

Mass Line Is Key To Lead Masses In Making Revolution

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The "mass line" is something that is often talked about by communists. But what does it actually mean? How does the Party actually apply this "mass line"? And what is the importance of applying the mass line in relation to the revolutionary mission of the working class? These are crucial questions.

The Programme of the Revolutionary Communist Party, in summarizing the principles of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought on which it is founded, sets down that "One of the most basic principles of this revolutionary science is that the masses are the makers of history and that correct ideas arise from and in turn serve the struggle of the masses of people. The masses, in their millions, in their daily experiences in class struggle, in production and in scientific experimentation of all kinds, amass great but scattered and unsystematic knowledge. Understanding this, the Party of the working class, in leading the class, applies the *mass line*. It takes these scattered and partial experiences and ideas, and by applying the science of revolution, sums them up, concentrates what is correct, what corresponds to the development of society and will move the class struggle ahead. The Party returns these concentrated ideas to the masses in the form of line and policies, which it perseveres in carrying out and propagating in linking itself with and leading the struggle of the masses, and these concentrated ideas become a tremendous material force as the masses take them up as their own and use them to transform the world through class struggle."

The mass line means, first of all, relying on the masses of people in the struggle, or as is sometimes said, "having faith in the masses." But this is not the same thing as religious "faith," which amounts to a false "leap" away from rational scientific knowledge to a realm which, by definition, is unknown and unknowable to man--and which, in reality, does not exist. The communist principle of relying on, "having faith" in the masses is the exact opposite of this: it is based on an analysis of the real world as it actually is, *materialism*; and as it develops through the struggle of opposing forces--and basically through the internal contradictions within things, in nature and society--*dialectics*.

Based on Materialism

The mass line is based on the understanding that the struggle to produce and distribute the material requirements of life is the driving force underlying the development of all society, that in class society this can only take place through certain class relations, and that therefore, as the Programme of the RCP puts it, "The history of society (since classes first developed in ancient times) is the history of class struggle. The continuing development of society from a lower to a qualitatively higher one has been accomplished throughout history by the overthrow of one class by another which represents a more advanced form of organization of production and society as a whole."

Through the development of society in just this way, mankind has now reached the stage where it can finally enter a new era in human history. It will be an era where the division of society into classes will no longer stand in the way of rationally struggling with nature to develop production and all of society, which rests on the foundation of production.

Why is it now possible to achieve this? It is not because anyone "wishes" or "wills" it to be so. It is because the material conditions--the development of large-scale productive forces and on this basis, the world-historical development of the modern working class carrying out socialized production--makes it possible. And further, it is not only possible but necessary, and inevitable, that society advance to this stage of communism. To put it simply, capitalism stands as the direct barrier to the development of society to a higher stage and it must be swept aside and fully eliminated.

Capitalism is the highest form of the division of society into classes--a division into a small handful of owners of massive means of production at one pole, and at the other millions of propertyless workers (proletarians), who are deprived of all ownership of the means of production and can live only by enriching the owners, the capitalists.

As the Party's Programme states, "on the one hand the development of capitalism has laid the basis for a life undreamed of in the past, but on the other hand the continued existence of capitalism keeps society from attaining this and keeps the great majority of society in continual suffering...The rise of capitalism, though brought about through great oppression of the people, was historically progressive, because it made possible the development of large-scale socialized production, and more because capitalism brought into being and concentrated as a mighty army capitalism's own gravedigger, the modern proletariat.

"The proletariat is the true creator of large-scale socialized production and the true motor in developing the productive forces in modern society. It is the historic mission of the proletariat to overthrow capitalism and replace it with a higher form of society, to liberate the productive forces from the shackles of capitalism, finally eliminate all forms of exploitation, all domination of one section of society over another, and open up completely new possibilities for the domination of humanity as a whole over nature."

Scientific Outlook

It is understanding this that enables the Party of the working class to apply the mass line. It is this scientific outlook representing the working class that makes it possible to penetrate beneath the appearance of things to their essence, to see beyond temporary and superficial phenomena, to advance with the main current of development and not be swept into side-streams or smashed on hidden rocks.

If capitalism could continue to improve life for the masses of people, or if capitalism were the highest degree of development mankind is capable of achieving, as the capitalists constantly preach, then, of course, there would be no need--or possibility--for revolution. But exactly the opposite is the case.

Objectively, society can only advance at this stage through revolution by the proletariat. But such a revolution can only be made by the determined action of millions. Such a revolution is inevitable, it must and will occur. But this will only happen as the masses--and first and foremost the masses of workers--become convinced of the necessity, of the inevitability of the overthrow and elimination of capitalism.

How to resolve this contradiction--the answer to this lies in the application of the mass line by the Party of the working class. But in order to apply the mass line, the Party must base itself firmly on the understanding that people learn through their own experience, and not simply through "being told" what is correct and what must be done.

Propaganda, while an extremely important vehicle for the Party to lay out the whole situation and the scientific basis for revolution to the masses, cannot by itself develop revolutionary understanding. For that the masses must have their own experience. In relation to that, the role of agitation by the Party is crucial--to organize the anger of the masses over particular outrages and abuses into militant, disciplined struggle, uniting many, not just a few. Agitation is key to unfolding around a particular struggle exposure of the system of exploitation which continually gives rise to such outrages and abuses and to indicate the links between the different struggles against this system.

No Party is fit to lead the masses, nor can it be in any position to determine what must be done and how to do it, unless it continually strengthens its ties with the masses and takes part, together with them, in the daily struggle against exploitation and oppression, and assists them in forging links between their struggles against the common enemy.

Repeated Experience

In order to determine the road forward and advance through the roadblocks on this path, the working class, and its Party, needs not one experience, or a few, but repeated experience. It is not a question of a few "smart people" drawing up a blueprint for "how society ought to be" and imposing this on reality, but of the masses of people struggling to change the world and in the process learning more about it, and the laws governing it, in order to change it further...and on, in an endless spiral.

But the experience of the masses, in their struggle to produce, in the class struggle and in scientific experimentation, does not take place in a vacuum, of course. It takes place in class society. And in capitalist society, along with their monopoly of ownership of the means of production, the capitalists control the media of mass communication, the educational system, etc.

They constantly try to "sum up" the experience of the masses according to the capitalists' own upside-down world view. They preach to the masses that they are dependent for their very lives on the capitalists, who "provide them with jobs," etc.--when, in reality, just the reverse is true. They try in this way to prevent the masses from uniting in struggle against them--promoting instead the idea that "every man for himself" is the natural order of things.

Where mass struggle wrings concessions from the capitalists, they try to picture this as a "gift" from them. They are forever bringing forward new politicians and other spokesmen, who pose as friends of the people in order to rob the masses of political initiative and independent action in their own interests--just as the capitalists rob them of the fruits of their productive labor.

And on top of all this, they use their whole state apparatus--police, army, courts, bureaucracies, etc.--to forcibly attack the struggles of the masses and to keep them in conditions of economic slavery. In these circumstances, in the everyday conditions of capitalist society, it is inevitable that people try various means, other than mass struggle against capitalism, to find a way out of this wage-slavery and the misery it means for millions. But it is just as inevitable that, for the great majority, there is no "way out" except through the common struggle of millions against capitalism.

Regardless of anyone's will, and regardless of the lying propaganda of the bourgeoisie and the influence of its ideology (which exists even within the working class) the laws of capitalism assert themselves. These laws dictate that the capitalists must exploit and oppress the masses of people, and that the masses will therefore rise up against them, until they are overthrown and class society is abolished.

This is why the Party of the working class must base itself on the experience and the struggle of the masses broadly--and not on that of a few individuals. To do this it is important to take into account that the masses at a given time and place are composed of different parts--the relatively advanced, intermediate and backward.

The Party must pay special attention to uniting with and raising the level of advanced workers not yet Party members, who continually come forward in these struggles as leaders. These workers are potentially a key link, a lever, to join the Party with the life and struggles of the class as a whole. In order for the Party to learn and grow, and in order for the movement of the masses to advance, the Party must train the advanced workers in the science of revolution, including the application of the mass line. And it must train them not apart from, but in the course of actually leading the struggle of the broad masses.

Persevering

And the Party must persevere--must learn together with the masses through the course of many struggles and must on this basis develop its ability to lead the masses, through all these struggles, toward the final goal of revolution.

But persevering does not mean tailing behind "at a snail's pace." It means uniting with the advanced within the working class and relying on them to bring forward the broad masses in struggle. It means enabling the masses to make the greatest advances and strengthen their ranks to the greatest possible degree through each battle against the enemy.

Persevering means, in short, as the Programme of the RCP states, that the Party must bend "every effort to fulfill three main objectives in these struggles: to win as much as can be won in the immediate battle and weaken the enemy; to raise the general level of consciousness and sense of organization of the struggling masses and instill in them the revolutionary outlook of the proletariat; and to develop the most active and advanced in these struggles into communists, recruit them into the Party and train them as revolutionary leaders."

The mass line does not mean that the Party's policies simply amount to holding up a mirror to the level of consciousness of the masses at any time. "Whatever the masses already understand, that is the mass line, that is what we should give back to them"--such is a distortion of the mass line and a denial of the Party's role as the vanguard of the working class, its *leadership* in the struggle against capitalism. This amounts to giving up the goal of revolution and perpetuating the conditions of slavery for the working class.

The conditions of capitalism do, in a certain sense, and up to a certain point, "unite" the masses of workers--bring them together in ever more concentrated, more socialized, production. And these same conditions do compel the workers to unite in struggle against the capitalists, to survive and to keep from being crushed. But, at the same time, capitalist society also divides the workers, forces them to compete for jobs and survival and maintains other divisions among them--nationality, sex, age, skilled and unskilled, differentials in pay, etc.

And beyond this, capitalist society and the culture and propaganda promoted by the bourgeoisie--which reflects and serves its interests, its position as the exploiting minority in society, as private owners of socially produced wealth--obscures and keeps hidden the basic laws that govern the development of nature and society. Capitalism disguises the basic relations in society, so that it appears that all social

relations--class relations--are relations between individuals, between owners of commodities. In particular capitalism disguises exploitation--the ripping off by the capitalists of surplus value produced by the labor of the workers--as an "equal exchange" (work for wages) between the worker and the capitalist.

Living within capitalist society and caught up in these contradictions, the "spontaneous" ideas of the masses are scattered, unsystematic and contradictory. There are the correct ideas which stem from the position of the working class in production, its socialization, and its struggle against exploitation and oppression. And there are incorrect ideas which stem from the ideology and propaganda of the bourgeoisie but which also find a basis in the worker's experience in capitalist society, which forces competition among the workers, maintains a "division of labor," etc.

And more, as the Programme of the RCP points out, "Each worker perceives a part of the reality of capitalism, but none by himself can grasp the overall picture, fully discover the source of his oppression or grasp the laws of nature and society that determine the development of the class struggle. In order to become conscious of itself as a class, and to know and change the world in accordance with its revolutionary interests, the working class must have the leadership of its own political Party."

Role of the Party

As stressed several times, the leadership of that Party is exercised through its application of the mass line. The Party must, as the Programme states, apply the science of revolution, based on the world outlook of the proletariat, to concentrate the correct ideas that the masses gain in everyday life. It must discard the incorrect and, in the course of uniting with the masses in the fight against capitalist exploitation and oppression, struggle against these incorrect ideas which have their source in capitalist society and its relations of exploitation.

The experience of the masses, especially the mass of workers, is the *raw material* for correct lines and policies. But it is not the finished product, the correct line itself. To develop this correct line requires the application of Marxism-Leninism to "process" the ideas gained by the masses through their experience. It is *this* that the Party must return to the masses and persevere in propagating and carrying out.

And this is a constant process--from experience to summed up experience (rational knowledge acquired through the application of Marxism-Leninism), back to experience (class struggle) ... and on and on. Further, the Party must not only "process" the ideas of the masses and raise their experience to rational knowledge, but must continually arm the masses themselves with the science of revolution, to enable ever broader numbers to know and change the world, and develop the struggle of millions, more and more in conformity with the revolutionary outlook and interests of the working class.

The mass line is not a gimmick. It is not a question of "taking the positive and getting rid of the negative" or building up what the communists "like" and knocking down the ideas they don't like. The fact is that the experience of the masses themselves are governed by the laws of development of nature and society. Someone might "like" to gain experience living in a capitalist society without exploitation, but there is no such thing as that. The capitalists might "like" to gain experience in smoothing over the contradictions of capitalism, but that is also impossible.

This system will end up in crisis and depression, will produce wars and widespread suffering for the great majority. This is inevitable, independent of anyone's will, due to its very contradictions--and fundamental to the contradiction between socialized production and private ownership that characterizes

capitalism. And just as inevitably this system will give rise to widespread struggle against this suffering, against the outrages and abuses that are the daily experience of the masses under capitalist rule.

Laws of Development

This is the way things are bound to develop--toward revolution to abolish capitalism. But revolution will not occur "automatically." At each point in the development of the struggle the bourgeoisie and the proletariat must and will contend not only in the practical battlefield, but also in the sphere of ideology.

There is, and will be so long as classes remain, a continual struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat over how to sum up the struggle, what lessons to draw from each battle and what road to take in order to change with the situation. To the degree that the proletariat, through its Party, does not correctly sum up this experience, does not correctly concentrate the ideas of the masses, the bourgeoisie will, through its political leaders and representatives, put over its summation.

Even where it is forced to make a concession in the practical struggle, the bourgeoisie will lay the basis for snatching it, and more, back. So while the outcome of every immediate battle is important, the most important thing is the growing class understanding, organization and unity built up among the workers in the course of many battles. As Marx and Engels said in the *Communist Manifesto* more than 100 years ago, "The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of workers." (p. 42, Chinese edition).

There is no "pure experience." In class society, experience reflects class struggle and can only be interpreted according to the interests and outlook of one class or another. The proletariat and the proletariat alone is capable of correctly summing up experience, because only its outlook and interest conform to the development of society. And only the proletariat is capable of resolving the contradictions of capitalism through revolution to advance society to the stage of communism, where mankind voluntarily and consciously changes the world and itself in the process.

This does not mean that, "in one stroke" or through one battle the masses of people will grasp the need for revolution or the road forward to making revolution. As emphasized before, that requires repeated experience, on the part of the masses of workers and their Party, and the constant summation of that experience by the Party to forge and illuminate the revolutionary road.

Sharpening Struggle

But, as also stressed before, the experience of the masses is governed by the internal contradictions of capitalism and the laws of development of nature and society. The understanding of the masses of the need to overthrow capitalism grows together with the sharpening of the contradictions of capitalism and the development toward a revolutionary situation--a situation in which the capitalist system is in deep economic and/or political crisis, the robbery of the workers is more intensified and the criminal absurdity of capitalism, with its want and starvation amidst plenty, are laid even more bare than in "normal" times; when the ruling class is forced into ever more cut-throat competition in its own ranks, and the masses of people feel the urgency and see the possibility of destroying the chains that enslave them to capital.

In such a situation, however, the bourgeoisie, while fighting more bitterly within its own ranks, will increase a thousand times its exploitation of the workers and its brutal suppression of the masses'

resistance. And as part of this, it will increase a thousand times its ideological offensive to confuse, split and paralyze the growing upsurge.

Only through the role of the Party of the working class, its application of the mass line to sum up and lead this mass struggle forward, can the working class unite its own ranks and rally behind it the great mass of the people to strike the decisive blows and bring down the capitalist enemy.

But the application by the Party of the mass line is not only a vital question with the development of a revolutionary situation under capitalism. At all stages of the struggle, both in building toward the overthrow of capitalism and in continuing the revolutionary struggle to eliminate capitalism and all its vestiges once the bourgeoisie is overthrown, the Party must consistently apply the mass line. It must do so, both to advance the struggle and to raise ever broader numbers of the masses to the ranks of conscious revolutionaries.

Only when the historic goal of communism has been achieved, will there no longer be a need for the Party to apply the mass line; then, in fact there will no longer be a need for the Party, because, as the Programme of the RCP states, "classes and class struggle will have been eliminated and all of society will consciously apply the principles of communism."

But between here and there is a long, complicated, and bitter struggle--a struggle made up of thousands of battles, of skirmishes leading to major encounters, from one stage to another. And at each stage the Party must deepen its ties with the masses and its grasp of Marxism-Leninism, and on this basis strengthen its application of the mass line. It must do so to fulfill its objectives and tasks as the Party of the working class and enable the working class to advance to the greatest degree possible through each battle, to accumulate through its repeated experience a deeper understanding of the laws governing the struggle, and to develop the consciousness, organization and unity needed to achieve the final goal.

[End of first article.]

Mass Line Is Key To Methods of Leading Struggle

[An unsigned article originally published in Revolution, March 15, 1976, and reprinted with two other articles in the RCP pamphlet The Mass Line in 1976.]

Recently (Dec. 15, 1975) an article in *Revolution* went into the basic principles underlying the mass line and its application to developing the revolutionary movement of the working class. This article stressed that, on the one hand the masses of workers must learn through their own experience--and not just one, or a few, but many, repeated experiences--the laws governing the actual development of the struggle; and that, on the other hand the proletariat--through its Party--must also wage repeated struggle with the bourgeoisie in the ideological sphere "over how to sum up the struggle, what lessons to draw from each battle and what road to take in order to change with the situation."

In light of all this, that article laid special emphasis for the Party to "pay special attention to uniting with and raising the level of advanced workers in the science of revolution including the application of the mass line ... not apart from, but in the course of, actually leading the struggle of the broad masses."

Unleashing Masses' Initiative

Closely linked to these crucial principles of the mass line is the question of methods--*how* to develop mass struggle, unleash the initiative of the masses in struggle, to raise their consciousness in the course of it and train the advanced who come forward in struggle as communists.

Mao Tsetung spoke to the same problem nearly 30 years after the founding of the Communist Party of China (and shortly before the capture of nationwide power by the Chinese people under the leadership of the Communist Party): "For over twenty years our Party has carried on mass work every day, and for the past dozen years it has talked about the mass line every day. We have always maintained that the revolution must rely on the masses of the people, on everybody's taking a hand, and have opposed relying merely on a few persons issuing orders. The mass line, however, is still not being thoroughly carried out in the work of some comrades; they still rely solely on a handful of people working in solitude. One reason is that, whatever they do, they are always reluctant to explain it to the people they lead and that they do not understand why or how to give play to the initiative and creative energy of those they lead.

"Subjectively they too want everyone to take a hand in the work, but they do not let other people know what is to be done or how to do it. That being the case, how can everyone be expected to get moving and how can anything be done well? To solve this problem the basic thing is, of course, to carry out ideological education on the mass line, but at the same time we must teach these comrades many concrete methods of work."

Explaining Political Line

This problem--of failing to explain, even to the advanced workers, lines, policies, actions, etc. that the Party has taken up--this is a real problem in developing the struggle in this country today, a basic

question of method for the Party, as the vanguard of the working class. Failing to explain what is to be done does not mean that people are not told about this or that event, or are not asked--even urged--to take part. The problem is that the *line* on which the action, policy, etc. is based, is not gone into, or gone into only in a shallow way.

What is this particular action, policy, etc. meant to achieve? Why is it correct and necessary and timely to take this up now? How does it relate to the fight that workers are already waging or already see the need to wage? How is the line on which an action is based a concentration of the experience and ideas of the masses, which will expose more sharply the face of the class enemy and deepen their understanding of the nature of the fight against this enemy? Who are the allies in this fight? How will a policy help the masses to fight in a more conscious and determined way for their own interests? These are the kind of questions that must be gone into, in discussing and explaining policies and actions taken up by the Party. Failing to go deeply into this, how can it be expected that the initiative of the masses, especially the advanced workers, will be unleashed?

Often related to this error is the tendency to tail the masses, or as the previous article on the mass line put it, to simply "mirror" their present level of consciousness and give back to them what they already understand. Along with that there is the question that, as Mao Tsetung summarized it, "Our comrades must not assume that the masses have no understanding of what they themselves do not yet understand. It often happens that the masses outstrip us and are eager to advance a step when our comrades are still tailing behind certain backward elements, for instead of acting as leaders of the masses such comrades reflect the views of these backward elements and, moreover, mistake them for those of the broad masses."

Is this not a problem that has often arisen in the work of our Party already? Are there not many cases when the masses looked to the advanced forces, including Party members, to kickoff and lead them in struggle, only to be disappointed? Have we not been told on more than one occasion such things as "we thought you were going to lead a walkout, how come you didn't?"...or found ourselves simply talking in a general way about attacks when the masses wanted to get together to fight concrete abuses and outrages slapping us in the face?

Determining Correct Forms of Struggle

This, in turn, is linked to the questions of what are the correct methods for building struggle, what are the correct forms to build it--or, more exactly, how to *determine* the correct forms. This, too, is a question of applying the mass line. It often happens that the masses go into struggle, or come to the advanced forces looking for leadership to go into action--and have creative ideas on how to do it. They have had rich experience in fighting the enemy and with different forms of developing this struggle.

The role of communists, once again, in relation to this is to apply the mass line, to concentrate what is correct in their ideas about how to fight and go into this deeply, especially with the advanced workers, and unite with them to organize the broadest number of people in active struggle. And, as this struggle develops, to continually apply the science of Marxism-Leninism to sum it up and give back to the masses the main lessons of the struggle.

In carrying this out it is especially important to guard against the tendency to substitute subjective thinking, or pre-conceived notions about how to build the struggle, for concrete analysis of the actual conditions of the struggle and application of the mass line to concentrate the experience and ideas of the masses. Otherwise the advanced forces can quickly become isolated from the broad masses, even in

cases where the masses have initially sought out the advanced forces looking for leadership or have rallied behind a call issued by the advanced forces, because--initially at least--it did reflect and concentrate their own interests and showed the way forward in the fight.

The masses have had a lot of experience that teaches them that the class enemy has real teeth, that it will hit back at struggles launched against it and that it will pay special attention to isolating--either by direct attack or through attempts at buying off--those who come forward as leaders of the struggle. The Party must learn, and must train the advanced workers--while learning from them--the methods for combatting this.

Investigation and discussion must be carried out broadly to develop the forms of struggle that enable the masses to pit their *strength* against the enemy. In this question the masses also have a wealth of experience and special attention must be paid to learning from it and applying Marxism-Leninism to sum it up, to concentrate what is correct in it, what corresponds to and will lead to the development of the struggle in a forward direction, toward the final goal of proletarian revolution. It must always be kept in mind, as the previous mass line article pointed out that "Between here and there [communism] is a long, complicated and bitter struggle--a struggle made up of thousands of battles, of skirmishes leading to major encounters from one stage to another."

"And at each stage the Party must deepen its ties with the masses and its grasp of Marxism-Leninism, and on this basis strengthen its application of the mass line. It must do so to fulfill its objectives and tasks as the Party of the working class and enable the working class to advance to the greatest degree possible through each battle."

Advancing Through Each Battle

This applies *within* each battle--each of the thousands of skirmishes as well as major encounters. If at any point during the development of the struggle, we depart from these principles, fail to deepen our application of the mass line in any respect, including the aspect of determining the correct forms of struggle, we are bound to make mistakes, and the struggle is bound to be set back. Experience has already been accumulated in this regard and should be summed up.

There are many cases where initially the struggle was developing in a big way, more and more people were coming forward, taking initiative, grasping matters in their own hands, giving active expression in battle to their deep hatred for the class enemy, but at a certain point the leading forces substituted their own "good idea" for a scientific application of the mass line in determining the next step--and what was the result?

The result was inevitably that the momentum built up was lost--at least temporarily--the initiative of the masses was dampened, the hand of the enemy was strengthened and the advanced forces became isolated. Where yesterday hundreds, sometimes even thousands, were in motion, now only a small number remain active. Where before the masses were gaining in their consciousness and sense of organization, now they become confused, demoralized and divided.

Of course, there will be ebbs and flows in the struggle due to objective conditions and the relative strength of class forces, and we cannot avoid altogether making mistakes in the struggle, because we--the Party together with the class as a whole--must learn how to wage this class warfare in the course of waging it. But the more thoroughly and all-sidedly we apply the mass line at each step, the more we discover and deepen our grasp of the laws governing the struggle through the study of Marxism-

Leninism, and return concentrated, correct lines, policies, tactics, etc., to the masses, the more we can learn to avoid mistakes and to correct them more quickly when they are made.

Isolating Enemy Agents at Close Quarters

Another lesson that must be summed up is that the class enemy does not only oppose the struggle in one form, nor does it have only one face. The enemy not only uses every means to openly oppose the struggle but tries by every way it can to sidetrack and sabotage it. It is bound to happen that in any decisive struggle agents of the bourgeoisie surface and work to wreck the struggle from within. It does not matter whether such people are directly in the pay of the bourgeoisie or not--though in many cases they are, and where this can be clearly demonstrated it is important to expose it--but the key thing is that they have the same *class outlook* as the bourgeoisie and on this basis represent and actively promote their interests within the struggle.

Therefore the Party, representing the outlook and interests of the working class, must be good at not only formulating general policies for a given struggle, but for developing at each decisive point the correct tactics, that indicate the next step forward, based on correctly concentrating the real needs and interests of the broad masses. Again, Mao Tsetung has summed up a very important lesson in this regard: "in a situation when the class struggle grows increasingly acute and is waged at close quarters, the proletariat has to depend for its victory entirely on the correct and firm tactics of struggle of its own party."

Sometimes this means entering into some form of compromise or agreement with opportunists--who claim to stand with the working class but actually represent the capitalist class--and at other times it may mean refusing to enter into any such compromise or agreement. This depends on concretely and all-sidedly analyzing the actual situation, what the particular tactics of the enemy--including enemy agents within the ranks of the masses--are, how exposed they are, what the level of understanding of the masses is, etc.

But, at all times, as the *Programme* of our Party states, in referring to the policy of jamming the union officials--which has broad importance for all our work--"To carry out this policy, the rank and file workers must at all times fight to keep the initiative in their own hands and build the struggle in their own class interests, never relying on the union leadership to carry the struggle--even those who can be won to stand with the working class--or allowing them to set the terms and limits of the struggle, reducing the rank and file movement to a 'pressure group.'" And the Party must lead the masses, the rank and file, in this, and must grasp that this is a process that requires repeated experience and comparison.

To sum up this point, the exposure and isolation of opportunist, enemy agents within the ranks of the masses must be done on the basis of applying the mass line to constantly develop and deepen not only correct general policies but concrete tactics to advance the struggle according to the interests of the masses and step by step toward the aim of proletarian revolution, educating the masses as to the nature of the enemy--open and disguised--and the long-term aim of the struggle, in the course of the actual battles. And, at the same time, the Party must constantly arm ever broader masses with a scientific understanding of the role of opportunists, of their *class nature*, and within that pay special attention to training the advanced who come forward as revolutionary leaders, so that they are increasingly armed with the science of the working class.

Advanced Actions

All that has been said, emphasizing the importance of uniting with and constantly winning over and deepening ties with ever broader numbers in struggle, does not mean that the advanced forces, led by the Party, should not take advanced actions. On the contrary, communists and advanced workers must play a vanguard role in the practical as well as the theoretical sphere. In other words, when it corresponds to the needs and desires of the masses, the advanced forces must be bold in taking action, action that will bring the rest of the masses into motion themselves, and must not wait until absolutely everyone is willing to "start things." Again, a principle summed up by Mao Tsetung is very important here: "Communists should create favorable new situations through struggle."

This, of course, does not mean that a handful of communists and advanced forces should try to take on the enemy all by themselves or to act as "individual heroes," substituting their own actions for the struggle of the masses, or initiating struggle that the masses do not yet see the need to take up. But simply because an action of the advanced forces may create controversy and struggle about whether it's right or wrong, should be supported or opposed--this does not in itself make the action incorrect. In fact, in many cases just such controversy and struggle is what is needed and is a very good thing, not a bad thing.

Advanced, Intermediate and Backward

We must never forget, once again learning from Mao Tsetung, that "The masses in any given place are generally composed of three parts, the relatively active, the intermediate and the relatively backward. The leaders must therefore be skilled in uniting the small number of active elements around the leadership and must rely on them to raise the level of the intermediate elements and to win over the backward elements."

Whether or not a particular advanced action should be taken depends on whether or not it will accomplish the above goals summarized by Mao Tsetung. In short it is absolutely correct, and necessary, for the advanced forces to initiate bold, determined action, when in fact it will *galvanize* broad numbers in struggle, will act as a spark to set them in motion and give play to their own initiative in fighting the hated enemy. There are, both in the past and more recent history of the workers' movement, many positive examples of this kind, as well as negative ones where the communists deviated from the mass line, and we must go deeper into these by applying Marxism-Leninism to learn more from them.

To summarize the main points in this and the previous article on the mass line, a point from the previous article is central: "as also stressed before, the experience of the masses is governed by the internal, contradictions of capitalism and the laws of development of nature and society. The understanding of the masses of the need to overthrow capitalism grows together with the sharpening of the contradictions of capitalism and the development toward a revolutionary situation."

And that article further stressed that, in order to become convinced of the necessity and inevitability of socialist revolution and to learn the means for making that revolution "requires repeated experience on the part of the masses of workers and their Party, and the constant summation of that experience by the Party to forge and illuminate the, revolutionary road." To that it must be added that not only repeated experience, but *comparison* is required for the masses to gain this understanding, comparison--in the course of the actual struggle--of the lines, policies, tactics, etc., of the two fundamentally opposed forces, the proletariat, represented by its Party, and the bourgeoisie, with all its various representatives, in their various forms, open and concealed.

Question of Revolution Comes to Fore

It is through this repeated experience and comparison--and the leadership of the Party in both the practical and theoretical spheres as summarized earlier--that the masses will step by step and more and more deeply grasp and embrace the outlook and the lines and policies representing their own highest interests, the interests of the only revolutionary class in modern society, the working class, representing the majority and the future, the emancipation of mankind.

Socialist revolution, the seizure of state power by the working class and its transformation of all of society to abolish classes is inevitable. When we say this we do not mean it is automatic--that it will happen through a mere "collapse" of capitalism, or that the masses, without conscious leadership will simply "grope" their way to communism.

To say this revolution is inevitable means that the development of society demands it, that capitalism stands as the direct barrier to progress for mankind and must be removed, and that the evils and ulcers caused by capitalism cannot be removed, except through socialist revolution. It means that therefore, capitalism will inevitably end up in crisis, will continually produce massive suffering and waste and destruction, until it is overthrown and eliminated.

It means that, even where the capitalist class is able, temporarily to resolve such a crisis its way and prolong its rule, to inflict momentary setbacks and defeats on the working class, it cannot escape the laws of its own system. It will yet again find itself faced with resistance and a tide rising toward revolution, until this revolution is finally achieved and carried through completely. It means that, until this occurs, the question of revolution, the need for revolution to do away with capitalism will continually assert itself, despite anyone's will, or any actions of the capitalists.

It is the role of the Party of the working class to enable the working class to build its struggle against the capitalist class as powerfully as possible at each stage and to ever more consciously build it toward the aim of revolution. The mass line and the concrete methods of developing the struggle that flow from it are mighty weapons that the Party can and must wield on behalf of the working class in this great cause.

[End of second article.]

The Day to Day Struggle and the Revolutionary Goal

By Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Central Committee, Revolutionary Communist Party

[Originally published in Revolution, May 15, 1976, and reprinted with two other articles in the RCP pamphlet The Mass Line in 1976.]

Last October, at the time of the announcement of the founding of the Revolutionary Communist Party, I wrote an article in *Revolution*, focusing on the question "How does the Party carry out its central task today?"--"to build the struggle, class consciousness and revolutionary unity of the working class and develop its leadership of a broad united front against the U.S. imperialists, in the context of the world-wide united front against imperialism aimed at the rulers of the two superpowers."

In that article I noted that "The present struggles of the working class in this country are centered around wages and benefits, working conditions, against speed-up, lay-offs, compulsory overtime and other attempts by the capitalists to increase the exploitation of the workers."

This, I pointed out, forms at present the "center of gravity" of the working class struggle and the work of the Party. And (to quote again from that article) "it is mainly by building this struggle and bringing light into it...that the Party will be able to mobilize and unite masses of workers, link up struggles and make the greatest strides in broadening the workers' movement into the all-around fight against the imperialist system, uniting and leading all those who are oppressed under it" toward the goal of overthrowing the bourgeoisie and establishing socialism under the rule of the working class. This represents a summation of fundamental principles adopted by the Party at its Founding Congress.

Since that time, on the basis of carrying out this line, advances have been made in linking up with and leading mass struggles and some important questions have come more sharply into focus. In particular, the question of the relationship between this "center of gravity" and the central task of the Party, between the day to day struggles and the revolutionary goal of the working class, the question of how to advance the movement of the masses of workers from its present level into a revolutionary workers movement aimed at the overthrow and eventual elimination of the bourgeoisie and class society--this is a vital question to which the whole Party and all class conscious workers must consistently devote our efforts to solving, in the course of building struggle against the ruling class.

Fundamentally this is a question of mass line, of constantly concentrating the correct ideas of the masses and returning these to the masses in the form of lines and policies that will enable them to move forward in the fight against the bourgeoisie. But this will remain merely a slogan--"mass line"--and be reduced to reformism, to limiting the struggle of the working class to an attempt to improve its position under capitalism, unless it is really based on the application of the science of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, unless it is guided by the basic truth which this science reveals: that capitalism is incapable of providing any real "improvement" in the position of the masses of workers, that it is based on exploiting the working class as wage-slaves and oppressing the great majority of society, that it stands as the direct barrier to the development of society, and that the working class must and will lead the masses of people in sweeping it aside and replacing it with a higher form of society.

In noting where the struggle of the working class is mainly concentrated today, and determining on that basis the "center of gravity" of the Party's work at present, we are taking stock of where things actually stand and stressing the importance of linking up with and leading these struggles, involving literally millions of workers. But, as the Party's Programme states, this means striving to fulfill three main objectives in these--as in all--struggles: "to win as much as can be won in the immediate battle and weaken the enemy; to raise the general level of consciousness and sense of organization of the struggling masses and instill in them the revolutionary outlook of the proletariat; and to develop the most active and advanced in these struggles into communists, recruit them into the Party and train them as revolutionary leaders." It must be emphasized that all three of these objectives must be carried out, that they are dialectically related and it is impossible to correctly carry out any of them except by carrying out all three together.

How to Move Forward

But in taking stock of where the struggles of the workers are presently concentrated and stressing the need to link up with and lead these struggles as summarized just above the point is not to say that we want the working class movement to *remain* at this level, for that would mean in fact continuing to condemn the workers to wage-slavery.

Besides, as I wrote in the previous article, many workers are already involved in fighting on various battlefronts against the ruling class, and not only around wages, working conditions, etc. But as I pointed out in that article, while "many workers are actively involved in these battles... [this is] generally not in an organized, class conscious way."

That is, these workers together with others who are hit by particular attacks, fight back against them spontaneously, and still largely without a class conscious understanding of the *nature* of the fight and its relationship to the overall struggle against the capitalist enemy. To put it simply, in fighting on these various battlefronts the workers involved do not, as a rule, do so consciously as *workers*, as part of a *class*, which must take up and lead all these battles *in its own class interest*.

It is the case that today it is mainly in the fight around wages, working conditions, etc. that workers fight with a *beginning*, an *elementary* and only elementary, *sense* of fighting together as workers. It is extremely important to work to raise this embryonic sense of common bond as workers into more developed class consciousness through the course of all these basic day to day battles. But these struggles, and the work of communists in them--even if carried out in the most correct way--will never in and of themselves lead to the achievement of the revolutionary goal of overthrowing capitalism and establishing socialism, nor establish in the understanding of the workers involved in these struggles the need to build their fight toward this goal. It is only as they learn to take up every major question, every important battle against the enemy, *and* to take them up as part of their own class struggle against this enemy, with the aim of overthrowing it, that the workers raise their consciousness to class consciousness in the fullest sense and develop their movement into a revolutionary struggle.

The point of noting where the workers' struggles are mainly concentrated now is to be able to unite with them and lead the masses of workers in broadening their movement into the all-around struggle against imperialism, the revolutionary struggle to overthrow it. In order to achieve this, the Party, through the application of the mass line, as stressed before, must carry out the principle of developing "fighters on one front against the enemy into fighters on all fronts." (Party Programme)

This means especially working to arm the masses of workers with an understanding of the *class basis* of all events in society and enable them to draw the links, in their understanding and actual struggle, between all the different battles being waged throughout society against the common enemy--the capitalist class.

It means keeping firmly in mind and applying in practice the strategic understanding that "Only by uniting with all social forces fighting imperialism can the working class develop consciousness of its own historical role as capitalism's gravedigger," and that through this process "the working class not only wins allies in the course of building the united front, but learns why it alone can lead them to overthrow the monopoly capitalists." (Party Programme)

Draw Out Real Connections

How do we resolve this contradiction--that today the actual struggle of the masses of workers is concentrated in the fight around wages, working conditions, etc., but that in order to develop its revolutionary consciousness and play its revolutionary role, the working class must build and lead a broad united front against the monopoly capitalists, must act as the vanguard fighter against all oppression? The answer lies in approaching *every* struggle of the working class--and for that matter every struggle involving different strata and social forces--as part of the political objective of building a revolutionary movement, led by the working class, aimed at overthrowing and eliminating capitalism.

The connection between a fight, for example, against layoffs and the fight against the imperialists' aggression and war preparations, is not that we want "jobs not war"--for to put this forward under capitalism is merely to spread illusions about the nature of the system, which inevitably produces war and unemployment--but that both of them are directed against the "same dark forces," against the ruling class of capitalists, and that in the long run, in order to do away with both unemployment and war, it is necessary to do away with their source, the bourgeoisie and the imperialist system. The same applies for the real links between all the different struggles in society.

We cannot carry out this kind of political work, and build a revolutionary workers movement, if we try to show how every event in society relates to the "center of gravity" of the present workers' struggle. We can only do it by showing, in a living way, how every event, every struggle, including those concentrated now in this present "center of gravity," relate to what they all, in fact, do have in common: that every attack people are forced to fight, that every abuse and outrage, all oppression, is rooted in the capitalist system of exploiting the working class as wage-slaves, in the fundamental contradiction between socialized production and private ownership, which can only be resolved through socialist revolution, led by the working class and its Party.

These questions are, of course, not new ones in the history of the working class movement in this country or internationally. In fact, V.I. Lenin spoke directly to these same problems in developing the revolutionary movement of the working class in Russia at the beginning of this century. "There is nothing more warranted," Lenin wrote, "than the urging of attention to the constant, imperative necessity of deepening and broadening, broadening and deepening, our influence on the masses, our strictly Marxist propaganda and agitation, our ever closer connection with the economic struggle of the working class."

Note that Lenin emphasizes "*our strictly Marxist* propaganda and agitation." And he goes on to say that "Because such urging is at all times warranted, under all conditions and in all situations, it must not be turned into special slogans, nor should it justify attempts to build upon it a special trend in Social-

Democracy [Communism]. A border line exists here; to exceed the bounds is to turn this indisputably legitimate urging into a narrowing of the aims and scope of the movement, into a doctrinaire blindness to the vital and cardinal political tasks of the movement." And Lenin concludes that "We must educate the whole class of wage workers to the role of fighters for the emancipation of mankind from all oppression. We must constantly teach more and more sections of this class; we must learn to approach the most backward, the most undeveloped members of this class ... to raise them steadily and patiently to the level of Social-Democratic [Communist] consciousness without making a dry dogma out of our doctrine--to teach them not only from books, but through participation in the daily struggle for existence of these backward and undeveloped strata of the proletariat."

Once again, it is important to stress, as Lenin does, that the key to this is to carry out "strictly Marxist propaganda and agitation" in connection with these struggles, to base ourselves on this revolutionary science and apply the mass line as the revolutionary weapon that it is, on this basis. (Quotes above from Lenin are from his article "On Confounding Politics With Pedagogics," written in 1905, Vol 8 of his *Collected Works*.)

Already, as I noted earlier, there are both advances and also sharp questions that have arisen in the work of the Party in carrying out the correct line adopted at its Founding Congress--questions that have been pin-pointed here. Experience should be summed up with these points in mind.

There have been cases, for example, where we have led large numbers of workers in fighting against particular attacks, and in large-scale, even sometimes protracted struggle, yet we have failed through the course of this to carry out "strictly Marxist" political work. There are even cases where, for example, in the period building up to May Day, we have united with advanced workers to lead masses of workers in hard fought crucial battles, and yet few, and sometimes none, of these workers have been involved in building for May Day, or even in attending the celebration itself. In this case, what is the purpose of building the day to day struggle?--unless as an end in itself, in which case it can only lead to a dead-end.

The same applies to work--and weaknesses in our work--in building for the July 4th demonstration in Philadelphia. Again, we can only draw the real links between the "daily struggle for existence" and other events and struggles--including especially major political events like May Day and the Bicentennial demonstration--if we draw out, in a living way, the links that both have to the larger question of building the movement of the working class as a whole, and its allies against the bourgeois rule, against the imperialist system. And again, if we don't draw the links in this way and build for these important political events in this way, then what--other than reformism--can be the purpose of our work?

The point is not that the daily struggle of the workers around wages, working conditions, etc. is unimportant or should not be concentrated on--it is, in fact, the present "center of gravity" of the workers' struggle and the Party's work. The point is that we must build these and all struggles in a revolutionary way. We must keep in mind, at every step in developing these struggles, and in building and linking up every major battle against the imperialist rulers, the revolutionary goal. We must work painstakingly and consistently to continually raise the level of the workers' movement, to raise ever broader sections of the working class to the conscious struggle against capitalism and for socialism, to rally the greatest number of allies of the working class in the fight against the capitalist enemy and enable the working class to lead a broad united front to overthrow this enemy and achieve the goal of emancipating mankind from all oppression and finally eliminating the bourgeoisie and class society altogether.

[End of third article.]