

The New Synthesis of Communism and the Residues of the Past

Revolutionary Communist Organization, Mexico

The Earth can rise on new foundations. Bob Avakian's new synthesis of communism gives us a new and essential theoretical guide for the revolutions of the 21st century that can put an end to the misery, oppression, and degradation suffered by the majority and open the road to unprecedented advances toward a communist world: the free association of human beings without divisions of class, nation, gender, or between mental and manual labor, where human beings transform the world and themselves based on a deeper, more scientific understanding of reality. In these days, when everywhere you hear the erudite preaching of the intellectual hitmen of the ruling class saying that communism "failed", that it was "horrifying" and that we have no other future other than the one offered by this horrible capitalist-imperialist system, the new synthesis represents renewed hope for the emancipation of the masses all over the world.

This new synthesis invites and promotes criticism, dissent, and debate, and calls on everyone to grapple with the many unresolved problems of the new stage of the world proletarian revolution. Nevertheless, in many cases it has had to confront, not reasoned criticism of its content, which—correct or incorrect—always contributes to the process of clarifying questions, but rather a barrage of insults, gossip and personal attacks coming, in the first place, from some organizations who call themselves "communist" and "Marxist-Leninist-Maoist". Mao put it well when he said that at first, nothing that is advanced has been applauded but rather has been heaped with scorn. Faced with the big questions of how to bury this rotten system and create a new world, the communist struggle has always advanced through the struggle over ideas and opposing positions: new advances break through either in opposition to positions dogmatically holding on to the past, or positions that throw out the scientific, revolutionary heart of communism in the name of "new conditions". Understanding this, as Engels said, one cannot feel much regret that the inevitable struggle has broken out. By developing and carrying through to the end the two-line struggle that has been unfolding in the international communist movement, we can further deepen our understanding of what corresponds to the real world and what does not, what contributes to emancipation and what does not, and unite and temper new initiators of a new stage of the world communist revolution.

Here we are focusing on four, among many, important questions in the present struggle, examining the positions of the new synthesis and of its detractors with regard to: 1. the socialist transition to communism; 2. the state and the armed struggle; 3. international communist organization and internationalism; and 4. the scientific method of communism as opposed to pragmatism and instrumentalism. We'll take on the arguments developed by some critics of the new synthesis. As far as the insults, personal attacks, and gossip about who supposedly did what to whom, for those who have the emancipation of humanity in mind and not petty group interests, it is sufficient to say that such methods of "struggle" have nothing to do with scientific communism.

1. Are a scientific summation of the experience of socialism and a conception of how to advance further and better this time needed now?

Are a scientific summation of the experience of socialism and a conception of how to advance further and better in the communist revolution needed now? Yes. It is necessary, among other reasons, because the socialism that existed in Russia and China was defeated and there are no longer any socialist countries in the world, because the ruling classes have taken advantage of these setbacks to broadly propagate the idea that socialism didn't work, because it is essential to learn from both what is correct and what is mistaken in the historical experience of socialism and the international communist movement in general in order to not repeat past mistakes and to be able to advance further and better than even the best of the past, and because there have been important changes in the world in recent decades that require analysis in order to correctly guide the communist

revolution today. It is to this need—to sum up the positive and negative lessons of the previous experience of the communist movement and socialist societies, to analyze the new conditions in the present world, and to learn from other spheres, that Bob Avakian has dedicated more than 30 years of intensive work. This has borne fruit in the new synthesis, which includes, among many other elements, a deeper understanding of the communist goal and what that implies for socialism to be, indeed, both a transition toward a communist world and a society in which the great majority would like to live.

However, this need for a summation of past experience and new development of communist theory for the resurgence and advance of the communist revolution today is not seen by some who declare themselves to be communists but who are blinded by a method that is not very Marxist and not very scientific. There are more than a few who think that the question of socialism and communism should be *avoided*, that “that’s for later” and that the “practical successes” of the movement in mobilizing masses in people’s wars or other struggles will resolve these problems. As is summed up in *Communism: the Beginning of a New Stage, A Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, a key document in the present struggle in the international communist movement, there are, in sharp divergence with the new synthesis, “two opposing tendencies—either to cling religiously to all of the previous experience and the theory and method associated with it or (in essence, if not in words) to throw that out altogether”, that is, to also abandon the principally positive aspects of the previous experience and embrace bourgeois democracy.”¹

Although any analogy has its limitations, it’s as if we had built a large and impressive building—socialism—with many innovations and extraordinary breakthroughs, as well as some secondary but important defects, and later, as the result of a big earthquake, the whole structure collapsed. Faced with this big setback, the dogmatists tell us, ‘Let’s build it again just like it was, there’s nothing to be worry about.’ The kindred spirits of the democracy of the present capitalist system tell us, ‘Forget about it, the structure’s no good,’ leaving us no alternative other than to live ‘outdoors’ in the present oppressive system. The new synthesis, on the contrary, applies a scientific method: let’s learn from the positive and negative lessons of this experience, and also learn from other sources, and conceive and get to work on building a new building that is more resistant to disasters and is better suited to the aims of the communist revolution.

2. Do the defeats of the first experiences of socialism mark the end of the first stage of communist revolution or not?

In two articles, the Communist Party of Afghanistan (Maoist) [CPA(M)]² argues essentially that the communist revolution up until now can’t be divided into two stages, that a qualitative development of the science of communism is not needed now, and that Bob Avakian’s new synthesis is a “rupture” with Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM), a “post-MLM” ideology, and is therefore erroneous.

Recognizing or not recognizing that the restoration of capitalism in China beginning in 1976, after the previous restoration in the Soviet Union (1956), marks the end of a first wave of the world communist revolution that began with the First International and ended in a situation where there are no longer any socialist countries or a communist international is intimately bound up with recognizing or not recognizing that these events demand a scientific summation from communists of the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the communist movement overall, in order to be able to advance further and better in this new stage.

¹ *Communism: the Beginning of a New Stage, A Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, Chapter V. “Communism at a Crossroads: Vanguard of the Future, or Residue of the Past?”, RCP Publications, Chicago, 2009. This is an essential document for a brief summation of key aspects of the new synthesis and for understanding the current struggle in the international communist movement. This and other documents from the RCP are available free on their website: revcom.us.

² “Our Position on the New Line of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA in its Manifesto and Constitution”; and “The Communist Party of Iran (MLM) has Fallen into the Lost Road of ‘Post MLM’”, in *Maoist Road/Via Maoista* No. 1, June 2011.

In its first letter, the CPA(M) argues that “The only criterion given for this division [into two stages] is the new synthesis of Bob Avakian and its outcome, the publication of RCP’s Manifesto”... This is simply not true. The two documents that the CPA(M) is commenting on (the *Manifesto* cited above and the *Constitution of the RCP, USA*) clearly state that “With the reversal of socialism in China after 1976, coming a couple of decades after that had happened in the Soviet Union in the 1950’s, the first wave of socialist revolutions was ended and, today the world is left without any socialist states.”³ Instead of criticizing the real position of the RCP, USA, they invent a false and absurd argument, a method that, unlike the scientific and critical method of communism, does not contribute to clarifying arguments and reaching truth.

Then they go on to state that “This division in two stages is not compatible with the different phases of the evolution of capitalism” or “with the different phases of the evolution of the science and the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat”. This is not to the point, because what is being discussed is not the evolution of capitalism or of Marxism, but instead the development of the *world communist revolution*, which, although related to the evolution of capitalism and of communist ideology, is a distinct process with its own particularity. In fact, when comrade Avakian first raised the “end of a stage” of the communist revolution and the beginning of another, he specifically stressed that he *was not* referring to stages in the development of capitalism or in the science of communism.⁴ The CPA(M) doesn’t recognize the particularity of these different processes. Is it true or not true that the temporary defeat of socialism mentioned above represented a *profound, qualitative change in the process of the communist revolution* that separates one stage in this process from another? The CPA(M) avoids this question instead of answering it.

In the second document, the CPA(M) continues with the same muddle of the evolution of capitalism, communist ideology, and the process of communist revolution, adding that there hasn’t been just one first wave, but rather several waves of the communist revolution up until now, that these waves of proletarian revolutions haven’t ended because “Despite the grand changes that have occurred, still the socio-economic order... i.e. the capitalist order—its foundation and basis are still intact,” and “Although the waves of proletarian revolution from Marx’s time to the defeat of the revolution in China have dwindled, still they have not ended completely.”⁵ And it proceeds to give examples of revolutionary struggles since that time.

In this second document, at least the CPA(M) begins to recognize that what is being discussed are waves (or stages) of the proletarian (or communist) revolution, recognizing implicitly and with no self-criticism that its first article distorted Avakian’s position. However, it continues to avoid the question of whether or not the restoration of capitalism in the previously socialist countries represents a qualitative change in the communist revolution marking the end of a stage.

On the one hand, they talk about a multiplicity of waves, apparently identified with the Paris Commune, the October Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, and the Cultural Revolution. It’s true that these four revolutions mark high points in the world communist revolution. And if the defeats of the first socialist experiences had been followed by new victories in establishing or reestablishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, these defeats might not have marked the end of the first stage. This wasn’t “predetermined”; many factors in the class struggle and the development of the world imperialist system played a role, but what in reality has happened is a period of more than three decades in which there are no socialist countries or communist international. Talking about past victories doesn’t answer the question of whether or not this big setback represents the end of a stage (and it reflects, among other things, a non-materialist and un-dialectical reluctance to talk about setbacks).

³ *Constitution of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, RCP Publications, 2008, p. 36. A similar formulation is found in the *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, at the beginning of “III. The End of a Stage — And what Conclusions Should, and Should not, Be drawn from this Historical Experience”.

⁴ Avakian, Bob, “The End of a Stage – the Beginning of a New Stage”, *Revolution*, Fall 1990: “When I speak of a ‘stage’ in this context, I’m not referring to a new historical epoch in the same sense in which Stalin characterized the present epoch as that of imperialism and the proletarian revolution...Nor am I referring to the stages in the development of our revolutionary science”. (Our translation from the Spanish edition, p. 8).

⁵ *Maoist Road/Vía Maoísta*, op. cit., p. 43.

On the other hand, they say that people's wars were developing for several years first in Peru and later in Nepal and that armed struggles continue in India and the Philippines, so "where the hell do you see that the complete ending of a wave of the proletarian revolution?"⁶ But no one is saying that all revolutionary struggle has ended: the question under debate, again, is if the restoration of capitalism in the previously socialist countries represents a qualitative change that marks the end of a stage in the world communist revolution. When they say that revolutionary struggles have not ended and that the capitalist order is still intact, they essentially argue that the proletarian revolution continues and continues to be necessary. They confuse the end of its first stage with the end of the communist revolution itself! Those of us who are in favor of the new synthesis think the proletarian revolution is more necessary than ever and that it represents the only hope for the oppressed and, in the final analysis, for humanity as a whole, but *in order for that hope to be fulfilled, we must recognize the implications of the qualitative change that occurred with the defeat of socialism and the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union and China and scientifically sum up the lessons of the first stage of the communist revolution as well as changes in the world since that time in order to be able to make new advances in communist theory and practice and to forge the vanguard of the future revolutions, instead of ending up as a residue of the past.*

Although they don't respond directly to the question under debate, it's clear that the CPA(M) denies that the restoration of capitalism in the previously socialist countries represents a qualitative change in the world process of the communist revolution and that it marks a new stage in that revolution. To which we can only remark that there are none so blind as those who do not wish to see. Although the CPA(M) formally recognizes that capitalism was restored in the previously socialist countries, it downplays the importance of this profound and qualitative change in the process of the world communist revolution. The method they apply to reach this conclusion is a dogmatic one that doesn't distinguish the particularity of the contradiction when confounding the process of the world communist revolution with other related but distinct processes and when failing to clearly analyze the stages in this process, confounding the end of a stage with the end of the process itself. In fact, qualitative changes due to the intensification or temporary mitigation of the contradictions in a complex process, or the disappearance of some and/or the appearance of other new ones, tend to mark stages in that process—in this case the temporary disappearance of the contradiction between the socialist system and the imperialist system with the restoration of capitalism in the socialist countries, the related crisis in the international communist movement, and other changes mark the end of a stage in the world communist revolution—and, "If people do not pay attention to the stages in the process of development of a thing, they cannot deal with its contradictions properly."⁷

3. Are qualitative advances in the science of communism needed in order to lead a new stage of the proletarian revolution or does the previous theoretical framework suffice?

The importance of recognizing the end of one stage and the beginning of another is that it is a material fact, although we may not like it, and it makes new advances in the science of communism necessary, on the basis of reconfiguring and recasting the positive experience from the past, learning from what was negative, analyzing new conditions, and learning from other sources in order to develop an understanding capable of correctly guiding the communist revolutions to come. This is what Bob Avakian has been doing, by developing the new synthesis, and it is what he has encouraged others to do as well; the need to do this is precisely what is denied by the CPA(M) and other dogmatic tendencies in the present international communist movement.

Although the CPA(M) recognizes the need to develop the science of communism as a general abstract principle, it considers that "A correct basic understanding of Marxism Leninism Maoism is

⁶ Ibid., p. 44.

⁷ Mao Tsetung, "On Contradiction," *Selected Works*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1967, Volume I, p. 325. See this for Mao's complete explanation regarding analysis of the stages of a complex process.

the reliable foundation and base for communist revolution,”⁸ that, before summing up the experience of socialism, it is more important to first sum up the experience of the regrouping of Maoist parties in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM),⁹ and that “Based on this summing up we can – and we must – review the Chinese revolution and Mao Tsetung, and this time not from the perspective of establishing international Maoism with paying attention only to their positive aspects – a level that already we have gone through – but from a critical perspective to look at its mistakes, shortcomings and possibly mistakes of the Chinese revolution and Mao Tsetung himself. *That is a work that never has been done before on an international level...*” [Emphasis added] They then say that the same thing can be done for the times of Lenin, Marx and Engels, on the basis of “reliance on the existing theoretical framework without claiming that it is complete.”¹⁰

It is little less than incredible that after 30 years of work and the publication of literally dozens of books, pamphlets, and speeches by Bob Avakian, carrying out precisely a critical evaluation of all this experience, it is said that “This is a work that never has been done before on an international level”. If there is disagreement with the *content* of this summation —and it is evident that there is— we’d like to hear the pertinent arguments, but please, don’t try to pretend that this work doesn’t exist! Or perhaps they consider that this hasn’t been done on “an international level”, because they and similar forces haven’t participated in the study and debate of this work, because they consider it to be of little importance? This has been their own mistaken decision, in spite of repeated calls to comment on these and other questions. The importance and correctness of new advances in the science of communism don’t depend essentially on who has participated or not in their elaboration but rather on whether or not they correspond to objective reality and to the advance toward communism.

It is evident that, for the CPA(M), critical summation of the experience of the first stage of the communist revolution in general and of the experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular is not an urgent task, it can be postponed until an indeterminate future, after summing up the experience of the RIM, and meanwhile, the “existing” theoretical framework is sufficient, i.e. the theoretical framework of almost 40 years ago, or a distorted and incorrect understanding of that framework. (It is undoubtedly important to *also* sum up the experience of the RIM. As we will see below, line differences related to the ones we are commenting on here made it impossible for the RIM as a whole to join together to defend communist principles in the face of the two line struggle in the Communist Party of Peru, as well as the adoption of a revisionist line by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in 2005. But how can it be that this could somehow have justified *not* critically summing up the previous experience of the communist revolution for decades and doing everything possible to ignore and finally to try to discredit the person who has done so? How is it possible for this to justify the insistence on *continuing* to persist in the same error?)

The CPA(M) condemns the new synthesis as “post MLM”, by which they mean to say that in their opinion the new synthesis is a “rupture” from the science developed by Marx, Lenin and Mao and a repudiation of their contributions as “part of a past that is no longer relevant.”¹¹ Here we see again the CPA(M)’s method of attributing an absurd argument to their adversary and then proceeding to “refute” it, instead of criticizing the actual analysis and especially the best arguments that are raised to defend it.

For the CPA(M), the “relevance” of the past is a question of *repeating it without criticism*, since by their own admission, quoted above, “already we have gone through” a “level” of “paying attention only to their positive aspects” and the task of approaching it “from a critical perspective” remains as a task for some indefinite time in the future, and this is, from their point of view, the “existing theoretical framework” that should be sufficient for now and for an indeterminate further period of time. This is not a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theoretical framework, but rather a *dogmatic*

⁸ *Maoist Road/Vía Maoísta*, op. cit., p. 45.

⁹ The Revolutionary Internationalist Movement was formed in 1984 as a regrouping of communist parties and organizations on the basis of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (then called Mao Tsetung Thought) after the restoration of capitalism in China in 1976.

¹⁰ *Maoist Road/Vía Maoísta*, op. cit., p. 48.

¹¹ “Our Position”, op. cit., p. 40.

framework created by the CPA(M) and others, who have abandoned the critical spirit of Marxism, arguing that for the time being it's enough to repeat some¹² theoretical formulations from 40 years ago with no critical reexamination.

It is evidently because of an appreciation of the profound “relevance” of the first stage of the communist revolution and the “the rich body of revolutionary, scientific theory that developed through the first wave of socialist revolutions”¹³ that Bob Avakian has not contented himself with repeating some phrases from the past but instead has deeply examined that experience as well as the theoretical advances associated with it in order to come to the conclusion that, in its principal aspect, that theory is fundamentally correct and scientific, but secondarily it contains erroneous aspects that need to be discarded, and it must be developed further to embrace new phenomena and to grapple more deeply with how to prevent capitalist restoration and advance further toward communism, among other problems. As such, and as opposed to the distortions by the CPA(M), the new synthesis actually represents principally a continuation and development in new conditions of the communist science developed since Marx up through Mao, and secondarily yes, it is a criticism and rupture with secondary but important erroneous elements that objectively contradict its principally correct and scientific character.

More fundamentally, the whole way of posing the problem expresses a dogmatic and religious approach. How can the correctness or incorrectness of the new synthesis be determined? The CPA(M)'s method is essentially to determine its truthfulness according to its supposed degree of correspondence or rupture with the previous “doctrine”. A *scientific* approach would require examining to what degree the new synthesis does or does not correspond to *material reality*. For example, if we examine the real experience of socialism with the method of dialectical materialism, is Avakian right or not to uphold the essential elements of the theory of Mao on continuing the revolution under socialism, such as the persistence of antagonistic class struggle, the engendering of a new bourgeoisie among part of the leadership of the communist party, the material base for the restoration of capitalism in the existence of “bourgeois right”, the inequalities and other relations and ideas inherited from capitalism and the need to mobilize the masses to transform all this step by step? On the other hand, is Avakian right or not when he criticizes nationalist tendencies in China and the Soviet Union expressed, for example, in “the sometimes pronounced moves to subordinate the revolutionary struggle in other countries to the needs of the existing socialist state”?¹⁴ Is he right or not in proposing an orientation of a “solid core with a lot of elasticity”, combining a solid core that struggles to advance toward communism with a lot of elasticity, not just permitting but also promoting dissent and criticism including criticism of the party and of socialism, or in criticizing the concept of “class truth” and arguing for a greater role for the intellectuals in socialism? Here we are only mentioning some of the pertinent questions.

The CPA(M) *doesn't discuss these questions, and rejects the new synthesis without analyzing or responding to its content.*¹⁵ It is as if physicists, when evaluating the new theory of relativity of Einstein, were to oppose it because of its “rupture” with the theory of Newton, instead of examining to what degree the previous Newtonian theory, and the new theory of Einstein, did or did not explain the phenomena of nature. New theoretical advances in science may represent more or less continuity or rupture with the previous understanding (we repeat: the new synthesis, is principally a continuation and development of the scientific essence of Marxism, and secondarily a necessary rupture with erroneous elements), but the essential question from a scientific point of view is not this

¹² We emphasize “some” because the formulations of Mao's theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat are conspicuously absent in the proclamations of the CPA(M) and others, including when they call for a new communist international organization.

¹³ *Constitution of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, p. 37.

¹⁴ *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, op. cit., “IV. The New Challenges, and the New Synthesis”.

¹⁵ On the contrary, it condemns its supposed “humanism” without giving any examples and offers us supposed “arguments” like how many times the names of Marx, Lenin and Mao appear in one part of the documents they comment on (without informing the gullible reader that they are mentioned many times in the Appendix of the same document) and it affirms without any basis to do so that to speak of a “new theoretical framework” or “new synthesis” necessarily means that Marx, Lenin and Mao are no longer considered to be relevant.

but rather whether or not the new theoretical development provides a more correct explanation of reality and therefore a greater capacity to transform it.

There is nothing sacred about Marxism (and in fact, treating it as something sacred goes against the scientific method, the dialectical materialist method, of Marxism). If there were facts that demonstrated the falsehood of fundamental principles of Marxism or of Marxism itself, it would have to be discarded. However, as Bob Avakian demonstrates in his response to Karl Popper, a bourgeois critic of Marxism, central principles of Marxism have repeatedly been proven to be true in social practice, and there are no facts that contradict or demonstrate the falsehood of these principles.¹⁶ However, there are important secondary elements in Marxism or Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (such as tendencies toward nationalism when dealing with the contradiction between the defense of socialist countries and the advance of the world revolution, the idea of the “inevitability” of communism, etc.) that are wrong and contradict the scientific essence of Marxism, and therefore a rupture with these elements is really essential.

With its false characterization of the new synthesis as a total rupture and repudiation of the previous science of communism,¹⁷ what the CPA(M) is actually defending, as are other representatives of the dogmatic tendency in the movement today, is their opposition to the need for *these* ruptures and, in general, their opposition to the need for a qualitative development of the science in order to be able to correctly lead a new stage of the communist revolution.

4. Can there be a communist movement that doesn't grapple with communism?

We need to pose the question: can there be a communist movement that doesn't grapple with communism? because we find ourselves in a situation where a large part of the communist movement *doesn't concern itself with communism or the problems of the socialist transition to communism*. You can try to deny the existence of the end of a stage, you can try to deny that there is a pressing need to develop the science of communism, but as soon as you walk out of your “communist church” and talk to others about socialism and communism, you run into questions like “if socialism was so good, why was it defeated?” There are answers to this question and others like it, but to find them, as Avakian says, “you have to dig for that answer and you have to keep on digging...” and this is what the dogmatic tendency says is not necessary now. So they talk a lot about “people's war” and very little about what its goal should be, with the hope that the “practical advances” of the movement will make these difficult ideological and political problems disappear. On the other hand, the other erroneous tendency, of throwing out all the previous experience as essentially negative, either tries to avoid the topic or presents socialism and communism as something that is less and less distinguishable from present day bourgeois democracy. And among those of both tendencies, or mixtures of them, it is not uncommon to find the cruder argument of “Why talk about socialism now? We can talk about that when we take power.”

So it is important to ask, why is it so essential to grapple with the more scientific understanding of communism that the new synthesis offers us and to popularize it among the masses?

First of all, because if the struggle today isn't guided by a correct understanding of the goal (as well as other cardinal questions), *it won't lead to achieving that goal*. All of us have started out on a trip at some time, either long or short, and it wouldn't occur to anyone to think “I'm at the beginning of my trip, so I don't care which way my destination might be.” Nevertheless, that's the logic of those who think the questions of socialism and communism, so sharply posed by the

¹⁶ See the section “Marxism as a science — Refutation of Karl Popper” in Bob Avakian, *Making Revolution and Emancipating Humanity*, available at revcom.us, or in the pamphlet, *Revolution and Communism: A Foundation and Strategic Orientation*, p. 18-30.

¹⁷ Far from being “determined to erase all past development”, as the CPA(M) imagines, Avakian and the RCP, USA, have emphasized the defense and popularization of the achievements of socialism in the past as an important aspect of ideological struggle among the masses against the class enemy's anticommunist offensive, and they have made important contributions in this regard, as opposed to many supposed “communists” who prefer to ignore these thorny questions.

temporary defeat of socialism, “aren’t on the agenda” now. It’s a bourgeois slander that communism claims that “the end justifies the means”. What is true, on the contrary, is that the end determines or should determine the means, and if you don’t have clarity about the goal, you will not adopt methods that are appropriate for achieving it.

We have the bitter lesson of the people’s war in Vietnam,¹⁸ which was advancing in the 1960s during the period when the two line struggle erupted in the international communist movement. Mao’s line, in the process of developing the theory of continuing the revolution under socialism, faced the line of the revisionists or false communists in the Soviet Union who had restored capitalism, mainly in the form of state capitalism under the leadership of a now revisionist “communist” party. The Vietnam Workers Party (VWP) took a centrist position, arguing for unity from a nationalist, pragmatic position. When the Soviet revisionists went from conciliating with western imperialism under Khrushchev to ever greater confrontation on an imperialist basis under Brezhnev and, in that context, due to their own imperialist ambitions, they started to give more military aid to Vietnam, the VWP increasingly united with Soviet social-imperialism.

Taking a centrist position and fighting for unity between what was objectively state capitalism with a socialist signboard in the Soviet Union, and what was genuine socialism as a transition toward communism in China *objectively represented a position of ignoring the difference between capitalism and socialism, and whether the people’s war that was being waged in Vietnam was going to lead to socialism or to some type of capitalism.*

And today we can see the results of this nationalist, pragmatic line, for all those who care to see. At the cost of millions of lives, the Vietnamese people won the people’s war against US imperialism... but their revolution never took the socialist road. First they were dominated by Soviet social-imperialism, and with the fall of that empire, the country returned to the fold of the imperialist block headed up by the United States. And there are the workers in Vietnam today, exploited wage slave in factories that belong to the imperialists.

Why did it end up like that? It wasn’t mainly because of personal dishonesty of the leaders, but rather due to the ideological and political line that was leading the party. The class struggle under socialism in China demonstrated that many of the elements who degenerated and became revisionists were, in fact, bourgeois democrats who had joined the part organizationally but not ideologically. Many made contributions in the period of democratic revolution against imperialism and feudalism, but they opposed continuing the revolution under socialism and defended the revisionist line. Their essential goal was not communism and the elimination of classes, but simply to achieve an independent, modern and prosperous country. This was also the orientation of the VWP, and the position in the international communist movement today that ignores the need to grapple with the questions of the socialist transition to communism and capitalist restoration *also reflects deviations toward nationalism, pragmatism, and bourgeois democracy, especially among those of us communists who are waging the struggle in “third world” countries. The importance of grappling with socialism as part of the world transition to communism is not seen essentially because there is another goal: how to improve the position of “my” country to some degree in the world capitalist-imperialist system by means of revolution and some kind of state capitalism.*

Secondly, there will not be any *communist* revolution without convincing an important section of people who presently think that communism “failed” or was worse than capitalism, and that is not going to be achieved simply through the “practical successes” of a movement that isn’t grappling with communism. *Theoretical* work is required in order to understand the truth about these questions more deeply, and *ideological* struggle with the masses is needed in order to counter the anticommunist ideological campaign of the enemy (as well as the predominance of bourgeois ideology generally). We’ve already seen in the case of Cuba that making a revolution and only talking about some supposed “communism” afterwards also only leads, in the best case scenario, to a revisionist state capitalism.

Finally, a real communist movement prepares the proletarians and other masses *to rule* and genuine socialism as a transition to communism needs to involve ever wider sections of the masses

¹⁸ See “Vietnam: Miscarriage of the Revolution”, *Revolution* (magazine), July-August, 1979.

in ruling the new society and in the struggle to advance toward communism. This also won't happen if you are evading the "difficult" questions about socialism and communism, as well as other cardinal questions of the revolution.

5. If you're not grappling with how to eliminate the "four alls", you are not fighting for communism

In the development of the communist movement of the past century, there was increasing influence of a mechanical materialist view that tended to identify socialism simply with state property, economic planning, and the leadership of a "communist party", which doesn't provide a basis for distinguishing between revisionist state capitalism and socialism, since these are characteristics of both. Faced with these errors from the period of the Third International, and even more with the profound jolt of the restoration of capitalism in the form of state capitalism under the leadership of a *revisionist* communist party propagating bourgeois ideology with an apparently Marxist discourse, the work of theoretical *excavation* in order to *rediscover* to a large degree the profoundly revolutionary essence of Marxism regarding socialism was crucial. Mao and his comrades began this work and it has been continued by Bob Avakian. It has included returning over and over again to a profound and essential quote from Marx:

This socialism is the *declaration of the permanence of the revolution, the class dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the abolition of class distinctions generally, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionizing of all the ideas that result from these social relations.*¹⁹

What does this mean? That socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat is and can only be an *historical period of transition toward communism* which, as Avakian says, "leads to what we Maoists call the 'four alls'—that is, the abolition of all the class differences among the people. The abolition or the end to all the production or economic relations underlying these class differences and divisions among people. The ending of all the social relations that go along with these economic or production relations. Oppressive relations between men and women, between different nationalities, between people of different parts of the world, all that will be put an end to and moved beyond. And finally, the revolutionizing of all the ideas that go along with this whole way, this whole capitalist system, these whole social relations."²⁰

If we look around us, present-day societies are like a pyramid, with a small group of big capitalists and other exploiters at the top. The socialist revolution makes possible great transformations and liberating advances by removing the top and establishing an economy and a society serving the needs of the people and the world revolution, instead of the profits of a few. Nevertheless, the rest of the pyramid is still there, to put it that way, with many inequalities and relations inherited from the old society, as well as the corresponding ideas. The abolition of the four alls implies getting rid of all of that step by step, taking apart the whole pyramid and the corresponding ideas, and finally arriving at abolishing, among other things, the exchange of commodities through money, eliminating the contradiction between mental and manual labor, sharing both kinds of work among everyone; overcoming the socialist principle of payment according to work performed and applying the communist principle "From each according to their ability; to each according to their needs"; not only overcoming national oppression but transcending nations themselves; eliminating every trace of the oppression of women by men and patriarchal ideology; and much more. In short, it means achieving a free association of human beings in the whole world, without exploitation, oppression, or social inequalities, without classes, nations, or states, in which there "will be collective and cooperative principles aiming for the common good and

¹⁹ Marx, Karl, "The class struggles in France 1848 to 1850", *Marx, Engels Selected Works (MESW)*, Vol. 2, p. 282.

²⁰ Basics, from the talks and writing of Bob Avakian, RCP Publications, Chicago, 2011, Chapter 2, #3, p. 34.

at the same time, within that, individuals and individuality flourishing in a way that has never been possible before.”²¹

Is this the final goal? Or is the goal just a planned economy that provides better conditions for the masses? Or can't we tell the difference? “There is the question of are we really going to transform society...A society that not only meets the needs of the masses of people, but really is characterized increasingly by the conscious expression and initiative of the masses of people. This is a more fundamental transformation than simply a kind of social welfare, socialist in name but really capitalist in essence, a society where the role of the masses of people is still largely reduced to being producers of wealth, but not people who thrash out all the larger questions of affairs of state, the direction of society, culture, philosophy, science, the arts, and so on.”²²

It was the great discovery of Mao—now ignored or repudiated by a significant section of so-called “Maoists”—based on summing up the experience of the restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union and the class struggle under socialism in China, that the inequalities and relations inherited from the old society that persist in socialism—what Marx called “bourgeois right” or “birthmarks” of the old society inside the new²³—, as well as the corresponding ideas, not only have to be transformed and eliminated in order to reach communism, but they also, together with imperialist encirclement, constitute the basis in socialist society for the persistence of antagonistic class struggle and the formation of *a new bourgeoisie among some of the high-level leaders of the communist party itself*, the “capitalist roaders” *who apply a policy of defending and widening these inequalities, relations, and ideas inherited from the old society, instead of restricting them step by step*. If this position, this line, is able to carry out a coup and take command of the communist party and the socialist state, *capitalism will be restored*, even if it is in the form of a state capitalism still calling itself “socialist” with the leadership of a revisionist party that still calls itself “communist”, and this is exactly what happened in the Soviet Union in 1956 and in China in 1976.

The founders of socialism didn't foresee this complexity of the transition that was revealed by the initial experiences of socialism, and in 1936, Stalin erroneously analyzed that there were no longer antagonistic classes in the Soviet Union. With this fundamentally mistaken idea, he interpreted the opposition and struggle that in fact persisted as being only a product of agents of imperialism and the overthrown exploiting classes; he confused contradictions among the people with contradictions between the people and the enemy; and he increasingly relied on the repressive forces of the state in the class struggle, instead of relying fundamentally on mobilizing the masses and leading them to take up ideological and political struggle in order to continue advancing toward communism.

Mao, on the other hand, came to a more correct understanding of the persistence of antagonistic class struggle in socialism, and discovered in the Cultural Revolution a form for unleashing the initiative and rebellion of the masses in socialism so as to learn to distinguish and analyze the positions that defended the relations and ideas inherited from the past with “Marxist” and “communist” arguments, to criticize and to overthrow the communist leaders on the capitalist road, to increasingly struggle themselves with the problems of the communist transition, and to carry out many new and path breaking transformations of the productive and social relations, as well as ideas.

These tremendous theoretical and practical breakthroughs are today the “forgotten legacy” for the dogmatic tendency and the more openly bourgeois-democratic tendency in the international communist movement that, in spite of differences between them, share the characteristic of “Never taking up—or never engaging in any systematic way with—a scientific summation of the previous stage of the communist movement, and in particular Mao Tsetung's pathbreaking analysis concerning the danger of and basis for capitalist restoration in socialist society.”²⁴

²¹ Ibid., p. 35.

²² Ibid., p. 68.

²³ As Marx correctly pointed out regarding what we now call socialism, “What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has *developed* on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it *emerges* from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges.” Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program,” *MESW*, Vol. 3, p. 17.

²⁴ *Manifesto from the RCP, USA, op. cit.*, Chapter V.

After 10 years of the Cultural Revolution, after twice defeating attempts at revisionist coups, after unleashing millions to debate, criticize, and influence the direction of society in a way never before seen in history, after creating unheard of socialist new things, nevertheless, with Mao's death, a new revisionist clique was able to jail his followers (the "gang of four"), militarily defeat the people's militias who rose up against the usurpation, and restore capitalist.

In light of this experience and other discoveries, if you have your eyes on the goal of communism, it should be evident that there is much more to understand, much more to develop, to be able to do better at exercising the dictatorship of the proletariat and to be able to advance further toward communism in this new stage of the world proletarian revolution. In these times of "The common tendency to reduce 'Maoism' to just a prescription for waging people's war in a Third World country, while again ignoring, or diminishing the importance of, Mao's most important contribution to communism: his development of the theory and line of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat",²⁵ we cannot overemphasize the fact that the lines in opposition to grappling now with the problems of the socialist transition to communism remain within the limits of the capitalist system in one way or another and don't correspond to a struggle capable of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat once again and leading the masses to exercise state power to advance further and better toward communism. If you're not grappling with the *goal* of the communist struggle, if you're not grappling with how to eliminate the "four ills", *you are not fighting for communism.*

6. A new profoundly revolutionary and liberating society: a solid core with a lot of elasticity

Unlike those who argue that the "existing theoretical framework" from the last century is sufficient, as well as those who want to throw out past experience as principally negative, the new synthesis brings forward a deeper understanding of the contradictions in the world-historical process of transition from the world capitalist-imperialist system to the world communist system, a summation of secondary but important errors of the past, and a new theoretical framework, orientation and method for how to advance further and better in this new stage of the communist revolution.²⁶

A central contribution of comrade Avakian about how to deal with the contradictions of the socialist transition better is the **solid core with a lot of elasticity**: "...you have to have a solid core that firmly grasps and is committed to the strategic objectives and aims and process of struggle for communism. If you let go of that you are just giving everything back to the capitalists in one form or another, with all the horrors that means. At the same time, if you don't allow for a lot of diversity and people running in all kinds of directions with things, then not only are people going to be building up tremendous resentment against you, but you are also not going to have the rich kind of process out of which the greatest truth and ability to transform reality will emerge."²⁷

This is something profound, new and important. In dialectical relation with a solid core that struggles for communism, you need to not only allow but to encourage dissent, debate, diversity, "elasticity". Why? Because this diversity exists in socialist society and if you don't recognize it and handle it correctly this leads to "tremendous resentment" and very harmful consequences. Because, although you need the leadership of a communist party, you also need to constantly draw in ever broader sections of the masses to rule the new society and to grapple with the problems of the transition to communism, and this can't be achieved by ordering people around, but only through debate, dissent, and struggle. And because *there is no predetermined map for how to get to communism*, this process involves many complex and difficult problems which will have to be solved, and the dialectical relation between a communist solid core and the "elasticity" of a lot of

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ We can't include a summation of even the principal elements of this here, and we refer the reader to the *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, cited above and to "Re-envisioning Revolution and Communism: What is Bob Avakian's New Synthesis?", at revcom.us.

²⁷ *Basics, from the talks and writings of Bob Avakian*, op. cit., p. 59.

diversity, debate and social experimentation is needed *in order to come up with the appropriate answers*. It will be very difficult to embrace all this in a broad sense and *to guide it toward communism*—in fact, Avakian emphasizes that at critical moments it will feel like being on the verge of being drawn and quartered—but this kind of rich and many-sided process is essential for being able to create a new socialist society where the great majority want to live and for moving this society, together with the advance of the world revolution, forward toward communism, and not letting it go backwards to capitalism.²⁸

The CP of Afghanistan (M), in the above-cited document, denounces the new synthesis in general as “crude humanism”, to which they counterpose, “including in socialist societies,” “the revolutionary class struggle” and the “continuation of class struggle.”²⁹ In reality, as we have seen, the new synthesis proceeds precisely on the basis of recognizing the continuation of the antagonistic class struggle in socialism and how to deal with this and other contradictions of the socialist transition to communism better. They don’t do us the favor of giving even one example of this supposed “crude humanism”. Could this be because Avakian poses the struggle for the “emancipation of humanity” and not simply that of the oppressed classes? They don’t say. What we can surmise, at least, from their defense of the “existing theoretical framework” of 40 years ago and the insistence on “class struggle” in opposition to a supposed “crude humanism”, is that the CPA(M) does not agree with the criticism of the tendency toward “reification” of the proletariat in the communist movement of the last century.

The “reification” of the proletariat and other exploited groups is “a tendency which regards particular people in these groups, *as individuals*, as representative of the larger interests of the proletariat as a class and the revolutionary struggle that corresponds to the fundamental interests of the proletariat, in the largest sense.”³⁰ This tendency has been expressed, for example, in the idea that people coming from the exploited classes will necessarily have a more revolutionary and “proletarian” position than those from other strata. Although it is true that the proletariat is the firmest social base for communist revolution, this cannot be mechanically applied to individuals’ ideology and role: Marx, as Lenin observed, came from the bourgeois intelligentsia, and nevertheless he had the most consequently revolutionary position and the position most in accordance with reality from among the revolutionaries of his times. Another reflection of the same erroneous tendency was the idea in the Soviet Union that, by training technicians and others from among the workers and peasants, they were going to resolve the problem of transforming these strata. Although this was a necessary and important advance, there was not sufficient understanding of the need to continue to reduce the differences between mental and manual labor (which did not change even when the class origins of the new technicians were proletarian) and that these people were not necessarily going to play a role in line with the advance of the communist revolution just because they came from the working class.

This is also expressed in the conception of the goal of the struggle: is it only eliminating the oppression and exploitation of the previously oppressed and exploited classes (which is necessary, but not sufficient) or does it require the abolition of the “four ells”, which implies the emancipation of all of humanity from all the relations and ideas characteristic of class societies? Unlike all other previous revolutionary classes, the proletariat does not seek to simply emancipate itself and establish its dominion over society but rather seeks to *disappear* with the disappearance of classes in general,

²⁸ Avakian has explored various aspects of the application of this new conception to the socialist transition (it is also applicable to the struggle under capitalism) that we can only mention briefly here, like encouraging criticism and dissent, including criticism of the communist party and its leaders, allowing the publication of some reactionary books as objects of criticism and debate, criticism of the concept of an “official ideology” in socialism, providing communist leadership fundamentally through ideological and political struggle and not by monopolizing leadership positions in the new society, a larger role for elections and socialist rule of law, among others. For a concrete and at the same time inspiring vision of this new lively and liberating society, we highly recommend the *Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America (Draft Proposal)*, from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (RCP Publications, Chicago, 2010). While it proposes a Constitution specifically for a socialist republic in what is now the United States, it has many universal aspects.

²⁹ *Maoist Road/Vía Maoísta*, op. cit., p. 41.

³⁰ *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, op. cit., Chap. 4.

since it cannot attain its emancipation “without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinctions and class struggles.”³¹ Or as Avakian has formulated it so succinctly and profoundly: “Communism: A Whole New World and the Emancipation of Humanity — Not “The Last Shall Be First, and The First Shall Be Last.”³²

Although the CPA(M) does not offer us examples or arguments about their disagreement with the content of the new synthesis, it is only one of the exponents of the general dogmatic tendency in the international communist movement, which has also had a lot of influence in our own organization, the Revolutionary Communist Organization, Mexico. Given that the CPA(M) doesn't offer any more concrete arguments, we would like to share with the reader some arguments from our own ranks and from others that, most likely, have their counterpart in one way or another in the dogmatic conceptions expressed by the CPA(M) and others in the international movement.

One argument is that talking about the errors of the past will only strengthen the anticommunist offensive of the bourgeoisie. This offensive is real, and as Avakian says, there are “real sharks”³³ who seek to take advantage of the errors of the communists, but a *scientific* approach capable of grasping the problems as they really are in order to come up with real solutions requires clearly identifying both what has been (principally) correct and what has been (secondarily) erroneous in the previous theory and practice. By approaching this experience in a scientific way, you can distinguish between lies and distortions on the one hand, and what were really errors on the other, as well as understanding the conditions in which these errors were made, the errors of method that were involved, and drawing the appropriate lessons. All of this actually *strengthens* the ability of communism to respond to the anticommunist offensive and also contributes to developing an understanding that is more in accordance with reality in order to lead the struggle for communism. The method of not openly criticizing past conceptions but instead saying something different as if it were a continuation of the past when in fact it is not (or worse yet, simply repeating what is erroneous) represents a quasi-religious approach to Marxism that has done a lot of harm in the movement.

Another argument is that by encouraging dissent, capitalism will be restored even more quickly; and it has been argued that Mao tried to do something similar with the policy of “letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend” in the 1950's and that it didn't work, the right took advantage of it and it had to be ended. It's true that the old and the new bourgeoisie will try to take advantage of openings for dissent in order to restore capitalism, and it's also true that this kind of approach *demands much more of the communists*, in terms of convincing others by the strength of their arguments. Nevertheless, experience has demonstrated that erroneous tendencies toward trying to deal with the complex contradictions of socialism by mandate leave the masses unconscious and disarmed, lead to treating contradictions among the people antagonistically, put a “chill” in the atmosphere by suppressing the necessary ferment of diverse ideas and scientific, artistic, and cultural work, and create a rigidity of thought that is incapable of correctly handling the contradictions of the socialist transition, which are complex and whose resolution isn't “obvious” in most cases.

We need to study the experience of the “hundred flowers” more, but it can be said that although reactionaries inside and outside the party took advantage of the opening, this in fact *helped* to clarify various positions under debate that Mao and the revolutionaries were then able to criticize more deeply and combat more fully. And this was far from the “end” of dissent in Maoist socialism: the Cultural Revolution, among other things, involved debate and dissent on a grand scale.

The new synthesis and the solid core with a lot of elasticity represent a qualitative advance beyond even the best of past experience, and a scientific summation of that experience indicates that the “elasticity”, the dissent, debate, the diversity of social experimentation it proposes is essential for elucidating the complex problems of the socialist transition, for educating the masses and the

³¹ Engels, Frederick, “Preface to the English Edition of 1888”, in Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1970, p. 13.

³² Basics, op. cit., p. 33. The capitalization is due to the fact that this is the title of a talk.

³³ “Bob Avakian in a Discussion with Comrades on Epistemology: On Knowing and Changing the World”, *Observations on Art and Culture, Science and Philosophy*, Insight Press, U.S.A., 2005, p. 58.

communists themselves in the confrontation between different points of view in the struggle between communist advance and capitalist regression, and for continuously expanding the participation of the masses in ruling the new society, making full use of the possible contributions of the most diverse sectors of society *as long as* an expanding solid core is constantly seeking to “embrace” all of this in the broadest sense and struggling for it to contribute to advancing toward the communist goal.

It has also been argued that this will allow a greater role for intellectuals and artists (and in fact the new synthesis proposes a greater role for intellectuals and artists under socialism), who have not suffered and who therefore are going to fight for restoration, as opposed to the workers and peasants who have suffered and because of that will fight in favor of socialism and will have more truth on their side (that is to say, an expression of the “reification” of the proletariat and other oppressed, already discussed, as well as the position of “class truth” that Avakian has criticized). Although communism corresponds to the overall interests of the proletariat as a class, this doesn’t mean that individuals who are proletarians or are from other oppressed groups necessarily have a better or a more correct position, and although the scientific viewpoint and method of communism provides the most comprehensive, systematic, and consistent means to arrive at the truth, people who do not apply it and who are even against it also discover truths. The case of Lysenko in the Soviet Union illustrates how harmful the idea of “class truth” is and the importance of basing ourselves on objective truth, regardless of who discovers it. There was a controversy in the Soviet Union when it was socialist between the agronomist Lysenko, who argued in favor of the theory of “the inheritance of acquired characteristics”, which science has in fact demonstrated is false, and other scientists who argued that this theory was wrong. Stalin and other leaders of the party intervened in support of Lysenko, who was in favor of socialism and communism, against other scientists who had more backward political positions, in part also for pragmatic reasons, because this theory promised to solve the acute problems in agriculture more quickly. In reality, the scientists who were more opposed to socialism were right about this question, and failing to recognize this did a lot of damage, not just because it didn’t work but also because the same wrong method was applied in other cases³⁴ and it became part of the leading orientation for the sciences and the methodology of the party.

On the other hand, as part of combating capitalist restoration and advancing toward communism, it is essential to live with and transform the intermediate strata. As Avakian points out, “this is once again a unity of opposites—*living with* and *transforming* the middle strata. If you set out only to live with them, you will end up surrendering power back, not to the petty bourgeoisie but in fact to the bourgeoisie; things will increasingly be on their terms. On the other hand, if you seek only to transform the petty bourgeoisie (speaking broadly, to refer to the intermediate strata of various kinds), you will end up treating them like the bourgeoisie and driving them into the camp of the bourgeoisie, seriously undermining the dictatorship of the proletariat, and you will end up losing power that way, also.”³⁵

The orientation of solid core with a lot of elasticity interpenetrates with an epistemological rupture with wrong tendencies in the international communist movement toward “political truth” and of identifying the “truth” with apparent immediate advantages for the revolutionary forces, by insisting, on the contrary, on the scientific method of dialectical materialism and the need to base ourselves on objective truth, including the “truths that make us cringe” about errors the international communist movement has made, and by insisting that “Everything that is actually true is good for the proletariat, all truths can help us get to communism”.³⁶

Recognizing more deeply that the socialist transition to communism requires the resolution of many unresolved contradictions and that in order to do that you need the dialectical interaction between a solid communist core and a lot of “elasticity”, dissent, and social experimentation in order to find the appropriate answers is also related to the philosophical rupture with the tendency toward “inevitablism” that can be found even in the *Communist Manifesto* as a secondary element, contrary

³⁴ See for example, Avakian, *Dictatorship and Democracy, and the Socialist Transition to Communism*, available at revcom.us.

³⁵ Avakian, *The Basis, the Goals and the Methods of the Communist Revolution*, available at revcom.us.

³⁶ “Bob Avakian in a Discussion with Comrades on Epistemology: On Knowing and Changing the World”, op. cit.

to the overall scientific method of Marx and Engels and that has reached more extreme expressions of mechanical materialism and quasi-religious concepts of predetermination, such as the ideas expressed by Abimael Guzman, better known as “Chairman Gonzalo” of the Communist Party of Peru (CPP), that “we are condemned to victory” or “It took the Earth fifteen billion years to generate communism.”³⁷

7. A solid core without elasticity that “imposes” communism: “Advancing” with the errors of the 20th century

This mechanical materialist and determinist methodology is related to a different conception of how to resolve the problems of the socialist transition toward communism: the line of “people’s war until communism”, expressed without very much theoretical development by the Communist Party of Peru (CPP) and taken up by some of the present detractors of the new synthesis.

While criticizing this erroneous conception, we would like to point out that the people’s war in Peru led by the CPP and its Chairman Gonzalo represented an important advance in the world communist revolution, that gave new hope to the oppressed around the world. It deserved and received the support of communists, revolutionaries, and progressive people everywhere. A deeper analysis to draw lessons from this rich experience is still very much needed. Here we are not attempting to make a more overall summation of the line of the CPP under Gonzalo’s leadership before he put forward the right opportunist line of negotiating an end to the people’s war from jail.³⁸

Regarding the line of “people’s war until communism”, to begin with, the conception of the problem is wrong: “The bourgeoisie, when it loses power, gets into the Party; it makes use of the army and seeks to usurp power, destroying the dictatorship of the proletariat in order to restore capitalism...”³⁹ There is no distinction here between the problem of representatives of the old overthrown bourgeoisie who join the Party and the problem of the *new bourgeoisie* that is engendered under socialism and in particular among some leaders of the communist party, due to the persistence of “bourgeois right”—the inequalities and relations inherited from the old society in the production and social relations—as well as the corresponding ideas. Actually, you can find some of the same conception in various documents at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, but the understanding of Mao and his comrades continued to develop further as they analyzed how the contradictions of socialist society itself generated *new* bourgeois forces.

As Chang Chun-chiao, Mao’s comrade in the struggle against the revisionists who ultimately seized power after the death of Mao, pointed out, when China was still socialist: “We must be soberly aware that there is still a danger of China turning revisionist. This is not only because imperialism and social-imperialism will never give up aggression and subversion against us, not only because China’s old landlords and capitalists are still around and unreconciled to their defeat, but also because new bourgeois elements are being engendered daily and hourly, as Lenin put it.”⁴⁰ And Chang proceeds to closely analyze how the persistence of bourgeois right in the production relations under socialism gives rise to a new bourgeoisie, as well as the struggle over continuing to restrict bourgeois right or to consolidate and expand it. When speaking of the need to eliminate the “four alls” mentioned above, he says, “In all the four cases, Marx means *all*. Not a part, a greater part, or even the greatest part, but all!” And he contrasts this necessity with those communist party members who “approve of the dictatorship of the proletariat at a certain stage and within a certain sphere and are pleased with certain victories of the proletariat”, but when a certain point is reached, they oppose continuing to restrict bourgeois right: “As for exercising all-round dictatorship over the

³⁷ “Por la nueva bandera”, *Guerra popular en el Perú, El Pensamiento Gonzalo*, compiled and edited by Luís Arce Borja, Brussels, 1989, p. 144. Our translation. In addition to the idea of predetermination implicit in the formulation that the development of the earth necessarily leads to communism, in reality science indicates that the Earth has only been in existence for 4 or 5 billion years.

³⁸ By now there is overwhelming evidence that Abimael Guzman/Chairman Gonzalo was and is the author of this line. See “A Serious Analysis of the Situation of the Peruvian Revolution and its Needs”, *A World to Win*, No. 32.

³⁹ “Bases de discusión” en *Guerra popular en el Perú, El Pensamiento Gonzalo*, op. cit., p. 370. Our translation.

⁴⁰ Chang Chun-chiao, “On Exercising All-Round Dictatorship Over the Bourgeoisie”, *A World to Win*, No. 14, p. 47.

bourgeoisie..., sorry let others do the job; here is my stop and I must get off the bus. We would like to offer a piece of advice to these comrades: It's dangerous to stop half-way!" And in regard to the leading revisionist capitalist-roaders he says: "You wanted to restrict bourgeois right? They said it was an excellent thing indeed and should be extended. They are a bunch of past masters at defending old things and, like a swarm of flies, buzz all day long over the 'birthmarks' and 'defects' of the old society referred to by Marx. They are particularly keen on taking advantage of the inexperience of our young people to boost material incentives to them, saying that like strong bean-curd cheese, it stinks but tastes fine."⁴¹

This Maoist understanding developed in the class struggle under socialism is what Bob Avakian rescued, defended and systematized in the wake of the coup in China: "It is precisely the top leaders of the Party who take to the capitalist road that constitute the greatest danger to socialism and must be the main target of the revolutionary struggle... The contradictions of socialist society itself—the remaining division of labor, differences in income, the persistence of commodity relations, etc., as well as the continuing influence of bourgeois ideology—provide the basis not only for bourgeois elements to be constantly generated in society generally, but especially for them to repeatedly emerge at the top ranks of the Party *and* for them to mobilize a social base for counter-revolution. This does not mean that all leading people, by mere virtue of their position, are bound to become bourgeois and turn traitor to the revolution. But it does mean that some of them—in particular those who take to the bourgeois style of life and adopt a revisionist ideological and political line—will do so and that they will then have both the necessity and the opportunity to rally a following for an attempt to seize power and restore capitalism. This, as Mao summed up, will continue to be the case all throughout socialism, until the contradictions of socialism are resolved through the revolutionary advance to communism."⁴²

The coup in China itself demonstrates the correctness of this analysis: those who seized power were not representatives of the old overthrown bourgeoisie, still camped out in Taiwan, but instead they were principally representatives of the new bourgeoisie, emerging under socialism. The formulation cited from the CPP disregards all this development of Maoist theory and, frankly, represents a regression in the direction of the errors of Stalin, who conceived of the danger of restoration as coming from direct representatives of the old bourgeoisie and of the imperialist countries. Although the CPP, unlike Stalin, does recognize the persistence of antagonistic classes under socialism, it pays no attention to how the relations in socialist society itself (the relations inherited from capitalism that need to be transformed toward communism) constitute the material basis for the emergence of a new bourgeoisie and for capitalist restoration. This is not a minor matter. If you conceive of the problem as simply representatives of the old overthrown bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie internationally, then simply getting rid of those representatives, in one way or another could seem to be a direct and effective solution: as the saying goes, "kill the dog and you get rid of the rabies." But if you understand that the contradictions of socialism itself constantly regenerate the danger of capitalist restoration, that there's a constant struggle between advancing further toward communism or returning to capitalism and that it isn't possible to "stop half-way" without returning to capitalism, then you see that the problem is much more complex.

In this light, it isn't surprising that the CPP stated that "it is false that [Stalin] resolved things by administrative means",⁴³ which was presented as being consistent with Mao's position, but was actually a disagreement with the evaluation of Mao who observed that "At that time [the 1920s] Stalin had nothing else to rely on except the masses, so he demanded all-out mobilization of the party and the masses. Afterward, when they had realized some gains this way, they became less reliant on the masses".⁴⁴

Based on this erroneous understanding of the problem, the CPP's "Gonzalo Thought" proposes, on the one hand, "the armed organization of the masses, the people's militia that swallows

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 53.

⁴² Avakian, Bob, *Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions*, RCP Publications, Chicago, IL, 1979, p. 299-300.

⁴³ "Bases de discussion", op. cit., p. 313. Our translation.

⁴⁴ Mao, quoted in *Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions*, op. cit., p. 147.

up the army.” The need to maintain a professional army under socialism, due to an important degree to imperialist encirclement and aggression, is a contradiction of great importance under socialism but, as we have seen, it is far from the only one. It is also correct to give emphasis to developing militias, but this cannot provide a complete solution to this problem. In reality, the revolutionaries in China did promote the militias and some of them rose up against the regular army when the coup happened, but they couldn’t prevail against the greater strength, weaponry, training, and discipline of the regular forces. More importantly, simply arming the masses doesn’t guarantee *what line* they will follow: in fact many armed masses in the militias went with the tide of the new revisionist line in power.

From this partial proposal, they go on to other profoundly erroneous and harmful proposals: the “militarization of society”⁴⁵ and the idea that the contradictions of socialism will be resolved with “revolutionary violence”: “we will maintain the continuation of the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat with revolutionary violence through cultural revolutions, and we will only get to communism with revolutionary violence, and as long as there is any place on Earth where exploitation exists we will finish it off with revolutionary violence.”⁴⁶ In the first place, presenting the Cultural Revolution as if it were essentially “revolutionary violence” is a crude distortion of the theory and practice of the Cultural Revolution, where Mao repeatedly insisted on *not* resolving contradictions through violence, which was possible because the proletariat still held state power, and the violence which was unleashed went against Mao’s line and harmed the development of the Cultural Revolution. Instead of frankly presenting this disagreement with Mao, an opposing view is presented as if it were in agreement with Mao’s position, which is an erroneous method that, as mentioned above, reflects the legacy of previous erroneous tendencies in the international communist movement of a dogmatic and religious attitude toward Marxism.

Revolutionary violence is necessary, without a doubt, in order to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism, to defend socialist countries from capitalist-imperialist aggression, to reestablish socialism after a restoration of capitalism, and to defeat armed attempts to overthrow the socialist state. However, simply “cutting off heads” cannot be the main way of resolving the problems of the socialist transition. For one thing, the new bourgeoisie is not a static and unchanging target nor is it easily distinguishable. The forces who make it up do not speak openly in favor of capitalism: they are leaders of the communist party itself who persist in defending a line that in reality will lead to restoration, at certain times some can be won at least in part to the revolutionary line while others cannot, and in fact the relative strength of such a line and whether or not it has the ability to usurp power changes in relation to the objective situation in the world and within the country. On the other hand, the essential problem, as we have seen, doesn’t reside in these people as individuals but rather in a line that has a material basis in socialist society. Experience has shown only too well that when you get rid of some revisionist leaders, others emerge, so in addition to mobilizing the masses to overthrow revisionist leaders, it is crucial to work on the roots of the problem by raising people’s ability to distinguish between the revisionist line and the communist line, as well as understanding the profound necessity and finding the appropriate forms for continuing to transform the “four alls” toward communism.

The use of violence as the principal means for resolving these problems of line, consciousness, and the transformation of the four alls is, in fact, harmful, as the negative experience of the Soviet Union illustrates. It necessarily leads to confusing contradictions between the people and the enemy with contradictions among the people, because there can be and will be people who oppose necessary socialist transformations who are not actively working to overthrow socialism, as well as many people who follow an incorrect line at a given time who can and should be won to the revolutionary line. In both cases, these are contradictions among the people that should be handled with ideological and political struggle and not with “revolutionary violence”. Conversely, armed attempts to overthrow socialism must be defeated. In addition, the use of violence as the principal means for resolving contradictions under socialism “chills the atmosphere”, putting an end to the

⁴⁵ “Bases de discussion”, op. cit., p. 370.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 310.

great debates, dissent, and line struggle that are essential both for finding correct solutions to the complex problems of the socialist transition and for developing the ability of ever greater numbers of people to distinguish between communism and revisionism: between the line that proclaims a position with Marxist phrases that objectively leads back to capitalism and the line that's struggling for appropriate steps forward in the transition to communism at a given time, something which is not a simple matter.

The CPP and its chairman were either unaware of or rejected the analysis by Mao and his followers of the complexity of this transition and the need to eliminate the "four ills". In the quotation above, communism is spoken of as if it were simply a question of abolishing exploitation. Although this is fundamental, the socialist revolution, with the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the conversion of the means of production into property of the whole people and collective property, basically eliminates exploitation, although in cases in which the revisionist line is expanding the inequalities of socialist society instead of restricting them, it "smells of exploitation", as Mao's followers said. But as we have seen, there is a much longer road (and a whole historical period) to cover in order to abolish the "four ills" in the entire world in order to reach communism, which isn't taken into account when frankly ridiculous things are said like "Chairman Gonzalo... will take us to Communism".⁴⁷

Similar to how it is proposed that the complex contradictions of socialism be resolved by means of an apparently simpler but fundamentally mistaken method of imposing things through violence, an attempt was also made to resolve the problems of the two line struggle in the CPP by means of subordinating the entire party to its chairman Gonzalo, in a profound deviation from democratic centralism and the principle that the individual (including the chairperson) is subordinate to the collectivity and the Party. A revolutionary leader can play an extremely important role in lifting up the vision of others when struggling for an understanding that corresponds to material reality and the advance of the communist revolution. If it had not been for Lenin's struggle, the revolutionary crisis that gave rise to the October Revolution would not have been taken advantage of, and Mao commented that "There were times in the Cultural Revolution, especially at the beginning, when I was the only one who agreed with my opinion." However, this role is not essentially due to some personal quality of the revolutionary leader but rather to the *line* that they defend: their understanding of the problems that the communist revolution faces and how to correctly solve them. Individuals follow and apply one or another line, but individuals as such do not have lines, which are, in reality, a product of a collective process of a party or of the international movement. In some cases, individuals may come to synthesize and concentrate key elements of the communist science and in such cases this should be recognized, but there isn't anyone who is immune to making mistakes in regard to the problems of the communist revolution or even adopting "solutions" that in fact go against the advance of that revolution. This, among other reasons, is why collective leadership, the subordination of the individual and even the chairperson of a party to the collectivity, and the most lively and critical debate in that collectivity are essential.

It seems that the profoundly erroneous practice in which members of the CPP swore loyalty to their chairman Gonzalo was, to an important degree, based on the logic that he, as a person, was the guarantee of the correct line and of victory, as was said many times. But no one, in and of themselves, can be the guarantee of a correct line: a correct line is the product of a process of correctly applying the scientific method of dialectical materialism to develop concepts that reflect or basically reflect material reality and how to transform it. A correct or basically correct line is essential to win victory, but there can be no "guarantee" of victory, since the revolutionary forces can be defeated, not principally due to their errors but rather to an unfavorable balance of forces, and other factors can also intervene.

What happens with the imprisonment of Gonzalo? The same mistaken logic according to which he is the guarantee of a correct line and of victory leads to thinking that the people's war cannot continue since he, the guarantee, is not present, and it is Gonzalo himself who issues the call to negotiate the end of the people's war and poses an erroneous analysis, a revisionist line, in the face

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 369.

of the real difficulties arising from his capture and that of other party leaders, as well as the difficulties in the international situation.

This line has already caused considerable damage in Peru and in the world, but these metaphysical and mechanical ways of dealing with contradictions lead to even worse things when dealing with the problem of forging a new society. As Avakian points out in regard to a different case of a solid core without elasticity: “We can see the negative, extremely negative, expression of not correctly grasping and handling this [the diversity of socialist society and how to live with and transform the middle strata -OCR] in the experience—which I won’t attempt to go into in any kind of full way here, but briefly—the experience of Pol Pot in Cambodia, where instead of this kind of approach they had this whole approach that involved real irony, as well as real disaster. They had peasant masses who had not undergone any real radical transformation in their thinking, despite certain changes in their material conditions: the peasant masses, especially in the base areas they established during the war against the Lon Nol regime and the U.S. (which installed and backed that regime), were led by intellectuals who had that problem, the very real problem that I’ve spoken of in other talks and writings—the phenomenon of education on a narrow foundation (I’ll come back to that point shortly, because it is actually a very important point). And the Khmer Rouge, under Pol Pot’s direction, took the rest of Cambodian society and attempted to pound and flatten it down to the level of the peasantry—as the peasantry was then—in the name of, and somehow as a supposed means for getting to, communism. To wildly understate it, they did not grasp solid core with elasticity or the “parachute point” [i.e., the diversity of socialist society -OCR] at all. And this led to real disasters and, yes, real horrors.”⁴⁸

Gonzalo’s line was not the same as Pol Pot’s, but his orientation of “people’s war until communism” is also an expression of overlooking the complex contradictions of the socialist transition to communism and thinking that a solid core without elasticity can simply impose its solutions on the diversity of socialist society. This is to insist on repeating and deepening errors of the 20th century and to reject and throw away the essence of Mao’s greatest contribution to communist science, the theory of continuing the revolution under socialism (and all this in the name of supposedly “imposing Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, principally Maoism”). If applied, this line can only lead to disaster and not to emancipation.

8. Elasticity without a solid core: “Advancing” toward the 18th century, or there’s no better communism than bourgeois democracy

While some advocate a solid core without any elasticity, others have become enthusiastic about “elasticity”, rediscovering bourgeois electoral democracy and throwing out the need for a solid core fighting for communism, and in particular the need for the institutionalized leadership of the communist party in socialism. Such is the case with chairman Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai, leaders of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [CPN(M)]—now the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [UCPN(M)]—and the revisionist line adopted by this party in the Central Committee meeting in October, 2005.

The new revisionist line of the CPN(M) completely ignores the real contradictions of the socialist transition to communism, the abolition of the “four alls”, that we have already examined, and reduces the essential problem in socialism to “bureaucracy”. In this way they replace a serious analysis of the real contradictions of socialist society with the commonplaces typical of bourgeois, social-democratic and revisionist analyses that are not able to find any problem other than “bureaucracy”. For example: “When democracy does not take root in the entire oppressed classes, then bureaucratic tendencies emerge in the Party, state, and the society as well...”⁴⁹ Although

⁴⁸ Avakian, Bob, “The Basis, the Goals, and the Methods of the Communist Revolution”, *Revolution* No. 48, available at revcom.us.

⁴⁹ July 1, 2006 Letter from the Central Committee, Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) to the Central Committee, Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, available in revcom.us. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) changed its

problems with bureaucratic methods of work have existed and will exist, as we have seen, the problem of the class struggle under socialism is much more profound than this.

This goes hand in hand with a profound distortion of the experience of socialism, ignoring the struggle of the masses under the leadership of revolutionary communists to continue advancing toward communism, especially in the Cultural Revolution in China, against the capitalist roaders among other party leaders who finally were able to carry out a coup d'état, imprisoning and killing the revolutionaries and restoring capitalism. Instead of this *reality*, they give us an invented history of the slow and gradual bureaucratic degeneration of the proletarian party and state as a whole, without any distinction between communists and revisionists or between socialism and capitalism: "in the past the proletarian state powers instead of serving the masses and acting as instruments of continuous revolution turned into masters of the people and instruments of counter-revolution, and rather than moving in the direction of withering away transformed into huge totalitarian bureaucracies and instruments of repression".⁵⁰

Such "analysis" of "totalitarian bureaucracies" is simply the bourgeois criticism of socialism, constantly spread through thousands of media, transplanted into supposedly communist literature. Therefore, as Lenin commented about the revisionist criticism of the fundamental ideas of Marxism in his times, "it is not surprising that the 'new, critical' trend in Social-Democracy should spring up, all complete, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter. The content of this new trend did not have to grow and take shape, it was transferred bodily from bourgeois literature to socialist literature."⁵¹ Or as we say in this computer age, "copy and paste".

By redefining the problem of the socialist transition to communism as "bureaucracy" instead of the abolition of the four ills in the entire world, and by distorting the real class struggle in the first socialist countries, the CPN(M) comes to the same old conclusion that the "solution" is "democracy" and in particular "multiparty competition": "If they are not to face competition among the masses to remain in the leadership of power, then there remains a material basis, in which the relation between the Party and the masses becomes formal and mechanical, consequently it provides an opportunity for bureaucracy to breed from within the Party itself... Hence, we believe multiparty competition for the people's government and, along with this, the people's right to supervise, control, and intervene, including recalling of their representatives from power, provides a kind of hook in the hands of the masses that can drag the wrongdoing comrades into their court."⁵²

They say that without this electoral competition "there remains a material basis" for bureaucratic degeneration, with the implication that with such competition such a basis no longer exists, shutting their eyes to the material basis for capitalist restoration in the very relations, inequalities, and ideas of socialist society itself, inherited from capitalism, as well as the fierce struggle during the entire socialist period between the struggle to advance further toward communism or return to capitalism. Based on ignoring the real problem, they find the "solution" in "multiparty competition", which is nothing more than the bourgeois electoral democracy that has never led, in any case in history, to dragging anybody in power into the masses' "court" and has been used a great deal to drag the masses and communists who are in the process of degenerating into revisionists into the "court" of the bourgeoisie. And the CPN(M) has demonstrated this in full by ending the people's war that it led for 10 years, turning in their weapons, dismantling their base areas, participating in elections, and entering into and heading up a government together with several parties of the big bourgeoisie allied with imperialism. There they offer us the spectacle of supposed communists sending Nepalese soldiers to fight side by side with U.S. imperialism in the war of aggression in Afghanistan, at the same time as they undo the agrarian revolution previously

name to the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) when uniting with Mashal, a grouping that they had previously identified correctly as revisionist.

⁵⁰ Bhattarai, Baburam, "The Question of Building a New Type of State", *The Worker* No. 9, February, 2004, p. 34. This article published in the official organ of the party developed several of the revisionist theses adopted by the party in 2005.

⁵¹ Lenin, *What is to Be Done?*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1973, p. 8.

⁵² "Letter", op. cit.

promoted by the party, returning the land in various areas to the old landlords. This is the bitter fruit of “multiparty competition”.

As Avakian underlines in his profound criticism of essentially the same line brought forward before by K. Venu: the “‘model’, where the communist party’s ‘right to govern’ is ‘strictly based on the electoral support gained by its platform just like any other platform’, would, at best, translate into a situation where rival power centers, coalesced around different platforms, would compete for the votes of the masses. The results of this (again, at best) would be some sort of ‘coalition’ government, in which ‘socialists’ and ‘communists’ of various kinds would be involved together with representatives of various other, more openly bourgeois and petit-bourgeois, ‘democratic’ trends, and in which the fundamental interests of the masses would be ‘compromised away’ and no radical transformation of society would be carried out (and any attempt at this would be quickly suppressed by this ‘coalition’ government). Hasn’t there been enough — indeed far too much! — experience all over the world, to graphically illustrate this?”⁵³ Avakian mentions, for example, the Indonesian experience where this type of bourgeois parliamentarianism led to the massacre of thousand of communists and other people. Recent experience in Nepal has also clearly demonstrated the correctness of his analysis, where the deals and agreements with bourgeois parties in Nepal have led to sacrificing the masses’ fundamental revolutionary interests for crumbs consisting of positions in a bourgeois state.

These days a large part of the planet’s population lives in “democracies” with electoral competition among different parties where *it is proven year after year that it’s no good*. Where in the world or throughout history have elections organized according to the bourgeois model resulted in meeting the real needs of the masses, instead of all kinds of deceit, illusions, and repression? Nowhere. Where has there been greater democracy *for the masses of people*, a greater possibility of transforming society in the direction of eliminating all kinds of social inequalities, a greater possibility of participating in administration of the state, a greater expression of the opinions of the *masses*, than in the socialist experiences led by a communist party, and especially the most advanced experience to date, the Cultural Revolution? Nowhere.

The seizure of power by the proletariat is only the first step of a long and difficult struggle that faces encirclement from imperialist countries that are determined to crush it, that faces the deception of a new bourgeoisie that speaks in the name of a supposed “communism”, that faces the complex struggle to advance the world revolution at the same time as overcoming the four alls, involving and training increasing numbers of the masses to actually *govern and transform* the new society, instead of simply voting to “decide” which group of double-dealers are going to crush and oppress them from the government during the next 4 or 6 years. Faced with these challenges, the leadership of a communist party is absolutely necessary under socialism; you can’t do without a solid core that is struggling for communism, although this core, as Avakian argues, must encourage and lead in the broadest sense of the word even greater elasticity than even the best of the past. This includes a larger role for elections with the participation of various candidates representing different forces and positions, and the orientation of exercising communist leadership fundamentally through ideological and political struggle and not principally through monopolizing positions of authority. However, the “option” of returning to the nightmare of capitalism that still predominates in the world and is going all out to undermine and overthrow socialism, will *not* be put to a vote, after all the sacrifice the people have made in order to free themselves from that nightmare. These kinds of proposals are quite frankly *criminal*.

The CPN(M)’s “democracy of the 21st century” is just a remake of the deception of “pure” democracy, “above classes”; that is, the theory of *bourgeois* democracy recycled from the bourgeois theorists of the 18th century. As Avakian emphasizes, “In a world marked by profound class divisions and social inequality, to talk about “democracy”—without talking about the *class nature* of that democracy and which class it serves—is meaningless, and worse. So long as society is divided into classes, there can be no “democracy for all”: one class or another will rule, and it will uphold and promote that kind of democracy which serves its interests and goals. The question is: *which class*

⁵³ Avakian, Bob, “Democracy: More than Ever We Can and Must Do Better than That!”, *A World to Win*, No. 17, p. 66.

will rule and whether its rule, and its system of democracy, will serve the *continuation*, or the eventual *abolition*, of class divisions and the corresponding relations of exploitation, oppression and inequality.”⁵⁴

As the *Manifesto from the RCP, USA* states: “Very significantly, these “mirror opposite” erroneous tendencies have in common being mired in, or retreating into, models of the past, of one kind or another (even if the particular models may differ): either clinging dogmatically to the past experience of the first stage of the communist revolution—or, rather, to an incomplete, one-sided, and ultimately erroneous understanding of that—or retreating into the whole past era of *bourgeois* revolution and its principles: going back to what are in essence 18th century theories of (bourgeois) democracy, in the guise, or in the name, of “21st-century communism,” in effect equating this “21st-century communism” with a democracy that is supposedly “pure” or “classless”—a democracy which, in reality, as long as classes exist, can only mean *bourgeois* democracy, and *bourgeois dictatorship*.”⁵⁵

We don’t need a solid core without elasticity that “imposes” a distorted, and ultimately a revisionist, conception of “communism”, nor do we need elasticity without a solid core, which embraces bourgeois democracy and leads to strengthening bourgeois dictatorship. The lazybones dogmatism of the CPA(M) variety, which is not only content with providing nothing new after almost 40 years but also warns us against the dangers of developing anything new, also has nothing to offer. We need a solid core with a lot of elasticity; we need the new synthesis, which opens up new vistas of a new and liberating society where the great majority would want to live and of how to advance better and further in the world-historic transition toward communism. This is the communist theory that can and must guide a new wave of communist revolutions, or *there won’t be* any such wave.

9. There will be no emancipation for anybody without smashing the bourgeois state: lessons from Nepal

The other fundamental aspect of the revisionism of Prachanda and the CPN(M) beginning with the adoption of their new line in 2005 was to replace the line of developing the people’s war for the seizure of power, culminating the new democratic revolution and advancing to the socialist revolution, with the supposed “tactic” of fighting for a “democratic republic” and a “transitional state” together with various other parties that the CPN(M) itself had characterized as bourgeois and pro-imperialist, to “restructure the state”, and excusing this with the need to struggle against the monarchy, which has now been deposed. This is the line that guided the peace agreement, the end of the people’s war, the proposal to combine the revolutionary army with the reactionary army, and the participation of the CPN(M) in the elections, in which they won a plurality of votes and formed a government with the bourgeois parties.

The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA thoroughly criticized this new revisionist line, that had already become evident in the writings of Bhattarai, in a letter sent to the CPN(M) in October of 2005, that is, at the time when the CPN(M) was just officially adopting this line and before its disastrous practical consequences became evident.⁵⁶ The CPN(M) rejected the RCP, USA’s criticism, saying that it was simply repeating the “ABC’s of Marxism”, refused to respond to subsequent letters, and followed the road into the revisionist swamp in which they are to be found at present. In addition to the questions of the socialist transition that we have touched on, the central question in this struggle was whether the immediate goal was to “restructure the state” or to destroy it, to smash it.

As one of the letters from the RCP, USA, emphasizes:

⁵⁴ Quoted in *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, op. cit., footnote 15, available at revcom.us.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Chapter V.

⁵⁶ These letters are available at revcom.us with the title: “On Developments in Nepal and the Stakes for the Communist Movement: Letters to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, 2005-2008 (With a Reply from the CPN(M), 2006)”.

One of the phrases that recurs in CPN(M) writings like a leitmotif is the call to “restructure the state.” In fact, this very phrase sharply sums up what is wrong in the CPN(M)’s political program. It is worthwhile reviewing the much-maligned “ABC’s of Marxism” in this regard. In summing up the experience of the different revolutions in 19th century Europe, Marx made the very profound observation that “all revolutions *perfected* this machine instead of smashing it” (our emphasis). What did Marx mean by this?

In particular he was referring to the fact that the several rounds of revolution in Europe and especially France (1789, 1830, and 1848) had resulted in transforming the state machinery to correspond with the capitalist economic base and “perfecting” its ability to fulfill its role as the enforcer of bourgeois dictatorship. Quite clearly Marx is referring to the abolition of the monarchy in much of Europe and the generalization of bourgeois democracy as the “perfection” of the capitalist dictatorship that the state represents. Later Marx specifically draws the lesson of the Commune which was not, in its essence, an effort to further perfect the bourgeois state apparatus in France but rather a first, albeit halting, sometimes irresolute, and ultimately unsuccessful effort to *smash* the bourgeois state machinery and replace it with a different state emerging from the proletarian revolutionary struggle.

At stake in the present debate in Nepal is whether, when all is said and done, the 10 years of People’s War will have served to *smash the reactionary state machinery or perfect it*. To put it quite bluntly, if the result of the war is the consolidation of a bourgeois republic, the tragic result will be that the sacrifice of the people will have served not to establish a new form of proletarian rule but only to “modernize” and “perfect” the very instrument that keeps them oppressed.⁵⁷

This “tragic result” is exactly what is happening today in Nepal, the result of adopting a revisionist line on socialism and communism, as we have seen, and the closely related result of adopting a revisionist line of fighting to “restructure” or perfect the old state instead of continuing the struggle to destroy it.

The correct communist criticism by the RCP, USA has been attacked from the “left” and the right, without anyone trying to refute the *content* of their position.

On the one hand, some attacked the CPN(M) before their about-face to a revisionist line, for applying some ceasefire tactics, insisting in the name of a supposed “Maoism”—in reality a “left” infantilism—that any ceasefire and any negotiation is equivalent to betrayal, without having enough coherence of principle to brand Mao himself a traitor, given that he established a ceasefire and negotiated with the Kuomintang in Chungking. At that time Mao emphasized that in combating the enemy, “How to give ‘tit for tat’ depends on the situation. Sometimes, not going to negotiations is tit-for-tat; and sometimes, going to negotiations is also tit-for-tat.”⁵⁸ Mao clearly explains that the negotiations had the political aim of further isolating the Kuomintang and preparing the civil war that finally led to the victory of the Chinese Revolution. The question for communists in evaluating ceasefire or negotiation tactics is whether these serve to strengthen the revolutionary armed struggle and finally destroy the bourgeois state or if they lead to liquidating the people’s war that is necessary in order to smash it. The Chungking negotiations clearly had the aim, and the effect of strengthening the people’s war and contributing to the victory of the revolution. Although we haven’t investigated enough to evaluate each one of the tactics adopted by the CPN(M) before the change in their line, it is clear that the ceasefire tactics in that period had the political aim of isolating the enemy and strengthening the people’s war. With the revisionist about-face and the change in the strategic goals of the CPN(M), all their tactics since then have been in the service of aims that don’t go beyond the suffocating and deadly confines of the world capitalist-imperialist system. Similarly, the “peace

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Letter of 19 March 2008, p. 30. See the original for footnotes of the quoted text.

⁵⁸ Mao Tsetung, “On the Chungking Negotiations”, *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung*, Volume IV, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1961, p. 56.

accords” proposed by the right opportunist line (ROL) in Peru were part of a whole revisionist line, as the comrades of the present Communist Party of Iran (MLM) analyzed correctly at the time.⁵⁹

It’s worth mentioning that the simplistic and dogmatic approach we’re discussing here wreaked havoc in the case of Peru as well. Without a doubt the situation was very difficult, with the detention of Chairman Gonzalo and later the proposal for peace accords coming out of prison and attributed to him, but without reliable proof initially that he was, in fact, the author. However, the response of the leadership that was determined to continue the people’s war to simply denounce this as a “hoax” without responding with arguments or developing the two-line struggle against the ROL (recurring in some versions at least to the same argument that any negotiation is betrayal and that Gonzalo “could not” do that, in addition to the strange argument that developing the two-line struggle against the ROL was “conciliation”) left the party and the masses disarmed politically, while this right opportunist line developed political argumentation in one document after another and there were more and more indications that Gonzalo was, in fact, the author of the peace accords proposal and of the ROL.

On the other hand, even some of the protagonists of the infantile attacks mentioned above, displaying their lack of principles, have “suspended judgment” in the face of the electoral “successes” of the UCPN(M) and are seeking unprincipled unity with this party, now led by a revisionist line. The practical impact of revisionism has provoked protest and opposition inside the UCPN(M) but unfortunately, up till now, as far as we know, this opposition has not gone beyond criticism of some of the tactics, instead of repudiating, criticizing, and thoroughly struggling against the revisionist line adopted in 2005. To speak frankly, although Prachanda and others talk about preparing the “insurrection” and even if they were to again take up some kind of armed struggle, as long as this is still in the service of the line of “restructuring” the reactionary state and fighting for a so-called socialism with bourgeois democratic “multiparty competition”, *it will not lead to liberating anyone*.

10. Unity for the emancipation of humanity or unity without principles in order to have “material force”?

We have observed from different angles, as the *Manifesto* of the RCP, USA, also points out, that the two erroneous tendencies that are opposed to the new synthesis—again, “either to cling religiously to all of the previous experience and the theory and method associated with it or (in essence, if not in words) to throw that out altogether”⁶⁰—although they appear to be such different and mutually-opposed tendencies, in reality have some features in common. Some participating organizations in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) have been in a hurry to show this in practice, by attempting to unite both wrong tendencies (and eclectic mixtures of both of them) in a new “Marxist-Leninist-Maoist” international organization, outside the RIM and in opposition to Bob Avakian’s new synthesis.

The first call on the part of some forces in the RIM to “achieve a new unity of the international communist movement based on Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and build the international organization that we need today” appeared on May 1st, 2011, signed by the Maoist Communist Party-Italy, The Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), the Communist Party of India (ML) Naxalbari, the Maoist Communist Party, Turkey and North Kurdistan, and five organizations that do not participate in the RIM. They tell us, among other things, that “In Nepal, 10 years of people’s war have created the conditions for the advancement of Nepali revolution. This revolution is now at a complex crossroads and must be supported against the counter-revolution waged by internal and external enemies as well as against the reformists who try to undermine it from within.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ Union of Communists of Iran (Sarbedaran)/UCIS, “It Is Right to Rebel!”, *A World to Win*, No. 21. The UCIS later played a key role in the formation of the Communist Party of Iran (MLM).

⁶⁰ *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, op. cit., Chapter V.

⁶¹ “People want revolution, Proletarians want the Party of the Revolution, Communists want internationalism and a new international organization”, May 1st, 2011.

So they're talking about a "people's war" in Nepal in 2011 with a vague reference to "reformism" without mentioning that it was *liquidated* with the 2006 peace accords by the revisionist line in command of the UCPN(M), which also appears as a signatory of the document. This was two years after the letters from the RCP, USA criticizing the revisionist about-face of the UCPN(M) were made public, all of which were surely received much earlier by the participants in the RIM. In a new document of May 1st, 2012, signed by the Maoist Communist Party-Italy (MCP-Italy), the Communist Party of Afghanistan (Maoist), and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Naxalbari, [CPI(ML)N], they now mention the revisionism of Prachanda and Bhattarai and call on the Maoists in the UCPN(M) to rebel against them, without saying anything about the *content* of this revisionism, their line of "restructuring" instead of smashing the old state and their revisionist line on socialism of "multiparty competition" and bourgeois democracy. This is a disservice to comrades of the UCPN(M) who are opposed to Prachanda's line who unfortunately until now have limited their opposition to proposing different tactics instead of thoroughly criticizing the opportunist about-face in the line of the party beginning in 2005.⁶²

Why do they first cover up the liquidation of the people's war in Nepal by the revisionist line in command of the party and later offer the label "revisionist" without saying anything even briefly about the content of that line? The Maoist Communist Party-Italy (MCP-Italy), which has played an important role in these efforts, has given us a clue by saying "We do not need to unite the parties on a document but to create an international center that will be a material force" and "Whatever your views on "revisionism" of Prachanda, now you can not create an international organization without the UCPN (M)."⁶³ We should thank the MCP-Italy for such a frank formulation of the kind of unprincipled unity that characterizes this whole project. Unity "on a document" would hold at least the possibility of some unity on the basis of shared principles. But, this is considered to be unnecessary. What matters is "material force" and since the UCPN(M) has "material force", although it follows a revisionist line, it should be part of this "new unity of the communist movement".

And this from people who call themselves Maoists, when it was Mao who emphasized so much that the correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line determines everything. The line, that is to say, the understanding of how the world is and how to transform it, what the problem is and what the solution is, determines if an organization really will be able to contribute to advancing the communist revolution or in fact is going to turn into a revisionist obstacle to that revolution. There is no doubt that the UCPN(M) has material force, but it is material force that is now in the service of a line that *is objectively opposed to the emancipation of the masses of Nepal and of the world, that opposes destroying the old state and establishing real socialism.*

Does this matter to us? Does it matter if the understanding you have of the world and how to transform it could in reality lead to emancipation or if it corresponds to keeping the masses forever enslaved under this system? The formulations cited from the MCP-Italy tell us in essence that this doesn't matter, that what matters is having "material force" and influence now, without worrying about the problem of material force *for what goal.*

If we really want to lead the struggle of the masses for their emancipation from the misery of this system, we need to concern ourselves in the first place with establishing and uniting the communists around a line that really corresponds to the material world and really will be able to lead a revolution that liberates the people, and demarcates from false solutions that, although they may call themselves communist, like the revisionist line of the UCPN(M), in reality represent a betrayal of the masses and the revolution. Or as Lenin put it: "'before we can unite, and in order that we may unite, we must first of all draw firm and definite lines of demarcation."⁶⁴

This is exactly the approach that was applied to form the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM). The *Declaration* of the RIM established a basis of unity around fundamental

⁶² This is evident, for example, in some articles reprinted from Nepal in the publication *Maoist Road/Via Maoista*, No. 1, June 2011.

⁶³ *Maoist Road*, op. cit., p. 34.

⁶⁴ V. I. Lenin, "What is to be Done?," *Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 4, p. 329.

principles and demarcating with the main forms of revisionism, and the different parties and organizations that accepted those principles united; later another document, *Long Live Marxism-Leninism-Maoism!*, was added. This is an approach based on principles, motivated by how to really achieve emancipation.

The end of a stage in the world communist revolution and the beginning of a new one, as well as new changes and events in the world in that context, have demanded and do demand an advance beyond the relative basis of unity reached in the RIM's fundamental documents. On the other hand, divergences in the RIM that have been sharply expressed in particular around events in Peru and Nepal, and now around the new synthesis, have become more pronounced. There have been many calls exhorting parties and organizations to write and debate these differences, with very little response. Avakian in particular has called several times for others to comment on the new synthesis and for those who are in opposition to it offer criticism of its *content*. Such criticism, on the basis of principles, whether correct or incorrect, will contribute to the struggle to clarify what is essential: a deeper and more correct understanding of how to understand the world and transform it and, on that basis, the ability to achieve that in practice. The response to this request, in most cases, has been either silence or a series of personal attacks, distortions, and slanders against Bob Avakian for daring to propose how to advance further and better in emancipating the people and for asking others to express their opinions on the content of that proposal, either in favor or against it. Other RIM organizations, such as the Communist Party of Iran (MLM), who have expressed agreement with the new synthesis, have also had to put up with a barrage of personal attacks and distortions of their positions, as can be seen in the CP of Afghanistan (M) document cited above.

In this regard, we must insist that debate and two-line struggle, even when this becomes very sharp, are indispensable and contribute to clarifying what corresponds to reality and the interests of the masses and what does not, as long as the struggle focuses on principles, on the "big questions" of how to advance proletarian revolution, and the real position and best arguments of your adversary are taken into account. However, methods of "struggle" based on distorting or inventing supposed positions of your adversary, spreading stories and gossip about who supposedly did what to whom, and personal attacks and slanders are extremely harmful: they conceal and cloud the questions of principle under debate, demoralize the masses or educate them in the same methods of discrediting and slander that the bourgeoisie uses, and they objectively help the class enemy, facilitating their attacks on revolutionary leaders, which they can disguise as "quarrels among revolutionaries". These are opportunist methods of struggle that every revolutionary should repudiate and criticize.

Given the divergences of principle in the RIM, the MCP-Italy, CPA(M), and CPI(ML)N propose forming another international organization of "MLM Communists" without resolving any of the questions under debate and without clarifying a principled basis of unity for this new organization. They simply declare that "To build this new international organization we must break with revisionism in all its aspects and particularly with those that have led to the current crisis and collapse of the RIM, namely the post- MLM 'new synthesis' of Bob Avakian in the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, and the revisionist line established by Prachanda/Bhattarai in the UCPN(M)."⁶⁵

We have already seen that at least for the MCP-Italy "breaking with the revisionism" of Prachanda does not necessarily mean that the UCPN(M) guided by this line since 2005 doesn't fit into their new "international organization of MLM communists" and the CPA(M) assures us that "Only four years have passed from the final defeat – or approximate final phase of victory in Nepal..."⁶⁶ This statement is almost unbelievable: They don't take a position! The end of the people's war because of a revisionist line adopted by the UCPN(M) might represent "final defeat" or, perhaps on the contrary, it is the "approximate final phase of victory in Nepal". They speak of the "revisionist line established by Prachanda/Bhattarai in the UCPN(M)", while "suspending judgment" and "waiting to see" if the outcome of the policies adopted on the basis of that line represent "final

⁶⁵ "1st Resolution passed by the Special Meeting of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Parties and Organizations of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement – May First 2012".

⁶⁶ Maoist Road/Vía Maoísta, op. cit., p. 44.

defeat” or “the approximate final phase of victory in Nepal”. What is really needed from the point of view of communism and internationalism is to struggle for the comrades in Nepal (and the communists around the world) to repudiate and thoroughly criticize the revisionist line adopted by the UCPN(M) in 2005, as the RCP, USA has done since that time. On the contrary, the course of action of the MCP-Italy and the CPA(M) regarding this question such importance for the RIM, the international communist movement, and the people of Nepal is another indication of their international “MLM” project’s lack of principles.⁶⁷

What’s even more important and outrageous, they brand Bob Avakian’s new synthesis as “revisionist” and try to split the RIM, calling publicly for the formation of another international organization, *without having made any criticism of the content of the new synthesis*. This is completely opposed to the communist method that should be applied when there are sharp differences over line in a communist party or international communist organization. With the correct communist method, you seriously analyze the other position, you show, with arguments, how it doesn’t correspond to reality and the advance toward communism, and you struggle, on that basis, to unite all who can be united around a more correct line. Only on the basis of reasoned criticism and a principled struggle is it correct to characterize another position as revisionist and only once the two line struggle has been carried through to the end is it appropriate to take organizational measures, if it has been proven that the other line is in fact opposed to revolutionary advance and its defenders cannot be won over. It is crucial to proceed in this way because this is the only way that a more correct understanding of the objective problems that the opposing position treats incorrectly can be clarified, and only in this way is it possible to unite all who can be united around a correct line. This is the method that was applied, for example, in Marx’s struggle with the anarchists, Lenin’s struggle with the revisionism of the Second International, and Mao’s struggle with the revisionism of Khrushchev and the capitalist roaders in China. It is the method the RCP, USA, and others fought to apply to the two-line struggle in the Communist Party of Peru, as well as in the more recent line struggle in Nepal. It is the method summed up in the principles of: “Practice Marxism, not revisionism; unite, and don’t split; be open and aboveboard, and don’t intrigue and conspire.”⁶⁸

As we have shown on the basis of analyzing the documents of the CPA(M) and others, the “reorganizers” are not applying Marxism and consequently they go in for splitting the RIM and resort to the personal attacks, gossip, and rumours that fill the pages of *Maoist Road/Via Maoista*, instead of developing two-line struggle around the key questions taken up by the new synthesis. These are very harmful and unprincipled methods, which should be criticized and repudiated by all communists, regardless of their position on Bob Avakian’s new synthesis.

To top it all off, while attempting to split the RIM, they try to blame Avakian for the “crisis and collapse” of the RIM. The present crisis in the RIM was not caused by Bob Avakian’s new synthesis. It has emerged because of the two-line struggle in the face of objective problems in the class struggle and in particular because of the refusal to take up principled debate over these problems on the part of the lines opposed to the new synthesis. This is taking place in the context of the objective need to develop communist theory and practice in the face of capitalist restoration, the end of the first stage, new conditions, and the demands of the new stage of communist revolution. The dogmatic tendency, reflected for example, in the positions of the CPA(M) or in another form in some of the formulations of “Gonzalo Thought” that we have examined here, denies that this objective necessity exists, seeking refuge in a distorted version of “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” that ignores or misrepresents Mao’s greatest contribution and throws out the revolutionary and scientific essence of communism. Others, like the line in command of the UCPN(M), in the name of new conditions, in essence attack and throw out all the previous experience of socialism as principally negative, presenting the bourgeois democratic theory of the 18th century as the new communism of the 21st century.

⁶⁷ We should add that the CPA(M) also brand Gonzalo Thought as “post-MLM” in their articles, while the MCP-Italy has presented itself as a great defender of Gonzalo Thought, which is another example that this project is not based on any principles other than their opposition to the new synthesis.

⁶⁸ Mao Tsetung, quoted in *The Tenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Documents)*, FLP, Peking, 1973, http://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/cpc/10th_congress_report.htm.

This hodgepodge of erroneous tendencies has found a point of “unity” in opposing Bob Avakian’s new synthesis that **has** sought to meet the objective need for further development of communist theory and has forged a new communist theoretical framework that strengthens its scientific foundations. The problem does not lie simply in their opposition to what objectively represents a great hope for the oppressed masses and the communist revolution throughout the world, but rather in their refusal to debate and seriously argue their opposition, as well as in the methods of misrepresentation, intrigue, and splitting that they have employed. If we have given particular attention here to the CPA(M)’s positions, it is not because they are the worst example of this, but rather exactly because at least they have responded with *something*, although they don’t get into criticizing the *content* of the new synthesis. Instead of carrying the two-line struggle through to the end, these forces have preferred to simply try to liquidate and split the RIM without further ado, and form another organization without even specifying its ideological and political basis of unity, except for a so-called “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” that tries to conciliate opposing positions on socialism, the state, people’s war, and other questions.

11. Science or pragmatism?

Although these forces try to avoid taking a consistent position on the big questions posed by the end of a stage and the beginning of a new one, all of us face them. They are unavoidable; they are part of the objective situation we confront. It is enough to go out and talk to people about communism to become aware of the disenchantment with or rejection of communism on the part of many people, including many progressive and revolutionary-minded people, due to the enemy’s anticommunist offensive that takes advantage of the material fact that the first experiences of socialism were finally defeated. You cannot truthfully and successfully combat this anticommunist offensive without deeply summing up the lessons of the first stage, but even more importantly, without adequate answers to these profound questions of the proletarian revolution, it isn’t going to be possible to get beyond this reactionary system.

The organizers of this new international “communist” organization imagine that they will be able to avoid these thorny problems by attracting people on the basis of their movement’s “material force”, making a big show of their real or imagined “practical successes”. In their view, so blatantly expressed in the above quote from the MCP-Italy, what’s important is having “material force” and getting more people, it doesn’t matter what line and goal this is all for. It is tremendously important to develop material force and win over everyone possible *for a line that can really resolve the objective problems of how to advance the world communist revolution*. Winning people to an organization that does not have, and doesn’t see the need to develop, real solutions to these problems on the level of theory is, regardless of the subjective intentions of those who do it, a *cruel deception* that promises emancipation but will not be able to get beyond the suffocating confines of this oppressive system. This unity without principles, the idea that you can get around the need to find solutions to the problems posed by the first stage of the communist revolution, and the urge to win people on the basis of the real or imagined “material force” of the movement are expressions of pragmatism, the bourgeois philosophy that what matters is what “works”, what gives immediate practical results that are apparently favourable, and it isn’t important to understand more deeply why and for what. Or as the architect of capitalist restoration in China, Teng Hsiao-ping said, black cat, white cat, it doesn’t matter as long as it catches mice; i.e. capitalism, socialism, it doesn’t matter as long as we get economic growth and other results. Or as they say here in Mexico, “let’s see which one is gum and sticks.”

Pragmatism is a suitable philosophy for the bourgeoisie, and you hear their representatives praising some people for their “pragmatism” and criticizing others for their “lack of pragmatism”. It corresponds to, or has a material base in, the nature of the capitalist market, where anarchy reigns. When the capitalists put their merchandise on the market, they can’t be sure what’s going to happen, and even the biggest ones may go bankrupt. Although they do market studies and things like that, a deep and scientific understanding of the essence of capitalism isn’t what they need for their

purposes: instead they need to see “what works”, that is, what will yield a profit. It’s a short-term philosophy that, like the capitalist market, gives precedence to immediate results: as long as they make a profit and the economy grows, it doesn’t matter that the kind of growth is causing global warming and leading us toward planetary disaster.

Pragmatism does not lead us to the truth. For example, in the middle of the last century, they developed a drug called Thalidomide that “worked”: it helped people to fall asleep and to control nausea in pregnant women, and clinical tests showed no toxicity in the people who took it, including at high doses. It works! It was approved, sold to many people... and only later the human tragedy of thousands of babies born with birth defects was discovered. They were satisfied with the immediate “successful” results, and they didn’t look into the essence of the problem, in order to understand that drugs that are not toxic for adults many cause deformities in fetuses.

We are emphasizing that pragmatism in the communist movement is a cruel deception, because it attracts and excites people with real or imaginary immediate results that are supposedly for their emancipation and, without science, like with thalidomide, they only come to realize the tragic results later on, when it is too late. Again, there’s the example of Vietnam (and also Cuba and Nicaragua) of what happens with the pragmatic line of sidestepping questions of principle, including the need to distinguish between capitalism and socialism, in the name of “advancing in practice”. And then we have the “success” of the UCPN(M) in administering the reactionary state on the basis of ignoring the “ABC’s of Marxism”, in the name of successful “tactics”. In all these cases, it is a cruel deception and betrayal to throw away the possibility of a whole new world so that supposed “communists” can be part of suppressing and repressing the masses through the state, and that is the “most” that pragmatism can achieve.

The pragmatism and lack of principles that characterizes this new international organization project is a continuation of the positivism, pragmatism and empiricism that the *Manifesto* from the RCP, USA correctly analyzes as another feature that both erroneous tendencies in the international communist movement share. It has been argued, for example, that the lines identified with Gonzalo or Prachanda are “correct” because of the practical advances at the time in the people’s wars in Peru and Nepal, or that Bob Avakian cannot have a correct position because he isn’t leading a people’s war. On that basis, we’d have to throw out the work of Marx, because he too never led a people’s war and he had little influence in the Paris Commune, although he drew deep and scientific lessons from that experience. And as we have seen, Gonzalo and the CPP, although they were right about some important questions, also spread some profoundly mistaken positions, including in the period of the advance of the people’s war in that country. (And let us say in passing that it’s a good thing that Avakian and the RCP, USA are not trying to start armed struggle now, since *a revolutionary situation doesn’t exist at present* in the United States. As Lenin correctly insisted and as was proven again in the “armed actions” of small groups in various imperialist countries in the 60s and 70s of the past century, launching armed struggle when there is no revolutionary situation only leads to the isolation and destruction of the revolutionary forces. The RCP, USA’s position, which is available for anyone who would like to comment on it instead of inventing absurd arguments,⁶⁹ is, in basic

⁶⁹ Like the “argument” of the CPA(M) in “Our Position”, op. cit., that the RCP, USA is “pacifist” because the formulation on the need for armed struggle in their *Constitution* is supposedly vague when they say: “To seize power, the revolutionary people must meet and defeat the enemy”, and “In this struggle for revolutionary change, the revolutionary people and those who lead them will be confronted by the violent repressive force of the machinery of the state which embodies and enforces the existing system of exploitation and oppression; and in order for the revolutionary struggle to succeed, it will need to meet and defeat that violent repressive force of the old exploitative and oppressive order.” (*Constitution of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, p. 9) It is very difficult to believe that the CPA(M) really thinks that the RCP, USA proposes to “seize power”, “defeat the enemy”, and “defeat that violent and repressive force” through peaceful means: on the contrary, this is a deliberate distortion of their position, which is also expressed elsewhere in the same *Constitution* in these terms: “The revolution would have to overthrow the state machinery of these capitalist-imperialists and bring into being a new state power that serves the revolutionary interests of the formerly exploited class, the proletariat, in emancipating all of humanity—in moving society, and the world, toward the abolition of class divisions and oppressive and exploitative relations as a whole. This revolutionary state would be the *dictatorship of the proletariat*—a state that would be radically different from all previous forms of states.” (p. 5, emphasis in the original). Again, could it really be the case that the CPA(M) cannot understand On the other hand, the CPA(M)

terms, to do everything possible to accelerate and prepare for the emergence of a revolutionary situation, which is what constitutes the material basis for them to then lead the masses in revolutionary armed struggle to destroy the old state and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Pragmatism, which directly and narrowly identifies what is “correct” with apparent successes in immediate practice, amounts to “the vulgarization and degradation of theory—reducing it to a ‘guide to practice’ only in the most narrow and immediate sense, treating theory as, in essence, a direct outgrowth of particular practice, and attempting to establish an equivalence between advanced practice (which itself, especially on these people’s part, involves an element of subjective and arbitrary evaluation) and supposedly advanced theory. A scientific communist, materialist and dialectical, viewpoint leads to the understanding that practice is the ultimate point of origin and point of verification of theory; but, in opposition to these narrow, empiricist distortions, this must be understood to mean practice in the broad sense, encompassing broad social and historical experience, and not simply the direct experience of a particular individual, group, party, or nation.”⁷⁰

An empiricist approach imagines that a correct theoretical framework is developed simply on the basis of summing up the experience of struggle of one party or one country, instead of recognizing the need to sum up historical and international experience—which the experience of a particular party is part of, but only one part—as well as learning from other spheres: philosophy, science, culture and art, etc. A positivist approach imagines that concrete practice directly provides us with correct theory, without recognizing the need for a *qualitative leap* to rational knowledge on the basis of embracing and *synthesizing*, drawing lessons, again not only from immediate concrete practice, but rather understanding this in the context of its interpenetration with and relation to broad social and historical experience and theory developed on that basis. An empiricist and positivist approach is like setting out to erect large buildings on the basis of simply summing up your own construction experience, without taking into account the broader experience synthesized in the principles of engineering and architecture, the study of soils, earthquakes and hurricanes, etc.

The CPA(M) gives us a good example of this narrow empiricist and positivist approach when they argue against the so-called “absolute role of theory” of the Communist Party of Iran (MLM) and of the RCP, USA: “Clearly, the highest point in the progression of the communist revolution in Marx’s time, the Paris Commune, was not indebted to the theoretical framework placed in it upfront by Marx. In fact Marxists did not have a clear role in initiating and leading the Paris Commune. Instead Marx’s theoretical progression and in particular, the theory of proletarian dictatorship, was very much indebted to the revolutionary practice at the Paris Commune, and Marx, through summing up this practice, developed the Dictatorship of Proletariat and built and structured it within Marxism.”⁷¹

They talk as if Marx had only posed (and only could have developed) the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat once there was the practice of the Paris Commune, which is not true. It’s enough to just observe that the quote cited above about “the dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary transit point” to put an end to the four ills comes from *The Class Struggles in France from 1848 to 1850*, published in 1850, that is to say, *two decades before* the Paris Commune, which demonstrates that, although Marx summed up new important lessons from the Commune, a scientific method, learning from all the diverse social practice, can and should in a certain sense “go ahead” of revolutionary practice, and should propose and lead the struggle for things that have not yet been realized in practice (and if this weren’t the case, there could be no *communist* theory, since no one

complains that there is no mention of a “general armed insurrection”, ignoring the analysis of the RCP, USA, regarding the probable development of the armed struggle in that country when a revolutionary situation does arise: “what would be required, on the part of the revolutionaries in an imperialist country, in order to have a chance of winning, would be to wage a more protracted struggle than the kind of mass insurrections that Lenin himself led in Russia in 1917.” One may disagree with this position, but a minimum of intellectual integrity would require at least citing the real position of the RCP, USA, instead of distorting it. See “On the Possibility of Revolution” in *Revolution and communism: A Foundation and Strategic Orientation* (p. 85), a document that is specifically cited in the *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, on which the CPA(M) is commenting. Available at revcom.us, *Revolution* #102.

⁷⁰ *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, op. cit.

⁷¹ *Maoist Road/Vía Maoísta*, pp. 47-48.

has experienced future communism). Marx could correctly and scientifically pose the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat *before that dictatorship existed in practice*, precisely because he didn't rest content with a narrow empiricist summation of the practice of the immediate struggle in one or another country. He came to this understanding as part of establishing, for the first time, a scientific theoretical framework for understanding the development and revolutionary transformation of society. He developed this on the basis of a profound study and analysis of philosophy, political economy, the class struggle, and social development. The CPA(M)'s argument, on the other hand, is the pragmatic, empiricist and positivist idea that treats theory as "in essence, a direct outgrowth of particular practice" and rejects the need for the revolution to be guided by the most advanced scientific theory developed starting from the *broadest* social practice (and not just the immediate practice of a particular party) and of human knowledge in diverse spheres.

This kind of method has ill-fated consequences. One of the reasons for the early defeat of the Commune was precisely the fact that it did not have Marxist leadership, it arose separately from grappling with the most advanced revolutionary theory of the times, and this is what the CPA(M) would have us do again, waiting for immediate practice to give us the answers to the big questions posed by the end of one stage and the beginning of another, with their false tale of how the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat developed. We should not repeat today in another form the negative side of the Commune that contributed to its early defeat; on the contrary, we should struggle for the scientific theory of communism, as it has developed up until now with the new synthesis, to guide revolutionary practice and to continue to develop, and we should struggle against the pragmatism and empiricism that they advise.

12. Base ourselves on objective reality or invent a reality that is more to our liking?

We have repeated the phrase "real or imaginary successes" several times deliberately, because in addition to pragmatism, another thing the tendencies opposed to the new synthesis share is instrumentalism, which is part of the harmful legacy from the international communist movement of the past as well. Instrumentalism is the method of "making reality an 'instrument' of our objectives, of distorting reality to try to make it serve our ends, of 'political truth'."⁷²

This can be seen in the 2011 and 2012 May 1st documents cited above, that paint us a pretty picture in which "the revolution emerges more and more clearly as being the main trend in the current world",⁷³ in which people's wars are advancing in several countries, in which the rebellions in the Arab countries have "paved the way for new anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist, anti-feudal, new-democratic revolutions", constituting "a new front in the battle between imperialism and the peoples. They join those existing in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine," and there are "exciting uprisings of the proletarian youth, which shakes the imperialist citadels..." and so on.⁷⁴

The instrumentalist method behind this kind of "analysis" is that of highlighting and exaggerating positive aspects in the situation and omitting or minimizing negative aspects, thus creating a so-called "reality" in agreement with the desires and objectives of the authors, which in turn it is hoped will motivate people to act in accordance with these desires and objectives. They may or may not have "success" in motivating some people with their rose-colored reality, but no communist revolution will be made with this kind of instrumentalist and subjectivist method.

We won't dwell on the details, but we invite the reader to compare the idea that the Arab rebellions have "paved the way" for the new democratic revolution with Avakian's statement on Egypt, which praises the very positive aspects of this uprising and extends his "heartfelt support and encouragement to the millions who have risen up", while also pointing to the need for a communist vanguard guided by the most advanced theory, without which the perspective can only be the substitution of one regime by another while remaining inside "the overall framework of global

⁷² *Basics*, op. cit., p. 116.

⁷³ *Maoist Road*, op. cit., p. 4.

⁷⁴ All phrases in quotes are from the "1st Resolution", op. cit.

imperialist domination and exploitation.”⁷⁵ Or to compare the one-sided representation of the significance of recent rebellions in the imperialist countries with what Avakian has written on the “Occupy” movement, which again welcomes the principal positive aspect of these struggles, at the same time as he criticizes the idea of a “horizontal” movement that has a strong influence on many of these movements and denies the need for leadership.⁷⁶

By characterizing the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan as a “front in the battle between imperialism and the peoples,” the instrumentalist approach ignores the problem that a large part of the forces on the battlefield are reactionary Islamic forces (including Al Qaeda and the Taliban) who do not represent the interests of the people’s struggle against imperialism. “What we see instead in the contention between the jihad and imperialist aggression “are historically outmoded strata among colonized and oppressed humanity up against historically outmoded ruling strata of the imperialist system. These two reactionary poles reinforce each other, even while opposing each other. If you side with either of these ‘outmodeds,’ you end up strengthening both.”⁷⁷

The height of instrumentalism is when they tell us that “The people’s war in Peru, initiated under the leadership of the Communist Party of Peru led by chairman Gonzalo remains an ideological and strategic beacon for the whole international communist movement.” On the one hand, they combine two into one in the relation between theory and practice: an “ideological beacon” would necessarily have to be an *ideology*, and we have analyzed above some of the aspects in the ideology of “Gonzalo Thought”, including before Gonzalo called for peace accords, that deviated from reality. On the other hand, by identifying the “people’s war” as an “ideological beacon”, they avoid the uncomfortable problem of the present situation in Peru, in which, after Gonzalo’s detention and the call for peace accords and for a protracted “strategic retreat”, the majority of the revolutionary forces have been defeated or have become demoralized, and the few redoubts continuing some form of armed struggle are divided into rival factions, some of which also call for a peace accord. As we have mentioned, the line of denouncing the call for peace accords as simply a “hoax”, instead of criticizing and refuting the content of the revisionist line that proposed them, left the party and the masses disarmed politically and ideologically and contributed to this outcome. It was precisely in this context that some forces in the RIM put forward the instrumentalist argument that, regardless of the facts, the “political truth” was that Gonzalo could not be behind the call for peace accords. That is, to put it more bluntly, we should proclaim as “true” what is convenient for our revolutionary objectives, even if this does not correspond to the facts.

The complex problems of the world-historic transition from the capitalist-imperialist system to world communism will not be resolved by inventing or trying to “impose” a reality that is more to our liking, but rather through striving to bring our ideas into correspondence with the contradictory material world, grasping the motion and development of the profound contradictions beneath the surface of events at a given point in time, and grasping both the favourable aspects and the problems, both what is correct and the errors, and not avoiding or covering up unpleasant facts like the errors of the international communist movement. As Avakian emphasizes, “The dynamic of ‘truths that make us cringe’ is part of what can be driving us forward. This can help call forth that ferment so that we can understand reality. This is scientific materialist objectivity. If you go deeply enough and understand that these contradictions now posed could lead to a different era based on the resolution of those contradictions, then you want to set in motion a dynamic where people *are* bringing out your shortcomings. Not that every mistake should be brought out in a way to overwhelm everything we’re trying to do, but in a strategic sense [we should] welcome this and not try to manage it too much—you *want* that, the back and forth.”⁷⁸

According to the “official optimism” of these instrumentalist approaches, any recognition of the difficulties in the objective situation (for example, talking about the defeat of socialism and its

⁷⁵ Avakian, Bob, “Egypt 2011: Millions have stood up with heroism... The future remains to be written”, *Revolution* No. 225.

⁷⁶ Avakian, “A Reflection on the “Occupy” Movement: An Inspiring Beginning...And the Need to Go Further”, *Revolution* No. 251.

⁷⁷ *BASics*, op. cit., p. 20-21.

⁷⁸ *BASics*, op. cit., p. 116.

causes), is seen as “pessimism” and “revisionism”. With this outlook, recognizing that something is difficult is tantamount to thinking it is impossible (as in the confusion cited earlier of the CPA(M) between the end of a *stage* in the communist revolution and the *end of the communist revolution*). Why should the communist movement pretend that the world-historic transformation that is necessary, possible, and so urgent, is relatively easy, that we always march forward in a straight line, that revolution is always the main trend, that the masses are always ready and the only question is the will and determination of the communists? On the contrary, this world-historic transformation “can only come about on the basis of proceeding from the actual material conditions and the contradictions that characterize them, which open up this possibility but which also embody obstacles to the achievement of this radical social transformation; and it requires a scientific understanding of and approach to these contradictory dynamics—and the leadership of an organized group of people that is grounded in this scientific method and approach—in order to carry through the complex and arduous struggle to achieve this transformation through the advance to communism throughout the world.”⁷⁹

13. Nationalism or internationalism?

In the course of this text we have pointed to several common and shared aspects of the dogmatic and the more openly bourgeois-democratic tendencies opposed to the new synthesis: they reject the pressing need to scientifically sum up the experiences of socialism and the previous stage of the communist revolution overall, they ignore any serious consideration of Mao’s theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, they reduce “Maoism” to a mere recipe for the armed struggle, they are stuck in one or another model from the past and they apply a pragmatic and instrumentalist method.

Another common denominator is nationalism. As we’ve already said, in addition to pragmatism, in the past and today, nationalism is another source of the refusal to grapple with the problems of the socialist transition to communism characteristic of these tendencies. In the oppressed countries in particular, practice has demonstrated that two types of revolutions and revolutionary movements are still possible in the epoch of imperialism: revolutions and revolutionary movements that don’t go beyond the world capitalist system (bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the old type, to use Mao’s term) and the new democratic revolution that breaks with the world capitalist-imperialist system, leads to the socialist transition, and is part of the world communist revolution. As we know, the Chinese Revolution was an example of the second type. Although they are very different from one another, the revolutions in Vietnam, Cuba and Nicaragua turned out to be revolutions of the first type: just, popular revolutions that should be supported at the time, but that didn’t break with the framework of the world capitalist-imperialist system and therefore ultimately did not liberate the particular country from imperialist domination, much less take the socialist road toward communism.

What marks the difference between one type and the other, as the examples cited illustrate, is not whether or not the leading forces call themselves communists but rather whether they do in fact lead this first stage of the revolution as a subordinate part of the world communist revolution aiming toward the abolition of the four ills in the whole world. A line that doesn’t distinguish between state capitalism and socialism, between revisionism and revolutionary communism, that believes that the problems of the transition to communism can be postponed until after the seizure of power, will end up in revisionism that aborts the proletarian revolution, as in Vietnam. If you aren’t grappling with the world-historic transition from the world imperialist system to world communism, you won’t go beyond a revolutionary nationalist position limited to the goal of achieving the liberation of “my country” as an end in itself (which, ironically, can’t achieve even that in the imperialist epoch).

This is the problem (in addition to pragmatism and instrumentalism) with all the hype on the part of the organizers of the new international organization about “people’s war” *isolated from and*

⁷⁹ *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, op. cit.

as a substitute for taking up the problems of the socialist transition. Frankly, as has been demonstrated by various other bourgeois and revisionist forces, armed struggle isolated from or opposed to the goal of communism is *not people's war* and in the final analysis *will not liberate anybody*.

This is also the problem with the formulation of the Communist Party of Peru and others that “The fundamental thing in Maoism is Power”.⁸⁰ It's completely true that “without power, all is illusion” and, as Avakian says, “It is **right** to want state power. It is **necessary** to want state power. State power is a **good** thing—state power is a **great** thing—in the hands of the right people, the right class, in the service of the right things: bringing about an end to exploitation, oppression, and social inequality and bringing into being a world, a communist world, in which human beings can flourish in new and greater ways than ever before.”⁸¹ However, if power is taken as the fundamental thing in Maoism (and even more so if one conceives the whole science of communism as “principally Maoism”, as in another erroneous formulation of the CPP), not only does this lead to denying Mao's greatest contribution, the theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, but it also leads to locating the final goal of the struggle as being seizing and exercising state power instead of communism, where there will no longer be any state power, which objectively reflects, especially in the oppressed countries, a deviation toward revolutionary nationalism, which recognizes the need to combat imperialism but not the need to arrive at the abolition of classes.⁸²

The CPA(M) accuses “Bob Avakian's synthesis” and the RCP, USA, of having “a narrow nationalistic and supremacist vision” for propagating their *Manifesto* summarizing their viewpoint regarding the foundations of communism and the new synthesis and analyzing the line struggle in the international communist movement, instead of limiting themselves to talking about the RIM and its *Declaration* in a situation characterized by the CPA(M) itself as “crisis and collapse” of RIM, and for not dedicating more pages to the RIM in the *Manifesto*.⁸³ On the contrary, the “narrow nationalist vision” corresponds to those who, faced with a proposal about how to advance the communist revolution better and further presented for commentary and debate, do not respond to its content and instead *find the very act of making such a proposal and presenting it for debate to be an act of “supremacy”*, hegemonism, “the RCP's complete disregard of the existence and efforts of RIM”, etc. If you present me with a proposal, you are exercising “supremacy” over me and showing “complete disregard” for me! What sort of internationalism is this? Where is there any concern for the emancipation of humanity in this? If you are seeking the emancipation of humanity, and you understand that this requires knowing the world as it really is, then any serious proposal would be of great interest. If you are stuck in the past, in dogmatism and nationalism, you find the very act of making a proposal that contradicts that dogma to be an act of “supremacy”.

Far from a “narrow nationalist vision”, the new synthesis of Comrade Avakian has deepened a more correct understanding of the material and philosophical basis of internationalism, by analyzing “why, in an ultimate and overall sense, the world arena is most decisive, even in terms of revolution in any particular country, especially in this era of capitalist imperialism as a world system of exploitation, and how this understanding must be incorporated into the approach to revolution, in particular countries as well as on a world scale”,⁸⁴ by criticizing nationalist deviations of subordinating the world revolution to the defense of a socialist country, and by insisting that internationalism is not something that the proletariat of one country extends to another but rather it proceeds, in the words of Lenin “from my *share* in the preparation, in the propaganda and in the acceleration of the international proletarian revolution”.

⁸⁰ “Bases de discusión”, op. cit., p. 313, our translation.

⁸¹ *Basics*, op. cit., p. 43.

⁸² It should be said that the proletariat can and must unite with forces who represent revolutionary nationalism without itself deviating from proletarian ideology of internationalism toward nationalism, and this is something which is complex and difficult but necessary in order to achieve victory in the new democratic revolution, break with the world capitalist-imperialist system, and undertake the socialist transition toward communism together with the advance of communist revolution in the world.

⁸³ “Our position”, op. cit., p. 40-41.

⁸⁴ *Manifesto from the RCP, USA*, op. cit.

What does it mean to apply internationalism and what does it mean to apply nationalism? Devoting resources and effort that they were in great need of, as the RCP, USA, did, to promote the creation and development of RIM, or staying on the sidelines to later launch accusations of “hegemonism”? Promoting, the campaign to “Move heaven and earth to defend the life of Chairman Gonzalo” when he was captured and a year later, faced with the proposal for “peace accords”, struggling fulfill the internationalist duty of the RIM to analyze the situation and the two-line struggle in order to reach scientific conclusions, or insisting that such an analysis was a matter exclusively for people in Peru and/or clinging to the “political truth” that Gonzalo had nothing to do with the opportunist line expressed in “Take up and Fight for the New Decision and the New Definition!” and other documents in spite of growing evidence to the contrary? Developing a communist criticism of the opportunist line in Peru or following at the tail of the simplistic position of denouncing it as a “hoax” and limiting criticism to epithets like “black vomit”, which robbed the CPP and the masses of a scientific analysis of the difficult situation and how to deal with it? Criticizing on the basis of principles and reasoned argumentation the revisionist about-face in the line of the CPN(M) from when it was first adopted, or not taking a clear principled position on it? Insisting on debate to arrive at a scientific summation of the lessons of the important experiences of the people’s war in Peru and in Nepal or jumping from promoting one or another struggle depending on narrow calculations of the benefits of prestige and “material force” without ever summing up anything scientifically? Finally, it is proof of Avakian’s firm *internationalist* orientation that not only has he recognized the need to further develop communist theory in order to advance the communist revolution in this new stage, not only has he repeatedly called for others to contribute to this same effort, but also, when others launched vicious personal attacks on him and made it very clear that they were not going to tolerate these questions even being debated, he did not waver and refused to sacrifice these *needs* of the struggle for emancipation to narrow group interests of maintaining “good relations” in the RIM.

Comrades,

We are immersed in a two-line struggle in the international communist movement over the road forward for the world communist revolution and the emancipation of humanity. The RCP, USA, has been extremely forthcoming in describing, in their *Manifesto*, the profound struggle in their own ranks against revisionism. In the Revolutionary Communist Organization, Mexico, as mentioned above, we have also gone through a sharp struggle, principally against dogmatic tendencies to cling religiously to the experience, theory, and methods of the communist movement of the last century, which oppose grappling with the new and profound contributions of Bob Avakian’s new synthesis. Like other supporters of the new synthesis in the international communist movement, we continue to welcome all reasoned criticism, we continue grappling with the new synthesis, and we see very clearly that much more remains to be done. The contributions of many more are needed to develop the theory and practice of communism that are necessary to be able to correctly lead the new stage of the world communist revolution.

Unprincipled unity with the dogmatic and the more openly bourgeois-democratic positions that we have sketched here can only lead to being left behind as a residue of the past and worse, a knife in the back of the masses, who urgently need communist revolution to liberate themselves from this system of horrors. The road to that emancipation demands a rupture with these erroneous tendencies in our own thinking and in the communist movement in general; it demands carrying the two-line struggle through to the end, grappling seriously and critically with the new synthesis of communism and its application to revolutionary practice everywhere, and building the vanguard of the future on that basis, in each country and on a world level, that measures up to the challenges of the new stage of communist revolution and the possibility and necessity of achieving new and historic advances in the struggle for world communism and the emancipation of humanity.

- May, 2012