.S., in a limited way made compromises or even up to a certain point made their peace, at least for a time, with the system because they became exhausted and saw that there was a question of having to go on living in a position of opposition to the established order for an extended and seemingly indefinite period without the prospect of revolution. That's not something the majority of people or anything like the majority can maintain all the time. People who "knew better," people who still believed in revolution and still hated and even today still hate the system and maybe even in their own thinking did not at all give up the idea of fighting against it if another opportunity presented itself—a lot of these people, maybe at least to some degree consciously, retreated. They were tired, they were exhausted, there was a shifting, they didn't understand consciously fully why. We didn't understand fully why either and our understanding of this is still being deepened and we're really, I think, only beginning to get a qualitatively deeper and more all-around understanding of it.

But there were these shifts in the world. On the one

hand, the Soviets were able to make their way into a lot of these revolutionary movements in a qualitatively greater way and turn them in a different kind of direction which produced contradictory results. Some forces gravitated more towards the Soviets as a result of that, other forces were repulsed by that because they had enough of an understanding of what the Soviet Union was to know that that was no good, but they became demoralized or disoriented by it. They didn't see an alternative to being under the domination of one or the other of the imperialist great powers or imperialist blocs, the West or the East. And, on the other hand, U.S. imperialism finally did extricate itself from Vietnam—on the basis of being defeated, but still not throwing everything in and being pulled down all the way.

If you remember, by the time that Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City, was finally liberated (and Cambodia was also liberated at roughly the same time), we all sort of felt that feeling of joy, watching that in 1975, after U.S. imperialism had been forced out and was not even in a position to give the kind of support to its lackeys there that would enable them to hold on. But the world had shifted enough that it didn't, in a certain way, have the same significance, if you want to get sort of metaphysical about it, although it was significant, as it would have had if it happened in 1970, because already the shifting contradictions in the world were such that this was now no longer the focal point of world contradictions in the way that it had been. That's another reflection of the same kind of thing that I'm talking about.

So in large part, not just in the U.S. but throughout the world as a whole, there was a certain retreat or a feeling, at least to some degree, of disorientation and a certain exhaustion; and it even affected the conscious forces, including our own party certainly, and also those more broadly who had been a part of the movement of opposition, part of the struggle, even been conscious revolutionaries. Because people can fight heroically, and they can fight, like in the Chinese liberation war or in Vietnam for long periods of time with little rest, but everything still proceeds in spirals, even with all that, and people can't fight indefinitely on a very intense level, which is what the latter part of the '60s into the early '70s was in the U.S. in general, and much more generally than that throughout the world. They can't fight that way indefinitely. And if after a certain period of time there is a shift in the way the contradictions of the world are expressing themselves and interpenetrating, and a shift in the relation of the forces, understood in that kind of materialist dialectical way, then, there's a need for people to regroup—in fact, to varying degrees there's a consciousness of this—and with some people, it even takes a form that they temporarily retreat. In other words, some of the reserves, if you will, of the more conscious, revolutionary forces are themselves exhausted temporarily—and it takes the further development of the contradictions and their further sharpening before some of these reserves can be called back into motion and even some won back over from the camp of the enemy, where they may have temporarily been attracted at least in part, to the side of the revolutionary forces.

Generally this is what was going on, but it wasn't going on country by country, internally, with only secondary relationships between one country and the next. In an overall sense, it was going on on a world scale in terms of the way these contradictions of the imperialist system, and the forces of imperialism and the forces arrayed against it were expressing themselves, and the shifts in that during this period from the early '70s through the mid-'70s and toward the late '70s. I think it's extremely important to understand because it enables us to grasp and to draw the appropriate lessons from this very sharply contradictory phenomenon. Coming out of World War 2, imperialism had gotten a new spurt on the basis of the resolution, partial and temporary, of the contradictions going into that war, and then through some of the changes that were made in its aftermath. Despite the struggles and tremendous revolutionary upsurges in opposition to this, there was still this sort of temporary *surge* of imperialism with U.S. imperialism at the head. The '70s was a period, however, where the weaknesses of the imperialist system were much more sharply manifesting themselves, when a lot of the strengths it had gotten were turning into their opposite. And despite the fact that there was a tremendous setback for the international working class with the rise to power of a new bourgeoisie in the Soviet Union in the mid-1950s and its transformation into an imperialist superpower and the head of an imperialist bloc, by the '70s the contradictions within that were also beginning to manifest themselves. Some of the developments in Poland, even in certain ways the 1968 Czechoslovakia events, while they showed the ruthlessness, in a certain sense the strength of Soviet social-imperialism, also showed the sharp contradictions that were gripping it and that were already beginning to sharply manifest themselves—and which would further deepen.

So, the '70s were, on the one hand, a period when the weaknesses, the contradictions, the crisis of imperialism and the sharpening of its contradictions can be more clearly seen. On the other hand, it was a period in which some consolidation took place and some gains were made because of the way the rival imperialists, particularly the two rival imperialist blocs, were moving, the necessity they faced and the freedom they had and the maneuvering that they both carried out—the Soviets more by using revolutionary movements against U.S. imperialism (at least that was one extremely important form of what they were able to do and did more fully), and the U.S. imperialists by regrouping and reorganizing their bloc and reasserting their leadership in a firmer way and on a new basis. These two things, on the one hand, the growing weakness, crisis, the much sharper manifestation of the contradictions of the imperialist system and, on the other hand, the actual gains or at least maneuvers that the rival imperialists were able to carry out, even at the same time as they came more sharply and directly into profound confrontation with each other, were going on at the same time in the '70s. And as a result of it, there was also this sort of lull or overall ebb in the revolutionary struggle and the revolutionary movement for these different reasons.

Prospects Sharpening Up

So, you had this period of the '70s which has been correctly described, for example in the preparatory material of *America in Decline*, as a period of crisis and development toward war, not as a period of great strength for imperialism. But at the same time as there is a much deeper crisis and things are sharpening up much more than they were, let's say in the '60s, even with all the tumultuous character of that decade, still the movement of opposition from the masses of people and the revolutionary struggles in the world are not as advanced and not as powerfully expressing themselves, not assuming such a powerful form as they were in the '60s. So this can lead spontaneously, and has led a number of people, to the conclusion that all there is about the '70s into the '80s is a very negative thing—namely, yes, the imperialists are in crisis, but they are getting ready to go to war and there's the whole danger of that, but there's not any real prospect of doing anything about it, that is, there's no real prospect of struggling against it and making revolution and fundamentally altering the world in that way either before, during or in the aftermath of world war. What's missed in that view, and what we've been stressing from different angles and giving more and more emphasis to as our own understanding of this has been deepened and developed, is precisely the need to grasp the ways in which the very same process which is heightening the contradictions between the imperialists and sharpening up the confrontation between them and leading them toward war is also sharpening up all the contradictions of this era, including the different expressions of the contradiction between the masses of people and the imperialists, and is sharpening up the revolutionary prospects and developments in the world. That is beginning to manifest itself again now, so that people, even spontaneously, are beginning to see more of that. But there is a need to make a leap and to begin to see the interconnection between these two different aspects, that is, the sharpening of the inter-imperialist contradictions, on the one hand, and the sharpening of the contradiction and struggle between the masses and the imperialists in its different forms and expressions on the other hand. There is precisely the need to grasp the spiral motion toward and the gathering together of the contradictions and the shaping up of an historic conjuncture which will influence the development of things in the world for decades to come and in turn upon which the conscious revolutionary forces—precisely by grasping this—can exert a tremendous influence, and influence things in the world for decades to come as well. That's what we have to continually and ever more deeply and from different angles and in a more all-around way, grasp, and also arm and educate broader and broader forces. And we also have an internationalist duty to put forth our understanding of that and to struggle with people over a correct understanding of this, as well as a need to carry this out within the U.S.

The more that's done, the more that people will recognize what we've been stressing over and over again: that at the same time that there is a sharpening up of con-

tradictions between the imperialists and the growing danger and the growing prospects of inter-imperialist war, with all the horror and destruction that really will entail—and we can't underestimate that or people will think and correctly so that we're not serious—ultimately more important, and where we can in fact exercise our initiative and freedom, is the real fact of the heightening and growing prospects and developments for revolution in the world which are part of the same process which is bringing all this to a head, to the conjuncture shaping up. The more that we enable people to grasp this, the more they'll see that this is not just sloganeering, but that this is a profound truth and that the very events which are, on the one hand, striking horror into people, and not without reason, are also calling into motion and will increasingly call into motion the forces that can ultimately put an end to this, if not through this particular conjuncture, at least can make real leaps toward that, and which in the final analysis, can, must, and will put an end to this. To understand this ebb is important, not just in and of itself, although it's important to do that. But precisely the most important aspect of understanding this ebb is understanding it in terms of what's shaping up now and in terms of the future, and how in fact that ebb was only a partial expression of the sharpening up and heightening of these contradictions with the growing prospects on the positive side, that is, for revolution and toward the final abolition of the system which in fact is now presenting in a concentrated way all the negative things which do strike real horror and repulsion into people.

Class Polarization Among Black People

Q: I wanted to talk a little about the differences between the Black national question now and what happened in the '60s, particularly in regard to the point you were making that the imperialists had some reserves. One of the reserves was that out of the '60s and the Black liberation struggle a real class structure developed among the Black population. You see it in some of the larger cities where they have really large Black populations, like Atlanta, Detroit and Oakland, California, where the mayor is Black and a lot of the whole power structure in the city is Black—this whole rise of the Black petty bourgeoisie. I'd like to discuss what's that going to mean for things that are shaping up.

BA: Initially, the presence of the petty bourgeoisie was one of the things that marked the movement in the '60s, if you include the students who were at the forefront of the civil rights movement and if you take overall the forces that were active and at the forefront of the whole Black liberation struggle in the '60s. A significant part of the movement of

that time was an expression of the frustration, sometimes formulated into more concrete demands and sometimes a more general expression of frustration, of a lot of the petty bourgeoisie among the Black people—frustration at their basic conditions as a part of an oppressed nation and their resulting concrete position in society. On the one hand, there was a whole transformation of the Black nation going on and the Black masses were being liberated from the land—in the form of being thrown off of the land—but also from an historical standpoint being liberated from the land, being transformed from largely scattered peasants in semi-feudal relations to proletarians, although at the bottom layers of the proletariat, concentrated in the urban ghettos. But along with that whole transformation there were the rising expectations among a lot of the Black masses generally and particularly those out of the professional and intellectual strata. Even with all the discrimination that they suffered, there were rising expectations—and those expectations were largely frustrated. Relatively speaking for the society as a whole, including even for the Black masses, the '60s was not a period where from the strictly economic standpoint their position and their conditions were more backward and more difficult than they had been previously. If anything, somewhat the opposite was true. But precisely in the society as a whole the changes were better than for the oppressed nationalities, including Black people.

In other words, in society as a whole, the '60s was a period of expansion in the economy, not very much unemployment, wages going up, earnings going up, and in a certain sense because of that the lower level, and the depressed level, the discriminated situation of the Black people stood out. This was true for Black people in general and particularly in certain ways it was very sharply expressed among the Black petty bourgeoisie. A lot of the movement at that time sprang from that and was an expression of it.

The Slip in Status of the "Responsible Negro Leaders"

And there were further developments especially as the Black masses on the other hand got more into motion and took their own direction—gave a slight "inkling" of how they felt; Eldridge Cleaver once said to Terry François, a Black bootlicker as he called him (and Cleaver was soon to know a lot better what *that* was) maybe Detroit and Watts gave you an inkling of how the Black masses felt. As they began to do that, there was a response on the part of the bourgeoisie. There was a lot of repression, but there was also the liberal line, as represented in the Kerner report, and specifically a very important tactic was to inject a lot of financial, political and ideological support into the Black petty bourgeoisie and build it up very rapidly—and in particular a lot of new Black petty bourgeoisie. Before that you remember your famous "Responsible Negro Leaders"; among them were never included people like Malcolm X who really voiced

ed the aspirations and represented the interests of the Black masses in rising up; they were never included. "Responsible Negro Leaders today denounced Malcolm X's call for a violent uprising on the part of Black people," etc. If you remember the Martin Luther Kings, the Roy Wilkins, and so on were always dragged out as Responsible Negro Leaders. Well, they were largely discredited through the upsurge of the '60s—even discredited among major sections of the Black petty bourgeoisie. A lot of those old leaders should be considered bourgeois anyway.

But it wasn't these old forces who were built up so much as new ones—even people who'd been active and militant but came out of the petty bourgeoisie; a lot of them were co-opted in various ways. There were the poverty programs, broadly speaking. I wouldn't say a tremendous amount, but relatively speaking a large amount of money was injected into the minority businesses through the Small Business Administration, and in other ways, you know, "openings for Black professionals" and so on. Some of these concessions are still around; for example to cite a couple of cities, in Atlanta and Oakland, there are Black mayors. And throughout the south there are hundreds of elected Black officials, whereas previously such a thing was very rare, in fact people got killed trying to vote and trying to elect and be elected in the south on even the local level. That was a concession made in the face of the struggle. Similarly, look at the media. It's true that they still don't like to have any significant, serious Black movie actors; they keep them downgraded even more so now than, say, ten years ago. But it's also true if you look on the news programs, for example, and in other areas of the media, you see a lot of Black faces, which you would never see before. Black faces in "High Places."

Those were some of the concessions they made and also in my opinion (and this is something that needs to be looked into much more deeply) they launched a real, very concerted cultural offensive; there was an ideological offensive, especially concentrated in the cultural arena, against a lot of the Black youth. This may not be literally how it began, but what marked it for me was *Shaft*, and then on to *Superfly* and all these sorts of things. They gave some room for "Black expression" in the cultural sphere, which wasn't really something coming from out of the uprising of the masses, nor certainly an expression of it; it was in fact aimed directly against the section that they were especially concerned about which was the extremely volatile Black youth, the basic proletarian Black youth. A lot of that was aimed specifically at confusing, disorienting them, and derailing their militancy, which had manifested itself in a very powerful way. It was aimed at derailing and misdirecting that militancy and rebelliousness into harmless channels, individualistic channels, and at promoting this whole line that goes along with the material promotion of the Black petty bourgeoisie that the way to get back at the system is to beat the man at his own game, to be slicker than he is at his own thing.

In all of this, both in the ideological sphere and culturally in particular, as well as in the material sphere, there were

some real concessions made and also some real steps taken to steer the offensive back at the masses, including by misdirecting their upsurge and rebelliousness and their volatility and channelling it into highly individualistic directions — making "me" the message. By the late '70s, the cultural expression of this was disco (and some other things). You have to be careful because the opposition to disco does divide sharply into two; there is some outright racist opposition to disco because it tends on a certain level to mix Black and white. But there is also the fact that disco was, I think, an extreme expression of the highly individualistic, even narcissistic, ideology that they were trying to promote among the youth generally and particularly the Black youth as well as the masses more broadly. It's extremely cynical and even somewhat consciously the expression of "we tried to change things before, we did all that political stuff, all that struggle stuff and now, get what you can out of life, good clothes, good cars; take shit all week and then go to the club on the weekend." That's the kind of mentality they've been able to promote in the late '70s to a certain degree. These are scattered ideas that I have that need to be looked into and synthesized to a higher level. But in the ideological expression they were very concerned to do what they were also very concerned to do in the material sphere, which was to build up petty-bourgeois forces among Black people, a petty-bourgeois social base and petty-bourgeois ideology and also more outright bourgeois forces, although they had to bring forward new ones; they had to bring forward Andy Young in place of Whitney Young. They had to have somebody who could say he was part of the '60s who could talk a little bit different, a little more militant line, a little bit more hip, up with the modern times.

All this is different expressions of the fact that through the '60s, through the '70s and moving into the '80s, there has been an increased class polarization among the Black people. Within the Black nation there are petty-bourgeois strata and forces, and more so now, even though they're being undermined and having a lot of their material concessions yanked away from them as the crisis is deepening. But still the bourgeoisie is not going to yank that away completely because it recognizes the important political and ideological role these forces play as a buffer. I don't think this is the *main* factor accounting for the ebb in the Black liberation struggle as well as the overall movement of the late '60s and early '70s. I think that a lot of the other things we talked about, especially on the international plane as well as things more broadly in the U.S. society itself, account *mainly* for that ebb. But within that, one important thing to recognize, which has implications for the future and the sharpening struggles of the period ahead, is the class polarization and the role of these Black petty-bourgeois forces and even bourgeois forces in acting as a social base for reformism and even for American patriotism. Look at the Muslims — Wallace Muhammed's World Community of Islam — with the American flag now. Some, like this organization, have gone from their earlier sharp denunciation (however much it may have been distorted by a religious and nationalist orienta-

tion) of U.S. society, to one of promoting patriotism and the flag—all that's personified by Muhammed Ali.

Revolutionary Nationalist Trend

So this whole question of the sharper class polarization among the Black people has to be grasped and explained with a materialistic dialectical analysis to the Black masses and also more broadly to the masses of people—all that's true and important. But on the other hand it would be a mistake to think that there will be or can be no more revolutionary expression based among the Black petty bourgeoisie. It would be a mistake to think that no more revolutionary program or organization can arise out of, and be an expression of, the sentiments and in a certain way the interests and position of the Black petty bourgeoisie in the present period. In fact, already we've seen there have been various expressions of a radical opposition to U.S. imperialism of this sort; revolutionary nationalist sentiments, programs, organizations have even experienced a certain resurgence in the recent years. So it would be wrong to think that that kind of thing no longer can exist and that there can no longer be any positive role or any significant positive role for that. There already is and there will increasingly be radical petty-bourgeois, even revolutionary petty-bourgeois, revolutionary nationalist sentiments, programs and organizations, and their influence will grow, not diminish among the basic proletarian Black masses. In terms of the struggle for what line leads, it will be in struggle against the proletarian line, the revolutionary communist/proletarian internationalist line, among the Black masses. However, just because they'll be locked in struggle doesn't mean that there won't be any basis for unity. In fact, we've been pointing out that the revolutionary nationalist forces can be a powerful ally of the proletariat in the struggle for revolution against the imperialist system. But, on the other hand, there is a dialectic there. The more strongly and correctly the struggle is waged for leadership of the proletarian line, the revolutionary communist/proletarian internationalist trend, the more it will be possible to build unity with those kind of forces because the unity won't be possible without struggle. But an attitude of all struggle and no unity would be quite wrong. It would be depriving the proletariat of its allies; it also would lead in fact to the isolation of the proletarian forces, not to the isolation of the petty-bourgeois forces who have a great deal of spontaneity going for them. Spontaneously there are a lot of things that tend to favor those kinds of forces.

So there will be a radical and revolutionary expression and movement among the Black petty bourgeoisie in the coming period because of the fact that this is *not* the early '70s, this is a period when the crisis will hit with full force in society, in the imperialist system as a whole, and is now deepening; they're heading towards a situation of historic conjuncture where all these contradictions are coming to a head. What is on the agenda on a world scale is world war

and revolutionary developments and heightened prospects for revolution internationally including heightened possibilities for revolution in the U.S. And all this is going to bring more Black petty-bourgeois radicalism or revolutionary nationalism. But still that's occurring within a different context than it occurred in the '60s, a different world context, and as part of that a different context within the U.S. And specifically in terms of the point we've been touching on, it's occurring in terms of a deepened and a sharpened class polarization among the Black masses. This is something which in the long term is actually more favorable to the proletarian trend, to the revolutionary communist/proletarian internationalist line, as opposed to even a revolutionary nationalist and certainly to a reformist pro-imperialist patriotic trend—even though it now has more material base than before among Black people and will of course be given tremendous ideological and political support by the bourgeoisie. Given the overall world crisis and the overall situation not just among the Black people, but in U.S. society as a whole, this polarization will be favorable to the proletariat if it is correctly grasped and correctly explained to the masses and if the correct policies are employed in relation to it as well as of course overall.

Class Analysis of Revolutionary Nationalism

I was looking at a short essay written by Lenin in the period between the 1905 and 1917 revolutions on the subject of the Russian author Tolstoy. And there's a certain analogy here, though it's certainly not very direct and there are differences. Lenin was making the point that some people want to hold up Tolstoy as the voice of the Russian people. That, he says, is a distortion. In fact, Tolstoy did give expression in a very vivid and sharp way to the sentiments of a broad section of the Russian people, but precisely that section which stood between the two major classes in modern society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (which were also the two major classes coming to the fore on the stage even of backward Russian society.)

In particular in Russia, Lenin says, Tolstoy gave expression to the broad peasant masses. And Lenin said in that sense there was much to be learned from Tolstoy, much that's positive in what he did, but precisely if you take Tolstoy's work as the voice of the Russian people as a whole, or the most advanced expression, or the line and orientation and outlook to follow, then it turns it from a good thing into a bad thing, it turns it into its opposite. At the same time as Tolstoy's work involves denunciation and exposure of the system, and the suffering of the people and their outrage, it also involves and gives expression to the limitations of those class forces that are precisely between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and which are potential allies of the proletariat but do not have the same interests nor the same outlook as a class.

The rough analogy that I'm making here is to these

revolutionary nationalist trends. In other words, it would be quite wrong not to see in them an important expression of the outrage in U.S. society, the outrage of an important section of the people, even if numerically relatively small, that is the Black petty bourgeoisie and those strata among the Black masses that tend to gravitate spontaneously toward the outlook and program put forward representing the Black petty bourgeoisie. But, on the other hand, if a clear distinction isn't drawn and if it's thought that some of this revolutionary nationalist expression is really an expression of the sentiments and still more so of the interests of the *proletarian* masses of the Black people, and of their class interests as part of the broader proletariat, broader in the U.S. but even more than that of the international proletariat, ultimately and most fundamentally — if that confusion is made, and the very clear class difference there is slurred over or not brought out clearly and sharply, not only in our own understanding but to the masses broadly, then in terms of our work, that will turn into its opposite. It will work against our ability to correctly unite with and to seek to divert and channel toward the cause of proletarian revolution, even the most revolutionary of the nationalist sentiments and expressions that ultimately represent Black petty-bourgeois strata, even if they attract sections of the Black proletarian masses at different times and to different degrees. That analogy may have limitations, but I think it's helpful to pose it in that kind of way.

International Arena Primary

Well, on the other hand, having stressed the importance of the deepened and sharpened class polarization within the Black nation, it's necessary, however to recall and re-emphasize a point that was made sharply in the struggle against the Bundists, that is against the nationalist deviations of the Black Workers Congress, the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization, and a few forces even within our own organization at that time, the Revolutionary Union, which was the forerunner of the party. In the polemics with those forces, we made the point that the main arena of class struggle, and the most basic class contradiction in which the masses of Black people were involved was not the class contradiction between the Black proletariat and the Black bourgeoisie. And the main enemy of the Black masses was not the Black bourgeoisie. The main bourgeois force they had to struggle against — the target of their struggle — was not the Black bourgeoisie. In fact, sections of it might be able to be won over or at least neutralized in an all-around revolutionary struggle. But the target of *that* struggle — the all-around revolutionary struggle — had in fact to be the *imperialist* bourgeoisie and those social forces which were allied with it. And the basic class force in opposition to them, of which the Black masses were a crucial part, and which had to be developed as the leader of the revolution, was the proletariat as a *class*, that is, the proletariat of all nationalities,

with of course its vanguard forces, in particular its party, at the head. Now, ironically, those forces such as the Black Workers Congress and the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization, the Bundists, because of their own nationalism (and this was something we stressed in polemicizing against their line at that time), because of their very nationalism, they tended to make the Black bourgeoisie, or bourgeois forces among the oppressed nationalities more generally in U.S. society, more of an enemy, saw them more as an obstacle than the imperialist bourgeoisie itself. Actually this was an expression of their narrow nationalist outlook.

There is an important lesson there which has to be drawn and applied particularly in today's situation where there is not only the deepened and sharpened class polarization that has gone on among Black people, but more importantly there is the deepening and sharpening crisis, sharpening class contradictions in society as a whole and more than that in the world as a whole. In that context particularly, it's important to recall and to develop much more fully an aspect or dimension to this that was not entirely left out at the time of those polemics with the Bundists, but which we've deepened our overall understanding of a great deal since, and that is that even more fundamentally than the class contradiction in U.S. society itself, the basic class contradiction that the proletarian masses, including as a very important part of that in the U.S. the Black proletarian masses, are involved in is ultimately the class contradiction on an *international* scale; that is, there are in fact particularities to different countries, there are different processes and dialectics to the revolution within different countries, and within different types of countries, but that does not negate the fact that all that is integrated into a single process which takes place overall on a world scale. The single process of the advance from the bourgeois epoch to the communist epoch on a world scale is made up of very diverse streams and currents and processes, but they are integrated on a higher level into that overall process on a world scale. And this is a point that is very important to bring out to the masses, the proletariat and its allies. In general it's extremely important, and also it's important to deepen that understanding among the Black masses in terms of winning those proletarian Black masses away from the nationalist orientation and ideology and nationalist perspective to an internationalist and to a proletarian outlook and political line.

As we've stressed, and recently for example in the response I wrote to a "Black nationalist with communistic inclinations," if the arena is presented as merely one of the nation, and if the class contradiction is treated as taking place within that arena, even if you say you're taking the standpoint of the proletariat ("I'm for the Black proletariat against

the Black bourgeoisie" or whatever it might be), that arena by itself is too narrow and favors the bourgeoisie. In particular it favors not only Black bourgeois forces, but ultimately the imperialist bourgeoisie. Precisely in order to win the masses of proletarians—and here in particular we are talking about Black proletarians—in order to win them to a proletarian stand, to an internationalist stand and programme, it is necessary to present the framework and the arena and the horizons as they really fundamentally and most importantly exist; that is, certainly not limited to just the Black nation nor even just limited to U.S. society, but first of all and fundamentally the world as a whole and the process and the revolutionary struggle taking place on *that* level with its various diverse currents and subordinate processes, but as an integral overall process itself. This in fact is the only way in which the proletarian masses—including again particularly we're talking about the Black proletarian masses—can be won to the proletarian line.

One of the forms of class struggle is "What is the arena?" Is the arena the nation or is the arena the international situation and the world situation and the world struggle? And if the arena is presented as just the oppressed nation—that is, Black people—or just the U.S. society, then that's ultimately favorable to the bourgeoisie. It is precisely a point of class struggle to fight for people to grasp that the arena objectively is, and must be reflected in their consciousness as being, first of all and fundamentally the world arena and that the basic contradiction that they are involved in, in class terms, is between the proletariat and its allies against the imperialists and their allies on a world scale through all its various different processes and streams and currents. Without doing that it's not possible to win people to and continue to lead them on the basis of the proletarian line and proletarian politics. And also importantly, if secondarily, it is the only way in which the possible allies among, for example, Black petty-bourgeois forces or even some Black bourgeois strata and forces can be won over or at least neutralized with the development of a strong proletarian revolutionary current, and especially with the development of an overall revolutionary situation, revolutionary movement, and the actual struggle for the seizure of power and the transformation of society. So even as we stress the importance of the deepened and sharpened class polarization that has gone on within the Black nation, among the Black people, yet this can only be correctly understood, and the understanding only correctly utilized and turned into a strong weapon for the proletariat and for its struggle, if in an overall sense it is presented in this light and in this framework and with this kind of orientation and those kinds of horizons are what people's sights are directed toward.