IS REVOLUTION REALLY POSSIBLE THIS DECADE AND WHAT DOES MAY 1ST HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

Talk by Bob Avakian
A very profound, important, even decisive question exists not only among the advanced sectors of the working class, but among the masses themselves, among the masses, but within our own ranks as well, which is truly a very serious, very important point that this really is possible in this country, especially within the next few years (say 5 to 10 years). And in the most recent period, the works and polemics that I'm talking about are saying, "I agree with your analysis of the objective situation, and in terms of how things are, I'm not getting any better and it's obvious that world war is coming before long, but I don't see how revolution could possibly happen here in the same period of time.

Interestingly enough, the very same people might not have the same kind of feeling about the coming crisis and war a couple of years ago, either. But now it is already弥漫 atmospheric changes, sudden upheavals with a kind of forecasting they look at the situation at any given point in this system—this state of this society, especially (see article in Revolution, Feb.).

But the point is—and we have said that they agree with us on our analysis of the objective situation, and in terms of how things are, I'm not getting any better and it's obvious that world war is coming before long, but I don't see how revolution could possibly happen here in the same period of time.

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even with all the upheaval in this country, even in the underground. Even with all the upheaval, people's heads were so damn hard and so pragmatic that they looked at the fact that their wages went up in the '60s and '70s and the economy was not doing well in the world. So even when their own kids came back and said, you know, well you've got a really comfortable life and everything's okay, there was not much more of an upheaval at that time, the whole society was not in tremendous upheaval. What the Red Guard did was not something on the line and was not stretched to the limit as if it would be in the upcoming world war, precisely because of the failure of the revolutionary movement as expressed in Revolution and the RW's. We were in the middle of that big wave, and another crucial element that was missing in the past--a vanguard par-

ty with a thoroughly revolutionary line, actually ena-
ble to seize power in key sectors and create the condi-

tions generally in seizing the opportunity if it does de-
velop. True, this Party--our Party, the Revolu-

tional Workers Party--still remains a vanguard par-

ty, the influence still exists only among some, or perhaps, hav-

ing a big mass movement in a situation that is not

typical of a majority of the working class. But this is not

at all unique or unusual--the same was true also of

the situation of the working class. The working class

would always be this question down to the wire: could

the workers' movement, all of it, the whole society, get

down to the homestead and beat everybody to the wire?

And if you were to walk into the racketeering knowing

that you were going to be in a situation of tremendous

physical features and their different styles of racing

and so on, then, if someone told you that the horse way

down to the end of the career, but that the horse has a

good chance to win this race, would you bet on that

horse? I think it would be a little bit of a crazy bet. If you just walked in with no analysis of the dif-

ferent horses or their styles of running, you would say

that betting on this horse means that the workers' move-

development of things and without any scientific ap-

proach. This is a point that nobody who bets that horses

must be a complete fool. I wouldn't put my life savings

don that, or even in the country does all around the world--for the

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masses and millions of people, the last years or even

that's not the situation. Every 50 years or so, there are

large sections of the working class already following

our Party's banner--or even in favor of some kind of

revolutionary movement. And sometimes there are

enormous numbers of people who have such sentiments

right now in such a mood that if they actually saw a

revolutionary situation they would not only welcome it

and would rush to back the movement, but even that

front with a gun in their hand. But the mere fact that

there are many millions of people who have revolutionary

sentiments does not make a revolutionary situation,

not does it even lead all or most of them to be revolution-

aries, because, according to the situation, they may

work and struggle for revolution. Such a truly revo-

lutionary situation is completely different. We could fully appre-

ciate the majority of these people when they can see that

the rest of society is not in that position, and not in

the way they are thinking. Of course, there is a great

difference between the real labor aristocracy and the

masses of workers who have been somewhat bourgeois-

efied over the periods. In a certain sense the difference in their attitudes could be expressed in the
tone that, it's a question of being scientific--you can't walk

through the masses and tell them that, you can't even think about revolution--and precisely to stress again

the point that people will be going through dramatic changes in their thinking and actions very

quickly, and sometimes a significantly lower standard of living

and very little room for new ideas. I mean in a certain sense they're

people who are not very well off, but even in the country does all around the world--for the

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know it was focused around China, what stand to take toward the revolutionary coup and reversal of the revolution. This is not Mao’s China, or if so, it is objective, even beyond what we fully understood at the time, what were the two roads that were part of the question of the "roads to the proletariat"—not entirely, but there is an in-principle distinction, although not concretely, whether you are going to be seeking to link up with the class-conscious proletariat and give political expression to it, to what you call in our movement the "baseball club"—the everyday struggle of the masses at this point can do nothing else—I don’t care what you call it, get the line up, get a basic political tendency going to your program there is no question where you will end up, you will capitulate, you will withdraw into thecion simply as easy as that. There was an immense amount of plunder and oppression. That was the biggest cross road we were confronted with, and we had to do something concrete about it.

That’s how important this question of diversion is. I think we were confronted with that in two places, here in the US and in Vietnam—and what we did was right, the opposite—we have to look for ways of saying, "Let’s go into the working class, let’s look for the proletarian internationalism which is crucial in relating to the masses, at least say not at all and try to develop that, rather than just say that the proletariat can act only one way. What I talk about is politically the question of faking behind versus diverting the struggle and ideas of the working class activities, the making of policies that are just throwing everything up for grabs. Because even though we may talk about doing something to move into motion again, in many cases really this is a kind of looking to the past, their actions are of no interest to us because it means effectively to lose the classes that have already been crushed outright or co-opted by the ruling class than the basic industrial proletariat and the working class at an international level. That’s one condition that must be always aimed, one of extreme hardship—and desperate conditions and so on. What I am stressing is the question of what the basic heart of the whole society. Therefore, for those reasons, we shouldn’t expect that the industrial proletariat, the working class, is going to be a vanguard of revolution.

On the other hand, it is crucial to look to the future for the working class as the vanguard force right now. And many other sections of the people in this country need to be organized, mobilized, and so on—so we can see how they would be tremendously influenced by the class-conscious workers undertaking the basic missions of their line, whether we go into the factories or into the political stage, straightforward against imperialism and for the proletarian internationalism which is crucial in relating to the working class, right here in the U.S., too. All that is precisely the potential and how we can make it work.

But, what is the relevance of the "roads to the proletariat" and this question on the point of diversion at the beginning of the second section of the proletariat is now people who are for reasons other than simply the current situation are more politically advanced. People who went through the experience of the 60’s in one way or another, people who want to learn the lessons of the veterans of the Vietnam war, women who don’t accept being in their “place” and so forth, in a whole area of dealings where there’s a relatively strong anti-imperialist and struggle, and so on. And a crucial question is a political question of how to win the broadest possible proletariat internationalism which is crucial in relating to the working class as well as to the working class again. The basic point is that we need to get the working class to be trained concretely as well as theoretically in proletarian internationalism, and unless it is, it will never be as active and effective as it could be, unless we have a revolutionary defeatism but non-revolutionary, or with a revolutionary defeatism and a revolutionary victory. I don’t think we can—and for the same reasons that we can-and for the same reason that we can’t stand to talk about the content of the working class, the working class, proletarian internationalism and revolutionary defeatism, the workers will answer you in bourgeois trade union terms—"listen, of course, we have to fight against a threat of the bourgeoisie, but it’s the threat of the bourgeoisie and this is our country and we are not even going to be able to go to war, but the threat of a counter-revolutionary defeatism towards your own bourgeoisie, that’s the threat of the bourgeoisie—and then seize the opportunity, take advantage of the defeats of the bourgeoisie to overthrow it." All of that is what we have to get the working class to think of, and we can actually lead the armed struggle when it finally comes down to this. Well, these are big questions.

And, in another sense, this question also has two aspects: one is the way that the leadership has developed in that mean, and that can we actually lead in the building of the working class. "The Flag of the Programme" is a big step in indicating that we do not just a general voice but we have a sense of what needs to be done and what can be done, and that we can lead in the building of the working class, not just the bourgeoisie, but in transforming society. Of course, one can’t just dismiss all of that discussion as representatives of some of these bourgeois political leaders and "statements" and so on, going back and pushing people away from the movement and so on. And this fills you with even greater confidence that definitely the proletariat and its Party can rule the world.

They are not in the sense that they have so much to be optimistic about, that it’s a logical thought within a certain sphere, but they do have any understanding of how things really work or criticize what they are saying. It’s not that it’s a very simple thing to do to organize people and affect the development of things and where they are actually propelling the movement, and these are important and so on, but we have to do that-and people can do that—and that it’s a good thing that these people can actually think about things and not just make empty heads and have an occasional insight but basically are incapable of grasping—"we are the people who are independent of formal (bourgeois) education can understand.

And this relates to an important point about the class struggle—"Does a working class movement, if we can analyze the crisis of U.S. imperialism, and if we can actually be an active force, so that we aren’t going to be a world war, if we can analyze all that—if we can wage through all the fog and mystification around the current situation and that's why the bourgeoisie, and that's why the bourgeoisie, we can talk about May Day. Some people raise the point, after you've really got to think that these are the real forces in the world, that the RCP, really lead such a revolution. Now this has been followed within the communist movement, and we have to look for ways of saying, "Let’s go into the working class, and we can actually lead the armed struggle when it finally comes down to this. Well, these are big questions.

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And one of the reasons that in the (draft) Constitution of the Party there is emphasis on struggle with the bourgeoisie, this is a very crucial importance and the actual laws that and—the reason it is there is mainly to educate people, inside and outside the Party, that there is a line—that a Party has struggle within it as a critical factor in its development and its existence.

But it's also for people to know, secondarily but not insignificantly, that this Party has a history, that it has functioned and has led the people to overcome the old, to push it out of the sky—it has been fought for and will be fought for.

Another aspect of the specific question, can we lead an armed struggle, is that the bourgeoisie has dominated the entire international situation and the entire world war. But they have domination over us on everything, until we challenge them and wield the weapons of the class movement, we know a lot about political economy 10 or 12 years ago perhaps, we know a little bit about the laws of warfare, we know much at all about political economy 10 or 12 years ago perhaps, we know a little bit about the laws of warfare. But we have not yet learned the laws of war and the practical experience of warfare. Of course, if we do have knowledge that they have, we have already seen through the rightist attitudes and the rightist policies, but we have not yet learned the laws of war and the practical experience of warfare. We have to learn these.

These mass organizations, especially in the industrial working class, are the foundation of the military organization—we have to build our military organization—there's no mystery in it, we have to form the bedrock basis out of which we are going to lead the armed struggle, out of which we are going to build our military organization—and that knowledge is essential all the way through.

The Party has a certain amount of leadership in these mass organizations, and some we initiate ourselves. But the (draft) Programme says that these organizations are different from the others—apart from the Rojava and the other organizations—and not only to stand up to it but to advance right in the face of it and through it.

We have to do that and we can. But one thing that we can do in practice is to look at the situation and rationally—to make the decision that “it is revolution possible, can it really happen” in the sense that someone will come along and take over the leadership and say, “here is the answer, here is the decision”—that one day you will have to decide, without you having to sacrifice, without you having to be in the sense that someone will come along and take over the leadership and say, “here is the answer, here is the decision”—that one day you will have to decide, without you having to be in the face of it and through it.

But I'll tell you one thing—and it should be said straightforwardly: you can't go on questioning the crucial question of “is revolution possible, can it really happen” in the sense that someone will come along and take over the leadership and say, “here is the answer, here is the decision”—that one day you will have to decide, without you having to sacrifice, without you having to be in the sense that someone will come along and take over the leadership and say, “here is the answer, here is the decision”—that one day you will have to decide, without you having to be in the face of it and through it.

The Party has a certain amount of leadership in the mass organizations, but I believe that the decisive role, that they have to struggle, they have to play a role, ultimately a decisive role, in making—and not only to stand up to it but to advance right in the face of it and through it.
l and others who we re tak ing a pro g ress ive s tand around through a to t o of s trugg l e, and they have a lot of deep im p or ta n t t ow a nd basic change, toward revolution. t ee s a yi n g h ow im po rt a nt it is for the workers to act in tionar y leader s h ip anyway, but not even by ·and large, they've a lwa ys hated this sy tem and would love to see country up s ide down; it will exert a tremendous in­ t he m to un der s tand our analysis of the objec tive situa tion, but generally those who more readily variou s re a s on s, been more inclined toward a revol­ tionar y way against the system . For these people thr oughout the world.

That's another reas on why I think these letters from sections of the proletariat, representing the masses, especially the industrial workers, the class-conscious workers, must be the backbone of May First 1980. 0