

else to find out about it or, for god's sake, to become a part of it. It's just the opposite. More and more people need to take this up. And, yes, they need to contribute to further developing it, as they're taking it out into the world and making it a powerful force politically—to mobilize people, to "Fight the Power, and Transform the People, for Revolution"—and summing up the results of that and learning and keeping that process going forward.

Mao made this statement: human life is finite, but revolution is infinite. Well, that's very true, very real and very important. Individuals, all individuals, are going to go out of existence at some point, some sooner than others. It's one of the horrific things about the world and the way it's so lopsided, with masses of humanity and vast numbers of nations in the world being oppressed by imperialism, that there's a huge gap between the life expectancy—just under "normal conditions," let alone with wars and everything else, a vast disparity between the life expectancy of the masses of people in the Third World and people in a handful of imperialist countries. But, beyond that, every life is finite, as Mao said, and is relatively short. There is the question of what we do with our lives, and what they're part of, what they contribute to. And we need to win more and more people to be inspired by—on a scientific basis but, yes, to be inspired by and passionate about—devoting their lives to this. We need this while we're influencing millions; we need to bring forward wave after wave of people who are firmly grounded in and deeply won to the need to fight for this and devote their lives to it. We need to bring forward, through the course of our work, thousands of new people who are won to that.

We need to make leaps in doing that right now. And then we need to continue, wave after wave, to bring forward greater numbers of people, so that we get to the point where, when there's a deep crisis, and millions of people have been influenced by these revolutionary ideas, and millions of people more broadly—tens of millions, tens and tens of millions—are waking up on a massive scale, questioning what's going on, and deeply feeling they don't want to live this way any longer; and when the system is in enough crisis, has enough of its contradictions sharply affecting it in a way that makes it harder for the ruling class to rule in the way it normally rules—then those thousands who've come forward as initiators of a new stage of communist revolution can be the core that brings millions into the revolutionary movement, and, in turn, influences tens of millions more to actually fight for this revolution.

A Danger Sign for the Ruling Class

So, that's how important it is to be breaking people out of this confined narrow process and of continually being drawn like a magnet back into accepting the terms that are presented to them: "If you vote for that one, he'll shoot you in the head; if you vote for this one, he'll just give you a mild poison which will slowly kill you over years. Wouldn't you rather have that?" And right now there's so much poverty of imagination—and poverty of dreaming, in the right sense—that many people can't see beyond those two alternatives, even though they know there's an "evil" in what's presented as a "lesser evil."

And, once again, we're back to the fact that there's a very close connection between people seeing that there is not a permanent necessity to existing conditions and seeing

that the existing conditions are not just outrageous, in and of themselves, but are rooted in a system, and that we don't have to have this system. The more that goes forward in a positive way, the more that will contribute to people being able to break out of these impoverished terms that are imposed from the ruling class, the more they will be able to dream and imagine, and then begin to concretely take up the fight for, a whole different way the world could be, and therefore cast aside the idea that the only choice they have is one which reinforces the existing system and all the horrors that go along with it.

The Need for a New, Really Revolutionary Communist Vanguard

BA: And once I took that step, then, as I said, for me it was a matter of whatever needs to be done—I have to do my best, I have to try to do it, in order for this to happen. It needs to happen, so I have to do what I can to make it happen. And, at a certain point, it became clear to me that there wasn't a single organization—while I had tremendous respect and learned a great deal from people in the Black Panther Party and from what the Black Panther Party overall was doing, I came to feel that their ideology didn't measure up fully; that, while there were important elements of it that spoke to what was needed, it didn't measure up fully to what was necessary to really understand, and therefore be able to transform, reality, in order to actually rid the world of things that it needed to be rid of, and bring into being things that increasingly seemed possible to me, a whole different way that the world could be. So, I felt at a certain point that there needed to be a new organization brought into being, which could serve as a core to unite with other people, through a process of development and struggle, to form a new party that could actually act as a vanguard. And once I became convinced of that, then I pursued that as actively as I could and struggled for it and argued with people.

And, once again, at a certain point it became clear to me that if this was gonna happen, and if the whole process was gonna be pushed forward toward revolution, I needed to assume more responsibility and take more leadership. And so I did. Because I looked around and I felt like: well, this is needed, and other people aren't doing what needs to be done, so I have to do this as best I can. I began to study more, and I began to struggle more to understand more deeply the things that I'd begun to understand, and I engaged in the process of struggle with others about what is really needed and what really is the way forward here.

And that started a process where—to me it's always been a matter that I haven't seen the world get better. I haven't seen the imperialist system reform itself. I haven't seen the oppression of the masses of people be eliminated or even alleviated. I've seen horror after horror after horror, and I've become more and more deeply convinced that this is grounded in this system, and that it's no longer necessary—that we could have a whole different world which would be emancipating for humanity in a real, qualitative sense. And so, I have seen no—to put it that way, I have seen no reason not to persevere with this, because the need for it continues to press itself upon humanity and, if you want to put it that way, to press itself upon my consciousness, upon my understanding.

So, when there was a need to form a new party, then I played the role that I felt was necessary to play in order to struggle to achieve that party on the best possible basis.

There were a lot of weaknesses and errors in the understanding and line of the Party when it was founded in 1975, the Revolutionary Communist Party, but fundamentally it was grounded in the right things. Fundamentally, it was a revolutionary party which was seeking—basing itself on and seeking to apply the science of communism to make revolution and to support and contribute to revolution throughout the world.

Meeting a Great Need, Rising to the Responsibilities

BA: So, once again, it was a question of, okay, there are needs that have to be met. There's a need to sum up this experience: What happened in China, and why? How does this relate to what happened in the Soviet Union? What are the underlying causes of this? How do we understand this in terms of what's going on in the world now? And what are the implications of this in terms of how we go about pursuing the struggle for communism in the world and applying the communist outlook and method? So, there was a need there. And I felt the responsibility to rise to the need—to dig into this deeply; and then to pursue, after that, looking more deeply into the history of socialist society in the Soviet Union and then China, including the experience of the Cultural Revolution in China, but also the experience of the communist movement more broadly and historically, beginning all the way back with Marx.

So I did a lot of reading and studying. I found myself in a position where I both was able to be and had to be—was able to study, but also was forced to be separated from a lot of the ongoing struggle at the time. So this, on the other hand, did provide the opportunity for me to do a lot of digging into the historical experience, a lot of studying, while I continued to pay attention to and provide the leadership that I could to the ongoing revolutionary movement. And, once again, it was a matter of: there's a need and, if you see the need and it's not being fulfilled, you have to rise to that the best you can and fulfill that need, to take that responsibility. That's what it means to act as leadership of a revolutionary process, a leader of a revolutionary party, to take the responsibility—which is what it is—to do that. And over the decades since that time, this was what was necessary—I did my best to rise to what was necessary in order to draw the lessons that needed to be drawn, to more deeply ground myself in the communist outlook and method that would enable the lessons to be drawn correctly, and to struggle to make those lessons accessible to growing numbers of people.

That is what's been the driving force in what I've been doing—feeling for some time, going way back for decades now, that there were needs and that they needed to be met, and that once you became convinced of the need and the possibility of this communist revolution and you saw the world was continuing on as it was, and it was causing tremendous suffering, you had to rise to those responsibilities. So that's what I've sought to do, and it's resulted in bringing forward a new synthesis of communism. But I didn't set out to bring forward a new synthesis of communism. [Laughs] I just set out to meet the needs that I could recognize were there, if the movement for communism was not gonna be set back even more than it was with the loss in China, with the reversal there—and the need to forge, if we could, the basis and the foundation to go forward again.

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