

MAKING REVOLUTION AND EMANCIPATING HUMANITY

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The Vision, the Works, the Leadership for a New Stage of Communist Revolution

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PART 2: EVERYTHING WE'RE DOING IS ABOUT REVOLUTION

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"Enriched What Is To Be Done-ism"

Hastening while awaiting—not bowing down to necessity

Next I want to talk about "Enriched What Is To Be Done-ism" and its role in building a revolutionary and communist movement. I want to begin by reviewing some important points relating to the whole orientation and strategic approach of "hastening while awaiting" the development of a revolutionary situation in a country like the U.S.

I spoke earlier about the outlook and approach of revisionist "determinist realism"^[16] which, among other things, involves a passive approach to objective reality (or necessity), which sees the objective factor as purely objective—and purely "external," if you will—and doesn't grasp the living dialectical relation between the objective and subjective factors and the ability of the latter (the subjective factor—the conscious actions of people) to react back on and to transform the former (the objective factor—the objective conditions). In other words, this "determinist realism" doesn't grasp the essential orientation, and possibility, of transforming necessity into freedom. It doesn't really, or fully, grasp the contradictoriness of all of reality, including the necessity that one is confronted with at any given time. So, one of the essential features of "determinist realism" is that it dismisses as "voluntarism" any dialectical grasp of the relation between the subjective and objective factors, and sees things in very linear, undifferentiated ways, as essentially uniform and without contradiction, rather than in a living and dynamic and moving and changing way.

Of course, it *is* necessary not to fall into voluntarism. There are many different ways in which such voluntarism can be expressed, leading to various kinds of (usually “ultra-left”) errors and deviations, if you will—including in the form of giving in to infantilist or adventurist impulses—all of which is also extremely harmful. But—particularly in a protracted or prolonged situation in which the objective conditions for revolution (that is, for the all-out struggle to seize power) have not yet emerged—by far the much greater danger, and one that is reinforced by this objective situation, is this kind of determinist realism which doesn’t grasp correctly the dialectical relation between the objective and subjective factors, and sees them in static, undialectical, and unchanging terms.

It is true that we cannot, by our mere will, or even merely by our actions themselves, transform the objective conditions in a qualitative sense—into a revolutionary situation. This cannot be done *merely* by our operating on, or reacting back on, the objective conditions through our conscious initiative. On the other hand, once again a phrase from Lenin has important application here. With regard to the labor aristocracy—the sections of the working class in imperialist countries which are, to no small extent, bribed from the spoils of imperialist exploitation and plunder throughout the world, and particularly in the colonies—Lenin made the point that nobody can say with certainty where these more “bourgeoisified” sections of the working class are going to line up in the event of the revolution—which parts of them are going to be with the revolution when the ultimate showdown comes, and which are going to go with the counter-revolution—nobody can say exactly how that is going to fall out, Lenin insisted. And applying this same principle, we can say that nobody can say exactly what the conscious initiative of the revolutionaries might be capable of producing, in reacting upon the objective situation at any given time—in part because nobody can predict all the other things that all the different forces in the world will be doing. Nobody’s understanding can encompass all that at a given time. We can identify trends and patterns, but there is the role of accident as well as the role of causality. And there is the fact that, although changes in what’s objective for us won’t come entirely, or perhaps not even mainly, through our “working on” the objective conditions (in some direct, one-to-one sense), nevertheless our “working on” them can bring about certain changes within a given framework of objective conditions *and*—in conjunction with and as part of a “mix,” together with many other elements, including other forces acting on the objective situation from their own viewpoints—this can, under certain circumstances, be part of the coming together of factors which *does* result in a qualitative change. And, again, it is important to emphasize that nobody can know exactly how all that will work out.

Revolution is not made by “formulas,” or by acting in accordance with stereotypical notions and preconceptions—it is a much more living, rich, and complex process than that. But it is an essential characteristic of revisionism (phony communism which has replaced a revolutionary orientation with a gradualist, and ultimately reformist one) to decide and declare that until some *deus ex machina*—some god-like EXTERNAL FACTOR—intervenes, there can be no essential change in the objective conditions and the most we can do, at any point, is to accept the given framework and work within it, rather than (as we have very correctly formulated it) *constantly straining against the limits* of the objective

framework and seeking to *transform the objective conditions to the maximum degree possible* at any given time, always being tense to the possibility of different things coming together which bring about (or make possible the bringing about of) an actual qualitative rupture and leap in the objective situation.

So that is a point of basic orientation in terms of applying materialism, *and dialectics*, in hastening while awaiting the emergence of a revolutionary situation. It's not just that, in some abstract moral sense, it's better to hasten than just await—though, of course, it is—but this has to do with a dynamic understanding of the motion and development of material reality and the interpenetration of different contradictions, and the truth that, as Lenin emphasized, all boundaries in nature and society, while real, are conditional and relative, not absolute. (Mao also emphasized this same basic principle in pointing out that, since the range of things is vast and things are interconnected, what's universal in one context is particular in another.) The application of this principle to what is being discussed here underlines that it is *only relatively*, and not absolutely, that the objective conditions are “objective” for us—they are, but not in absolute terms. And, along with this, what is external to a given situation *can become internal*, as a result of the motion—and changes that are brought about through the motion—of contradictions. So, if you are looking at things only in a linear way, then you only see the possibilities that are straight ahead—you have a kind of blinders on. On the other hand, if you have a correct, dialectical materialist approach, you recognize that many things can happen that are unanticipated, and you have to be constantly tense to that possibility while consistently working to transform necessity into freedom. So, again, that is a basic point of orientation.

The Pivotal Revolutionary Role of the Communist Newspaper

In that framework, I want to speak to the questions: *how* do we hasten, or what are some of the key elements of hastening while awaiting; and how does “Enriched What Is To Be Done-ism” apply to that? First of all, what do we mean by “*Enriched* What Is To Be Done-ism”—what are we referring to in speaking of “What Is To Be Done-ism,” and what do we mean when we speak of this being “enriched”? “What Is To Be Done-ism” refers to the fundamental orientation set forth by Lenin, in his famous work by that name (*What Is To Be Done?*), where he emphasized that the essential role of a communist is to be, not a “trade union secretary” (in other words, not a leader of struggles for reforms and improvements in the situation of the working class within the confines of the capitalist system) but a “tribune of the people”: someone who shines a penetrating light on the outrages and abuses perpetrated by the capitalist system, the ways in which all this affects different strata among the people, and how different strata respond to major events in society and the world; who brings to light, in compelling ways, the underlying causes and relations at the root of all these outrages and injustices—pointing through all this to the need for revolution and the establishment of a new, socialist and ultimately communist society, and the decisive role of the exploited class in the present (capitalist) society, the *proletariat*, in bringing about such a revolutionary transformation, as part of

the overall world proletarian revolution. In this connection, the following from a different work by Lenin provides another profoundly important but—in today's world especially—little known about or understood insight of scientific communist theory:

“People always were and always will be the foolish victims of deceit and self-deceit in politics until they learn to discover the *interests* of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises. The supporters of reforms and improvements will always be fooled by the defenders of the old order until they realize that every old institution, however barbarous and rotten it may appear to be, is maintained by the forces of some ruling classes.” (Lenin, “The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism,” in *Marx, Engels, Marxism*, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, p. 73, emphasis in original—cited in Bob Avakian, *Phony Communism is Dead...Long Live Real Communism*, second edition, Chicago: RCP Publications, 2004, p. 122)

And, of course, a central and pivotal point in Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* is his analysis of why and how communist consciousness—which involves a scientific outlook and approach—cannot be developed “spontaneously” but must be brought to the proletariat and masses of people *from outside the realm of their own more direct and immediate experience*; and that, for this as well as other reasons, the communist revolution must have the leadership of an organized vanguard party, which is made up of people, drawn from all sections of society, who have taken up the communist viewpoint.

In speaking of an “enrichment” of “What Is To Be Done-ism” we are referring to what more has been learned since the time of Lenin—including in terms of the dialectical relation between consciousness and the transformation of material reality, or between the subjective and objective factors—and an even more heightened emphasis not only on enabling increasing numbers of the masses to engage with what's going on in all the different spheres of society and how that relates to the fundamental nature of society and the fundamental question of transforming society and the world, but also an emphasis on breaking down, to the maximum degree possible at any given time, the barriers to their engaging in the sphere of “working with ideas” and the struggle and contention in the realm of ideas (in the spheres of art and culture, science and philosophy, and so on) as well as putting before these masses the problems of the revolution—drawing them, as much and as fully as possible, at every point, into grappling with crucial questions relating to the need for communist revolution *and* the means for making that revolution. The point of all this is not simply to create a situation in which growing numbers of the masses will “feel involved” in the revolutionary process, but to actually help find the solutions to these problems and to enable the Party, as well as the masses, to learn in this way.

Very much at the heart of “Enriched What Is To Be Done-ism”—and at the heart of Lenin's original discussion of “What Is To Be Done?”—is the role of the communist newspaper, as a “collective propagandist” and “collective organizer” of the revolutionary movement. Many people ask: “How can you make a revolution, how can you build a revolutionary movement, with a *newspaper* as your main weapon?” Often the implication

of questions of this kind is that proceeding in this way, with a newspaper as your main weapon in building the revolutionary movement, is inevitably going to lead you into reinforcing notions of “patient education” or some kind of “each one teach one” approach, through which, supposedly, everybody will somehow learn what they need to know and then everybody will be prepared to move in a revolutionary way at some point in the far off, indefinite future. But, of course, that will not happen, and that cannot lead to a revolution. Life—and in particular human society and its transformation—is much too dynamic and contradictory for an approach like that to ever succeed in leading to revolution (if, indeed, the goal of revolution could even be maintained by proceeding with such an approach).

But there is an essential reality and truth to Lenin’s point when he insisted that the wielding of a newspaper is the better part of preparation—ideologically, politically, and organizationally—for the eventual struggle for the seizure of power. How is the wielding of a newspaper the better part of such preparation? This has to do with the role of consciousness and the relationship between consciousness and people taking initiative in struggle. Lenin’s point in *What Is To Be Done?* is *not* that communists don’t need to organize the masses in various forms of struggle to resist the abuses and outrages of the system; and not that we should never issue “calls to action” to enable the masses to wage such political struggle and resistance. But, Lenin rightly insisted, the most important thing we need to do is bring to light and bring alive for people who are oppressed and exploited, and who are dissatisfied in various ways with this system—to bring to light and bring alive for them the actual nature of this system, and how the things which are weighing down on them, or which outrage them, interrelate to each other, *and* how they are *all rooted in the very nature and functioning of the capitalist-imperialist system*; how to understand correctly, scientifically, not only what is exposed in this way but also how all the different class forces in society (and the world as a whole) figure into this larger picture of the functioning of the system, and (without falling into mechanical materialism) how, *and why*, different classes and strata *tend to respond* to different events in society and the world.

And, as Lenin put it, if this is really done in a powerful way, in a way which—*metaphorically speaking*—draws blood, sharply penetrates beneath the surface of things and gets to the core and essence of things, this will fill people with (in Lenin’s phrase) “an irresistible urge to act” politically. It will call this forth far more powerfully than all the direct calls to action that we might make—as important as that is on many occasions—and in a greater way than our directly organizing masses of people to carry out various forms of political struggle and resistance, as important as that is as well. And an important extension of Lenin’s basic point is that what people see as *tolerable*, or *intolerable*, is dialectically related to what they see as *possible* or *necessary* (or, on the other hand, what they come to see as *un-necessary*—or no longer necessary—no longer something they just have to put up with and endure).

Fairly frequently, in talks and writings, I have referred to masses of people suffering *unnecessarily*. What this is speaking to is that, when people come to see that what they are going through—what, in reality, this system is putting them through—is not “ordained by god,” or is not “just the way things are” or the result of the workings of some impenetrable power—societal or supernatural—but instead stems from the very workings of a system and, moreover, that things could be radically different once this system is swept aside, then the recognition of the possibility of acting to change things—and the impulse to act in this way—becomes much more powerful. One of the biggest things weighing on the masses is their belief that no radical change is possible because the forces they are up against are too powerful. But also weighing very heavily on them—and closely interconnected with the sense that real and radical change is not possible—is the notion there is no real alternative to the way things are, so the most you can do is try to get the best you can within this situation, or just suffer silently through it and seek the refuge and solace of religion or something else which represents, objectively, an illusory “escape.” But the more the actual nature and workings of this system are laid bare and brought to light in many different ways—graphically and compellingly—and the more that people grasp that this is *not* the way things have to be, but *only the way things are because of the workings of a system*—a system which is full of contradiction—the more they can feel, and will feel, impelled to act. Lacking that, even our best efforts at mobilizing them to act are going to eventually run into their limitations and be sidetracked or turned around into their opposite, into something which actually reinforces the present system and the sense that nothing can be done to radically change things.

Addressing all this, through applying the basic orientation and approach that Lenin argues for in *What Is To Be Done?*—and as this is further “enriched,” in the ways I have referred to here—is the role of the communist newspaper in building the revolutionary movement. Our Party’s newspaper, *Revolution*, has to continue to sharpen its ability to play this role, at the same time as comrades in the Party—and growing numbers of people who, at any given time, are not yet in the Party but are, in a basic sense, partisan to or supportive of the Party’s aims and actions—have to wield the newspaper with this kind of orientation. This must be done with a continually deepening understanding that it is actually preparing the ground—and in an overall sense is the single most important part of preparing the ground—politically, ideologically, and organizationally, for the future struggle for power, when there is a major, qualitative change in the objective situation and the emergence of a revolutionary people, in the millions and millions, owing to the unfolding of the contradictions of the system itself and—in dialectical relation with that—the work of the conscious revolutionary forces, with the Party at the core. This is (to invoke again Lenin’s phrasing) “the better part of preparation”—even though it is, in a sense, indirect preparation—for the future struggle for power. It is not activity in the sphere of military struggle, obviously. But it is the better part of preparation for when the objective situation does undergo a qualitative change, in the way and on the basis spoken to here. Wielding the newspaper in this way is, in the conditions that obtain in countries like the U.S., the most important means of hastening while awaiting.

This relates back to—and establishes an overall framework for—the role of the newspaper as a “collective propagandist and collective organizer” for the Party as well as for a broader revolutionary movement, and for the growing core within that movement which is partisan to the Party and its strategic objectives. The newspaper provides a concentrated means of “laying down a guideline” to enable people to move in unison around major political questions and events in society and the world—not in the sense of people being “automatons,” all marching together in a mindless way, but in the sense of their understanding more consciously how to respond to world events—to respond in a way that represents meaningful activity toward an objective which they can more and more clearly identify as a radical alternative which is, in fact, possible, as well as desirable, and which has to be, and can be, brought into being through their conscious initiative and struggle.

Combating “the spontaneous striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie”

The newspaper also plays a key role in what Lenin described as diverting masses and movements of mass opposition from their spontaneous striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie. I have to say that my sense of what Lenin meant by this used to be more that there was a spontaneous *tendency* in these struggles, and among the masses involved in them, to come under the wing of one or another section of the bourgeoisie (as personified not only by direct and literal representatives of the ruling class, but often by people whose positions and outlooks ultimately represent the interests of the ruling class, even if the particular individuals are not themselves members of that ruling class). But, in going back to *What Is To Be Done?* more recently, it struck me that Lenin actually refers to the *striving* to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie. (His precise formulation, speaking specifically of movements of the working class, is “this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie.”)

We see this all the time, among various strata of the people. For example, recently someone told me that they came across a car with two bumper stickers: one of them said “If you’re not outraged, you’re not paying attention”; and the other one was supporting Obama for president. I thought if I were to come upon this I would barely be able to resist the temptation to stick a piece of paper on this car with the message: “If you’re supporting Obama, you’re *still* not paying attention.” [*Laughter*] Here is another example of “striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie”: the owner of this car is, through the one bumper sticker, putting forward a very good sentiment: “If you’re not outraged, you’re not paying attention.” But, on the other hand, where, spontaneously, does this person want to go with that? Into the camp—under the wing—of the bourgeoisie, in the person of Obama, with some stupid quote of his about how “there’s not a liberal America, there’s not a conservative America, there’s just the United States of America.” How profound, and how liberating.

And along with—or as part of—this “striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie,” there is the repeated phenomenon of people who insist that they can’t stand the cult of the personality nevertheless continually reinventing “saviors” from among the

representatives of the ruling class. “Al Gore—please run for president.” This is based on a certain “oppositional” posture that Gore is assuming, not only around the environment and global climate change but, to a certain degree at least, around things like the war in Iraq. But this reflects a lack of understanding that (as I pointed out previously, in the context of the 2004 elections^[17]) the reason that Al Gore is saying and doing these things, as limited as they are—and as much as they remain within the dominant, ruling class political framework—is because Al Gore is *not* running, at least not right now—and if he were running he would increasingly be saying *different* kinds of things—as he did in 2000—in order to demonstrate to those who actually shape and control the decision-making process that he is capable of directing the ship of state of U.S. imperialism, through the very dangerous waters into which it has gotten itself.

These examples—and many others that could be cited—demonstrate the tremendous struggle that must be waged in order to enable people to break out of this orientation of “striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie,” to enable them to rupture, in their thinking and orientation, beyond the narrow confines of how the ruling class shapes and dominates political life, along with every other aspect of society; to grasp what has been repeatedly shown in reality—that meaningful political change (even short of revolution, let alone the radical transformation of society that is possible only through revolution) can come about solely through taking political action that is *independent of* and, in an essential way, *in opposition to* that whole dominant framework.

When you look at the various mass movements that have occurred, even just in recent years—whether it’s the massive outpouring of immigrants, or the anti-war movements that have developed, or other manifestations of political opposition and resistance—it is clear that there is, time and again, not just a “pull” but a *striving* to find a section of the bourgeoisie under whose wing they can seek support and protection—and, as many see it, can become “effective” in doing so (while the question of “effective” *at what and on what terms, toward which ends*, is begged). This is a continually recurring phenomenon. To paraphrase an observation by Lenin in another context (in which he was speaking about the regeneration of the bourgeoisie, out of small production and trade, under socialism), this “striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie” is regenerated daily, hourly, continuously, spontaneously and on a mass scale: “I know, I know, they’re not any good, they’re all bad,” many people will say, speaking of bourgeois politicians; but then they turn around and insist that it is nonetheless necessary to get behind one or another of them, in order to “do something realistic.” Well, my answer to that is: Yes, let’s do something realistic—but let’s not do something *bad*. And coming under the wing of a section of the bourgeoisie, and the Democrats in particular, is something very bad indeed—it will lead, and can only lead, to political paralysis, and worse, in the face of very real, and continually mounting and intensifying, crimes carried out by the system, and the ruling class, of which these Democrats, no less than the Republicans, are representatives. As I have pointed out before: **If you try to get the Democrats to be what they are not, and never will be, you will end up becoming more like what the Democrats actually are.**

Waging a determined struggle against this “spontaneous striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie” is a crucial part of our all-around work, and the newspaper has a particular and a concentrated role in the struggle to divert masses and movements of mass opposition from this path and onto a path of truly meaningful political activity.

Meaningful Revolutionary Work

Boldly spreading revolution and communism

Building on what has been said so far, I want to turn to the question: what is meaningful revolutionary work—especially, but not only, for basic masses who became part of the revolutionary movement in this period when there is not yet a revolutionary situation? As can be seen in other talks and writings of mine over a number of years, I have repeatedly come back to and wrangled with this question—it is a very crucial and very vexing problem. How do you actually find the means for masses to engage in meaningful revolutionary work—with particular but not exclusive focus on the youth among the basic masses, but others as well—how can this be done without getting pulled onto the wrong road? How do you give the *correct expression*, in today’s circumstances, to the desire of youth for radical change, and to their militancy?

In this connection, I want to recount a story I read in a report about work with a guy who teaches special education. He was talking about how some of these youth don’t have any sense of the possibility of anything bigger than what they are caught up in every day. Well, one day he walked into a classroom and there was this girl who is in one of his classes—she had her headphones on and she was listening to some “gangster rap,” with all of its misogyny and everything, and he went up to her and asked, basically: “Why do you listen to that crap?” And she replied: “Well, they don’t give a fuck—I like their anger.” In response to this, he posed the question to her: “If you could direct that anger that you feel and that you identify with into something more useful, something for more positive change, would you do that?” And her answer was very clear: “In a minute. But that’s not ever gonna happen.” And she put the headphones back on.

This is the challenge we’re faced with. A lot of people can’t even recognize the positive aspect in this alienation and anger because its expression—the form it is taking—is so often negative in its immediate terms. There is a reservoir of outrage there which we see come out repeatedly and take very diverse and, yes, often very dead-end and even harmful forms. But how do we give expression to this in a revolutionary way, yet maintain the tenseness not to get pulled onto the wrong road and not to give in to, or give vent to, the wrong impulses and not try to do things prematurely, *before* there is the development of a revolutionary situation and a revolutionary people can be and is brought forward in masses, in millions? This is a problem we need to continue to wrestle with. This is one of our major responsibilities—to break through on this—not simply to shake our heads and groan over the difficulty of dealing with this contradiction but, through back and forth with the masses, to actually realize and not abdicate our responsibility to be the ones who are applying the science to solving this problem.

I want to speak to this here—and what I have said so far regarding the pivotal role of the newspaper is a central and decisive element in this—but we need to continue to wrestle with it, in an ongoing way, because we have to make further breakthroughs on this. We are not going to have the kind of revolutionary movement that is needed—and ultimately we're not going to have a revolution—unless, among the youth in particular but also more broadly, we break through and bring forward an increasing number of the masses to undertake meaningful revolutionary work in this period, when there is not yet a revolutionary situation in which there is the possibility, and the basis, to wage the all-out struggle for power.

Now, in this connection, there is importance to the relation between *ideological* factors—broadly defined, to include not only exposure of the crimes and nature of this system but, as Lenin put it, setting before all our communist convictions and objectives, *and* engaging the masses of all strata, including the basic masses, in grappling with questions of science, philosophy, culture, and so on, as well as major political and social events—the relation between all that, on the one hand, and *political* factors, including the desire and ability of the masses to resist oppression and injustice, and to do so in a way that contributes to building a revolutionary and communist movement, and not in a way that is aimless and/or once again goes under the wing of a section of the bourgeoisie.

One key aspect of providing a means and a vehicle for increasing numbers of masses—particularly youth and the basic masses generally but people from other strata as well—to be engaging in meaningful revolutionary work, is the orientation of spreading revolution everywhere—boldly and, in the correct sense, very aggressively. In the correct sense, right up in the face of all this reformism and all this dismissal of revolution and attacks on revolution and communism. We need to be unleashing this and guiding and leading this everywhere, boldly and with a conquering spirit. Once again, our newspaper, *Revolution*, is crucial and pivotal in this. But more needs to be done, on the foundation of this crucial and pivotal role.

I was talking with some people about this recently: Every day, if you are paying attention to what is going on in the world, and you are looking at things with a scientific, communist viewpoint, you find that life continually cries out for revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. In watching the reporting of various events and discussion of various questions in the mainstream, bourgeois media, you find yourself constantly in the position of wanting to call out: **D-O-P**. You read articles, or watch the television news, about Jena, Louisiana—the outrages there, with the persecution of Black youth, the Jena 6, and the contradictions that are boiling up—and the thing that comes to mind, if you're approaching this as a communist, is **D-O-P**: this is what we need to deal with this, to get rid of profound injustices like this, and everything they represent. With the dictatorship of the proletariat, with a revolution leading to rule by the proletariat and aiming for communism, it will become possible to deal with these things in a way that they can never be dealt with by the present system and its ruling class of capitalists. This system and its ruling class can never deal with all this—except in ways that are harmful to the masses.

Or look at the whole controversy and upheaval around immigration, with all the talk about “securing the borders” and the different programs that are being brought forward by different sections of the bourgeoisie, and the reactionary contention this gives rise to. And, along with this, there are the Black/Latino contradictions that are being fanned and intensified, with the phenomenon on the part of many of the immigrants that they don’t understand the whole history of Black people and they are inclined to accept the bourgeois line, with its lies and distortions about what Black people are all about, while at the same time many Black people are feeling resentful toward the immigrants, pulled by the notion that these immigrants are “taking our jobs, we’re being pushed to the margins and somehow it’s the immigrants’ fault.” If you are approaching this as a communist, immediately what comes to mind is: **D-O-P**. With the dictatorship of the proletariat, we could resolve these contradictions—not with a snap of the fingers, but through struggle in a way that would be in the interests of all these different sections of the masses. Yes, it would involve contradiction and complexity—but it would not be *that hard*. But it is impossible under this system, and within the confines of this system, to resolve these contradictions in the interests of the masses of people—which is yet another thing that points to the fundamental need to sweep away this system through revolution.

Or when you see how conflicts arise between safeguarding the environment, on the one hand, and on the other hand the need for developing the economy—and, yes, people’s concerns about their jobs and livelihoods—when you see how these things sharply clash under this system and there’s no good resolution... **D-O-P**.

Or to take another key dimension of this: Recently, there was an article in *Revolution* exposing the repression of the youth in the schools—this was in New York City, but this is a phenomenon across the country.^[18] And there was a response to this *Revolution* article, from one of these disillusioned and disgruntled teachers, who said, in effect: “You try to teach these youth; you have all these romanticized ideas about these youth, but you have no idea how unruly they are.” Well, what is the answer to that—not only to this person’s distorted view but also to the real contradictions they are pointing to—how can this be addressed and resolved in a good way? **D-O-P**. This is what we need to deal with all these kinds of contradictions. The positive aspects that are there—not only among the youth, but even the desire of people like that teacher to do something good, which is being smothered and corrupted by the dominant relations and the corresponding ideas that prevail under this system—this could be recast and resynthesized in a positive way with the rule of the proletariat.

Or look at the contradictions bound up with the differences between intellectual and physical work, and between the different strata who, in this society, carry out the one and the other kind of work (what we call the mental/manual contradiction, for short): In fundamental terms, it is impossible to deal with this contradiction positively in this society. This contradiction can be resolved, and can *only* be resolved, in a positive way with the dictatorship of the proletariat and the advance to communism. Connected to this, there is the example I cited in a talk a few years ago on the dictatorship of the

proletariat (*Dictatorship and Democracy, and the Socialist Transition to Communism*) in regard to religion, referencing the movie *Contact*, where here you have this glaring contradiction that the masses of people, who have the greatest interest in communist revolution, are to a very large degree caught up in religion and other mental chains that are binding them, while there is a relatively small section of people in the world at this time which understands questions of this kind (concerning religion and—the non-existence of—god) much more clearly but is, to a large degree, alienated from and has no real understanding of the basic masses. What is the answer? **D-O-P. Revolution.**

And the need for this is pointed to even by certain contradictions that arise in the course of building struggle. For example, in the battle to defend dissent and critical thinking in academia (and ultimately in society as a whole), we see how some individuals who are the target of attack by reactionary forces, and the state, can have a “stand-offish” attitude toward other people in academia who are in essentially the same position. In immediate terms, this emphasizes the need to bring out, and struggle with people to grasp, the larger picture into which this all fits, and to recognize the importance of uniting in struggle against all these attempts to suppress dissent and critical thinking; and at the same time, and most fundamentally, it points to the reality that to resolve the contradictions bound up with all this, we really need revolution—we need the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Yes, it is true—and it is a very important and profound truth—that the larger goal, and the aim of the dictatorship of the proletariat itself, is to finally reach communism, throughout the world, where the need, and the basis, for any form in which one part of society rules over others—any form of class dictatorship—will have been eliminated and surpassed. But the reality is that, without the dictatorship of the proletariat, without communist revolution, we will never be able to advance toward, and finally reach, that larger goal.

All this is another way of expressing Lenin’s point that communism springs from every pore of society. The need for communist revolution really does spring *continuously* from every event in society and the world. Once one has taken up the scientific outlook and method of dialectical materialism, one can see this very clearly. And on this basis we should be leading and bringing forward growing numbers of masses to be very boldly—with a conquering spirit and, in the right sense, very aggressively—taking this out everywhere, among all sections of the people. As we have emphasized a number of times, there is nothing more *unrealistic* than the idea of reforming this system into something that would come anywhere near being in the interests of the great majority of people and ultimately of humanity as a whole. On the basis of our scientific understanding and method, we have to have—and we have to inspire other people to have—a conquering spirit about this. This is extremely important: to be going out very broadly and very boldly and, in the right sense, aggressively with *revolution*.

Let's get down to basics: *We need a revolution. Anything else, in the final analysis, is bullshit.* Now, that doesn't mean we don't unite with people in all sorts of struggles short of revolution. We definitely need to do that. But the proffering of any other solution to these monumental and monstrous problems and outrages is ridiculous, frankly. And we need to be taking the offensive and mobilizing increasing numbers of masses to cut through this shit and bring to the fore what really is the solution to this, and to answer the questions and, yes, the accusations that come forth in response to this, while deepening our scientific basis for being able to do this. And the point is: not only do we need to be doing this, but we need to be bringing forward, unleashing and leading, and enabling increasing numbers of the *masses* to do this. They need to be inspired, not just with a general idea of revolution, but with a deepening understanding, a scientific grounding, as to why and how revolution really *is* the answer to all this.

Meaningful Revolutionary Work

A culture of appreciation, promotion, and popularization

One important aspect of boldly spreading revolution and communism everywhere is the work of building what we have characterized as a culture of appreciation, promotion, and popularization around the leadership, the body of work and the method and approach of Bob Avakian. Now, I recognize that some people (especially among the middle strata, frankly) may find it "immodest" (and perhaps, to some, strangely disturbing) for me to speak about this (and, for god's sake, to refer to myself in the third person!). But, first of all and fundamentally, "modesty" (or "immodesty") is not the essential issue, not the heart of the matter. This, like everything else, is a matter of a scientific approach—objectively assessing what is represented by a particular person and their role, their body of work and their method and approach—and it should be viewed and evaluated, by myself or anyone else, in this way and according to these criteria (and, let's be honest, would those who object to my referring to myself in the third person here really be any less "put off" if I were to talk about "a culture of appreciation, promotion, and popularization around the leadership, the body of work and the method and approach of *myself*"?). No, the essence of the question is: what is objectively represented by this leadership, this body of work and method and approach, and what does this have to do with the larger question of transforming the world?

As Lenin emphasized in *What Is To Be Done?*, one of the key tasks of communists is to *set before all their communist convictions and aims*. And this means presenting what is, at any time, *the most advanced representation* of those convictions and aims. In fundamental terms, the principles involved are the same as in all fields of scientifically based endeavor (physics, biology, medicine, and so on): breakthroughs are very often associated with a particular individual, and to speak about the most advanced understanding at a given time would be impossible without reference to and, yes, a certain focus on, that individual—and attempting to avoid such reference and focus would be extremely artificial and wrong, and not at all helpful. So, once more, while of course there are particularities to the sphere of political (and ideological) leadership, and more specifically

to *communist* leadership,^[19] with regard to anyone whose role has a significant influence (or is put forward as something which should have a significant influence), the basic question comes down to: what is the *content* of that role, and in particular the content of the body of work and the method and approach of that person, and what effect would it have, one way or another, if that were to have greater, or lesser, impact and influence?

Why am I—why is my body of work, and method and approach—important? Because this is bringing forward an advanced understanding, a heightened understanding, of what revolution and communism are all about and how to move toward the objective of revolution and communism, as well as a method for engaging and struggling through the contradictions that are inevitably going to be encountered in that process. (Some things *are* inevitable—and, while the achievement of communism is not inevitable, it is inevitable that in the struggle to achieve communism we are going to encounter many complex and difficult contradictions. We can guarantee that.)

That is what this is all grounded in—what it is all for. When we're taking this out, and working to build this culture of appreciation, promotion, and popularization, we are not doing so in order to build a cult around a person, in some religious sense. We're doing so in order to enable people to engage the most advanced understanding we have of where society and humanity needs to go, and can go, what this body of work and method and approach has to do with *that* and why it's important *in relation to that*—why, in reality, it is indispensable for masses of people to engage with this in relation to—to serve, and to advance towards—*that*, and not anything else. Even the aspect, which is secondary but not unimportant—the aspect of the person Bob Avakian—is important *only* in the framework of, and on the basis of, being a revolutionary communist leader, the leader of a communist vanguard party which is capable of leading people toward the goal of revolution and ultimately communism—which has to continue developing its ability to do this, but has a basic foundation for actually leading people toward that goal. That is the point of all this.

It is on that foundation, and in that context, that it is important to build a culture of appreciation, promotion, and popularization, and in fact to take energetic and innovative steps to better acquaint the masses of people of different strata with this leadership, this body of work and method and approach. If we are in fact being guided by the scientific understanding that human society needs to, and can, advance to communism, that the struggle to achieve this objective must be the conscious act of masses of people, on the one hand, while at the same time this must have, and has no prospect of being realized without, leadership—leadership that, in relation to this goal, embodies the most advanced understanding and methodology—and that what is concentrated in the person, yes, but most fundamentally in the body of work and method and approach of Bob Avakian represents that leadership; then what flows naturally from that is the recognition that this is something the masses of people must be made aware of and acquainted with, and must take up as their own, with the understanding of how crucial it

is, in terms of their own fundamental interests and ultimately the highest interests of humanity as a whole. As a document of our Party on the question of revolutionary leadership emphasizes:

“the fact that certain individual revolutionaries emerge as a *concentration* of this process, and themselves become a concentrated expression of the best qualities of revolutionary leadership—including a selfless dedication to the revolutionary cause and deep love of the masses, as well as a strong grasp of the scientific methodology needed to unleash the masses and chart the path of revolution in line with their objective interests—then the existence of such an individual leader or leaders is not something to lament but something to welcome and celebrate! It is part of the people’s strength.”^[20]

It is very important to grasp the dialectics, as well as the materialism, involved in this. In this regard, of real significance is the way in which, and the basis on which, a number of Black artists and intellectuals, many of whom have differences with some of what I am putting forward, have in various ways (including by signing the *Engage!* Statement^[21]) helped to create an atmosphere where what I have to say can be engaged by a broader audience and where efforts to suppress my voice and to carry out repression aimed at me will meet with stronger resistance. What is noticeable is that, even while they have varying degrees of differences with my communist views and convictions, many of these people, including a number who have read my memoir (*From Ike To Mao and Beyond: My Journey from Mainstream America to Revolutionary Communist*), are interested in or drawn to me more in the personal dimension—or, perhaps better said, my “personal history” and in particular the ways in which it is clear that I have been deeply affected and influenced by personal relationships with Black people as well as by the larger political and revolutionary struggle of Black people. But, at the same time, while we respect where they are coming from and greatly appreciate the support they have given, coming from their own viewpoints and despite certain differences with my political and ideological outlook, what *we* are seeking to do, in accordance with our own viewpoint, is to strive to have all this contribute, in an overall sense, to our fundamental, strategic objectives of revolution and ultimately achieving a communist world. From our point of view, that, and nothing else, is what everything we are doing is about and is aiming for.

Why are we working to make it all contribute to communism? Because “that’s our thing”? No. Because that’s where things need to go in order for there to be a radically different and far better world. Key concepts that we talk about—perhaps too often with too much “shorthand”—such as the “new synthesis,”^[22] along with principles of epistemology and philosophy, as well as of politics, which are concentrated in the body of work and the method and approach that I have been developing—and which, yes, do get concentrated to a certain extent in the person who is bringing forward this body of work and method and approach—*all this is about revolution*: its basis and purpose is to serve the masses of people in making revolution and advancing toward communism.

What we are about, and what we base ourselves on, is most emphatically not a religion. In its philosophical outlook and its methodology, as well as in its political understanding and objectives, it is grounded in, and guided by, a scientific understanding and approach. The whole discussion, previously in this talk, on Marxism as a science should make that very clear.^[23]

We are not a cult but a group of scientists (a group that aims to be continually expanding), straining to solve vexing problems—making mistakes, yes, and doing our best to learn from our mistakes, doing our best to learn from others, including those who have different outlooks and objectives than we do—approaching all this in a systematically and comprehensively scientific way. We have never argued, nor believed, that the Party collectively or the leader of the Party—or any individual or group of people—is endowed with supernatural qualities or powers, or that the Party or the leader of the Party is “infallible” or should be “worshiped” or followed blindly. All notions of that kind are completely alien and fundamentally opposed to what we *do* believe and set out to put into practice—namely, that it is possible, and necessary, to apply a critical and revolutionary scientific outlook and method to continue learning more about reality and, in dialectical relation with that, to carry forward the struggle to radically change reality, in the direction toward communism.

We do believe—and are confident that this belief is scientifically grounded—that the Party collectively, and in a concentrated way the leader of our Party, Bob Avakian, has acquired and developed an advanced understanding and method and approach in terms of that scientific process of understanding, and radically transforming, reality: a scientific approach which rejects any notions of “infallibility” or of some kind of final and complete knowledge, but which recognizes and insists that what we are, and must be, engaged in is a process of continually deepening our understanding, and our ability to apply our understanding in revolutionary practice, through the dialectical relation—the back-and-forth interplay—between practice and theory, and between applying to reality our best understanding of what is true at any given time and continuing to learn more about reality—including what is shown *not* to be true about what we had previously believed—learning (and enabling others to learn) from our mistakes as well as what we accomplish by applying our understanding, learning from many others, in a wide array of fields and with a broad diversity of views, at the same time as we continue learning from our own practical experience and our own efforts and struggle in the realm of theory and “working with ideas.”

The development of what we have referred to as the “new synthesis” is a clear and salient example of this. This new synthesis—regarding the historical experience of the communist movement and of socialist societies led by communists, and regarding the objectives as well as the outlook and method of communists—has been developed (and, in fact, is still being further developed) primarily and essentially by Bob Avakian, as the leader of our Party and in the overall context of the collectivity of our Party (and as part of the broader communist movement internationally) over a period of nearly 30 years, through a process of extensive and intense work and struggle in the theoretical realm, in

dialectical relation with developing policies with regard to the practical struggle, guided by the fundamental objective of revolution and the ultimate aim of communism, and summing up the results (positive and negative) of the efforts to implement these policies, during the course of this whole period of nearly 30 years. Not only does all this *not* rest or rely on religious notions or approaches, but, again, such notions and approaches are complete anathema to and are in fundamental antagonism with what this is all about; and criticism of and struggle against religious tendencies, of any kind—among the ranks of the communists as well as more broadly in society—is precisely one of the main principles of the body of work and method and approach of Bob Avakian.

With regard to the question of individual leaders—as well as leadership collectively—our approach is one of applying the scientific outlook and method of dialectical, and historical, materialism to this as well. We are aiming for the ultimate achievement of communism, throughout the world. And, yes, it is true: when that goal is reached, then there will no longer be a need, or a basis, for vanguards and for leaders in the sense in which we now think of leaders. But at the present time, and for some time to come, there is, and there will be, a great need for and a great importance to leaders. This is an expression and a result of underlying contradictions and profound divisions in society (the division between mental and manual labor in particular, and more fundamentally the contradictions between the forces and relations of production and between the economic base and the superstructure—and the interrelation and interpenetration of these contradictions—as this takes form in this era where the world is still dominated by the capitalist-imperialist system). And, so long as that is true, the essential questions will remain: What is the *content and effect* of that leadership—where will it lead people, and how? What does it enable people to do, or prevent them from doing? Does it contribute to their capacity to actually comprehend reality, and to act consciously to change it, in accordance with the fundamental interests of humanity—or does it interfere with and undermine that?

This point has been made before but, especially when there is so much confusion and misunderstanding about this—much of it consciously and deliberately spread by the ruling class and its intellectual camp followers, as well as some others—it is necessary to emphasize it again: Given the nature of the society and world in which we live; given that this society and this world are still under the domination of exploiting classes and are fundamentally shaped by the dynamics of a system of exploitation, capitalism-imperialism; and given the profoundly unequal and oppressive social divisions that are bound up with this—given all this, *society, and the people who make up society, are going to be **disproportionately influenced** by one set of ideas—and one group of leaders—or another, whether they acknowledge it or not.* And again the essential question is: *which ideas and which leadership, in the pursuit of which purposes and aims, toward what ends and by what methods and means?*

On the foundation of this understanding, actively, energetically, and creatively building a culture of appreciation, promotion, and popularization around Bob Avakian, among growing numbers of people, and enabling them to grasp the crucial importance of

engaging with his body of work and method and approach, while taking up the challenge of protecting and defending the person who is bringing this forward and providing this leadership—this is a key part of boldly taking revolution and communism out everywhere. It is one of the key means, one of the main vehicles, we have for doing that. But *that* is what we are doing, in building this culture of appreciation, promotion, and popularization. This has its own particularity, but ultimately and fundamentally it is about—it is in the service of—nothing other than spreading revolution and communism and building a revolutionary movement of masses, consciously taking up the orientation of being *emancipators of humanity*.

Meaningful Revolutionary Work

Fight the Power, and Transform the People, for Revolution

In dialectical relation to spreading revolution everywhere—and fundamentally serving the same revolutionary objectives—there is the need to mobilize increasing numbers of the people, from various strata, in “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” (as it is put in “Some Crucial Points of Revolutionary Orientation—in Opposition to Infantile Posturing and Distortions of Revolution”—see *Revolution* #102, September 23, 2007).

Why, for over a decade now, have masses of people, particularly from within the inner cities (but also people from other parts of society), mobilized every year on October 22, the National Day of Protest to Stop Police Brutality, Repression, and the Criminalization of a Generation? Because this does concentrate major social contradictions—it is one significant concentration of the contradictions of society and the nature of the system and the ruling class, and the way this affects masses of people. The same applies to many other mass organizations and other forms of mass struggle. And it is very important to grasp the dialectical relation—the back-and-forth interplay and mutual influence—between building this kind of resistance and spreading the need for revolution boldly and broadly, in every corner of society.

Why am I stressing this? Because it is important as a basic point of orientation, but also more specifically because, in resisting and opposing tendencies toward the revisionist line of “the movement is everything, the final aim nothing,” it is necessary and crucial not to turn the idea of spreading revolution and communism into just another “academic” exercise—another form of scholasticism, or sterile and uninspiring dogma. Spreading revolution and building resistance are dialectically related and there should be a “positive synergy” between them—all contributing toward our strategic objective of getting to the point where we *can* go for the all-out seizure of power when the objective conditions—including the mood, the inclinations and sentiments of millions of people—are such that this becomes possible.

We have to continually develop and strengthen our ability to identify and handle the

actual living relationships between these two things: spreading revolution and communism everywhere—boldly, with strategic confidence and a conquering spirit, “taking on all comers” who want to offer other alternatives and criticize ours, and advancing through the back and forth between studying and wrangling collectively over how to do this, and actually doing it—and, at the same time, building resistance in an increasingly powerful way, including through identifying the major concentrations of social contradictions at any given point.

Speaking to an important dimension of this, another comrade in the leadership of our Party suggested a formulation which I believe captures some of the essential aspects of building the revolutionary movement: **Fight the Power, and Transform the People, for Revolution** .

It is true that we are not simply seeking to transform the people, abstracted from and in the absence of mobilizing them to resist the outrages and injustices of this system; but, in fact, transforming the people is a big part of what needs to be done—and the masses of people know it. One of the main things that masses of people say when the question of revolution comes up—besides “they’re too powerful and there are too many people against us”—is that “we are too fucked up” (and many will say, “everybody else is too fucked up”). [*Laughter*] People understand that we have to transform the people. But we also do have to fight the power. We have to do all this, however, *for revolution*—and not for anything else, anything short of that. We have to correctly handle the dialectical relations involved in this, and bring this whole orientation to life, more and more powerfully, through the “positive synergy” of these two aspects—fighting the power, and transforming the people—for revolution.

We need to make this a mission of the youth—and of the masses of people more generally. The organized forms in which we join together with masses of people need to be an expression of what’s being captured in this slogan. For example, Revolution Clubs should not *just* be places to watch the DVD (of the talk *Revolution: Why It’s Necessary, Why It’s Possible, What It’s All About*). Doing that is important—it is one part of what these Revolution Clubs should be doing—but if that’s all they are doing, then they will lose their purpose. These Revolution Clubs should be a place and a vehicle through which masses can come together to spread revolution *and* to build resistance—to fight the power as well as transforming the people, with the objective of revolution constantly in mind. And, yes, people will be learning more about what this means—what this revolution is all about, why it’s a revolution aiming for communism, what communism means, what the transition to communism involves—they’ll be constantly learning more about all that. But what is captured in the slogan **Fight the Power, and Transform the People, for Revolution**—along with what is the unifying principle of the Revolution Clubs: **Humanity Needs Revolution and Communism**—this has to be the leading edge and identifying essence of what we’re about, and what mass forms like the Revolution Clubs are about. This relates to the point that was discussed earlier, and the emphasis that was given, to diverting masses and movements of mass opposition from “the striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie.”

Communists, and people being drawn forward to revolution and communism, have to be out there aggressively and boldly bringing forward the need for and the goal of revolution. This flows from the profound reality that humanity really does need revolution and communism. This will require, and should involve, a tremendous amount of struggle with people—waged in a good way, a living and compelling way—to bring alive the *reality* of revolution and the fact that this is not just some abstract idea unrelated to what is going on in the world now. To be clear, the point is not that revolution is an immediate reality in this country, in the sense that the struggle for the seizure of power is a possibility under present conditions—once again, the possibility of waging this struggle for power can only emerge with a major qualitative change in the objective situation—but I am emphasizing the *reality* of revolution now in the sense of its being concretely built for, all during the period before there is a revolutionary situation and a revolutionary people numbering in the millions and millions.

What is captured in the slogan **Fight the Power, and Transform the People, for Revolution** is a big part of not only building the revolutionary movement in general, but also diverting masses and movements of mass opposition away from being subordinated to the bourgeoisie and its representatives. A growing revolutionary force, galvanized and mobilized around a revolutionary and communist orientation, has to be increasingly out there as a “magnet,” as a pole of attraction for people who—however latently and however much it involves contradiction—are searching for and desire a different world than this one, who have a sense that this world is very fucked up and want to know if another way really is possible, as well as others who have temporarily given up on the idea that this is possible but need to be jolted awake to the reality that it is possible—that there can be another way—and that *this* is the way.

Meaningful revolutionary work has to revolve around things that give life and expression to what is captured in **Fight the Power, and Transform the People, for Revolution** . This has to actually *be* meaningful revolutionary work—and it has to *feel like* meaningful revolutionary work to people who are coming forward and taking it up. And let us be very clear here: This is not all going to be neat and orderly, it's not all going to be everybody marching in formation with us tightly controlling everything—which we shouldn't be trying to do anyway. We shouldn't be trying to keep everything from getting “unruly” and from involving any risk. You are never going to build a revolutionary movement, you are never going to enable the masses to take up meaningful revolutionary work, if you try to approach it in that way.

And, yes, this means walking another razor's edge, because there is an enemy out there—there is an oppressive state out there—they will take advantage of every foolish thing that's done, every amateurish thing that's done, by people who are newly involved in the struggle and are inexperienced. So, throughout this process, it will be necessary to struggle with people—and struggle sharply some times—about what does, and what does not, serve the revolution that we're all about and the means to actually bring that revolution about. And, yes, without allowing paranoia to set in—which would in fact seriously undermine the revolutionary movement as well—it will be necessary to be alert

to, and not be naive about, people who may be sent into the ranks of the movement in order to try to divert it—not only back under the wing of the bourgeoisie, but into forms that would make it easier for the bourgeoisie to crush it, which it will try to do in any case.

This is another expression of the “drawn and quartered” point,^[24] applied to this question of meaningful revolutionary work and activity. But if we don’t inspire in masses of people a sense and a spirit of going out and challenging people with revolution, *and* a sense of taking out to people, “if you want to fight the power, then get with us,” there will be no meaningful revolutionary work, and no revolutionary movement.

There will at times be sharp struggle with masses over these questions: what is and is not the best way to build the revolutionary movement, what will and will not contribute to revolution, what represents really being serious about working for revolution and what is giving in to infantile impulses—and, on the other side of it, what represents just getting off into a reformist dead-end, as opposed to staying on the road of revolution? There will be, and there should be, all kinds of struggle about those questions. But people should have a sense: If you want to know about, and work toward, a different world—and if you want to stand up and fight back against what’s being done to people—this is where you go. You go to this Party, you take up this Party’s newspaper, you get into this Party’s leader and what he’s bringing forward, you come to the Revolution Clubs, you join in with the people carrying out political activity that embodies this—spreading revolution and building resistance, and the “positive synergy” between the two—all aiming for revolution.

Now, of course, we’re going to be engaged in many forms of “united front” mass organizations, if you want to use that phrase—organizations made up of a diversity of people and forces whose objectives and whose basis of unity is not revolution. But, at the same time, and of great importance, there should be some forms of mass organization whose basis of unity and objective *is* revolution—forms besides just the Party, which masses can join in, such as the Revolution Clubs. And within broader “united front” movements and organizations, there should be that element of the Party, and those partisan to the Party’s viewpoint, bringing forward its outlook and objectives, in the appropriate way—in a way which recognizes and respects the integrity and basis of unity of the broader mass movement/organization and does not confuse or conflate that with what the Party stands for and is working for.

And again, as part of putting forward revolution and communism, in a living and compelling way, we should be “taking on all comers” in healthy debate and ideological struggle. You want to talk about Hannah Arendt? Let’s talk about Hannah Arendt. That is one foolish person, that Hannah Arendt. *[Laughter]* That is one unscientific person, propagating all kinds of distorted, unscientific notions about communism and “totalitarianism,” and so on. Let’s talk about that Hannah Arendt. We should be anxious to get into these kinds of debates and struggles. And, as Mao said, what we don’t know

we can learn. That's why we have theory, and that's why we have the collectivity of a Party. That's why we have a scientific outlook and method to enable us to do these things.

As I have been emphasizing, the Revolution Clubs are one key form and means through which to involve masses, including masses newly awakening to political life and struggle, in the revolutionary movement. And it is very important to correctly handle the contradictions involved in enabling the masses themselves to take increasing initiative in building the revolutionary movement and, at the same time, giving them the leadership they need in order to do this. In the course of working to build the revolutionary movement, new people—as well as people who have been around for a while—will run into all the contradictions out there that you run into as soon as you start carrying this out. *How* do you spread revolution? What do you say when people come back at you with this and that, when you put forward revolution and communism? How do you build resistance? What is the correct way to take on this or that particular attack or outrage? This requires leadership—leadership which helps provide the answers to these questions *and* which unleashes more and more initiative among the masses—which doesn't stifle and suppress that initiative but, increasingly over time, enables masses themselves to take greater initiative to take matters into their own hands, and to *lead others*. The notion that masses don't need leadership—and acting in accordance with that notion—will only lead to *suffocating* the initiative of the masses and to demoralizing them. You don't take people who have never been swimming and throw them in the deep end of the pool and say, "we don't want to stifle your initiative." Thanks a lot! While they're drowning we can repeat incantations about how the masses can do this themselves, and they don't need leadership. No. It is up to us to *work together* with masses, and to lead them, without being overbearing—without suffocating them, without extinguishing their initiative, but giving fuller and fuller expression to it.

Building the Party

In relation to all this, and as a crucial element of building the revolutionary movement overall, we have to give the necessary emphasis to the crucial importance of building the Party itself. We have to grasp firmly the basic point that, from the point of view of the necessity, and the strategic objective, of revolution, *the most important form of organization of the masses* is the Party itself, as the vanguard of the broader revolutionary masses. Building the Party is crucial and pivotal in terms of being able to hasten while awaiting a revolutionary situation, and being in a position to lead a revolution when the revolutionary conditions and the revolutionary people do come forward. We need to be systematically approaching the building of the Party quantitatively—that means we need to bring in many more new members, we need to recruit boldly and recruit widely among the basic masses and among all strata.

Back in the day, at the time of the RU (the Revolutionary Union—the forerunner of the RCP), some people had a method of recruiting on any old basis, if someone would express any sort of agreement, even in a vague kind of way, with the idea of

communism. So we had to struggle against that and insist: no, there has to be some *substance* to this. Well, one of the people advocating this kind of “loose” recruiting, raised the formulation that we needed to “recruit widely and boldly.” And we answered: yes, but *not wildly and badly*. That is an important distinction. [Laughter] And this distinction still needs to be applied. We need to continually build the Party *quantitatively*—we do need to recruit boldly and, yes, widely, among the basic masses and among all strata—but we need to do it correctly, on the basis that we are recruiting into the Party people who have made the leap to being *revolutionaries* and *communists* in their basic outlook and orientation, who have grasped and are united with the basic principles and objectives—the basic line—of the Party.

The Party needs to become rooted, much more broadly and deeply, among the masses of people of different strata, but especially among the proletarians and other basic masses who have the greatest interest in the revolutionary transformation of society and the world. We have to win people to be communists, and then actively take up a concentrated process of recruiting them. We need to recruit *communists*, people who are prepared and determined to dedicate their lives to revolution and the final aim of a communist world—to being emancipators of humanity—to contributing as much as they can, in an organized and disciplined way, to that cause.

And it is important not to underestimate the potential for significant numbers of people now—and, as things develop, for greater numbers of people—to be won to revolution and to communism. Yes, it is true, we are going up against a lot of spontaneity and the reality that socialism has been reversed, and capitalism restored, first in the Soviet Union, and then in China; there is the influence of these objective developments, along with the ways in which the imperialists and their intellectual camp followers have moved to seize on these historic setbacks. As part of this, there is the irony that in reality socialism was overturned, and capitalism restored, in the Soviet Union 50 years ago now, but for much of that time the rulers of the Soviet Union continued to maintain an increasingly threadbare camouflage of “socialism” and “communism,” until finally, in the early 1990s, they dropped this altogether, and the Soviet Union, and the states which succeeded it when the Soviet Union was finally dissolved, became *openly* capitalist. This demise of the Soviet Union, and the open embrace of capitalism in the former Soviet bloc, has further unleashed a hungry pack of rabid bourgeois ideologues who are piling on and trying to tear to pieces any remaining respect for socialism and communism in the minds of the masses. So, yes, we are going up against all that—the imperialists and reactionaries (and more “liberal” or “progressive” antagonists of communism) have all that going for them—but what is not in their favor is the reality of what the capitalist-imperialist system (and other outmoded systems and social relations and related ideas) actually do and what they actually mean for the masses of people and, on the other hand, the reality of what communism actually stands for, and what has been the actual—principally very positive—experience of the communist movement and of socialist countries led by communists. There is, in reality—sometimes openly expressing itself,

often not too far beneath the surface, or sometimes even further beneath the surface but still alive—great potential to win people to revolution and communism and to recruit people into the Party and continually build the Party quantitatively.

At the same time, there is the need to further build the Party *qualitatively*, to continue to further transform the Party to strengthen its revolutionary and communist character—ideologically, politically, and organizationally. But it is important to emphasize that this must be done in the context of—and for the fundamental purpose of—transforming the larger objective world. We have to carry forward the struggle to further revolutionize the Party itself in that context, and we have to bring people forward to make the leap to joining the Party in that context and with that fundamental objective.

In all these ways, including systematic attention to building the Party, both quantitatively and qualitatively, our orientation and our aim has to be making revolution and communism—making the orientation and challenge of being emancipators of humanity—an increasingly powerful pole of attraction: for basic masses, for the youth among the basic masses and youth generally, and for others throughout society.

Overcoming Obstacles and Limitations, “Mobilizing All Positive Factors”

There is something very important that can be learned from experience in relation to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and more particularly what we have summed up about the limitations and shortcomings of our Party in relation to that. I am referring not only to our limitations in terms of our organized strength and numbers, and so on, but also instances where initiative was not taken where it could have been, where people bowed to the difficulties of the situation, including the repressive force of the state, when there was a basis to go up against that, together with masses of people, and transform necessity through struggle. We should go back to our summation of that,^[25] study that deeply, and draw the lessons very fully, in order to be able to do better in the future, including on the many occasions in the future when major events will suddenly erupt, often seemingly “out of nowhere.”

Who predicted, or could have predicted, everything that happened with Hurricane Katrina? Now, of course, after a certain point, meteorologists predicted that there would be a major hurricane in that area at that time. But, ironically, the hurricane itself came and went—and many believed, for a moment, that the worst was over—and then the levees broke. Who predicted that? Well, once again, there was accident and causality. There were reasons why the levees broke, and it appears that there were some people in positions of authority who had good reasons to believe they might break. But who could have predicted, or did predict, everything that gave rise to? This emphasizes again the importance of not proceeding with a “determinist realism”^[26] in engaging reality and the possibility of radical change.

What could have been done by an organized communist vanguard in that situation was way more than what was done. Now, the effect of the vanguard acting fully in accordance with its responsibilities as a vanguard, and everything that might have come about as a result of that—what we sometimes refer to as the revolution/counter-revolution/more revolution dynamic—would have been tremendous, in the sense of being very intense. But if we think we're going to get from here to there (from the present circumstances to one where the whole direction of society is "coming up for grabs") without that kind of dynamic, repeatedly along the way—and then in a greatly magnified way when, finally, a revolutionary situation and a revolutionary people, in the millions, does emerge—then we are deluding ourselves and we should just forget about the whole thing—which, of course, we are not going to do.

So, again, I seriously suggest that we study this summation regarding the experience relating to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, from the perspective of learning to do better. Many things that are similar to that experience—particularly in the sense that they embody sudden eruptions of dramatic change—are going to present themselves from many different directions. In some cases, we will be able to see, somewhat in advance, at least the outlines of, or the possibility of, what is coming; while in some other situations, even that will not be possible until the tumultuous event is suddenly "right upon us." This is a matter of fundamental orientation and is crucial in terms of our overall work and objectives, but also more specifically in enabling masses of people—uniting with and leading these masses—to undertake meaningful revolutionary activity even when there is not yet a revolutionary situation, in order to contribute to the revolutionary goal and to bringing about the advance—as far as possible, at any given point, and as fast as possible—toward the situation where there is a revolutionary people in the millions and the objective possibility of revolution poses itself in immediate terms.

Along with this, we need to be focusing on and applying the orientation of, as Mao put it, "mobilizing all positive factors." All these contradictions among the people, for example, even when they mainly take a negative expression, are not just something negative—they also have a positive side, at least potentially—they have the potential to be transformed into something positive. Now, to be very clear, that doesn't mean they are positive now and all you have to do is "accentuate the positive." No, you have to *wrench* the positive out of what is now, principally and essentially, negative—you have to transform a bad thing into a good thing.

Again, a sharp example of this is the intensifying Black/Latino contradictions today. This is right now, in its principal and overwhelming aspect, a very negative thing, but there is potential for it to be transformed into something positive by our correctly "working through"—or, better said, *struggling through*—this contradiction, to bring to the fore what is positive within this situation, which is *the unity of the fundamental interests* of these masses of different nationalities, along with the reality that—even while, in immediate terms, it has a negative expression, in the main—there is a positive aspect, and a positive potential, in the fact that masses of people are being awakened to political life and are grappling with major social issues and events. The challenge is to bring the positive

elements, which do reside in this, to the fore and to transform things by stressing, and winning growing numbers of people to see, their fundamental common interests. And this means enabling them to see that the ways in which things are affecting them—including the ways in which, right now, they are being influenced and impelled toward being in conflict with each other—all this is *rooted in, and is part of the essential workings of, the capitalist-imperialist system*. This is how we have to approach all the contradictions we face. There are potential, if not immediately expressed, positive factors in all these social contradictions we encounter; and we have to be good at identifying the positive factors and bringing them to the fore, so we can “eat up” the negative. At the same time, it is crucial to understand—and to enable growing numbers of the masses to understand—that, while real progress can be made in transforming these contradictions (in turning bad things into good things), in the context of resisting the many outrages and injustices of the system, this cannot be fully realized—the fundamental unity of the masses of people around their highest interests cannot be achieved in a qualitative sense, and in an ongoing and further developing way—until we do make a revolution, overturning the rule of capital and establishing the rule of the proletariat and masses of people. Here again, is another expression of the **D-O-P** principle.^[27] But the point—the dialectical materialist understanding of this—is that we can, and we must, bring forward powerful elements of the future—including the unity of masses of people in struggle, increasingly motivated and guided by a scientific, communist understanding of where their common and highest interests lie—as part of building, and in order to build, the revolutionary movement toward the goal of abolishing the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This year, for example, the National Day of Protest to Stop Police Brutality, Repression, and the Criminalization of a Generation, on October 22nd,^[28] has importance both because this continues to constitute an important concentration of social contradictions and, as an additional element, because it is one important vehicle for transforming, in a positive direction, the contradictions among the people, including the Black/Latino contradictions, through emphasizing the common oppression they face and the common interests they have.

I have been following accounts, in the mainstream bourgeois media but also in *Revolution*, about what happened on May 1st in Los Angeles. Now, it is a fact that a lot of the Black masses had a backward attitude toward the immigrant rights demonstration on that day. And a lot of the immigrants were caught up in a very reformist and “assimilationist” orientation. But, in one sense, and even though this was a painful lesson, the bourgeoisie did the masses a favor by showing its true nature, with an unprovoked and brutal attack on this demonstration. These immigrant masses are, in large numbers, at this point, trying to be accepted, and even in many cases bending over backward to prove how respectable and hard-working they are—and the ruling class unleashed the dogs on them. And a lot of the immigrant masses, especially but not only those who were directly attacked in this way, began to understand a little bit more about what it is that they’re up against here, and that the operation of the system and the powers-that-be are not going to just let them become part of this set-up on some basis of dignity and

equality. And a lot of the Black masses said, “Oh, I see, they don’t like these people either. That’s the kind of shit they do to us all the time.” Now all this is spontaneous, but it’s the raw material, if you will, from which we have to work, and can work, to recast and transform things in a still more positive way.

And, in an overall way, we also have to be continually grasping and applying an understanding of the dialectical relation—the potential “positive synergy”—between the “two maximizings,” that is, maximizing the development of a politicized atmosphere and a revolutionary movement, with a communist core, among the basic masses, and doing essentially the same thing among the middle strata. It is really only from the communist standpoint that you can see the potential for the positive dialectic here. A lot of different sections of the people, on their own and spontaneously—with their spontaneous viewpoint and the way in which that is largely influenced by the dominant ideas and media and other means of molding public opinion—don’t see how these different things can be, or can be *transformed into*, positive and favorable factors. They don’t spontaneously understand the significance of different things happening among different strata, how all this fits into an overall picture, and how this can be made to serve something positive, even while much of it is going in different directions.

In *Bringing Forward Another Way*,^[29] I talked about how we have to increasingly develop our ability to correctly handle the contradiction between, on the one hand, struggling with people to cast off their bourgeois-democratic illusions and, on the other hand, uniting with them in a lot of struggle in which people are largely *proceeding from* those bourgeois-democratic illusions. This is, in a sense, parallel to—or involves the same principles as—correctly handling the “two maximizings,” and getting a positive dialectic going in that kind of way, through a lot of struggle.

From our communist viewpoint and with our communist methods, and by applying this science, we can see how a lot of things that fall far short of where we need to go—and which may not seem, spontaneously, to be of any immediate benefit to different sections of the masses or to the overall revolutionary objective—actually can be mobilized and marshaled to be part of this whole process that goes toward where we need to go. And it is up to us to make that—the links between these different things, the ways in which they have important things in common and the roots they have in the same system—come alive for the basic masses but also for other sections of people.

This is another expression of “mobilizing all positive factors” but as it applies particularly to the interrelation between things more directly affecting different strata, how that all can be marshaled toward our strategic revolutionary objectives, and how the necessary positive dialectic (or “synergy”) can be fought for and brought forward in the course of, and as a crucial part of, building toward those objectives.

Heightened Parasitism and the “Two Outmodeds”

I want to return briefly to the question of the heightened parasitism of U.S. society, as a result of the position and role of U.S. imperialism in the world, and the dynamic, or

dialectic, of the “two historically outmodeds.”^[30] The more U.S. imperialism pushes ahead with its drive for unchallenged empire, focusing much of its fire on Islamic fundamentalist forces—and the more there is the absence of an outpouring of mass political opposition within the U.S. to this course—the more this, in turn, strengthens the Islamic fundamentalist trend. And, at the same time, the more this whole dynamic—where these “two historically outmodeds” (imperialism and Islamic fundamentalist Jihadism) reinforce each other, even while opposing each other—goes forward and is strengthened, the more it will become increasingly difficult to *bring forward another way*: to break out of the current deadly dynamic and to galvanize and mobilize people around a positive pole, opposed to both of these “outmodeds”; to rally masses of people on both sides of the “great divide” in the world—between imperialist countries, and above all the U.S., on the one hand, and Third World oppressed countries, with billions of impoverished and desperate masses, on the other hand.

In connection with this, we have to simultaneously struggle against two trends which represent (to borrow Engels’ phrase) “opposite poles of the same stupidity.” On the one hand, there is a line—which has currency among some “left” forces in the U.S. and elsewhere—of supporting Islamic fundamentalists simply because they are in some measure opposing imperialism, and U.S. imperialism in particular, without examining, or really being concerned very much about, the *content* of that opposition and where the ideology and program of Islamic fundamentalism will lead—the true horrors it really does represent. This speaks to the importance of the polemic by Sunsara Taylor that was in *Revolution* not long ago^[31]—a polemic against the ISO (International Socialist Organization) and their opposition to the “two outmodeds” analysis, as well as their whole economist (and ludicrous) line about how working people in the U.S. don’t benefit from imperialism—to which perhaps the most meaningful response is, simply: “What fucking world are you living in?!”

This is an important polemic, but it will continue to be necessary to take on—to dissect and refute—these kinds of arguments (as put forward by the ISO and others). This kind of thinking represents, ultimately, a defeatist orientation toward really being able to take on imperialism through mobilizing masses on a revolutionary basis, and a limiting, or consigning, of the struggle to the contest between these two reactionary and outmoded forces; it amounts to, or leads to, becoming cheerleaders for one side or the other (and in the case of those with “anti-imperialist” pretensions, often doing this on behalf of those, like the Jihadist Islamic fundamentalists, who are to a certain degree opposing U.S. imperialism but, once again, are doing so from a reactionary and “historically outmoded” position, politically as well as ideologically). It is one thing when, in the past, some people’s stance and role amounted, or became reduced to, simply playing the role of cheerleaders for forces struggling against U.S. imperialism, but those forces were at least engaged in what could legitimately be considered revolutionary struggle (as, for example, the Vietnamese people’s war of resistance against the U.S.). But it is quite another thing when you’re becoming cheerleaders for thoroughly reactionary forces, with all the horrors they’ve already brought about and would bring about on a much fuller scale, were they able to do so.

On the other hand, “the opposite pole of the same stupidity” is the line that the U.S. is, after all, better than the Islamic fundamentalists—because, the argument goes, the U.S. is a democracy, even if a flawed one. And, along with this, the point is made that the U.S. is after all a secular country—even if, as many would admit, this is being challenged in a serious way now by Christian fundamentalist forces within the U.S. *Revolution* recently received a letter from a prisoner very strongly arguing this point: we should at least support democracy, up against feudal or other reactionary forces, including Islamic fundamentalists, which aren’t even democratic; and we should support the spreading of democracy, even if and even where it comes through the brute force of the U.S. military. For example, the letter insisted, we should support the U.S. going into Darfur, because that would be better for the people there. But, in reality, in an ultimate and fundamental sense, a U.S. military incursion—and still more a full-scale invasion and occupation, like what has happened in Iraq, or even on the level of what has gone on in Afghanistan—would make things *worse* for the masses of people, over any period of time, not just in Darfur but in the world as a whole. It would strengthen U.S. imperialism and its ability to continue imposing very real horrors on literally billions of people throughout the world—through military means but also through the “normal functioning” of imperialist economic exploitation and social oppression, and the political structures that enforce this. But you have to have a scientific outlook and method to see that.

And when you get outside of the so-called “left,” this line of siding with the imperialist “outmoded” has much more currency. This applies among many people who are generally “progressive” but not part of any organized “left” group, as well as in society broadly. And, of course, it is championed by some people who have the posture of being defenders of the enlightenment and of rational thought: sometimes this is done in more crude and very aggressive ways, by the likes of Christopher Hitchens, but it is also argued by people who are perhaps, or in some sense seem to be, more subtle and nuanced in their approach (someone like Sam Harris, for example). Both Harris and Hitchens polemicize against religion in general but bring this around to arguing that Islamic fundamentalism is worse than Christian fundamentalism—in effect ignoring, or even covering over, the very real danger posed by Christian Fascism.^[32]

These are positions we’re also going to have to continually engage and refute, and in doing so it will be very important to bring forward the correct synthesis very sharply, in opposition to both of these “poles of stupidity.” It is crucial to deeply understand the fact that if you support either of these “two historically outmodeds” (historically outmoded strata among colonized and oppressed humanity, and historically outmoded ruling strata of the imperialist system) it is really true that you end up strengthening *both*—and you strengthen the whole dynamic where they reinforce each other even while opposing each other. It is really important to understand deeply, and to enable growing numbers of people to actually understand, this dynamic—which also enables you to understand why it would not be a good thing for the U.S. to intervene in places like Darfur.

At the same time, it is also very important to be clear—and this is something I also emphasized in *Bringing Forward Another Way*—that, between these “two historically outmodeds,” it is the historically outmoded ruling strata of the imperialist system, and U.S. imperialism in particular, which by far has done and is doing the greatest harm in the world and represents the greatest obstacle to the advance of humanity to a radically different and much better world. This is not only a general truth, but something that is being acutely posed right now. So here I want to focus on *this* historically outmoded: the imperialist system, and U.S. imperialism in particular.

Parasitism, infantilism, instant gratification and self-indulgence

As one aspect of this, it's worth recasting and reconstructing some analysis in the book *Consumed* by Benjamin R. Barber, who was the original author of the formulation “Jihad vs. McWorld” (the title of an earlier book by Barber). While Barber's view is confined to terms within the framework of capitalism—and he insists that there is no real (or desirable) alternative to capitalism, in one form or another—there are nonetheless some important and provocative insights in *Consumed*. As Barber portrays it in *Consumed*, capitalism in this stage is faced with the contradiction that:

“The global majority still has extensive and real natural needs.... But it is without the means to address them, being cut off by the global market's inequality (the ‘north/south divide’) from the investment in capital and jobs that would allow them to become consumers. This is true not just for the global Third World but for the growing Third World within the First World, the poor who live among the wealthy, exposed to the seductions of the consumer marketplace but without the means to participate in it....

“In this new epoch in which the needy are without income and the well-heeled are without needs, radical inequality is simply assumed.” (*Consumed*, pp. 9, 10)

And a little later he says:

“Capitalism is left in crisis on both sides of the North/South frontier. In the North, in a dynamic compellingly described by William Greider, too many unprofitable products chase too few consumers, too many of whom must be prodded, pushed, and cajoled into consumption; while in the South, too many urgent but unprofitable needs chase too little available capital, held by owners who remain disinterested in those without discretionary income—the impoverished, disease-ridden, deeply needy inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa, for example.” (*Consumed*, p. 45. The paraphrase by Barber here of William Greider refers to Greider's book *One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997.)

Capitalism, Barber argues, must now set about creating artificial needs among those with disposable income, utilizing advertising on a massive scale and the very elastic extension of credit.

There is much, including much that is fundamental, that is left out or greatly distorted by Barber in his analysis—including the whole phenomenon, historically, of the “primitive

accumulation" of capital, to which Marx spoke, incisively and with searing irony^[33]—as well as the actual nature and workings of capitalism in its imperialist stage now. There is the whole history of the U.S., for example: slavery; the use and extreme exploitation of immigrant labor, wave after wave; and the westward expansion of the U.S. through the armed theft of land from Mexico as well as from Native Americans, with the reduction of Mexico to a semi-colony of the U.S. and the conquest and confinement on reservations of the native peoples themselves through genocidal means. And there has been—this is something very important to understand—the spreading of this on an international scale, and the continuing growth of parasitism in U.S. society, through a series of spirals—through two world wars, and then the resolution of the "Cold War" and the heightened globalization that was further unleashed by that—which is combined today with the existence of significant sections of society, within the U.S. itself, which Barber refers to as "the growing Third World within the First World," including millions of immigrants, many of them undocumented, at the bottom rungs of the proletariat, and millions more proletarians and semi-proletarians in the inner cities, especially Black people and Latinos with extremely high rates of unemployment, much of it more or less permanent with regard to the formal and official economy.

Just to briefly elaborate on the point about the spreading of this through a series of spirals, including two world wars, if you go back to the beginning of the talk "Why We're in the Situation We're in Today...And What to Do About It: A Thoroughly Rotten System and the Need for Revolution,"^[34] it is pointed out that it wasn't always the case, in the "configuration" of U.S. society, that you had this "fat middle," which includes more bourgeoisified sections of the working class as well as new and old strata of the more classical petit bourgeoisie. But through first one and then another world war in the first half of the 20th century, and the advances (in imperialist terms) that the U.S. made through those wars, the configuration within the U.S. changed accordingly, in line with a heightening parasitism. The more classical proletariat shrank in relative terms, and even in absolute terms, speaking of the industrial proletariat, and the more bourgeoisified sections of the working class and the intermediate strata grew through each of the two spirals associated with these two world wars. Exploitation—or even the most extreme sort of "Fordist" exploitation, in other words, labor intensive exploitation—was not eliminated from this system, even within the U.S. itself, but it became much more "internationalized": looking at things on an international scale, it was spread more broadly and more deeply. And this, again, is both an expression of and has gone in tempo with a heightening parasitism characterizing U.S. society itself (in the case of the imperialist ruling class, reaping huge profits from—and in the case of the population overall, enjoying, although quite unequally, benefits as a result of—the exploitation of billions of people throughout the world, particularly in the Third World). In a sense, this is like the line from the Yeats poem ("The Second Coming") about the "widening gyre." This has been a spiraling process where, within the U.S., the working class, in its "classical" form, is being shrunk, and the more "parasitized" sectors of society are growing, while at the same time, on a world scale, the masses of people are ensnared, in one way or another, in ever greater numbers in the web of capitalist exploitation, and the corresponding poverty, misery, and brutalization has grown. So, again, it is not that

imperialism has somehow done away with extremely intense, and impoverishing, exploitation; but it has increasingly “spread it out,” made it increasingly an international phenomenon—and this has everything to do with the heightening parasitism and the changes in (social and class) “configuration” within the U.S. itself.

So, now, the extreme parasitism of U.S. society, and its relation to the rest of the world, is something we are faced with—something which, so to speak, we have to “work our way through.” I was trying to think of what would be a really good way to encapsulate this—the way in which large sections of the population in the U.S. are removed from physical labor, and from the actual process of production, while at the same time many are indulging in crass overconsumption, even of food. And then it hit me: what really captures this is *hot dog eating contests*. [Laughter] You know, these contests where people from the imperialist countries, including Japan—what’s his name, Kobayashi?—the big question becomes: “is he gonna win again this year?” [Laughter] But then, as it turns out, there is a “great” turn of events, and we hear, “his world record is broken by an American—all right!” Sixty-two hot dogs, in however many minutes it is. Think about what a grotesque phenomenon this is. Here you have people, literally stuffing hot dogs down their throats as fast as humanly possible, trying to outdo each other in this perverse competition, while the great majority of humanity struggles just to have enough to eat, and many cannot even do that under the conditions of imperialist domination and the associated relations of exploitation and oppression—and, yes, the extreme parasitism in the imperialist countries, the U.S. above all.

Contrast this parasitism, and the phenomena it gives rise to, with what is captured, for example, in the subhead to one chapter of Mike Davis’ book *Planet of Slums*. The subhead is “Living in Shit”—and this is not a metaphorical but a *literal* description of the conditions of huge numbers of people in the shantytowns throughout the Third World. Contrast this with the profligate self-indulgence of many (though, of course, far from all) in the imperialist countries.

And, of course, along with this heightened parasitism and, yes, self-indulgence, is the promotion of extreme individualism in the U.S. This has always been a country marked by individualism, but it has now reached new heights—or depths. It’s in the advertising—they’re selling ideology as well as products, even on the simplest levels. Take the advertisement for a certain shampoo: this shampoo will do this and do that—and, then the punchline, “After all, I’m worth it.” The whole outlook that’s promoted, over and over again, through things like this, is one of extreme individualism, self-absorption, and self-indulgence.

And along with that—this is one of the points Barber emphasizes, which has some validity and importance to it—is the promotion of a great deal of “infantilization” of the population. While we don’t want to, and should not, descend into the unscientific (and, as a matter of fact, individualistic) terms of bourgeois psychology, Barber has a point that, after all, one of the key dividing lines between infants and adults is the deferring of immediate gratification; and that, if you want to sell all kinds of stuff to people, one of

the best ways to do it is to prevent, or reverse, the leap involved in developing the capacity to defer gratification—to infantilize people to where there's a constant striving, an endless quest, for greater and greater gratification in immediate terms. Of course, even in a predatory imperialist country like the U.S., this is not realizable without an unprecedented extension of credit; and in this country vast numbers of people are presently stretched way beyond their means.

This often goes to ridiculous lengths. James D. Scurlock points out in his book *Maxed Out*: the more in debt you are, the more credit you can get—up to a certain point—while they're charging interest rates that would put a petty loan shark to shame. For example, the credit card companies—the rates they charge are incredible. But, as Barber puts it, at one and the same time they direct adult advertising “pitches” to young children to get them to demand more and more consumer goods (toys of various kinds, and so on), while trying to prolong the infantilization of adults so that they will continue to be addicted to instant gratification. So the “I wanna,” “I gotta have” mentality is constantly asserting itself. And while these are not the fundamental dynamics involved, there is some truth to this and some importance to understanding this in its social and ideological expressions and effects.

All this constitutes another part of the political and ideological terrain, if you will, that we have to deal with—that we have to confront and transform.

One of the key things that goes along with this—another dimension to the whole way in which the imperialists are approaching the world—is not only the establishment but the *very stubborn maintenance* of an all-volunteer military. While the rest of society is urged to indulge in such things as “patriotic shopping,” there is an institution, drawing its ranks to a significant degree from the bottom layers of society, whose task is to fight the wars on which all this depends ultimately. And there has been a conscious effort to keep the rest of society sheltered and screened from this. Many people have commented on this, and while we shouldn't overdo this, and approach it one-sidedly, there is some truth to the observation that a number of people have made: if they were to bring back a draft, you'd see a lot of people's attitudes become very different, very quickly. Think of the many people who at this point are saying, “Well, I don't like what's going on, but there really isn't much you can do about it”; or “I went out and protested at the start of the Iraq war, but it didn't really do any good, so now I'm just gonna live my life.” This would change, in significant measure—we shouldn't overstate this, but there is a reality to the fact that this would change in significant measure—if the draft started hanging over the heads of a lot of youth (and their families). And it would be very interesting to see if it hung over the heads of female, as well as male, youth this time. In the past, the draft was an all-male phenomenon, but it would be very interesting to see if they could do that now, and what social contradictions would be intensified and accentuated, however they dealt with it (whether they drafted both males and females, or only males).

So, besides other reasons, this is an additional dimension to why you see that people in the Bush regime in particular, but generally in the ruling class, are sticking stubbornly to having an all-volunteer military. This is a whole strategic approach of having a highly technologically-oriented military, with somewhat more educated people than in the past to wield this technology, and having this heavy technological component of the military make up for (or substitute for) large numbers of troops that might have had to be employed in the past. This is not simply a military approach. It is that, but there is also the political dimension of their very consciously reckoning with and calculating the social effects and implications of moving away from an all-volunteer military and this whole arrangement where, on the one hand, a small section of society is drawn into this institution—which has a whole different ethos and is organized in a whole different way than the rest of society, in order to be the military arm of this system—while the rest of society is awash in extreme individualism and even infantilization.

Not all, but still too many, Americans—especially within the middle strata, although not only there—are in a real sense falling into acting like children, easily distracted with toys. “Here at midnight tonight—the new iPhone!” People will line up, and fight each other to get in line, to get the new iPhone, but they can’t bring themselves to mobilize against the torture and the wars and everything else that is being done by their government, in their name and right before their eyes—this is not even really being hidden.

Now, it is true that, particularly in the period leading into the U.S. invasion of Iraq, very large numbers of people did mobilize in opposition to this, and to the general direction in which the Bush regime was driving things. And there have, of course, been protests, even significant ones, since then. But the truth is that, as the Bush regime has made clear, even with the great difficulties it has encountered in Iraq it is determined to persevere on this course, and is even threatening to escalate things, with an attack on Iran—and as the Democrats and the ruling class overall have made clear that they are going along with all this, or at least will do nothing meaningful to oppose it—while there are many people who know that this is wrong, is having horrible consequences, and holds the potential for much worse, far too many of these people have retreated into passivity—and what amounts to complicity—on the basis that to try to stop this seems too daunting and requires too much sacrifice.

This is the moral equivalent of coming upon a man brutalizing and raping a woman and not doing everything you can to stop it. You call out strongly “Stop!” But then, when he menacingly turns and responds, “No—I really need to do this,” you simply slink away muttering “Oh, I didn’t know he was so determined about this—and I don’t want to get hurt myself.”

And this complicity is taking place while, as the logo of World Can’t Wait so graphically illustrates, the world burns and the prospect of far worse looms ominously before us.

As I pointed out in “Why We’re In the Situation We’re In Today...And What To Do About It: A Thoroughly Rotten System and the Need for Revolution,” this is a whole way of life and fundamentally a whole system that requires and calls forth *war*, of various kinds. If you

think about this deeply, you can see why this cannot be maintained without continual war in one form or another—either directly or by proxy. This is a whole set-up, including extreme parasitism, that couldn't be maintained other than through those means.

As I have also emphasized (in this talk and elsewhere), this parasitism is accompanied by, and is not really possible without, debt on a massive scale—both personal debt for large sections of the population and huge government debt—with interconnections between these dimensions of debt and ramifications, and potentially much greater ones, on an international level as well as within the U.S. itself. This is something that Kevin Phillips speaks to in *American Theocracy*; and James Scurlock, in *Maxed Out*, examines some of this as well, including the ways it affects broad strata of the middle class. And there is a way in which the “infantilization”—“let me be a child playing with the goodies”—turns into its opposite for many, many people. After the bursting of the “dot.com” bubble, the big thing more recently has been the housing market, which was inflated with a lot of these loans that enticed people who really couldn't afford the houses they were being sold—interest-only loans, adjustable rate mortgages (or “subprime” loans), and so on—and then all of a sudden it comes due. This bubble is now bursting in significant ways, too, and this is affecting people very broadly—from the middle strata down to much more impoverished sections of society—as well as having repercussions within the economy of the U.S., and the world economy, as a whole.

Today the strains in all this are intensifying and hold the potential to become even more greatly magnified. For example, think again of the stress that is being placed on the all-volunteer military as a result of what, for the ruling class, has become the debacle in Iraq. Think of the potential for much greater pressures on this military, in light of the larger imperialist plans this Iraq war is part of. And think of the potential effect of all that on this whole phenomenon of parasitism, if they are not able to hold things together while continuing to maintain an all-volunteer military.

If we look at all this and think about it in relation to this phenomenon of heightened parasitism, and everything that goes along with that, we can grasp, in yet a further dimension, the importance to the ruling class of promoting Christian Fascism and the reasons why there is, on the part of a powerful section of the ruling class, backing for the Christian Fascist forces that are so prominent in U.S. society today. This is very important—as a cohering force overall, and particularly in terms of a hard core of support for the imperialist system and the whole course on which it has been set by the Bush regime in particular.

Something that was pointed out a number of years ago (in “The Truth About Right-Wing Conspiracy...And Why Clinton and the Democrats Are No Answer”), is that a lot of this extreme individualism, heightened parasitism and relentless consumerism, while it causes real problems and embodies real obstacles from the perspective of our revolutionary objectives, also poses significant problems for the ruling class, much as they're also promoting it. Among broad sections of U.S. society, because of a variety of reasons and motivations but definitely including the extreme manifestations of

individualism among many, the idea of self-sacrifice for the imperialist system does not have a lot of currency, if you'll pardon the expression. So this involves acute contradiction—not only for us, from our perspective, but also for the imperialists, from the perspective of and in relation to their objective of establishing an unchallenged, and unchallengeable, empire. "The Truth About Right-Wing Conspiracy" quotes from the *Communist Manifesto*, speaking to how capitalism has reduced things to the cold cash nexus and removed all the philistine sentimentality and religious embroidery, etc., from exploitation; but then it points out that there is a section of the U.S. ruling class today that wants to *reinvest* this cold cash nexus with religious embroidery and sentimentality, because there's a fear that things can't hold together otherwise. It is worth quoting "The Truth About Right-Wing Conspiracy" at some length here:

"In some significant ways, what was written 150 years ago in the *Communist Manifesto*, concerning the consequences of unfettered bourgeois commodity relations, is assuming a pronounced expression among sections of the U.S. population in the context of today's 'post-Cold War' world capitalism. The following phrases from the *Manifesto* have a particular and powerful resonance: 'the bourgeoisie, wherever it has gotten the upper hand...has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment.' It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of Philistine sentimentalism in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value.... In a word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.' There is a great irony here: the very 'triumph' and 'triumphalism' of capitalism in today's circumstances has produced effects and sentiments which tend to undermine, among significant sections of the U.S. population, the willingness to make personal sacrifices for 'god and country'—that is, for the interests and requirements of the imperial ruling class, within the U.S. itself and in the world arena. In reaction to this, the 'conservatives,' with the Christian Right playing a decisive role, are attempting to revive and impose precisely 'the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of Philistine sentimentalism'—to resurrect a situation where worldwide exploitation that is unsurpassed in its brutality is at the same time 'veiled by religious and political illusions.'" (Bob Avakian, "The Truth About Right-Wing Conspiracy...And Why Clinton and the Democrats Are No Answer," *Revolutionary Worker* (now *Revolution*), October 17, 2004—originally published in the *Revolutionary Worker* in the fall of 1998, and available at revcom.us)

This underscores the importance for the ruling class of a religious fundamentalist—a Christian Fascist—movement, which insists that America should have, and must have, a special relationship to God and must impose its "God-ordained mission" on the world, at the point of a gun (or through high-tech military means). It further explains (and "situates") the very fervent advocacy on the part of a section of the ruling class on behalf of this Christian Fascist orientation and program as a cohering force, in the context of the juggernaut of war and repression that is being driven forward now by the Bush regime.

Very significantly, there are two major forces and institutions in the U.S. today which, in opposition to the rampant individualism characterizing the society as a whole, embody an opposite pole. That is, two major forces and institutions which represent the interests of the ruling class and embody an opposite pole to extreme individualism *in that way*—an opposite pole of *reactionary, fascist-oriented, and extremely hierarchal collectivism*. What are these two institutions? The Christian Fascist churches and the military. Here we see another basis for the close intertwining of the two and the great influence of the Christian Fascists within particularly the officer corps of the U.S. military.

All of this is an expression of the various dimensions—and the contradictory aspects—of “living in the house of Tony Soprano”^[35] (which is another way of speaking to the parasitism and privilege which obtains for significant sections of the population living within the number one imperialist power in the world, the world’s only superpower). And this speaks to the urgent need for *rupturing people out of this*—for bringing forward another way—and for bringing forward, as the bedrock of that, those who have the least stake in “living in the house of Tony Soprano,” even as political (and ideological) work must be carried out among all different strata of the people, including those more caught up in this parasitic self-indulgence, consumerism, individualism, and, yes, infantilization. We have to look beyond the immediate conditions at any given time, to the more longer-term perspective and to the deeper mainsprings and dynamics of things.

The Mess in Iraq, the Threat of War on Iran, and the Challenges This Poses

I have spoken in other talks, including *Bringing Forward Another Way*, about what a mess, what a real debacle, the Iraq war has turned out to be for the U.S. ruling class. It is striking that more than one person, speaking from the perspective of that ruling class, has talked in terms of the invasion and occupation of Iraq representing the worst policy decision that’s been made in the history of the country. That’s quite a statement! You have people like Zbigniew Brzezinski (National Security Advisor in the Carter administration and one of the main architects of the U.S. policy of backing the Islamic fundamentalist Mujahadeen in Afghanistan in fighting against Soviet occupation in the 1980s) talking in these terms. At the same time, to give us a sober sense of things (I didn’t see this, but someone told me about it), Brzezinski was on the Charlie Rose program, with Henry Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft (former high officials in the Nixon and Ford and the Bush I administrations, respectively) and apparently at one point, after talking about what a debacle Iraq was, *and* what a disaster it would be to get into a war with Iran, Brzezinski apparently said that, if a situation had developed with the U.S. like happened with the British sailors who were taken prisoner by Iran, then Bush would almost certainly have had to go to war with Iran—and, said Brzezinski, I would have supported him.

So this should be something sobering for us to learn from, in terms of how the ruling class looks at its interests, even amidst these tremendously intense contradictions. But that doesn’t mean that there is an easy resolution of all this for them. Without

elaborating further, I'll just refer to what's been said previously and analyzed in our newspaper, and in *Bringing Forward Another Way* and elsewhere, about what is represented by this debacle in Iraq for the ruling class.

Iran: the prospect of regime change and the possibility of war

And then there is the possibility looming of war with Iran. Scott Ritter's latest book, *Target Iran: The Truth About the White House's Plans for Regime Change*, is very interesting. It has its own particularities, and ultimately it is coming from the point of view of this system and a section of people who identify with this system. It has some particular analyses relating to Israel which I don't have time to get into in any depth here but which are somewhat striking: You can see the specter emerging of the position that Israel is maybe not such a friend of the U.S., and specifically that Israel may drag the U.S. into a war with Iran, which would be very much against the interests of the U.S., in Ritter's view. Ritter even goes pretty far in the direction of saying that people who are calling for war with Iran, more out of allegiance to Israel than to the U.S., are traitors to the U.S. This begins to emerge in this book. Again, this is being put forward from the point of view of someone who considers himself a deeply patriotic American. Without getting into all that here, I have to say that there is a lot of interesting analysis of the many twists and turns in the inspections by the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) in Iran, and how the U.S., and the Bush regime in particular, has tried to manipulate those inspections (or the results of them) in the attempt to establish more of a rationalization for going to war with Iran—or in any case to effect "regime change" in Iran, possibly through warfare—and how the U.S. has been, at times, frustrated in these efforts but has never abandoned that essential objective of "regime change," by one means or another.

Now, we should not get into stereotyped and linear thinking about this either. Some people, with extensive knowledge about the internal dynamics within Iran, as well as about the U.S. and its role in the world, are inclined to believe that a U.S. military attack on Iran is a possibility but that there is also a possibility that the U.S. could try to work with and through various forces within the ruling elites in Iran—forces who would try to move in a direction more acceptable to the U.S.—to bring about some sort of regime change in Iran without having to go to war. And there is also the possibility of Israel attacking Iran and then more pro-U.S. forces coming forward within Iran to present a more "reasonable alternative," from the U.S. point of view, and to negotiate an arrangement with the U.S. to avoid further warfare.

What seems clear is that both of these things are possible—both regime change and/or war—and certainly it would be very unwise, simply because Iraq has turned out to be a real debacle for the U.S., to therefore discount the possibility of an attack on Iran, by the Bush regime, before Bush leaves office (assuming he does). There are a lot of things at play in this, and I'm not saying this or that analysis is necessarily correct, but I am emphasizing that we should not get stuck in stereotypical, or "one-track," thinking but rather should continue to dig down and analyze this scientifically.

What is clear, however, is that it constitutes a real contradiction for the U.S. ruling class to have an Iran which, whether or not it has nuclear arms, nevertheless is increasingly asserting itself in the Middle East. Once again (as discussed in *Bringing Forward Another Way*), there is a real irony in how Iran is increasing its influence, in Iraq and the region more generally, by taking advantage of the mess the U.S. has created in Iraq. And sometimes you just have to laugh, sardonically, when you hear these mainstream-bourgeois news reports: "Investigative journalism is establishing that Iranian forces are operating in Iraq!" I was thinking that there should be a spoof done along the lines of: "Investigative journalists have been engaged in a year-long study, interviewing thousands of witnesses and examining evidence from many sources, and they have now determined that U.S. forces are operating in Iraq!" [*Laughter*] I mean, here are the U.S. imperialists, who have, with massive destructive force, invaded and occupied Iraq, and *they* have their mouthpieces making noises about "unearthing the truth" that *some other country* has got a few forces operating in there. (And at least Iran "lives in the neighborhood"—and didn't come from thousands of miles away to invade and occupy another country.)

Yet, notwithstanding their lies and distortions, Iran is a real problem for the U.S. imperialists, and the question of going to war with Iran is certainly not, as they say, "off the table." Not long ago, there was an article in the *Guardian* of London which reported that, a month or so before that, there was a battle of sorts within the Bush regime over whether to have a more bellicose or less bellicose posture right now toward Iran, and that the result has been that Bush is leaning toward Cheney's position of being more bellicose. But there are a number of major contradictions at play in all this. It's not just a matter of the whims or inclinations of particular politicians—or even just the aims and ambitions of those in the Bush regime who are now at the core of ruling class power in the U.S.—but deeper contradictions that are at play, and that hold the potential to bring about a far greater "mess"—yes, for the masses of people, within the U.S., in the Middle East, and ultimately in the world as a whole, but also, in strategic terms, for the U.S. imperialist ruling class.

The pyramid of power—and paralysis

All this sets a certain framework for things. We've talked about the paralysis at the top of the pyramid—or specifically on one side (the "Democratic Party side") of the pyramid—of power in the U.S. But, as dialectical materialists, one of the things we have to recognize—and which we're discovering in very living terms—is that this doesn't immediately lead to masses of people springing loose and going into motion with independent political action in opposition to what their government—embodied now especially in the Bush regime—is doing. To a large degree, in the short run this is contributing instead to paralysis among progressive people, particularly among those in the middle strata (although not only there) who look to the section of the ruling class that is represented in a general sense by the Democratic Party, and who are desperately striving to "come under the wing" of this section of the ruling class, but are facing the contradiction—in an even greater way than it was faced at the time of the build-up to the Iraq war, at the end

of 2002 and in early 2003—that this section of the ruling class *does not want to do* what they want it to do. It is not just for some superficial (or subjective) reasons that it doesn't want to do this, but because *the leaders of the Democratic Party recognize that the interests it represents—and fundamentally the interests of the system it serves—don't lie in doing what many (even the majority) of people who constitute its "base" (or who, in any case, are repeatedly pulled into voting for the Democratic Party) want it to do.*

So this "striving to come under the wing" of that section of the bourgeoisie (represented generally by the Democratic Party) is in some significant ways frustrated. But, again, this leads to extremely contradictory results in the short run, in people's thinking and in what they do—and *don't* do—politically. It poses very sharply—and adds another dimension to—the whole challenge of political repolarization (and here I'm speaking of repolarization on different levels—on the level of World Can't Wait and its objectives and basis of unity, on the one hand, as well as more fundamentally and strategically in terms of repolarization for revolution).

The continuing urgent need for mass political resistance

With that as a background and framework, I want to say some things briefly in terms of World Can't Wait. First of all, it is important to scientifically examine what has and has not yet been achieved by World Can't Wait. What has not been achieved is all too obvious: the mass outpouring that needs to be brought forth around the demand to Drive Out the Bush Regime! and repudiate its whole program. On the part of World Can't Wait, there have been attempts on several occasions in the past two years to call forth this outpouring of political opposition and resistance—and work around this has reached hundreds of thousands of people and has resulted in the mobilization of many thousands, in relatively large and smaller demonstrations in cities around the country—but unfortunately this has still not been on anything close to the massive level that is required. I am not arguing—and I don't believe it is true—that it was wrong for World Can't Wait to call for and seek to mobilize this mass outpouring, and to paint, as the "Call"^[36] of World Can't Wait powerfully does, a picture of what it would look like, and what it would mean, to have such a mass outpouring. But the reality is that this has not yet happened—for reasons that have to do with things that I have discussed in this talk (and that we have examined in other places) in terms of what people are objectively up against and how they are viewing and responding to that (or not responding in the ways that are urgently needed). So it remains a challenge—for our Party; for others, coming from different viewpoints, who are working within World Can't Wait; and for those generally who feel compelled to actively oppose the horrors that are being perpetrated by their government—to actually bring forward the massive political resistance that is so urgently needed, and to struggle through the political and ideological questions, as well as developing the concrete means and forms, to make this a reality.

At the same time, while this is, unfortunately, still a secondary part of the picture at this point, it is important to recognize that some things *have* happened as a result of World Can't Wait being on the political terrain. You can get at that by just posing the question:

What would the political terrain be like if World Can't Wait had *not* been out there for the past couple of years? Would the question of mass opposition to the crimes of the Bush regime—crimes which are captured so powerfully in the beginning of World Can't Wait's "Call" (the "Your government" indictments) and which have been added to, and have stood out in even sharper relief, since that "Call" was written—would the opposition to that be on anything like the level it is on, without World Can't Wait (as limited as that level still is, in relation to what actually needs to happen)? I believe the answer is clearly no. Would the question of actually removing this regime, through impeachment or some other political means—driven by mass independent political opposition and resistance—would that be posed even to the degree that it is posed now, without World Can't Wait? Again, I think the answer is clearly no. I don't say this by way of ignoring the role and effect of other political forces, or so that we and others can not feel too badly about having fallen short so far. This is part of making a scientific analysis and assessment—it's dialectically related to recognizing what the shortcomings have been and trying to understand more and more deeply why, but also what there is to build on, in terms of larger objective conditions (some of which I have been speaking to here) but also in terms of the particular things that World Can't Wait has brought forward and the challenges it has posed to people, which have had a political impact and influence, even though this has so far fallen short in terms of that translating into the kind of mass outpouring that is still so urgently needed.

And there are also new features on the terrain which, in my opinion, have something to do with what has been done by World Can't Wait, as well as other forms of political opposition. For example, I believe that even something like the present electoral campaign circus—and, more particularly, the fact that this started so early, nearly two years before the actual Presidential election in 2008—is at least indirectly related to what's been stirred up through the efforts of World Can't Wait (as well as others). Everybody's been struck by the fact that this election circus has been out there so far in advance of the actual election. I was just watching CNN the other night: "Countdown to the YouTube debate." [Laughter] *Countdown to the fucking YouTube debate*—it's about a year and a half before the election and we've got "Countdown to the YouTube debate"!

I believe that this traveling circus—a version of which they had out early last time, well before the 2004 election, but which has started this time even further in advance of the election—is very consciously a part of the efforts of significant forces in the ruling class to promote the thinking that "Bush is terrible, what he's doing is terrible, he's the worst president we've ever had, and this is really intolerable...but the clock is ticking down and, after all, he'll be out of office soon." That idea, and the paralysis it leads to—the way in which it diverts people in a negative sense, away from the kind of mass political resistance they need to be waging, back into the dead-end of the bourgeois electoral process—gets reinforced by having the campaign already going on. It contributes to creating the impression—or, really, the illusion—that Bush is already gone, and now the attention is focused on who will next occupy the position of chief executive and commander-in-chief.

As I see it, one of the reasons why this traveling circus is out there already is that there is a real awareness among conscious sections of the ruling class that they have to do something about—something which will sidetrack into harmless channels, and politically “anesthetize”—the widespread disgust and outrage over the Bush regime and everything it stands for—everything it has done and is doing, but also everything it stands for in a very basic sense. There is the danger, from the ruling class point of view, that this could be galvanized into a mass political outpouring that breaks out of the confines of bourgeois politics as usual and the electoral framework that reinforces and gives concentrated expression to that politics.

Yes, we have what I call the “Frank Rich illusion”—or delusion—that (to paraphrase): “Bush is over; the Christian fundamentalists, they’re no longer a real phenomenon, that’s all over and done with.” Every once in a while, people with this viewpoint have a moment where they return to reality and recognize that this is not really what’s going on, but there is this whole illusion that’s being promoted—and probably believed by people like Frank Rich, but promoted in any case: “Now, everybody just calm down. Yes Bush is terrible, yes what’s happening is terrible. But everybody calm down. He’s almost gone. These forces are defanged, they really have no more influence.” Never mind the reactionary Supreme Court appointments and decisions. Never mind the ongoing torture (which is not really even disguised and is denied only barely, and with the most evident hypocrisy). Never mind the continuing efforts to treat the scientific fact of evolution in the same way as the right to abortion—that is, as some kind of “crime” and moral outrage (a crime and outrage against Christianity and decency) being committed by various “ists” (“abortion-ists”...“evolution-ists”...and so on). Never mind the fact that Bush still has a firm grip on his role as commander-in-chief, and nothing the Democrats have done—or even talked about doing—has in any way shaken that. Yet, in the face of all that, still we hear: “They are over, it’s all done, they’re defanged, don’t worry about it.” Even when this is in the form of “liberal triumphalism,” it is at best self-delusion.

And in 2008 we will face the fact the election will be in high gear. All the primaries are going to be early in the year, and basically the terms of (ruling class) politics are going to be set by early spring, at the latest.

Al Gore and illusion, delusion and misdirection

And then we have the role of Al Gore. In addition to what I pointed out earlier about Gore and the role he is playing now, it is worth looking at what is said—and what is not said—in his new book, *The Assault on Reason*. The title of this book is a direct reference to what is being done by the Bush regime (and those allied with it). Well, the first thing I did when I got this book, before I read it, was to go to the index. Does the word “evolution” appear in the index? Noooo. Does the phrase “intelligent design” appear? Noooo. Then I read the book itself, and I never found—maybe it’s there and I just missed it, but I don’t think so—I never found any discussion of evolution in this entire book in which the assault on reason by the Bush regime is being criticized by Al Gore.

It is also very interesting, and significant: A number of times Gore actually uses this word *crimes* in speaking of the Bush administration and what it has done—he repeatedly accuses it of *breaking the law*. Therefore, in the concluding chapter of the book, Gore calls for impeachment? Noooooo. That never comes up. Here is a bourgeois politician talking about the great “founders” of the U.S. and “our great Constitution” and how it’s being trampled on and manipulated—and yet there seems to be some sort of gap here, some sort of lacuna, where the “remedy” that is provided in the Constitution, when the President commits crimes and breaks the law—this remedy, impeachment, is *not spoken to* in this book (and not put forward by Gore in general).

Instead, through the efforts of Gore and others, people are being channeled into things which are ineffective but safe—or at least seemingly so—things which hold out the illusion of doing something about the state of the world and the future of humanity, but without any real risk—and without really affecting the state of the world and the future of humanity in any meaningful and positive way. People’s attention is being turned to things like the environment, things like Darfur—and as important and as presently ominous and tragic as these things actually are, the *way* in which these issues are being addressed, and what people are being told to do about them, by the likes of Gore, are either meaningless or extremely harmful. They either involve courses of action (or inaction) which won’t get anywhere near the actual causes of the problems, and don’t provide an actual solution, *or* they advocate things, such as military intervention by the U.S. (or forces led by or beholden to the U.S.) into various countries—the actual effect of which would only be, over any period of time, to *make things worse* in the world. Even if, in the short run, such intervention might lessen some of the violence, in the long run what it will contribute to is more suffering on the part of the masses, and *more violence inflicted on them* in various forms.

Transforming the political terrain

All this—the operation of the imperialist system overall, as a result of its underlying dynamics, the particularity of the Bush regime and the comprehensive nature of what it is doing and setting out to do, with the lasting implications and impact of this—is still very little understood and confronted. This has imposed and is imposing very real and profound necessity, not only for different sections of the people, but for the ruling class and the system as a whole—within the U.S. itself as well as in the international dimension. For example, the massive debt that’s been accumulated; the gutting of government programs, combined with massive tax cuts; the Supreme Court appointments and decisions—these things have lasting effects and implications that are not easily reversed.

The whole phenomenon which is spoken to in the “Call” of World Can’t Wait, the move to change society in a fascist direction and for generations to come—with torture and the gutting of *habeas corpus* and the right to trial, attacks on dissent and critical thinking, the many-sided assault on science and the scientific method, and on rational thought itself, the promotion of ignorance and bigotry—this has gone a long way already and has set in

motion things that are not easily reversed, including from the point of view of the ruling class and the maintenance and furtherance of the interests of their system. Even if other sections of the ruling class were able to come to the helm of the ship of state (to use that metaphor), and even if they wanted to change course, at least in some significant measure, it would be very difficult for them to do so. Creating a situation where it would be very difficult to undo what they have set in motion—this has, of course, been a conscious intent of the forces grouped around Bush, but it's also been the actual effect.

Still, at this point (or in the near future), if a mass movement were called forth around the demand to Drive Out the Bush Regime!, it would have a tremendously positive impact on the whole political terrain—rupturing things onto a whole different course, or at least posing a powerful mass demand to rupture things onto a whole different course, and creating much more favorable political terms, in this country and indeed throughout the world—making things more favorable for further resistance against the crimes of this system and, more fundamentally from our standpoint, more favorable in terms of repolarization for revolution. Would things be acutely contradictory, even if this mass outpouring were to come forth? Yes, of course. Would this strengthen a lot of bourgeois-democratic illusions? Yes. But this, again, is part of the material reality that we're working with—and driving out the Bush regime as a result of mass political opposition and resistance would create *a far better set of contradictions*, so to speak, than *not* having such a mass outpouring, even with all of its contradictory tendencies and effects. And in any case, the great need remains to repudiate, and bring to a halt, this whole program and bring about a profound change in the political terrain, through massive political opposition and resistance; and this is a challenge that we, together with others, must continue to confront and strive to break through on.

Repolarization for Revolution: A Strategic Orientation

In the context of everything that has been said so far, I want to emphasize the continuing importance of grasping and applying the strategic orientation of the United Front under the Leadership of the Proletariat. It is in relation to this strategic orientation that the principle of the “two maximizings,” which was spoken to earlier, takes on real importance. And within this dynamic—or dialectical relation—of the “two maximizings,” there is the particular and decisive importance of bringing forward basic masses as *conscious and active partisans of proletarian revolution and communism*—or, in other words, as *emancipators of humanity*.

Religion and repolarization—the complexity of reality

In carrying forward and applying the strategic orientation of United Front under the Leadership of the Proletariat, we have to keep in mind a point that also has been emphasized repeatedly: the complex nature and features of reality. You cannot have a reductionist or simplistic approach to reality. Here, to illustrate the point, I want to invoke the analogy of a map with many different layers, with a different coloring for each layer,

expressing different phenomena (population centers, parks, bodies of water, and so on). This is a useful metaphor or analogy to help understand the complicated and variegated nature of the reality that we're dealing with and are working to transform.

As one illustration of the basic point, I have been thinking about why it is that (to put it this way) "Chris Hedges is better than Christopher Hitchens." Recently, I've read accounts of debates that have been held between the two of them. Hitchens, it seems, is to a certain degree having an insidious effect because, to a lot of enlightened, thinking people—including people with many progressive sentiments—he sounds good because he cuts through this contradiction (as does Sam Harris in his own way) of people trying to make religion something other than what it is, to "reinvent" it into more palatable terms. But Hitchens (and Harris as well) does this all in the service of a thoroughly reactionary objective: defending the core program of the Bush regime, at least in its international dimension, with its "war on terror."

Hitchens, from everything I can tell, really is an atheist, but he is an atheist in the service of imperialism. As an extension of his worldview, and in the service of his political objectives, he applies an extremely mechanical and reductionist approach which (as expressed in his book *God is Not Great*) reduces many of the profound and complex conflicts in the world to simply religious terms, ignoring or (conceptually) obliterating the most profound and decisive divisions in the world, such as those between imperialism and oppressed nations, as well as between classes, thereby *leading away from a real understanding* of the underlying dynamics and driving contradictions in all this.

So here is an example of how we can't have a crude and simplistic approach to reality. I've read Hitchens' book *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, and there's much that you have to agree with in it. I laughed out loud a number of times: There is a lot of puncturing of religion—there's also some nonsense, and worse, but there's a lot of good puncturing of religion. There's a lot of exposure of what religion leads to and the real harm it does in the world, and what's wrong with the whole religious outlook. One can even identify, up to a certain point, with his call for a new Enlightenment, at the end of the book. But, again, all this is in the service of something which is itself very poisonous.

With regard to Chris Hedges' *American Fascists*, it is very stimulating and at the same time often frustrating to read this book. It contains a lot of valuable insight—in the form of both analysis and anecdotal reporting—into the phenomenon of Christian fundamentalism in the U.S. and those who are drawn to it. And this book stands out, in a good way, in identifying the right-wing Christian fundamentalists as what they are—fascists—and opposing the idea of conciliating with them, insisting that on the contrary you have to stand up to and struggle against this, with an understanding of what people in this fundamentalist movement are really being organized around, what this really represents, what it's really aiming to do and will try to implement if and when it can seize on an opening to do so—in the context of some major social crisis. And Hedges' political positions are much, much better than Hitchens'. There are many things to unite with, in

regard to Chris Hedges and what he is doing in the world. Just look at the article he co-authored recently in *The Nation*,^[37] which exposes, through stories recounted by U.S. soldiers (or former soldiers) themselves, the atrocities being committed by the U.S. occupying forces in Iraq. On balance, he is doing much more good in the world than harm—and he's certainly doing a lot more good than Christopher Hitchens (or Sam Harris).

And yet, strictly on the question of religion, as such, if you put the two positions up against each other, Hitchens' is better. Sam Harris' position is better. Sam Harris, in *Letter to a Christian Nation*, says straightforwardly: Both the fundamentalists and I agree that the meaning of the Bible is what the Bible says it is, that the Bible means what it says. It's either true or it's not true. Quit trying to make it say something else than what it clearly says or mean something else than what it clearly means.

Well, one can only agree with that. And I have to say that I chuckled in reading that book, too—and you cannot help “licking your chops” at certain points in appreciation of the way that some of this religious nonsense (and worse) is being ripped to shreds, in sometimes creative ways, by Harris.

But in the final analysis, Chris Hedges is a lot better than Harris and definitely a lot better than Christopher Hitchens: If you look at the overall effect of what they are saying and doing, and how it is influencing people, there is no question that what Hedges is doing, even with its very real shortcomings—including its effort to “salvage religion,” and Christianity in particular, through the approach of “reinterpreting” it into something other than what it really says and really is—is much better than Hitchens, is in fact on the other side of the “political divide” from Hitchens, who is lined up squarely with—and is aggressively wielding whatever talents and skills he has to attack those who oppose—what is being done by the Bush regime and the imperialists.

But more than that, in the final analysis what is really needed out of all this is a **communist approach**—which can incorporate, and recast, as part of a different synthesis, the positive aspects of what is represented by people like Chris Hedges; which can help to bring forward the best in people who do have a basically good stand, while rejecting and struggling against what would lead in the wrong direction; and which can expose what is wrong—and indeed what is insidious—in the position of people like Hitchens.

Christian fundamentalism, the needs of the ruling class, and repolarizing for revolution

In this light, before concluding, I want to briefly return to the question of Christian Fascism—the “cohering hard core” role of this force in U.S. society. I've spoken already, in a certain dimension, to the particularity of why this is needed by the ruling class now, given its necessity. If you think about what was said earlier, in terms of the extreme parasitism and individualism—and, yes, infantilization—and the extreme levels of self-indulgence that are promoted in the U.S. especially at this time, and you look at that in relation (and in real ways now in sharp contradiction) not only to the needs of the ruling

class in general but more specifically to the necessity that they have brought into being—for themselves as well as for others—through what has become a real debacle in Iraq, in the context of their grander designs, you can see why there is a need, on their part, to have at the ready, and continually to “prime,” this kind of hard core force which is exerting an increasing influence now but is also poised to exert a qualitatively greater influence if the need arises and is recognized by powerful enough sections of the ruling class. This is the role of Christian Fascist forces in the U.S. today and looking to the future (from the point of view of the ruling class, and a certain section of that ruling class in particular, which has been grouped in and around the Bush regime).

Now, it is true—and this is a point I have emphasized before^[38]—that this Christian Fascism is one element in the context of the overall program of the forces at the core of power now in the ruling class. But I have noticed certain tendencies, including within the ranks of our Party, to act as if the Christian Fascists are the whole, or the essence, of what we are up against. Instead of situating this within the context of the capitalist-imperialist system and its ruling class as a whole—and *in that context* calling attention to the particular and important role of the Christian Fascists—there has been a phenomenon (and here again I’m speaking not just about others, outside our Party, but more specifically about tendencies within our Party) of treating the Christian Fascists as though *they* were ruling the country. However, that was never the point of this analysis—and that does not conform with reality. But it conforms to an inclination to appeal to people on the basis of bourgeois-democratic illusions and prejudices—and this is an easy thing to fall into because, frankly, it enables you to seek unity with people on the basis of simply defending and preserving bourgeois democracy, if you want to get right down to it. If the enemy is Christian Fascism and not a whole system—if that’s your strategic view in essence—then you’re going to go in the direction of upholding and tailing bourgeois democracy.

The point of our Party’s analysis was never that Christian Fascists are now ruling the country, in the sense that a Christian Fascist program and force is what is now defining the essence of bourgeois rule in this society. The correct understanding and approach has to do with what this Christian Fascist phenomenon poses in relation to the sharpening contradictions in society and the world, in the context of larger forces and of an overall program, within the Bush regime itself and in the framework of the system and the ruling class as a whole. For example, the point has been made that, while the Christian Fascists have lent a lot of support to the heightened international marauding of the U.S., this has been driven more by the “neo-conservative” forces in and around the Bush regime than by the Christian Fascists. This is another illustration of the complexity and “multi-textured” nature of reality (the multi-layered and multi-colored map, to invoke that metaphor again).

Revolution: stereotypes, stage managers and the living process

But there is a definite role for the Christian Fascist forces—now, and potentially in an even larger sense, if things develop in a certain way—as a “cohering hard core force” for the system and the ruling class. And, yes, in a larger overall “mix” this could be something that plays a kind of “stage manager” role in terms of sharpening crisis in society and even ripening the conditions for revolution (“stage manager” is a formulation used by Lenin in speaking of the role of World War 1 in relation to the Russian revolution of 1917). In the context of the sharpening of contradictions overall—within the U.S., on an international level, and in the mutual interpenetration and influence of these dimensions—the aims and the actions of the Christian Fascists *could* call the legitimacy of bourgeois rule into question—or could play a key part in bringing the question of the legitimacy of bourgeois rule overall much more forcefully onto the political agenda—for much, much broader sections of society. It *could* play that role. That’s what we have said—and have given a certain emphasis to. That is all that is correct to say because, as Mao emphasized, Marxists are not fortune tellers.

Christian Fascism is definitely an important element within a larger “mix”—let’s understand that. And, as part of that larger “mix,” it could play a “stage manager” role in relation to revolution. But it is also very important to emphasize something that was spoken to in “Two Great Humps,”^[39] where there is not only discussion of “hastening while awaiting” a revolutionary situation, but also—and here is another application of the importance of not being bound by conventions, superstitions and stereotypes—there is an emphasis on *not erecting artificial barriers to revolution*. And this means not doing so in the manner of “formulaic” thinking that declares, “Here’s the way revolution will come about and become possible: The Christian Fascists will force out other sections of the ruling class, they’ll take over the government and institute theocratic rule, and then all the bourgeois democrats will rally to our side and we can make revolution.” With that kind of orientation and mentality, if things don’t fall out neatly like that—which they are very unlikely to do—then, of course, revolution will be totally off the map and out of consideration, for who knows how long.

That kind of wooden thinking amounts to taking something like the analysis of the potential (or possible) “stage manager” role of Christian Fascism and turning that grotesquely into its opposite. It amounts, at least objectively, to doing what “Two Great Humps” insists we should *not* do—namely, erecting artificial barriers to revolution, including in the form of stereotyped and “scholasticist” formulas.

Revolution arises out of a complex interplay of contradictions, within the particular country and internationally, and the interpenetration between those levels or dimensions. Yes, there are certain things and certain patterns we can identify. Yes, the role of Christian Fascism is a very important element in the “mix” right now. And, yes, it could play a “stage manager” role. Yes, there is something very real in the analogy between what is going on now and the period before the Civil War in the U.S., in the mid-19th century. Speaking in broad terms, there is a point to the analogy to a “coming civil war.” But this has to be understood in living dialectical terms, and in materialist terms. Not with a dry, dead, uninspiring religious and dogmatic approach.

What really is involved, and what we really have to grasp firmly and apply consistently, is a materialist and dialectical understanding of the relation between the objective and subjective factors, with *all* the complexity involved in this, with *all* the interpenetration of the different layers of that “multi-textured” reality.

When we identify certain phenomena or certain patterns (such as those having to do with the role of Christian Fascism in the U.S. in this period) as being of real significance, and potentially great significance, it is with that kind of method and that kind of approach—as part of gaining a scientific understanding of reality, to serve to hasten as much as we can the development of things toward a revolutionary situation, and to contribute to a more favorable repolarization in relation to the strategic goal of revolution. This means consistently “straining against the limits” imposed by the objective situation, not in order to fulfill a stereotype but in order to *transform* the objective conditions that we are confronting (to transform necessity) as much as possible, at every point, all in order to contribute to bringing about—and to preparing growing numbers of the masses and the Party for—the eventual ripening of a revolutionary situation and the emergence of a revolutionary people, in the millions and millions, conscious of the need for revolutionary change, determined to fight for it, and oriented and able to seize on the revolutionary opening when it finally occurs.

Everything we do has to be informed and infused with this kind of understanding and this kind of approach—this kind of materialism and this kind of dialectics. Everything we do is, and must be, about revolution.

In concluding, let me go back to the title of this talk. What is it we are called on to be—what is it we are called on to bring forward—in increasing numbers and with increasingly conscious initiative? Makers of revolution. Emancipators of humanity.

[PROLONGED APPLAUSE]

Footnotes

[16] The subject of “determinist realism” is spoken to in part 1: “Beyond the Narrow Horizon of Bourgeois Right”—available at revcom.us—and, in the serialization of part 1, is found in “Marxism as a Science—In Opposition to Mechanical Materialism, Idealism and Religiosity,” in *Revolution* #109, Nov. 18, 2007. [[back](#)]

[17] This refers to a talk by Bob Avakian in 2004, *Elections, Democracy and Dictatorship, Resistance and Revolution*, available at bobavakian.net. [[back](#)]

[18] This article, “NYC Public Schools and Criminalization of the Students: What Kind of System Does *This* to Its Youth?” appeared in *Revolution* #93, June 24, 2007. [[back](#)]

[19] *Footnote by the author* : With regard to communist leadership in particular, I have discussed the social contradictions, as well as the historical experience, with which this is bound up, in a number of writings, talks, and interviews. See, for example, "Interview Series with Michael Slate," and in particular the section "On Leadership," available online at bobavakian.net. [\[back\]](#)

[20] From "Some Points on the Question of Revolutionary Leadership and Individual Leaders," part 2 of 1995 *Leadership Resolutions on Leaders and Leadership*, which was released by the Party on the 20th anniversary of its founding. These resolutions were originally published in the *Revolutionary Worker* (now *Revolution*), October 1, 1995 and are available at revcom.us. Part 1 is titled: "The Party Exists for No Other Reason than to Serve the Masses, to Make Revolution." For additional discussion of these questions see also "The Crossroads We Face, The Leadership We Need," *Revolution* #84, April 8, 2007, available at revcom.us. [\[back\]](#)

[21] The statement "Dangerous times demand courageous voices. Bob Avakian is such a voice" can be found at the website of Engage! A Committee to Project and Protect the Voice of Bob Avakian, at www.engagewithbobavakian.org. [\[back\]](#)

[22] A discussion of this "new synthesis" is found in *Making Revolution and Emancipating Humanity, Part 1: Beyond the Narrow Horizon of Bourgeois Right*, and in particular the final segment of part 1, "Historical Experience and the New Synthesis." Part 1 is available online, as one document, at revcom.us, and has been serialized in *Revolution*. "Historical Experience and the New Synthesis" is the final installment in that series; it appears in *Revolution* #113, Dec. 23, 2007.

The following is a pivotal part of that discussion of the new synthesis:

“To try to concentrate—or to present a basic synthesis—of what is represented by this new synthesis, it can be said:

“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.

“In a sense, it could be said that the new synthesis is a synthesis of the previous experience of socialist society and of the international communist movement more broadly, on the one hand, *and* of the criticisms, of various kinds and from various standpoints, of that experience, on the other hand. That does not mean that this new synthesis represents a mere ‘pasting together’ of that experience on the one hand, and the criticisms on the other hand. It is not an eclectic combination of these things, but a sifting through, a recasting and recombining on the basis of a scientific, materialist and dialectical outlook and method, and of the need to continue advancing toward communism, a need and objective which this outlook and method continues to point to—and, the more thoroughly and deeply it is taken up and applied, the more firmly it points to this need and objective.” [[back](#)]

[23] This discussion of Marxism as a science is found in part 1 (“Beyond the Narrow Horizon of Bourgeois Right”), which is available, as one document, at revcom.us. In the serialization of part 1 in *Revolution*, this discussion is contained in the installments entitled “Marxism as a Science—In Opposition to Mechanical Materialism, Idealism and Religiosity” and “Marxism as a Science—Refuting Karl Popper,” which appear in *Revolution* #109, Nov. 18, and #110, Nov. 25, 2007. [\[back\]](#)

[24] The “drawn and quartered point” is discussed earlier in this talk—see Part 1: “Beyond the Narrow Horizon of Bourgeois Right,” which is available at revcom.us, and in particular the last section of Part 1, “Historical Experience and the New Synthesis,” which appears in *Revolution* #113, Dec. 23, 2007. [\[back\]](#)

[25] This was a statement by the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA—“On Hurricane Katrina: Three Fundamental Lessons”—which appeared in *Revolution* #14, September 18, 2005, which is online at revcom.us. Following is the text of that statement:

Three fundamental things to be learned from what has been happening, including the role of the government, in relation to hurricane Katrina:

1. The real nature of those who rule over the people, and real weaknesses of this ruling class, have been further revealed before the world. The “superstitious awe” that people are conditioned to have toward the powers-that-be and their state—their whole machinery of rule, and of repression—has been dramatically shaken through these events and in particular through the actions of the government itself. In the eyes of large numbers of people, the ability to rule as well as the right to rule of this current regime, and indeed of the ruling class as a whole, has been called into question in significant ways. Things which this ruling class attempts to keep hidden, to deny or to distort and misrepresent—including the oppression and the extreme poverty of large numbers of Black people in the U.S. itself—has burst through the “normal” web of deception and the iron hand of suppression. What does and does not matter to the powers-that-be—and in particular their complete lack of concern for the masses of poor and oppressed people, and indeed for the people in society in their great majority—has stood out for all to see, throughout the U.S. and all over the world. At the same time, it has been graphically illustrated that, even though they remain very powerful, the rulers of the U.S., and their armed forces and other machinery of oppression, are not all-powerful.

2. Not only the need but also the possibility of revolution, and of a radically different society, shows through in these events—once they are understood in their true light. Masses of people, in the areas most immediately affected, were being left by the government to suffer, day after day, in conditions not fit for human beings, yet they showed their humanity in many ways and put the lie to the slanders that portrayed them as criminals and animals. Where they took matters into their own hands, the great majority did so with right on their side, in the attempt to meet needs that could be met no other way. Overwhelmingly, the people trapped in these conditions have responded by

supporting and helping each other, especially those in most desperate need, while expressing outrage at the indifference and inaction of the government; and in this they have been supported and assisted by people all over the country. In all this can be seen the potential for masses of people to be mobilized to bring into being a society in which relations among people are radically different than the daily dog-eat-dog that this capitalist system pushes people into. Yet what has also stood out very clearly is that the masses of people are not fully aware of and organized on the basis of an understanding of how the whole operation of this system is in direct and deep-going conflict with their real and fundamental interests. When they gain that understanding, and are organized to act on that basis, then a revolutionary struggle of millions and millions of people, combined with the development and sharpening of certain objective conditions, could make it possible to break the hold of the class of cold-blooded capitalist exploiters who rule over this society (and much of the world) and to bring into being a new society and a new state which would put the interests of the great majority of the people at the foundation and at the center of everything it stands for and everything it does. But for this to happen, the masses must have revolutionary leadership. And that points to a third and final crucial point.

3. There is such a revolutionary leadership—the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, and its Chairman Bob Avakian. But to put things squarely and honestly, while the Party has been exerting real efforts to take up its responsibility in relation to the events surrounding hurricane Katrina, the ability of the Party to actually lead in these dire and urgent circumstances has been far short of what it needs to be. If the influence of the Party and its organized ties with masses of people had been much greater, leading into these events surrounding hurricane Katrina, the Party would be able to play a far greater role in raising the understanding of the masses of people as to what was happening and why: why the government and the whole ruling class reacted the way they have—with the loss of thousands of lives, and terrible suffering for hundreds of thousands more, much of which could have been prevented or significantly lessened—and what this says about the nature of their system and why we need a radically different system. The Party could have been playing a far greater role in enabling masses of people, in the areas immediately affected and throughout the country, to be organized to respond to these events and to wage organized political struggle, on a much higher level and in a much more powerful way, to force steps to be taken immediately to save hundreds and probably thousands of lives that have been, and are still being, needlessly lost. And all this could be having the effect of raising the consciousness and the organized strength of masses of people to a far higher level, with the necessary goal of revolution more clearly and sharply in view. These events surrounding hurricane Katrina and all that has been forced into the light of day in connection with this, has shown the great need for the Party to rise to its responsibilities and play its leadership role in this way, on a whole other level, and for

masses of people to rally to, to support, to join and build, and to defend—this necessary and crucial revolutionary leadership, as embodied in the Revolutionary Communist Party and its Chairman Bob Avakian. [\[back\]](#)

[26] “Determinist realism” is discussed earlier in this text (*Making Revolution and Emancipating Humanity, Part 2: Everything We’re Doing Is About Revolution*), in the first section, “Enriched What Is To Be Done-ism.” It is also discussed in Part 1, “Beyond the Narrow Horizon of Bourgeois Right”; and, in the serialization of part 1, is found in “Marxism as a Science—In Opposition to Mechanical Materialism, Idealism and Religiosity,” in *Revolution* #109, Nov. 18, 2007. [\[back\]](#)

[27] **D-O-P** refers to an earlier part of this talk where emphasis is given to how the continuous outrages people suffer, and the way social contradictions are repeatedly posed, in the present society point powerfully to the need for revolution and a radically different society and state: the dictatorship of the proletariat. [\[back\]](#)

[28] This talk by Bob Avakian was given before October 22, 2007. For coverage of protests on that day, see *Revolution* #107, November 4, 2007. [\[back\]](#)

[29] *Bringing Forward Another Way* is a talk given by Bob Avakian in the fall of 2006. An edited version of this talk is available at revcom.us, and this was serialized in *Revolution* in #83, March 25; #85, April 22; #86, April 29; #87, May 6; #88, May 13; #89, May 20; #90, May 27; #91, June 10; #92, June 17; #93, June 24; #94, July 1; #95, July 15; #96, July 22; #97, July 29; #98, Aug. 19; #99, Aug. 26; and #100, Sept. 9, 2007. [\[back\]](#)

[30] *Footnote by the author* : In relation to this discussion of heightened parasitism and the “two outmodeds,” besides my talk *Bringing Forward Another Way*, among other works the following are valuable as “background resources”: *Planet of Slums*, by Mike Davis (Verso Publishers, 2006); *AMERICAN THEOCRACY, The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century*, by Kevin Phillips (Viking/the Penguin Group, 2006); *Consumed, How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole*, by Benjamin R. Barber (W.W. Norton & Company, 2007); *MAXED OUT, Hard Times, Easy Credit, and The Era of Predatory Lenders*, by James D. Scurlock (Scribner, 2007); and *TARGET IRAN, The Truth About the White House’s Plans for Regime Change*, by Scott Ritter (Nation Books, 2007). [\[back\]](#)

[31] “U.S. Imperialism, Islamic Fundamentalism...and the Need for Another Way,” in issue #91, June 10, 2007. [\[back\]](#)

[32] For a further discussion by Bob Avakian of this phenomenon—and refutation of the arguments of people like Harris and Hitchens—see “Religious Fundamentalism, Imperialism and ‘The War on Terror’” and “Why Is Religious Fundamentalism Growing in Today’s World—And What Is the Real Alternative?”—excerpts from the forthcoming book (to be published in the spring of 2008 by Insight Press) *AWAY WITH ALL GODS! Unchaining the Mind and Radically Changing the World*, in *Revolution* #103, October 7, 2007 and #104, October 14, 2007. [\[back\]](#)

[33] For example, the following from Marx:

“The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation.” (Karl Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, p. 751, also cited in *The Science of Revolution, an introduction*, by Lenny Wolff, RCP Publications, 1983, p. 90) [\[back\]](#)

[34] “Why We’re In the Situation We’re in Today...And What To Do About It: A Thoroughly Rotten System and the Need for Revolution,” is part of 7 Talks by Bob Avakian, in 2006, which are available online at revcom.us/avakian and bobavakian.net. [\[back\]](#)

[35] “Living in the House of Tony Soprano” is discussed by Bob Avakian in *Bringing Forward Another Way*. This is available in its entirety, as a pamphlet and online at revcom.us, and it has been published as a series in *Revolution*. The installment in that series which discusses “Living in the House of Tony Soprano” is found in *Revolution* #87, May 6, 2007. [\[back\]](#)

[36] The “Call” of World Can’t Wait, and other information about this organization, can be accessed at www.worldcantwait.org. [\[back\]](#)

[37] “The Other War: Iraq Vets Bear Witness,” by Chris Hedges and Laila Al-Arian, *The Nation*, July 30, 2007. [\[back\]](#)

[38] See, for example, *The Coming Civil War and Repolarization for Revolution in the Present Era*, a Collection of Articles by Bob Avakian, (Chicago: RCP Publications, 2005). [\[back\]](#)

[39] The full title of the talk is *Getting Over the Two Great Humps: Further Thoughts on Conquering the World*. Excerpts from this talk appeared in the *Revolutionary Worker* newspaper (now *Revolution*) and are available online at revcom.us. The series “On Proletarian Democracy and Proletarian Dictatorship—A Radically Different View of Leading Society” appeared in *RW* #1214 through 1226 (Oct. 5, 2003-Jan. 25, 2004). The series “Getting Over the Hump” appeared in *RW* #927, 930, 932, and 936-940 (Oct. 12, Nov. 2, Nov. 16, and Dec. 14, 1997 through Jan. 18, 1998). Two additional excerpts from this talk are “Materialism and Romanticism: Can We Do Without Myth?” in *RW* #1211 (Aug. 24, 2003) and “Re-reading George Jackson” in *RW* #968 (Aug. 9, 1998). All of these articles can be found online at revcom.us. [\[back\]](#)

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