

Constitution of the Revolutionary Communist Party

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I. Preamble:

Basic Principles of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

To emancipate humanity, the world needs revolution and communism

The world today cries out for radical, fundamental change.

We live on a planet where tens of millions of people died in the two world wars in the 20th century, and in other wars since then...and where large parts of humanity today continue to be caught up in brutal and destructive wars, resulting in massive loss of life and incalculable agony.

We live in a world where millions die from easily preventable diseases...and still more face hunger as a daily fact of life. We are locked inside a worldwide economic system that dispenses crumbs and extends privileges to a relatively small number, while forcing billions to seek desperately for work that more often than not numbs the mind, crushes the spirit and destroys the body...an economic system which has devastated and despoiled nature itself and now has put the future of human life into question.

We walk through our days in a world where the lives of countless children are ground up and destroyed, some as child laborers and even outright slaves, others as the victims of poverty and humiliation...their potential crushed, or their lives cut short. And everywhere, women—one half of humanity!—still face the gauntlet of rape and abuse, and the continual oppression and hostility that comes in forms both traditional and “modern.”

People whose sexual orientation or identity is different from the dominant norms in society—and this is particularly and acutely so where this in some significant way conflicts with the prevailing patriarchal sexual relations—are discriminated against and persecuted, and many are subjected to brutal, even murderous attacks.

Tens of millions of people in this country face a life of grinding exploitation and bitter desperation. Many have been driven here from countries which have been plundered by U.S. capital, only to find themselves dubbed “illegal” and forced into the shadows by Gestapo-like persecution. Especially among Black people, as well as other peoples of color and oppressed nationalities, great masses of people have been cast aside because they can no longer be profitably exploited. Instead of recognizing their humanity and unleashing their potential, this system has *criminalized* them—with one in nine young

Black men locked down in prison, and with Black and Latino youth having to face harassment, brutality, and the constant threat of death at the hands of the police whenever they walk out the door. Meanwhile the apple-pie racism of America festers and often boils over, in forms old and new.

On top of all that, this economic and social system forces everyone to look at, and to treat, everyone else as potential competitors and antagonists. “Dog eat dog” and “look out for number one” are the true commandments of this society. Those who try to make things better, within the confines of this system, find their efforts constantly frustrated, unable to get at the underlying problems.

As a result of all this, alienation and despair run rampant, and people feel as if their lives are empty and meaningless. And for relief? Either the mindless chase after ever more commodities, or the false fantasies and consolation of religion.

But the cruelest fact of all is this: **IT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE THIS WAY!** For here is the glaring contradiction: in today’s world the production of things, and the distribution of the things produced, is overwhelmingly carried out by large numbers of people who work collectively and are organized in highly coordinated networks. At the foundation of this whole process is the *proletariat*, an international class which owns nothing, yet has created and works these massive socialized productive forces. These tremendous productive powers *could* enable humanity to not only meet the basic needs of every person on the planet, but to build a new society, with a whole different set of social relations and values...a society where all people could truly and fully flourish together.

Yet this cannot and does not happen; instead, for the great majority of humanity, and for large numbers of people in this country, things get worse, and seem ever more hopeless.

Why? Because these productive forces are socially created and worked, through the labor of vast numbers of people, but they are owned and controlled by a relative handful: the capitalist-imperialist class. And the imperialists’ private appropriation of socially produced wealth is backed up by law, by custom...and by the armed force of the state. All these imperialists care about—and all that they *can* care about, given the rules of their *capitalist system*—is the endless drive to accumulate profit and more profit, and the violent expansion and defense of the empires built to ensure that accumulation.

This burning contradiction—between the socialized character of production, and the private appropriation and control of it—is what fundamentally determines the character and direction of society and the world as a whole. It is the root reason we continue to suffer these horrors. Upon these basic economic relations arises the whole structure of the state, of politics and culture, of ideas and morality. And no matter what reforms and/or cosmetic changes may be carried out, so long as the same system is in effect and the same class rules, the outrages that people suffer throughout the world will continue to be reproduced and will become ever more grotesque.

To this problem, there is only one solution: a revolution that overthrows this system and the capitalist-imperialist class that embodies and runs it—a revolution that will immediately establish a *new power*.

This new revolutionary power must, and would, immediately strip the capitalist-imperialist class of its property and power. It would immediately set about meeting the most pressing needs of the people and solving what up to now have seemed the most “intractable” problems. And it would do all this to serve, and as part of, something larger: a *world* revolution, leading to the all-around emancipation of humanity. This new power, a socialist state rooted in the conscious activity of tens of millions of people, would embark on a series of further struggles to dig up the very roots of exploitation and oppression in every sphere, from production to social institutions to ideas, in a process full of monumental challenges and real vitality and diversity.

This revolution would be a process of people transforming conditions and, as they do so, transforming themselves—and again, doing this as part of and in conjunction with revolution all over the world. The goal would be, and must be, nothing less than a society in which people would finally know what it would mean to be free: a truly communist society, a global society that has uprooted and moved beyond class divisions and all other oppressive social relations and the corresponding ideas and culture. This does not and cannot mean freedom from *all* constraints; people would still have to work together to produce the necessities of life and deal with nature and our obligations to each other. But it *would* mean that people will be free to do that in a way that does NOT divide us into hostile competing forces...free of the enforced ignorance that is so integral to today's world...and free, finally, to continually develop a true world society of human beings who increasingly flourish, not only as individuals but most fundamentally in their mutual relations and interactions with each other.

This is the course, and the final goal, of the communist revolution.

The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA exists for this reason, and no other: to lead the masses to make this necessary communist revolution, as part of the worldwide struggle for a truly liberated world.

Communism can only be achieved through proletarian revolution

People today are told to “be realistic”: to confine their aims to getting governments to reform, and to “realize the true ideals of democracy.”

THIS CAN'T WORK! Putting your hopes and efforts into that can only make things worse. Such a course is, in fact, *not* “realistic”; it is a dead end.

Why? Bob Avakian, the founding Chair of the RCP, has put it this way: “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* 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."

The monstrous armies and brutal police forces at the core of today's state were built up over centuries to protect and serve the interests and goals of the class of capitalist-imperialists. This class alone determines when, how and *against whom* the army and police will be used, and to what ends. Their monopoly on "legitimate force" reveals American democracy (like all democracies) to be, in essence, a dictatorship of one class over another—in this case, *a dictatorship of the imperialists*. And the whole history of this country—from the genocidal dispossession of the Native American Indians to the scores of wars and military actions this country has fought...from the horrendous founding crime of slavery to the violent repression directed against every radical movement that has arisen in this country to fight for a better world—has proven this point over and over again.

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.

All previous states have served the extension and defense of relations of exploitation; they have enforced the domination of exploiting classes, and have fortified themselves *against* any fundamental changes in these relations. The dictatorship of the proletariat, by contrast, aims at the eventual abolition of the state itself, with the abolition of class distinctions and of all antagonistic social relations leading to exploitation, oppression, and the constant regeneration of destructive conflicts among people. And, in order to continue advancing toward that objective, the dictatorship of the proletariat must increasingly draw the masses of people, from many different sections of society, into meaningful involvement in the process of running society and carrying forward the advance toward the ultimate goal of communism throughout the world. This process will be characterized by people thinking and acting in diverse and creative ways...it will be full of ferment and dissent and debate, over both the character of society and its course at any given time...with leadership being exercised to both unleash this and, in an overall sense, to guide this toward the ultimate goal of communism. This state corresponds to, and will be necessary throughout, socialist society; but socialism is not an end in itself—it is the critical and necessary transition aiming for the final goal of a communist world—and the socialist state must continually undergo radical transformations that are in line with, and serve, the advance toward that final goal, which will involve the eventual

elimination of the division between the state and the rest of society and the abolition of the state itself, with the abolition of class divisions and oppressive relations among people, throughout the world.

This socialist state would lead and support people in making radical transformations in every sphere of society. It would construct a *socialist economic system*, by first taking over the major means of production (factories, land and mines, machinery and other technology, etc.) that have been owned and controlled by the big capitalists as their private property—converting these into socialist state property and utilizing them to meet the needs of the people, while rendering support to revolutionary struggle throughout the world. The socialist state would play a decisive role in moving society, through various waves and stages of multi-faceted struggle and social transformations, toward the communist vision of ensuring a common abundance for the people as a whole and overcoming the age-old division between those who work with their minds and those who work with their hands (between mental and physical labor), as well as all other oppressive divisions among people. It would act to prevent the return of the former exploiters, and resist the attacks of imperialism. It would make possible a different *kind* of democracy, on a far greater scale and with a much more radical vision and practice of human freedom than anything today, in line with its final goal—a final goal in which democracy itself, as a form of state, is transcended and people together debate and decide the course of things without resort to any kind of apparatus of violent suppression. Finally, this new revolutionary socialist state would be built as a “base area” for the world revolution—a springboard and support base and beacon for revolutionary struggles in other countries, all working together to get to a world without exploitation and oppression.

A new stage of the communist revolution

The revolutionary communist movement began in 1848, when Marx and Engels brought forth the basic theory and vision in the *Communist Manifesto*. The first stage of this movement included three epic revolutions: the Paris Commune; the Soviet Revolution; and the Chinese Revolution, which included the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution as its high point. These revolutions effected unprecedented and amazing changes; their vision and accomplishments inspired people around the globe. But world imperialism remained dominant, and these were new and beginning efforts; despite heroic struggles, each in turn was finally defeated by the forces of reaction. In the wake of those defeats, these revolutions have been endlessly slandered, and the truth about them suppressed and distorted. In actual fact, these revolutions proved that a better world really is possible, and through these revolutions humanity has accumulated invaluable experience and a whole new point of departure.

But it has now been decades since the revolutionary proletariat held power in any country—whatever the labels, there are no socialist countries today. Humanity urgently needs a new stage of communist revolution, based on upholding and really thoroughly learning from the past achievements *and on that basis* analyzing shortcomings and

mistakes, and carrying things forward in new ways, to new peaks. The challenge of deeply summing up this past experience and charting the path forward has been taken up by Bob Avakian, and in so doing he has further developed the scientific theory and the liberating vision of communism at this decisive crossroads.

If there is to be a revolution, there must be a revolutionary party

Making revolution against a powerful and vicious enemy—and going on from there to bring into being a whole new world, without exploitation and oppression—is an incredibly challenging and complex process! Such a revolution requires leadership; it requires an organization with a sweeping vision, a scientific method to analyze reality and how to go about changing it, and serious discipline. An organization that can awaken and unleash the revolutionary potential of the masses of people, direct their outrage against the real enemy, and loft their sights to the emancipation of all humanity. An organization that can chart the path through extreme ups and downs, and dangerous twists and turns. That organization is the revolutionary vanguard party. *Only* with an organization such as this can the masses rise to the historic challenges, and win their emancipation.

The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA has taken on that responsibility in the U.S. The members of the RCP, USA are united in their profound desire for a radically different and better world, and their understanding of the need for revolution to get to that world. They have dedicated themselves wholeheartedly to revolution, and on the basis of that they channel their individual abilities and passions to the cause and needs of this revolution.

The communist revolution requires a scientific understanding of society. This science of revolution arose from, and has continued to develop in constant interaction with, all the great streams of society's intellectual, scientific and cultural life, as well as the class struggle, and the struggle for production itself. [For more on the science of communism, see Appendix.] This science did not and could not arise spontaneously from the immediate conditions of the oppressed, or even from the struggles that erupt against the imperialists; that framework is too narrow, too saturated and imbued with the outlook and ways of approaching things of the very system that dominates the masses. For this reason, along with the fact that the system denies the masses of people training in and access to theory, this science must be brought to the masses from "outside" their direct experience and conditions. That requires a party rooted in a scientific understanding of the system and of the kind of revolution that must replace it.

Without such a party, there can be no revolution. The party leads the masses, through a back-and-forth, wave-like process of raising their understanding and leading them in struggle against the enemy.

In leading the masses to struggle against the bourgeoisie, a vanguard party also has to

struggle against the ways in which the prevailing social relations exert an almost gravitational pull on the party to “settle in” and accommodate itself to imperialism and to aiming for nothing more than reforms within this system of exploitation. And, once in the leading position of the new revolutionary state, a party again faces monumental pressures in the form of the persistence of the old relations and ideas in society (which can only be fully uprooted over a protracted period of time), along with open threats and aggression from imperialism. These find concentrated expression in forces within a party who, in the face of that, take up lines and policies which would stop halfway in making revolution, and actually drag society back to capitalism-imperialism. This too has to be combated—even more vigorously.

But the ongoing revolutionary process which the party itself must unleash and lead actually holds the key to resolving this contradiction: through repeatedly waging struggle to stay on the revolutionary road (and bringing the masses into that struggle to the greatest degree possible), and constantly struggling to forge a living link between what it is doing at any given time and the final goal of communism. And only with the actual achievement of communism will the need for such a party—that is, the need for an institutionalized leading group in society—be transcended.

Until that time, the vanguard party is the absolutely necessary and essential instrument for the masses’ liberation—first, in the revolutionary struggle to achieve power, and then all through the extremely complex struggle to maintain power and advance toward communism. As such, it is precious—the most precious thing the masses have.

To seize power, the revolutionary people must meet and defeat the enemy

In a country like the U.S., the revolutionary overthrow of this system can only be achieved once there is a major, qualitative change in the nature of the objective situation, such that society as a whole is in the grip of a profound crisis, owing fundamentally to the nature and workings of the system itself, and along with that there is the emergence of a revolutionary people, numbering in the millions and millions, conscious of the need for revolutionary change and determined to fight for it. 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.

Before the development of a revolutionary situation—and as the key to working toward the development of a revolutionary people, in a country like the U.S.—those who see the need for and wish to contribute to a revolution must focus their efforts on raising the political and ideological consciousness of masses of people and building massive political resistance to the main ways in which, at any given time, the exploitative and oppressive nature of this system is concentrated in the policies and actions of the ruling class and its

institutions and agencies—striving through all this to enable growing numbers of people to grasp both the need and the possibility for revolution when the necessary conditions have been brought into being, as a result of the unfolding of the contradictions of the system itself as well as the political, and ideological, work of revolutionaries.

All the party's work—everything it does—is aimed at making revolution, and advancing to communism. As noted above, there would need to be a crisis in society and within the government itself for a real chance at revolution to open up. But a real revolutionary vanguard can't just passively wait for that to happen; it must hasten the development of such a situation through its ideological and political work, "preparing minds and organizing forces for revolution" and working to actively shape the "political terrain" on which a future revolutionary situation might emerge.

This work of "hastening while awaiting" requires that the party strain against the limits of the objective political situation it faces—working to transform the situation to the maximum degree possible at any given time and doing so in relation to, and maintaining its tense alertness toward, any possible openings for revolution. To do this, it leads a whole ensemble of revolutionary preparations, with the party's press and the spreading of communist theory, especially as concentrated in the body of work, method and approach of Bob Avakian, as the mainstays of that activity.

Proceeding on the basis of its revolutionary orientation and objectives, the party must mobilize mass resistance to the system's outrages; it must engage the masses as broadly as possible on the biggest questions of the revolution; and through all this it must recruit new members as widely as possible (based on the high standards outlined in the Principles of Organization, below). As a key part of this, the party works to mobilize people from all sectors of society, and in particular the backbone of the revolution—those at the bottom of society, with nothing to lose but their chains—around the slogan "Fight the Power, And Transform the People, For Revolution."

The party comes at everything it does from the standpoint of the international proletariat and the people of the whole world. This basic stand and orientation is *proletarian internationalism*. It is based on the understanding that the proletariat is an international class; that imperialism is a single integrated world-system, even as it is riven with contradiction and antagonism; and that the communist revolution is a single world process, even as it takes place in many particular countries. This means doing all you can to make revolution in any particular country while politically supporting this same orientation and outlook and working to advance the cause of communism all over the world.

The United Front under the Leadership of the Proletariat: the strategy for making, and continuing, the revolution

In order to win, the party will have to unite millions and tens of millions of people—and a

vast array of political and social forces, with diverse viewpoints—to actively take part in and support the revolution. The party's strategy to do this is the United Front under the Leadership of the Proletariat.

The fundamental interests of most people in this society do NOT lie with the imperialists. This simple but profound truth is an important part of the objective material basis for why revolution in this country is both necessary and possible. Many different sections of people protest and rebel against the things this system does, and these protests should be and can be supported and strengthened; this means diverting them away from the pull to come under the influence of representatives of the system, and instead marshaling them as part of a *revolutionary* movement. Many different ideas, ultimately representing different classes, will contend for leadership of these struggles; but only the outlook and program of the proletariat—that class which has nothing to lose but its chains—can lead this struggle to revolution and communism.

Those whose conditions of life most correspond to that “nothing to lose” character will, in the main, be the backbone—the most solid social base—of the struggle to actually overthrow this system, and create a new one. At the same time, many people from different classes will also actively join in, or at least support, the revolution. The main thing is that there be a sizable and growing core, rooted in the proletariat but drawing from all strata among the people, that is infused with the outlook, goals and methods of communism, acting as a leading force and “magnetic pole” around which the whole revolutionary people can be galvanized.

At the heart of, and decisive to, the united front is the alliance of two major streams of struggle: the movement to overthrow capitalism and establish the new socialist state, as a transition toward communism (a movement which must be made up of every nationality), *uniting with* the struggles of the Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Native American Indian, and other oppressed nationalities to end their oppression as peoples (i.e., national oppression). The genocide against the Native Americans and the enslavement of Black people lie at the very roots of American society. Not only has this oppression not ended, but—along with the oppression of other minority nationalities—it has assumed new, and in some ways even more twisted, forms. And this is so despite the tremendous and profound struggles waged against this oppression, and the great sacrifices made by the masses in these struggles. The cold, but liberating, truth is this: this oppression can *only* be—and, in fact, *will* be—ended through revolution *against* this system.

These two streams of struggle face a common enemy and have a common solution; the fact that a large section of the proletariat is made up of oppressed nationalities further strengthens the material basis for this unity. At the same time, there are also different programs and outlooks within the movements against national oppression, ultimately representing different class forces, and the actual forging of this key alliance will be a very dynamic process—full of united struggle against the common enemy, and vigorous debate over the road forward, the outlook needed for liberation, and the ultimate goal.

There are other highly significant social contradictions that feed into—and help drive forward—the revolutionary movement. In particular, the oppression of women is bound up with the division of society into classes, and it is deeply rooted in every sphere of American life, including in the very structure of the family itself, and there is a crying need—*right now*—to again bring forward a force of women, and men, dedicated to rooting it out. Moreover, this is a “touchstone” question for the revolutionary movement—the revolution must fight against the oppression of women now, wherever it rears its head, and continue to struggle against it in the much more favorable conditions once power has been seized, aiming for nothing less than full emancipation.

Another burning question focuses on immigrants, most of whom have been driven here from nations oppressed by U.S. imperialism. The imperialists constantly stir up anger and hatred against them, using them as scapegoats; in sharp contrast, the revolutionary movement welcomes the immigrants and works to unite them in the struggle to get rid of imperialism and to carry forward the revolution toward the final goal of communism throughout the world.

The strategy of the United Front under the Leadership of the Proletariat also makes it possible to build unity with the vast and varied middle class in the U.S., which includes intellectuals and artists, professionals, many farmers, entrepreneurs, etc. On the basis of strongly putting forward the need for thoroughgoing revolution and setting out its vision of the future society, the party can reach out to and win over many middle class people to the communist revolution, and many more to various levels of support or at least “friendly neutrality.” Key among these sections will be the youth, who are not so wedded to the way things are, and can be more open to radical and fundamental change; and bringing forward a real movement of radical- and revolutionary-minded youth, from every strata of society, is a key part of the party’s strategy and revolutionary work.

The party applies the method of unity-struggle-unity in forging the united front. This involves, at any given stage of the struggle, uniting all who can be united around the immediate and urgent political battles of the day, while at the same time vigorously struggling over both the ultimate goal of the struggle and the outlook and method that should guide it. Through all this the party aims to win as many people as possible to rupture fully to the communist outlook and method, and it attempts as well to increasingly influence the thinking and values of people in society overall in that direction.

Applying this strategy and method through twists and turns, hastening while awaiting the development of a revolutionary situation, bringing forward, through many different avenues, a revolutionary people that would number in the millions and come from all walks of life, while at the same time studying theory and historical experience that is relevant to and required in order to make revolution, and developing a doctrine that could actually defeat the imperialists...through this whole ensemble of revolutionary work, the party does all it can to bring closer, and to prepare the people for, the time when revolution can be made.

At that time, millions will flood into political life, with all sorts of viewpoints—but as the crisis develops, and through the scientific leadership of the vanguard, society will sharply polarize, and two main forces—the ruling class and the reactionary armed forces (and other reactionaries) it is able to marshal, on the one side, and the revolutionary movement of millions, and tens of millions, on the other—will face off. Society will then become more or less “compressed” around one or the other of the contending “poles.”

Most of those who rally to the revolution at that point will do so not so much out of a worked-out belief in the ultimate goal of communism, but because they have come to understand that only the program of the revolutionaries can solve the acute and urgently pressing problems racking society. But this relative and temporary “compression” will “open back out” once the new revolutionary power has been seized and consolidated. The new society will once again be characterized by a wide diversity of social forces that occupy different (if changing) positions with (more or less) correspondingly different and diverse viewpoints regarding what should be done and why, at any given time.

The party must understand this well, and continue applying its strategy of United Front under the Leadership of the Proletariat in the new and more favorable—but different—conditions *after* the seizure of power. This includes applying the method of unity-struggle-unity, all the way through the transition to communism. Again, this is rooted materially in the differences between people that will still remain, for a whole historical period, after the seizure of power (the legacy of inequality in different forms—for example, the still remaining differences between those who mainly work with ideas and those who mainly do manual labor). In the new socialist society, in carrying forward the transition toward the final aim of communism, the orientation of the socialist state and the vanguard party will be to pursue a long-term policy of “living with” and transforming those whose social position, and world outlook, is characteristic of the middle strata. This means continually working toward the goal of overcoming these remaining material differences among the people, and their ideological effects, while striving to win growing numbers of the people to consciously take up the outlook and aims of the communist revolution.

In all of this, the leadership of the party will be essential.

II. Principles of Organization

The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA is made up of people who have come together to help fulfill the greatest need before humanity: making revolution, as the first step toward communism. They have fully dedicated their lives to this—with great seriousness and great love; with great determination and great passion.

The line of the party is decisive

The most essential and decisive thing about the party is its *line*. The party's line consists

of its understanding of the scientific method and body of knowledge of communism (of communist theory, in the most sweeping sense); its application of that theory to reality; and the basic principles, strategy and policy that result from that application.

If the line of the party is correct—if it corresponds to and “captures” the essential motion and development of reality, and correctly identifies the pathways of revolutionary practice—then no matter how small it might be at any given time, the party will still be able to advance toward revolution and contribute to the emancipation of humanity *so long as it takes this correct line as the foundation of its internal life and its work among the masses*. But if, on the contrary, the line is wrong in key aspects, and worse still if the party were to persist in a wrong line on a fundamental question and, through the course of that, if the basic orientation of the party were to change and the party itself become *revisionist*, that is, if its line degenerated into one that objectively accommodates to imperialism and essentially gives up on seeking to make revolution, even if it does not admit it...then no matter how many people might be attracted to it in the short run, the party will in the end amount to nothing more than another knife in the back of the masses. That is just how essential the question of line is: it is the difference between revolution and counter-revolution.

The ultimate point of this line is to transform the world. There is a back-and-forth interaction between the development of line and the transformation of the world that drives this whole process. This is the theory/practice/theory dynamic, and it is the heart of party life.

Bob Avakian has characterized this dynamic in this way: “proceeding at any given time on the basis of our theory and line, as determined collectively and through the structures, channels and processes of the party; extracting lessons from our practice and raising these up to the level of theoretical abstraction, but also drawing from many other sources (including the thinking and insights of others), and applying the scientific outlook and method of communism, dialectical materialism, to repeatedly synthesize all this to a higher level, in the development of and through the wrangling over theory and line—which is then returned to and carried out in practice, on what should be a deepened and enriched basis. And on...and on...and on...”

In short, line is the essential and dynamic factor in the interaction between the party and the larger objective world. The struggle to develop this line, to grasp and apply it and through the course of that to deepen and enrich it, and where necessary to correct it...this struggle is the lifeblood of the party, and at the heart of every party member’s activity and duties.

Basic orientation—“Our collectivity is our strength”

In developing and carrying out this line, the party acts as a collective organization, not just a collection of individuals.

Every party member is a leader of the masses, and each “brings to the table” valuable

insights, experience, ability, and creativity. And every individual's actions in any given situation can make a huge difference—positive or negative. At the same time, the party enables people to pull together to understand and change the world. People channel their insights and initiative into a collective process and vehicle, and this collectivity makes possible a much deeper and more far-seeing analysis of reality, and a much more powerful and profound mobilization of the people to transform that reality, far beyond what any single person acting as an individual, or even a loosely affiliated group of people, could ever accomplish.

Inside the party, comrades share the good and the bad, and look out for each other: this too is an expression of our revolutionary outlook and our collectivity. Inside the party there is (and should always be) much collective discussion and wrangling over what to do, over right and wrong in the development of the revolutionary theory and practice to which all comrades contribute; this is the “juice” of party life. But vis-à-vis the enemy we close our ranks tightly, and present them with a strong and unfissured wall of unity and allegiance to leadership. This makes it all the more difficult for them to breach our ranks.

Democratic centralism

Our collectivity is expressed and realized through the collective functioning of the units and other bodies of the party on the various levels. The entire party is welded together as a chain of knowledge and chain of command on the basis of democratic centralism.

The leadership of the party sets out basic principles and analyses, focuses attention on the key questions before the revolution, and guides the party through rigorous investigation and vigorous discussion of all this. This enables a rich process of wrangling and debate to take place throughout the ranks on a scientific foundation. Once the line is set, everybody enthusiastically carries it out into practice. Both aspects of democratic centralism—the wrangling over line and its unified implementation—are essential to the whole process of knowing and changing the world on the most correct and profound possible basis. The principles of democratic centralism enable the party collectively to not only draw from, and to synthesize, on a scientific basis, the ideas of comrades in the party...but also to learn from the thinking of masses of people outside the party, and to develop and strengthen its ties with them, as an important part of carrying forward the dialectical process of deepening its understanding of reality in interrelation with its ability to lead masses of people to transform reality in a revolutionary way, toward the goal of communism.

One key aspect of democratic centralism is the unified and disciplined functioning of the party, which is grounded in its fundamental unity, in terms of ideological and political line. The disciplined character of the party is also reflected in the following rules of functioning: the individual is subordinate to the collective; the minority is subordinate to the majority; the lower levels are subordinate to the higher levels; and the entire party is subordinate to the National Party Congress, or to the Central Committee chosen by the Party Congress, when the Congress is not in session.

Party organization

Article 1—Membership

Membership in the party means a lifelong commitment to revolution, and the emancipation of humanity. Those joining the party dedicate their lives to doing all the hard work, the risky work, the often unpopular and “going against the tide” work, to make this a reality. Once having joined, nobody should ever leave the party unless they have become convinced, after a protracted period of waging struggle, that it has become irremediably revisionist—that is, that it has degenerated and betrayed the cause of revolution, even if it still calls itself “communist.”

Duties of members

A. On the basis of their revolutionary stand and orientation, party members must want revolution so badly that they are willing, and determined, to be scientific about it. Party comrades work to continually deepen their grasp, and application, of the scientific outlook and method of communism. They struggle for what they know to be true while maintaining a critical spirit and an open mind to the possibility that they may be wrong.

The greatest responsibility of every party member is to struggle for the party’s line to remain, and develop further as, a revolutionary line. Every party member must dare to go against the tide of revisionist lines (again, lines that would lead to betrayal of the revolution); at the same time, every member must raise their theoretical level so as to be better able to discern, and struggle against, such lines.

Party members must strive to maintain their focus on the biggest questions of the revolution, to proceed in accordance with overall strategic goals, and to ensure that the work done at any given point is in line with, and contributing to, those long-term strategic goals.

B. Party members are ready to sacrifice everything and to willingly and enthusiastically accept any assignment or take on any responsibility, no matter how challenging, to advance the revolutionary cause, not only in the particular country but internationally. Communists do not join the party for a career or an “alternative lifestyle,” but to lead the masses to make revolution. Party members are prepared to meet any repression at the hands of the enemy.

C. Party members safeguard the integrity of the party channels and party leadership. They uphold and strengthen party discipline, and form a wall against the enemy.

D. Party members actively represent the communist outlook, method, stand, and morality among the masses, and live it in their own lives. They propagate communist ideas, and lead the masses in fighting against the enemy. Party comrades believe the masses can scientifically understand the world, and struggle with them to do so; party members do not believe in gods or spirits, and boldly oppose religious ideas among the

masses, as well as all other ideologies that stop short of (or oppose) revolution and, ultimately, will at best settle for reforms within the capitalist system—even while we will seek to unite with, struggle with, and learn from people holding those ideas. Party members also know that the masses look to them and attach a great deal of hope in them—that they expect the best of the comrades—and they live their lives with that in mind.

Party comrades are acutely oriented to seizing every possible opening to promote revolutionary struggle, and the goals of revolution and communism, in all they do. They enthusiastically carry out assignments and they dare to take initiative. They try to avoid, but cannot fear, making mistakes.

E. Party members actively report to their units, and to leadership, what they are learning and thinking. This includes their wrangling with questions of theory and strategy and big developments in the world, reflections on culture or science, as well as their summation of experience gained in particular work and the thoughts and views of the masses. Party members have the responsibility to systematically and scientifically analyze all this in reports, and to participate in developing strategic conceptions for different arenas of the party's work.

Recruitment process

People who apply to join the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA should have a fire in the belly for revolution. They should stand with the masses of people, and should have basically ruptured with the bourgeois world outlook (even while continuing to fight its ongoing pulls). They should have a good basic grasp of the communist outlook and fundamental unity with the line of the party, as well as an eagerness to learn more. They should deeply grasp the importance of this party to the masses and the cause of revolution. They should have a good, if basic, understanding of the party's line (as set forth in this Constitution and its Appendix), and they should have experience in applying all this to the practical revolutionary struggle, and the back-and-forth between theory and practice.

Anyone applying for membership must submit an application, either written or oral, going into several points: their life history, and why they have become a communist; the changes and ruptures in their understanding and outlook that they have gone through in coming to that decision; and how they understand the leap in commitment involved in joining the party. The party body concerned should evaluate this in light of the person's all-round development, including their stand toward and relationship with the masses and their dedication to revolution, and appoint one or two comrades to discuss all this with the applicant, as well as clarifying any questions around the line of the party and the responsibilities of members. At the appropriate time, the party body concerned shall make a determination as to whether to accept the application for membership, and this decision shall be reported through party channels to higher levels of party leadership.

Article 2—Party discipline

The party relies on the conscious understanding of its members to maintain its discipline in the face of the enemy. The party rules reflect a commitment to maintain the party as a democratic centralist organization, dedicated to nothing less—and nothing else—than communist revolution.

A. There should be vigorous discussions among all comrades, and with the masses, on cardinal political and ideological questions. Party members have a responsibility to raise any disagreements with line or policy in the highest regularly meeting party body to which they belong, in an open and aboveboard way. Conversely, party members must not go outside of party channels to vent such disagreements and criticisms, nor should they form groups or factions opposed to the line of the party; such factions distort, corrode and undermine—and left unchecked would ultimately destroy—the chain of knowledge and chain of command of the party.

B. If party members hold different views with regard to the decisions or directives of the party body they serve on, or others above it, they may reserve their opinion while maintaining party discipline and carrying out those decisions or directives. They have the right to bypass immediate leadership and report or appeal directly to the higher levels, up to and including the Central Committee. It is absolutely impermissible for leadership to suppress criticism or retaliate. It is essential to create a situation in which there is both centralism and democracy; both unified line and broad initiative; both discipline and ideological struggle; both unity of will and action, and personal ease of mind, liveliness and contestation of ideas.

C. All party members must oppose “liberalism”—that is, they should forthrightly criticize things that are wrong and that violate the line and discipline of the party, and not “let things slide” for the sake of “friendship,” “getting work done,” etc. Such liberalism is a corrosive that eats away at the heart of the party.

D. The party relies on the conscious discipline of its members to carry out the line and to uphold standards in resisting and countering the enemy—ideologically, politically, and organizationally. Where party members violate this discipline, leadership will apply sanctions. In all cases of discipline, the member has the right to appeal, again including up to the Central Committee. Sanctions include: warning, serious warning, removal from posts, placing on probation within the party, termination of party membership, or expulsion.

If comrades repeatedly demonstrate, through opposition to and violations of democratic centralism, that they do not belong in the party, or if their revolutionary will degenerates, they will be prevailed upon to resign. In situations where a party member’s ideological and political stand and understanding has degenerated, and they are not really in fundamental unity with the line of the party, they should be prevailed upon to resign. If party leadership has recognized this, but the person herself (or himself) has not recognized or accepted this and does not want to resign, or even refuses to resign, this

should be resolved through deepening struggle over this question, to the point where all concerned come to agreement that the person in question does not (or in fact does) belong in the party. If such agreement cannot be reached, then the party leadership, at the level concerned, shall make the decision as to whether or not the person's membership should be withdrawn—and this decision must be reported to, and approved by, the next highest leadership level, before it can be acted on. In this case, too—as in all situations where disciplinary measures are taken with regard to a party member—the party member in question has the right to appeal, all the way up to the Central Committee.

Opportunists, chronic violators of party discipline and/or elements hostile to the proletarian revolution must have their membership terminated. Actual counter-revolutionaries, agents of the ruling class and its state, and those who seek to organize a headquarters within the party in opposition to the line and leadership of the party and its democratic centralist principles, must be expelled—cleared out of the party and not readmitted.

Article 3—Leadership

Communist leadership—line, method and orientation

Communist leadership is most of all a question of line—of striving oneself, and leading others, to apply the science of revolution in a living way to objective reality to develop the most correct line possible and to carry out this line to build the revolutionary movement toward the final aim of communism.

Communist leaders strive to give the people they lead the fullest possible understanding of the line, learning from them as they lead, and on that basis unleashing their revolutionary enthusiasm and conscious initiative and activity. They work with people to sum up the results of these efforts, helping them to learn as fully as possible from this experience and to contribute to deepening the line and to further transforming the world on that basis.

A. Party members and especially party leadership on all levels must listen to the opinions of the masses, both inside and outside the party, and encourage their criticism. Party members have the right and responsibility to criticize and make proposals to people on all levels of the party, including party leaders and leadership bodies.

B. Choosing leadership is an important responsibility of party members, akin to taking responsibility for the line of the party. People on each level of the party choose their leadership based on the criteria of leadership outlined above; the party unit then makes a report to the next highest body, and this choice is reviewed. If there are differences between the two levels over this, there should be a reasonable amount of back-and-forth discussion to resolve this.

C. Party leaders are precious and must be defended and protected from the class enemy. All comrades take responsibility for this.

Leading bodies

A. The Party Congress is the highest body of the party. It sets the party's basic orientation and objectives, especially at crucial junctures of the class struggle. The National Party Congress shall be held at key junctures in the revolutionary movement, barring extraordinary circumstances, or approximately every seven years.

The Congress elects the Central Committee, which develops line and policy to meet the challenges of leading the revolutionary struggle, through all its twists and turns. The Central Committee is the highest leading body of the party, when the Congress is not in session. In periods between Party Congresses, the Central Committee shall periodically report to the party membership.

B. The Central Committee elects the Chair of the Party and other officers and its standing bodies, to which it delegates all of its authority when it is not in session. The Central Committee, under the leadership of its Chair and other officers and its standing bodies, shall set up a number of necessary bodies on different levels in order to guide the overall work of the party.

Article 4—Party units

Tasks of the party units

Party units combine the strengths of their members and collectively approach the world, and making revolution, with sweep and rigor; imagination and thoroughness; creativity and perseverance; and struggle and unity. The unit is the principal site where members work to systematically grasp and apply, deepen and develop, and struggle over the line of the party. Units base themselves on the theory/practice/theory dynamic, leading their members in the ongoing process of knowing and transforming the world.

The units must:

A. Give constant guidance to party members, and the people that they lead, concerning the ideological and political line of the party, beginning with the most cardinal questions facing communists and the revolutionary masses.

B. Lead members to carry out two-line struggle, i.e., the comparing and contrasting of correct and incorrect lines, their content and implications, so as to raise their ability to distinguish right and wrong and, in particular, communism and revisionism. At the same time, foster a spirit and atmosphere of fearlessly daring to think and do, of not being bound by convention, of “reaching for the heights and flying without a safety net.”

C. Lead all party comrades in fulfilling the basic requirements as party members enumerated in Article 1.

D. Maintain close ties with the masses: summing up their conditions, actively investigating what and how they are thinking, carrying out ideological struggle with them, and leading them in struggle against the enemy—learning while leading, and leading while learning.

E. Take in new party members, take the ideological pulse of all members, enforce party discipline and consolidate and expand party organizations.

Party units should function like teams of scientists—plunging into vigorous struggle over the character and dynamics of the material reality they are engaging, then applying the resulting analysis to transform that reality, and summing up results with the same orientation and method, as thoroughly and sweepingly as possible, as part of the overall chain of knowledge and chain of command of the party.

Conclusion

The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA has taken the responsibility to lead revolution in the U.S., the belly of the imperialist beast, as its principal share of the world revolution and the ultimate aim of communism. This is a great and historic undertaking—and all those who yearn to see this happen should rally to and support this vanguard, working together with the party, building support for it and, on the basis of taking up the cause and outlook of communism, joining it.

The emancipation of all humanity: this, and nothing less than this, is our goal. There is no greater cause, no greater purpose to which to dedicate our lives.

Appendix: Communism as a Science

Communism is both a science and a revolutionary political movement. It is also a goal—not a utopia, but a liberating goal whose potential basis lies within the situation that confronts humanity, a situation where a leap is possible to a radically different and much better world.

To understand the world, and to change it in the interests of humanity, people need scientific theory. Science is not some set of mysterious laws “belonging to the scientists.” Science, all real science, is a vital human activity that aims to learn the causes of phenomena the reasons *why* things happen and *how* they develop—and it seeks these causes in the material world, which includes human society. A scientific approach does not seek supernatural “explanations” nor does it accept any explanations which cannot be tested, and verified or disproved, in the real material world, but instead develops an initial theory based on evidence from the world, tests out the theory in actual practice

and against the results achieved, and through this process arrives at a deepened understanding of what is true. That understanding must then be further applied to reality.

Communism is a radical rupture from all religious outlooks. It has shown the way out of the spiritual slavery in which oppressed classes have been chained throughout history. It matters to know what's real. There is no need to invent gods who supposedly control the natural world and humanity's destiny. Without a scientific outlook, people are deprived of an understanding of the means and dynamics of change, of their own potential role in bringing about change—and of the joys and grandeur of discovery.

And, beyond the break from traditional religion, a truly scientific and revolutionary outlook cannot be—must not involve any element of—a “resurrection” of religiosity in new forms. Communism is not a dogma or a set of scriptures. Just as there is no god in heaven, there is no predetermined “earthly end” toward which everything is bound to proceed. There is no idealized version of “nature” or “history” working toward the “inevitable” goal of communism. Tendencies toward such thinking that have existed in the history of the communist movement must be broken with. We need science, we need a scientific approach to everything. And the communist method and outlook provides that approach.

A classical charge is that communists have cooked up a vision of an “ideal world” and then set out to impose this utopian, idealist vision on everyone. This is what so-called “anti-totalitarians” claim—that communists have utopian dreams and schemes that may sound good but have no grounding or basis in reality, so (as the accusation goes) communists are forced to increasingly use coercion against the very people in whose name we proclaim such a utopia, and end up utilizing the most horrific means to try to impose it. That is *not* what this is about. Communism examines, in a living way, the real mainsprings and dynamics involved in society and points to the direction in which the underlying contradictions are driving things. The method of Marx, and of communism as it has developed since the time of Marx, is anything but a metaphysical approach that proceeds from abstract principles and categories and seeks to superimpose them on reality.

Communists must be engaging reality, on as scientific a basis as possible at any given time. And, in this process, communists are interacting with other people who are applying different outlooks and different approaches with different objectives. Their thinking, their objectives, their inclinations and their ideas—some of which may actually better reflect reality than our understanding at times and with regard to certain phenomena—this is also part of the larger objective reality that communists need to engage. It is necessary to have a scientific approach to that as well. The communist outlook provides a systematically, consistently, and comprehensively scientific means to do that, *if* that's what communists actually take up and apply, and don't corrupt it with religious or other philosophically idealist and metaphysical notions and approaches.

Communism must be understood as a living and continually developing science. Marx

laid its essential foundations. And communist theory has continued to develop from Marx's time—to further comprehend changing reality, to learn critically from the historical experience of the communist revolutionary movement, and to learn from broader spheres of human thought and experience—all to confront and meet the great needs of making revolution in a changing world. Communist theory—at least real communist theory—is not a static, closed system of thought. In sum, communism is a comprehensive outlook and scientific method that can and must be applied to all spheres of life and reality and in the process further developed.

Marx's breakthrough

It was Marx, working with Engels, who first forged and systematized communism's theoretical and methodological foundation—dialectical materialism, and historical materialism (applying dialectical materialism to human society and its development).

Dialectical materialism provides the basis for a systematic, comprehensive and consistent scientific approach. As materialism, it reflects the fact that all reality consists entirely of matter in motion—nothing else. There is nothing that is eternal, unchanging, fixed, etc., nor is there any spirit or consciousness divorced from particular forms of matter in motion. *Dialectical* materialism reflects the fact that everything has internal contradiction and motion, and everything interacts with other forms of matter in motion. And, under certain conditions, matter undergoes qualitative change—leaps and ruptures—out of which new things emerge.

Over the whole period of more than 150 years since the time when Marx and Engels first formulated communism as a scientific theory, there has also been the continuing enrichment of the understanding of dialectical materialism itself, on the basis of learning from continuing discoveries in natural science, social science and history, and other fields. It is not that these discoveries and developments have shown that, after all, reality does not consist only of matter in motion; it is that they have deepened our understanding of what that means, and at the same time have posed new challenges in understanding particular forms of matter and particular aspects of the laws of motion of matter.

Marx's application of dialectical materialism to human society and its development was truly a revolution in human thought, paving the way for revolution in practice. This breakthrough—historical materialism—put the understanding of human society and its motive forces on a scientific foundation, for the first time.

This new, historical materialist, understanding pierced the confusion and the misleading myths that history is the product of supernatural forces like "gods," or is determined by the will and action of "great men" or by the workings of some unchanging "human nature." Rather, development in nature and in history occurs through the dialectical interplay between necessity and accident (causality and chance) and in the case of human history between underlying material forces and the conscious activity and struggle of people. But this does not mean that history is all accident—or that history is

whatever we make of it. Here is the importance of another crucial insight of Marx: people make history, but not in any way they wish—they do so on a definite material foundation, which is independent of their will. People can radically change reality in accordance with their fundamental interests, but they can do so only on the basis of what that material reality actually is. The more correctly people understand reality, how it has come to be the way it is, and how it is continually moving and changing, the more people will be able to recognize, and work to effect, radical changes that are in the ultimate and fundamental interests of humanity. While human history does not unfold in accordance with any “higher will” or purpose—and has no predetermined end—there is, as Marx also pointed out, a certain coherence to human history. That coherence is rooted in the fact that each generation inherits the productive forces (land, technology, factories, the knowledge and skills of the people, etc.) from previous generations and generally further develops them and passes them on to the next generation.

Historical materialism shows that the fundamental basis of any society is its economic system—its system of producing and reproducing the requirements of life. But people don’t just produce any old way; they do so by entering into particular, societal, relations of production—which Marx called the “economic base” of society. And in class society all this is under the domination of a ruling class, which organizes production and which creates and dominates the ruling political structures, and which also comes to dominate the ideas, culture, etc., of that society. This continues until the further development of the productive forces runs into fundamental conflict with the existing production relations. Then a revolution in the political superstructure—in which the rising class overthrows the old ruling class—must occur to bring about new production relations that correspond to the new productive forces...and a new class comes to rule.

Marx was not the first to analyze the existence and features of classes and the struggle between classes. But Marx rooted all this in the historical materialist understanding that the existence of classes and the struggle between classes is bound up with particular phases in the historical development of production.

And Marx did not, of course, stop there. Communist theory showed the basis, and paved the way, for an entirely new kind of revolution in human history: the proletarian revolution. A class had emerged—the proletariat, owning nothing but its own ability to work—a class that works in common in networks of production on the vast, socialized (and increasingly globalized) means of production that capitalism has brought forth. The proletariat and this socialized production are in fundamental conflict with capitalism’s private appropriation of socially produced wealth—in the form of private capital, whose inner nature is exploitation and fierce competition on an expanding scale with devastating consequences for humanity. The proletariat is an increasingly large, strategically placed and international class. But, even more important, this class represents the potential for socialized relations of production—and thus for a new, socialized way of utilizing the productive forces collectively, as the common property of humanity, without exploitation—and without class divisions.

For this fundamental reason, the proletariat is the first class in history whose emancipation requires the kind of revolution that will sweep away all—not some, but all—exploitative and oppressive relations, and the political structures and ways of thinking that arise from and reinforce these relations. The proletarian revolution leads to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat—a state that is radically different from all previous forms of the state, which have *all* been class dictatorships serving exploiting classes and their political domination. And this new state must itself be a transition to a communist society, abolishing all class distinctions and the state itself. In short, to achieve its own emancipation, the proletariat must, in a truly profound way, lead a revolution as the emancipators of humanity.

The fact that communist theory, founded by Marx, developed this understanding and put it on a scientific basis was unprecedented—akin to what Darwin did in the natural sciences.

Here, it is impossible even to indicate the many different elements of communist theory which Marx developed...and still fewer of the important developments of that theory since Marx founded it. But that is not the essential point here. Rather it is to indicate why we say that communism should be understood, taken up, applied, and developed as a science—and to briefly illustrate this through indicating something about its process of development.

What Marx developed was and remains a foundation; at the same time, as that implies, it was a beginning. A science must develop—otherwise it is not science. Any science has incomplete and incorrect elements of understanding; it must be repeatedly interrogating its own conceptions, examining criticisms made by others, and correcting what's been shown to be wrong, summing up the results of practice. And, beyond that, the world it seeks to understand is constantly changing.

Communist theory has developed—and must continue to develop—to fulfill great needs.

A scientific understanding of imperialism, and further development of the proletarian revolution

By the end of the 19th century, after Marx's death, capitalism had developed in a qualitative way. In Europe, North America and Japan, giant monopolies arose—large, highly centralized and powerful units of capitalist ownership and control. Along with this, the capitalist powers extended their domination and vicious exploitation in a major way to all parts of the world. With this and other related changes, capitalism had developed and transformed into capitalist *imperialism*. This was a new phenomenon, and presented revolutionaries, and the people of the whole world, with great new necessity—new conditions to scientifically understand, new reality to transform to make revolution.

Applying the communist outlook and methodology, Lenin analyzed the basic features and predatory dynamics of this new development of capitalism into imperialism, now operating on a world level; in this way, the science of communism was further

developed.

Lenin's work analyzed how, and with what effects, a deep divide grows between the imperialist nations and the large majority of humanity who live in the nations imperialism oppresses—and how that divide is in fact an international, exploitative production relation which imperialism brings right into the heart of the way capitalism works in this era. This relentless process of accumulation now includes the extraction of “super-profits” from oppressed nations. Lenin's analysis demonstrated the effects of this “parasitism” of imperialism in the imperialist “home countries” themselves, which include the spread of a portion of the spoils to certain strata inside the imperialist countries, even the “bribing” of a section of the working class. This produced a different situation than what had been foreseen by Marx, who had anticipated that the proletarian revolution would come first to Europe, where capitalism had first developed, and where its development had brought into being a mass of impoverished and exploited proletarians. But, as Lenin analyzed, with these new divisions in the world, while the basis for proletarian revolution was in fact extended and deepened worldwide, it was temporarily held back, in some ways, in Europe.

So this was something new in communism. Precisely as a science, communism developed, discarding and modifying certain elements, while retaining and developing its essential core. Far from disproving it, this demonstrated and developed the living, scientific character of communist understanding.

The changes brought about by global imperialist exploitation and plunder also required other changes in communist theory and revolutionary strategy.

For example, with the changes imperialism brought to its “home countries,” including the above-described element of parasitism, Lenin emphasized the significance of the resulting “split” in the working class there—between the more exploited and impoverished sections and the more bribed and “bourgeoisified” sections—and the need for the proletarian revolution to have its most fundamental, bedrock base lower and deeper in the proletariat, in its poor and more exploited sections.

This is also an era when rivalry and war between the various nation-states over the division and redivision of the world has come cloaked in various nationalist appeals: “defending our country,” along with “saving democracy” etc. Communist theory, as developed by Lenin, analyzed the thoroughly reactionary foundation of these imperialist nationalist appeals; they are an expression of imperialism's spread all over the globe—bringing both international tentacles of exploitation and the national rivalry of competing imperialist states. Based on this, applying and developing in the new conditions the *Communist Manifesto's* slogan “the workers have no country,” Lenin further developed and sharpened the communist understanding of proletarian internationalism. At the same time, he began to develop communist theory to encompass the great potential revolutionary role, in the era of imperialism, of the struggle for national

liberation in the *oppressed* nations—and to grasp the need and basis for those struggles for national liberation to be led by the proletariat, as part of the world revolution with the ultimate goal of communism.

With these, and other, developments, communist theory was able to synthesize a systematic understanding of how imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism, and has laid an even deeper and more global basis for the proletarian revolution, which must put an end to the capitalist-imperialist system.

In the first part of the 20th century, the communist movement made new leaps, and there was a vast amount of new experience accumulated in making proletarian revolution—and in actually establishing revolutionary state power, a dictatorship of the proletariat, in the Soviet Union. This was an unprecedented leap, a beginning of entirely new experience for humanity. This rich and fundamentally liberating experience can be seen as the accumulation of a vast amount of “raw material” for further scientific understanding and further ability to advance. And, in fact, communist theory underwent further developments—including with regard to the need for a vanguard party and on the nature of the revolutionary state.

As Lenin showed, the essential reason for the need and the role of the party, as the vanguard of communist revolution, is the understanding that this revolution requires leadership and a scientific approach to bringing about the radical transformation of society. Due to the very contradictions that make revolution necessary, including the fact that the majority of the masses are largely locked out of intellectual training and of “mental labor,” their self-emancipation requires leadership—scientific leadership. In fact, that kind of leadership is the very best instrument for unleashing the conscious understanding and initiative of the masses, which was precisely the purpose and theme of Lenin’s work on the question of the party. Lenin also understood that the vanguard party needs to be highly organized and disciplined. The party is organized in order to bring together the strength of its collective knowledge and to wield this understanding in the most powerful way in making revolution. And it must be organized against attempts to suppress and wipe it out. It needs to lead the masses of people in mass revolutionary struggle to change the world, and to transform themselves in the process.

The need for a vanguard party also has to do with the fact that the spontaneous struggle of the masses will never, left to itself, make a revolution. The spontaneous influence of bourgeois ideology, which dominates and pervades society, will constantly pull the struggle to lower, ultimately reformist, understanding and aims. This pull of spontaneity needs to be diverted, with scientific communist leadership. The point of this kind of vanguard is exactly the opposite of being an “elite to replace the masses.” Rather, the point is to bring to broad sections of masses a scientific understanding of the goals and means of revolutionary emancipation—both in theory and in the constant analysis of events of all kinds in society and the world as a whole. And, as we have come to further understand, this also means unleashing a process in which the masses are themselves increasingly involved in taking up, and becoming part of solving, the biggest questions of

the revolution. All this is essential both in the period before the seizure of state power, and, after power is seized, in carrying forward the struggle in socialist society, aiming for the final goal of communism throughout the world.

As an integral part of the pioneering experience of preparing for and then leading the Russian revolution to seize power, consolidate the new power through a civil war (in which armed forces of imperialist and reactionary states actively took part on the side of the counter-revolution), and then embark on the socialist transformation of society, Lenin further developed the communist theory of the state. Building on the initial, though far-seeing, summation by Marx of the short-lived revolutionary experience of the 1871 Paris Commune, Lenin further fleshed out and applied communist theory which showed that the proletarian revolution cannot simply take hold of the ready-made machinery of the state, which existed within and served the old society, but must instead smash that state apparatus and create in its place the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is a radically new kind of state, which both involves the leadership of the party and increasingly incorporates the masses into the running of society, carrying forward revolutionary change toward communism and the eventual abolition of both the party and the state itself.

Revolution in the oppressed nations...and continuing the revolution under socialism

Mao Tsetung took up the theory of communism, as its message echoed powerfully across the globe in the wake of the victory of revolution in the Soviet Union. But communist theory was to a large extent undeveloped in relation to the specific features and process of revolution in the vast areas of the world dominated by imperialism, and suffering under semi-feudal and colonial, or semi-colonial, conditions. In living refutation of the idea that communism was an ideology applicable only to Europe, Mao took up the scientific outlook, method and basic principles of communism and applied them to this situation—analyzing Chinese society and its economic and social relations. Mao continued to make new analysis of classes, production relations, and experience in resistance and revolution—including setbacks and defeats that were suffered in the early phases of the revolution in China, which were due, in part, to attempts to dogmatically and mechanically follow previous revolutionary experience and “models,” particularly that of the Soviet Union, rather than applying the scientific outlook and method of communism in a living way.

Out of this work of Mao’s and the back and forth between theory and practice, the conception of “new democratic” revolution in semi-colonial and semi-feudal countries was developed—where revolution led by the proletariat could first defeat feudalism and imperialism and establish a new state power, a new form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which, while not immediately socialist, opens the door to the socialist transition to communism. Mao also developed the theory and practice of protracted people’s war, as the central means for carrying out this new democratic revolution. These advances in communist theory still provide a fundamental orientation and foundation

for revolution in that type of country—even while there is also the pressing challenge to take into account the vast changes in the world since that time, and to further develop the strategy for revolution to fight and to win in these changing conditions.

Then, after the seizure of power and embarking on the road of socialist transition in China, communist revolution was confronted with yet another unprecedented development. By the late 1950s, socialism had been reversed in the Soviet Union—and capitalism restored, in “socialist” guise. This was not a reversal that came from outside, but from within, and under the direction of the “communist” leaders of the Soviet Union itself. This was not recognized at the time, and was something entirely new—in fact largely unanticipated in communist theory as it had developed to that point. While also not clearly understood at that time, there were similar forces at work in China posing dangers of a reversal of socialism there, too.

In response, and through continuing efforts lasting most of two decades, until his death in 1976, Mao worked on and developed both the theory and practice of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. In this, Mao broke new ground in communist theory—including in both the political and philosophical realms. Further developing the understanding of socialist society as a *transition* toward communism, Mao forged a deeper understanding of the protracted and often intense struggle to overcome the “birthmarks” of the old society within the new one—along with an understanding of the basis within socialist society for the constant regeneration of these expressions of the old relations—economically, politically, and ideologically. Building on Lenin’s contributions in understanding the importance of the superstructure and the consciousness of the people in making socialist revolution, Mao gave great emphasis to unleashing and leading the conscious role of the masses in waging class struggle against ideological and political lines and policies that would seek to expand, not restrict, “bourgeois right” (the way the still existent commodity relations and inequalities left over from capitalism, right within socialist society, mutually reinforce each other, and are reflected in the superstructure—the political institutions and ways of thinking, culture, and so on—and how all this poses obstacles to the continuing revolutionary advance under socialism and must be restricted and finally overcome as a crucial part of the struggle to prevent capitalist restoration and achieve the final goal of communism).

While there were great dangers and pressure of all kinds (military, economic, and more) from outside China, Mao saw the heart of the danger of capitalist restoration coming from within the communist party itself. But his was a materialist and scientific, not superficial and populist, understanding of this. Applying and developing communist materialism, Mao, contrary to “popular wisdom,” did not see the essence of the problem as “bureaucracy,” or “leaders going bad.” Rather, the essence of the challenge was that once power is seized and forms of socialist ownership are established, then power over the means of production and economic relations is concentrated in political leadership. And, in particular, it is expressed in political, as well as ideological, line and direction—whether line leads toward further revolutionization of these relations, or toward

reinforcing and regenerating old relations, heading back to capitalism. As Mao and his comrades put it, “the capitalist roaders are representatives of capitalist relations of production.”

In practice, the struggle to prevent capitalist restoration reached its height in the decade-long “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” in China, and succeeded for ten years, until a coup by capitalist roaders in the party shortly after Mao’s death, in 1976, resulting in rapid fashion in deep social polarization and the full-bore horrors of capitalism on display in China today.

This is exactly the outcome that Mao and his comrades warned against, and fought against. Equipped with the further breakthroughs in scientific understanding Mao had forged, they were able to understand this danger and its basic sources, and mobilize millions in a massive attempt to prevent it, and advance the revolution. This stands in contrast to, and greatly in advance of, the earlier experience with capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union, which was consolidated there by the late 1950s, with no similar great battle against it. These important new elements of scientific understanding about carrying forward revolution under socialism, which were developed by Mao and his revolutionary comrades, represent significant elements of the basis for picking up from here and forging further advances—in communist revolutionary theory and practice.

End of a stage...beginning of a new stage

With the reversal of socialism in China after 1976, coming a couple of decades after that had happened in the Soviet Union in the 1950s, the first wave of socialist revolutions was ended and, today, the world is left without any socialist states. In the face of this, and in the midst of unprincipled and all too often uncritically accepted slanders, a truly scientific summation of this historic experience is essential for a new great advance.

There are, at the same time, major changes in the world—which were greatly accelerated after the (already capitalist-imperialist) Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s and the U.S. was left for now as the “sole standing” superpower in the world. A giant spreading wave of imperialist “globalization” has swept the planet—accelerating deep and more extensive capitalist penetration and integration of many parts of the world and creating many new horrors, including globe-threatening environmental destruction. This has come packed with immensely dislocating, destabilizing, and devastating consequences for vast populations of humanity, especially but not only in the oppressed nations. Big shifts of population have taken place—international immigration and, within oppressed countries, vast populations have shifted from rural areas into cities and spreading shantytowns. These developments and drastically changing conditions create new challenges for revolutionary strategy and revolutionary struggle the world over.

All of this poses, anew, the great need for communism. While there are no socialist states in the world, there is the experience of socialist revolutions and there is the rich body of revolutionary, scientific theory that developed through the first wave of socialist revolutions to build on. But the theory and practice of communist revolution requires

advances to meet the challenges of this situation—to scientifically address, and draw the necessary lessons from, the overall experience of this first wave of socialist revolution and the strategic implications of the vast changes taking place in the world.

Bob Avakian has taken on this responsibility, and has developed a communist body of work and method and approach that responds to these great needs and challenges.

He has undertaken a scientific summation of the first wave of socialist revolutions, in the Soviet Union and China. And, as a starting point, he has refuted the notion of the “death of communism,” upholding the great accomplishments of these revolutions, and has developed further analysis of the real problems they confronted in the societies they “inherited,” and in taking the first steps of socialist transformation in an imperialist-dominated world. Upholding, as by far the main aspect of these revolutions, the liberating changes they produced on many levels for the great majorities of the formerly oppressed, Avakian has also analyzed the negative aspects of this experience. This has involved critically examining both political and philosophical conceptions that guided this first wave of socialist revolution. A scientific summation of this experience, and the criticisms of it, requires a recasting and recombining on the basis of a materialist and dialectical outlook and method, in accordance with the need to continue revolution—advancing to communism.

Out of this work, Avakian has developed a new synthesis. This new synthesis has many dimensions—encompassing philosophy, politics and strategy. In its political conception of socialist society, this new synthesis is solidly based on a full appreciation of the essential need for the proletariat, in a concentrated way through its vanguard party, to lead and to firmly hold onto state power, without which all the gains of the revolution will be lost and all the horrors of capitalism will be back with a vengeance. But it also involves new conceptions of *how* communist leadership and revolutionary state power should be exercised—in order to give full expression to the all-around liberating potential of socialist society, and to maximize, at every point, the transformations toward communism. This envisions that, along with building on previous socialist forms of involving the masses in the administration of society and exercising power, a much greater degree of ferment and dissent should characterize socialist society than previously—not only because it is important for there to be real liveliness, but to serve a process of involving the broadest masses in the deepest possible wrangling with issues, in order to get at the truth more fully and to advance the masses’ understanding, involvement and capacity to enter into, and transform, all spheres of society. While the former capitalist exploiters will not be allowed rights to organize for their return, opposition among the broadest masses to various policies and even to socialism itself will not be suppressed—it will be debated and struggled over—as long as that opposition does not take the form of organized attempts to overthrow the socialist state.

This new synthesis also involves a greater appreciation of the important role of intellectuals and artists in this whole process, both pursuing their own visions and contributing their ideas to this broader ferment—all, again, necessary to get a much

richer process going. The socialist state, including the army and the courts, must be responsible to the party; but they must also be responsible to a socialist Constitution, which the party must not seek to “go around,” and which must guarantee basic rights and legal procedures, along with characterizing the basic forms of the socialist state and economy at a given stage of the revolution. The aim is to provide a legal framework for a given stage of ongoing revolutionary transformations under socialism, and for people, by having clearly spelled out and institutionalized rules and rights, to have ease of mind and liveliness, along with some “space.”

In short, in this new synthesis as developed by Bob Avakian, there must be a solid core, with a lot of elasticity. This is, first of all, a method and approach that applies in a very broad way. It is based on the scientific understanding that reality is, indeed, real—and it consists of particular forms of matter in motion, each with a specific identity—but at the same time every particular thing is moving, changing, interacting with other things at different levels. A clear grasp of both aspects of this, and their inter-relation, is necessary in understanding and transforming reality, in all its spheres, and is crucial to making revolutionary transformations in human society.

This method and approach appreciates the need for leadership—including identifying times and circumstances when clear and firm conclusions can and must be drawn, and leadership given directly and very decisively. It also means identifying times and circumstances when you cannot and/or should not do that. This is an approach to leadership that also appreciates that there are many circumstances in which a much greater degree of “elasticity” is not only possible but very necessary—leadership that appreciates the need for, and encourages, broad initiative, creativity, contestation of views and ferment. There is no such thing as solid core with no elasticity, or all elasticity without a solid core. In exercising revolutionary leadership, it is necessary to learn while leading, and to lead while learning. It is necessary to both work to expand a leading core (which itself is continually going through changes) *and* necessary to encourage elasticity to the greatest degree possible at a given time—while keeping a clear “eye on the prize” of revolution and communism through all this.

Applied to socialist society, this approach of solid core with a lot of elasticity includes the need for a leading, and expanding, core that is clear on the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the aim of continuing socialist revolution as part of the world struggle for communism, and is determined to continue carrying forward this struggle, through all the twists and turns. At the same time, there will necessarily be many different people and trends in socialist society pulling in many different directions—and all of this can ultimately contribute to the process of getting at the truth and getting to communism. This will be intense at times, and the difficulty of embracing all this—*while still leading the whole process broadly in the direction of communism*—will be something like going, as Avakian has put it, to the brink of being drawn and quartered—and repeatedly. All this is difficult, but necessary and a process to welcome. It’s the only way to get there, the only way to get to communism. As Avakian himself has summarized it:

This new synthesis involves a recasting and recombining of the positive aspects of the experience so far of the communist movement and of socialist society, while learning from the negative aspects of this experience, in the philosophical and ideological as well as the political dimensions, so as to have a more deeply and firmly rooted scientific orientation, method and approach*—with regard not only to making revolution and seizing power but then, yes, to meeting the material requirements of society and the needs of the masses of people, in an increasingly expanding way, in socialist society—overcoming the deep scars of the past and continuing the revolutionary transformation of society, while at the same time actively supporting the world revolutionary struggle and acting on the recognition that the world arena and the world struggle are most fundamental and important, in an overall sense—together with opening up qualitatively more space to give expression to the intellectual and cultural needs of the people, broadly understood, and enabling a more diverse and rich process of exploration and experimentation in the realms of science, art and culture, and intellectual life overall, with increasing scope for the contention of different ideas and schools of thought and for individual initiative and creativity and protection of individual rights, including space for individuals to interact in “civil society” independently of the state—all within an overall cooperative and collective framework and at the same time as state power is maintained and further developed as a *revolutionary* state power serving the interests of the proletarian revolution, in the particular country and worldwide, with this state being the leading and central element in the economy and in the overall direction of society, while the state itself is being continually transformed into something radically different from all previous states, as a crucial part of the advance toward the eventual abolition of the state with the achievement of communism on a world scale. (“Making Revolution and Emancipating Humanity,” Part 1)

Along with, and related to, this new synthesis, Avakian has developed and extended a principle brought forward by Mao: that Marxism embraces, but does not replace, the various spheres of science and art, along with other realms of human endeavor. On the one hand, communism is the most systematically, thoroughly and comprehensively scientific outlook and method. But that does not mean that “having Marxism” is the same as having truth about any particular thing. Communism is not a dogma. And the communist outlook and methodology must be applied to particular things, to different fields, to ever-changing reality. And non-communists, including opponents of communism, will discover important particular truths that communists do not. Communism must embrace all reality, not just a part of it. And it must do so in an open, scientific way. It must have contact and interaction with other schools of thought. Through that kind of engagement—assuming communists approach it *as communists*—new truths can be continually arrived at, and communism itself can and must be enriched and strengthened.

In line with all this, Bob Avakian has consistently struggled for communism to be understood, taken up and applied as a living *science*.

Communism: a living synthesis

As Bob Avakian has expressed it, communism is an integral philosophy and political theory at the same time as it is a living, critical and continuously developing science. It is not the quantitative addition of the ideas of the individuals who have played a leading role in developing it (nor is it the case that every particular idea, policy or tactic adopted by them has been without error). Communist ideology is a synthesis of the development and especially the qualitative breakthroughs that communist theory has developed since its founding by Marx up to the present time.

And as communism, in theory and as a revolutionary movement, picks itself up and goes forward into the challenges of the times, our party, the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, takes to heart the following from Bob Avakian's book *For a Harvest of Dragons*:

"In the final analysis, as Engels once expressed it, the proletariat must win its emancipation on the battlefield. But there is not only the question of winning in this sense but of how we win in the largest sense. One of the significant if perhaps subtle and often little-noticed ways in which the enemy, even in defeat, seeks to exact revenge on the revolution and sow the seed of its future undoing is in what he would force the revolutionaries to become in order to defeat him. It will come to this: we will have to face him in the trenches and defeat him amidst terrible destruction but we must not in the process annihilate the fundamental difference between the enemy and ourselves. Here the example of Marx is illuminating: he repeatedly fought at close quarters with the ideologists and apologists of the bourgeoisie but he never fought them on their terms or with their outlook; with Marx his method is as exhilarating as his goal is inspiring. We must be able to maintain our firmness of principles but at the same time our flexibility, our materialism and our dialectics, our realism and our romanticism, our solemn sense of purpose and our sense of humor."
