A Year, A Decade of Historic Importance

By Bob Avakian
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I. New Year, 1980. We are on the Threshold of Tremendous Upheavals and Momentous Events Throughout the World and Within This Country Itself.

The next decade. Where are we headed? Millions ask this question, and not just because a page of the calendar is turning, but because the whole world is turning, turning upside-down. We are about to enter the ’80s. When we emerge on the other side, we and the whole world will be drastically changed. For we are headed into a decade different from the past, a decade where all the basic contradictions in the world will be increasing with piercing intensity.

War—world war—and revolution are not distant words but looming realities. There is the possibility of a revolutionary situation developing right within this country. And it is a real possibility, one that even the words but looming realities. There is the possibility of a revolutionary situation developing right within this country. And it is a real possibility, one that even the

Not only the decade, but this very year of 1980 is one of tremendous importance. And its importance centers around May 1, 1980, which will sound the first revolutionary salvo of the 1980s, a day when a force of thousands of class conscious workers and others will march on the streets, refusing to go to work, to go to school, to remain passive but instead begin to take history into their hands, and out of the hands of those vicious bloated dogs like George Meany and the rest who claim the mantle of the U.S. working class and drag it into the cesspool of reaction. Setting this banner of the working class and holding it high together with millions worldwide is not just a matter of replying to an insult. It is a matter of political necessity.

The stakes in the short period that lies ahead, leading up to revolutionary May Day are very critical. The struggle to build revolutionary May Day is a crucial battle, one that will put an opening mark on the revolutionary period in which we are standing. It is a time when the bourgeoisie in this country is going on, parading in front of the masses of people such stars as Jimmy Carter, a has-been peanut farmer, Ronald Reagan, an embalmed leading man, and Ted Kennedy, shining knight of the Living Dead, the capitalist class. In these elections the bourgeoisie, because of its situation, will be forced to shed some of their paper hate platitudes and focus on some political questions, questions of world affairs, and reveal some

Report from People’s Delegate

First Hand From Iran

Following is a first-hand account by Clark Kissinger, who headed the Send the Shah Back, Hands Off Iran delegation of Americans recently returned from Iran.

Getting There

Getting to Iran in the midst of this U.S.-manufactured crisis took a little doing. We were quite aware that the government would attempt to sabotage any people’s delegation trying to get to Iran. Just the last week the State Department revoked the passport of the former CIA officer Philip Agee to prevent him from traveling to Iran to take part in investigations of CIA activities in that country. And one of our own delegation, Rev. W.J. Stafford of Decatur, Ga., had the conditions of his parole changed to prevent him from leaving the state of Georgia when his travel plans became known to his parole officer.

Thus we met in secret in Washington, quickly dropped by the Iranian embassy to obtain visas, and drove directly from the embassy to Dulles International Airport with tickets for Paris only. The plan was for Rev. Stafford to fly to the next day after we made a safe getaway. All this meant, of course, that we were not able to do the kind of preparations before we left which we would have liked to. Money was a big problem because we couldn’t do public fund raising. And there were many individuals and groups who we know would have liked to join in advance in supporting the delegation, yet such additional phone call increased the risk just that much more.

The delegation members had to get acquainted on the way over. Carol and Becky worked together on the trip to go to the women’s health clinic in L.A., and Fred from VVAW and myself had met earlier in Washington as volunteers in the

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things, expose each other, even expose their system in part, in an on-going way—and from today forward.

II. Events Right Now Confirm This Analysis

Events are already confirming this basic analysis. As concentrated right now around Iran, these events show a similarity in various parts of the world, not only in the political work, all the more necessary and all the more possible.

Right now the power of the masses is bursting forth in revolution—not only in Iran, but also in other parts of the Middle East and other parts of the world, including Latin America. Each week, it seems, puffed up reactionaries in this country who are for it, line up—"This is the..."—or off the people face to face with the reality of yet another people, in another part of the world, rising up to smash their imperialist tormentors in the teeth.

And right along with this are the moves, the preparations of the imperialists, with everything from crisis in moving toward World War 3. They have their plans to use the situation around Iran. They are whipping up reaction in this country to ease the sense of crisis with even more in mind than preparing public opinion for a reactionary coup in Iran, or even military intervention there. They're aiming at whipping up people up for the next imperialist war, by fabricating blind reactions, shouting, "We've been left..."—or attacking the imperialists, saying this "shows in practice the revolutionary character of the proletariat and its class-conscious workers, to step onto the political stage under its revolutionary banner, to take action starting now.

III. Step Onto the Political Stage

The urgent need for the working class—for mass support and fighting classes of the people of the world and as a superpower heading up the other imperialist bloc—are not only face to face with the U.S. imperialists in all areas around the world, but are also finding themselves the direct and indirect target of mass reaction. Right now, copping the U.S. imperialist performance in Vietnam, the Russians are facing popular uprisings in Afghanistan (a country which, not so long ago, was a U.S. imperialist base), and the U.S. imperialists are facing a growing revolutionary situation in Iran and the overall fight against imperialism and reactionaries.

The U.S. imperialists, their allies, and even, despite their sharpening contention, their Soviet imperialist rivals, all these have the nerve to conduct a sickening, morbidly and historically out-of-the-ordinary chorus about how the revolutionary struggle of the Iranian people is "the authentic people's movement of the world..." and the like. But the fact is that, as opposed to the reactionary "independent historical action"—this is dramatically and powerfully demonstrated in the events around Iran. What a significant blow, what a jolting force, for the working class, as embodied in these class-conscious workers, to step onto the political stage under its revolutionary banner, to take action starting now. This urgent need is all the more present today, around Iran, the imperialists are finding themselves in a new decade, and are more and more standing with the people of the world and are more and more standing with the people of the world.

But all this frenzy also shows their weakness, their difficulties. They are not even succeeding all that well in whipping up a social base of patriotic, idolatrous flag-wavers, and even more importantly all this also shows that these imperialists, particularly the U.S. imperialists, just can't bully their way around the world as they were able to for a while coming off World War 2. Their frustration about this knows no limits, and they resort to gangster logic, moaning, "We've been pushed around too long" and bellowing "That's enough, pretty enough, plenty enough." They resort to "independent historical action" by the advanced section of workers and the class-conscious workers, to step onto the political stage under its revolutionary banner, to take action starting now. Not just in the U.S., but in a on-going way and from today forward.

And in this light, and in relation to the role of the advanced section of the working class, saying this "shows in practice the revolutionary character of the proletariat and its class-conscious workers, to step onto the political stage under its revolutionary banner, to take action starting now." This emphasizes, again, that all we are doing now is not just "precisely preparation for when the conditions are right..." (as Lenin referred to just above) they are, in another sense, a part, a very important part, of the whole process of revolutionary transformation—broadening the mass base of the revolution or defeat when there is a qualitative leap in the situation.

And this is why, we must understand why the real source of all this misery—the imperialist system—not acting blindly and against their own class interests, but driven face to face with the reality of the imperialist system, driven to a new frenzy by the historical grave diggers of imperialism and all forms of exploitation. As we said in the Revolutionary Worker, all the more necessary and all the more possible.

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"The revolution itself must not by any means be regarded as single act... but as a series of more or less powerful outbreaks rapidly alternating with periods of more or less intense calm."—Lenin, April 16, 1917. "What Must Be Done?"..."To Be Done?"...making a statement which is full of meaning for the people of today, but which, especially the major political battles, we wage now can be crucial not only at hitting back, politically, at the enemy and not only a defensive one but beyond that perhaps in deciding the outcome for the revolutionary conditions for the future.

The initial call for May Day 1980, issued by our Party last May Day, 1979, put it this way, "...our force will be overwhelming...and will be needed to..."—and that time will surely come! But to bring about this, we have work to do and struggle to carry out. Not just in the U.S., but in a on-going way and from today forward. Work and struggle to bring closer and closer together these events right now around Iran and the overall fight against imperialism and reactionaries in various parts of the world.

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heard anything about politics, begin to act in a revolutionary way... When the revolution has been sufficiently prepared, the concept 'masses' becomes different; several thousand workers no longer constitute the masses. This word begins to denote something else, the majority... (Vol. 32, "Report to the Third Congress of the Communist International")

With the development, and especially the full ripening, of the situation, sudden and dramatic changes take place: millions awaken to political life (and already to move and influence thousands and tens of thousands does have at least indirect, or quantitative, influence on broader masses—even millions). These millions who awaken to politics do, of course, enter in with all their misconceptions, prejudices, etc., at the start—but they learn quickly.

Iran, again, is what Lenin referred to in the above "lecture" as a crisis "in miniature" showing on a smaller scale and in a less developed way what will happen in a thorough and deep-going crisis in society as a whole. And in this "miniature crisis" around Iran, again, despite the lying propaganda of the imperialists, especially where the revolutionary line and stand of the class-conscious proletariat has been able to penetrate, as focused in the work of the RCP and those allied with it, many, many people have learned and been turned around—so that all this shows all the more the need for the class-conscious to act, especially around such burning questions as Iran that do awaken many to political life.

With the development, and especially full ripening, of the situation, with millions, awakening for the first time, the thousands who rally now around the revolutionary banner of the international proletariat become millions, ultimately tens of millions, who, at least come to support the program of the communists—the program of revolution and all the concrete, immediate programmatic things (such as the end to a war, the abolition of unemployment) that revolution means. This, even in a "miniature crisis", shows all the more the need for a newspaper that can awaken many to political life.

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V. Concrete, Immediate Tasks

In the coming year, in the coming decade... We see the outlines of the class-conscious working class on "The '80s", a worker's day, that breaks sharply with imperialists and unites us here with the whole international working class.

- The Revolutionary Worker newspaper, the main weapon we have today for revolution, must be wielded much more seriously and much more urgently. This is because it is our main tool of preparation for revolution, and it is also central overall to the other battles in the struggle, including May Day itself, though May Day and other battles do have to be built in "miniature form".

Throughout this whole period of, as Lenin described it, powerful outbreaks alternating with periods of calm, our work requires the flexibility, the consistently revolutionary thrust that only a newspaper can provide—linking all these events, in whatever period to come under ever more vicious attack as the ruling class finishes off this system, the leadership must be defended. And to assist the Party in carrying out and expanding its all around revolutionary work, the RCP's Million Dollar Fund Drive must be brought to a victorious conclusion by the end of this month.

- May Day 1980—an historic and critical battle, a battle whose result in the coming months will mark a leap forward, or backward for the working class! The fact that such an event has never taken place before in this country emphasizes all the more the leap that must be taken, the leap it will represent. And this event, more than any other single battle, will put the imprint of the class-conscious working class on "The '80s" and will put it on with a bang, right off the bat! In this key time on the threshold of this decade whose revolutionary potential we have analyzed, the advanced must act now, and act in such a way on May Day 1980, Internation Workers' Day, that breaks sharply with imperialism and unites us here with the whole international working class.

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The critical question—that is, the thing we can effect and take freedom initiative around—is the role of the Party and the advanced. We can seize this initiative in wielding the weapon of the Revolutionary Worker, in waging political battles, in influencing and activating, mobilizing around their real interests and the revolutionary stand of the international proletariat, the many who already are beginning to and increasing much more seriously and much more urgently. This is because it is our main tool of preparation for revolution, and it is also central overall to the other battles in the struggle, including May Day itself, though May Day and other battles do have to be built in "miniature form".

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